

3. Expressive *wanglai* in life cycle events (I)

This is the second Chapter on expressive *wanglai*, which covers a person's life from cradle to tomb (from birth to death). It will demonstrate how a family's social support or *lishang-wanglai* networks (see 6.2) are built and changed when there are significant family changes: a new born child, a new member married into the family, house construction, family division, elderly care and funerals, etc. In this Chapter we will describe networks with reference to the focal child, person, family, etc.

3.1. Birth and growing up

This period, in theory, starts as early as when a child is an 8 month old foetus and extends after the child's 16th birthday when there are celebrations for seeing-off a person starting work, entering further education, or joining the Army, etc. Along with the child's growth there are many events involving *lishang-wanglai*. They are events before and after the birth (*dan shengtang* and *dan shutang*), celebrations for the one-month old birthday (*manyue baitai*), the one-year old birthday (*zhousui baitai*), to be a guest and to be visited (*zuoxinke* and *kantouke*), events for a child pre-school and starting school (*taoshubao* and *taotuanzi*), celebration of the sixteen year old birthday and seeing-off ceremonies (*shiliusui baitai* and *huansonghui*), etc. The section 5.5 shows details of all mentioned events and how different relations are built up bit by bit around a person through different events over the growing up period. All the contacts between a focal person and his or her different relations can be seen as expressive *wanglai* because related people on the above occasions express their care and attention by visiting each other with gifts or entertaining each other with feasts. The process of making such relationships can be described as "fattening pigs" or knitting *lishang-wanglai* networks (see 6.2).

3.1.1. Expressive *wanglai*

In order to show how expressive *wanglai* works I constructed the Table 10. The first 10 rows of the table relate to the growing up period of a person. It shows that by 18 years old a person has more or less fully formed his or her *lishang-wanglai* networks. They are agnatic and non-agnatic kin, neighbours and fellow villagers of

both a child's family's and his or her *jiujiu*'s family's, possibly including also all the close non-agnatic kin's families', friends including little friends or sisters and classmates, village collective, ancestors and a local goddess and gods. The following point will show how the *lishang-wanglai* networks are knitted.

(1) The bold arrows in Table 10 indicate the importance of different events. The bold arrows in the non-agnatic kin column show that both "before the birth" and "one month old birthday" are important events because they involve three or four generations of non-agnatic kin. The former is the ceremony at which a new generation of non-agnatic kin join the focal family's network. The latter is mainly to establish a basic *lishang-wanglai* network for the focal child. This comprises the child's relatives, neighbours, fellow villagers, friends, ancestors, and local goddess, etc. (See related events in section 5.5). On the row of 16th birthday event there are two bold arrows. They are on the columns of agnatic and non-agnatic kin. This shows this event has the largest size and highest standard of the life cycle events in the growing up period. It involves three or four generations of both agnatic and non-agnatic kin because this is locally regarded as the most important event to mark the child becoming an adult.

(2) Whereas the solid arrows represent basic relations of a focal person or family's network, the dotted arrows are relations of the person or family's close non-agnatic kin. Although relations of the person or family's close non-agnatic kin may or may not become part of the person or family's network, it is important to acknowledge their existence. For example, Zhou, the husband of a before birth event (see section 5.5), shows how this network worked in his own experience. Zhou said although his family could have arranged a marriage for him with or without love, he would never have married his wife based on true love without the local systems of "to be a guest" or "to be visited". These systems allowed him through indirect links to get to know a girl and eventually marry her, even though she lived in a different village from him. Zhou's wife is a daughter of a neighbour to one of Zhou's little friends. On the one hand, those neighbours can be seen as one of the dotted arrows to Zhou's family's relations. On the other hand, Zhou's family and its close relatives can be seen as one of the dotted arrows of the little friend's family's relations because he is a nephew of one of the neighbours of Zhou's mother's natal family in

Kaixiangong Village. When the little friend was 5 years old he visited his aunt's (father's sister) family and was introduced to Zhou, who was playing in his mother's natal family. When the little friend was 7 he became Zhou's classmate in Kaixiangong Primary School because his village was without a school. When Zhou was 8 years old he paid his first return visit to the little friend. This was also the first time he met a girl who was his little friend's neighbour's daughter. Since then Zhou, his little friend, and the girl played together over many years. They all graduated from the Miaogang High School together when they were 16 years old. Zhou told me, eventually, the girl became his wife and the little friend is one the closest friends among the 45 who were invited for his wedding banquet. Thus the relationships among Zhou, his little friend, and the girl changed from the dotted arrows of Zhou's family to solid arrows.

(3) The directions of arrows in Table 10 show direction of gift giving. Following the rows, it can be seen that the gift flow changes between balance and imbalance several times over the events during the growing up period. The rows corresponding to the before and after birth events and the seeing-off ceremony show how all the relations visit the focal family with gifts on their initiative. The case study of the "after birth event" (see Section 5.5) shows how the Rao family received gifts and money totalling 1,680 *yuan* from relatives, friends, neighbours, and fellow villagers and spent 1,200 *yuan* for entertainment at the event. How could the gifts givers be sure they would receive return for the gifts they give? Mrs Rao explained to me that the imbalanced figure always reminded her that the Rao family "owe some *renqing*" to their friends, neighbours, and fellow villagers. When there is next a chance she will balance it. If we concentrate on the columns of "neighbours" and "fellow villagers" we can see the rows of "one month old birthday" and "to be visited" show that the focal family gave gifts to neighbours and fellow villagers which balanced each other. This balance is in both the quantity of gifts and order of action, namely, it completed a round of visiting and hosting each other. The rows of "asking for rice balls" and "the 16th birthday" show only a one-way gift flow from a focal family to its neighbours and fellow villagers. Thus, after this, the imbalance of the gift relationship is re-established. This time it is the

focal family that gave gifts first and stored some *renqing* with their neighbours and fellow villagers.

(4) Table 10 divides all relations into four groups by social and spiritual support resources. They are agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers; non-agnatic kin, friends; collective and others; ancestors, gods and goddesses. For agnatic kin, neighbours and fellow villagers, normally the support provided is labourers, together with a token of money or gifts, and materials. In the case of “before birth event”, Zhou’s male and female agnatic kin offered different types of support throughout the day, in the form of shopping, kitchen assistance, dish washing, cleaning, sorting gifts, serving tea or meal and providing company for the guests. The agnatic kin also brought tables and benches and other equipment for the event. They also provided a little financial support in the form of *fenzi*, which consist of about ten *yuan* wrapped in red paper per household. At the event neighbours and fellow villagers mainly provided support by giving gifts or lending tables or benches for feasts, etc.

Non-agnatic kin should include a child’s mother’s brother’s (*jiujiu*) family and a daughter who has married out of the family. In Table 10 the columns “mother’s brother” and “daughter married out” show these two relations sometimes play a more positive role than other non-agnatic kin. The events of the “one month old birthday”, “asking book bag”, and “asking rice balls” would happen in particular between a child and *jiujiu*’s family and then be extended to other relations. The events in “house construction”, “elder’s birthday”, etc. would involve *wanglai* between a daughter who married out of the family and her natal family. In the “before birth event” the significant gifts from non-agnatic kin can be understood as indirect financial support. At this event they also express their sense of caring by chatting with the pregnant woman and her mother-in-law, to share the complicated feelings before her birth and exchange experiences of labour and birth, etc. This chatting serves a similar function to a discussion in an antenatal class in Northwich Park Hospital, London which I attended for preparation of my own baby’s birth.

Friends served a similar function to non-agnatic kin. In the growing up period little friends always mixed with a relationship between classmates. The nature of a

relationship between classmates is an institutional relationship. It is very likely to be personalised as expressive *wanglai* in the village. The two events of pre-school education and starting school allow relationships with classmates to be personalised because everybody expresses their feelings of wanting to get to know and be closer to others by giving others gifts on their own initiative. For Zhou, close classmates can be counted as little friends and distant classmates remain in an institutional relationship. Once a classmate becomes a little friend of a focal person, and the focal person is old enough, he or she is obligated to provide financial and emotional support when requested.

Although a relationship between the village collective and a household is supposed to be an institutional relationship, it can also include financial and emotional support. As personal support, this kind of support between villagers and their collective can be personalised in a reciprocal way. In the growing up period the only event which involves such a relationship is the seeing-off ceremony for someone joining the Army. Before the rural reform of 1980s, the youth looked forward to joining the Army because this was one of best ways of improving one's lot. After the rural reform was carried out, villagers believed that to serve the Army would waste time that could otherwise be used to get rich. As sending people to the Army was a state task the village collective had to work very hard, including the personalisation of the relationship with candidates and their families, in order to fulfil it.

Ancestors, gods, and goddesses mainly provide emotional and spiritual support. There is no provable exchange relation between villagers and their ancestors and local gods or goddesses. However, all my sampled households said that they had general beliefs, and this is validated by how they involved themselves in different kinds of events involving spirits. The grandmother of the Song family told me that although it took some effort to prepare the worship for her granddaughter's first birthday's events, it is important for her to feel they can get the *ataimo*'s (a life goddess) blessing after the worship. Two weeks after the Song family's daughter's one year old birthday event I went to visit another family with a nearly one year old daughter. The girl's mother told me that she had made a nice one-month old birthday for her daughter, which took care of all the relationships of her family

including the goddess. To my surprise she then said “I am not going to give a ceremony for my daughter’s one year old birthday because I am less superstitious (*bu name mixin*).” It is clear that for her the one-year old birthday ceremony is mainly an exchange with the goddess as it was called *zhousui baitai*. I will explain more of the religious sense of this in the next section.

3.1.2. Different *lishang*

I am now using *lishang* criteria to explain how the expressive *wanglai* works in the growing up period. I will also show that the criteria of *lishang* are not fixed and how they change during this period of the life cycle.

(1) The moral sense of giving and sharing came from the flow of gifts. Zhou’s wife told me how she started making friends from her classmates by giving and sharing. When she was 7 years old she went to Kaixiangong Primary School because the village where she was born and grew up did not have one. She felt it was difficult to fit in with the class to begin with because the majority of children came from Kaixiangong Village. However, what she learnt from the flowing of sweets and rice balls is an ideal that giving gifts could make friends, although she forgot which were whose because everybody gave sweets and rice balls to each other. Since then whenever she had sweets and snacks she would bring them to school and share with others. She also gave manual help to others on a cleaning day when the child on duty was absent¹. This kind of behaviour was also encouraged by her teacher who always praised them for being good pupils and doing good deeds (*haoren-haoshi*). Gradually she made a few friends through giving and sharing. When she went to Miaogang High School and even after she married into Kaixiangong Village from a neighbouring village she kept this method of making friends.

In 2000 Ren’s wife, whom I met at her “after birth event (*dan shutang*)”, told me how parents or grandparents carry out and pass on a local custom to the young generation by encouraging them to give and share with others. She learnt the local custom from her son. It is that a child should bring his or her younger cousin(s) of non-agnatic kin to visit a younger child or children who lived in the same group. Mrs Ren had a son Ming who lived in group 7. A little boy Ban was three years

older than Ming. When Ban was young he attended Ren's baby's events and had received rice balls from Ming's family since he was born. So he knew basic information about Ming and to some extent he was obligated to Ming's family. He also knew all the cousins' information through "being a guest" and "being visited" and other kind of *wanglai* with his non-agnatic kin. One day, when Ban was 7 years old, he realised one of his cousins who lived in the group 9 was the same age as Ming of his group. They were both 4 years old. He then brought the cousin, a girl, to visit Ming's family. Mrs Ren's mother-in-law, Ming's grandmother, entertained them very well. All the children enjoyed very much each other's company and started to play together regularly. One year later, Mrs Ren continued, Ming and the girl who went to the same nursery in the village became close friends.

