

PART II A MODEL OF *LISHANG-WANGLAI*

As I said at the beginning of the section “General methods” in the Introduction, I started my fieldwork in Neiguan Village, Gansu Province in 1995 and in Kaixiangong Village, Jiangsu Province in 1996. The reason that after I completed my fieldwork in Neiguan I returned to the UK for a few months was because I found there were patterns of social support and relationships that seemed to be following certain implicit cultural models. I discussed related issues with my supervisor, adapted the questionnaire of ESRC project and then went to Kaixiangong Village for the second part of my fieldwork. Although I only spent three months in Kaixiangong village, I collected as much as possible related information. After the end of my stay in Kaixiangong, while I was developing the *lishang-wanglai* model, I had to refer back to my informants from time to time. The additional empirical data over the last eight years through this “post-fieldwork” method that I innovated (see at the end of the section “General methods” of Introduction) together with my fieldwork data, provided a solid ground for me to forge the *lishang-wanglai* model.

Therefore, the first Chapter in Part II, Chapter 5, will provide *lishang-wanglai* related local customs and major events to help readers to refer the four different types of *wanglai* (reciprocity) and related *lishang* (principles) back to the villagers’ everyday life. From the ethnographical materials in the five chapters one can see that the *lishang-wanglai* model is my interpretation of patterns of social relationships based on certain implicit cultural models in Kaixiangong village, rather than being a literal rendering of folk models.

Chapter 6 engages in a thorough multi-disciplinary discussion with related work by classical Chinese social thinkers, sinologists, anthropologists and sociologists. The major topics cover Sahlins’s (1972) study on reciprocity, many related Chinese notions, different usages of *li shang wanglai*, my own usage of *lishang-wanglai*, social support networks, *lishang-wanglai* networks, and social creativity as motivation of *lishang-wanglai*. Through this literature review I digested my empirical data and built up the theoretical model of *lishang-wanglai* gradually. For

instance, I realised Kaixiangong villagers' *renqing* type of *wanglai* and *guanxi* type of *wanglai* are identical with Befu's expressive exchange and instrumental exchange, and one of the two extreme ends of *wanglai* can be fitted into Sahlins's negative reciprocity. Moreover, when the *lishang-wanglai* model is combined with social support networks I can see how materials and other things flow through different types of *wanglai* and why the dynamic changes occurred by calculation of a set of reasons (*lishang*). Furthermore, I will show how the motive force for driving the ego-entered *lishang-wanglai* networks is social creativity.

Lishang-wanglai itself is not a method, but as far as I am concerned it has methodological implications. Whether or not it could be a general analytical concept needs to be tested in different ways. At a Nativization Symposium Feuchtwang encouraged his Chinese colleagues to rise to the challenge of making concepts derived from studies of China stick in inter-regional debates in order to enrich anthropological theories (2001:57). It echoed with the call of some Chinese sociologists' that we must forge our conceptual tools (*chuilian gainian gongju*) based on thorough empirical studies (Chang 1992:546). Therefore, I treated myself as an informant and applied the *lishang-wanglai* concept to an analysis of my own fieldwork experiences. Furthermore, I moved the object away from myself to a close colleague -- my supervisor and analysed a case which I witnessed when he visited Kaixiangong village. This case shows how *lishang-wanglai* worked between local officials and a foreign professor from far beyond the village.

5. *Lishang-wanglai* related local customs and events

Although Part I demonstrates how social relationships are experienced by ordinary people using rich empirical data, it shows that patterns of social support and relationships seem to follow certain implicit cultural models. I interpret these with my *lishang-wanglai* model following one of the villagers' expressions: "*li shang wanglai*" (see section 6.1.3). The *Lishang-wanglai* model is based on "a fuller account of ancestor-worship; of more complicated system of belief and knowledge" and "a comprehensive picture of the cultural, religious, and political systems of China", and forms a contrast with Fei's work which was dominated by "the exploitation of soil, and the reproductive processes within the household and family" (Fei 1939 Malinowski's Preface: xxiii). Although there are already many studies on cultural and religious aspects of social life in other parts of China, my work develops *lishang-wanglai* from this particular village. Chapter 5 will provide additional, broader and raw materials about Kaixiangong villagers' everyday life and customs in order to promote better detailed understanding of the *lishang-wanglai* model.

5.1. Kinship system

The kinship system in Kaixiangong village is quite interesting. It includes agnatic kin (*zijiaren*), non-agnatic kin (*qinqi*), close relatives (*jinqin*) which means major non-agnatic kin and quasi kin, far relatives (*yuanshin*) which are relatives excluded from the close relatives list, new relatives (*xinqin*) which are relatives of a newly married wife or husband, old relatives (*laoqin*) which means relatives of a focal family's grandparents or above. All the above relatives play different roles in social support events or *lishang-wanglai* activities, but agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin and quasi kin play the most positive role.

The description of agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin is based on the section on "Agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin" in my previous paper including Figure 3 (Chang 1999). Figure 3 shows a household tree, where all the kin of a given household

enclosed in dotted lines can be split into two classes: agnate (in bold) and non-agnate. Because of the institutions of patrilineal descent and patrilocal marriage, on marriage the agnatic relationships of a woman are changed: A becomes agnate to her husband's household; B becomes non-agnate to her natal household.

Agnatic kin

Agnatic kin are those related to the household in a direct male line, either as ancestors or descendants plus women who marry into the household, minus women who marry out. Agnatic kin support in Kaixiangong mainly comes from those households that share the same grandfather or the same great grandfather in the male line. The villagers call these households *zija* or *zija menzu*.

In Kaixiangong there is a custom for extending agnatic kinship. Some households lack *zija* households in the village, because, for example, several generations in one line had only one son, or because the household moved from another place, or because there is hostility between brothers due to an unjust division of household property. These households will enter another neighbouring agnatic kin group by means of *ren zija*, namely, adopted agnatic kin. Twenty-five per cent of households in the village sample have the relationship of *ren zija*.

For those households which have no son at all, the village also has a custom called *zhaonuxu*, which takes two forms. Firstly, a son is adopted, raised and then marries the daughter of the household to continue the lineage with the same surname as the father's. This is the opposite of *xiaoxifu* meaning small daughter-in-law or *tongyangxi* more precisely meaning foster daughter-in-law (Fei, 1939:53). Secondly, the daughter of the household with no son will marry someone who agrees to marry into this household and allow their children to keep their mother's surname. This woman's natal relatives will remain agnatic kin and the *zhaonuxu*'s relatives will become non-agnatic kin even though they are linked through a man.

The phrase 'agnatic kin' used here includes all the above relationships, namely, *zija* relatives, *ren zija* relatives, and the relatives of the household which have *zhaonuxu*.

Non-agnatic kin

Non-agnatic kin are related through a female link. Normally, in a three generation household these include the male household-head's father's married-out sister's relatives, mother's relatives, married-out sister(s)' relatives, wife's relatives, married-out daughter(s)' relatives and so on. However, in Kaixiangong there are ways of extending the non-agnatic kin network, just as *renzijia* extends agnatic kin. The custom of *ren guofangqin* (quasi kin) allows a member of a household to have one or more adopted father(s), mother(s), son(s) or daughter(s), a relationship which Fei (1939:87) called a pseudo-adoption. 68.8 per cent of households in the village have a relationship of *ren guofangqin*.

Villagers need to limit the number of *guofangqin*. Too few, and they have insufficient support, too many, and they have to pay back too much in return. Some households want *ren guofangqin* for *chuxing*, that is to add a father's surname (the child still keeps its own) to guarantee the child will not die and will grow up healthy, but they do not want to increase the number of non-agnatic kin. Another way to protect a child is to ask the father's sister and her husband to be the child's *guofang* parents. This phenomenon, *qin shang jia qin*, 'adding kinship to kinship', means adding extra responsibilities to those who are already non-agnates.

In Kaixiangong, the term *qinqi* includes all the kinds of non-agnatic kin listed above. In addition, villagers take the *zhaonuxu*'s natal household and its relatives, the *guofangqin*'s relatives, the master or apprentice's relatives of a member of a household into account as non-agnatic kin. The phrase 'non-agnatic kin' I use here includes all the above relationships.

No one in Kaixiangong can tell when these customs, the *ren zijia*, *zhaonuxu* and *ren guofangqin*, came into being, but they believe that they are necessary for meeting a household's different needs. Almost every household can immediately list the number of both its agnatic and non-agnatic households. Villagers always maintain a reasonable number of each for practical purposes, although because marriage and birth results in an increase in kin, they sometimes need to remove some agnatic and non-agnatic kin from their list.

The reasons non-agnatic kin are seen as especially important providers of social support for a household are: “firstly, non-agnatic kin are always a large network offering security for different types of resource. For each household in my sample, the average number of agnatically related households is 5.72, and non-agnatically related households is 9.31. There is a common saying, *zhongren shi chai huoyan gao*, meaning ‘the more people, the greater strength’. Secondly, non-agnatic kin have an obligation to provide financial support, while the limited number of agnatic kin share a local economic condition and are under fewer obligations. Thirdly, non-agnatic kin relationships can always be made by marriage or adoption. The villagers also told me they value *renqing* (human feelings) more than *renli* (labour), and value money and gifts more than materials. More evidence about this will be given later” (Chang 1999:164).

69 per cent of my sampled households involved the relationship of quasi kin. They are mainly non-agnatic kin. Most of them had no relative relation at all before joining in such a relationship. Some of them were non-agnatic kin already which they called “to add a quasi relative on top of relative (*qin shang jia qin*)” to make the relationship closer.

Quasi kin

The quasi kin (*guofangqin*) relationship was called pseudo-adoption (Fei’s term) in 1930s. It “is to create a new social relation similar to kinship by metaphorical use of relationship terms and by ritual acts” (Fei 1939:89). The main purpose of claiming quasi relationship is for support rather than enjoyment or pure instrumental purposes, which can be seen from the quasi relations’ role in major family events.

There is a ritual for claiming quasi kin as non-agnatic kin. Villagers are most likely to claim one or more women as quasi mothers after a child’s birth. The ritual is called carrying a small Chinese New Year’s Eve feast (*dan nianyefan*). The quasi mother should *dan nianyefan* for three years to the child. Here the *nianye* of the *nianyefan* means the Winter Solstice (*dongzhi* -the day marking the beginning of the 22nd solar term, 21, 22, or 23 December), which is also called small Chinese New Year. It normally happens anytime after harvest season before the Winter

Solstice. For the first *nianyefan* the quasi mother should carry a big basket with a big bowl of rice and red or black beans, a *tizi*, a carp, two pieces of half cooked pork, egg balls, meats balls, red eggs, oranges, a hat, a red bag with 20 *yuan*. The above gift was worth 100 *yuan* in 1990. The child's family entertained her with a nice meal and returned a little bit of raw rice in the bowl. The second year the ritual was more or less the same except the gifts were slightly different from the first time, instead of a hat she brought a pair of shoes. The third year was the finishing year (*mannian*). Apart from the previous gifts this time the quasi mother should bring clothes and knitting wool for the child. The child's family should make different rice cakes, i.e. white and green colour rice balls with red bean fillings, savoury rice balls mixed with thin slices of radish, etc. The child's family should cook a nice meal with *tizi* for the quasi mother and put some rice cakes as returning gift.

Once a child claims a quasi mother her husband became the child's quasi father automatically. The child should address them as quasi parents and the two families become non-agnate relations (*guofangqin*). They put each other on their families' lists for Chinese New Year's feasts.

In practice apart from claiming quasi non-agnatic kin Kaixiangong villagers also claim quasi agnatic kin, even quasi neighbours (omitted here).

5.2. Family division

Family division is very rare in Kaixiangong Village. Based on one case which I partly witnessed I will demonstrate the related customs.

The event of family division in Kaixiangong village could last for two years. This is different from Cohen's "serial division" (1992) and Yan's finding in Xiajia that the timing of family division has been shortened (1997:194-95, 1998:75). I attended a final part of the family division in HL Wang's family in May 1996. HL Wang told me that the main event of family division started in March 1994. The reason the family decided to divide the family then is because the whole family believed it would be much simpler to do it before the second son's wedding. The main event took two days.

On the first day HL Wang's family invited four *jiujius* (Mrs HL Wang's wife's brothers including one quasi-*jiujiu*), one *gufu* (Mr HL Wang's sister's husband), and three male agnatic kin to be helpers (witness or mediates) and guests. The oldest *jiujiu* was in charge of the event. As a major part of family division the family property should be divided fairly. After people discussed details of the family property one of *jiujius* wrote two copies of family division contracts for the two sons, with the same contents. After the two sons agreed the contents they signed as holders of the contracts. All the above relatives signed as witnesses. In the end the oldest *jiujiu* joined the two contracts together, affixed his seal to the joint, and handed them to each son.

The two copies included the same contents. They were:

- I. House. Two semi-detached two storey two bedrooms' building divided into two parts: the east part belongs to WQ (the older son) who should build a separate staircase himself; the west part belongs to ZQ (the younger son) who should complete the bedrooms himself on the first floor. He can also keep the motor vehicle for the balance of the building cost. The semi-detached bungalow behind the main house divides into two parts: the east part belongs to WQ and the west part belongs to ZQ for their kitchen and dining rooms.
- II. Additional house. The detached bungalow with one living room, two bedrooms, and one kitchen and dining room belongs to HR (HL Wang's unmarried brother). The semi-detached piggery divides into two parts: the east part belongs to HL (HL Wang), and the west part belongs to HR.
- III. Parents' accommodation. Parents live in one of WQ's bedrooms temporarily. After ZQ completes the bedrooms the father remains in the bedroom and the mother moves into one of ZQ's bedrooms. If parents felt uncomfortable from some point they are allowed to swap their bedrooms with the semi-detached bungalow behind the main house.

- IV. Foundation base. The east part of the yard in front of the house and east side of foundation base (5x4 m²) belongs to WQ, but ZQ is allowed to access it for rubbish and manure. The west part of the yard in front of the house and the back yard belongs to ZQ.
- V. Elderly care. After parents pass their sixtieth birthdays both WQ and ZQ provide 150 *jin* of grain, 500 *jin* of firewood, and 200 *yuan* of cash to each of them.

Then there was a simple worship for ancestors. They laid offerings on the dining table, everybody bowed, and burnt candles, etc. This was followed by a family feast (*qieqiekai*), which can be directly translated to cut off each nuclear family from the joint family. In this feast an upper part of pig leg must be involved, for the symbolic meaning of each small family growing well after the family division. The above relatives and their families were invited for the feast.

On the second day villagers move furniture and large items based on family division contracts. For the case of HL Wang's family the only big item was a motor vehicle, which was mainly purchased by the younger son, used by him, and stored in his house, and agreed to belong to him by everybody. So the main activity on the second day was a family feast with the older son's parents-in-law's family. The guests carried a shoulder pole of gifts to HL Wang's family for the meal. The gifts included rice cakes, upper part of pig leg, and some kitchen stuff. They were for the ceremony of the older son's family eating separately from the joint family.

A ritual of worshipping the kitchen god must be involved when the new kitchen was used for the first time (for details see the younger son's later section). The feast marked the joint family passing one of its non-agnatic families to the older son's nuclear family. HL Wang told me that before the family division his family networks included 19 families of non-agnatic kin. Apart from the above relatives which already, on the first day, took part in the family division feast, the rest of them came for a feast individually within a few days after the event of family division.

Until May 1996 after the younger son got married and the new kitchen was built, the son's parents-in-law's family carried gifts to HL Wang's family for the ceremony of the younger son's family eating separately from the joint family. I witnessed the worshipping kitchen god ritual. In the morning the younger son's mother-in-law and sister-in-law¹ carried a shoulder pole of big gift baskets to HL Wang's house. They were some kitchenware, such as a crate full of rice, two bamboo wire strainers, two dustpans, two brooms, eight rice bowls, eight medium bowls, eight large bowls, ten plates, some cooking utensils and chopsticks, etc. The gifts also includes some food, such as a big upper part of pig leg, a large intestine in a silver pot with a silver coin on top of it, a bag of egg cakes, a bag of sweets, two bags of egg products, eighty wet rice cakes in a big bamboo steamer covered with red cloth and with an evergreen on top. After Mrs HL Wang served the in-laws tea and snacks she started to worship the kitchen god. She placed some of the gifts and additional fruits on a new stove, burned incenses and bowed to the kitchen god. The ritual finished as simply as that. She then started to use the new stove to cook a meal for the younger son's family. This was an eating separately meal (*chichikai*), which was the younger son's family's first meal after the family division. Thus the family division completed.

The worship of the kitchen god was called *baixinzao* which requested a new stove and new wok, etc. The symbolic meaning was for making the new family a fresh start because a good start is half of the success. The presentation of gifts also involved a religious sense, like even numbers of 2, 8, 10, 80, etc. for luckiness; colours of red (keep away evil) and green (long life); pronunciations of a upper part of pig leg (*tipang tishang*) and large intestine (*dachang chang*) for raising living standards and marriage lasting longer; the meaning and shape of a silver coin was for a life wealthy and satisfactory (*yuanman*) and united together (*tuanyuan*). The eighty rice cakes were for distributing to agnatic-kin, neighbours and fellow villagers as an announcement that the worshipping of the kitchen god has been done and the family division has completed.

At the same time the joint family passed the non-agnatic relationship to the younger son's family. By then the family division was ended.

5.3. House construction events

In order to see different kinds of house construction events clearly I would like to describe styles and functions of houses before and after new houses were built. The old house style was the same as it was in 1930s, which can be seen on plate VII, “a typical front view of a house” (Fei, 1939). According to my fieldwork notes, part of the structure was made of bricks, with wooden panels covering the front side including a door and windows, and a roof covered with thin slices of tiles. Such a house is a south faced detached bungalow which covered an area of 56 to 80m² (or 180 to 260ft²), namely, 7 (D) x 8m (W) or x 11m (W), plus a rear extension *longshao* (dragon tails) as a kitchen². The house normally was divided into two or three parts (*jian*) from west to east. For example, for a 56m² house villagers called it as two *jian*. If the kitchen is on the west part of the house the dining and living area would be on the west, and the east part would be a bedroom area which can be divided into two bedrooms.³ However, the functions of “house is used for the silk industry, for threshing rice, for cooking, and for other productive work. It is also used for shelter, for sleeping and comfort. In the case of silk raising, much space is needed especially during the last two weeks of the raising period. In that period, all the rooms, except the kitchen, may be used for sheltering silkworms. All the members of the household will crowd in one bedroom. The individual allotment of bedrooms disappeared temporarily (Fei, 1939: 60).”

The new house style kept the same functions of eating, sleeping, living, and productive work as the old houses, but increased living standards by changing the bungalow style (*pingfang*) to a two-storey building (*loufang*) and fully building the structure with bricks. Recently some villagers rebuilt their houses and even named them as *xiao bieshu* (little villas), which increased life quality⁴ but did not alter the functions. For example, for the same covered area of 56m² in a detached two-storey building the ground floor is the same as for a bungalow house, but the east part is an empty area for living or productive work instead of division into bedrooms. The first floor is divided as an en-suite flat including a bedroom, a living room, and a bathroom at one part, and two further bedrooms and a family bathroom at other part. Instead of the two *jian* of a bungalow house villagers considered this kind of house as four *jian*,⁵ while a two-storey building with a covered area of 80m²'s was

considered as six *jian*. In order to use land efficiently there were also some semi-detached two-storey buildings, whose style and structure were the same as detached two-storey buildings.

In different stages of house construction villagers arranged finance, materials, labourers, etc., resources from their families' *lishang-wanglai* networks through different events. The process of house construction is as follows: one week for pulling down an old house and sorting out reused materials, two weeks from laying a foundation to putting up the first floor, two weeks for putting roof-beams and laying tiles, and six weeks for plastering, decoration, wiring, plumbing, painting, etc.⁶ The events include laying a foundation stone (*baidipan*), putting up the first floor (*jialouban*), putting up the roof-beams (*shangliang*), and moving into the new house (*shengqian*). According to my informants the above events came from the local tradition, except the putting up of the first floor (*jialouban*) because the first two-storey building appeared in the village in 1982.

Ceremony for setting a foundation stone (*baidipan*)

I was only allowed to partially attend an event of laying a foundation stone in the Huang family on 9th April 1996. In order to avert misfortune some of them were not allowed to be seen by anybody, including me. Mr and Mrs Huang told me that the event started at 3 o'clock in the early morning by setting off big firecrackers. Mr Huang drove four stakes into each corner of the foundation boundaries. Each stake was wrapped in red cloth, which would stay all the way through the house construction in order to avoid evil. At the same time Mrs Huang was putting two benches in the south middle of the ground as an "altar table", covered with a big red cloth. She then placed a few plates on top of the benches with a whole fish, a big bar of pork, some eggs cut into half, and a basket of diamond-shaped rice cakes (*tuyuan*), specially used for a land god. Mr Huang also burned candles, incenses, and paper money. She also made a bow facing the "altar table". The meaning of the ritual is for worshipping a land god (*tudi gonggong*). This ritual is important particularly for houses which were not built on the exactly original foundations.

At 8:00am people gathered in a village warehouse which was borrowed by the Huang family for general uses throughout the period of house construction. These

people were helpers formed by Huang family's agnatic kin, neighbours, fellow villagers, as well as a few bricklayers. They drank tea and ate the diamond-shaped rice cakes (*tuyuan*). A few big firecrackers were set off for breaking the soil (*potu*), and then they started digging the foundations. While people were digging the foundations, at around nine o'clock, Mr Huang's brother (her son's *jiujiu*) carried a shoulder pole of gifts for congratulation. The gifts were two upper parts of pig legs, one basket of steamed buns, two *jin* of sweets, and six big firecrackers. Mr Huang displayed them at the "altar table" for a few minutes while the firecrackers were set off. She then moved them away. She also distributed sweets to all the people around the site. The steamed buns were tea for the helpers later in the day. The celebration feast was held at suppertime. It contained ten dishes, but without an upper part of pig leg. Apart from the above helpers, Huang's agnatic kin's families and some close non-agnatic families attended the feast. They were Mr Huang's brother's family, Huang's married out daughter's family and his mother's quasi-daughter's family. They brought *zongzi*, steams buns, firecrackers, sweets, etc. for attending the feast and took away one quarter of *zongzi* and steams buns of whatever they brought as return gifts after the feast.

Putting up the first floor (*jialouban*)

On the 1st May 1996 I attended the event of putting up the first floor (*jialouban*) in YM Zhou's family. YM Zhou told me that it took nearly twenty days to get to the stage of putting up the first floor of the house. Everybody close to his family desired a ceremony for the half success of the building work. The ritual of putting the first floor up was simple. They set off big firecrackers while the putting up of the first floor was started and completed. Most of the attendees of the feast were the same as for the feast of laying foundation stone, except different sets of non-agnatic kin with different types of gifts. They were YM's married out brother's check formatting here two sons' families. Each of them brought 20 *jin* of egg cakes, one upper part pig leg, 2 *jin* of sweets, 10 big fire crackers, plus 200 *yuan* cash. The gifts and gifts money amounted to 320 *yuan* from each family. YM's mother's quasi-son's family brought 100 steamed stuffed buns (*baozi*), one upper part pig leg, 2 *jin* of sweets, 6 big firecrackers, and 160 *yuan* cash. YM's mother's quasi-daughter's family brought 1,000 *yuan* gift and gift money. The gifts

are more or less the same as the YM's mother's quasi-son's family, plus 100 small square-shaped rice cakes half way through the feast for when YM set off the firecrackers. After the feast the non-agnatic families took their share of returning gifts away with them.

