

## Marriage, Family, and Gender

UNMARRIED CHILDREN represent potential unfulfilled and burden unrelieved, according to the traditions of Taiwanese society. An unmarried man well into his twenties is regarded as a boy; the twenty-year-old married male, by contrast, is considered a man. Until he has married, a son is perceived as having received mainly what is his due: food, shelter, parental instruction on matters of personal conduct and social behavior, and education. He has not yet entered into that matrimonial union whereby he can give back to those who have given him life, namely, to his parents and, through and beyond them, to his ancestors. The son represents to his parents unfulfilled economic, social, and religious potential. They expect him to pay them back for their efforts expended during his childhood. Until he marries, he is handicapped in realizing his economic potential and paralyzed in achieving his socioreligious potential.<sup>1</sup>

His sister remains a burden unrelieved. In her youth she was quite possibly a delight, especially to her mother, and conceivably to her father as well. Unless a few brothers had already been produced by her parents by the time she was born, however, her birth was a disappointment to both her mother and her father. And whatever delights her existence eventually may have afforded them, she was held to be a burden if she had not married by the time she was eighteen, nineteen, or, certainly, twenty. Before the advent of abundant opportunities for factory and urban jobs as the contemporary economy burgeoned, any economic contribution a woman could make by the age

of twenty was minimal; hence, materially she was held to be a burden. In the traditional conception, living independently is not something a decent woman does, but living with her parents into adulthood is socially unsatisfying for a daughter. Her family and the villagers of her community believe that to do so is to leave unfulfilled her destiny as a wife and mother in someone else's household, in some other village, worshipping someone else's ancestors, providing someone else's descendants. Until she fulfills this destiny, a daughter is not only an economic burden but an unrelieved socio-religious burden as well.

Marriage unfolding according to traditional Taiwanese culture is rarely an event of great personal joy for the two individuals involved in the union, but it is an instance of great joy for the families of the male and female thus joined. Only in experiencing some measure of the joy of their families in proceeding toward potential fulfilled and arriving at that moment when burden is relieved do the betrothed themselves take satisfaction in the event and its rituals. In the course of the last thirty years, the economy of Taiwan has changed and grown dramatically. Economic developments have brought with them changes and challenges to the island's social and cultural institutions. Women's economic value to their families has increased manifold with these developments. More urban opportunities have resulted in a larger number of young people separating themselves from their parents residentially and generally assuming a more independent pose.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the continuity in many aspects of the traditional system of family and kinship in Taiwan remains striking. Even in cases in which traditional norms have been altered considerably, older forms are alive in the contemporary memory; they have greatly informed and continue to inform the development of today's Taiwan. At the end of this chapter we will return to the matter of contemporary change. But given the prominent presence of traditional familial values even in contemporary society and the extent to which these values have contributed to economic development on Taiwan, the first several sections of this chapter are presented with the intention of presenting forcefully the key features of the traditional kinship system, suggesting along the way its abiding presence and importance in contemporary society.

#### MARRIAGE RITUALS

Taiwanese marriage customs dictate that bride and groom not only have different surnames but also be from different villages. The two young people to be joined ideally have little familiarity with each other; important parts of the marriage ritual imply that bride and groom are seeing each other for the

first time.<sup>3</sup> Typically the marriage pool is found among those twenty or so villages economically and socially linked to a township government seat or other important urban center, and within those twenty villages a handful come to be regarded as particularly good sources of mates.<sup>4</sup> Traditional marriages are arranged by the families of the young man and woman, a duty assumed mainly by their mothers, who frequently employ a go-between. According to custom, the ideal age of marriage for females is about eighteen, and for males, twenty; but the deal might well have been struck years before, say, when the girl was twelve and the boy fourteen. The ideal prospective wife is physically strong enough for successful childbearing and skilled in the domestic arts. The ideal prospective husband is from a family in good economic condition and has personal habits appropriate to his role of provider.

When the families come to a tentative agreement regarding the match, the boy's family sends a letter to the young woman's family requesting engagement. Shortly after this letter is delivered, the young man, his father, other male relatives, friends of his family, and the go-between pay a visit to the young woman's family in observance of the "lesser engagement" (*xiaoding*); the young woman's father plays the role of the host. The young man's family gives such gifts as clothing, jewelry, an engagement ring, engagement cakes, substantial food items, and a small portion of the brideprice. The brideprice looms large in the economic exchanges between the two families. It is a substantial amount of money given by the groom's family in expression of their sincerity and goodwill in making the match; the brideprice ritually strengthens the tie between the two families. The young woman's family reciprocates with gifts that could well include a suit, shirts, neckties, a pair of new shoes, an engagement ring, accessories such as a gold pin to go with the groom's necktie, sweets, fruit, and substantial food items to be distributed to the young man's relatives and friends as an engagement announcement. If nothing happens to spoil the prospective union, the next important step in the direction of marriage takes place. This "greater engagement" (*dadang*) finds the young man's family paying a formal visit to the young woman's family to set the date of the wedding. At the "greater engagement" the boy's father presents the final, larger amount of the brideprice, additional gifts for the family as a whole, and frequently a few small items for the young woman herself.

In the month or two after the "greater engagement," the family of the groom busies itself preparing food, purchasing utensils and other items the young couple will need, and decorating the room (*xifang*) where the young couple will live. Neighbors and relatives close at hand give presents and words of congratulation. Invitations are sent to relatives who live at distances, pre-



8.1 Modern bride and groom in search of the perfect garden location for photographs.

cluding word-of-mouth announcement of the wedding. In the bride's home, mother tenderly offers final words of advice to daughter and assists her with preparations of wedding attire and dowry.