Mrs Ren also told me another story relating to how Ming made his little friends. Ming and Jia had been good friends since birth because Ming was 40 days older than Jia, who lived in group 6, a neighbouring group to that of Ming. In 2001, these two little boys, aged 5 1/2, rode bicycles in the village and saw a girl in a village shop. She was one of their nursery's little friends who lived in group 4. They decided to take her back to Ming's home. Ming's mother, Mrs Ren, gave them a big tea and the children played happily together. Just before Mrs Ren took the girl back home her grandmother came to collect her. The grandmother had found a message from the village shop saying that her granddaughter had gone away with the two little boys Ming and Jia. Since then the girl became another close friend of Ming. This story illustrates that the way of making friends can be spontaneous and does not necessarily follow the local customs. Both cases of Ming making two little friends from other groups show that parents generally encourage children in making their little friends.

This caused me to reflect about how relationships are established between my son and his little friends in the UK, where there are similarly different systems for mothers and babies making friends. When my son was a few months old I made a few friends for my son: two through the antenatal class, two from the NCT (National Children Trust) mothers' and babies' networks, one from the village where we live and one from a local clinic's waiting room. When he went to the

nursery and reception of his previous school he made four friends there. However, we lost almost all of them as everyday interactive friends. Three of them moved to other countries and we moved away from the local area where we lived. In 2003 one of the children we met in the NCT group moved away to another school after he became my son's best friend when my son joined his class after we moved to a new place. After losing the last friend of his childhood my six year old son faced a problem of how he could make friends for himself independently. One day I saw him sending a little present to our neighbour's son who newly came to his class. He told me it is good to give to others because that was one of the ten commandments that God told Moses on bringing the Israelites with him to Israel. However, he told me he even cried for his Mummy when the neighbour's son teased him in school. I too found it is very difficult to make new friends for a child when he or she is getting older because others have either formed their own friendship circles, have siblings which involve more complicated arrangements for each of them, are busy with after school clubs, or some other reasons I haven't yet found. My point is that it is common for mothers to put effort into making friends for their children from a very young age, although different places have different ways of doing this. The above way of the older cousin bringing his younger cousins into his group in Kaixiangong Village fits perfectly into the local system of *lishang-wanglai*. Although Ming and Jia brought a girl back home, which is not part of any local custom, the way in which Mr Zhou encouraged them is based on the principle that giving is a virtue in making friends. Although I can't simply apply the village's way of making friends into my own life on the other side of the world, the principle of giving to others could be shared everywhere in the world.

(2) The degree of emotional attachment depends on frequency of *wanglai*. After the "before birth event (*dan shengtang*)" Mrs Zhou told me that it was very important for her that her natal family lived only one hour's walking distance away from Kaixiangong Village because it would be much easier for her and her married in family to *zoudong* (another local term for come and go or *wanglai*) with them. This allows the relationship between Mrs Zhou's married in family and natal family and its relations to be maintained more easily. Moreover, the feelings among them can be closer as the local saying "*qinqi yue zou yue qin, linju yue zou*

yue jin (literally the more *wanglai* the closer between relatives, the more *wanglai* the nearer between neighbours)”).

Here the meaning of “neighbours” can be as broad as fellow villagers and little friends in the village. Mrs Ren told me that although her son’s best little friend lived in a neighbouring group, they in fact lived as close as neighbours since both families lived on the adjacent edges of their own groups. They have contacted each other frequently since their babies were born. Over the past five years both the parents and children became attached to each other with strong emotion and the children were called little brothers. Especially, Mrs Ren added, as her son’s generation would not have any siblings so such little brothers or little friends are particularly important to them.

It is not difficult to imagine that the relationship between the above two little friends could become like the relationship between Mr Zhou and his special little friend who brought together Mr and Mrs Zhou. I would like to reflect on the village’s custom to show how little friends or little sisters get closer through expressive *wanglai*. As I mentioned in the section on annual life cycle events, at the Beginning of Summer (*lixia* is the day making the beginning of the 7th of the solar term -- 5, 6, or 7 May) there was an event called *yehuofan* (a kind of picnic), which involved generous *wanglai* among little friends. According to local custom, once children passed their eleventh birthday they were expected to form such gangs of little friends or little sisters and be obligated to each other. Apart from sharing everyday school life, e.g. going to school together, eating lunch together, doing homework together, etc, they also share each other’s birthdays, shopping or outings on weekends and holidays. In particular, they helped each other’s families do housework and farming on the busy seasons’ holiday (*nongmang jia*). For example, cutting grass for feeding rabbits, feeding chickens and ducks, and picking leaves off mulberry trees for silk worms, etc. These are the initial stages of labour support in their lifelong friendship. This part of the relationship between little friends and sisters can be counted as expressive *wanglai*, compared with generous *wanglai* when they played together or entertained others.

On the summer picnic a girl told me that they enjoyed each other's company very much and felt attached to each other just like real sisters, although they had rows sometimes. The gangs of little friends or little sisters could be modified as they grew up. However, after they had grown up and the little friends or little sisters lived apart the concentrated attachment from their childhood would be released when necessary. As Yang found in her fieldwork, such close friends do not need *guanxi* to gain help from each other when needed because the special childhood relationship stores up enough emotional resources for them to enjoy later on (Y. Yang 1995: Chinese article). This kind of input and output forms a vertical circle in one's life cycle. When their son or daughter got married they address each other as "old friends (*lao pengyou*)" and "old sisters (*lao jiemei*)". More details about how this kind of relationship plays a positive role in villagers' *lishang-wanglai* networks can be seen in the rest of this chapter.

(3) Rational calculation can be seen from the quantity of gifts, size of events, meanings of etiquette and arrangement of events, etc. There are always clear quantities of gifts for each event from different relations. For example, in the "before birth event", Mrs Zhou's natal family had to bring gifts worth 400 *yuan* each, her agnatically related kin brought gifts worth 100 *yuan* each, Zhou's old generation non-agnatic kin only brought gifts worth 50 *yuan*, whereas Zhou's agnatic kin each gave 10 *yuan* plus labour support. The quantities indicate the different position of different relatives in Zhou's family's *lishang-wanglai* network. Mrs Zhou told me that the local custom provided guidelines which divided relations into different groups and specified quantities. People need to work out the correct quantity for a given event, and usually get this right, however when this calculation is made incorrectly it can cause conflict (see Chang 1999:167-68).

Since there are so many events in villagers' life, like annual cycle events of a family and life cycle events of each individual member of a family, the well balanced sizes of events would involve rational calculation. Table 10 shows that in the growing up period the one month old birthday and sixteen year old birthday are the largest events which involve three or four generations of relatives and all the other relations. The before birth event involves both agnatic and non-agnatic kin;

the after birth event also involves neighbours, fellow villagers, and friends; the one year old birthday only involves close agnatic and non-agnatic kin and little friends within the village; the “to be a guest” event only considers the hosts’ relations which include the hosts’ agnatic kin, neighbours and fellow villagers; the “to be visited” event takes the focal family’s agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers into account; “asking for book bag and rice balls” are concentrated relationships with classmates. The knowledge of who should attend which event can even be seen in young children. One day, I saw three children, just before supper time, who went to attend a family feast of house completion and left one child behind. This child told me that he should not go with them to the feast because his family belonged to a neighbouring group. This means children from a very young age understood which occasion they could or could not be included in according to local customs and applied this into their life without involving the grown ups’ advice.

The size of events is not only to do with different relations, but also related to the standard of treatment. This can be extended to meanings of etiquette. For the Zhou family in the before birth event Mr Zhou’s natal family were the most important guests in this occasion because this was the first time Mrs Zhou’s natal family’s relatives were invited for a feast since Mrs Zhou got married. So the standard of the feast is one of the highest. There is a related saying involving a rational calculation in family management. It is that parents’ responsibilities extend up to three years after their children marry and it would then be their turn to be responsible for the rest of their life for the elderly (*yeniang guandao hunhou sannian, zinu guan tamen hou bansheng*). As I mentioned in the end of “before birth event” (See 5.5), this event laid a foundation for a new wife’s status in her married family. According to the local custom, after a child is born, the wife becomes the main manager of family events. The new wife / mother is supposed to have an updated list of agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin, friends, neighbours, and fellow villagers, etc. She is also expected to learn the arrangements and customs of all the family events. Although the process of learning about so many events can extend through a lifetime, the wife / mother is expected to be competent at this within three years after her marriage into the family.

The contents of gifts contain different meanings: some for the pregnant woman's health, others for the new baby's birth and luck growing up, and for entertaining guests after the new baby is delivered, etc. However the customary details of gifts can be adapted based on rational choice. When I was in an informant's family I saw a woman give the informant a bag of biscuits. The informant told me that the giver was one of her neighbours. The biscuits were brought by the neighbour's non-agnatic kin when she visited the neighbour's son. I then asked the neighbour why she brought biscuits rather than dried rice cakes as the local custom demanded. She told me that the visitor was too busy to make the dried rice cake so she had brought a case of biscuits instead, which she learnt how to make from another village. She enjoyed this change because she liked the taste of the biscuits. This also happened in other events. In the asking *jiujiu* for book bag event, *jiujiu* should customarily give an abacus to his niece or nephew. Instead of this a calculator is now used. Nowadays, some *jiujius* even give a bicycle to their niece or nephew, instead of the customary rain boots. Even the ways of arrangement for different events can be changed based on rational choice. For example, asking for a book bag and asking for rice balls are two separate events. BL told me that although his family, as most families in the village, kept the two events as they were, some families combined them together in one big event. According to BL the overall cost for the two events varies from 100 to 300 *yuan* each. In the "asking for book bag" event a focal family could spend 7 to 13 *jin* of rice powder which can make 120 to 180 rice cakes, dependent on the size of *jiujiu*'s family's networks. In the "asking for rice balls" event a focal family could spend 50 to 100 *jin* of rice powder, for 120 to 180 rice balls, again depending on the size of the child's family's networks. On top of these there are other gifts involved. This new custom of combining the two events together started in the late 1990s. The focal families spend 300 or 400 *yuan* on making rice balls and additional gifts and make one visit to *jiujiu*'s family and distribute rice balls to everybody. So the combined event is less effort than for the two separate events. Having one big event saved their energy and time for arrangements but required a large single amount of money to be paid. BL also told me that if one child has two or more *jiujiu* they should work out different shares and take their own share for the events. If a child is without a

jiujiu, normally when the child was young, his or her mother would create a quasi *jiujiu* for the child.

(4) Religious sense can be seen from the symbolic meanings of gifts' contents, details of rituals, and the degrees and variety of the believers' belief. The symbolic meanings of the content of the gifts embody a religious sense in every event obviously. Examples are as follows. Jujube in Chinese is pronounced as *zaozi* which is the same as the short for *zao sheng guizi* (this means to have a treasured son earlier). This gift is particularly important before the birth event. In the after birth event everybody should bring a bag of *yunpiangao* (a kind of rice cake in thin strips) to see the mother and baby. I had different explanations for the *yunpiangao*. The baby's mother told me that *gao*'s pronunciation is the same as *gao* short for *gaogao xingxing* which means happiness. *Gao*'s pronunciation is also the same as *gao* (tall) which symbolised that the child would grow up healthily. An informant told me that this kind of cake is only for this particular event among so many different cakes in the life cycle and other events. It is formed from about 100 thin strips and is completely different from other cakes. The number of strips symbolises a life of a hundred years, and is usually used in expressing good wishes for a new-born child. Another visitor said although he did not count how many strips were in the cake, so many strips means wishing the child to have lots of friends in his or her life. *Ataiyuanzi* or *ataituanzi* (goddess rice balls) and *wai sheng tuanzi* (nephew or niece rice balls) in the events of the one month old birthday and asking *jiujiu* (mother's brother) for rice cakes also have their symbolic meanings. *Yuan* of *yuanzi* is the same pronunciation as circular, *tuan* of *tuanzi* means ball or roll something into a ball. *Tuanyuan* is a term specially used for family reunion. So those rice balls symbolized having a happy family life. In the sixteenth birthday event *shoutao* (peach shaped cakes) symbolise a long life: the traditional meaning of the peach.