Putting up the roof-beams (*shangliang*)

On 20th April 1996 I attended an event of putting up the roof-beams (*shangliang*) in FL Wang's family. The event started at 7:30am when four decorated boats with gifts arrived near to FL's house. The view looked magnificent. They were the family's four close non-agnatic families', e.g. Mrs FL Wang's natal family, the married out daughter's family, their son's quasi-mother's family, and Mr FL Wang's *jiujiu*'s family. The gifts included live pigs, a set of bathroom facilities, a ceiling fan, a washing machine, many duvets, a mosquito net, different kinds of food and fruits, sweets, and lots of big firecrackers, etc. Helpers unloaded them and presented them in the middle of the house. They also put the duvets and mosquitoes net on top of the decorated roof-beam for a while. The way in which they decorated the triangle shaped roof-beam is that they wrapped a piece of red cloth (*baoliangbu*) on the top end of the roof-beam and fixed a set of copper coins at the top end and then hung a red string with a small wooden block wrapped in a red cloth. Then they put the roof-beam onto the proposed position while big firecrackers were set off. People gathered on the first floor in order to catch *zongzi*, steamed buns, sweets, oranges, cigarettes, etc. thrown by a carpenter and a bricklayer. They each received one red bag containing 20 *yuan* for doing such a ritual of *paoliang* (through up to roof-beams). At 9 o'clock people had a break for tea, *zongzi*, fruits, cigarettes, and sweets. The rest of the morning was for tiling roof tiles on the roof. At the end of the event there was another ritual "*zuojie*", which means to make a solid flowerpot with an evergreen plant on the top middle of the roof. The big firecrackers were set off again and followed by a lunchtime feast. Tidying up work was in the afternoon. At 3 o'clock there was a tea. A formal feast with upper part of pig leg was in the evening, which involved nearly 200 guests. They were 80 non-agnatic kin, 40 agnatic kin, 8 bricklayers, 4 carpenters, 50 fellow villagers, 10 friends, and members of the family. FL set off firecrackers for the ceremony of putting up the roof-beams. The non-agnatic kin and friends

brought gifts and gift money for the feast and took away returning gifts with them after the feast.

Moving into the new house (*shengqian*)

Moving into a new house is the last main event during the period of house construction. Again I was only allowed to attend part of the event on 28 April in XK Zhou's family. This was for the same reason as in the laying foundation stone event, because moving into a new house also involved religious activities. XK told me that the first ritual is called *anchuang* (moving beds and placing into designated places) at 6 o'clock before sunrise in order to avoid people seeing it. His family members moved beds, table and benches from a village store house into the new house. Then he set off big firecrackers. The second ritual at 10 o'clock was called *zhuangmen*, which meant to fix an entrance door for the new house. Big firecrackers were set off again followed by a tea. Apart from *zongzi*, white and green rice balls (*tuanzi*), deep fried glutinous rice cakes with sweet fillings (*jiuniangbing*) were needed for the symbolic meaning of the project of house construction rounded off satisfactorily (*yuanman*). Before the lunchtime Mrs XK Zhou set up an altar table for worshipping the family's ancestors. After lunch people did winding up jobs. The moving into a new house feast was held at suppertime. There were 52 people who attended the feast, including 24 non-agnatic kin, 8 agnatic kin, 16 follow villagers, and members of the family. The non-agnatic kin brought gifts for the feast. They were large intestines of pig, fresh noodles, fruits, sugar, sweets, and firecrackers. Firecrackers were set off again during the feast. Again the non-agnatic kin took away their share of returning gifts after the feast.

Completed house tea party

The last event of the house construction should be a completed house tea party. It normally happens within one week after a family moves into a new house. I did not attend such a party. Mrs Yao told me that all the wives who lived in the same group should be invited. 28 of them attended her family's tea party including agnatic kin who lived in the same group, neighbours and fellow villagers' families. She served smoked soya bean tea, snacks, and sweets for the quests. Although some of them

came to the house for different feasts during the period of house construction, Yao said, it was nice for her to show them around the new house. In addition, Yao told me that she went to many such tea parties and learnt lots from others.

5.4. Annual cycle events

Although I lived in Kaixiangong Village for three months, it is still too short to observe everything throughout a year. Therefore, the list of annual cycle events partly came from my observation, and partly is recorded from my informants when I was there or after I came back UK via post-fieldwork. There are many different kinds of yearly based rituals or events which I have placed into five categories according to their nature. They are: festivals and customary events, ancestors worship, local gods worship, annual everyday cycle events and annual production cycle events.

Festivals and customary events

The description of annual cycle festivals and customary events in seasonal sequence are as below.

From the lunar New Year's Day to the 15th day of the 1st lunar month is the Chinese New Year period. Traditionally on the 1st day of the 1st lunar month people let off a string of small firecrackers as soon as they get up. This is for keeping evil away and for having a good harvest and happy life. Traditionally the villagers eat rice balls with fillings (*tangtuan*), small rice balls without fillings (*xiaoyuanzi*), or rice cake with sugar (*tangniangao*) and noodles for breakfast. The symbolic meaning is for reunion of family members, sweet and long life. I was told that on this day people should worship local gods and the kitchen god according to local custom. Some families would have a reception for the kitchen god. This day should be a quiet and relaxed day on which no tools should be touched and no people should be met. From the 2nd day onwards people started to have feasts and tea with relatives, neighbours, friends, and fellow villagers, etc. Weddings also take place during this period. An old man told me that in old society (before 1949) there were two religious events during this period. One was called *jielutou* (birthday of five road gods: east, west, south, north, and middle) on the 5th day. Villagers met on the

streets to burn incense, fire fireworks, and beat drums and gongs boisterously. They hoped that the road gods would bless them so that business would go smoothly. Another was called *mengjianghui* (*mengjiang* is another way to address *liuwan* or *liuhuang*), on the 13th day. *Luiwan* spells *liuhuang* in modern *pinyin*. “*Lui* being the personal name of the god and *wan* meaning king,”... “The god, *luiwan*, is the supernatural protector against the local menace” (Fei, 1939:103). There is another slightly different version of it. Originally Liu came from Liu Rui, a General of the Song Dynasty. He was famous for putting off plagues of locusts (Xu 1996:195). People meet at temples to burn incense, candles, money paper and make bows, etc., to pray for harvest.

On the 15th day is the *yuanxiao* festival or lantern festival. I was surprised that the villagers were very quiet at the festival. They only made rice balls with different fillings (*yuanxiao yuanzi*) for it. Some families worship local gods and the kitchen god together twice (on the 1st and 15th day) of each lunar month ritual. A villager told me that they never play with lanterns because it would be dangerous. This is confirmed by the county general records. In 1915 the lantern festival was forbidden by the local government because it caused a serious fire disaster (Wujiang Xianzhi, 1994:792).

On the 2nd day of the 2nd lunar month the villagers cut dried rectangle-shaped rice cake into slices and fry them in shallow oil. The rice cake should be eaten with brown sugar and walnuts. This is called *eryue er cheng yaogao*. This practice is good for improving adults’ waists and backs according to local custom. The 29th day of the 2nd lunar month is the Buddhist Guanyin (*guanyi niannian*)’s birthday. Some women go to the temple to burn candles, money paper, and to bow to the goddess.

On the 3rd day of the 3rd lunar month the villagers stick mustard flowers (*jielai ua*) in different places called *sanyue san cha jiecaihua*. According to the local custom they stick them in women’s hair (of any age) to cure headache; they put them on the top of the stove to keep ants away from it; they hang them on bedsides to keep evil under control (*yaxie*), etc.

Qingming festival (the 5th of the 24 solar terms) for worshipping ancestors is later on in the 3rd lunar month. Apart from ancestor-worship there was a newly developed custom for parents-in-laws, including those of both the engaged and married. Immediately after the *qingming* festival new tea goes on the market. A male fiancé should bring new tea and fresh fruit to visit his future parents-in-law. Married couples should visit the wife's parents-in-laws (*niangjia*) together, with new tea and fresh fruit. The purpose of the visit is to pay respects to them. The symbolic meaning of this is to wish that their life be full of youthful vigour. A villager told me of another new custom dating from 1995, that the mother-in-law also gives the son-in-law gifts, such as the upper part of a leg of pork, cloth, handkerchief, etc. After the new tea went to the market every female villager would arrange tea parties for neighbours, friends, and fellow villagers (see section of "Neighbours and fellow villagers" later).

During the period of the 3rd and 4th lunar month there was a local play in the past (*chuntaixi*, see the section about the Spring Performance). The Beginning of Summer (*lixia*) is the day marking the beginning of the 7th of the solar term (5, 6, or 7 May) on the 4th lunar month. It is the second festival for human beings according to the local custom. It is also the wine god's birthday. Men may drink as much rice wine as they like in the family feast. Villagers also called this feast the fresh food tasting (*lixia changxin*). The food included *tabing* (a steamed small round thin green coloured cake made with malt, *ziniantou* – a fresh herb, mashed soya bean, and glutinous rice powder), *doufan* (boiled rice with fresh broad bean), salted duck eggs, yellow croakers or rice-field eel, deep fried bean curd, fried fresh vegetables, i.e. three-coloured amaranth, garlic bolt, etc. A newly married out daughter should visit her natal family with summer clothes and a summer sleep mat of woven split bamboo. Some children visited their mother's brother (*jiujiu*)'s family by themselves for the feast on the Beginning of Summer. On that day children under the age of 16 need to be weighed. They also gather together for a picnic which is called *yehuofan*.

The 5th day of the 5th lunar month is the traditional Chinese Dragon Boat Festival. It has never been a big event in this village. The villagers present ball-shaped rice cakes (*tuanzi*) and deep fried peach-shaped rice cakes with red bean paste fillings

(*shoutao*) to the kitchen god. They also burn incense and candles on their stoves. There is normally a family feast. They eat *zongzi* (a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves) and *zhizhudan* (boiled egg with a spider in egg white which is put in while the egg is raw). The spider is not for eating but for good luck. Beside, there is a saying *wuyue wu mai tiao huangyu guo duanwu* that means on this day the villagers should buy a kind of yellow crackers for the feast. On the feast there are also dishes like fried bean curd with garlic leaves. Some older children would wear a necklace made of garlic cloves. Children under one year old should wear a tiger hat, clothes, and shoes. A villager N told me that the materials of making the tiger suit should be provided by the child's maternal uncle (*jiujiu*). To make it can involve labour support because some people do not have this skill and have to ask others to do it. Recently, people can buy these suits from the town market. The reason for wearing the tiger suit is to keep mosquitoes away from the child.

On the 6th day of the 6th lunar month there is a saying *liuyue liu mai lai huntun liu yi liu*. *Liu yi liu* is similar to *liuyue liu* (6th of the 6th lunar month) in pronunciation and means to visit informally. *Huntun* is a speciality of the Southern China, compared with dumpling (*jiaozi*), a similar speciality of Northern China: it has much thinner wrappings and is eaten with flavoured soup. They normally eat *huntun* and noodles on this day. It was the birthday of pets, cats and dogs. On this day villagers have a shower for cats, dogs, and themselves. They also lay items such as beds, clothes, books, out in the sun. However, there has recently been a big change in this custom. During this month there is another custom called *jiujiu mai qizi*. *Qizi* means seven kinds fruit or nuts with *zi* (seed or core). They are orange (*juzi*), pear (*lizi*), peach (*taozi*), plum (*lizi*), Chinese date (*zaozi*), red bayberry (*meizi*), watermelon seeds (*guazi*), etc. Recent year the villagers also accepted items without “*zi*”, i.e. banana and candied fruit, that have become fashionable can also be part of the “*qizi*”. Normally a mother's brother should buy seven kinds of fruit for his sister's child or children. The mother's brother (*jiujiu*) should also bring firecrackers together with the fruits. If a child's father has been taken as a son-in-law, the father's sister (*gugu*) should buy *qizi* for the child.

On the 7th day of the 7th lunar month people should cut a watermelon according to the saying *qiyue qi nage xigua qie yi qie*. This is the way in which the villagers celebrate the harvest of watermelons and keep cool on hot days. Also girls and women should pick up balsam from their own courtyard and use it overnight to paint their fingernails red. An old woman remembered that when she was young her mother showed her how to put an embroidery needle into a big bowl and beg from the Weaving-girl star (Vega) for wisdom. The 15th and 30th day of the 7th lunar month are two important days for ancestors and land gods.

On the 8th day of the 8th lunar month people normally pick *ling* or water caltrop (*bayue ba nage ling lai bo yi bo*). This was the harvest season of *ling* or water caltrop. People set aside a day to enjoy it. On the 15th day of the 8th lunar month there is a traditional Chinese Moon Day festival or middle moon festival, *tuanyuanjie* (see the section on Festivals for human beings). It is also one for worship of local gods and the kitchen god. People normally present apples, pears, and peaches, and of course some moon cakes on their stoves. They also burn incense, candles, and bow to the local gods including the kitchen god. A villager told me that the Moon Day Festival has been an official traditional festival for a long time so they just simply fit it in their everyday life without creating any special food for their dinner on this day. According to local custom, on this day the youngest generation (*xiaobei*) should give moon cakes and fruits as presents to older generations (*zhangbei*), and married out daughters should visit their natal families with similar presents to their parents.

On the 9th day of the 9th lunar month the villagers make rice cakes with newly harvested glutinous rice which is called *jiuyue jiu chongyang gao*. A villager told me this day is designed in autumn for celebrating the harvest. Villagers call autumn gold autumn for two reasons: the colour of mature grain is similar to a gold colour and autumn also illustrates that a person becoming older. So the custom agrees with a traditional Chinese Double Ninth Festival (*chongyangjie*), which in particular marks respect to the elderly.

In the 10th lunar month people will make rice wine called *shiyue zhong niangjiu*. On this day the villagers have their family feast with rice wine. The rice wine is made by themselves. This day is again to celebrate the harvest.

Dongzhi (the winter solstice – 22nd of the 24 solar terms; 21, 22, or 23, December) normally is in the 11th lunar month. Apart from ancestor worship (see next section), villagers also hold a family feast and invite any married out daughters' family to join it. Villagers believe it is the longest night in the year so they finish the feast early and sleep early. There is also a custom called *dan dongzhifan* which means people give presents, different food, to each other with a basket. This normally happens on the *Dongzhi's* Eve among relatives, neighbours, friends, and fellow villagers.

On the 8th day of the 12th lunar month people eat *labazhou* (rice porridge with beans, nuts, and dried fruit eaten on the day). This originally came from the temple. Buddhist monks and nuns cooked such porridge mixed with vegetables, peanuts, ginkgo, red date, and rice for warding off calamities and removing illness for worshippers. On the 23rd day is the ceremony for the kitchen god (see related section). There are several ceremonies around the end of the 12th lunar month. I will omit the ceremonies for local gods, ancestors, and family reunion feasts here and show instead a ritual related to a local goddess. On 28th, 29th, or 30th days of the 12th lunar month some families worship a goddess (*lizimo*). *Lizi* is a popular name for *jili* (good luck and auspicious). *Mo* is the local way to address a lady, in this case the local goddess. A woman told me that she presents offerings on a table in the front living room. At the end of the table she lays twelve handleless small wine cups in a line with Shaoxing wine in each cup. In the middle of the table a whole pig head is presented. Around it are fruits and cakes. At the front of table there is an incense burner on the left and two candles on the right. A little wooden bench is set one meter away from the front of the table and faces the middle of the table for people to kneel down (*guibai*) to worship the goddess. On the right-hand side some money paper is burned in an enamel basin or simply on cement surface ground. The woman also told me that not many families worship the *lizi* goddess in the village. So, according the local custom, there is a flexibility allowing different arrangements to each family during the period from the end of the lunar year and

beginning of the lunar New Year, as I mention in the section on kitchen god worship.

The above annual events and rituals show that the villagers' everyday life is varied and colourful. There are supplements to the main rituals for local gods, ancestors, and people. For example, both the worships for *lizimo* at the lunar New Year Eve and birthday of Buddhism Guanyin at the 2nd lunar month are for goddesses. On the day of the Dragon Festival the villagers also worship their ancestors. For human beings the events cover many types from baby's tiger hat, girls painting the fingernails, children's picnic, women's flowers, men's *yaogao* (a kind of rice cake), to parents-in-law's new tea, elderly day, swapping around gifts to neighbours, friends and fellow villagers, to family reunion, ceremonies of harvest, etc.

Ancestors' worship

The first ritual of ancestor worship is on the lunar New Year's Eve. I spent my first day with the Women's Federation of the Village, Mr BY Zhou's family. BY's stepfather⁸ was preparing the lunar New Year's Eve feast (*nianyefan*). Before the meal started I noticed that he was setting up a table for a ritual. He told me that it was worship for the ancestors (*baishangzu*). The table was a standard size of a square metre (*baxianzhuo*), which allows a maximum of eight people to eat together. It stood in the middle of the hall (living / dining room). Three long thin wooden benches were placed on the back, left and right sides of the table. Four small handleless wine cups and four pairs of chopsticks were at the back edge of the table, three cups and three pairs of chopsticks were on both left and right sides. At the front side of the table there were candle sets on each side. There was a small stool facing the middle of the table. On the right hand side next to the stool was an old enamel washbowl for burning papers. The offering sacrifices were presented in the middle of the table with five big dishes. They were an upper part of pork leg (*tizi*), fish, pork meats balls, bean sprouts and Chinese leaves.

The ritual of worship of ancestors⁹ was very simple. BY's stepfather poured liquor and rice wine into the wine cups, lighted candles and burnt paper. He then bowed three times with palms put together held in front of his chest (*baibai*), facing the

dining table where the sacrifices and candles were presented. He also made three bows with bent knees on the wooden bench (*guibai*). The rest of the family members took turns to worship their ancestors in the same way. After the worship BY reset the table for the family New Year Eve feast. There were seven more dishes carried on the table and the lunar New Year Eve feast started. They told me that all the members of extended family, namely, a brother or his family were requested to share the feast and therefore maintain relationships between each other through reference to the ancestor.

The second ritual of ancestor worship is *qingming* festival. It is traditionally observed as a festival for worshipping at ancestral graves, technically known as “sweeping the graves or Tomb-sweeping Day”. The festival itself was very simple but lasted for a few days. There was a village saying that the 5th of the solar term can be any day of three days on 4, 5, or 6 April, the festival itself always lasts for four days (*santian qingming sitian jie*). For example, in 1996 the 5th solar term was on the 4th April and the villagers started the preparation for the festival on the 1st April. The sacrifices offered to their own ancestors must be *zongzi* (a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves) and fruit. It would take at least one or two days to wrap a large quantity of them. The ritual on the *Qingming* was more or less the same as on the lunar New Year’s Eve. Members of the family light candles, burn paper and bow to the ancestors with bent knees, followed by a family feast. According to local custom if a family member has died within three years then all the members of the family should gather together to sweep the graves (*shangfen*), otherwise not. There were also other different customs related to sweeping the graves.

The third ritual of ancestor worship is *qiyueban* (the 15th day of the 7th lunar month), which is a ghost festival traditionally. According to the villagers, in the nether world gods are always represented as good beings and ghosts as bad beings. Villagers also believed one’s ancestor never turned into a god but could be turned into a ghost if he or she was treated badly. Then the ghost would bring bad luck and evil into one’s life. So the ghost festival is a day specially designed for the villagers to express themselves to their ancestors. The ritual is quite simple. They go to the local temple to burn incenses and bow first. Then they set up table for

offerings to their ancestors, light candles, burn paper and bow with bent knees. The sacrifices offered to their own ancestors must be *huntun* (a kind of dumpling in Southern China)¹⁰ and square shaped rice cakes with a red spot on top of each. The ritual ends with a family feast.

The last ritual of ancestor worship is *dongzhi* (the Winter Solstice, the 22nd solar term - 21, 22, or 23 December) which is the day marking the beginning of the 22nd solar term. This time the offered sacrifices are big rice balls with sweet and savoury fillings. Apart from offering sacrifices, lighting candles, burning paper and bowing with bent knees, etc. villagers invite married out daughters' families to join the family feast. They also give small gifts to neighbours, fellow villagers and friends. Such giving can be seen from Fei's description. "The general view is that the spirits live in a world very similar to ours, but that economically they are partially dependent on the contributions of their descendents which are made by periodically burning paper money, paper cloths, and paper articles. Therefore it is essential to have someone to look after one's well being in the after-world" (1939:30). This ritual is similar to what I saw in Neiguan village. There was a saying that on the 1st of the 10th lunar month villagers should send clothes and money to their ancestors (*shiyue yi song hanyi*). But it is one and half months earlier than Kaixiangong. The custom might be caused by a regional location difference. Neiguan is located in Northwest China, which is much colder than Kaixiangong.

Local gods' worship

The biggest ceremony or ritual (*dabai*) for local gods and goddesses is called "to grab and burn the first incense at the lunar New Year's Eve (*niansanshi qiang touxiang*)". After the lunar New Year Eve's feast in BY Zhou's family I went to the Grandpa temple (*laotaimiao*) in Miaogang Township with her son, QF Zhou. We got to the temple at around 8 pm and left at 2 am. Inside the temple there were many statues placed on a big, long altar table. Apart from *Qiu laotaiye*, the local lake god, there were a son and a grandson of his, Bodhisattva Guanyin (*guanshiyin niangniang*), Maitreya, etc. Local villagers presented many offerings, i.e. fruits,

cakes, wine, etc. I found they were almost all brought by women. The women visited the temple and took part in the ritual individually.

I followed many of them for the ritual from beginning to end. The ritual was very simple and informal. They firstly presented the offerings on the altar table. Then they burnt a bunch of incenses and held them in front of their chests with both hands and made a deep bow facing the statues of the local gods and goddesses. Some of them performed *kowtow*. They left the rest of the incenses in a big incense burner outside the temple. Then they burnt candles and put them on a big candlestick frame and made another bow facing the temple. The candlestick could hold several dozens of candles at a time. Underneath the candlestick there was a big basin half full of water for storing the candle ends safely. Afterwards the women burnt money paper in a big open style stove on the left side outside the temple. Finally, they went to a big ginkgo tree by the temple and put their hands on it and stroked it gently with their eyes closed. Then they stroked their face and hair with their hands. Thus the ritual finished. Most people repeated the above process but without the step of presenting offerings, or did them in different orders. People who came later simply left their offerings on a few extended altar tables after the main table was full. They then took off old candles from the candlestick frame and threw them in the big water basin. There were thousands and thousands of people from different villages continually going to the temple for the ceremony or ritual from 7 pm till the early morning of the next day.

The medium worship was for the land god on the 30th day of the 7th lunar month. It was the land god's birthday. Two thirds of the sampled families said that they burned incenses and offered sacrifices to the land god (*shang diwangye xiang*). A woman, JY Yao, told me that the reason for worshipping the land god (*bai tudigonggong*) was because they should ask him to forgive them for urinating and defecating everywhere when they were young. So this ritual would always involve children who were one year old and above. Normally a grandmother, or a mother if one has no grandmother, leads the ritual. JY told me that she took her grandson to the East Temple. They presented offerings, e.g. apples, pears, lotus root, etc. on an altar table and burned candles and money paper there. She also explained to the

child that “it was *tudigongong* (grandpa land)’s birthday”. They then made a bow to the land god, one after the other.