On the wedding day, if full observance of traditional Taiwanese marriage rituals holds, the groom's family sends a decorated bridal chair into which the young woman, wearing a bridal gown of red or deep pink, her face covered with a piece of red satin, enters promptly. The scene typically finds the bride's mother weeping while the father, whatever his emotions, stands stoically. The bridal chair is closed so that no one on the road can see her as four able-bodied men of the groom's family carry her to her new home. The bride's family has proudly displayed the young woman's dowry in their house and courtyard before members of the groom's party load the items on an accompanying vehicle, where the typically enormous haul can be clearly viewed by onlookers. This dowry has multiple categories. It includes a sum of money under the bride's exclusive control, items for personal use, other items for the express use of her and her new husband, and still other items that the broader family may utilize. Typically the dowry is twice again as much as the young woman's family received in the brideprice.<sup>5</sup>

Upon arrival at the home of the groom, the bride is taken to the front court, where the wedding is performed. In the center of the court she finds a table on which are placed offerings to the gods of Heaven and Earth, a pair of red candles, and three sticks of incense. Standing beside each other, the couple face forward giving honor to the gods; the bride then turns with a bow to the groom, who returns the gesture. Family members then lead the couple into the house to the *xifang*; according to tradition, the girl is assisted by women as, head still covered, she steps over some object intended to symbolize ritually her ability to surmount all obstacles to a successful marriage. Inside, the couple pay homage to the ancestors at the altar just inside the front door and then proceed to the *xifang*. In their room, bride and groom face each other. The groom, following instructions from attending females, removes the red cloth from his bride's head; according to tradition, husband and wife now cast eyes on each other for the first time. After a while the bride leaves to pay respects to her new parents-in-law; she then returns to take her seat on the bed beside her husband. As feasting and words calling for many progeny and great prosperity reign in the household, young members and friends of the family come into the *xifang* at will, deepening the embarrassment of the young man and woman, so recently turned husband and wife. Young people shoot barbs at the groom, request silly performances of the couple, talk, and take up time so that the moment when bride and groom can be alone is delayed. At last the young people leave. Someone brings wine and food to the couple; they toast each other and consume some of the food together, ritually completing the transition to husband and wife. An interesting period begins in which the young couple seek to balance their own interests against the interests of the other *fang*, all of which ideally work together in the greater interest of the *ji*.

#### FANG WITHIN THE JIA

Thus far, we have referred to the young man or the young woman's "family," a term useful enough in its general meaning to convey the necessary information regarding the marriage ceremony. But in the United States when we discuss family, we most typically have in mind either the nuclear family specifically or kinfolk very broadly and nebulously defined. In addition to the nuclear family, two other main forms are identified by anthropologists: the stem family, which includes a married son and his family unit in addition to his mother, father, and unmarried siblings; and the "extended" family consisting of at least two married sons and their familial units living with their mother, father, unmarried siblings, and any other kinfolk oriented to-

ward the same home. Both of these family forms have great relevance to Taiwanese society. In Taiwan, as in other Chinese societies, the cultural ideal is the extended family, with the ultimate goal being "five generations under one roof."<sup>7</sup> The extended family is difficult enough to achieve; five generations (ranging from young children to their great-great-grandparents) under one roof was and is nearly impossible. But the ideal says much about the value the Taiwanese place on familial unity, cohabitation, and cohesiveness.

*Jia* is the Mandarin term for an ideally cohesive and inclusive family unit. *Fang* are any constituent families. Three important aspects of the *jia* are the economy, the group, and the estate.<sup>8</sup> Which form the *jia* takes depends on the members or claimants associated with those aspects. The *jia* estate is the sum total of agricultural, industrial, commercial, and residential property to which a member of the *jia* has a claim of inheritance. The *jia* economy refers to the precise ways in which the resources of the *jia* estate are put to use to generate still more resources for the enlargement of the estate. The *jia* group includes those members with either active or potential claims on the *jia* estate or participation in the *jia* economy. If the *jia* is of the extended form, multiple *fang* must be participating in the *jia* group, involved in the *jia* economy, and most importantly, retaining claims to their share of inheritance of the *jia* estate.

Because it was the basis of traditional society, agriculture served as the foundation for most *jia* estates. Yet Taiwanese folk readily gave their labor to nonagricultural pursuits if these were economically advantageous to the expansion of the estate. Investment might also be made in human potential, for example, funding of higher education for *jia* members who showed the kind of talent that could yield position, influence, income, and status to the glory of all in the *jia* group. The familiar image of the *jia* is its concentrated form: an extended family whose group members are geographically situated in a single residence or residential compound; there they participate in an economy concentrated on the cultivation of surrounding fields, exercising claims on an estate the economic origins and expansion of which are based in agriculture and the management of which is concentrated in the hands of the extended family patriarch. In fact the *jia* may maintain a common budget while dispersing its *fang* economically and residentially. Although many scholars of the family predict that modernization will lead to the decline of the extended family in favor of smaller units, in Taiwan larger family structures have proved highly adaptable and valuable to the modernizing economy. The Taiwanese *jia* have always responded flexibly to economic opportunity, a propensity that has increased under conditions of rapid development.