Religious sense is also embodied in details of different rituals and events. For example, there is a taboo in the event of asking a mother's brother for a book bag. This is that if a year is *mangnian* - the Beginning of Spring (the 1st of the 24 solar terms, normally 3, 4, or 5 February) is earlier than the lunar New Year Day - then the event should be moved to the year before or after in order to avoid bad luck. An

informant Yao told me that *mang* of *mangnian* is the same character in Chinese for blind, which has lots of negative meanings: worship blindly, obey blindly, act blindly or aimlessly, etc. It is especially important to avoid this at events that mark a child's going to school. Colours in the wrapping and decoration of gifts also involve religious sense: to wrap gift money, silver dollars or padlock of necklace with red paper bag, and to wrap big steamers as gift containers with red cloth is for avoiding evil; to decorate evergreen (green colour) on top of gift containers is for long life.

Religious sense can also be seen from the degree and variety of the believers' belief. In Section 5.5 I mentioned in the section on the one-month old day ceremony that Mr Ren's family did not worship ancestors due to the family's practical concerns. Mrs Ren admitted that her married family took ancestor worship less seriously than some other families in the village. Again, the Song family did not have a ceremony for the one-year old girl's birthday and worshipped the local goddess because her mother had "less superstition than others". However, Mrs Ren told me that she learnt more details from other families about the one-month old day ceremony. In 2003, when I was checking details with Mrs Ren she told me that having a son for the family is a very important thing. She hoped I should not miss in my account an important relation which is the ancestor, although her family did not worship ancestors (*qingzuxian* including *zuzong* - ancestor and *xianren* - forefather) because her mother-in-law wasn't well enough do to it due to serious arthritis on her knees. She told me that there were many families that still continued the tradition of asking ancestors to bless the new baby.

The way in which villagers combined ancestor worship with the worship of the local goddess is that they worship the ancestor first, then worship the local goddess at the same place. They set up an altar table for the ancestor and make a bow to him. They then take away all the offerings and set off firecrackers. Then they reset the altar table to worship the local goddess. What she learnt is as follows. First set up the altar table for ancestors. The altar table's grain should be oriented east to west because this way could keep ancestors at home. When worshipping ancestors it should face north because they are part of the family. For worshipping the goddess however it should face south and the grain of the altar table should travel

south to north because the goddess is an honoured guest and this will let her come into the house smoothly along the grain. She sounded as though she enjoyed this adapted arrangement. She told me that if she became a grandmother she would help arrange her grandchild's one-month old day in such a proper way.

Here is another case, which is creative. Zhou told me that his family did not hold a ceremony at his baby's one-month old day at all because all the members of his family are Christian, which is in conflict with superstitious beliefs. He counts worship of ancestors, local gods or goddesses as *mixin* (superstition). Instead of this, his family had a ceremony for his son's one-year old birthday. This is different from the majority of the villagers. Zhou and his wife invited all the members of the child's *jiujiu*'s (his mother's brother) family for the birthday party. *Jiujiu*'s family brought a big cake, sweets, and clothes for the party boy. They sing a happy birthday song to the party boy and helped him to blow out the candle. They also prayed to god before they ate the cake and the lunch time ceremony feast, which was set up by the boy's parents and grandparents. Afterwards they distributed some sweets to the children of neighbours and fellow villagers. This case indicates that although in Zhou's family the religious belief changed, the *lishang-wanglai* remained.

Mrs Ren told me that details of rituals could be changed from time to time. For example, in the past people burned *huangtongzhi* (a kind of rough straw paper) in rituals. The ash looked like fine dust with black and white colours. From 2000 onwards villagers burned *lianfang* (a kind of special paper) and the ash looked like a *yuanbao* (a shoe-shaped gold or silver ingot used as money in feudal China) with a yellow colour. Burning paper money signifies sending the money to ancestors or local gods or goddesses. Mrs Ren told me that along with the raising of villagers' standards of life they would like to spend more real money to buy such special paper for the ancestors or local gods or goddesses because they believed the more they offered to them the better the care their ancestors would gain from them.

3.2. Establishing a marriage relationship

After I attended many wedding related events I reached a conclusion that it took about five years and 50,000 *yuan* on average in 1996 to complete the whole process of establishing a marriage relationship for a boy/fiancé/groom/husband's family and 40,000 *yuan* for a girl/fiancée/bride/wife's family. This process involved complicated transactions of finance and relationships. Among many works on Chinese marriage studies², Fei (1939), Freedman (1966), and Yan's (1996a and b) works are close to mine in two ways. (a) Both Fei and Yan stressed the issue of the new family or conjugal relationship. Based on his fieldwork in Kaixiangong Village Fei (1939) suggested "the marriage gifts and dowry are, in fact, the contribution of the parents on both sides to provide the material basis for the new family, and a periodic renewing of material basis of the household for each generation" (43). Sixty years later Yan (1996b) made it clearer that in Xiajia village "the marriage transaction is no longer a cycle of gift exchange between two families, but has become a means of claiming one's share of family property employed by individual brides and grooms in their pursuit of conjugal independence"(198-99). (b) Freedman raised an issue of kinship relationship between two families of the boy/husband and girl/wife, "the successful absorption of a 'foreign' woman into the family and the smooth regulation of ties created between two sets of kin" (1967:11).

My observations in Kaixiangong will show the above two points are complete from vertical and horizontal views. (a) Although bridewealth and dowry provide the material basis for the new family in a vertical circle of generational relationship, as Fei and Yan observed, they overlooked the fact that the bridewealth and dowry can also be seen as a kind of investment from both sides of parents for their care in old age and burial after they die. Also the tendency which Yan (1996b, 2003) found in Xiajia, that the brides and grooms who claim bridewealth were in favour of conjugal independence, is not the case in Kaixiangong (see 4.3). (b) Although the bridewealth and dowry provide the material basis for the newly established marriage relationship between two families and their kinships in a horizontal circle, Freedman did not show how the relationships are established or reviewed, and overlooked other kinds of relationships. Section 3.1 has already shown how both a

new couple's families strengthen their relationship and build up new relationships for the younger generation. Section 5.6 shows how a marriage relationship is established between two families and how this new relationship modifies the existing family networks through major events. I have shown in section 3.1 that children in Kaixiangong Village are involved in large family based *lishang-wanglai* networks from when they are born. By sixteen years old, Mrs Zhou told me, most children are expecting to find their own partners in marriage (*duxiang*)³. The establishment of a marriage relationship includes different stages: from asking for red paper, two betrothal rites, the seeing-off ceremony, wedding, and other pre-wedding/post-wedding activities. All the events relating to the marriage relationship serve the function of ending or renewing the family's *lishang-wanglai* networks. Once all the relationships have been reviewed the process of establishing a potential marriage relationship has been completed. Here I will show how all the different parties to these events participate with *lishang-wanglai* and, in some cases, social creativity.

3.2.1. *Lishang-wanglai* in the period of establishing a marriage relationship

Table 10 is formed of three parts divided by triple lines. In section 3.1 I have discussed the first part, how *lishang-wanglai* networks were knitted for/by a person from his or her birth to sixteen years old. I will discuss the third part in section 4.3. In this section I will show how the networks work as “fattening a pig” through different events among different relations during the period of establishing the marriage relationship. I will demonstrate the operation of the expressive *wanglai* first, and then involve *lishang* criteria for further analysis.

3.2.1.1. Expressive *wanglai*

Here I will explain different events and relations according the Table 10 first and then point out how the different *wanglai* are mobilised.

Different events

The bold arrows in Table 10 show that the most important events during this period are the betrothal rite and wedding ceremony for both fiancée/bride and fiancé/groom's families. These events involve the broadest lists of the given

families' relatives, namely, people with the same surname who lived in the same group (*tongxing de renjia*) but not are not so close as to take the part of neighbour, nor so close by blood tie to be a part of the agnatic-kin; or people who have moved back one rank on a family's non-agnatic list (*laoqin*) due to a marriage relationship being established. The fiancée/bride's and fiancé/groom's fathers, the fiancée/bride's and fiancé/groom themselves, and their friends were not invited for the betrothal rite feasts. They are the most important guests and kept for the special occasion (see related paragraph in next section).

The solid and dotted arrows represent fiancé/groom/husband and fiancée/bride/wife and their families and relations separately. The events of seeing-off feasts, tea parties, and gifts show different *wanglai* between the fiancée and her relations because only the fiancée, but not the fiancé, has to end large numbers of relationships. Thus the fiancée receives gifts from them, which can be seen as a payback from those with whom the relationship (with her but not her family) will be broken. This payback is analogous to the final payback, on the slaughter of a pig, after many years fattening, and can be seen from two ways. From a vertical point of view the process started when the fiancée was born. The food for fattening the pig is *renqing* and *ganqing* rather than finance or materials because the *wanglai* among the relations over a certain period are already balanced. From a horizontal point of view the pig can be seen as a gain from some families who received feasts, tea parties, or gifts from the fiancée's parents in the past, or investment from other families who would be involved in the same events in the future. In either way the period of preparing gifts varies from a few months to more than one year and the relations could take their time to arrange the gifts based on the fiancée's family's dowry list.

The thin solid and dotted arrows represent fiancé/groom/husband and fiancée/bride/wife themselves separately. From the post wedding events of the Table 10 we can see sometimes these two arrows joined together and at other times the thin dotted arrows and solid arrows joined together. This signifies that the new wife has started a process of fattening another pig in her life with her husband or mother-in-law among her new home's relations. This is the process of knitting her new family's *lishang-wanglai* networks.

Different relations

Apart from the abovementioned broadest list of a given family's relations, I will now show how the *wanglai* happens among the major relations and given families during the period of establishing a marriage relationship.

(1) Agnatic kin is the most positive relation for both fiancée/bride/wife and fiancé/groom/husband and their families. There is no visible ancestral hall or temple (*zongci*), no lineages system exists in Kaixiangong Village. The activities of agnatic kin or people sharing the same surname embody the idea of a patriarchal clan's existence. Especially in the period of establishing a marriage relationship the agnatic kin's involvements are very high, on many occasions even unique. Apart from the involvement of finance, materials, and labourers, their position of being the same clan (*jiazu, zongzu*) and close agnatic kin of both a wife's natal family or a new couple's family plays a unique role. For a fiancée/bride there is a separate flesh and bone feast for seeing off the bride before she gets married, the agnatic kin also accompany the bride's father as a clan to take part in a feast held by the groom's family for uniting two families to be a big family after the wedding. The agnatic kin are included again in the bride's house when the bride and the groom visit the bride's natal family, and they in return are invited back for a feast in each of the agnatic kin's families. For the fiancé/groom/husband agnatic kin play an equally important role, which is mainly displayed in the post-wedding events. They accompany the bride's father to the groom's family as guests. They also invite the bride and the groom for feasts in turn in return to each agnatic family for welcoming them to join the clan, etc.

(2) Non-agnatic kin obviously play an important role in this period. Yao family's case of dowry (See 5.6) shows non-agnatic families took 76.2 per cent of the total numbers of gift givers from among the kinship source, whereas 23.8 per cent came from agnatic kin. This is similar to the finding from the ESRC project in Kaixiangong Village. It shows 77.14 per cent of contacts in financial support came from non-agnatic kin, and 22.86 from agnatic kin (Chang & Feuchtwang 1996:17). Apart from the absolute numbers of non-agnatic kin always being larger than agnatic kin I found another reason for this. The lesser quantity of agnatic kin's

financial support compared to non-agnatic kin's is also caused by a local custom which deducts the costs of labour in helping at feasts, hosting feasts, gifts money, as well as the post-wedding welcome feasts that agnatic kin are supposed to provide.