There were twice monthly small worships (*xiaobai*) for local gods and goddesses on the 1st and the 15th days of each lunar month (*chuyi yueban*). The biggest small worship is on the lunar New Year’s Day. On the day at 10 am I went to East Temple in the village for the 1st day of the 1st lunar month worship. The East Temple was divided into two parts. The main statue *guanyin*, a goddess, was on an altar table in the west side of the temple, whereas *guandi* was presented in a main place of the east side of the temple. I saw many women worshipping local gods there. One woman was selling incenses, candles, and money papers. A woman bowed to the statues of *guanyin* on bent knees in front of the altar table. She then burned candles and put them on the candlestick outside the temple. There were two uncovered oil drums full of water underneath the candlestick. Afterwards she went in the temple again, burned a bunch of incenses and held it in front of her chest and bowed to the curtains behind *guandi* and the other statues on the altar table. Then she left the ends of incenses in an incense burner outside the temple. Finally she burnt money papers (*huangtongzhi*) in an open stove by a warehouse wall outside the temples. Other women did more or less the same things. For the rest of small worship throughout a year the villagers repeated the same things but in a simpler way

The kitchen god is particularly important to the villagers. They distinguish kitchen god worship (*baizao*) from other kinds of worship (*baishen*, *bailaoye* or *baitai*). In his book “*Peasant life in China*” Fei told stories about worship of the kitchen god (Fei, 1939:99-102). I am not going to add any details of how the worship works. My interest was to find a relationship between villagers and the kitchen god. As I mentioned earlier, there were two big and two medium yearly worships for the kitchen god, and two regular small monthly worships. The two big worships for the kitchen god are the 3rd day of the 8th lunar month and the 23rd of the 12th lunar month¹¹. The former is the birthday of the kitchen god. On this day people present sacrificial offerings, i.e. peach-shaped birthday cakes (*shoutao*), apples, oranges, noodle, lotus root, water caltrop. They also present three small handleless cups of wine to the kitchen god because they believe he has three heads with three mouths.

Then they burn incenses, candles, paper, and bow to the kitchen god.¹² The latter is the day on which villagers send the kitchen god on his annual trip to Heaven (*songzao*). Instead of a peach-shaped birthday cake, noodles, lotus roots, in the sacrificial offerings, people offer rice balls mixed with pumpkin (*huang nanguagao*) and fermented bean curd (*hei doufugan*). This particular day is also called small lunar New Year's Eve (*xiaonianye*) and a family feast is normally involved. After the feast people should burn incenses, candles, paper money, and bow to the kitchen god. When they burn paper money they also burn the paper inscription of the kitchen god. This is the way in which the kitchen god returns to heaven.

Two medium kitchen god worships are on 29th or 30th day of 12th lunar month, or 1st day of the 1st lunar month, and 3rd, 15th, 24th days of the 6th lunar month. The former is a reception for a new kitchen god (*jiezao*). On this day people present a new paper inscription of the kitchen god and offerings like small rice balls without fillings (*yuanzi*), fermented bean curd (*hei doufugan*), noodles, and fruits on their stove. They also burn candles, incenses, and make a bow to the kitchen god. The latter includes three worships on three days which counts as one medium worship in the 6th lunar month. Although this worship was counted as a medium one, villagers treated it much less seriously. Only two fifths of the sampled families bothered with the ceremony. On the 3rd, 15th, 24th days of the 6th lunar month villagers burn candles, incenses, and bow to the kitchen god because no offerings are needed for the kitchen god. On these dates for health concerns both males and females wear shorts in the morning and in the afternoon the elders are stripped to the waist.

Two small kitchen god worships are on the 1st and the 15th days of every lunar month (*chuyi yueban xiaobai*). On these two days the villagers only burn incenses and candles on their stoves. This kind of ritual can be held in temples in the Township or in the village, or even at home. Fei also observed this in his fieldwork in the 1930s. He said each family sends its representative to visit the temples and make sacrifices individually (Fei, 1939:104). Nowadays, more and more people combined the regular worship of the kitchen god and other local gods together.

Annual life cycle events

Annual life cycle events are those which relate to the life style of the villagers and which are repeated on a yearly basis and which engage social support to some extent. They are: peeling soya beans, making rice cakes and conditioning silk-quilted roll neck jerseys. Strictly speaking villagers won't do conditioning silk-quilted roll neck jerseys for each member of family every year. For a 4-person family each member gets a new silk-quilted jersey once every four years on average.

Peeling soya beans

Peeling fresh soya beans (*boqingdou*) normally happened from 20th September to 15th October every year. This event would involve labour support, although it is a small event. As a speciality of the village smoked soya bean (*xunqingdou*) is an important ingredient served with tea throughout the year. Since peeling fresh soya bean is a very boring task women normally would gather together to chat while they work. Jin told me that to get 5 *jin* of smoked soya bean 30 *jin* of fresh soya beans must be peeled, taking half a day's work for five women. After they finished peeling the beans she held a tea party (*xinkucha*) for the helpers' hard work.¹³ As a reciprocal task she peeled soya beans with five other families. Jin's partners were more or less the same every year. The team can be formed by agnate kin, non-agnate kin, neighbours, friends or fellow villagers. In my sampled households 87.5 per cent of them had such yearly based labour support.

The way in which the villagers arranged such an event is quite similar to a notice in a school's newsletter in London. It says that "We need volunteers to cut out the free books for schools vouchers from the crisp packets we have collected so that we can send off for more books. Come with a friend to chat as you work. Coffee will be provided!" The difference is that in the village this arrangement is regarded as a kind of labour exchange and they worked in turns with each other's families.

Making rice cakes

Rice cakes flow (*gaolai gaoqu*) is another analogy for *zou renqing* or expressive *wanglai* in Kaixiangong. There were different types of rice cakes for different events, which include both annual cycle and life cycle events. These rice cakes can be classified into three types. They are dried rice cakes, race balls, and *zongzi* (a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves).

Dried rice cakes include *yunpiangao*, *shuigao*, and *gaobing*. *Yunpiangao* is a kind of rice cake in thin strips which is used as a gift for visiting new born babies or a return gift after a wedding banquet, etc. *Shuigao* is a kind of flat cube shaped and a 4x4x2cm sized rice cake with or without fillings inside or different patterns on top. For example, it has a red square pattern made of dried fruit thin slices on top for the one-month old birth celebration. It has one small red spot in the middle for a completed house celebration, fillings of red bean mash and mixed dried fruit thin slices for a family division, 16 Chinese characters on each cake with four of them joined as one group for betrothal rites. These characters are *changming fugui* (long life, riches and honour), *chenxin ruyi* (very gratifying and satisfactory), *zaosheng guizi* (have a child earlier), etc. *Gaobing* is a kind of circular rice cake similar to the *shuigao*'s size with different kinds of small flowers patterned on top of each. Among the above rice cakes only the last one involved labour support because it was not possible to buy them from the market. I saw three women spend a whole afternoon to make such *gaobing*. It was made out of a wooden model which is about 3 inches wide and one foot long including a handle. Each model had three different patterns which made a set of such rice cakes.¹⁴ According to the local custom, a household should distribute a set of such *gaobing* to neighbours or fellow villagers when it holds an event. Thus labour support is involved whenever a family needs to make a large quantity of *gaobing*.

Rice balls include *tuanzi* (a 6 cm diameter big race ball with red bean mash filling) and *yuanzi* (a small 3 cm diameter race ball without fillings), which has two different colours: white and green dyed with pumpkin leaves. There were different names for different events, e.g. *atai tuanzi* or *atai yuanzi* for the one month birthday celebration, *waisheng tuanzi* for asking a school bag from *jiujiu* (mother's

brother), *nuxu tuanzi* for parents-in-law to give a son-in-law after the newly married couple's first visit. A child's sixteenth birthday, completing a house, etc. also involved rice balls. To make such rice balls normally would involve labour support from three to four people.

Zongzi is a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves and is eaten during the Dragon Boat Festival every year. Apart from this, in Kaixiangong *zongzi* are made on many other occasions, e.g. for the Pure Brightness Festival (the 5th of the 24 solar terms on the 4, 5, 6, April, see 5.4), three events of house construction, and funeral, etc. All the above events need a large quantity of *zongzi*, which naturally involves labour support. Liu told me that, unlike making rice balls which almost everyone can do themselves, to make *zongzi* requires special skill and labour support is especially important. So in her family the team for making rice balls or rice cakes was different from the team for making *zongzi*. This made labour support arrangements more difficult.

Conditioning silk-quilted roll neck jerseys

Wearing silk-quilted roll neck jerseys was a new fashion in the village from early 1990. The villagers wore these underneath a normal jacket or suit. This way of dressing, as main winter clothes, replaced traditional cotton-quilted overcoats because it was warmer, more lightweight, comfortable, convenient, and slimmer looking, etc. In contrast, I looked clumsily even more an outsider because I always needed to wear a down jacket, both outdoors and indoors (even indoors because the villagers never close their main entrance door (see Neighbours and fellow villagers of 1.2.1.)

The conditioning of silk-quilted roll neck jerseys (*fanyi*) from time to time became another kind of regular work involving labour support. This kind of jersey was made of two cotton roll neck jerseys with silk-quilt in the middle as a sandwich. Zhou told me that she conditioned silk-quilted roll neck jerseys (*fanyi*) in October and removed the quilt to wash the jerseys (*chaiyi*) in April every year. *Chaiyi* could be done all by herself, but *fanyi* needed another person to help because two people were needed to stretch and smooth the silk quilt. Each jacket needs 3 to 5 *liang*

(150 to 250g) silk, depending on the size. Her family has five people and she needs to condition five such tops and one pair of trousers for her 70 year old father. Since silk-quilted roll neck jersey became part of their life style it is natural that they help each other as a labour exchange. After the work they had a cup of tea but it was not a tea party because only two people were involved in it.

Annual production cycle events

Amongst the many yearly based production events there are three kinds which normally involve social support. They are: agriculture production, raising silkworms and raising rabbits.

Agriculture production

Table 5¹⁵ shows there are two busy seasons in farming each year. The first one is from 20th May to 30th June for harvesting wheat, barley, and rapeseed, sowing seeds, young shoots in nursery farms, transplanting rice, and raising spring silkworms. The wheat, barley and some of the rapeseed were turned over to the State as their mission of taking responsibility for the land. Mainly the threshing needs labour help because there were only 1 or 2 big threshers for wheat, and 4 or 5 families share one small thresher within a group of about 30 households. Normally this kind of support would involve 4 or 5 households and they helped each other in turn. They called this kind of labour support labourers' exchange (*huangong*). However, this kind of labour support has changed recently (see "Social creativity" in section 6.3).

Sowing seeds, young shoots in nursery farm, and transplanting rice seedlings are also important because this is only a once a year plant grant for eating. This work involved less labour support from others. Traditionally, after harvest and before the rice seedling transplant, villagers would hold a feast for the people involved in the labour support. They can be relatives, both agnate and non-agnate kin, neighbours and fellow villagers. This feast is not grand because an upper part of pig leg (*tizi*) is not requested.

The second busy season in farming was from 20th October to 15th November. It involved harvesting rice, reaping, husking, storing rice and sowing seeds of wheat, barley, and rapeseed, etc. However, almost no labour support happened during the period.

Raising silkworms

The history of raising silkworms in this area goes back 4,700 years (Liu, 1996:429). It is also an important sideline production. Normally there were four times each year in which the silkworms were raised. There were spring silkworms, summer silkworms, early autumn silkworms, and later autumn silkworms. However, villagers did not raise summer silkworms for many years because the silkworms produced much less cocoons in hot weather. The most important period is raising the spring silkworms from 20th May to 30th June.

The stage of hatching eggs involved a kind of social support. In the village every 3 to 4 or 7 to 8 households on average share each hatchery, which is a small room in a private house. The facilities in a hatchery were well sterilised and disinfected, and temperature and humidity were well controlled. BY Zhou told me that 11 households shared her hatchery. Two of them were agnate kin, two non-agnate kin, two fellow villagers, and five households from a neighbouring group. As soon as they collected their share of eggs from a group head's house they sent them directly to her hatchery. The newly-hatched silkworms needed to be fed four times a day around 9:00am, 3:00pm, 9:00pm, and 3:00am. During the first few days BY got up at 3:00am to feed the silkworms. Other families made appointments for the rest of the times. Normally they collected their silkworms back to their own houses to raise after two weeks. If any family had any kind of family event the silkworms had to stay in BY's house for one more week. This kind of support happened twice a year, in the spring and later autumn. It was not needed for the early autumn one because the weather was warm enough for households to hatch eggs without hatcheries. This is how BY and the 11 households supported each other using an exchange involving both labour and materials, and the hatchery.

Raising rabbits

Raising rabbits became an important sideline production in the village. In his second visit to Kaixiangong in 1956 Fei found a change from raising sheep to raising rabbits. Instead of 1,000 sheep in 1936 there were 1,000 rabbits in 1956 in the village because it provided a reasonable income with much less risk and costs (1986:230). In his third visit to Kaixiangong in 1981 Fei noticed that raising rabbits together with other sideline productions took half the per cent of the villagers' income in 1980 (1986:259). In 1981 Wujiang County's export of rabbits' hair was well matched with silk. According to Liu, from 1980s to middle of 1990s the State purchasing price of rabbits' hair was steady, between 60 to 80 *yuan* per kg. In 1995 there were a total of 5,500 rabbits which produced 2,200 kg of hair in the village (1996:464-65). In my sampled households, 91 per cent of families raised rabbits, varying from 6 to more than 23.

I observed the cutting of rabbit's hair in Ni's family. I saw four women including Ni work together. Ni told me that her family raised 14 rabbits, which brought 1,750 *yuan* income in 1995. They needed to shear each rabbit's hair every 55 days, which means 7 times per year on average. It needed three or four people to cut the hair and it was normally women's job to do this. After the shearing, Ni held a tea party for her helpers. During the tea time they told me the tea was a reward for their hard work. They helped each other in turns. The three helpers were one agnate kin and two neighbours of Ni's family.

5.5. Life cycle events -- birth and growing up period

There are major events in the growing up period in the village. They are events before and after the birth; celebrations of the one-month old birthday and one-year old birthday; to be a guest and to be visited; events for a child pre school and starting school; and celebration of the sixteenth birthday and seeing-off ceremonies. The major difference between village children and those in urban China or the West is that the latter have a birthday celebration every year, whereas the former have events of being a guest and being visited and getting ready and

starting school. Although the village children do have a birthday every year the celebrations are relatively simple.

Events before the birth (*Dan shengtang*)

An event before a baby's birth called is *dan shengtang* (to carry soup for a woman when she has been pregnant for eight months), and *dan shoutang* (to carry soup for a woman after she gives birth). *Dantang* is short for these two events of providing 'soup' before and after childbirth. Fei found that 'soup' (*tang*) in the 1930s referred to a kind of herbal soup to help birth at a time when there was a high maternal death rate and high infant mortality (1939:35). The meanings of soup changed from time to time. In the 1960s and 1970s the 'soup' was sugar or sugar tickets. A sugar ticket was 150g sugar per person per month according to the then current state policy. The villagers believe that sugar is the best nourishment when food is scarce. In the 1990s the 'soup' signified different kinds of gifts -- those for the pregnant woman's health, for the new baby's birth and growing up lucky, and for entertaining guests after the new baby is delivered.

I attended a *dan shengtang* event in HK Zhou family's on 21st March 1996. There were two feasts for two groups of Zhou's relatives. The lunchtime feast was for Mrs Zhou's natal family's relatives. They came in the morning with *shazhao* (big bamboo steamers each of 50cm diameter) containing gifts of knitting wool, jujube, the upper part of pig's leg with foot (*datizi*), eggs (hen and duck's), egg cake, noodles, lotus root starch, brown and white sugar, *daidi* (a thin glutinous rice crust), and so on. In addition, Mrs Zhou's natal family gave clothes for a new baby suitable for four seasons and for different uses, all made by Mrs Zhou's mother. Mrs Zhou's natal family's gifts total cost was about 400 *yuan*. Every non-agnatically related household, as newly established non-agnatic kin (*xinqin*) of Zhou family, spent on average 100 *yuan* for gifts.

The lunchtime feast was designed for Mr Zhou's natal family's relatives. Altogether about 48 people attended the feast, seated around six tables: 37 women, six men and five children. During this feast Mr Zhou's relatives accompanied Mr Zhou's natal family's relatives. I noticed Mr Zhou's mother sat Mrs Zhou's natal family's relatives on the best seats separately at different tables, accompanied by

Mr Zhou's mother, his father's brother's wife and his father's patrilineal cousin's wife, etc.

The supertime feast was designed for Mr Zhou's relatives including both agnatic and non-agnatic kin. 72 people attended the feast. In contrast to the wedding banquet, only those close agnatic kin who had invited the new couple for welcoming feasts after they got married were invited, and all the non-agnatic kin within three generations were invited for the *dan shengtang* event. They brought gifts with them for the feast which were similar to Mrs Zhou's natal family's relatives in variety. Since Mr Zhou's natal family's relatives became *xinqin* (new generation relatives) her husband's family's non-agnatic kin became *laoxin* (old generation relatives) and only needed to bring gifts worth 50 *yuan* each, according to local custom.

In the two feasts the Zhou family received gifts and a few red envelopes amounting to 2,500 *yuan* and spent about 3,000 *yuan* on tea and snacks, and return gifts including jujube, eggs, and instant noodle, etc. This cannot simply be explained by finance support. Emotional support and caring, in this case, were more important than finance and labour support because the people came to share the tension caused by expectation and fear of the birth, as Fei noticed in 1930s (1939:34-35).

The meaning of the event can be the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Zhou family's *xinqin*, a new generation of non-agnatic kin, joined in the Zhou family's *lishang-wanglai* networks. Mrs Zhou's mother reported that she felt that she was an important guest, noting that Mr Zhou's household treated her, her brother's wife and her husband's sister well as honorary guests. This is great change compared with Fei's description in 1930s that a pregnant woman's mother had a duty to look after her for several days (1939:35). Although participants of a new wife's natal family can vary from a servant to honorary guest over the event, the relationship between the new wife's natal family and her married in family is the same, namely, the new wife's natal family became important resources for the married in family. In this case Mrs Zhou's natal family and its relatives became important guests and resources in Mrs Zhou's family's list of close non-agnatic kin after the *dantang* event.

Events after the birth (*Dan shutang* and *wangxinke*)

10 days later, 31st March, I attended DQ Rao family's *dan shutang* event. Mrs Rao told me that since the family already held a *dan shengtang* event when she was 8 months pregnant, which is quite similar to the above Zhou family's, the *dan shutang* would be much simpler. In the morning I saw Mrs Rao's natal family plus other six families of non-agnate kin, as well as Mr Rao's four close non-agnatic kin, bring gifts to see her and the baby. The contents of the gifts were more or less the same as the *dan shengtang* plus a bag of *yunpiangao* (a kind of rice cake in thin strips), except no clothes and upper part of pig leg from Rao's mother, no knitting wool from all the relatives. As in many events in the village there was also a standard quantity of gift for different kinds of people. Both Mrs Rao's natal family and Mr Rao's *jiujiu* (mother's brother) should get 80 *yuan* each, the rest of non-agnate kin 50 *yuan* each, Mrs Rao's friends (little sisters) 30 *yuan* each. The Rao family held a lunchtime feast for all the guests. The feast was without *tizi* (upper part of pig leg), which is the way villagers describe the standard of the feast as lower in rank than the *dan shengtang* feast, although the numbers of dishes looked similar to the *dan shengtang* feast.

Apart from *dan shutang* from the baby's mother's and father's close non-agnate kin, father's agnate kin, other people would also come to see the baby. There were about 40 visitors who were the baby's parents' friends, neighbours, and fellow villagers. They brought small gifts, such as a kind of rice cake in thin strips (*yunpiangao*), milk powder, and put a red envelope with 10 *yuan* on top of the gifts. The baby's family entertained with tea and snacks for all the guests. Rao's family spent about 1,200 *yuan* for the entertainment (feast and tea). But they received gifts plus gift money amounting to 1,680 *yuan*. It looked like the Rao family received gifts in *dan shutang* more than what they spent. But the figure included a mixed event of both *dan shutang* and *wangxinke* (visiting a new born baby).

Dan shutang was only meant for those relations who attended *dan shengtang* event. They are the baby's father's family's both agnatic and non-agnatic kin, and the baby's mother's natal family's close relatives. Here *sheng* and *shu* in *dan*

shengtang and *dan shutang* can be translated as raw and ripe, uncooked and cooked, unfamiliar and familiar, etc., as an informant explained it to me with the term of “*yihui sheng erhui shu* (unfamiliar at the first meeting, familiar at the second)”. The significance of the baby’s mother’s natal family’s relatives is that they should be familiar visitors in this event because in this occasion there were more unfamiliar people gradually being introduced into the baby’s life. They were the baby’s parents’ friends, neighbours, and fellow villagers. For them, to visit a new-born baby is called *wangxinke*. The *xinke* is formed by two Chinese characters, namely, new guest. *Wangxinke* event lays a foundation of a new born baby’s status as a new guest in a society formed by *lishang-wanglai*. The term of *xinke* indicates that as soon as the baby was born it started immediately a life journey of *lishang-wanglai*. The following sections will show how it started to visit others and be visited, etc.

Celebrations of the one-month old birthday

The celebrations of the one-month old birthday are called *manyue baitai* (a local goddess) because the event involved a ritual of worshipping a goddess. I attended a *manyue baitai* from 17th to 20th March in the JP Ren family. Two days before the baby’s one month birthday the baby’s grandfather carried a basket (*shazhao*) of dried rice cakes (about 100 *gaobing*) to visit the baby’s *jiujiu*’s family to ask for a rabbit hat (*taomaozi*). This was a way of sending a message of *manyue baitai*. Instead of the *jiujiu*, who was working in a township with his wife, the *jiujiu*’s father gave him a purple colour rabbit hat¹⁶. As soon as they received the dried rice cakes they distributed them to their relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers. On the 18th they went shopping for gifts in the township while two people made rice balls for the *manyue baitai* at their home.

On the 19th the *jiujiu*’s father¹⁷ carried a shoulder-pole load of gifts and his mother carried a basket to visit the baby’s family. They presented their gifts. They were a cot (150 *yuan*), a red cloth wrapping a silver padlock (150 *yuan*) and a silver dollar (80 *yuan*), a red paper bag with 100 *yuan*, an upper part of pig leg (*tizi*), a bag of cake, two big food steamers (*longti*) of wet rice cakes (80 of *shuigao*). A bunch of evergreen was placed on a red cloth cover of the steamers. In the steamers there

were 12 big white rice balls with fillings of red bean mashes (*atai tuanzi*) and 30 small green¹⁸ and 30 small white rice balls without fillings (*atai yuanzi*). The former were for agnatic kin and the latter were for neighbours, fellow villagers, and all the attendants. The above gifts were worth 600 *yuan*.

The baby's mother was dressed him in a cloth specially (*ataiyi*) made for worshipping *ataimo* (a goddess) and put the rabbit hat on his head and hung the silver padlock in front of his chest. *Jiujiu*'s father drew a line between the baby's eyebrows and painted both cheeks in red on his face. This is called *tiaoshou* and symbolised the wishes of a long life for the baby. The baby's *jiujiu*'s father told me that the ritual has simplified recently. Otherwise he needed to cut the baby's hair according to the old custom.

At the same time the baby's grandmother was presenting offerings for the *ataimo*. She put a table¹⁹ in the middle of living/dining room on which a paper inscription of *ataimo* was presented in the middle of the back of the table. Two candles were on each side of it. There were five big plates of offerings in the middle of the table. They were a small live mandarin fish, a raw upper part of a pig leg (*tizi*), a whole raw chicken, some big green rice balls and small rice balls. The baby's grandmother and the mother carried him in turn making bows to the *ataimo*. The baby's grandmother then sent off the *ataimo* by burning the paper inscription of it and setting the fish free. This custom originally came from Buddhism.

The baby's father lit firecrackers and fireworks for 20 minutes. Children in the same group shared the firecrackers and ran in the family. The father gave the attendants small white and green rice balls, one of each. He then distributed the rice cakes and balls to their agnate kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers. The baby's father left rice cakes and balls in a bowl on top of the stove in the kitchen or dining table in the living dining room for those families with nobody in.

At the same time, the baby's grandmother carried him to visit his *jiugong* (father's *jiujiu*)'s family, namely, the grandmother's natal family. This was the first visit in his life. His *jiugong* put a tiny bit of sugar into his mouth, which symbolised the wishes of a sweet life for the baby. He also gave him a red envelope. The baby's

grandmother then carried the baby to his *jiutaigong* (father's grandmother's brother)'s family. He did the same thing to the baby.