An extended *jia* can very well turn into a corporation featuring diverse agricultural, commercial, or industrial enterprises. As long as several *fang* continue their interest in participating in the *jia* group, fulfilling their particular roles in the *jia* economy and participating in the expansion of, as well as deriving benefits from, the *jia* estate, the *jia* maintains its cohesiveness. As pressures for division of the *jia* estate intensify, usually an extended *jia* ultimately breaks into its constituent *fang*, which then establish their own separate *jia*, probably nuclear at first but possessed of the potential for extension.

### *Jia* Unity, *Jia* Division

When a Taiwanese woman enters the *jia* of her husband, her position is extremely insecure. The greatest asset she brings to her new family is her childbearing potential. Divorce was rare in traditional Taiwanese society and remains rare in Taiwan today; however, failure to produce sons specifically can lead either directly to divorce or to those familial and marital tensions the relief from which might come only through divorce.<sup>9</sup> Concubinage, formerly a means of providing progeny outside the primary marital arrangement, is today illegal. In some cases a male, in reversal of the usual pattern, goes to live in his wife's village and agrees to give his first son the surname of his wife's heirless parents so that their line of descent might be maintained. (This is a matrilineal marriage.) Remaining in the familiar surroundings of her natal village may give some comfort to a wife; however, the norm looms large in Taiwanese society, and this option is not truly satisfying for any of the parties to the marriage. If anything, pressure to produce not just one but additional male progeny, with the male offspring subsequent to the first taking their father's family's surname, was greater for the wife than ever.<sup>10</sup> Giving birth to sons in particular and children in general was critical for the woman for at least two reasons. First, only by giving birth to children who can expand the family and ensure the maintenance of the descent line is it possible for a woman to fulfill her destiny, make secure her position in her new family, and ensure descendants to sustain her soul in the afterlife. Second, with the arrival of children, her *fang* increases in size and the unit more clearly representing her own interests grows in power. The young woman increasingly finds herself impelled to advance the interests of her own children against the interests of other members of the *jia*, and in the meantime to cultivate the affections of her own children within her own *fang*.<sup>11</sup>

Even for the Taiwanese, who clearly envision the extended family ideal and who at some point in their lives are likely to pass through this familial developmental stage,<sup>12</sup> this large family group contains a collection of indi-

viduals with a cornucopia of particular interests and personalities, frequently at odds with each other. The young wife's relationship with male members of her husband's *jia* is subject to strict taboos ensuring physical and emotional distance.<sup>13</sup> The mother-in-law interacts with the young woman much more closely, both physically and emotionally, but is typically not affectionate. Arguments between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law classically arise over proper ways to wash clothes, prepare meals, discipline and train children, and a host of other matters pertaining to domestic management. Initially the daughter-in-law defers to the mother-in-law and by convention should continue to do so. Inevitably, though, a daughter-in-law with some spirit will assert herself, particularly with the birth of a son and perhaps the addition of another child or two. If the daughter-in-law does manifest an independent streak, the stage is set for a test of wills that undermine *jia* unity.<sup>14</sup> The husband's sisters may offer sympathetic companionship, but they are, after all, destined to leave the patrilocal *jia*. The wives of the husband's brothers are less emotionally remote than the males, but they are competitors with the newest female arrival to the *jia*, and are already engaged in spirited competition among themselves. Rather than join forces to advance their own interests within the *jia*, each young wife tends to see that institution as hopelessly dominated by men and forever subject to the goals of a patriarchal system.

The young wife who has given birth to children has already set about creating a "uterine family" composed of mother and her offspring.<sup>15</sup> Usually the young mother is very aware of the need not to overpamper her son as he grows up; she is as likely as the father to administer physical punishment, particularly of the reactive rather than the calculated kind: The father's corporal blows are administered with greater cool, more dispassionately, in response to offenses that have crossed the borders delineating ideal child respect for elders and their authority. But mother is in a position to grant favors, make treats, soothe the pain of childhood stumbles, and in general draw her son emotionally close to her. This is at least as true of the daughter, who despite her expected departure at eighteen or twenty nevertheless remains close by her mother's side learning domestic arts and proper female behavior from her chief role model. Children are thus a young mother's chief sources of general emotional satisfaction and love, yet they are also her main constituency in the politics, the maneuvering for power, within the *jia*. Furthermore, though not a part of her personally cultivated "uterine family," the young husband frequently grows in his general affection for his wife, and in many cases he considers her a valued counselor and sounding board for his own frustrations within the *jia* group, the *jia* economy, and the *jia* estate.

Brothers participating in the extended *jia* evidence their own tensions. As children, their relationship normally featured many characteristics not conducive to smooth relations as adults. An elder brother in Taiwanese society is expected to be highly tolerant of the behavior of his younger brother. He is forbidden to strike his sibling, even to retaliate for a blow leveled by the younger one. The elder brother is expected to share his treasured possessions with his younger brother and in general give rein to his whims without expecting like return. The Confucian ideal holds that younger brothers should respect the authority of elder brothers, and eventually this ideal is invoked in everyday life—but in adulthood rather than childhood. Parents place higher demands on older children, who are expected to care for their siblings even while the younger ones are treated with leniency. Then, once the responsibilities of adulthood arrive and the brothers establish *fang* within the *jia*, fraternal hierarchy is formally moved to the fore of human relationships. Until division of the estate occurs, the father first but then brothers in descending order according to age hold authority in making joint decisions regarding the *jia* group and the *jia* economy. All brothers participate in those decisions, but ultimately opinions of the older males carry more weight. This can be irritating to younger brothers, who resent their subservient position, even as their elder brothers quite possibly maintain lingering resentment over the trouble the younger ones caused them as they were growing up.<sup>16</sup>