Amongst non-agnatic families *jiujiu* (the mother's brother) and his family plays a very important role. As one of the wife's non-agnatic kin, the *jiujiu* represented her natal family because he inherits his family property, including his sister's who has lost the right to inherit due to being married out of the family. The way in which his parents transfer some of the family's property to their married out daughter is to let him give a greater number of more expensive gifts to her. At the same time he gains honour as the most important person among all the relations who attend the wedding (*jiujiu wei da*). However, *jiujiu* can't be the richest guest among them so the local custom laid down guidance for different relations in order to avoid the situation of a 'river being higher than a bridge' (*heshui moguo qiao*).

As we have seen in earlier related paragraphs the reason villagers care about numbers of non-agnatic kin is because they are important resources for emotional and financial support. The following case will show how crucial is such resource for a poorer family. HL Wang told me that his family had two sons. The older son got married in 1989. It took his family another 6 years to get ready for the younger son to be married. The total cost was 35,000 *yuan* from asking for a red paper to the wedding. The family had to borrow more than one third of the money for it. The sources were 4,000 *yuan* from his sister's daughter (she called Wang as *jiujiu*) who lived in the village; 2,000 *yuan* each from his father's brother's two sons who lived in Zhenze Township; 1,900 *yuan* from his *jiujiu*'s sons and daughters who lived in Xicaotian village; 1,500 *yuan* from his wife's brother who lived in the village; 1,000 *yuan* from his agnatic kin who lived in the same group; and 600 *yuan* from his sister's son who lived in the same village. The total sum was 13,000 *yuan*. Of this sum 93 per cent of the lenders were the Wang family's non-agnatic kin who were on Wang family's list for lunar New Year's feasts.

Wang told me that the above order on the list of borrowed money is based on the quantity borrowed rather than the closeness of relations. This is the same way, thus,

as the donation list which was published in the rebuilt East Temple. The reason he did this was because the principle for repaying should pay for the distance relations first then to close relations according to local custom. By May of 1996 before I left the village the Wang family had repaid 7,100 *yuan* and left 5,900 *yuan* for 1997. The only items unpaid were two items from Xicaotian village and Zhenze Township's. Wang said that if his second son were taken by any family as son-in-law this marriage would save 10,000 *yuan* according to the local custom.

(3) Friends played multiple roles on the wedding day. The fiancée's friends gave her gifts, gift money, and accompanied the bride to her married family, whereas the fiancé's friends provided labour for the performance on welcoming a bride's party, loading and unloading dowry, etc, and also paid a significant amount of gift money on the wedding feast. Apart from the bride and groom's friends, both the bride and groom's fathers' friends are also involved in the event. On the wedding day the friends make up more than half of the guests. For the bride and groom and their families it is the highest honour to have lots of people for the wedding: this means that they have rich human resources. My informants always gave numbers of guests proudly for the feasts. If some families had less than 15 tables of guests (120 people) for the wedding they would explain the reason, so as to save their face before being asked.

(4) For neighbours and fellow villagers the most obvious point is that the seeing-off ceremony had nothing to do with them, according to Table 10. The reason for not involving neighbours and fellow villagers in the Zhou family's daughter's seeing-off ceremony was because a daughter's marriage away from the village means the family loses a daughter and should therefore keep the event low key according to local custom. However, immediately after the wedding day, the Zhou family distributed rice cakes to its neighbours and fellow villagers when the bride and her husband paid a brief visit to it. It is a very important thing to distribute the rice cakes and sweets at the right time because they were left out from the big family event of the seeing off ceremony because they were "losing a daughter". The cakes and sweets from the daughter and her husband meant she was reborn as a closer new non-agnatic kin of her natal family. This is the only transaction between Zhou's family and its neighbours and fellow villagers during

the period of the post-wedding, which can be seen to compensate them for not being a part of the ceremony. In contrast the *wanglai* between the new wife and her marriage family's neighbours and fellow villagers were positive. The new wife and her mother-in-law invited their neighbours and fellow villagers for a tea party first, on their initiative. Then they visit each family of them, one by one. Thus a basic foundation of a relationship between the new wife and her new neighbours is laid.

(5) The column "others" of Table 10 means matchmakers. For villagers it is very important for a matchmaker to take part in the marriage process, as traditionally there is a Chinese saying that a proper way of contracting a marriage should be based on "the command of parents and the good offices of a matchmaker" (*fumu zhi ming, mei shuo zhi yan*). In the 1930s, according to Fei, matchmakers were requested by girls' parents and distributed red papers with eight characters to boys' families randomly. One boy's family could receive several red papers and choose one of them through a fortune-teller's help. The matchmakers then played a role as negotiator of bargains between the boy's and the girl's families until an agreement was reached between two families (1939:40-43). This custom changed greatly in the 1990s. I was told normally there are three matchmakers who would be involved in establishing a marriage relationship: two walking matchmakers (*xingmei*) and one sitting matchmaker (*zuomei*). The walking matchmakers' jobs were to go between two families asking for red paper, providing small and big bridewealth, and guiding the groom's team to welcome the bride from her home to the groom's family on the wedding day. The sitting matchmaker is for making sure everything is all right in the above three stages. There were still fortune-tellers outside of the village but villagers hardly ever used them. For them the importance of matchmakers in establishing a marriage relationship can be seen as below. (a) Morally it is right and honourable for parents to arrange a boy's and a girl's marriage properly through matchmakers (*mingmei-zhengqu*) according to *lifa* (rules of etiquette) or local customs. The three matchmakers were addressed as *huahong* (blooming flower), *jianxiu* (change bad luck into good luck), and *yuelao* (the god of marriage) on the red envelopes of gift money at occasions of betrothal rites and wedding.⁴ They also used the terms of *qingmei* (inviting matchmakers), *xiemei* (thanks to matchmakers), *meiren zuo da* (the best seats for matchmakers), etc. For

example, on the wedding day the groom's father should invite the walking matchmakers for a big breakfast with a whole duck or whole chicken. On the day after the wedding day the groom's father should pay a thank you visit with an upper part of a pig's leg to each matchmaker's family. (b) For the matchmakers, as Qiu said, he felt he didn't have the heart to turn down his nephew's parents' request to be a matchmaker because normally the matchmakers are the closest relatives or friends of their "clients". According to the local custom the two walking matchmakers should be invited one of each by the boy's and girl's families separately. The sitting matchmaker should be a girl's *jiujiu* (mother's brother), *guru* (father's sister), or a person who is very close to the girl's family. Walking matchmakers can be male or female. Normally it is the wife of a family who is a walking matchmaker for the small betrothal rite and a husband for the big betrothal rite and wedding. So the three matchmakers can come from three different families. (c) As an intermediate or go between, to be a matchmaker is a kind of sideline occupation. It would bring some income. According to the standard rate in 1996 payments to matchmakers were 40, 60, 80, 100 each from asking red paper, two betrothals, and wedding from a groom's family and 20, 30, 40, and 50 from a bride's family, plus some thank you gifts from both groom and bride's families separately. Thus each of the matchmakers' families can receive about 600 *yuan* for being a "go between": 400 *yuan* from a boy/fiancé/groom's family and 200 *yuan* from a girl/fiancée/bride's family.⁵ Since matchmakers are necessary in establishing a marriage relationship, Tan said, I would rather pay for my close relatives than others as the saying *feishui buliu wairen tian* (do not let fertilized water flow to outsiders' paddy fields). (d) For villagers, it does not matter who plays the role of matchmaker and how things should be arranged, the most important matter is they ought to have a third party to represent the will of a marriage god (*yuelao*) to bless the new couple to live to a ripe old age. This kind of religious sense is still rooted in villagers' unconscious. Yao told me that, the root is so deep inside of the village, that even during the Cultural Revolution period (1966-76) the villagers cadres had been asked to act as matchmakers and Chairman Mao's portrait and revolutionary slogans had been used as the god of longevity (*shouxing*) picture and a pair of antithetical couplets.

(6) The reason some villagers involved the village collective into the biggest family event is because they needed financial support. Those families normally were either relatively poorer than the average living standard or had better knowledge of using collective resources in the village. For example, JG Wang, a head of one group of the village, told me that he had two daughters and incurred debt in arranging his older daughter's wedding. The older daughter had to take a man into the family as a son-in-law because his two sisters had married out of the family and he is the only son of his family. JG Wang's listed family expenditure is different from that of HL Wang's in two ways. This family spent about 50,000 *yuan* from the small betrothal in 1994 to the wedding in 1996. Among the total sum 40 per cent is spent on the two betrothal rites and 60 per cent on the decoration and wedding. The total debt is 50 per cent of the total expenditure, namely, 25,000 *yuan*. JG grouped lenders in 5 sources. They are 6000 *yuan* from 5 families of non-agnatic kin, 3000 *yuan* from 3 families of agnatic kin, 6000 *yuan* from 6 friends who had grown up together in the village, 2000 *yuan* from a bank, and 8000 *yuan* from his work colleagues and some people he got on well with (*yaohaode*) through his work links. Among them only 60 per cent came from private sources because JG's wife came from north Jiangsu (*subei*) which is the poorest area in the province, whereas 40 per cent came from public sources including bank and work colleagues. Although the money was not directly borrowed from the village collective, the way in which JG arranged the money was through his knowledge and ability to use village collective resources. For example, applying for money from a local bank requires an application form, and two guarantors at the village cadres' level, approved and stamped by the Village Committee. One applicant is allowed to apply for 2000 *yuan* at a time for six months. This complication and the limitations of borrowing money from the local bank puts off lots of villagers. However, as a head of one of the groups in the village, JG did not feel it was too much for him because he had lots of dealings with the village cadres in person and they helped him for the routine work. The money lent by his work colleagues was due to the same reason that JG had a friendly relationship with the village cadres, who helped him not only to go through administrative formalities but even helped him with their own money. JG's case is quite close to villagers' understanding of *guanxi* as I have shown in 1.2.

However, one of the lenders said this was a “*renqing guanxi*” between him and JG because they got on more like friends rather than colleagues, although the way in which they were linked was by work, for he was a head of another village group. Such a mixture of human feelings and work position is not unique. In the above HL Wang’s case, HL borrowed 1000 *yuan* from JM Wang. JM Wang was related to HL Wang in three ways: he was on the margin between agnatic kin and being of the same surname who lived in the same group, he was also a vice Director of the Village Committee. The reason HL Wang categorized him as agnatic kin is because JM Wang told him with sympathy when loaning money to him “please accept this small amount of money as a token of agnatic kinship without feeling embarrassed (*yidian xiaoyisi, buyao buhao yisi, doushi zijiaren ma*)”. For HL Wang the amount of money itself was not large but the way in which JM Wang handled the matter deeply moved him. He thought then he gained great face from him because to be poor and to borrow money from others, especially from those whose position is higher than his own, is not a comfortable business. As I mentioned in section 5.8, JM Wang also helped when a very poor old man, whose son went away from the village, died from lung cancer. Many people told me different stories about how kindly JM Wang had treated them. I asked him what he would have done if he had not had money when HL Wang came to him. He said he would still have agreed to lend to him by borrowing a small amount of money from his relations, because his resources are greater than HL Wang’s. What JM Wang gained from such kindness towards his kinsmen and fellow villagers was that they trusted him and felt grateful to him. Thus he gained a solid mass foundation for his work. This kind of giving and receiving is the top down component of the vertical circle of reciprocity in marked contrast to the bottom-up type that Yan found in Xiajia village (1996b).