At the lunchtime the baby's family held a feast with *jiujiu's* parents for the family celebration. After the feast there were many people who received rice cakes and balls and visited the baby with little gifts, i.e. a few sweets, a bag of instant noodle, and small red bag for congratulations on his one month birthday. In the evening, the baby's father's family started preparations for his paying return visits to his *jiujiu's* family.

On the 20th morning the baby's mother carried him, his father carried gifts, and his grandmother carried their personal belongings to pay a returning visit to the baby's *jiujiu's* family. When they were 100 meters away from the *jiujiu's* family several fireworks were fired, which served the function of gunning a welcome salute. In front of the *jiujiu's* house there were three piles of firewood. The *jiujiu's* mother held a big bamboo pan (*canda*)²⁰, with diameter a meter. The baby's mother put the baby on the pan and the *jiujiu's* mother carried him into the house. This ritual symbolised the baby's safe arrival (*ping'an dida*) and all to be well in his life (*yisheng ping'an*).

The baby's father presented gifts on a table. They were 100 dried rice cakes, a bag of cakes, 11 sets of gifts which contained 2 *jin* sugar and one bag of crisp pancake rolls (*danjuan*) of each. The *jiujiu's* mother presented offerings for the *ataimo* (a local goddess), more or less similar to what the baby's grandmother did in his home. This time the baby's *jiujiu's* mother and his mother carried him in turn making bows to the *ataimo*. The baby's *jiujiu's* father lit firecrackers and fireworks again. Children who lived in the same group heard the fireworks and came running in to see the new guest. They received some small rice balls. The baby's *jiujiu's* mother then distributed the dried rice cakes to relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers. After lunch the baby's father and his grandmother went back home. The baby and his mother lived in *jiujiu's* family for a month. During their stay close relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers visited him with gifts. The baby and his mother also took 11 sets of gifts mentioned above and attended meals with the 11 close relatives of the *jiujiu's* family in turn. After the trip the baby and his mother

went back home with some gifts, knitting wool, rice cakes, etc. They distributed the rice cakes again to their relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers.

After more than one-month *wanglai* with different relations the circle of the one-month old birthday's celebration is completed. This is the first event arranged for the baby himself since the celebration of his birth was actually mixed with his mother. This can be seen from the following points. (a) It is the first time the baby had been involved in a religious life. There were two rituals held separately in both the baby's family and his *jiujiu*'s family, also his mother's natal family. This is why the event named *manyue baitai* (worship a local goddess on the first month old birthday). The cloth the baby wore was called *ataiyi* (the goddess cloths), the rice balls called *atai tuanzi* (the goddess big rice ball) and *atai yuanzi* (the goddess small rice ball). (b) This was the first time the baby worshipped his ancestors and asked blessings from them. For the baby's family this was also a way of reporting to their ancestors that the family had added a new member. (c) In his one-month old birthday especially important relations of "*jiujiu*" were introduced into the baby's life. The *jiujiu*'s family spends a considerable amount on the event. The gifts were for everyday usage, like the cot; for spiritual purpose, e.g. a silver padlock which symbolised happiness and a silver dollar for getting rich; the upper part of pig leg for the family feast; the rice balls and cakes for establishing relationships with small friends, relatives, neighbours, and fellow villages. (d) The one-month old birthday involved several times of *wanglai* between the baby's family and their relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers. The cakes flowed reciprocally. Every family received cakes twice. The first time was for *manyue baitai* and the second time was returning home as a little guest from *jiujiu*'s family. The baby was also involved in reciprocal relations with his father's *jiujiu* and his father's mother's *jiujiu*. The above people for the baby were familiar because this was the second time he saw them since he was born. (e) The one-month old birthday involved several times of *wanglai* between the baby's family and his *jiujiu*'s family and their relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers. It was the first time for the baby to be involved in a broader circle of relations related to *jiujiu*'s family. The *jiujiu*'s relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers received cakes from the baby's family twice. The first time was "asking for hat?" and the second time

was paying a return visit to *jiujiu*'s family. They also received gifts and letters from those relations of *jiujiu*'s family. (f) The one-month old birthday is also the first time to introduce small friends from both his own family and his *jiujiu*'s family's groups into the baby's life. The children within the group came to the family without delay upon hearing the firecrackers and fireworks. They came all by themselves without adults' company. These children potentially can be the baby's future friends, neighbours, or fellow villagers. Thus, this little person had been knitted in his family's *lishang-wanglai* networks. At the same time his family was knitting his *lishang-wanglai* networks for him.

One-year old birthday celebration

The one-year old birthday celebration is called *zhousui baitai* because the event also involves a ritual of worshipping the local goddess. The size of the one year's old birthday is much smaller than the one-month old birthday.

On 3rd May I attended a one-year old birthday event in JL Song family. This event was arranged by the birthday girl's grandmother, because the girl's mother was working in an enterprise of the village. The presentation of the offerings looked slightly different from the one-month birthday which I described above. A paper inscription of *ataimo* was presented in the middle of the back of the table. Two candles were placed in front of the table instead of on each side of the *ataimo*. On the table there were a small live mandarin fish, an upper part of pork leg (*tizi*), a whole chicken, some smoked bean curd, white and green small rice balls without fillings (*atai yuanzi*). The grandmother also put a small bench facing the table. The girl hung a silver padlock on her chest which was given by her *jiujiu* on her one-month birthday. The grandmother carried the girl and made a bow with bended knees to the *ataimo*. She also helped the girl do it all by herself. Then the grandmother burned the paper inscription of *ataimo*. She also lit firecrackers and fireworks. After that she distributed small rice balls to the children who came to the house. At the end of the ritual the grandmother set the mandarin fish free with the birthday girl. She then took her to distribute rice balls, which she made herself the day before the event, to her relatives both agnate and non-agnate kin. After they received the rice balls they gave them sweets or biscuits in return for celebration of

the birthday. The girl's grandmother also prepared a nice evening meal for the family celebration of the girl's one-year old birthday.

This event indicates two points. (a) The girl's members of family and her family's relatives shared the happiness of her one-year old birthday. As an extension of the members of the family only the agnatic and non-agnatic kin who lived in the village were involved in the celebration. The girl's grandmother told me that this is the way in which they limited the size and standard of the celebration. (b) Although there were no new relations introduced into the girl's life in the one-year old birthday, the friends and local goddess were involved in her event for the second time since she was born. It is important for her that by her one year old birthday all her relations should be familiar to her. The girl's grandmother told me that after the one-year old birthday the girl would start another circle of *lishang-wanglai*, which is called to be a guest (*zuoxinke*) and to be visited (*kantouke*), from the next lunar Chinese New Year onwards.

To be a guest and to be visited

To be a guest is called *zuoxinke*, which means a child is a new guest of his or her family's close non-agnate kin, whereas to be visited (*kantouke*) means that the close non-agnate kin of the child's family visit him or her. Compared with the previous intensive knitted circle in making familiar relations with relatives, neighbours, fellow villagers, friends, ancestors, and local goddess, etc. another *lishang-wanglai* circle of a child is knitted for more than fifteen years from one year old to sixteen years old onwards.

Let's take the one-year old birthday girl for an example. The grandmother told me that during the coming lunar New Year period the girl would visit the Song family's close non-agnate kin in turn (including *jiujiu*'s family as well as quasi kin's), with her mother. The way in which she and her family visited all the non-agnate kin is much simpler than when she first visited her *jiujiu*'s family when she was one-month old. There is no need to fire welcome fireworks or put her on the big pan, or even live there for a month in the event of being a guest of the close relatives. The standard way is that they would have a nice meal with each non-agnate kin on different days on a day trip. Each time when the girl and her

mother came to be a guest of one particular non-agnatic kin's family they should bring a basket of dried rice cakes (*gaobing*) with them in order to distribute them to the visited family's close kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers. People who received cakes would pay a visit with a small gift to the family with the new guest.

From 3 to 5 years old the girl would be visited as a new guest (*kantouke*) by the close non-agnatic kin which visited during the lunar New Year periods. It is the female adults' job to pay a visit to the new guest of their non-agnate kin. They would bring a basket dried rice cake (80 –100 *gaobing*) in turn in the same year or different years. Each visitor would be entertained by a nice meal. After the meal the girl's family would then distribute the cakes to its agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers.

In the events of being a guest and visiting a child is involved in much broader lishang-wanglai networks of his or her family's close non-agnatic kin's. If the girl's family had ten close non-agnatic kin²¹, this means she would pay 10 visits to all of them and they would distribute her dried rice cakes to their families' close relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers. When the girl goes to be a guest to those non-agnatic kin's families she would receive visits and gifts from all of them. This would be the first time she saw them in person and related to them through one of her family's close relatives. These events would also strengthen the girl's family's relationship with its agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers because she would receive ten visits from her family's close non-agnatic kin and distribute dried rice cakes ten times to all of them. If all the above events happen the family's lishang-wanglai networks around the girl are getting much larger and stronger.

Events for a child pre school and starting school

Starting school is a very important stage for a child in his or her life and involves two events. I did not get a chance to observe these because they normally would happen in late summer. The following description is based on information provided by many informants in my sampled households.

Qiu started to organise the event of asking *jiujiu* for a book bag (*tao shubao*) when her daughter was 5 years old. She made 120 dried rice cakes (*gaobing*), with help

from one of each her neighbours and fellow villagers. She took her daughter and cakes with her to visit the girl's *jiujiu*. They had a nice meal with *jiujiu*'s family. *Jiujiu*'s wife then distributed the cakes to her relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers. Qiu and her daughter went back home with some *zongzi* (a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves) given by *jiujiu*'s family.

A few days before the school started the girl's *jiujiu*'s wife (*jiuma*), representing the girl's *jiujiu*, visited the Qiu family. She brought the girl many things, a book bag, a stationery box with a pen, pencils, a ruler, a pencil sharpener, erasers, notebooks, an ink-slab, a paintbrush, a calculator, a cloth, a pair of trousers, an umbrella, rain boots, etc. Qiu told me that the symbolic meaning of the umbrella and rain boots is for *feng-yu wu zu* (literally, to go to school regardless of wind or rain). *Jiuma* also gave the girl some sweets. The sweets were used for an introduction to children in the school. Qiu explained to me that, on the first day of the school, children dressed in new clothes, carried a new book bag which contained stationery, notebooks and sweets, which all should be given by *jiujiu*'s family. They handed sweets to their teacher. The teacher introduced each student while distributing his or her sweets to other classmates. In the meanwhile, the child would receive sweets from others, which were also given mostly by their *jiujius*.

Another event is called asking *jiujiu* for nephew or niece balls (*tao waishengtuan*). Bao, another informant, told me that when her son was aged 7 they visited *jiujiu*'s family again. They bought gifts of a bag of tea, smoked green soya bean, sesame seed, and a basket of dried rice cake, etc. The above gifts were mainly used as a tea party for *jiujiu*'s relatives or friends who were involved in making rice balls for the nephew and niece (*waishengtuan*). They had a nice meal in *jiujiu*'s family. Then *jiuma* distributed the cakes to her relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers. *Jiujiu* gave him a red envelope which contained 100 *yuan* before Bao's son left *jiujiu*'s family.

A few days later the boy's *jiujiu* carried two loads of rice balls for the nephew and niece with a shoulder pole to visit the boy's family. The rice balls were made of 100 *jin* of rice powder. They were both white and green in colours, with sweet and

savoury fillings. The white rice ball had fillings of mashed red bean and the green rice ball had fillings of pork meat mixed with sliced radish. The Bao family held a feast with *tizi* to entertain *jiujiu*'s family. They then distributed the rice balls to their relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers. The boy then brought lots of rice balls to school, distributing to his classmates one of each. He would also receive others' rice balls earlier or later.

The main purpose of the two events about starting school is to help children make friendly relationships in school. Bao told me that villagers believed sharing sweets and rice balls are generally seen as a good way for children to get on with each other, just as having meals is a good way for adults. Her son's class had 46 children. The flowing of sweets and rice balls among children also provided a basic foundation for them to give and share things. This can be seen as an extension of flowing rice cakes among *jiujiu*'s relations. I asked many people why *jiujiu* is so important for the events. Qiu's answer related to knitting *lishang-wanglai* networks. It is to say that *jiujiu*'s family normally lived in a different village nearby and the relationship between a child's family and *jiujiu*'s family increased opportunities for a child to make school friends who might come from *jiujiu*'s village. This could explain why on these two occasions the child's *jiujiu*'s family distributed rice cakes to its relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers.

Celebration of the sixteenth birthday and seeing-off ceremonies

The sixteenth birthday (*shiliusui baitai*) starts from a child passing the 15th birthday. Peng's mother told me that her family's close non-agnate kin visited her son and gave him gifts, such as a watch, a bicycle, clothes, shoes, etc. earlier or later. The way in which they brought gifts to see Peng was similar to how they first visited the child when he was 2 to 4 years old (*kantouke*). They entertained them with a feast of 12 dishes without *tizi* when they visited the boy.

On the 20th April, the day before the birthday, I saw five women making different rice balls (*atai tuanzi* and *atai yuanzi*). They were Peng's grandmother and her friends and neighbours. In contrast to the one month old and one year old birthdays, on the sixteenth birthday peach-shaped birthday cakes were made (*shoutao*) which symbolised a long life for the boy. On the morning of the 21st

Peng's mother was setting altar tables. She joined two tables together. At the north end of the table there were two paper inscriptions, side by side. One was *ataimo* and the other was *nannu xingan* (the pronunciation of *xingan* is similar to the heart and liver goddess but it was a mixture of a god and a goddess). There were six small bowls and three handleless wine cups in front of them. They were for double cups of tea (sweet and savoury) and cups of wine. Two candles were in front of the cups. There were 12 big plates of offerings laid on the table. One was a big live mandarin fish, one was a bar of pork, and one was a whole raw chicken. There were three plates of different kinds of rice balls, three plates of peach-shaped birthday cake with fillings, and three plates of fruit (bananas, apples, and orange). There was a table which extended from north to south. On the extended table three *jiujiu*'s families' gifts were presented. Each set of gifts was held in two big bamboo steamers wrapped with red cloth. They were 90 square shaped dried rice cakes with toppings (*fanggao*), fruit, and firecrackers, fireworks, and a red envelope with 100 *yuan*. The day before the birthday Peng's family already received one upper part of pork (*tizi*) and 400 *yuan* for clothes from each *jiujiu*.

Peng's grandmother put a small wooden bench facing the altar tables. Peng made a bow with bended knees with closed palms in front of the chest to the paper inscriptions of *ataimo* and *nannu xingan*. Peng then served a cup of wine to one of each. After all his cousins finished making bows Peng made another bow to the paper inscriptions. Then Peng's grandmother sent them off by burning the paper inscriptions. While Peng's mother rearranged the tables Peng's father lit two strings of firecrackers and eight fireworks. Peng's mother then set the mandarin fish free.

The standard of the feast of the 16th day birthday was one level higher than the earlier one due to an upper part of pork (*tizi*) being involved when individual non-agnate kin came to see Peng with their gifts after he was reached the age of 15. Apart from *tizi* there were whole chicken, ricefield eels, red eggs, bean cut, and vegetables, etc. The firecrackers were also lit during the feast. 5 close non-agnate kin (including three *jiujiu*'s families, one aunt's family, and one quasi mother's family), and 3 agnate kin attended the feast, including Peng's grand aunt's family (father's father's sister). After the feast all the guests took their share of returning

gifts home. Peng's grandfather then distributed race balls (*atai yuanzi*) to neighbours and fellow villagers. During the 16th birthday Peng received a total amount of 300 *yuan* of gifts and 1,500 *yuan* gift money from three *jiujiu*, 200 *yuan* gifts from each of Peng's aunt (mother's sister)'s family and his quasi mother's family, and 50 *yuan* from Peng's grant aunt, as an old generation relative, which was her share. The feast cost 1,000 *yuan* and the rest of the expenditure amounted to 200 *yuan*. Obviously this was the first time Peng received considerable financial support from his relatives.

A few days later I was told that Peng's family held another little birthday party for him and invited all his little friends and classmates, a total of 9 children²². They came to the party with some gifts. In this case, an informant told me that, the "little friends" had a narrow meaning which indicated little friends who had grown up together. When children were school students' age villagers distinguish classmates from little friends. When the children get married the term of "little friends" would be used to cover all kinds of their friends. Children normally started to make other kinds of friends from 16 years old onwards.

After the 16th birthday children are expected to complete their middle school education. They would go to high schools or secondary specialised schools or start work in enterprises or business. This would be a first separation from existing little friends or little sisters and there would be opportunities of making new friends. Three years later they would either go to universities, find other jobs, or join the army, etc. This would be the second such life experience. Thus their little friends' networks could be increased from little friends from the same village, to classmates, to work colleagues, army comrades, etc. Based on our sampled households in a wedding banquet there are 22.46 little friends and 8 old friends on average per household²³.

However, there is a kind of seeing-off ceremony (*huansonghui*) for children who go to secondary specialised schools, universities, or serve the Army outside of the township. All close agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin, little friends and classmates would be invited for the seeing-off ceremony. They should bring gift money (*lijin*) varying in amount from 50 to 100 *yuan* each. There was a difference between a

person joining the Army and others because the former was obligation and the latter was voluntary. So the village collective is involved in this case. An informant told me that her son received about 2,400 *yuan* gift money from a seeing-off ceremony of going to the Army. He also received 1,000 *yuan* in a red envelope and 400 *yuan* gifts, e.g. suitcase and watch, etc. from the village collective. This was the first time he received a considerable financial support independently from the village, his friends and collective among the gift money givers.

The above two events from sixteen years old onwards mark a transition of a person from a child to an adult. The 16th birthday party is a review of relations for a young person. Take Peng's case for example. All the relatives including old generation relatives, friends including little friends in the village and close classmates, even the goddess (*ataimo*) and her companion (*nannu xingan*) had to be invited. Meanwhile, the neighbours, fellow villagers of both Peng's family and his *jiujiu*'s families' are considered by the giving of rice balls. Moreover, a new kind of relationship is involved in a person's life of the person's if he has to serve the Army. This new relationship was the village collective, even the Township Civil Affair Bureau. Thus a basic *lishang-wanglai* network of a person is more or less knitted.

5.6. Life cycle events -- establishment of marriage relationships

Marriage relationships are very complicated relationships. They can be horizontal relationships between the fiancée/bride and fiancé/groom and their parents. They can be horizontal relationships between the two families, as well as their relatives and relations. The period of establishing a marriage relationship between the fiancée/bride and fiancé/groom and their relations takes about five years. This section will demonstrate *lishang-wanglai* in the following ways: pre-wedding *wanglai* between the fiancée's and the fiancé's families, pre-wedding *wanglai* between the fiancée's family and its relations, wedding ceremony, post-wedding *wanglai* between the bride's natal family and the groom's family and post-wedding *wanglai* between the new couple's family and its relations.

Pre-wedding *wanglai* between the fiancée's and the fiancé's families

In 1996 pre-wedding *wanglai* between the fiancée's and the fiancé's families mainly included two betrothal rites. One is called the small betrothal rite (*xiaoding*). Here the Chinese character *xiao* means small and *ding* is an abbreviation of *ding hun* (betrothal rite or engagement). Another is called the large betrothal rite (*dading*) which means a formal engagement. There are different ways of addressing and arranging betrothal rites for a boy/fiancé's family and a girl/fiancée's family.

Small betrothal rite (xiaoding)

For a boy's family the small betrothal rite includes *taotiezi* and *dan xiaopan*. The purpose of the event *taotiezi* is to ask a girl's family for a red paper on which eight characters defining the year, month, date, and hours of the birth are written. A red paper (*tiezi*) from the girl's family or red envelopes (*hongfengtong*) with bridewealth and gift money from a boy's family normally are placed on a container like plate or tray, so called *dan xiaopan* (*pan* short for *panzi*, namely, plate or tray). For a girl's family the small betrothal rite includes *chutiezi* and *shou xiaopan*, which means to provide a red paper and to receive the bridewealth.

On 16th April 1996 I attended a small betrothal rite in Yao family. I saw two women, walking matchmakers (*xingmei*), who carried gifts arrive at 1:30 pm. They presented a boy's family's gifts and gift money on a table. They included three parts: *li*, *wu*, and *liwu*. *Li* is *li* of *liwu* (gift) which relates to gift money/bridewealth for the fiancée's family and its close relatives' families. The gift money was itemised in different red envelopes. They were 3,066 *yuan* for the fiancée's family as bridewealth; 488 *yuan* should be spend on small gifts for more than twenty of the relatives; 40 *yuan* for each for three matchmakers. Apart from two walking matchmakers (*xingmei*) there was a sitting matchmaker (*zuomei*). The sitting matchmaker should be the girl's mother's brother and wife or father's sister's wife and she or he does not need to appear at the occasion of asking for a red paper or small betrothal rite.

Wu is *wu* of *liwu* (gift) and / or *wuzhi* (materials), or *lidan* (gift list) in Xiajia's case (Yan 1996:55). It listed what the fiancé's family proposed for the dowry, one of each wedding rings, watches, bicycles, and woollen sweaters for the future bride and groom. Some families would put real gifts (*liwu*), i.e. a pair of gold rings and watches, or red envelopes with a certain amount of money for rings, watches and bicycles, in a little box (*wushihe*) which means to keep the arrangement safe without something going wrong.

The *liwu* (gifts) are called additional gifts (*fuli*). They were 120 small soft crunchy rice cakes (*songgao*) with Chinese characters on the tops of gold, jade, flower, and grass, etc.; two boxes of knitting wool with one red and one yellow of each, two balls of bright red knitting wool, a big box of sweets (5kg), a bag of crunchy candies (*sutang*), a bag of biscuits, two washing towels with red and green strips, and a red and a green string. The crunchy candies were for the elderly and the biscuits were for the children of the Yao family.

Apart from the girl's parents there was an old man, as a companion, who was one of the Yao family's agnatic kin and understood local customs. After they checked everything Mr and Mrs Yao gave the red paper with eight characters of their daughter to the two walking matchmakers. The girl's eight characters are "kuichou eryue chuqi wushi" which means the girl was born at 9:00 am the 7th day of the second lunar month, 1973.

The Yao family then held a tea party for the matchmakers, accompanied by a few of its agnatic kin. Meanwhile the Yao family asked the two matchmakers to bring their return gifts to the boy's family together with the red paper. The return gifts were prepared by Mrs Yao. She left 20 small soft crunchy rice cakes (*songgao*) brought from the boy's family on the bottom of the basket, and filled it with a kind of rice cakes which looked slightly different on top. It is called *gao jia gao* which means the two families joined together would raise their living standard from a certain level. She also left one third of the sweets for the returning gifts. She then added 20 *yuan* each to three red envelopes, making a total of 60 *yuan* each, for the matchmakers. She gave the two walking matchmakers one of each of the red envelopes with 60 *yuan* in each and saw them off.

Mr and Mrs Yao then held an evening feast with the upper part of a pig's leg for celebration. They invited close relatives for it. They were 3 families of agnatic kin and 7 families of non-agnatic kin, including the sitting matchmaker. The non-agnatic kin brought gifts like sweets and cakes (about 16 *yuan* of each) for the feast. Gifts were not requested from the agnatic kin for they were helpers for the feast. After the feast the guests brought their share of gifts back home.

Afterwards Mr and Mrs Yao distributed the rice cakes and sweets to a broader list of the family's agnatic and non-agnatic kin, Mr Yao's friends, and the neighbours, but did not yet to fellow villagers. A broader list of agnatic kin included families sharing the same surname and living in the same group with the family (*tongxing*), and non-agnatic kin included families in older generation (*laoqin*), i.e. Mr and Mrs Yao's parents' parents' sisters or brothers, etc. The fiancée distributed them to her own friends, namely, little sisters.