Such tensions mean that the extended family ideal eventually gives way to pressure for division of the estate. In dividing the estate (*fen jia*), younger brothers are given neither wider latitude as in childhood nor less priority as in the administration of an undivided estate in adulthood: The Taiwanese, as do all Chinese societies, follow the system of equal inheritance. According to social precedent, any adult brother can demand his share of the estate at any time. In some places in Taiwan, division typically occurs soon after brothers marry and the birth of children enlarges the various *fang*. In other places brothers usually defer to their elderly father as at least formal head of the *jia*, delaying division until after his death. In a few instances brothers find it economically advantageous to remain jointly invested in the *jia* group, economy, and estate throughout their adult lives, but this is in practice the exception rather than the rule. At some point during their young to middle-age adulthood, brothers usually dissolve their joint social and economic arrangements.<sup>17</sup>

Whether or not the *jia* remains extended, the extended family ideal makes itself felt even in cases in which the *jia* estate has been divided. An examination of rights and obligations in the Taiwanese family shows clearly the long shadow cast by the extended *jia* ideal.

## RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS IN THE FAMILY

Social custom in Taiwan dictates that a person has certain highly defined rights and just as highly specified obligations by virtue of her or his membership in the family. Inheritance is a prized right that accrues to children in the Taiwanese family. In the United States a bumper sticker reading, "I'm spending my children's inheritance," reflects a cavalier attitude toward the family estate that is unthinkable in Taiwan. People in the United States ideally rear their children with moral care; they instill a success ethic based on individual initiative; they send their children to college if the family can afford to do so; and then they cut them loose, to prosper but also perhaps to fail if their individual preparation and effort prove insufficient. The dissatisfaction with the phenomenon of adult children adrift on the vagaries of the contemporary U.S. job market returning home to live with mom and dad shows how much Americans expect adult children returning home to live as dependents with their parents. Children in the United States, for their part, dread the thought of elderly parents becoming a burden, knowing that even old folks believe that living in their children's home is a hold-the-nose option delayed as long as possible.

Things are different, indeed, in Taiwan. Parents and all adult members who can be held together in the *jia* group work hard, diversifying their labors as much as possible, sparing no reserves of energy toward the building of a large *jia* estate. Great personal sacrifice is made and much denial of creature comforts is endured for the sake of saving, investing, and expanding *jia* resources. This is the meaning of life. Building a bountiful *jia* estate honors the ancestors, makes lavish ritual offerings to them possible, and ensures their happiness in the afterlife. Constructing a secure and growing economic foundation provides for the generations to come: children, grandchildren, and ideally all descendants to follow. Adult children returning home is an unimaginable problem: Ideally they never left, and that they will be welcomed if they return is a given. Conversely, children accept their eternal obligation to care for their parents. As Confucian dictum goes, "When we are young, our parents nurture us; when our parents are old, we sustain them."

Even after division of the *jia* estate, Taiwanese children and parents maintain close contact. Although they may no longer be contributing to a joint economy and expanding a jointly held estate, parents watch carefully to see if their children are living frugally, working hard, and investing wisely; for the children's behavior reflects the upbringing given by the parents and also affects their ability to be responsible to all those along the descent continuum. The children have received a great deal if their *jia* estate was sizable, and they

are in any case expected to accept their inheritance with the accompanying understanding that they will be responsible for the living conditions of their parents. This responsibility can take several forms and evidences considerable variability from place to place and family to family in Taiwan.<sup>18</sup> When the *jia* estate is divided, some sons set aside enough land for a physically able father to work to sustain himself and their mother. If the father has grown elderly or if, as happens frequently, he has died and their mother is their lone remaining responsibility, they may set aside land to work either jointly or in rotation for the benefit of their parents or parent. Still another, highly interesting alternative is known as meal rotation, whereby the parent or parents live and eat by turns with two, three, or more sons.

Elderly Taiwanese men frequently face an unpleasant, if secure, fate.<sup>19</sup> Having cultivated a paramount position in the *jia* group as long as possible, they eventually find themselves having to give way to the leadership of sons, who afford them a degree of formal respect but likely hold little natural affection for them. Elderly mothers, by contrast, often have a more agreeable fate. The young mother planted the seeds of affection when she drew her uterine family unto her. As an elderly woman, she can sew and mend clothing and cuddle small children, thereby relieving the workload of the son's wife. The wife, now the ruler of her own domestic realm, finds herself more favorably disposed to her mother-in-law. The children also welcome their grandmother and the treats and favors she dispenses. Thus, in many cases the obligation to care for a mother after *jia* division and in her old age is undertaken in good cheer. Her visits are anticipated with delight by her son and his family.

Ancestor worship falls in the category of familial obligation that one returns in exchange for rights received. In the absence of a significant inheritance, a Taiwanese child may be lax in making good on this obligation; one study found that only in the cases of substantial inheritance did children conscientiously complete the ritual observances due to deceased parents.<sup>20</sup> A sizable inheritance of the *jia* estate obviously enlivens the memory and makes more secure ritual attention to parents as they dwell in another realm. A strongly felt right received is likely to make a son feel a more eternal sense of obligation.