(7) Although ancestors and local gods amount numerically to a small proportion of the *wanglai* between a fiancée/bride/wife and a fiancé/groom/husband and their families with different relations, the key point here is whether or not people take ancestors and local gods into account during this period of the life cycle. I was surprised after I attended two weddings because I did not see the brides and grooms *baitiandi* (make ceremonial obeisance to gods in Heaven and Earth), which is a

popular performance during the wedding. I asked them for the reason. The replies were all the same that “it is no longer fashionable (*bu shixing*) to do so”. After I discussed the matter with them we all agreed that the form of paying respect to the local god had changed, but the meaning was still there. It was embodied in the decorative central hall: a big painting of the god of longevity (*shouxing*) with a boy and a girl (*tongnan tongnu*), and a pair of antithetical couplets on each side of the picture. The young couples believed from the bottom of their hearts that they hoped the heavenly gods would bless them (*laotian baoyou*) to have a long life, a child, and a happy family. But none of them wanted to have two children, like the picture shows, because they said nowadays to rear one more child means to lose a part of life.

Mobilizing of different *wanglai*

Although the whole chapter is about expressive *wanglai*, sometimes this can be changed into different types of *wanglai*. As I have shown in the previous sections a marriage relationship involves a number of relationships between a fiancée and fiancé, a daughter and her parents, a son and his parents, a wife and a husband, in-laws’ families and their relations before and after the wedding, etc. The reason villagers asked the kitchen god to keep the red paper safe or involved matchmakers was because sometimes things would go wrong. If one thing goes wrong it can change a relationship from one type to another and affect lots of related relations. I will show how these changes occur briefly with a few examples.

The first example happened in the 1950s⁶. A relationship between Xie and his parents can be categorized as expressive *wanglai*, like most of the parents and son relationships in the village. He married a girl who was adopted into the family as a daughter-in-law-to-be (*tongyangxi*), as a part of a family arrangement. The relationship between him and his wife just managed to keep going (*couhe*). It sounds like an instrumental *wanglai* because they stayed together just for the sake of keeping the family together, and without love. However, Xie met a girl and they fell in love with each other. After Xie failed to convince his parents to give up his marriage his girlfriend was forced to marry another man as arranged by her family. The relationship between Xie and his parents went down to instrumental *wanglai*. The whole family lacked vitality. One year later Xie’s lover ended her unhappy

life. Since then Xie's relationship with his parents and wife moved down to negative *wanglai*. He decided to end the family line (*duan xianghuo*) by separating from his wife. His wife then had an affair with another man and got pregnant. Xie's family refused to accept the baby so she committed suicide by hanging on a beam. Xie's wife's death improved the relationship between Xie and his parents from negative *wanglai* to instrumental *wanglai*. A few years later he agreed to marry another woman and had a daughter. However, Xie never walked away from the shadows of the two dead women. Eventually his new wife divorced him and left their daughter with Xie's family. The relationship between Xie, his daughter, and his parents remained instrumental *wanglai* until Xie's daughter grew up and Xie's parents passed away.

The second example happened in the 1970s. Fang had an expressive *wanglai* with her parents until she got engaged to a man. However, she fell in love with a different man. Both her own and her boyfriend's families had already held a large betrothal rite for them with a different boy and girl. They both failed in convincing their parents to break off the engagements. Fang's relationship with her parents became more and more tense which can be seen as instrumental *wanglai* or even negative *wanglai*. Fang tried to convince the matchmakers to help and they refused her because they had committed themselves on her parents' side. She even went to her fiancé's family and tried to find out a solution. However, the fiancé's family organised its male agnatic kin to beat her badly in a storehouse. Eventually Fang gave up hope and told her boyfriend that she wanted to die. Her boyfriend decided to die with her for love. They both committed suicide by hanging themselves on a big tree. Thus the relationship between Fang and her parents entered into a negative *wanglai*. In a recent telephone conversation Yao told me that he believed this kind of relation can be seen as negative *wanglai* because the effect of Fang's death on her parents would last to the last moment of their life as an act of revenge.

The third example happened in the 1990s. An informant Xu told me that her ex-daughter-in-law divorced her son eventually because the Xu family's financial situation was never satisfactory to her. In her words "this marriage was very much grudging (*mianqiang*) from the very beginning". She agreed with me that during the period of establishing the marriage relationship the relationship between her

ex-daughter-in-law and her family could be seen as instrument *wanglai*. A few years ago Xu's family's situation was quite good because her husband was a hero in the War to Resist U. S. Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53) and he worked in Miaogang Township. The two families held betrothal rites before her son went to the Army. However, after they got married the family's situation got steadily worse. Xu's husband lost his final chance to be promoted due to his lower education level and returned back to the village with little pension. Her son demobilized from the Army and worked in a depressed village enterprise. The young couple lived together with lots of rows. Eventually the ex-daughter-in-law divorced Xu's son and left her own son in the Xu family. The relationship between the ex-daughter-in-law and the family moved down to negative *wanglai*. Although the ex-daughter-in-law never came back once even to see her own son, the villagers still counted the relationship as negative *wanglai* because the negative effect on the family was still there.

The above cases show how different types of *wanglai* can be moved up and down within the same relationship, e.g. a son or a daughter with their parents, or a wife and husband. Therefore, the evidence from Kaixiangong again challenges Sahlins's (1968) model of the closer relationship the more the generous attitude (see more in 1.4 and 4.3).

3.2.1.2. *Lishang* criteria

Whenever I gave explanations for any of the above cases, one or more criteria of *lishang* were touched upon. Here I will show how different *lishang* worked during the period of establishing a marriage relationship, or the principle in the process of fattening pigs or knitting networks.

Moral judgment

Moral judgment can be understood as respectful of local customs (*laofa*) or understanding of *lifa* (rules of etiquette; the proprieties). For Kaixiangong villagers how gifts flow is practice, and why gifts should flow in particular ways involved principle. For example, why did villagers sometime put gift money in red envelopes, and sometimes gift wrap it with a small piece of red paper? This

distinction has not been noticed by anthropologists before and there is thus no division between *hongfengtong* (red envelopes, i.e. DL envelope size) and *hongbao* (little red bags) in anthropologists' work. However, Qiu told me that if a fiancé's family wrapped the bridewealth and gift money with many pieces of small red paper (*hongbao*) to give to the fiancée's family and her relatives, the fiancée's family should refuse to accept them however large the quantity of the money. In contrast, if a person brings gift money with a red envelope (*hongfengtong*) to attend a wedding feast, he or she would be laughed at by other people. In these two cases the presentations of the gift money are not in line with *lifa* (rules of etiquette; the proprieties). According to the *lifa* if a gift-giver uses a red envelope for his gift money he or she is muddle-headed (*linguini*) because he or she is unable to remember local customs that are so often repeated. It would be more complicated if the bridewealth giver used little red bags for the gift money. This could be interpreted as (a) the fiancé's family did not respect the fiancée's family by being too informal; (b) the fiancé's family did not take the relationship seriously and so did not even bother to make envelopes because the amount of paper used in making an envelope is similar to that used in wrapping folded money; and (c) the fiancé's family did not understand *li* because the particular names of different gift moneys should have been put on each red envelope with paint brush writing. The names were, i.e. *wei li* (small gift) for fiancée's family, *qinggeng* (invitation) for fiancée's father's friends, *yuelao* (marriage god) for payment to a matchmaker, etc.

For Kaixiangong's villagers the red envelopes are normally only used for betrothal rites and in a wedding for delivery of bridewealth between a fiancé/groom and a fiancée's families and their matchmakers, a fiancée's relatives, different kinds of helpers. The red envelopes are called *hongfengtong*, because the money is too much to be folded in this formal occasion. The red bags relate to gift money from individual givers to receivers because the money is limited and can be folded and wrapped in a small piece of red paper. This is called *hongbao*, which can be translated as "little red bag". This division might relate to rational calculation in a quantity of money or the size of paper. The significance of the division between red envelopes and little red bags is for existing rules of etiquette and the proprieties. Furthermore, using a given kind of presentation for gift money for both

givers and receivers is a moral judgement of how well they understand the local customs. This does not mean every villager should know all the details for every event. It is important for the villagers to seek such advice from a specialised person to sort out this for them.

A moral judgment is also needed to be able to create new ways based on local customs (*laofa*) or rules of etiquette and the proprieties (*lifa*) because in practice there are so many things not covered by the *laofa*. For example, the girl, Fang, was beaten up by her fiancé's male agnatic kin and she or her family did not complain about it because according to *laofa* they were right to hit her since she had broken off the engagement. The tragedy of her and her boyfriend's suicide for love woke up the villagers and they have developed a better custom to solve such a problem since the 1960s. If somebody wanted to break off an engagement her or his family should be able to do so in order to prevent the tumult about the bridewealth. The fiancée's family should return all of the red envelopes with the bridewealth plus some extra, whereas the fiancé's family should lose the small and big betrothal gifts and give additional apology gifts.

Such adaptation of local customs can be seen on many occasions. For instance, all the wedding photos which I saw were taken in a photo studio in Wujiang City. Instead of the studio's standard sample with a groom wearing a formal suit or a swallow-tailed coat and a bride wearing a white wedding dress in Western style, on wedding photos in the village the brides were wearing pink wedding dresses instead. For the villagers the white wedding dress is in conflict with the *laofa* which demands a bright red colour cloth or dress. The more serious matter according to the *laofa* is that the colour white is not a lucky colour because villagers only wear white during funeral periods. So the compromise has to be made that the style of wedding dress is as the same as the sample in the photo studio and the colour is pink, which is in between bright red and white. This new custom has been widely accepted.

Human feelings

Human feelings in this period are mainly revealed in three ways. The first one relates to a true feeling of love between the conjugal couple which becomes more

obviously expressed in physical terms. There was an old Chinese saying that “to get married first then have a courtship (*xian jiehun hou lianai*)”. However, nobody can tell whether or not the married couples have a courtship or are in love after they get married. The above tragedies of love show feelings of true love can be the main reason that causes the changes of types of family relationships.

The second feeling is of pain at separation mixed with *renqing*. Some villagers expressed their pain at separation by embodying it (Kipnis’s term) in local customs because it is very difficult to express such a feeling directly in public. For example, in Zhou family’s seeing-off ceremony the bride’s father’s mother swore loudly about a shortage of sweets, the bride’s relatives set up six rows of human fences one after the other to stop the groom’s team from getting into the house (*baishan*), the bride’s mother wept after the bride left, etc. Sometimes a bride’s close male relatives would complain that the red envelopes were not enough and tell the groom’s team to return to the groom’s home, which is called “*dahui*”. The groom’s team have to go back to the groom’s family to collect more money. “The symbolic expression of antagonism on the part of the girl’s relatives often causes unpleasant feelings between the newly established affinal relatives, especially if they have not a sense of humour (Fei 1939:45).”

It is very difficult to express such feelings appropriately. Villagers preferred to express themselves a bit too exaggeratedly on those occasions. If the girl’s natal family members or relatives did not show such feeling, especially in front of the groom’s welcome team, it would be interpreted that the family did not care for the girl enough. Fei (1939) claimed such feeling of “we cannot let them have our girls without making a fuss” is a psychological expression of conflict between mother-love and patrilineal descent (43). In order to show such feeling in public everybody who is involved in different roles has to play with exaggeration. In the division of the wedding ceremony work, some people helped with the labour, even though this was not required by a particular local custom, because according to the general local custom it is always good to be over done rather than under done. The grandmother said the way that she expressed herself was through her share of gift money in a red envelope being larger than that of the other relatives. She was

expressing her feeling of pain at separation from her granddaughter and at the same time doing her job properly.