Let's go back to the fiancé's family. As a welcome rite the family set off a string of small firecrackers as soon as the matchmakers appeared. After the matchmakers handed the red paper to the fiancé's parents they placed it on the stove by the kitchen god²⁴. On top of it they put two rice cakes to keep the red paper safely. It should stay there for one year before being moved to a suitcase where the family's treasures were stored. During this period nobody is allowed to mention the red paper at all (*xiukou*) in order to avoid anything going wrong in the arrangement. Some families also worship the kitchen god, asking him to guard the red paper.

They then set up a feast for celebration of the small betrothal rite. The fiancé's family invited the matchmakers and close relatives for a lunchtime feast. Afterwards they also delivered rice cakes and sweets to the broader list of relatives, neighbours, and both the fiancé' father and her own friends. The details were more or less the same as for the Yao family.

Large betrothal rite (dading)

The large betrothal rite (*dading*) is a formal betrothal rite or engagement. So this occasion normally should happen at lucky dates, i.e. lunar New Year period, May

Day holiday, or the National Day. Again, there are different events for both fiancé and fiancée's families.

For the fiancé's family the large betrothal rite is also called *taorizi* and *dan dapan*. In order to fit the marriage relationship (*dingqin*) into the event a date for the wedding (*dingrizi*) should be booked, the "deposit (*dingjin*)" that large amount of bridewealth should be delivered to the fiancée's family, so called *duan dapan*. For the fiancée's family the large betrothal rite is also called *churizi* and *shou dapan* which means to give the date of wedding and receive the bridewealth.

There was no a large betrothal rite when I was there. I collected data from a few families about the event. The Xu family held the large betrothal rite on the 2nd May 1995. For the Xu family this event was called *shou panzi* (accept a plate or tray with formal bridewealth). After the two matchmakers arrived Mr and Mrs Xu's brother checked details of the bridewealth.

Again, the bridewealth were divided into three parts: *li*, *wu*, and *liwu*. *Li* included many itemised red envelopes: 6,660 *yuan* for the fiancée's family, 1,880 *yuan* was for more than twenty of the relatives, for example, *jiujiu* (mother's brothers), *guma* (father's sisters), *yima* (mother's sisters), *guoniang* (quasi-mothers), *jiuli* (bothers), *bogong* (father's older brothers), *shugong* (father's younger brothers), *waitai* (mother's mother), *zengtai* (father's father), etc. wrapped separately. Each of them contained gift money varying from 80 to 120 *yuan*, and 60 *yuan* each for three matchmakers. The above list should be provided by the fiancée's family. *Wu* included gifts and a gift list. The gifts were especially for engagement, i.e. a pair of golden rings and watches, or equivalent amount of money in red envelopes in the safe box (*wushihe*) if a fiancé's family did not sent to the fiancée's family on the small betrothal rite. The gift list listed what the fiancé's family proposed for the future bride's dowry. They were jewels including a golden necklace, a golden bracelet, golden earrings; electrical home appliances including a sewing machine, a colour TV, a video player, a refrigerator, a washing machine, a standard fan, a bicycle; beddings and cloths, etc. *Liwu* (gifts), the additional gifts, were a basket of rice cakes, two cartons of cigarettes, and two boxes of sweets (5kg of each), four *jin* (500gm) of silk, four *jin* of knitting wool, and a woollen sweater.

After they accepted them the matchmakers, the Xu family and its relatives had a lunchtime feast for celebration of the engagement. To this feast a broader list of the Xu family's agnatic and non-agnatic kin were invited. Those people would all be invited, again, for the seeing-off ceremony. The non-agnatic kin brought gifts worth about 30 *yuan* to attend the ceremony, whereas agnatic kin brought 10 *yuan* of gifts because they were also helpers for the ceremony. After the feast the guests brought back their share of the gift money and return gifts of rice cakes and sweets with them.

At the same time Mr Xu added 30 *yuan* to each red bag, making a total of 90 *yuan* each, for the matchmakers for taking away the wedding date and returning gifts to the fiancé's family. For this case the Xu family only returned half of the sweets because the proportion of the returning gift was based on the quantity from a fiancé's family. Again, Mrs Xu sorted out the returning rice cakes with the principle of *gao jia gao*, that to join two families together would raise their living standard on top of a certain level.

For the fiancé's family, it invited two matchmakers for a small tea party in the morning and sent them off to the fiancée's family. As soon as the matchmakers came back from the fiancée's family, the fiancé's family set off a string of small firecrackers to welcome them, followed by a ceremony feast. Instead of a lunchtime feast in the small betrothal rite this is a supper feast because the matchmakers had lunchtime feast with the fiancée's family. This high standard feast involved an upper part pig leg, as well as 18 different dishes for each table. They invited a broader list of the family's agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin for the feast. As in the small betrothal rite, the agnatic kin brought a small portion of gifts for the feast and took their share of housework, i.e. kitchen assistants, setting up tables, entertaining guests, etc. The non-agnatic kin came with gifts, i.e. apples, pears, peaches, etc., an amount of 30 *yuan* each. After the feast all the guests brought their share of returning gifts back home.

After the large betrothal rite both the fiancée and fiancé's families distributed the rice cakes and sweets to the fiancée or fiancé's fathers' friends, and fiancée or fiancé's friends. The fiancée herself or fiancé himself distributed a bag of crunchy

candy (*gaotang*) to each of her “little sisters” or his “little friends” and invited them to the wedding. If their friends worked outside the township they should send them invitations. They should also remind them when near to the date of the seeing-off or wedding ceremonies. The cakes and sweets also were distributed to neighbours and fellow villagers who would be involved in post-wedding tea parties.

The significance of the engagement for the relationship between the fiancé and fiancée are as follows. (a) To involve all the possible relations of their families for moral restraint. If either the fiancé or fiancée broke off the engagement (*tuiqin*) they and their families would lose great face (*diuren*) in front of their relations. Here the villagers used the character *ren* (human being) rather than *lian* or *mianzi* (face) because this matter is too serious to upset their whole family. (b) To subside the tumult with the bridewealth financially. According to local custom if the fiancée breaks off the engagement her family together with her relatives should return all of the red envelopes with the bridewealth, plus 10 per cent extra. If the fiancé breaks off the engagement his family would lose all the deposit which they paid for twice in advance, namely, the gifts and money in small and large betrothals. On top of this his family should bring apology gifts to the fiancée’s family. (c) If everything went well those relations would be part of resources in establishing a marriage relationship between the bride’s and the groom’s families as Freedman (1967) noticed, rather than only for the “new family (Fei 1939)” or the “conjugal couple (Yan 1997, 2001)”. The rest of sections will show details of how the relationship is established.

Pre-wedding *wanglai* between the fiancée’s family and its relations

After the large betrothal rite the wedding date is fixed. All the people related to the fiancée and her family should make their arrangements for seeing-off the fiancée. Different kind of relations expressed themselves in different ways. They can be to give her gifts (dowry gifts), gift money, invite her for seeing-off tea parties and feasts, etc.

Dowry gifts and gift money

I found that dowry gifts are part of the bride's dowry which comes from her family's agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin, and her own friends. I checked with some villagers. It appeared to be no problem that relatives and little friends always gave marriage gifts. Tan's mother, a 76 year old woman, told me when she was young her "little sisters" gave each other gifts when they got married, but the overall quantity was not so large. Women in the village always have their own private savings (*sifangqian*). Fei noticed this "Theoretically, according to the ideal system, other members, whenever they get money from other sources, must hand it to the head; and when they need things must ask the head to buy them. It is a very centralised economy. But in practice the earner usually reserves the whole or a part of his or her earnings. For instance, a girl who works in the factory usually gives her wage, not to her grandfather, but to her mother to save for her own future use" (1939: 62).

According to the local custom, Xu told me, nowadays these kind of gifts normally account for nearly half of the dowry. For example, the reference rate in 1996 is that if a fiancé's family gave 10,000 *yuan* of bridewealth to the fiancée's family, on the wedding day, the groom's welcome bride's team should take 20,000 *yuan* dowry together with her to the groom's family. In other words, among the 20,000 *yuan* dowry about 10,000 *yuan* dowry gifts should come from the bride family's agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin, and her own friends. Mr Yao told me that her family received dowry gifts of about 10,800 *yuan* which came from 5 families of agnatic kin, 16 families of non-agnatic kin, and her daughter's 32 friends. I worked out immediately that on average each family or person spent an amount of 212 *yuan* on the gifts.

However, this was not what the villagers would have calculated. Tan told me that according to the local custom there were three points to be noticed. (a) The total sum of 10,800 *yuan* including 2,000 *yuan* itemised small red envelopes which came from the fiancé's family on the large betrothal rite. The receivers should add 50 per cent on top of whatever they received for their gifts to the bride one month before the wedding. This means if they received 100 *yuan* they should spend 150

yuan on the dowry gifts. Therefore 3,000 *yuan* of the total sum should be counted as a kind of retuning gifts to the groom's family. (b) On top of that all the receivers should also give their share of gifts to the bride, which varies from 50 up to 500 *yuan*. The quantity of gifts is dependent on the closeness between the givers and the fiancée's family. However, there is a further division between agnatic and non-agnatic kin. The fiancée family's agnatic kin are normally required to send gifts from 50 to 80 *yuan* because they should also hold a seeing-off feast for the fiancée (see "Seeing-off feasts"). In this case the dowry gifts from 5 families of agnatic kin were about 350 *yuan*. In contrast, the 16 families of non-agnatic kin sent 4,450 *yuan* of dowry gifts. The reason non-agnatic kin provided a larger amount of gifts is because the numbers of families were three times greater than agnatic kin and they were not required to hold a seeing-off feast for the fiancée. (c) The fiancée's 30 friends gave her about 3,000 *yuan* gifts, on average 100 *yuan* each. Apart from the dowry gifts the fiancée's friends also should give her gift money wrapped in red paper (*hongbao*) on her seeing-off ceremony. For example, Yao had 32 "little sisters" who were the bride's childhood friends, school classmates, and work colleagues of a village enterprise. About half of them had already married and lived in different villages. The bride's list shows she received 4,600 *yuan* from them. As her friends, apart from gifts and gift money, they also were companions of the bride to the groom's family on the wedding day.

The significance of the gifts is as follows. (a) It is a way for the bride to remember the above relations. These gifts were called objects to be accompanied alive with the fiancée (*peijia*). The way in which villagers used *peijia* is similar to the word of *peizang* (objects to be buried alive with the dead). As Martin (1998) noticed, many researchers (Blake 1978, Liu 1936, and Watson 1981) have shown in south China, from women's point of view, marriage was associated with death, dirt, darkness, confusion, cold, poverty, meanness and sterility, rather than life, purity, light, order, heat, prosperity, plentitude, and fertility (169-171). I have no intention to make a farfetched comparison. Mr Zhou did tell me that marriage for her meant losing an old life and gaining a new life. According to local custom, after a fiancée married out from her natal family she has no more dealing with most of her relations except a few very close families, i.e. her *jiujiu* and her parents' sisters.

She made a list of which gift was given by each family or friend and whenever she used them they would remind her of the givers. This is how she remembered her old relations.

(b) The gifts act as a kind of financial support. As I have shown in 3.1 of the growing up period a person has been involved in his family's *lishang-wanglai* networks since he or she was born. In other words, his or her families knitted the *lishang-wanglai* networks for him and her when they were very young and they carried on knitting the networks themselves as they got older. This process of knitting networks is just like fattening pigs. A girl is expected to receive the big pig from her natal family's relations and her own friends when she marries out from her natal family. Then the process of fattening the first pig has been completed. After she got married she would be involved in fattening another pig with her husband and his family. For a boy, if he left the village for the Army he would receive such a small pig as I have shown in 3.1.1.7. When he takes a wife into his family he also receives a pig via his wife. After he got married he would fatten another pig with his wife.

Seeing-off tea parties and seeing-off feasts

Just as actors and actresses come out in reverse order of importance when responding to curtain calls at the end of a show, the same applies to the seeing-off a fiancée in the village where she has grown up. I did not attend any of these events because my informants told me that they did not bother to invite me to them because they happened too often and were too small to be noticed.

According to my fieldwork notes, the seeing-off tea parties were held by neighbours and fellow villagers' families in a fiancée family's group. Mr Rao told me that there were 30 households in his group. From a geographical way of counting 7 families were his family's neighbours including 3 families of agnatic kin, 22 families can be called fellow villagers (*tong xiaoze de renjia*) including 2 agnatic kin. This means the 5 close families of agnatic kin were not necessarily close in location. Among the 29 households 10 families' surnames were the same as his family. So there is another category of "*tongxing de renjia*" which means

they share the same surname and lived in the same group. Among the 10 families there were 5 agnatic kin, 2 neighbours, and the rest of them were sometimes categorized as agnatic kin, sometimes as fellow villagers. For example, in the ceremonies of weddings, funerals, or house construction they were invited as agnatic kin; in other events from births to betrothals they were counted as fellow villagers. In the occasion of seeing-off or a wedding ceremony, according to local customs, the same surname families were only required to give gift money but did not need to give gifts before that, and were required to provide a tea party before or after the wedding, which is the same as other neighbours and fellow villagers.

Mrs Zhou told me that two months before the wedding day she and her mother were invited to tea parties in turn by her family's neighbours, same surnames, and fellow villagers. They did not need to bring any gift for it because they had given rice cakes and sweets after her betrothal rites. Each family provided different snacks for the tea party, i.e. sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, sweets, candied fruits, etc. According the local custom, some families have double teas of sweets and savouries if the time is close to a lunar New Year. If the time is close to the fourth lunar month then some families would make the savoury tea with newly produced tea.

The seeing-off feasts held by a fiancée's family's close agnatic kin are called *chaiguroujiu* (similar to *liniangrou* in a Northwest Chinese village, Stafford, 2000a) in which *chai* is for separate, *gurou* for flesh and bone, and *jiu* means feast. Some people said it was called *cuiguroujiu* in which *cui* means to hurry (literally to accelerate the ripening of the marriage). This event, from the agnatic families' point of view, is a formal way of ending their relationship with the fiancée. So this kind of feast must have an upper part of pig leg. The feasts normally started two months before the wedding. All the agnatic families should take turns to invite the fiancée accompanied by her mother to the seeing-off feast. The feast itself costs about 150 to 200 *yuan*. Each family would also give the fiancée 20 *yuan* wrapped in a small piece of red paper (*hongbao*, red bag).

There is also a kind of seeing-off feast held by non-agnatic kin. Mr Rao said her natal family had 16 families of non-agnatic kin. Among them 6 families were

distant non-agnatic kin who only attended her seeing-off ceremony with gift money, and 10 families on the list for lunar New Year's feast attended her betrothal rites, gave her dowry gifts, and gift money on seeing-off ceremony. Within the 10 families 4 of them were even closer. They were her mother's brother and sister, her father's sister, and her quasi mother's families. These 4 closer non-agnatic kin also held feasts for her before she got married. The reason they invited her for such feast is because they would be taken away with her (*daizou de qinqi*) after she married out from her natal family. For example, they were part of the team of the before and after birth events (3.1.1.1.) and would also be part of the distant non-agnatic kin of Mr Rao's son's future wedding feast. Among the 4 close non-agnatic kin Mr Rao's *jiujiu* (mother's brother) was the closest. We will see the differences in the next section.

Seeing-off ceremony (chujia)

The seeing-off ceremony is called *chujia* in the village. Here the Chinese character *chu* of *chujia*, *chutiezi*, *churizi*, or *chufenzi* is the same word which means to give, i.e. give a red paper with a girl's eight characters, give the date of the wedding, give a share of gift money, and give the daughter to her new family. This ceremony, mixed with part of the wedding ceremony because it includes a party sent by the groom's family to meet the bride at the bride's home. It is called *yingqin* before the bride was escorted to the groom's home for the wedding. In 1996 I attended two such ceremonies on 23rd February in Yao family and 1st May in Zhou family. My descriptions in this section are mainly based on these ceremonies.

On the day before the seeing-off ceremony the bride's mother worshipped ancestors (*qingshangzu*), which is different from *baishangzu* during festivals. Here *shangzu* are ancestors, *qing* means invite or welcome, because this was the way in which the family invited its ancestors to join the family ceremony. The background of the central living room was decorated as a ceremony hall (*zhongtang*). In the middle of the wall there was a big painting of the god of longevity (*shouxing*) with a boy and a girl, and a pair of antithetical couplets on each side of the picture. A big red paper-cut of double happiness (*shuangxi*) was on each side of the back

wall. Under the picture stood a big sideboard against the back wall. On top of the sideboard there were two big red wooden bathtubs full of special long rice cakes (*dagao*), each wrapped with red paper. In between them there were a set of big candlesticks.

Mr Yao, the bride's mother, set up the altar table in front of the sideboard with 12 big dishes with different food in the middle of the table and lots of handleless wine cubs with Shaoxing wine, rice bowls, and chopsticks around it. She moved the set of big candlesticks in front of the table and put candles on. She knelt on a big mat and bowed to the ancestors with both hands in front of her chest. Then she burned some papers. For the mother this was the way in which the family reported to its ancestors that a member of the family was going to leave. For the bride, this was a seeing-off ritual to her ancestors and at the same time she believed that she would get blessings from them.

After a ritual/feast with the ancestors, on the seeing-off ceremony of the wedding day, there were three feasts with the family's relations. The breakfast feast is the main feast (*zhengjiu*), which must involve the upper part of pig's leg. In the Yao family the bride's family invited a full list of the family relations and the bride's "little sisters" / friends for the feast. They came with small red bags (*hongbao*) of gift money. There were about 164 guests. Among them 16 agnatic kin, 76 non-agnatic kin, 40 friends of the bride's father, and 32 of the bride's friends. This was a way for the bride's parents to express their feelings by holding as grand as possible feast and organizing as many as possible of their relations to share the special moment. It was also a special occasion for those attending to express themselves to the bride by bringing small red bags.

After the breakfast the bride's parents and helpers set up tables and chairs for the next part of the ceremony. They put two joined dining tables from north to south in front of the sideboard. On the table there were eight big plates covered with different snacks, i.e. sweets, pistachios, peanuts, sunflower seeds, watermelon seeds, candied fruits, etc. Ten tea bowls were along the edge of the table. Two main chairs faced south and four chairs were on each side of the big table.

Around 10:30 am the groom's team arrived by two decorated boats. People set off big firecrackers from both the bride's family and the groom's boats. The groom's oldest agnatic kin (*laozhangbei*), guided by the male match-makers and the groom's friends, carried silver plates with itemised gift money wrapped in red envelopes (*hongfengtong*) to the bride's home. This plate is called *zhuangyuanpan* in which the meaning of *zhuangyuan* originally is Number One Scholar, the title conferred on the one who came first in the highest imperial examination. *Zhuangyuanpan* is the highest standard plate that the groom's family carried to the bride's family, not in size of plate or amount of money, but for its symbolic meaning.

The bride's mother lit two candles and opened the scene of checking bridewealth on the *zhuangyuanpan*. She then served them green tea with smoked soya beans. The bride's father, *jiujiu*, two male matchmakers, and some close male relatives sat around the big table. They started to check the *li* (gift money) by counting each red envelope. They were 5,880 *yuan* for the bride's family, 550 *yuan* for a chef who cooked for the seeing-off ceremony for the bride, 350 *yuan* for a tailor, 150 *yuan* for a lacquerer, 300 *yuan* for matchmakers (100 *yuan* each)²⁵, 100 *yuan* each for the chief witnesses at the wedding ceremony, who were the bride's mother brother (*jiujiu*) and the bride's father's sister's husband (*gufu*), 60 *yuan* for her *jiujiu* to wear the flower on the bride, 20 *yuan* for a person who brought news of the arrival of the groom's team (*baomen*), and a small red envelope of 10 *yuan* each for the groom's friends who helped load and unload the dowry. The *wu* (gifts) were the silver plate itself, two big flower candles, small fire crackers, two cartons of cigarettes, and two boxes of sweets (5kg each) for the fiancée's family, etc. The total gift money and gifts amounted to 8,000 *yuan*.

At the same time the groom's friends distributed sweets and cigarettes to the rest of the guests. The bride's relatives set up six imaginary fences one after the other to stop the groom's team from getting into the house (*baishan*). They got through them by giving them sweets and cigarettes.

After a discussion among the bride's father, *jiujius* and other close male relatives they agreed with the numbers of the gift money and gifts and then decided the quantity of returning gifts. The climax of the ceremony would then be started.

However, another seeing-off ceremony, for the Zhou family, did not go smoothly. I am now shifting to the Zhou family's seeing-off ceremony. The bride's *jiujiu* did not arrive in time so the bridewealth counting had to be postponed a bit. Meanwhile the bride's grandmother (father's mother) started swearing loudly because the sweet boxes had been emptied and there were still many guests waiting for their share. The groom's friends immediately went away to buy some more sweets.

After the bride's *jiujiu* arrived everything was more or less the same as in the Yao family. Let us stick with Zhou family from now onwards. After the bride's father and *jiujiu*, etc. approved the bridewealth the groom's friends were allowed to load the dowry onto the boats. During the period of loading the dowry the big and small firecrackers were set off again. At the same time there was a deafening sound of gongs, drums, and trumpets all the way through the period of loading dowry.

Before and during the loading of the dowry I conducted a full list of the dowry. They were much more complicated than they were in the 1930's, which only consisted of furniture, ornaments, clothes, and sometimes a sum of money (Fei, 1939:68). In this case, the dowry included a colour TV, a video player, a standard fan, an electric heater, a pair of chairs, a pair of sofas, a tea table, a pair of flower vases, a desk, a bookcase, a pair of wooden chest boxes, a pair of leather suitcases, 18 duvets with covers, 8 sheets, 8 pillows, a pair of towelling coverlets, an iron, an ironing board, two dozen clothes hangers, a pair of bronze foot warmers, a big doll, a big soft toy dog, a set of 5 wooden boxes, two pairs of wooden tubs full of peanuts, broad beans, sweets, a pair of basin bowls, a pair of spittoons, a chamber pot, a hair drier, half a dozen bottles of shampoo, half a dozen bottles of hair mousse, a refrigerator, washing machine, a pair of gas cookers, four dining chairs, a pair of wooden buckets (*tangtong*) full of peanuts and broad beans, an electric kettle, a bucket of dried fruit, a pair of woollen blankets, a pair of plastic containers, a pair of measuring cups (*shuiyao*), a pair of baskets (*shazhao*), 8

thermos bottles, a big saucepan, 20 bowls, 8 cups, an electric rice cooker, a set of tea spoons, a 5 piece stainless steel cookware set, a 5 pieces non-stick cookware set, and a bicycle.

Apart from the above dowry the bride's *jiujiu* also brought two big red wooden bathtubs full of special long rice cakes (*dagao*) each wrapped with red paper which were displayed on top of the sideboard, two big red boxes full of rice, 100 small square shaped rice cakes, ten big fire crackers, two big flower candles²⁶, and one double mosquito net. As I mentioned at the end of last section, as the closest non-agnatic kin, during the establishing of a marriage relationship the bride's *jiujiu*'s family gave her gifts and gifts money five times. The last time they gave the above gifts to the bride was on the day before the wedding day and the gifts would also be taken away with the bride together with the rest of the dowry.

During the period of loading the dowry some of the groom's friends were busy getting ready for the next climax. They lay down straw mats on the ground in front of the big table and in the middle of the hall. Then they put a chair by the north end of the mat facing south and put a duvet (*zhuangyanbei*) on top of it. In front of the chair they placed a bronze foot warmer with warm stove-ashes.