To her own parents the female is obligated to learn the domestic arts, help with chores, assist with young children, and maintain a healthy, energetic physical demeanor that will make her an attractive partner in marriage. From her parents she receives proper training in the required domestic skills, cultivation of her moral character, and proper treatment as she is offered for marriage. The generous dowry a woman receives upon marriage—part of

which goes to the husband's *jia*, part of which is shared by members of her *fang*, and a sizable portion of which is for her own use to dispose of as she wishes—represents a form of inheritance; it is smaller than that received by her brothers, but so are her eternal obligations to her parents.<sup>21</sup> After marriage, a woman's prime responsibility to her own parents lies in her proper conduct as a wife, which reflects her parents' skill in raising children and makes her natal *jia* and village good sources of marital partners. Her parents will monitor how she is treated in her husband's *jia* and oversee intervention should treatment be truly cruel.

Thus, familial rights and obligations operate within the rubric of patriarchy but offer both men and women some form of inheritance, promise of care in old age, and eternal sustenance of the soul in exchange for rendering of obligations according to social role. Social role and familial role have been so closely related in Taiwanese society that the student of Taiwan comes to observe numerous social extensions of the familial ideal.

#### SOCIAL EXTENSIONS OF THE FAMILIAL IDEAL

Southeastern China, from which most of Taiwan's Chinese population emigrated, is famous for the number and extent of those social formations known as lineages.<sup>22</sup> Lineages form when a number of related *jia* agree to endow an ancestral hall or otherwise provide for the common care of ancestral tablets. The lineage primarily honors an ancestor to whom all members of the constituent *jia* can trace blood relationship. Usually this ancestor in some way brought his kinfolk great honor, whether by success in business, service in the community, or attainment of a covered government position. Implied in any measure of success would be the wherewithal to leave behind a large estate, a substantial portion of which relatives would set aside to endow the lineage and its hall in the great ancestor's honor. From income generated by the estate, lineage leaders could invest in land and enterprises from which all male lineage members would derive benefit. Profits generated by the estate could be used to establish schools, fund relief efforts in behalf of lineage and community in times of natural disaster, establish local militia to provide for the physical security of lineage members, provide welfare services for poor lineage members or to meet special needs, and conduct lavish rituals and provide bountiful feasts in honor of ancestors. Having the greater capability to endow the lineage estate, families of substantial means were more likely to form lineages than were families of poor or moderate means. Relatively humble folk, though, might form lineage organizations. Through these strong ritual connections they would secure networks conducive to common

advancement and, especially, joint security in areas short on the rule of law and government policing efforts.

Provision of common security was of utmost concern to people on the Taiwanese fringe of traditional empire. Families related by traceable ancestry came together to enhance their power to control land, water, and other resources to which others sought to stake claims. On the mainland, lineage territory tended to expand as contiguous units whereby a particular lineage became the chief power in a given region. This pattern was in evidence to some extent on Taiwan, but the island is also notable for having produced dispersed lineages, linking kinfolk in different and noncontiguous villages, frequently with the ancestral hall located in one village to which nonresident lineage members traveled on particularly important ritual occasions. Because individuals with common needs of security and mutual aid, regardless of blood relations, immigrated at different times, multiple-surnamed villages are numerous. With the arrival of more or fewer kinfolk, particular kinship groups tended to grow more dominant within the village. In time two or three lineages would typically dominate, their power enhanced by links to lineage members in other villages.

Given frontier conditions, considerable leniency was frequently exercised in the matter of proving descent. Similarly, people of the same surname might come together to form a clan, an organization anthropologists distinguish from lineage. Members of a clan claim ancestry of questionable veracity. Descent lines are spurious, and the link to the putative common ancestor is for many, if not all, clan members fictitious. Lineage members generally offer compelling proof of ancestry. Taiwanese people, including anthropologists within Taiwan, are more flexible and less exact when referring to lineage and clan than are Western anthropologists; trained anthropologists in Taiwan recognize the formal distinction but argue that the Taiwanese frontier tended to blur the distinction and that trying to establish it involves terminological difficulty in the Chinese language.<sup>23</sup> Lineages, clans and hybrid forms live on to provide support networks for many in Taiwan today.

What is striking about the clan and the more flexible lineage is the attractiveness of the familial ideal beyond the *jia* form. The value that the Taiwanese place on this attachment to kinship is seen also in relationships that they have outside the family. In single-surnamed villages dominated by people with lineage ties, kinship terms are naturally used. Even in multisurnamed communities, villagers are given to referring to one another in kinship terms. They use subtle cues to distinguish real kin from close friends, but they call one another uncle, aunt, elder brother, younger sister, cousin, and so on. A wife marrying into her husband's family and establishing herself in her new

village acquires a whole set of new relatives genetically unrelated to her. She refers to these people as father, mother, younger brother, and older sister. Her husband likewise employs limited kinship terms when addressing his wife's family upon their visit to her natal home; her children do not live close to their maternal grandparents, but they employ similar terms with certain differences to distinguish paternal uncle from maternal uncle and the like. A common differentiating character is *nei* (internal) for paternal kin and *wai* (external) for maternal kin.<sup>24</sup>

One study shows how relatives by marriage are more important than suggested by much of the scholarly literature, which emphasizes the patriarchal nature of Taiwanese society.<sup>25</sup> This study emphasizes how ties to a daughter-in-law's family have the potential to link people of two villages in matters that speak to their common good. These associations with maternal relatives, and through them to people in other villages, have become more important as economic and political opportunities have become diverse and abundant. Often it is the well-connected person, someone with close maternal kin in communities other than his own, who succeeds in a real estate or construction venture or who prevails over an opponent in a closely contested political event.