The third kind of feeling of closeness can be expressed by giving different amounts of gift money in post-wedding feasts with families among close agnatic kin. The amount of gift money given by each family of agnatic kin to a groom's family on the wedding day is called *fenzi qian* (share of gift money), and is based on the standard obligation of agnatic kin. The local custom provided reference figures for each type of agnatic kin, e.g. in 1996 a groom's father's brother paid 160 *yuan*, a groom's father's father 120 *yuan*, a groom's father's father's brother's sons 100 *yuan*, etc. It would be not proper to give more or less than the guideline on this occasion. However, in post-wedding feasts these agnatic families were free to give any amount of gift money to the new wife. This is a way to tell the new wife the real closeness and distance among these families. If one of them decided she did not like the new wife she can reduce the amount of gift money. If another liked her and wanted to make a closer relationship with her new family they could put some more money into the little red bag. The rule is that the amount of the gift money should be an even number for double happiness and for the couple to remain happily married to the end of their lives. There is no need to say anything. Based on the amounts of gift money and rules the new wife should be able to update the list of agnatic families. This is not simply for increasing or reducing the number on the list. It is a matter of ordering the list according to closeness and distance. So the updated agnatic kin list is based on a feeling of closeness rather than the closeness of blood tie or geography.

Rational calculation

Rational calculation can be seen everywhere during the establishment of a marriage relationship between two families. Here I will start with Table 11 to show three major points.

(1) Table 11 shows the expenditure of Mr Rao's family and Mrs Rao's natal family during the period of establishing a marriage relationship from 1992 to 1995. The figures are approximate. From the table we can see two points. (a) The column of Mr Rao's family shows that the Rao family provided 30,000 *yuan* for decoration of

the bridal chamber (20,000 *yuan*) and basic materials (the 10,000 *yuan* which is supposed to be used by the bride's family in this way according to local custom). Mrs Rao's natal family provided 22,000 *yuan* dowry for the new couple. The total sum was 52,000 *yuan*, which was 52 per cent of the total expenditure from the two families. This expenditure is more like Fei's (1939) observation that it is for the "material basis of the new family", rather than Yan's finding in Xiajia village that the raising of bridewealth and dowry is for the "conjugal family" (1996b, 1997). In Kaixiangong the reason for this is that the majority of new couples lived with their parent(s). (b) Table 11 shows that the rest of the expenditure was 48,000 *yuan*, namely, 48 per cent of total expenditure used on expressive *wanglai* among their relations for feasts including food, drink, cigarettes, sweets, etc., gifts and return gifts to different relations, and ceremony related expenses including decoration of the central hall, tips for labours, firecrackers, etc., different kinds of gift money during post-wedding feasts, tea and snacks for tea parties, etc. Of the two families Mr Rao's family spent 36 per cent and Mrs Rao's natal family spent 50 per cent on expressive *wanglai*. The reason Mrs Rao's natal family spent on this item for this purpose more than Mr Rao's family is mainly because it occurred in pre and post-wedding activities. So Yan did not see a large expense spent on the updating of *lishang-wanglai* networks of the wife's natal family and the husband's family.

(2) Financial support is necessary for almost all families during the period of establishing a marriage relationship. The ESRC social support project shows that in Kaixiangong Village 72.37 per cent of financial support for family events, emergency, and investment is provided by a household, 18.35 per cent is from private sources, and 9.29 per cent from public sources (Chang & Feuchtwang 1996: 8). These figures are very similar to those households which take wives or son-in-laws into the family in establishing a marriage relationship. Table 12 shows that Mr Rao family's household's financial support amounted to 62.6 per cent of the total, those from other private sources 33.7 per cent, and those from public sources 3.7 per cent. (a) For the Rao family the sum of 35,800 *yuan* was accumulated over many years from 1988 to 1995 by the working members of the family. In the row of private sources there is a figure 5,200 *yuan* which was gift

money given by guests at the wedding feast. This can be seen as a pig received from the family's networks. It would take another a few years for them to repay back the debt of 13,000 *yuan*. The main reason for seeking financial support was for decorating an en suite flat style of bridal chamber within the family house. Unlike the old style of bridal chamber, which is one double bed room within a family house, the new flat style appeared in the later 1980s. The new bridal chamber is like a one bedroom flat without a kitchen. It contains a bedroom with en suite bathroom and basic furniture including bed and built in cupboards, and a separate sitting room. The cost of decoration varies from 10,000 to 30,000 *yuan*. The rest of domestic contents were the dowry worth 22,000 *yuan*, which was received from the bride's family. (b) Mrs Rao's natal family only spent 17,400 *yuan* of family savings, about two thirds of the total expenditure, during the period of establishing a marriage relationship. There was no need to seek financial support from public sources because her natal family had rich resources from private sources in three ways. More than half the money came from Mr Rao's family, although it would return back to his family eventually in a different form as bridewealth. Gifts came from the family's relatives and the girls' friends worth 8,000 (See 5.6 for details of how the gifts worked). 3,800 *yuan* came from the family's relations, excluding the daughter's friends, at the seeing-off ceremony feast. The bride brought 3,400 *yuan* of cash from her friends' gift money with her to her husband's family.

Although both Mr Rao's family and Mrs Rao's natal family received a large amount of gift money during the wedding / seeing-off ceremony feasts, the families are part of the networks of other families. This village had a long tradition of high ceremonial expenses in each family. Fei (1939) mentioned ceremonial expenses vary from 5 *yuan* to 20 *fen*⁷ according to the closeness of kinship and friendship, and on average the amount per family per year was at least 10 *yuan*. At that time the basic expenditure per year per family was 263 *yuan*, marriage expenses was 500 *yuan* including bridewealth and wedding ceremony (133-137). In the ESRC social support survey the expenses averaged per year per family 4,872.88 *yuan* (Chang & Feuchtwang 1996: 6) in 1992, whereas marriage expenses were 20,000 *yuan* including bridewealth and wedding ceremony at that time. It seems the

marriage expenses were twice a family's annual expenditure in the 1930s and four times in the early 1990s. However, my finding shows the main reason for the latter increased expenses is the decoration of the en suite flat of the bridal chamber, which reflects the changes of family composition and life style.

(3) The majority of two children families in the village normally reach a balance between a married out daughter and a married in wife. There is a village saying that if a woman, for example, A, gave birth to a daughter, B, her family would pay for three generations (*sheng yige nu'er pei sandai*). The first generation is A's parents, the girl's grandparents. From just before B was born A's parents would start to prepare before and after a child's birth events, throughout the growing up period events are carried out by A's brother (who is B's *jiujiu*), up until B married out from her natal family. The second generation affected is A and her husband, who pays for B's upbringing until she is married out from the family. After B has a child her natal family, through B's brother, would become the third generation to support B's son's growing up. Their role in this would be similar to that of the first generation. So A's parents, A's brother's family, and A's son's family form three generations working by relays one after the other in complete circles of giving birth, giving support, to giving up the daughter. Such circles flow in vertical and horizontal directions.

As a reciprocal circle if a family take a wife into it though establishing a marriage relationship between two families it equally gains three generations through the daughter-in-law and her natal family and her son's family in both vertical and horizontal ways. This is how a family with one daughter and one son through marriage reaches a balance over three generations. If families have two sons or two daughters this model can still be applied by either taking a man into the family as son-in-law for a daughter (*zhao nuxu*) or letting a son be taken into another girl's family. As I pointed out in an earlier paper (1999) in the past women had no right of inheritance, since both the land and house are paternally inherited. When a daughter marries she receives dowry from her parents, but at the same time loses considerable rights over property in her natal household. Although women have equal rights including the right of inheritance with men under the post 1949 Constitution, this is not implemented in the village where local customs are

preferred (Chang, 1999:168). So the mobilization of materials is based on a complete set of local customs. On the one hand, a woman gives up the legal right of inheritance of the natal family's property after she marries out from it. On the other hand, the local customs provide protection for the married out daughters to gain recompense for their share of the natal family's property throughout life cycle events.

Since the Chinese state's one child family policy only applies to urban areas the above model is fully developed in Kaixiangong Village and worked quite well. However, nowadays more and more young generation families want to have one child only, on their own initiative. This model met a challenge. I will show how villagers created new ways in dealing with the change in section "Social creativities and enjoyment in marriage relations" later.

Religious sense

Religious sense can be seen everywhere throughout the period of establishing a marriage relationship. Villagers used symbolic meanings of even or odd numbers, colour, date, food, pronunciation of words for different things, etc. For example, in every event returning gifts is required. The rules for returning gifts are "*feng dan huan yi* (return one item if the number of gift is odd)" and "*feng shuang bu huan* (return nothing if the number of gift is even)" for cigarettes, and to return half of the sweets from the fiancé's family's gifts. One should always keep an even number because the meaning is two, double, a pair, the lucky numbers. In 2000 I found one reason for a gift receiver always returning a little piece of token gift in a gift sender's container. It was explained with the well known symbol of Taoism by Yao. The logo combines two parts *yin* (black) and *yang* (white) in one logo in which a white spot is in the middle of the black part and a black spot is in the middle of the white part. The spots are turning points for changes from white to black or vice versa. So the gift giver's container shouldn't be filled with gifts in full. The gap can be seen as the white point in the black part. The gift receiver puts a little bit of return gift in the empty gift container to represent the little black spot in the white part. So both parties can see that the other wishes to continue their relationship. Not to return the little token gift in the empty container would signify that one is stopping *wanglai* with the other.

On the plate or tray for the small betrothal rite there were two threads of knitting wool. The red colour is for a girl from a boy and the green one is for a boy from the girl (*nan hong nu lu*). The meaning of the threads is to link two people together, as Fei (1939) said “this is facilitated by religious beliefs. Human marriage is believed to be held together by the old man in the moon, *yuelao*, with invisible red and green threads. This knitting together is symbolically performed in the wedding ceremony. The paper inscription of the god is in evidence in every marriage ceremony. Human helplessness breeds such religious beliefs and help to relieve the situation (46)”. The red colour used to be very popular. In order to avoid evil almost everything was wrapped with pieces of red cloth. They put a piece of red decorative cloth on top of gifts, the anchors for station of the groom’s boats were wrapped with red cloth, the envelopes and the little red bags for gift money are made from red paper. Red bows also are used for decoration, e.g. on two sugar canes standing by the bed of the bridal chamber, on the roots of two bamboo trees.

The meaning of the sugar canes is for the deeper relationship and the happier life of the couple because the taste of sugar cane is sweeter towards the root. The bamboo trees are called *shangrenzhu*, which means to climb the bamboo tree a bit by bit up to the end, literally, to raise the living standard bit by bit.

In the welcome bride party there is a custom of *bao xinni* which means a bride’s father carries her on a chair which is covered by a red duvet (*zhuangyuanbei*). This is actually adapted from an old custom of *pao xinni* which means a bride’s father or her closest male agnatic relative carries the bride in a sedan chair (Fei 1939:45). Since the sedan chair (*jiaozi*) is no longer used post 1949 the villagers adapted to it with a normal chair. In addition in Tan’s case they used a decorated car (*jiaoche*) to collect the “bride”. The *jiao* of *jiaoche* and *jiaozi* is the same character and meaning for a sedan chair, the *zi* of *yizi* and *jiaozi* is also the same character and the same meaning for a sedan chair. So to collect a bride with a car and have the ritual of *bao xianxiang* is an integrated ritual.

An old man told me the reason for the ritual of “throwing the bride into the air” is because the bride should not take away her natal family’s soil with her when she left home. It would be “*bai niangjia, liang fujia*” which means she would make her

husband's family prosperous by reducing the natal family. This custom can be seen from other parts of China. As Freedman described a bride should take her dowry with her and leave food and riches behind her as she leaves her parents' house. She should be "borne out of the house into the sedan chair, or if she walks to it, then her feet must not touch the uncovered ground (1966:16)."

3.2.2. Social creativities and enjoyment in marriage relations

There have been ever changing situations over the past decades since Fei conducted his fieldwork in the 1930s. I will show how villagers have been coping with the changes by adapting and creating new customs and that they have enjoyed what they have been doing.