The bride's mother changed two new candles and lit them. Then the bride, accompanied by her "little sisters", walked down the stairs. Her father carried her from the end of the stairs onto the chair. Her mother put a small piece of glutinous rice cake (*songgao*) into her mouth. This cake together with a large plate of such cakes was brought by the bride's *jiujiu* and would be taken away with the dowry to the groom's family. Her *jiujiu* then put on a flower for her head. If the groom came he would put the wedding ring on her finger and the bride's mother should put a wedding ring on his finger. He would receive red bags with gift money from the bride's parents one of each. In this case, the groom followed a traditional way and gave her the wedding ring in advance so he did not come to the bride's home. Then firecrackers, drums, gong, trumpet, went off again. The bride walked to the boat accompanied by her 32 "little sisters". The bride's mother was weeping after she left.

After the bride and groom's teams left the bride's family held lunchtime and supper feasts without the upper part of a pig's leg. Most guests stayed for the lunchtime feast. About half of the guests who lived in the village stayed for the supper. They believed it was important to stay as long as possible to accompany the bride's parents because they had just lost their beloved daughter.

Between the feasts the bride's *jiujiu* and *gufu* (father's sister's husband) started counting the gift money and writing down a list (*yinqingbu*) for the bride's family. Here the character of *yin* is silver meaning money, *qing* is human feelings, and *bu* is a booklet. It is more precise than "*renqingbu*" which I heard in Shandong and Gansu provinces, and "*lidan*" in Yan's Xiajia village (1996). The total sum of the *yinqingbu* was 3,145 *yuan* from all the relatives of the family and the bride's father's friends. The difference between this list and the groom's family's list is that all the "little sisters'" gift money would not be included in this list because she would make her own list for herself. The bride's list shows she received 3,150 *yuan* from her friends.

After the seeing-off feasts all the guests took their share of returning gifts, like "party bags" in England, back home. Unlike the betrothal ceremony after the seeing-off ceremony the bride's parents did not distribute any cakes or sweets to their neighbours and fellow villagers. Mrs Zhou said there is no need to do so because she lost her daughter. According to local custom such a distribution is to share gain rather than loss.

Wedding ceremony (*quqin*)

The wedding ceremony is called *quqin* in the village. Here the Chinese character *qu* is pronounced as same as *qu*, which means to collect something. The *qu* of *quqing* was designed specially for collecting a woman and is formed by the *qu* of collecting a thing plus a Chinese character *nu* for woman. *Qin* means blood or marriage relations and in this case *quqin* means to take a woman as a wife and get married. *Qu* is different from *tao* of *taotiezi* and *taorizi* which means ask or beg for something. The former is for collecting somebody after special permission and the latter is for asking permission for somebody.

I attended two wedding ceremonies on 21st and 23rd February 1996 in the Tan family and the Qiu family. The Tan family took a man into the family as a son-in-law (*zhaonuxu*) and the Qiu family took a girl, who came from outside of the province and worked in a village enterprise (*dagongmei*), into the family for a wife. Neither of them was typical enough for a description in this section. However, the presentation of the former more or less represented a standard way of wedding according to local custom, whereas the latter represented adaptation in the wedding ceremony. In order to help the reader to understand the normal style of wedding ceremony I have to choose the Tan family's case and use "groom" for the woman and "bride" for the man.

Although worshipping ancestors is a part of the wedding ceremony as is the seeing-off ceremony, the Tan family did not worship the ancestors because the "groom"'s mother was born in Wujiang County and had little knowledge about the local customs. She was introduced into the village by one of her family's relatives because her natal family was poor with four sons and four daughters including her. The "groom"'s father did not see the point of doing it because he had problems in the relationship with his own two brothers after his father passed away in 1991. In my notes Qiu's mother's description of worshipping ancestors was similar to the Yao family on the seeing-off ceremony. It also happened at the dinnertime on the day before the wedding day in the middle of the decorated central hall. Although the ritual is more or less the same as it was on the seeing-off ceremony, the meaning was different. For Qiu's mother to worship ancestors was the way to report to the family ancestors that they would bring a woman into the family to continue the family line (*xianghuo*, literally, incense and fire).

Let's return to the Tan family now for the wedding ceremony. The Tan family's central hall was also decorated with a big picture in the middle of the wall in which the main figure was the god of longevity (*shouxing*) with a boy and a girl. Different families chose different prints in different styles with different pairs of antithetical couplets on each side of the picture. This antithetical couplet said "*qianzai fugui fuguang man fuzhai, baifeng hehe fuwang ju shoutang* (the light of happiness shines on the happy family for a thousand years, the hope of happiness gathers to the family central hall with hundreds of peaceful people and plenty of everything)".

The heart-shaped bright red double happiness paper cuts were on each sides of the back wall. A big sideboard was against the back wall under the picture. A set of big candlesticks were in the middle of the sideboard. Both sides had two big red wooden bathtubs full of special long rice cakes (*dagao*) each wrapped with red paper.

There were also three feasts on the wedding day. The breakfast feast was designed for the matchmakers and the “groom”’s 22 “little friends”. The “groom”’s father sent two people to the matchmakers’ homes and accompanied them back to the “groom”’s home. They sat in the big living room next to the central hall and faced the East (*zuoxi chaodong*), which were the best seats. After the feast the “groom”’s friends went upstairs accompanied by the “groom”. The “groom” distributed sweets and snacks to them. They also helped her put the wedding dress on. At 10:00 am the welcome “bride”’s team (*yingqindui*) got ready. They were the “groom”’s father, two male matchmakers, 8 male helpers, a band of 8 children, the “groom”, and her 22 friends. The 8 male helpers would not normally be required, but they were needed in this case because the “groom” was female and her female friends would not be able to do jobs like unloading and loading the dowry. The “groom”’s father carried a big tray (*zhuangyuanpan*), which contained lots of red envelopes and some gifts. The male helpers carried a chair, a rolled up straw mat, a folded up duvet (*zhuangyuanbei*), two big bamboo trees with roots and leaves and decorated with lots of small red bows²⁷, and a bronze foot warmer with warm stove-ashes, boxes of sweets, etc. The band was formed by 8 children, boys and girls between 11 to 12 years old, who were pupils in Kaixiangong Primary School. They played a trumpet, a gong, a pair of small cymbals, and drums for the Young Pioneers at the school. They were paid 20 *yuan* each for the wedding ceremony.

Unlike the seeing-off ceremony the welcome bride team came with the boats because both the groom and bride’s families lived in the same village, but in different groups,

The Tan family’s “bride” lived in a different village so they hired two cars and two coaches as transportation for people who took part in the ceremony. They also hired a boat for carrying the dowry. As soon as the vehicles and the boat arrived at

the “bride”’s house the big firecrackers were set off from both sides. The children played the music and drums, etc. The “groom”’s father and matchmakers went into the “bride”’s house and presented the gift money and gifts to the “bride”’s parents. They sat around a big table drinking tea and eating snacks while the “bride”’s father, *jiujiu*, and father’s sister’ husband counted the gifts money. At the meanwhile, the “groom” and her friends sat in another living room around a big table eating, drinking, and chatting, same as the “bride” and his friends who were in a different living room upstairs.

The remaining steps of the ceremony were more or less the same as I have shown for the Zhou family on her seeing-off ceremony. They distributed sweets and cigarettes to guests, loaded the dowry, placed a straw-mat, a chair, a duvet, and a bronze foot warmer with warm stove-ashes, etc. After the dowry was loaded the boat left first. At the time a string of small firecrackers were set off and the band played music, etc.

When every thing was ready the “groom” held a bunch of flowers accompanied by her friends and went upstairs. She gave the flowers to the “bride” and then they held arms and walked downstairs. The “bride”’s brother carried him all the way to the chair. The reason his father did not do it because the “bride” was too heavy to him. The “groom” stood beside him. The “bride”’s mother put a ring on the “groom”’s finger and gave her a little red bag of 200 *yuan*. Then the “bride”’s female close non-agnatic kin gave her red bags in turn. The red bags contained money varying from 100 to 180 *yuan*.

The reason the close non-agnatic families gave the money to the “groom” was the way in which they responded to the “bride”’s goodbye, because he chose to not take them away with him after he married out from his natal family. This was not a special custom for this kind of marriage (*zhaonuxiu*). According to the local customs, villagers were allowed to choose whether or not to keep the natal family’s close non-agnatic kin after she or he married out from her or his natal family. Mrs Rao in 3.2.1.2 chose to take them with her, and Mrs Zhou (3.2.1.2) and the “bride” here chose not to do so. In this case, the red bags represent the close non-agnatic kin’s replies to the end of the relationship between them.

The band played again, and the firecrackers went off when the “groom”’s team set off. The “groom” and “bride” walked in front of the team followed by the “groom”’s father, matchmakers, the band, and friends from both sides. Apart from carrying the straw mat, a chair, a duvet, and a bronze foot-warmer they also carried one of the bamboo trees with them back home.

By the time they got home the dowry had just been completely unloaded and placed in its designed places perfectly. Even electrical home appliances were unpacked and connected. All the wrappings had been cleared away. The bridal chamber looked like a one bedroom flat within the house²⁸. It contained a bedroom with en suite bathroom and a separate sitting room, but no kitchen. The “groom”’s family supplied a double bed with basic beddings, bedside chests stood by two decorated sugarcanes with roots, and built in cupboards occupied one side of a wall. The rest of the things came from the dowry from the “bride”’s family. The helpers were watching the new TV in the sitting room and eating snacks from the new containers which they just brought back from the “bride”’s family.

The central hall also changed a bit. There were two big plates of food with decorations placed on the sideboard. One contained white and green rice cakes with fillings and another contained fresh made noodles. In front of the big table there were two big “flower candles (*huanzhu*)” which were specially designed for a wedding. All these were given by the “bride”’s *jiujiu* and brought back by the helpers, together with the dowry.

Outside in the courtyard two old men who were getting ready to welcome the welcome “bride”’s team. One was preparing a string of firecrackers, and another was arranging three bunches of straws like a tripod. As soon as the team appeared they set them off. The “bride” and “groom” and the team walked through them. After the “bride” and “groom” got into the central hall they sat on the main chairs facing south. The representatives of the “groom” and the “bride”’s friends sat around the table. The “groom”’s mother lit the special flower candles. They drank tea, ate snacks, and teased the new couple. For example, they asked the “groom” to light a cigarette for the “bride” and they blew it out again and again; they asked

them to drink tea without spillage with their arms tangled together; they asked them to bite one sweet without letting their lips touch; etc.

After they had enough fun the “groom”’s parents moved the flower candles to the upstairs corridor by the bridal chamber. The “groom” changed her wedding dress for a bright red woollen suit. They then started the main wedding feast. There were about 184 people formed 23 tables. During the feast the new couple proposed a toast to each table. After the feast people started to play cards, chat and watch TV.

At the same time the “groom”’s father and his brothers, the “groom”’s *jiujiu*, were counting the gift money and writing the list (*yinqingbu*). The order of the list was from the top to the bottom according to the amount of money. For example, the 4 *jiujius* varied from 420 to 400 *yuan*. After they wrote them down they did a calculation with 4 groups: 12 families of non-agnatic kin gave 2,300 *yuan*, 5 families of agnatic kin 400 *yuan*, 4 father’s friends 290 *yuan*, and 22 “groom”’s friends 2,210 *yuan*. The total sum was 5,180 *yuan*.

The “groom”’s mother got ready the “party bags”, which contained a bar of special long rice cake (*dagao*), a pack of cigarettes, sweets, etc. The “groom”’s mother also distributed two pieces of small square shaped rice cakes and sweets to the family’s neighbours and fellow villagers.

The day after the wedding day the “groom”’s father paid thank you visits to two matchmakers’ families with a red envelope of 100 *yuan* and an upper part of pig leg for each. As I mentioned in a note of 3.2.1.3, the two red envelopes of 100 *yuan* for the two walking matchmakers were empty because, according to the local custom, a groom’s father should pay a thank you visit to each of them (*xiemei*). This is how they ended a relationship over a few years period between a groom’s family and the matchmakers’. In some cases, one of each of the matchmakers was invited by a groom and bride’s families, and then both their fathers should pay thank you visits to the matchmakers separately, immediately after the wedding.

Post-wedding *wanglai* between the bride's natal family and the groom's family

After the wedding the show of establishing a marriage relationship is far from ended. Qiu's new wife told me about her story. Although her mother and younger sister were working in Shenze Township within one-hour bus distance to the village, rather than ten hours train distance from her hometown, they did not attend her wedding because, according to the local custom, the bride's natal family's members were not allowed to appear in the wedding ceremony. However, her older sister's family was invited for the wedding because she married a villager of the village two years ago. This was a compromise because fellow villagers were not on the invitation list for the wedding according the local custom. This section and the next section will show how relationships between a groom's family and a bride's family are established, and how the groom and the bride establish a relationship between their new family and the surrounding villagers.

Briefly visit a bride's natal family (huimen)

The first scene of the act is called *huimen* (briefly visit a bride's natal family), which is opposite of the *guomen* (the bride goes out of her natal family's door on the wedding day), rather than *huijia*. Here the characters of *hui* is for returning, *guo* for over or passing, *men* for gate or door, and *jia* for family or home. *Guomen* is a special term designed for a woman who got married. In theory, it means after she passed through her husband's family's gate or door she would no longer be a member of her natal family. When she came back to her natal family for a visit she passed through their gate or door, but not this did *not* mean she was a member of the family again. In other words, the married out daughter became a close relative of her natal family, and vice versa. In practice, before the bride got married when she returned to her natal family she said "*huijia* (go home)" and after she got married she would say "*hui niangjia* (go to mother's home)". This is the same everywhere for a nuclear family when either wife or husband visits their parents' families. However, the difference is that the wives in Kaixiangong village normally lived in their husbands' families, therefore, they lost their right of inheritance from their natal families by the local custom, but not by law. The way in which they gain

their natal family's property back is by following local customs throughout life cycle events. At the same time they enjoyed themselves in attending and arranging those events.

I did not attend this kind of event of *huimen*. Mr Rao told me that on the second or the third day after the wedding day the bride and groom should visit the bride's natal family (*huimen*). She and her husband brought two bottles of liquor, cigarettes, fruits, and a basket of small circle shaped rice cakes as gifts to her parents. The gifts cost about 200 *yuan*. Her parents held a feast of two tables with an upper part of pig's leg on each to entertain them. The bride's family members and male agnatic kin were invited for the feast. The feast cost 600 *yuan*, including drink and cigarettes. At the feast the new couple received 180 *yuan* gift money in little red bags: 80 *yuan* from the bride's parents and 10 *yuan* from each of the agnatic kin. At the same time they asked the male agnatic kin to bring red bags of 4 *yuan* gift money to each of agnatically related children. The meaning of the visit is to reassure the bride and her parents that their daughter would be OK after she left her natal family. The new couple also invited the bride's parents, brother(s), and male agnatic kin to visit the bride's new family. Afterwards her mother distributed the small rice cakes and sweets to her neighbours and fellow villagers.

Uniting two families by male members (zuo manyue)

The next scene is called *zuo manyue* (uniting two families). The *manyue* is the same characters of *manyue* for a baby's first month birthday but with different meaning. Here it takes another meaning of *manyue* (full moon) which means one family is a half moon and two families make a full moon. As I have mentioned at the beginning of the section, the members of a bride's natal family are not allowed to come to the groom's family on the wedding day according the local custom. This event and the following one is the way in which the two families gathered together. If the representatives of the bride's natal family paid a visit to the bride's new family and were entertained properly by the groom's members of family the relationship between these two families would be united as one big family (*manyue*).

Normally on the third or the fourth day after the wedding day the bride's father and close male agnatic kin would visit the bride's new family with gifts. I went to the Tan family and attended such an event. I saw the bride's father and five other male agnatic kin carrying gifts in big steamers with a shoulder pole come to Tan's house. They were small square shaped rice cakes (*songgao*), sugar canes, etc. which cost 150 *yuan*. The Tan family held a feast with the upper part of a pig leg accompanied by its male agnatic kin on two tables. After the feast the groom's mother distributed the rice cakes to the family's agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers.

Uniting two families by female members (shierzhao)

Although a bride's brother came with his mother for this event, the event is mainly designed to unite the female members of the two families. Shier zhao originally means that on the twelfth day after the wedding the bride's mother and brother visit the groom's family with gifts. Nowadays this event would happen on the sixth day after the wedding. Some villagers also called this event as to be new guests (*zuoxinke*) of the groom's family.

On that day Mrs Rao's mother and brother brought a big cloth bag of gifts to visit her new home. It contained a bag of tea, a bag of smoked soya beans, a bag of *daidi* (crust of cooked glutinous rice powder), sugar, and red date (jujube). Mrs Rao's mother-in-law held a feast with an upper part of pig leg because this was the bride's mother and brother's first visit. This time was her mother-in-law and female agnatic kin's turn as companions for the feast. The groom family's agnatic kin's children were also invited. Mr Rao's mother and brother also brought 5 bags of gifts, including egg cakes for old people and biscuits for children, to the Rao family's 5 agnatic kin families. At this occasion Mrs Rao's mother gave each of the children little red bags with 10 *yuan*. One child was absent and his mother took the red bag for him. The gifts and gifts money cost 200 *yuan*. After the feast the bride's mother-in-law put 10 per cent of everything back in the bride's mother's cloth bag as return gifts.

Mrs Rao told me, the meaning of this visit, perhaps, is that her natal family wanted to support her to make a friendly environment around her new home because the gifts which her mother and brother brought would be used in a tea party for the neighbours and fellow villagers later (see next section). On this occasion her brother was also introduced to the female agnatic kin as *xiaojiuzi*, another way to address the *jiujiu* who would be Mr Rao's future child's *jiujiu*. The *xiaojiuzi*'s appearance and the above gift can be seen as a kind of *renqing* investment from Mr Rao's natal family.

Post-wedding *wanglai* between the new couple's family and its relations

After the relationship between a bride's natal family and the new couple's family has been established it is the turn for the new couple to start knitting their own family's *lishang-wanglai* networks.

On a new couple's list the most important relation is the wife's natal family, which has been categorized as a new non-agnatic kin (*xinqin*) as soon as the above events (see section 3.2) were completed. At the same time the husband family's agnatic and non-agnatic kin would be slightly modified. They would remove very old generation relatives (*laoqin*) from the family's list, e.g. the husband's father's mother's mother's brother's family. For some families the wife's natal family's close non-agnatic kin would become less important non-agnatic kin of the new couple's family (*niangjia de qinqi*) if she brought any of them with her, e.g. Mr Rao in section 3.1. In the case of the "bride" in the Tan family of section 3.2, he only kept his natal family as new non-agnatic kin. In this section I will show how a new family involved in different relations at the later stage of the period of establishing a marriage relationship.

To be new guests of a bride's natal family and its relations

Here the characters of to be new guests (*zuoxinke*) are the same as the "to be guests" when a child passed his or her first birthday and became a new guest of his or her family's non-agnatic kin's families (see section 3.1.1.5). The meaning of to be new guests is different in two ways: (a) to be new guests of a bride's natal family and its relations, and (b) to be a new guest of a groom's family's relations.

For the new wife's family, in theory, after a bride married out from her natal family she would no longer be a member of her natal family. In practice, for the villagers, only after the event of the bride's mother's visit to the groom's family was the bride no longer a part of her natal family and become its new guests (*xinke*). The event of *zuoxinke* normally happened around one month after a bride got married. Some people also called this the "return to the bride's natal family after she was married for one month (*manyue hui niangjia*)". This visit made a starting point for the new couple to be the new wife's natal family's new non-agnatic kin.

Mr Zhou told me that she and her husband carried a set of steamers with a shoulder pole as their gifts. They were crunchy candy, liquor, fruits, egg cakes, biscuits, oatmeal, etc. for the new wife's parents. Other gifts, e.g. crunchy candy, egg cakes and biscuits wrapped up individually were for attending feasts held by each agnatic kin. For the event of "to be new guests" it cost about 400 *yuan* for the new couple brought gifts to all the families and gift money to the children. The cost was not so large because she did not bring any families of non-agnatic kin from her natal family with her to her married family so there was no need to spend anything on the non-agnatic kin. They stayed at Mr Zhou's natal family for about a week to attend the feasts held by the above 10 families of agnatic kin and two feasts by her natal family.

The first scene of being new guests was to attend a feast with an upper part of pig's leg at Mr Zhou's parents' home. Her natal family's agnatic kin were invited. The new couple then took turns to visit each family of agnatic kin for a feast with the prepared gifts which I mentioned in the last paragraph. This was the first and also last time the new couple was invited to their families for feasts because this was those agnatic kin's way to end the relationship with the new couple.

During the feasts each family's older generation adult gave the new couple a little red bag with 10 *yuan* and the new couple gave each of their children a little red bag of the same amount if the children were a younger generation than them. If an agnatic kin family was without older generation and younger generation, such as a newly married couple living apart from their parents, then they did not need to exchange little red bags according to the local custom. In this case the 10 families

all had an older generation and only 4 of them had a younger generation so they spent less than what they received. In some cases the gift money they gave and received can be balanced. The reason for giving little red bags in such a way is for the exercising of generation identity because the new wife through this occasion can learn related rules of preparing little red bags for different occasions. It is also a way to end the relationship between the new couple and the wife's natal family's agnatic kin with balance.

During their stay Mr Zhou visited her "little sisters" and friends who lived in the village, she even visited some friends who married and lived in different villages. This is the way in which she expressed her thanks for their support on her wedding ceremony. It is also the way to end each relationship with them.

As I have mentioned in the section on the seeing-off ceremony, brides were supposed to keep a list of gift money given by their friends. Mrs Zhou remembered *wanglai* details between herself and each of her friends. If she had given gifts and gift money for some friends in the past already, then the rice cakes and sweets meant her way of ending the relationship between them. Otherwise she would return them the same amount of gifts and gifts money when they got married. By then, in theory, she would have ended the relationship between herself and her friends from her childhood.

However, there is a difference in a friend relationship between a bride and a "bride" who was taken into his wife's family as son-in-law. Mr Tan told me that, although his son-in-law chose not to bring close non-agnatic kin into his married family, he would bring resources into the family in different ways. For example, according to the local custom, the relationship between the "bride" and his friends from his childhood should last until after the house completion ceremony of his married family (see 3.2.).

The to be new guests event in Mrs Zhou's natal family ended by another feast held by Mrs Zhou's natal family. Again, all the agnatic kin were invited, who did not need to bring any gifts for the feast this time. This feast for the members of Mrs Zhou's family represents starting a new relationship and for the agnatic kin means

saying goodbye. After the feast Mr Zhou's father accompanied the couple back to their home with a shoulder pole of rice balls with sweetened red bean paste fillings. The rice balls are called son-in-law rice balls (*nuxu tuanzi*) because this is the first time the new couple came back from the new wife's natal family as new guests. These rice balls should be distributed to the couple's agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers, and the husband's friends. This is an announcement that the new non-agnatic kin relationship between the new wife's natal family and the new couple has started *wanglai*.

However, the final ending of a relationship between married out daughters and their natal families during the period of establishing a marriage relationship is the event of *xiexia*. This means new wives should take a rest in the first summer in their natal families after they married out to their husbands' families. Mr Rao told me that she brought gifts and returned to her natal family and spent a few days there. The gifts were fruits, steamed buns, and small pancakes with fillings (*jiuniangbing*). The buns and pancakes were for her mother to distribute to her agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers. Afterwards her mother sent her back to her husband's family with some gifts. They were two feather fans, an electric fan, a double size summer sleeping mat of woven split bamboo, etc, summer clothes for both the new wife and her husband, an umbrella, mosquito net, etc. The above gifts cost about 400 *yuan* in 1996. Mr Zhou said she received more or less the same gifts from her mother's but without the mosquito net because her *jiujiu* already gave her one as additional dowry. The new wife's mother-in-law's family would entertain the bride's mother for a nice meal, costing about 100 *yuan*. This meal was without an upper part of pig leg, there were no other guests, and no return gifts for taking away. Some families would have a different arrangement. Instead of the new wife visiting her natal family she might stay at the husband's home for different reasons. Her mother would visit her married family with the above gifts.