Long a tradition in Taiwan, sworn brotherhoods are fascinating extensions of the familial ideal.<sup>26</sup> These associations are classically sworn by two or more close friends who seek to strengthen an already established bond. In a temple ritual, the friends swear an oath of mutual assistance and loyalty. They offer incense, and then burn the written text containing their names as parties to the agreement and the terms upon which they swear their loyalty, thus enabling the document to rise to the celestial archives. The new brothers by oath share food and wine; in the midst of their meal, they cut their fingers to let their blood flow together into a common cup of wine. The newly sworn brothers then drink this wine, blended with the blood of their now eternal bond. Their families become, on some level, families of each other; thus they use kinship terms for members of each other's families, entailing dowry contributions, funeral expenses, and even mourning obligations.

Sworn brotherhood is a social extension of the kinship ideal, which originated on the Chinese mainland. The height of its literary expression comes in Luo Guanzhong's classic fourteenth-century novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*), which focuses on the union of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei and their daring deeds in the period just after the fall of the great Han dynasty. On Taiwan, Xu Yu's *Traditional Folktales of Taiwan* (*Taiwan minjian liuchuan gushi*) heavily features the adventures of two sworn brothers. The popular guards depicted on the entrance doors to many temples

in Taiwan, General Fan and General Xie, are sworn brothers famous for their rock solid mutual fidelity; and some groupings of local gods are considered sworn brothers by their adherents. In contemporary Taiwan sworn brotherhoods frequently bring together from different parts of the island migrants who agree to loan each other money, encourage each other's business enterprise, and support each other in disputes with nongroup members. A unique case in the city of Tainan found two groups of sworn brothers with a linking member coming together to solve a sticky situation brought on by the misdeeds of a sworn brother in one of the groups; successful resolution of this incident proved so rewarding that thenceforth members regarded each other as half-brothers, further expanding networks of human support and economic cooperation. A sworn brotherhood founded by eight male migrants to Taipei in 1954 eventually expanded to twenty members, with alternate expulsions for "outrageous behavior" and additions of members holding some advantage for the group. Two of the new members transformed the organization into a "sworn siblinghood": These two were females admitted because their membership held advantages for the "fraternity's" economic network.<sup>27</sup> This leads us to consider the position of women as they take on new roles and acquire new status in a society into which patriarchy has traditionally been woven as surely as Taiwanese factory workers today stitch Nike cross-trainers.

#### FEMALE INDIGNITY AND DIGNITY

Clearly, women are subordinate in the traditional Taiwanese kinship system. As in many other premodern systems, efforts to subordinate and control women were undertaken by men who both admired and scorned them. Men's awe of women's ability to bear and give birth to children resulted in belief systems that attached great importance to procreation even as the physical processes involved in procreation were scorned. Emily Martin Ahern has carefully studied the power and pollution of women in Taiwanese society and provided fascinating detail on associated beliefs.<sup>28</sup> The sex act itself is held to be polluting. One who has recently had intercourse is forbidden to participate in religious rituals, for example, or even to come into the presence of a god's image. Anyone, male or female, who has come into contact with menstrual fluids is likewise unworthy of worshipping the gods. As a practical matter, women rather casually dispose of menstrual napkins or pads in ways that return them to the earth; this results in a sullying of the earth and certain ritual taboos: A god's image may not be carried under a clothes-drying pole, for instance, because feet soiled with dirt, and thus potentially the pollution



of women, have passed through clothes hung out to dry. Both mother and newborn child are soiled with birth fluids and are therefore confined to the house for a month to spare the highest god in the traditional pantheon, Tian Gong, the sight of them. Elaborate rituals are carried out to protect a child from permanent harm due to birth pollution and also due to contact with other polluting occurrences, most notably death. The Kitchen God dwells dangerously close to where women work and is easily angered if washcloths, baskets, or clothes, all of which in some way have potentially come into contact with the bodily fluids of women, should brush against the stove. Female pollution displeases the greater gods: But women frequently lead ritual observances to relatively minor gods such as the Bed Mother or those designed to appease the souls of dead ancestors and hungry ghosts—in their association with sex, birth, and death, all subject to the kind of pollution tied to women.

Life and eternity, though, are also associated with sex, birth, and death. Here, of course, lies the power of women and the origin of the awe and fear men have of them. A child's very soul is held to reside for four months in the placenta. Indeed, menstrual blood is perceived as the physical essence from which springs life. Marjorie Topley powerfully illustrates the consequences that accrue should women choose to withhold their sexuality, their birth-giving potential, and their service to families in the raising of children.<sup>29</sup> She describes young women in the sericulture economy of Guangdong Province who swore oaths to one another to refrain from marriage and to live together in sisterhood. Given the women's unusual ability to make money in the sericulture industry, many families tolerated their unorthodox life plans. In the families that held to the traditional marriage ideal, women intent on following through with their oaths bound their bodies to make intercourse impossible and ran away as soon as possible, never to return. In Taiwan, becoming a nun in a Buddhist convent has afforded and continues to offer a similar respite from unwanted marriage. More tragically, the old society featured enough cases to be notable of women who looked at their life options as so abhorrent that they ended their lives by their own hand.