3.2.2.1. A stack plates

The changing situation caused changes in the process of establishing a marriage relationship in Kaixiangong Village. According to Fei (1939), the first step of establishing a marriage relationship is to ascertain the time of birth of the girl through matchmakers. Initially it was the girls' families arranging matchmakers to send red papers (*tiezi*) with eight characters defining the year, month, date, and hour of the birth to different boys' families and let them choose. The second step was for a boy's mother to bring the red paper to see a fortune-teller. He served both as a means of reaching a decision and for shifting responsibility for human error to the supernatural will. The third step was, once the girl was selected, for the matchmaker to persuade the girl's parents to accept the match. After the bargain, the bridewealth would be sent on three ceremonial occasions before the wedding (40-43).

However, the custom changed in the 1990s. Normally there were three events to establish a marriage relationship between a fiancée and fiancé's family. They are asking for a red paper (*dan tiezi*), small betrothal (*dan xiaopan*) and large betrothal (*dan dapan*). At these events the red paper and the envelopes of gift money are all placed on plates (*pan*). So instead of three events the villagers simplified this as two events or one event. For example, the Tan family held an event of equivalent size to a small betrothal's rite for the "asking for a red paper" (*dan tiezi*) event in

1992. The family then combined the small and large betrothal into one in 1994. This was called “carrying a stack of plates (*dan yiluopan*)” which means to join the small and large betrothal rites in one ceremony. Tan family’s used social creativity in the above two events. The reason the Tan family changed custom in this way is because Tan’s wife’s natal family lived in Wujiang City. It would be very difficult for the family to arrange two betrothal rites based on the village custom without considering their situation. What they did for the “carrying a pile of plates (*yiluopan*)” was simply to put li (gift money or bridewealth) into three big red envelopes: 800 yuan for *jikou* (not to mention the red paper), 4,800 yuan for small betrothal and 6,800 yuan for larger betrothal. There were also lots of red envelopes on the big plate for the fiancée’s relatives and matchmakers. The rest of the gifts, return gifts, feast and distribution invitations and the news, etc., were more or less the same as the normal way of the large betrothal rite.

By 1996 the Tan family was still the only family to have arranged its engagement in such a way. However, recently, in my telephone interviews I discovered that the creation of “a pile of plates” had been widely accepted as a new local custom with a bit of adaptation. An informant told me that the villagers simply join the events of asking for a red paper, small and large betrothal rites together in one go because two plates cannot be called a pile of plates. He said some old villagers referred to the old custom of “three plates”, namely, small, medium, and larger plates in pre 1949 to prove that “a pile of plates” is, in fact, a proper adaptation based on the local tradition.

3.2.2.2. *A wife’s natal family lived outside the province*

I attended a wedding on the 5th of the first lunar month 1996. The groom Qiu was getting married to his bride Jiang who came from Henan Province in 1993. Qiu met Jiang in the village enterprise when she first came to the village. Jiang had lived with Qiu’s family since they became boyfriend and girlfriend. However, they could not get married for two years because Jiang was somebody else’s fiancée in her hometown. Thus the way in which the marriage relationship was established is different from the standard arrangements in many ways (See 5.6).

The wedding ceremony was also different and adapted to the family's situation. On the wedding day there were three formal feasts. The first feast was at breakfast time which normally is a seeing-off ceremony held by the bride's family. In this case it was held by Qiu's family because Qiu's mother, Mrs Qiu, claimed she was Jiang's adopted mother. In order to make a distinction between the seeing-off feast and wedding feast Mrs Qiu decided the main meat was whole duck instead of upper part pig's leg. She chose duck rather than chicken because it was bigger and nicer. Mrs Qiu organised her agnatic kin to kill 26 ducks and clean their feathers the day before the wedding day to get ready for the feast. All the agnatic and non-agnatic kin and some of Qiu's little friends who lived in the village attended the feast with little red bags of gift money. The main wedding feast was at lunchtime with the upper part of a pig's leg, which was in line with the local custom. In this feast Mrs Qiu played a mother-in-law's role with the bride. Apart from the above attendants the groom's other friends who lived outside the village and the bride's friends attended the wedding feast with their little red bags. In the evening feast all the above guests attended again except those who lived outside of the village.

After the lunchtime feast I noticed they ate cream cake for dessert. Qiu told me that this way was influenced by Wujiang City. The reason for the combined cakes for the feast is because Qiu had four *jiujius*. They decided two of them would provide the long rice cakes and the other two, the cream cakes. Qiu's mother then placed them on a longer sideboard in the middle of the back wall of the central Hall. Apart from a set of big candlesticks and two big red wooden bath basins full of special long rice cakes (*dagao*) there were also four boxes on top of each other at both ends of the sideboard which contained a lots of cream cakes. Qiu told me this was a good combination of traditional and modern, East and West.

Mrs Qiu told me that the total cost for establishing the marriage relationship between Qiu and Jiang was 30,000 yuan which included decorating the couple's room, making furniture, buying a TV, Hi-fi, refrigerator, bicycle, clothes, watches, golden necklace, rings, earrings, and wedding feasts, etc. The Qiu family managed this without borrowing money because all the expenditure came from the family savings over years, including Jiang's who gave most of her wages to Mrs Qiu.

Obviously the reason why the Qiu family spent 20,000 yuan less than the average expenses in establishing a marriage relationship was because it had no need to pay for bridewealth and a welcome bride party in the bride's family.

Mrs Qiu told me that although the wedding feast cost 7,500 yuan including feasts, drinks, cigarettes, and sweets, etc., she expected the expenses on the wedding day to be balanced more or less by gift money from the guests, as happened in other weddings in the village. After the lunchtime feast the groom's *jiujius* (mother's brothers) counted the gift money and wrote down the list on a red paper. I saw the total sum from the list was 6,936 yuan. Of this 746 yuan was given by 10 agnatic kin, 2,360 yuan given by 15 non-agnatic-kin, and 3,830 yuan given by 35 friends. However, the gift money list is different from a standard marriage in the village in many ways. (a) The above figures show friends were the largest financial providers. Among 35 friends, 33 were Qiu's friends, including 9 of his little friends in the village, 13 classmates in primary school and high school, and 11 colleagues in the enterprise. From Qiu's point of view about two thirds of the ones who gave little red bags in Qiu's wedding can be seen as an outcome of his input since he was born (see 5.6). One third of them gave little red bags to Qiu based on a friendship between work colleagues. Qiu told me that there is a kind of informal mutual aid group between work colleagues. They provided such resources naturally because everybody would get married sooner or later and they enjoyed each other's presence during the biggest event in their life. For Qiu some of the friendly colleagues that appeared in his wedding with little red bags were an outcome of his input because he had attended weddings with little red bags for about half of the 11 colleagues in the past. He was sure he would go to the others' weddings whenever they got married. Out of Qiu's 33 friends there was only one female friend, who was Qiu's childhood little friend. Qiu told me that if his father had not died earlier and his family situation had been better than the current situation then this female friend could have become his wife. This supports the idea that Kaixiangong children made little friends of mixed sexes from a very young age like Mrs Rao's son and a special female friend, and that these early relationships could lead to a marriage relationship as with Mr and Mrs Zhou.

(b) Normally this kind of list only lists gift money from the groom's family's relations. However, this list added gift money from the bride's sources. This was 200 yuan from the bride's sister's family who lived in the village, 70 yuan from her master, and 100 *yuan* from a colleague of the enterprise where she worked.

(c) Normally a groom's sister's friends are not invited to the wedding. However, Qiu's older sister's best friend was invited. She gave 200 yuan in gift money. At the beginning she was categorized into the friends' group. One *jiujiu* questioned the relationship. After discussion the *jiujius* decided to move her into the non-agnatic category as quasi-sister. Thus the family's non-agnatic kin increased from 14 to 15.

(d) I asked them why the bride's master at her workplace only gave her 70 *yuan*. They explained to me that the relationship between a master and apprentice would be very special if they have individual tuition like carpenter, lacquerer, bricklayer, or chef, etc. with their apprentices. In this occasion if the bride is involved in a relationship with above kinds of master she should be given 200 *yuan*, which is the same amount as the groom's father's sisters' families or quasi-parents if he has them. For the *jiujius* it was reasonable that the master only gave her 70 because it would be burdensome for her to do more: her work group had many unmarried apprentices and she should give each an equal share when they got married. She would not expect them to make a return back to her in the same way because she was already married.

(e) The 100 *yuan* from all the bride's colleagues was a standard rate, which is the same amount as just one of Qiu's work colleagues. The bride told me that she received less colleagues' gift money for two reasons. On the one hand, half of them came from outside of the area and did not have an intention to establish a marriage relationship in the village. So they would not create the same kind of mutual aid group as male colleagues. On the other hand, the other half of the colleagues had already married and had no need to involve themselves in such a relationship. They expressed their congratulations on Jiang's marriage by collecting small token money from everybody and bought her a present. Jiang then distributed her happiness sweets (*xitang*) to them afterwards. This way was created by the female

workers in the village enterprise. It is the same as the normal way in the majority of urban areas, and in my own former work units at Shenyang and Beijing.

From the above paragraphs we can see that adding the bride's gift money on the list and putting the groom's sister's best friend's gift money into non-agnatic kin category were creative activities, in adaptation to different circumstances. As I have shown earlier, Mrs Qiu organised the wedding event and combined the ceremonies of seeing-off and the wedding, which were both creative activities. However, the way in which the above creativities worked is because they are based on some local traditions. Qiu's *jiujius* modified the wedding gift money list because their relationship was more like quasi-sisters rather than work colleagues, although they did not claim each other to be so. As Mrs Qiu explained, there were customs of *tongyangxi* (a girl taken into the family as a daughter-in-law-to-be) or *tongyangxu* (a boy taken into the family as a son-in-law-to-be) in the village before 1949. Although Jiang's case was different from *tongyangxi*, there are references in dealing with different kinds of relationships before, during, and after wedding among them, which can be adapted to apply to Jiang's case. Therefore, such creativities can be seen more or less as adaptations of local customs or other practices. They happened everywhere and all the time and provided opportunities for people to create and enjoy their creativities in human relationships.

In this case everybody in this family played two or more roles. They played each role at one time and shifted one role to another role at other time. For example, in the seeing-off ceremony feast Mrs Qiu played the adopted mother's role and from the lunchtime feast onwards her role changed to that of mother-in-law. For Qiu and Jiang the situations were much more complicated. They started with a relationship of boyfriend and girlfriend. After Jiang moved into the house they had to change their roles to be a brother and a sister, which meant they were not allowed to make love. On the wedding day they were groom and bride and afterwards they became a husband and a wife.

I was interested in the special relationships among the members of the family and conducted another interview after the wedding. Qiu told me that he fell in love with Jiang and established a relationship of boyfriend and girlfriend soon afterwards.

One day Qiu brought her back home and asked his mother's permission to let her live with his family. Mrs Qiu agreed with this, with one condition that they should never make love before they get married. Both Qiu and Jiang kept their promise. Qiu was proud of his girlfriend with a phrase "*jie shen zi hao* (preserve one's purity; refuse to be contaminated by evil influence)".

I found their unusual and difficult situation can be explained with the four criteria of *lishang*. They are moral judgement, human feelings, rational calculation, and religious sense. (a) Qiu told me that it would be wrong morally if he made love with Jiang without marrying her. However, he could not marry Jiang because she was somebody else's fiancée. Jiang told me that she escaped from her family before the wedding because that marriage was arranged by her parents. For Qiu it also would be wrong morally to make love with her because his family provided free accommodation for her. Jiang had to control her emotion in order to avoid an embarrassing situation for the above reasons.

(b) Although Jiang already had a fiancé, she never loved him. Qiu and Jiang did love each other very much. The way in which they expressed their love was by treating each other nicely in everyday life, without making love, as a brother and a sister. Qiu also tried his best to control his passion. Mrs Qiu told me that she liked Jiang very much and treated her as her own daughter. Her husband passed away when Qiu was 4 years old. Since then she and her children, two daughters and one son, had been dependent on each other for survival. One of Qiu's sisters married out from the family a few years ago. Another sister lived in Wujiang, although she had not yet married. Jiang came to the house to brighten the family. All of them were emotionally attached to each other more and more as time went on. However, Qiu could not marry her because they needed a certificate from Jiang's hometown to prove that she was either unmarried or divorced in order to be registered as a legal couple. Jiang's fiancé's father was an official in the township where she came from. He stopped Jiang from getting the certificate by using his work connections. If Jiang had cared about material gains or social status more than love she could easily have accepted her family's marriage arrangement. However, she escaped from the arrangement and eventually realised her ideal family relationship based on love.