After the summer holiday event the dealings between the newly married out daughters and their natal families would be changed gradually from their mothers to their brothers, namely, the relationship between their children and the children's *jiujiu*.

To be a new member and new guests of a groom's family's relations

After completing the events to be new guests in a wife's natal family it would be the turn, for the new couple, to become involved with the husband's family's relations. The relations included agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers. For events between a husband's family's relations and the new wife she would be a new member of the family, and for her husband family's close non-agnatic kin the new couple would be new guests.

Local custom states that the arrangements for the event of becoming a new member of the husband's family or new guests of the husband family's close non-agnatic kin can be held at different times. If the wedding was held during the lunar New Year the whole thing can happen very quickly. If the wedding was held in the National Day, the 1st October, the feasts would be delayed to the following lunar New Year period. If the wedding was held in the middle of year then the feasts could take a few months to complete. If the numbers of the new couple's agnatic and non-agnatic kin were small it would also happen quickly. One informant said she had three families of agnatic kin and seven of non-agnatic and she was married during lunar New Year period, which made her life much simpler, but less fun.

In contrast to the seeing-off feasts held by the agnatic kin of the fiancée's family before the wedding, there are welcome feasts held by the agnatic kin of the groom's family after the wedding. After a new couple completed *wanglai* with the wife's natal family and its relations they would be invited by the husband's family's agnatic kin for welcome feasts in turn. Mr Zhou told me that she and her husband brought the same gifts to her husband's agnatic kin as they brought to her natal family's agnatic kin. Although there were upper parts of pig legs involved in the feasts and the ways of little red bags flowing were more or less the same as there were in her natal family's families of agnatic kin, the meaning of the feasts was not the same because the former was for ending a relationship and the latter was for renewing a relationship. The purpose of the feasts is to welcome the wife to be a new member of the clan. This is also a way to introduce the new wife to the closeness of the families of the husband family's agnatic kin. During the feasts there were also little red bags of gift money as there were in the wife's natal

family's agnatic kin's feast. But there is a difference that the amount of gift money can help the new wife to update the list of agnatic families in a certain order based on feelings of closeness rather than closeness of blood tie or geography.

After the couple completed the circle of feasts with the husband family's agnatic kin it would be the new wife's turn to be a host. According to the local custom the new wife should only invite her mother-in-law's generation's females of her married family's agnatic kin for a feast. For example, the Qiu family invited 10 female representatives of the 10 families of agnatic kin to attend the feast. This is practice for the new wife to be a host. During the feast time the ladies would offer her all kinds of help. If she had any problem in arranging household events she was encouraged to consult them. It is also a way for the new wife to get to know more of the relationships between her new family and its agnatic kin. According to local custom the old generation females should bring little red bags for the feast. On this occasion they are free to put more or less gift money into the red bags. As I mentioned in the above paragraph the new wife can tell whoever likes her or not from the amount of gift money, rather than words.

As a new member of the family the new wife also invited female neighbours and fellow villagers for a post-wedding tea party (*kaichaguan*) to liven things up. Mrs Zhou said she entertained them with double teas, both savoury and sweet teas. The savoury teas were made of smoked soya beans and green tea. The sweet tea was made of crust of cooked glutinous rice powder (*daidi*) and sugar. The above things were brought by her mother and brother on their visit a few days after her wedding. There were also snacks of sunflower seeds, sweets, etc. During the tea party Mrs Zhou and her mother-in-law also showed them the new couple's newly decorated bridal chamber (*xinfang*).

At the same time the female neighbours and fellow villagers also invited the new wife and her mother-in-law for tea in their families. She accepted the invitations. After Mr Zhou had settled a bit in her husband's family she, accompanied and, introduced by her mother-in-law, started to visit neighbours and fellow villagers' families for a tea in turn. This was how she started *wanglai* with them.

Finally I will move onto a relationship between a new couple and the husband's family's close non-agnatic kin. Before a man got married he was a member of a family related to his family's non-agnatic kin. After he got married and took a wife into his parents' family he and his wife would gradually become representative of his parents' family. The interfamily relationship between the new couple and the rest of the family looked like the relationship between the bridal-chamber within the whole family house (sections 3.2.1.4, and 4.2.1). Therefore, for the family's non-agnatic kin the new couple, who lived within one house with their parents or siblings (in stem or extended families), were treated as a newborn nuclear family on some occasions.

For example, the new couple was invited together as new guests of the husband's family's close non-agnatic kin families in turn. These feasts were for the new couple's first visit and upper parts of pig legs must be involved. Some people explain this kind of feasts as returning feasts of the wedding feast. During the feasts the little red bags flew as well. The rule of giving little red bags is the same as what I have shown when the new couple were guests in the new wife's natal family's agnatic families, but different from feasts between the wife's married in family and its agnatic families. If the host family has an older generation member(s) he or she should give the new wife a little red bag which varies from 10, 40, to 100 *yuan*. If the host family had a younger generation member(s) the new wife should give him/her/them little red bags of an amount as above. If the members of the host family were the same as the new couple then there is no need to give a red envelope to each other. Generally, the amount of little red bags flowing between the new couple and their close non-agnatic families is greater than agnatic families of the wife's natal family's.

When the new couple attended such feasts they should bring gifts costing 40 *yuan* to each family, which included crunchy candy, fruits, egg cakes, biscuit, and a basket of small square-shaped rice cakes, etc. The reason they brought doubled gift amounts to close non-agnatic kin's families was because the small square shaped cakes were for the non-agnatic kin to distribute to their agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers. The way in which they distributed the rice cakes is similar to a child when he or she is to be a new guest in each family of close non-agnatic kin.

Those rice cakes would associate the child with his or her parents by the non-agnatic kin's agnatic kin, neighbours, and fellow villagers. This is how the new couple started to "feed pigs".

5.7. Life cycle events -- funeral ceremony and postfuneral rituals

I attended four funerals, including some postfuneral rituals, in Kaixiangong village in 1996. They were three traditional funerals and one Christian funeral (omitted here). Although they had completely different styles, they all involved social support and *lishang-wanglai* networks in different ways. I will describe them based on XQ Wang's mother's case and add variations when necessary.

On 5th March 1996 XQ Wang's mother passed away in the morning. Before she was dead her son and son-in-law carried her onto the temporary bed, which is the same as in North China (Naquin, 1988). After death she was washed and dressed in brand new clothes inside and outside by her daughter and daughter-in-law. The deceased had two sons and lived with the elder son. The younger son married out of the family as a son-in-law in the village and died in an accident a few years ago. The younger son's wife came around at the last moment and brought her share of gifts for setting up the altar table as soon as her mother-in-law had breathed her last.

The family sent a member of its agnatic kin as a messenger to announce the sad news (*baosang*). The messenger wore a strip of white cloth in a trouser pocket. He went to the houses inside and outside the village where XQ Wang's agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin and friends lived, based on the Wang family's list. At the same time the family prepared the mourning hall (*lingtang*), which was in the family living room. The corpse lay on a temporary bed and the head was to the east and feet were to the west and the body was covered by a duvet with a red silk cover. The bed stood by the end of the hall against the northern wall. By the bed there was a stool for seating the mourners. A big white curtain separated this place from the rest of the hall. In front of the curtain there were two joined tables as an altar table. On the table there were offerings, e.g. a pig head, fruit, oval shaped rice cakes with

filling (*tabing*), wonton, glutinous rice dumplings (*zongzi*), incense, candles, yellow paper, etc. In front of the altar table there was another stool.

Paying condolences to the deceased (*puxiang*)

As soon as the people got the sad news they immediately came to pay condolences to the deceased (*puxiang*). It is similar to paying one's last respects to the remains (*xiang yiti gaobie*) in urban China. I saw one woman who carried a bag wrapped with a green shawl. It contained a sheet of white cloth, some yellow paper and incense. She put the white cloth on the body of the corpse and the yellow paper under the feet. Then she sat on the stool by the bed and wailed. Other female family members joined in the wailing with her. She then removed the white cloth and yellow paper from the corpse and gave them to the daughter-in-law. She then walked away from the place where the corpse was and bowed with knees bended on the stool facing the altar table. Other mourners repeated the same throughout the day.

During the event of paying condolences to the deceased Taoist priests are required. A group of five Taoist priests arrived before lunch time. They hung a big breadth of painting on the white curtain. The jade emperor and the god of longevity (*shouxing*) were on the picture. They then placed religious equipment on the altar table and played music with different instruments, e.g. gong, tambour, and two stringed bowed instruments (*huqin*), etc. They also sang songs and chanted the salvation litany from time to time throughout the day. After all the closest kin had performed the ritual of paying condolences to the deceased, the Taoist priests set up their table. They also put Taoist robes and hats on and played music, sang songs and chanted the salvation litany again.

After lunch two women came with their husbands, one after the other. They carried a pair of loads full of gifts with a shoulder pole. They placed the gifts, more or less the same contents as the existing gifts, on the altar table. They then paid condolences to the deceased, more or less in the same way as earlier mourners. The only difference was they presented lots of gifts on the altar table with big trays crossed from east to west. Then a man and his wife came with almost the same amount and contents of gifts and repeated the above ritual. I was told that they

were the closest kin of the deceased. The women and their husbands were the deceased daughter and daughter-in-law, quasi daughter and quasi son-in-law, and the man with his wife was the deceased's late husband's prentice of carpentry. According to the custom both quasi daughter and prentice played the roles of daughter and son throughout the funeral and post funeral ritual.

For the rest of the afternoon mourners came with gifts, similar to the relatives in the morning, to pay their condolences to the deceased (*puxiang*). Around supper time up to 100 mourners gathered in the house. They were the deceased and the family's agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin, including close and distant kin, newly established and old generation's kin. They all came with a basket full of gifts. The contents were more or less the same, except no pig heads, but of a much smaller quantity. They also brought red bags (envelopes) with gift money. The supper contained twelve dishes. Before and after the supper the Taoist priests played music, sang songs and chanted the salvation litany. Then most of them stayed in the house for the whole night, as well as the Taoist priests. It was called a vigil (*shouye*).

Funeral feast (*sushijiu*)

The second day in theory was a funeral day. On the day some more mourners came to pay their condolences to the deceased (*puxiang*). Some came from far away places and others didn't have time to come on the first day. On this day all the fellow villagers in the same group sent their senior female to the house. The deceased's daughter-in-law gave a bag of tofu, so called "elderly tofu", to each senior female of the group. The supper was called the formal funeral feast (*shushijiu* or *zhengcan*). An upper part of pig leg (*tizi*) and eighteen dishes were served. The 120 guests included the agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin families which shared the same surname (*tongxing*) and the deceased's son's friends. They came with red bags (envelopes) with gift money. The Taoist priests came again and played music, sang songs, chanted the salvation litany before and after supper and stayed overnight as well.

Cremation (*huohua*) and ash box burial

The event of cremation (*huohua*) was called burial (*xiazang*) before the 1970s. Since then cremation spread in this area. The event became more complicated because it includes two parts: seeing off the deceased to the crematorium and burial of the ash box. Taoist priests played music, sang songs and chanted the salvation litany before and after breakfast. After the big breakfast everybody put on their mourning dress. Some people moved one of the altar tables together with sacrificial offerings to the northwest end of the living room and sat a spirit tablet (*lingpai* or *lingwei*) at the middle end. Others bowed on bended knees in front of another altar table, one by one. Behind the altar table and inside the big white sheet some people tied the duvet and corpse together and transferred it onto a stretcher or hearse. At the same time women were wailing mournfully. The deceased's daughter wailed in a heart-stricken manner and fell to the floor. One of the priests burnt a bunch of straw outside the house. The temporary bed, a flat single door, was stood in front of the main entrance. The younger son's wife smashed a tile on the door (*qiaomen tuanzi*), which is similar to smashing a bowl in other parts of China. Firecrackers were set off. Some people held a big white sheet very high as an arch or bridge. The deceased's son, son-in-law, her late husband's prentice and one of close cousins carried the stretcher with the corpse under it and left the house. Other people carried something after the stretcher. Taoist priests played music and followed them, and then the rest of the mourners followed. They walked through the village all the way through the village to get the hearse which stopped by the main road. All the mourners got onto a big truck with the hearse to go to the Wujiang City Crematorium. Once they got to the Crematorium the women wailed again. They planned to have a kind of ceremony in the Crematorium and brought lots of mock money, candles and firecrackers with them. However, they didn't use them at all in the Crematorium because there were signs saying "Burning mock money is forbidden" and "Superstitious activities are forbidden", etc. So there was no ceremony at the Crematorium, just the burning of the corpse in the furnace. While they were waiting to collect the ash they bought a bone ash box together with mini plastic wreaths (*huaquan*) and flowers etc.

When the big truck with the mourners returned to the village the priests played music again. Most of the mourners went home with the priests. The truck then carried close family members all the way to the site where the bone ash box was to be buried. A person set off firecrackers and started the burial ritual. They wailed again, drank sugar water, poured the water around the grave place, bowed with bended knee one by one, and went home. Four men remained to bury the bone ash box. They place the deceased's ash box next to the deceased late husband's grave. It looked like a mini detached house. They turned the mini detached house looking grave into a semidetached house with bricks and cement. They also fixed the plastic flowers on top of the new semi grave and the plastic wreaths (*huaquan*) in front of it.

JH Zhou's family's bone ash box burial or welcome ritual was slightly different from XQ Wang's. As soon as the big truck came back to the village everybody including the Taoist priests got down from it. Two grandsons carried a lantern each and walked in front of the group, followed by the deceased's son who carried the bone ash box covered with a piece of red silk, then Taoist priests and the rest of the mourners after them. Firecrackers were set off and music played and people walked all the way through the village and into Zhou's house. The close members of the Zhou family then walked to the land to bury the bone ash box. The rituals of firecrackers, wailing, sugar water, and bowing, etc. were more or less the same as those of the Wang family. The difference was that they played Chinese official funeral music bought from Wujiang Crematorium while they built the grave for the bone ash box. Taoist priests didn't come to the land, which is the same for every household, but different from the case in Neiguan, Gansu province, my other fieldwork village. They also threw a handful of coins on top of the ash box before they covered it. It is clear that at the stage of welcoming (*ying*) the bone ash box back home (*lai*) and burying it the stopped social relations were no longer involved in the ritual of burial, apart from intimate family members.

Back to XQ Wang's case. After the close family members finished the burying ash box ritual they came back home, wailed and bowed to the altar table. It was located in the northwest corner of the house. The picture of the dead person hung on the west wall and the spirit tablet stood on the altar table against the west way. Instead

of candles for ancestors there was an oil lamp by a spirit tablet on the altar table, together with sacrificial offerings. They were rice balls, tofu, wonton, vegetable and fruit. After they had lunch the deceased's son and close family members carried some things outside the village by the east temple and burned them. They were items used by the deceased, e.g. a big straw mat, closestool (*matong*), some clothes, etc. Thus the funeral was completed.

Do the sevens (*zuoqi*)

There was a postfuneral ritual called “do the sevens (*zuoqi*)”. The villagers normally do three “sevens”: the first, third and fifth seventh day after the person dies. The first seventh day ritual (*touqi*) is for sending the dead person to join his or her dead relatives, i.e. late wife or husband and ancestors and settling the deceased to be one of the ancestors. The third seventh day ritual (*sanqi*) is for the deceased as a new arrival to meet all the heavenly gods and spiritual beings, and the fifth seventh day ritual (*wuqi*) is a ceremony for the deceased to be settled in the nether world.

However, XQ Wang's mother's case is slightly different from the above typical ritual. According to local custom, the deceased fifth seventh day ritual should be finished before Qingming Festival. Wang's mother died on the 5th March 1996. Her fifth seventh day ritual should have been on 8th April, which would be after Qingming Festival (4th April 1996). Under this circumstance the local custom said the family should do the third seventh day ritual instead of the fifth one, and then it could carry out the sweep of the deceased's grave for the first year at the Qingming Festival on 4th April. So the Wang family did the first seventh day ritual and combined the third and the fifth into one ritual.

On the first seventh day the Wang family's members and close relatives gathered together in the morning. They were the older son, his wife, the older daughter, the younger son's wife and the quasi daughter. They changed fresh food on the altar table and bowed in front of the mother's tablet. They dressed up in mourning clothes and walked out of the house with a basket and bag filled with incenses, paper money, etc. They walked around the village and stopped at one end of a bridge. They put some incenses on the ground and burned some paper money and

bowed. The reason they started the ritual from here is because it was the place where a little temple for deceased soul “(*lingwumiao*)” was located. Although the little temple disappeared for several decades physically, it remained in the villagers’ memories and remembered by one generation after another. They repeated the same at the other end of the bridge. Then they walked around the river and passed another two bridges. They did the same thing as they did at the first bridge. The reason they repeated the ritual on the three bridges was because they needed to accompany the deceased to get to the right place to join her late husband. Finally, they walked to the East Temple and put the rest of the incenses on the stick holder and the rest of paper money in a burner, and bowed with bended knees. The temple is their imagined meeting point between the deceased and her late husband and ancestors. After they finished the ritual everybody stroked the wooden column inside the temple, which looked like what the local people did on the big ginkgo outside Laotai temple near the Miaogang Township on the Chinese New Year’s Eve. When they returned home they wailed, burned more paper money, bowed and changed into their normal clothes. They had tea with kinds of sweet rice balls (*yuanzi*) and savoury rice cakes (*tabing*), which symbolised the deceased’s reunion with her late husband and ancestors. At the lunch time the rest of family members joined them and bowed to the altar table. The ritual ended.

The third seventh day ritual should be on 25th March 1996 but the Wang family changed it to the 24th according to a local custom. The custom said when “double sevens” happened the villagers can hold the event one day in advance or after in order to avoid the unlucky numbers for the deceased. The third seventh day was on 25th March which is the 7th day of the second lunar month. It doubled the sevens of the third seventh day and the day of the lunar month. So the family decided to hold the third seventh day ritual on 24th March. This change determined by religious feelings compared with the previous change of combining the 3rd and 5th seven days events in one which was mainly concerned with practicalities.

The ritual of the third seventh day (bear in mind it should be the fifth seventh day ritual for a normal case) started at 8 o’clock in the morning. A Taoist priest chanted scriptures (*nianjing*) by a table which was also against the west wall but one meter away from the altar table. On the table the Taoist priest set a number of inscription

tablets which represented the death god (*dizangwang*), land god, Jade Emperor, etc. There were also incenses, scriptures and a wooden fish – a percussion instrument made from a hollow wooden block, originally used by Buddhist priests to beat rhythm when chanting scriptures (*myu*). On the altar table there were 9 small dishes containing offerings. They were two big apples, two big pears, pickled tofu, cooked green vegetables, pickled vegetables, steamed rice, rice balls, steamed egg custard and dried fish. Around the table there were many sets of clothes made out of coloured paper for the four seasons, a shawl, apron, beddings – silk padded quilt, bed, foot warmer (*jiaolu*), houses, and two big parcels containing all the deceased's clothes, shoes, etc. There were also lots of mock paper money and mock *yuanbao* (a shoe-shaped gold and silver ingot used as money in feudal China) and incenses. The mock *yuanbao* were sorted into piles of 16 of each (means 1 *jin*) and the mock paper money were also sorted into piles of 100 *yuan* each. The above items were given by the family members and close relatives who were the same people as in the first seventh day ritual. The way in which they sorted out the above stuff was based on a list, just as they did for preparing a daughter's dowry.

5 families of agnatic kin and 12 families of non-agnatic kin were invited for the event. As in other major family events the agnatic kin were helpers and came with 10 *yuan* gift money and much lesser gifts than each non-agnatic kin family. Each non-agnatic kin family came with 25 *yuan* gift money and a basketful of gifts, e.g. fish, pork, tofu, eggs, rice cakes, steamed stuffed buns and paper money, etc. They got some returning gifts in their basket, e.g. two rice cases and two eggs, and 10 per cent respectively from the 10 and 25 *yuan* for they wore mourning clothes.

At 11 o'clock the Taoist priest put the deceased's tablet (*paiwei*) into a small box. He also wrote a few envelopes with letters of introduction to the god of the dead, land god, etc. The Taoist priest guided all the people for the rest of the rituals. They put on mourning clothes and wailed around the altar table. They burned some paper money and mock *yuanbao* together with the envelopes, which the priest wrote earlier inside the house. They then blew out the oil lamp and removed offerings from the altar table and brought the paper stuff into the courtyard. They then burned more mock money, paper clothes, foot warmer, bedding, beds and houses, together with some real clothes, etc. in front of the house. While the things were

burning XQ and his wife, sister, sister-in-law and quasi sister walked around and around the fire after the priest. They also chanted something with him. In the end they took off their mourning clothes while they were walking and shaking off dust into the fire. Then they set off firecrackers. This is how they sent off their mother's soul and possessions into heaven and separated themselves completely from her. At the same time they prayed to the heavenly gods and other spiritual beings to bless them.

After lunch the priest moved his stuff from the living room to the kitchen. He set up 6 small wine cups, 6 pairs of chopstickers, 6 rice cakes, 3 apples, 3 smoked tofu (*xundougan*), two candles and a bunch of incenses on the stove. He then chanted scriptures and burned two sets of mock *yuanbao* (8 per set) and kitchen inscription tablets. The son and grandson bowed with their knees bended three times. This ritual was for reporting to the kitchen god.

It then was the time to worship the ancestors. They all went back to the living room. In the middle of the room there was a table. On the table there were four small wine cups and four pairs of chopstickers on each side of the east and west end of the table, on the north side there were three wine cups and three pairs of chopsticks and on the south there were two bowls. There were three steamed stuffed buns and 2 cakes on each plate at the four corners of the table. On the middle of the table there was one bowl of soup and four dishes of food. There was a candle on the table. Everybody bowed, facing to the north of the table. They then hung their deceased father's picture next to those of the deceased on the west wall and bowed to them. This meant that from then onwards they would live together again in the underworld.

The above ritual mainly concerned family members, close agnatic kin and close females of non-agnatic kin. The evening feast was the main meal. Apart from the above people all the non-agnatic kin's male members and children joined in. The feast is to celebrate that the deceased has settled in the nether world.

Wearing the mourning material (*daixiao*)

There were different mourning clothes and materials during the funeral and postfuneral. The villagers kept some traditions from Fei (1939)'s time, such as that the son, daughter-in-law, daughter and son-in-law's heads should be tied with a long white belt down to the ground, and short belts are worn by grandchildren (75). But instead of the son's generation wearing coarse hempen cloth and grandchildren wearing white clothes I saw they both wore white clothes and distinguished the male and female by long and short white clothes. This adaptation is for a practical concern because the white long clothes are a doctor's and chef's uniform, which are much easier to buy or borrow than to get coarse hempen cloth. During the funeral period all the agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin are requested to wear the above mourning clothes, but friends only need to put a piece of black cloth on their arms.

On the ritual of the fifth seventh day (Wang's case was the third), family members and close agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin were also requested to wear the above mourning clothes. After the ritual only members of the family and close relatives wore mourning materials for a certain period. It served the functions of remembering the deceased, accompanying the deceased in his/her separate world and averting evil from evil spirits for both the living and the dead.

In the Wang family's case I saw the son wear mourning shoes which were specially made shoes with white cloth on the front top after the third or the fifth seventh day ritual. I was told it lasted for six months or a year depending on how well they were made. The son must wear them all the time until they wear off. Each daughter or daughters-in-law wore a small bow of knitting wool on their hair for one to three years. The grandchildren's generation wore a little black cloth on an arm, and the great grandchildren's generation wore a little red cloth on an arm.