More typically, women strive mightily to carve positions for themselves upon the stone of patriarchy. Even as water, according to the Taoist image, shapes with its patient power the apparently tougher stone, so women leave enduring marks on the patriarchy. They form uterine families. They work to maximize the advantages of their *fāng*. They shape community opinion through their verbal communication. They actively manage the household and handle its day-to-day finances. They take an active role in the social life of the community and handle rituals that, though polluting, are the very

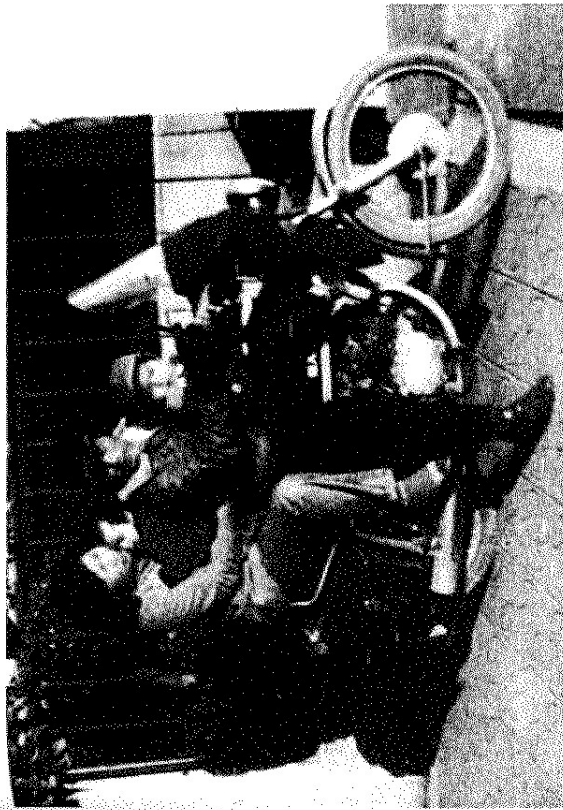
stuff of life in this world and in eternity. In the last decade or two of their lives they experience the love and gratitude of children and grandchildren. Frequently a woman will rise to the position of matriarch, wielding influence over her sons after the death of their father, making decisions for the *jiā*, having patiently arrived at her position like some queen who outlives the male heirs to the throne.

Even in the traditional kinship system, women hold great power and achieve high dignity, finding ways to avert their putative pollution and to overcome the indignities thrust upon them. Taiwan at century's end highlights the powerful potential of women more than ever before.

#### THE TAIWANESE FAMILY AT THE CLOSE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

At the end of the twentieth century there are two seemingly irreconcilable phenomena in the area of family and gender. The first is the durability of the extended family ideal. In his sociological study of the changing family pattern in Taiwan in the course of modernization, Chun-kit Joseph Wong showed that Taiwan is experiencing a definite trend toward fewer children, the result of a combination of an aggressive government birth control effort, the realities of crowded urban life, the increase in two-wage-earning couples, and modern attitudes as revealed in a cross-island survey.<sup>30</sup> Wong also found movement toward the nuclear family, but even among those revealing "transitional" or "modern" (as opposed to "traditional") attitudes and behavior, he found that either stem or extended family forms prevailed in half of all cases. When people were asked to cite their ideal family form, the stem and extended arrangements made similar, even slightly better, showings.

Wong's data support our own observations and anecdotal findings made during our latest period of residence on Taiwan during 1988–1990. The farm family Huang, with which Gary spent much time, came from humble origins but had prospered through hard work. The family was very fortunate in the traditional view; it had produced three sons, one of whom had attended National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei and secured a teaching position in the county seat of Chiayi, some twenty-five miles to the north of the Huang's home village. This family was well in touch with modern life through this son's residence in the major city of the island and a smaller city of considerable population and local importance, as well as their access to mass media and convenient transportation to the reasonably close cities of Tainan and Kaohsiung. Even though the elder son had married, the family had not yet divided its family estate, and Gary's discussions with the middle son indicated that even after the other sons married, immediate division of



8.2 An urban family of the 1980s using the most available personal transportation system.

the estate was not a foregone conclusion. The unmarried sons lived with their father and contributed their labor when they were not working in the industrial district established in their county during the early 1980s. Other cases that came to our attention during our residence and a follow-up visit during the summer of 1995 suggested to us that the familial ideal is very much alive in contemporary Taiwan.

Phenomenon number two, though, seems to threaten that ideal: the rising position and increased status of women. Factory labor has provided a personal source of income for many women. They can live on their own if they wish, and those working too far away may take up residence in company dormitories; but most young women remain at home before they marry, making powerful contributions to the *jiz* economy. Their financial contributions to family well-being have made them ever more insistent that their parents allot a generous dowry to them when they marry. Although they contribute to the joint estate if it is as yet undivided, they are conscious of the amount of their contributions and strive to take a substantial sum with them when they marry.<sup>31</sup>

Marriage rituals as described in the early pages of the chapter have increasingly been simplified and modernized. Wedding dress, transportation, and ritual have changed with contemporary society. The traditional forms provide the points of reference from which contemporary styles have evolved, and in most cases the symbolism is still decidedly patriarchal. But romantic love plays a greater role in marital unions now, and women have a higher sense of their rights in what they see as a partnership. Western styles of marital dress are very influential; the Taiwanese are inordinately fond of parading for photographers in beautiful natural surroundings, the woman clad in flowing white wedding gown, the man in tux or suit of Western origin.