(c) Qiu said he could ignore the fact that Jiang was somebody else's fiancée, and there were even many old women who fled from famine in the village and married again with male villagers in the 1960s. However, Qiu also thought rationally of his case. The worst thing for his family would be if they were unable to register their child's birth due to his or her parents' marriage being illegal. Jiang and her natal family tried again and again over a two year period and finally convinced the fiancé's family to accept the returned bridewealth and apology gifts. She obtained the certificate eventually. Qiu was proud of his wife, "our marriage is now in accordance with reason and popular opinion (*heli*), in accordance with human feelings (*heqing*), and in accordance with rules and regulations (*hefa*)."

(d) For conclusion of the marriage relationship Qiu said he was lucky that *laotian* (heavenly god) sent him such a nice fairy. Jiang said that they had a predestined relationship (*yuanfen*) to be married. Mrs Qiu said that she believed that the circle of the bitterness had ended and the sweetness had begun in her life. All the above sayings are related to a religious sense.

3.2.2.3. A marriage hanging on two sides

Since the application of the state one child family policy, nowadays more and more young generation families want to have one child only, on their own initiative. The local marriage custom system has met a challenge. Here I would like to introduce a case because it reflects many changes in establishing a marriage relationship between two families and their relations. Although this case wasn't itself of a single child family, it could also be a new model for such, as a villager told me.

The case started with a conflict for taking a man into the family as son-in-law (*zhao nuxu*) in the Shen family. He and his wife had two daughters and had been thinking of taking a man into the family as son-in-law for the older daughter for a long time. According to local custom (*laofa*) if a family has two daughters the older daughter should take a man into the family as son-in-law, if a family has two sons the younger son should be taken into somebody's family as son-in-law. However, his older daughter's boyfriend's family had two children, one older daughter and one younger son. According to another *laofa* the son should take a

wife into the family because his older sister should be married out of the family and she, in fact, was already married out of the family. However, Shen's daughter convinced her parents of a different way: of letting her *liangtougua* according to another local custom. Here *gua* is short for *guafan* (hang a streamer), *liangtou* means they live independently but would visit both her and her boyfriend's families in turn occasionally.

Since the three parties were all in line with different local customs (*heli*) they reached an agreement of the idea of *liangtougua*. They made a slight change and called this *gualiangtou* because nowadays there was not such a streamer to hang and Shen's daughter and her boyfriend were free to "hang (*gua*)" themselves, namely, to live with either family for any amount of time. Therefore, all the betrothal rites and wedding ceremony should be adapted accordingly, which they called "*laofa xinban*" (literally, to do a new thing based on old ways or local customs).

Instead of small betrothal and large betrothal rites the two young people and their parents agreed that they would make it in one go as an engagement (*dinhun*). In the middle of April 1996 the engagement ceremony was held in Shen's family. Two *jieshouren* (intermediate people, which is a new way to call matchmakers) came to the village by car. They carried two big baskets of gifts wrapped in red cloth. There were two bottles of liquor, four cartons of cigarettes, six pieces of big rice cakes with lucky words on top, one bag of tea, one bag of candied dates; a pair of rings with a diamond on each of the golden ring (*huangjin* - yellow coloured gold) and the platinum ring (*baijin* - white colour as treasure as gold), a gold bracelet, a gold necklace, a pair of silver bracelets, 10,000 yuan cash, and four empty red envelopes.

Normally, Shen told me that, for either small or large betrothal rites the bridewealth would be wrapped in different itemised red envelopes. His understanding was that the empty red envelopes were the fiancé's family's goodwill gesture of adaptation of the old way of *liangtou gua*. Shen was not surprised by the above gifts which were all discussed in advance, except for the 10,000 yuan cash. After Shen and his wife discussed this matter with their older

generation relatives they decided to refuse the money because this would mean that they accepted the fiancé's family's bridewealth and the relationship would be changed. However, the intermediates refused to take the money back. They insisted that the money was not for the fiancée's family, but for her to buy clothes which were agreed in advance, only doubled in quantity. Shen and his wife agreed to accept the money with a condition that the fiancé's family also have to accept 10,000 *yuan* for the fiancé's clothing otherwise his daughter would be treated as married out from the family according to the local custom. On one occasion, when the fiancé visited the Shen family they made him take the 10,000 *yuan* back to his home.

After the ceremony feast the fiancée's mother handed return gifts to the intermediates. They were two big steamers of small rice cakes for the fiancé's family to distribute to its agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers; a bag of soft crunchy rice cakes (*songgao*), two bottles of liquor, two boxes of candied dates; two towels, a platinum ring, 3,000 *yuan*, and four empty red envelopes.

One year later the couple got married. Shen and his wife told me, through telephone conversations, that the wedding was also a new thing based on old ways. They explained to me that the old way is for both the bride's and groom's families to hold wedding ceremony feasts. The new way is that the two families can hold a joint wedding banquet in a restaurant or hotel, as people did in urban areas. For their daughter's case the adapted way was that both the bride's and the groom's families held one feast each on the wedding day. The lunchtime feast was held by the bride's family. The groom with his seven friends as company attended this feast. In the supper feast it was the groom's family's turn to hold the wedding feast. The groom and his friends, the bride and her seven friends accompanied her to the groom's family. Both the groom's seven friends and the bride's seven friends were their high school classmates who had known each other very well for many years.

Both families agreed that the numbers of guests, types of gifts, and standard of the feasts, etc. on the wedding day should be more or less the same. For example, they chose seven friends for both sides of the bride and the groom for various reasons. (a) It is morally right that those friends should be most likely to live and work in

the same city, Wujiang, and could become lifelong friends. According to the Chinese saying that *zaijia gao fumu, zaiwai gao pengyou* (at home one can rely on parents, away from home one can rely on friends). (b) Those friends were very close friends from the bride and groom's school, which is a boarding school. Both the bride and the groom came from different townships and went to another township where the school was located for studying, as did their other friends. Over a six year period they became very close emotionally. (c) For practical concerns on the arrangement of the wedding the groom plus the seven friends could just fit in two cars. Again, when the bride went to the groom's family for another wedding feast they hired two cars. They could also be fitted on one dining table in both families' wedding feasts.⁸ (d) In addition, the bride's mother said the number 8 is a lucky number. Apart from this table there were two other tables, eight on each, of the bride's "little sisters" who lived in the village or were primary school classmates.

Since Shen's older daughter and her husband lived in Wujiang City all the pre-wedding and post-wedding *wanglai* between the in-laws' family became very simple in a number of ways. (a) The bride did not have a large amount of dowry. The bride brought with her engagement gifts worth 20,000 *yuan*, her parents' gift money of 16,000 *yuan*, and her friends' gift money of about 2,800 *yuan* given at her wedding feast. The Shen family also gave the son-in-law engagement gifts worth 20,000 *yuan*, his family and friends also gave him more or less the same amount of gift money as the bride got from her family and friends. The young couple explained that they wanted to make their own family with the above money based on their own interests. However, her natal family kept a bridal chamber for her and her husband. All the relatives and her friends' gifts were kept there. (b) This marriage did not involve a relationship with ancestors because Shen's wife said her daughter insisted the marriage was a new arrangement and so she did not want to involve them. The same happened in the groom's family. However, they decorated the central hall for the wedding ceremony for good luck and a happy family. (c) The in-laws' families invited each other for lunar New Year feasts once a year. They addressed each other as non-agnatic kin and added each other as non-agnatic kin on their family lists. If Shen's daughter was taken into her

husband's family as wife then the Shen family should be non-agnatic kin of her husband's family. This new couple should not bring the husband's parents for the lunar New Year's feast once a year held by the Shen family. However, in this case, her husband's parents should attend the feast with the young couple because they were non-agnatic kin of the Shen family as well. (d) Shen's daughter and her husband attended feasts held by Shen's agnatic and non-agnatic kin's families. Equally the young couple also attended the husband's family's agnatic and non-agnatic kin's families' feasts together, as well as tea parties with neighbours and fellow villagers in both Shen family's group and the husband's family's group. The difference is they were new guests together to every family because none of them became a member of the other family. (e) Their daughter and son-in-law had a four year old little boy and visited them about once every two weeks on average and did the same to their son-in-law's family. The son was in full time nursery from six months old so there was no need for them to look after him. Furthermore, Shen's wife needed to look after her little shop at home so she hardly ever visited her daughter's family in Wujiang.

Shen and his wife told me that both their younger daughter and her boyfriend were working in Wujiang as well. They would make similar arrangements of engagement and wedding for the younger daughter. Shen's wife admitted that however equal the relationship between this kind of hanging over two sides' (*gua liangtou*) marriage there were still some things that cannot be shared equally. For example, as a marriage of taking a man into family (*zhaonuxiu*) the wife's agnatic kin would remain as agnatic kin. If the new couple had a child he or she should carry on the wife's surname. The child should call his or her mother's sister *guma* (father's sister) rather than *yima* (mother's sister), and call his or her mother's brother *shushu* (father's brother) rather than *jiujiu* (mother's brother). The child's father's natal family and its relatives would be non-agnatic kin of the new family. His brother should be his child's *jiujiu*, and his sister should be his child's *yima*.

In Shen family's case all the above ways of address to relatives made her feel her daughter had married out from the family. The reason her daughter's son carried his father's surname was because, her daughter said, that "I have to follow the local custom wherever I am (*ruxiang suisu*)". This means she lived in an urban area

where nuclear families' children almost all used their father's name as surname. Thus, when a conflict of local customs happens between a rural area and an urban area the resolution can be reached based on where the new couple is located.

The whole process of establishing a marriage relationship is like a drama which contains prologue, acts, scenes and epilogue, etc. In this process mainly horizontal expressive *wanglai* is involved, compared with the vertical expressive *wanglai* from birth to sixteen years old. Although the process of knitting *lishang-wanglai* networks involved the villagers' life in tragicomedy, the motilities of *wanglai* are always determined by different criteria of *lishang*.

¹ Unlike schools in the UK, in China no cleaners worked in schools. It was children's work in turn on duty to clean classrooms.

² For example, C. Chen 1985; Cohen 1976; Croll 1984; Freedman 1966, 1967, & 1979; Harrell 1992; Johnson 1983; Parish and Whyte 1978; Wolf 1985; and Yan 1996, 1997, 1998, & 2001, etc.

³ This can also be seen from W. R. Geddes' interviews of two married couples in 1956.

⁴ *Yuelao* is short for *yue xia laoren* (the Old Man of the Moon) who is the god of marriage, who has on record in a book the marriage fates of those on earth and attaches betrothed couples with a red cord which will bind them for life; also for a matchmaker.

⁵ In the case of a marriage without matchmakers the village also created a related custom. If a girl was introduced by some one to the boy from outside the village and they got married the groom's family would pay 2000 *yuan* in one payment to the related intermediaries who introduced the girl to the boy.

⁶ This example and the next were mentioned in Shen Guanbao's book *Yichang jingqiaoqiao de geming: sunan xiangcun de gongye yu shehui* (*A quite revolution: Industry and society in Southern Jiangsu*), 1993, Kunming: Yunnan People's Publication House. I re-interviewed some informants and obtained further information.

⁷ Although Fei used dollars and cents rather than *yuan* and *fen* in his English version of the book, in the Chinese version "yuan" and "fen" were used.

⁸ A dining table is called *baxianzhuo* (Eight Immortals table) which is an old fashioned square table for eight people.