Sweep a grave at Qingming Festival for the first three years (*shangfen*)

On the 4th April it was the first time for the Wang family to sweep the grave for the newly passed away mother who joined her ancestors. According to the local custom "do the sevens" and sweep the grave, the participants must be an odd

number. One reason XQ Wang's deceased father's prentice didn't take part in the "do the sevens" ritual was because there were five people already. He would have had to come if XQ Wang's younger brother hadn't died, which would make seven of them in total. In theory all the people who attended the ritual of the first seventh day should all come again for the three times sweep of grave. However, XQ Wang's younger brother's wife, his sister-in-law, couldn't make it and the quasi daughter gave up sweeping the grave as well in order to keep the odd number. So three adults, i.e. XQ, and his wife and sister went to sweep the grave. Children were also allowed to join them if they kept the odd number, but they didn't come because they were in school.

In the morning of the Qingming Festival I saw that XQ, carrying a gravestone on his shoulder, walked ahead, followed by his wife who carried a basketful of stuff, e.g. fruit, incenses, candles, paper money, sugar and bowls in one hand, and a thermos bottle of boiled water in the other. His sister carried a plastic bag with apples, bananas, incenses and mock *yuanbao* (shoe-shaped money) in one hand, and a stool in the other. They went to the graveyard. XQ fixed the gravestone in front of the grave side by side with his father's. They put offerings on the stool, burned incenses, candles, mock money and bowed. Lastly, they drank sugar water and poured the sugar water around the grave. Thus the grave sweep finished. They needed to carry this out for a further two years then the sweep grave ritual would be completed. The rituals of postfuneral are then completed. According to the custom they do not need to do anything any more for the grave because they should let their parents rest in peace and never disturb them any more.

5.8. Emergency events

The ESRC social support project looked at three event types: family events, emergency events and investment events (see Table 4). The sections 5.2, 5.4 to 5.7 are relatively complete in information based on the family events of the ESRC project. Section 5.3 shows that house construction events are more to do with family events rather than investment events under the categories of the ESRC project. I will omit the investment events here because I observed very few cases of investment events as private business was strictly controlled in 1996 (see section

“Kaixiangong Village” of Introduction). In this section I will show what were the emergency events and how they were handled by Kaixiangong villagers.

Natural disasters

Natural disasters in Kaixiangong Village are most likely to be floods, plagues of insects or infectious diseases of animals. They hardly ever have drought, due to the village’s location at Lake Tai.

Flood

From the end of June to middle of July 1991 Wujiang County suffered from the biggest flood in the century. The rainfall was more than 500mm and the water in Lake Tai was one meter beyond the warning water level. Along the embankment by the village some places needed flood-relief channels and others needed higher dams to be built. At this time of emergency, the Kaixiangong Village Collective responded to the above administrations’ calling to the villages to fight the flood. In order to tide up the flood, Wang, a head of the 5th group, drove a boat and bought many materials, thick bamboo tubes for pilings, straw sacks for filling with stone or brick pieces or soil, etc. The village collective also decided that each household should contribute five big bags (*shepidai*) filled with soil or broken bricks for reinforcing dykes and dams. Dong, a former head of one of the groups, told me that he led villagers of his group working on the dam day and night for about 20 days and minimised the loss of property.

As a result of the flood, compared with other villages where many houses fell down, the losses of Kaixiangong were that hundreds *mu* of farmland were inundated by floodwaters. Dong told me that only 30 *mu* of farmland were inundated in his group. The floodwaters ruined 1 *mu* of rice fields and spoiled 1 *mu* of mulberry fields of his household. For the former he added one more fertiliser, which cost 150 *yuan*. But the loss from the mulberry field was much bigger. The direct loss was about 500 *yuan*, due to about 6 pairs of loads (*dan*) of fallen mulberry leaves and the silkworms producing much less cocoons in the year. The indirect loss was more than 500 *yuan* because it took him about three years to

recover the mulberry field, which involved costs of fertiliser, farmyard manure, replacing dead mulberry trees, labour, and time.

The reason that Kaixiangong lost much less than other areas in Wujiang County was because they had a protection embankment. The village agricultural technician, Yao, told me that the flood control work was annually based and organised by an informal committee formed by six neighbouring villages organised by the Township. There has been an agreement between the villagers and the village collective ever since the household responsibility has been applied in the village in the mid 1980s. It included that each household should contribute one labourer for reinforcing dykes and dams, and set up a flood control fund. The fund was financed according to how much farmland each household contracted with the village collective. This way stood the tests of floods in 1995 and 1999. Only 5 per cent of the farmland of the village was inundated by floodwaters in 1999.

Yao believed the most important thing is protection. His farmland lost nothing during the flood because he dug deeper ditches and drainage which all linked together in his own contracted farmland. He would convince villagers to do the same as him in order to protect them from the flood. However, there was a change in 2000 at the township level. Wang, the head of 5th group, told me recently that in order to take care of the Lake the local government appropriated special money and bought 5 dredgers and employed 5 or 6 people on each of them. Their job is to clear up silt and mud and reinforce the dykes and dams with it on a regular basis. If this way works the villagers need no longer be organised for the work during flood season.

Plague of insects

Protection from plagues of insects is also regular work. Yao, the agricultural technician, told me that the locust disaster, which is mentioned as a common disaster by Fei (1939:167), had been fully controlled since 1950s. As part of his job, Yao always walked around farmland often to monitor the pest and disease situation. He also attended about 20 different meetings in the Township for reporting, exchanging information, and training, etc. Whenever necessary Yao

announces the news repeatedly through village wired broadcast. He also writes notes and instruction on a black board outside the pesticide and chemical fertiliser station of the village. Normally villagers need to apply pesticide nearly twenty times a year to control both pests and disease. They are six times for mulberry tree from June to September for snout moth's larva (*mingchong*), wild silkworms, caterpillar, etc.; five times for rice from later July to September, for rice borer, bacterial blight of rice, rice blast, sheath and culm blight of rice, and rice leaf roller, etc; four times for wheat from later November to April for wheat midge, wheat aphid, gelechiid, armyworm, etc, and three times for rape in the same season. The overall cost for the above pesticide is 120 *yuan* per household on average. Although there were so many different kinds of pests and diseases in farm plants they were more or less under control. Even though some families do less well with the protection, the loss is still insignificant.

Disease of farm animals

For farm animals' disease there was also an epidemic prevention system. There was an epidemic prevention station in the Township and a veterinarian in the village. The veterinarians from both the Township station and the village provided service for prophylactic inoculations for pigs and sheep twice per year in spring and autumn. It is a hard task to sell pigs to the state and if there was any problem the Township epidemic prevention station should take responsibility. The medical costs 3 *yuan* for each animal, including baby animals, and the service is free because it was the Township epidemic prevention station's job. Villagers pay for the chemical cost after the injections.

However, villagers should arrange epidemic prevention for rabbits themselves, because raising rabbits was purely a sideline production, which is nothing to do with the state. Beside, it only costs 0.30 *yuan* for each rabbit per injection. Zhou told me only half the villagers asked the village veterinarian for injections for their rabbits. The rest made their own arrangements, which involved labour support. For example, she bought two bottles of epidemic prevention chemical herself from the Township station and asked a former colleague of her husband in the village enterprise to do injections for her rabbits. In exchange she helped his family in

cutting the rabbits' hair. She then gave the remaining one and half bottles of the chemical to one agnate kin and one fellow villager's family. They asked somebody else to give injections to their rabbits.

Human made calamities

To my surprise many informants lost their patience when I was asking people for details of natural disasters. They brought up the topic of human made calamities. Human made calamities can be unsuitable policies, political campaign, war, etc. For example, BS Yao, a former head of the village, told me that there was 813 *mu* mulberry land of the village in 1995 whereas in 1985 only 459 *mu*, because nearly half of the mulberry land were used for planting rice during the Cultural Revolution period. Moreover, in 1958 the villagers had to grow vegetables, corn, pumpkin, sweet potato, wheat, barley, and highland barley, etc. in limited mulberry land, which restrained the growing of mulberry trees. This was because villagers needed to survive themselves due to most of the village's land being used for growing rice for the State. The man-made calamities during the Great Leap Forward made the natural disasters afterwards even worse than they would otherwise have been. In 1961 they were too poor and had to beg for food. On the subject of begging his wife had to let one of their daughters be adopted into another family. I asked him what was the biggest human made calamity during the post Mao era? He said that the policy of restraining private business in the village would cause a big calamity within one year. His words became true a few months after I left the village.

When I was there the village had three collective enterprises of silk products, rice wine, and a chemical plant. They were built with funds pooled by all the households in the village. However, villagers complained about the loss incurred by enterprises which were drawn into larger and larger debt caused by the problems of management and political corruption. After I came back to the UK I have kept contacts with the village. YG Zhou, the outgoing head of the village, told me that in 1996 November all the village enterprises became bankrupt with a debt of up to 10 million *yuan*. This means on average every household could take a share of 16,000 *yuan* debt, if the debt went to the villagers. This was what the

villagers had been worried about since 1991, when the earliest such worries were recorded by Lu, a previous fieldwork researcher.

This bankrupting of enterprises was caused by a policy of systematic changing from town and village collective ownership to private (*gaizhi* or *qiye zhuanzi*). Initially some villagers and workers prepared to snatch properties from the collective enterprises. The offices in the township had to close for a few days in order to avoid conflicts with villagers and save the running cost of a few thousand *yuan* per day. At this emergency situation the related policies came up just in time, i.e. replacement of a head of the village, contracts for the enterprises with private owners, selling some equipment to individuals, etc. The complexion of the changing was soon under control.

The following example shows how the silk production enterprise fared during the crisis. (a) Four people raised funds of 140,000 *yuan* and took over the silk production enterprise. Two of them came from the village, who were self-employed and had some capital. They asked two others through their business links who lived in outside villages to join him and raised enough funds. They signed a contract with the village in which they became shareholders and managers. (b) There were about 200 workers in the enterprises before it went bankrupt. The major effect was that the majority of the workers became unemployed (“*xiagang nongmin*”) and they couldn’t get any unemployment relief due to the nature of town and village enterprises. About 40 per cent of the unemployed were relatively rich and did not have to wait to be re-employed. They bought one or two looms from the enterprise at a cost of about 1,000 *yuan* each, which was about ten times cheaper than the original cost. At the end of the year their income was slightly more than 10,000 *yuan* on average per household. (c) About 50 per cent of the unemployed skilled-workers who were not able to work independently went back to their old jobs again after the enterprise came under new private management. At the end of the year on average their income was about 10,000 *yuan*, although they lost their income of between 5,000 – 6,000 *yuan* while they were unemployed, with no unemployment relief. (d) The rest of the unemployed had to either work on the little bit of contracted land, or turn to service businesses. One new service is called cooking service (*chuishhi fuwu*), namely, to

cook lunch for the self-employed who were busy working and without time to cook for themselves.

Illness and injury

(1) Village Clinic (*weishengshi*) was a basic health unit in rural China. Dr Ni explained how the rural co-operation medical system changed over the last 25 years from time to time. Before 1984 the clinic charged 5 *fen* per visit for registration, plus the costs of medicines. In 1984 along with the rural reform policy of responsibility system applying to the village, the collective charged 3 *yuan* per person per year for a medical fund. The fund was used for someone with a serious illness who was allowed to claim up to 30 *yuan* for medicine from the village collective. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of the “private support”, household No. 5, the Rao’s family, spent 40,000 *yuan* for Rao’s son’s medical treatment for leukaemia in 1993. Apart from private support it also borrowed 6,500 *yuan* from the village collective. I asked Rao how much a villager was allowed to borrow from the collective? He told me that there was no clear regulation for borrowing money from the collective. His case was unusual because it was well known that the expenditure for his son’s medical treatment was very large. Any household involved in a large amount of expenditure for hospital treatment was allowed to apply for aid for poor from the Township Civil Affair Office. After seeking private support and village collective support, Rao applied for reimbursement from the township (*gongjia baoxiao*) for 9,000 *yuan* from Civil Affair Office. It was 22.5 per cent of the total medical expenses and made a significant difference financially for his family. He was grateful to get financial support in this way.

From 1984 when the rural reform applied, Ni, as a village doctor, was paid about 2,000 *yuan* per year by the village collective. In 1991 Ni received 3,600 *yuan* per year from the village because there were only two doctors left. This was because the midwives were no longer needed in the clinic due to pregnant women being encouraged to go to the Township hospital to give birth. When I was there, Ni told me he only received 3,000 *yuan* in 1995 because a new reform of medical

insurance was introduced (see (2) for medical insurance). He then lived on fees from dual sources, partly from the village and partly charges for treatment.

After the medical insurance system was established in the Township the registration fee to the clinic increased to 50 *fen* in 1996. If a doctor paid a visit to a patient he should charge 3 *yuan* at daytime and 5 *yuan* in the evening, according to a regulation from the Township Medical Management Association (*yiguanhui*). On top of that villagers needed to pay the cost of medicines themselves. The doctor was also allowed to earn the difference of 15 per cent between market and wholesale prices for the medicine. In return he should turn part of the profits to the Medical Management Association. Recently, through a telephone interview, Ni said that over the last four years he only received about 2,000 *yuan* on average from the village.

However, from the year 2001 onwards the village would not pay him at all. The reason is a deeper level of rural reform was applied in 2001 in the village. It is called “*feigaiishui* (change collecting fees system from peasants to taxes system)” which is for reducing peasants’ burden from the root and improving the relationship between peasants, collective, and the state. In 2000 the village collected fees amounting to 490,000 *yuan*. The village task of *feigaiishui* is cutting down 40 per cent of this, which would affect mainly village cadres’ salary. Instead, the village collective agreed for him to keep the business license and waive his rent from using the clinic in order to continue disease prevention work for the villagers. Ni attended a meeting of the Township Medical Management Association in May 2001 in which issues of increasing fees for visiting a patient, etc. were considered, due to the changing of rural medical co-operation system towards a free market system. Since Ni would no longer receive payment from the village collective from 2001 he increased fees from visiting patients. Ni did not think it would be difficult for him to charge higher rates to his patients under the new circumstances because the good relationship between him and villagers would help the villagers to understand his new situation.

(2) Medical insurance (*yiliao baoxian*) means to claim the medical insurance from the Medical Foundation of the Township. It was a new phenomenon in rural China,

although well-developed in developed countries, as a commercial system like a bank. Xie, the head of Wujiang Civil Affair Bureau, told me that the Bureau conducted an experiment in one township with a foundation of a large amount of medical expenses based on different shares (*gaoe yiliao tongchou jijinhui*). The method spread to all townships of Wujiang County from 1991. However, different townships have their own detailed proper ratio between patients and the arrangement. In Miaogang Township it called Township Medical Management Association (*yiguanhui* for *yiyaoguanli jijinhui*). Villagers in Kaixingong paid 6 *yuan* per person per year for it in 1995, which increased to 12 *yuan* in 1999 and 16 *yuan* in 2003. If the illness or injury was serious they were allowed to claim a certain amount from it. The village treasurer told me that the villagers could claim 30% of 1,000 *yuan*, 40% of 2,000 *yuan*, up to maximum 4,850 *yuan* of 10,000 *yuan* from the Township Civil Affair Office for a hospital treatment of a serious illness.

Household 7 was the first case in the village to benefit from medical insurance. Han told me that he fell off a roof when he was helping a fellow villager build a house in 1995. His vertebra was injured and he was sent to Wujiang hospital for treatment. It cost him 3,000 *yuan*. Since his family had a furniture business, it did not need to seek financial support from outside the household. However, he was surprised to receive 800 *yuan* from the Township Medical Management Association, to which each of his family members had only just paid 6 *yuan* that year. Han told me that in the past he was not so clear what was the difference between the medical insurance and relief fund or aid from local government agents. He did not like, in particular, to be forced to pay the medical insurance, because he was healthy. Han believed many villagers would, like him before the accident, have resentment with the local government for forcing them to join the system. After the accident he learnt medical insurance was a fair way to gain something back from what they have paid. "Accidents are inevitable," Han explained to me, "although I did not see any point of paying for the medical insurance when the policy was introduced to the village, because I was reasonably healthy just like many others".

(3) The disabled living allowance was another resource of public financial support. It appeared in the village around 1995 along with the reform of the rural co-operation medical system. The relationship between the allowance provider and receivers should be an institutional relationship, which is nothing to do with *lishang-wanglai*. Recently, more and more villagers gained such disabled living allowance. One extreme case was a villager who even cut off one of his fingers in order to meet criteria to qualify for it. However, at a very early stage of its implementation, household No. 13 gained such an allowance involving *lishang-wanglai*. Liu, a 52 year old housewife told me that she was not very qualified to be on the rates of disabled living allowance from the township because her problem wasn't listed on the criteria.

When Liu made her case to some village cadres she convinced them with a number of reasons, which can be seen as *lishang* criteria. (a) Morally Liu was proud of herself for raising two sons for the Country (*wo yang erzi wei guojia*). The older son worked in Shengze Township and was financially independent from the family after he graduated from a University. The second son went to serve in the army and could be promoted there. So the State (*guojia wei wo yanglao*) should provide her for living expenses when she lost ability to work. (b) Liu's case gained wide sympathy in and out the village. She said she only started to seek public financial support when she lost her job in a village enterprise due to the worsening of her serious arthritis in her knee joints. Her second son was serving in the army and could not help with the household responsibility for the farmland. Her sister-in-law, who lived next door, helped her with much of her housework. (c) Rational calculation also helped. Liu told me that she had two operations in 1983 and 1988. For the first operation her family did not seek any support from outside of the household, although her older brother gave her 500 *yuan*. Her husband was a farmer and fisherman and she was working in a village enterprise. She had two brothers, one a carpenter, as well as a group head in the village, and another a lacquerer. They both lived in the village with a comfortable living standard.

However, for the second operation, which cost 3,000 *yuan*, she had to seek financial support from private sources. Her elder son started work then and gave her 1,000 *yuan*. Her older brother loaned her 1,000 *yuan*. Since both her sons were

away from home, she could not work in and outside of the house, and even needed to go on spending money on her knee joints. So she decided to seek long term medical support from the village collective. (d) Luckily, the heavenly gods saw her difficulty (*laotian youyan*) and gave her a chance. Liu told me that the village head introduced a kind of fund providing living allowances of 30 *yuan* per month for disabled people. It was raised by township welfare factories for the Township Civil Affair Bureau. The allowance increased from time to time along with the development of the welfare factories.

(4) Funerals for the poor were extreme cases which involved a vertical expressive *wanglai* from the Director of the Village Committee, Wang, to a villager Gao, of household No. 14. In 1991 this family included two persons: a father and a son. It was then one of the sampled households, but was no longer one in 1996 because the son went away from 1988 and the father passed away in 1992. According to fieldwork notes by Lu Feiyun in 1991, the father Gao's wife died many years ago and his son left three years previously because his family was too poor to arrange a marriage for him. Gao suffered from lung cancer in 1991 and passed away in 1992.

During his last days Wang arranged everything for Gao, until the funeral finished. Wang visited Gao very often. One day he found Gao was dying and asked a doctor to check him. At the same time he went to Miaogang Township and invited a specialist to arrange funeral affairs. The funeral arrangements followed the local custom but much simpler. Wang told Gao's relatives, neighbours, and friends the sad news. They paid condolence calls with gifts. The gifts and gift money was equivalent to 400 *yuan*. After his body was cremated a feast was arranged. It cost 1,200 *yuan*, which included gifts from Gao's relatives. The rest of money came from Gao's own limited savings. There were about 30 funeral attendees. So the funeral was financially supported mainly by Gao himself, plus some private support which included labour support. However, the arrangement can be counted as public support.

When I heard that Gao was a kind of relative of Wang I checked with Wang as to the difference in the arrangement if Gao had not any relative relationship at all with him? Wang told me it made no difference whether or not they were relatives. The

reasons were: (a) Wang regarded the arrangement of this kind of thing as his job. It was morally right that he should take care of his villagers nicely and he would take responsibility for all the poor and unfortunate people if it was necessary. When Gao suffered from lung cancer in 1991, he had hospital treatment which cost 8,000 *yuan*. Wang arranged social support for him from both public and private sources. On one hand, Wang applied grant-in-aid from the village collective and the Township to pay his hospitalisation expenses. The village collective paid 4,000 *yuan* from relief fund and 2,000 *yuan* were claimed from the Township Civil Affair Bureau. On the other hand, after Gao came out from the hospital Wang organised about 30 relatives, neighbours, and fellow villagers of his group to visit him with gifts. Apart from support of material, emotional and spiritual kinds, the neighbours and fellow villagers also offered labour support with his housework and even his land work, because he could not work on the land for both his own grain and contract tasks.

(b) According to Wang there was a human feeling of sympathy (*tongqing*) with Gao more than feelings of relatives (*qinqing*). The relationship between two families was very far because Gao's grandmother had some link to Wang's family and it wasn't on his family's non-agnatic kin list from his grandparents' generation. Gao was grateful, according to Lu's fieldwork notes, that villagers not only worked for him but also spent money on his expensive medicine. Gao understood that people would help in an emergency but not for poverty, according to the local custom (*renqing*), but for his case the human feeling (*ganqing*) was even heavier.

(c) The simplified arrangements for Gao' funeral were based on the local custom which accorded with rational calculation. It wouldn't be proper for the villagers if Gao didn't have a funeral at all, but it was proper for the funeral to be as simple as it was.

(d) Wang didn't believe in a particular god, but he believed in a general religious sense of comeuppance. Wang told me that although he never expected anything directly in return from Gao, he could gain villagers' trust by treating a poor and sick person nicely.

¹ Since *jiujiu* (the younger son's brother-in-law) worked outside of their village his sister-in-law, accompanied by her mother, brought the gifts, just as Mrs Ren's father represented her brother for her son's one month old birthday event in 4.1.

² Some houses have kitchens on the west side of the front of the house, which are called *daotou longshao* (turned around dragon tail).

³ The dimensions are approximate and together with the description came from my fieldwork notes based on a few existing old style houses.

⁴ For example, the little villa style has a loft area for storage, which gave more rooms for living.

⁵ This is a standard structure of a family house in the village, as I have shown in the Tan family of 3.2.1.4.

⁶ It took 5 to 8 months for house construction in 2001 because the little villa style of houses are taller with two floors for more storage places in the loft, and the decorations are much more careful.

⁷ Who count as *gugu*, namely, father's sister.

⁸ Her mother passed away.

⁹ The ancestors included BY's mother.

¹⁰ *Won ton* in Gauntness.

¹¹ Fei said it was on 24th day of the 8th lunar month (1939:100) and it was also birthday of the kitchen goddess (1939:153).

¹² It was no longer true that paper was not allowed to burn in one's house or courtyard (Fei, 1939:100-01).

¹³ This kind of tea party (*xinkucha*) is different from the tea party after Harvest of Green Beans (1.2.1).

¹⁴ The model is not available from a market. Qiu told me that her grandfather, a handy man, made it for her family and also made it for others.

¹⁵ This table is adopted from Fei (1939:152-53).

¹⁶ If the child was a girl the rabbit hat should be a pink colour.

¹⁷ Although the *jiujiu*'s parents are the baby's grandparents, in this case they represent his mother's natal family and play roles for the baby's mother's brother. So I would like to address them as *jiujiu*'s father or mother.

¹⁸ The green color is made of juice of pumpkin leaves.

¹⁹ When the table is for presenting offerings its grain should run from south to north, whereas for dining the grain runs from west to east.

²⁰ It was used for raising silkworms.

²¹ There was 10.6 per cent close non-agnatic kin on average among sampled households.

²² Some families invited the birthday child's little friends and classmates for the birthday meal if their close relatives were fewer.

²³ This figure came from wedding gifts and gifts money, which excludes little sisters and old sisters, because they kept gifts and gifts money for themselves according to the local custom.

²⁴ This is the same in 1930s (Fei, 1939:41)

²⁵ Two of them were empty bags because the "groom"'s father would pay a thanks visit to the matchmakers on the second day after the wedding.

²⁶ The candles with dragon, phoenix patterns and flowers were usually used in the bridal chamber on the wedding night.

²⁷ See religious sense of *lishang* in 3.1.2.2.

²⁸ This design related to a typical stem household composition in the village (see 4.2.1).