Women who remain in rural villages can still fit rather neatly into the patriarchal system with its paritocal residence. Taiwan's population is well dispersed by the standards of developing and recently developed countries, so many people do remain in rural villages, even if the bulk of their income is not derived from agricultural sources. Some young *fango* go with *jiz* blessing to larger or smaller cities to establish businesses or take up other employment. Taiwan's rapid economic development has featured small business prosperity as a key feature. Small family-owned businesses also accommodate the traditional patriarchal ideal well; an energetic young wife, perhaps bringing a substantial dowry largely of her own making into her marriage and the *fango's* business, can work close to her children while at the same time helping to run the business. In many cases she effectively runs the business while her husband seeks other employment in the same town or city, very much in accordance with the tradition of maximally efficient use of family labor.

Opportunity to attend colleges and universities, both in Taiwan and abroad, is also available to women, and they have seized the chance to train themselves for corporate business and the professions. Still greatly outnumbered by men, they face an old boy's network that makes that in the United States look insignificant by comparison, yet they persevere and they endure. The professional woman is now a fact of the urban landscape in Taiwan. As women become highly educated, and as they contribute more powerfully to the economies of the family and the society in general, they become more insistent on their rights. These rights were officially secured under the Marriage Law of 1931, passed under Guomindang administration on the mainland as part of a push for modern change in economics and society. By this law, women were given formal equality with men in such matters as divorce and inheritance. Until recently women were in general hesitant to invoke the law in the face of family pressure and the patriarchal tradition. At the close of the twentieth century, women are increasingly demanding political and economic equality with men. Women have the formal right to equal inher-

itance, for example. This flies in the face of Taiwanese tradition, and until recent years women did not challenge that tradition in significant numbers. Beginning in the 1970s, however, women began to maneuver for the best share they could secure from their natal family's estate, pushing for their rights as far as family harmony would allow, then backing off with something less than equal inheritance but much more than they would have inherited under the fully traditional system.<sup>32</sup> In the course of the 1980s and 1990s, a vanguard of urban women has pushed for full equality in all matters of economy, politics, and family. In the case of divorce, the woman's position has been greatly bolstered when pushed into the courts; there now occur cases in which the wife gains custody of the children. Unthinkable just a few years ago, this offers a great challenge to the notion of patriarchy, which has anchored the Taiwanese sociopolitical system for centuries.

Traditional Taiwanese notions of family and kinship continue to influence the development of contemporary Taiwan. The notion of the extended family as an efficient economic unit with the potential to become a corporation, probably small but with unlimited possibilities for expansion, has contributed powerfully to the island's astounding growth. The Taiwanese ideal of family and kinship creates great pressure for success and puts a premium on material prosperity. Women are now fed by the same ethic of success that has driven men, and they strive for material prosperity through increasingly independent routes. It is likely that essential elements of the Taiwanese system of family and kinship will endure into the twenty-first century; it also seems that an ever-increasing number of women will demand parity with their brethren. How this contradiction gains synthesis will be a development that all who hold an interest in this fascinating society will watch closely.

#### NOTES

1. Martin C. Yang, *A Chinese Village: Taitou, Shantung Province* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 103-22; Hugh D. R. Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 26-28; Margery Wolf, "Child Training and the Chinese Family," in Arthur P. Wolf, ed., *Studies in Chinese Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), pp. 224-27.
2. Chun-kit Joseph Wong, *The Changing Chinese Family Pattern in Taiwan* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1981), pp. 84-87.
3. Yang, p. 111.
4. G. William Skinner, "Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (November 1964), pp. 3-43; Lawrence W. Crissman, "The Structure of Local and Regional Systems," in Emily Martin Ahern and

Hill Gates, eds., *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1981), pp. 116-24, especially pp. 120-21.

5. Chen Chung-min, "Dowry and Inheritance," in Hsieh Jih-chang and Chuang Ying-chang, eds., *The Chinese Family and Its Ritual Behavior* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985), pp. 16-127, especially p. 118.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.
7. Baker, p. 1.
8. Myron L. Cohen, *House United, House Divided: A Chinese Family in Taiwan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); see also Cohen's articles, "Lineage Development and the Family in China," in Hsieh Jih-chang and Chuang Ying-chang, eds., *The Chinese Family and Its Ritual Behavior* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985), pp. 210-18; and "Developmental Process in the Chinese Domestic Group," in Arthur P. Wolf, ed., *Studies in Chinese Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), pp. 183-98.
9. Wong, pp. 65-67, and 87-89; Baker, pp. 45-47.
10. Baker, p. 22.
11. Margery Wolf, "Child Training," p. 227; and her classic work, *The House of Lim* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), pp. 75-98. See also Yang, pp. 60-61.
12. Arthur P. Wolf, "Chinese Family Size: A Myth Revitalized," pp. 30-49, in Hsieh Jih-chang and Chuang Ying-chang, eds., *The Chinese Family and Its Ritual Behavior* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985); Cohen, "Developmental Process," pp. 183-98.
13. Yang, pp. 65-66.
14. Margery Wolf, "Child Training," p. 232; Baker, pp. 19-21.
15. Margery Wolf, *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 52-37 and 164-67.
16. Margery Wolf, "Child Training," pp. 237-38.
17. Division of the *jia* estate occurs at different times in the development of the *jia* group according to the precise geographical, economic, and social factors prevailing. Myron Cohen found great incentives operating to keep the extended *jia* together in a tobacco growing village of Taiwan's Pingtung County (see note 8). Burton Pasternak found similar cohesiveness for different reasons in a rice and sugarcane economy of central Taiwan. See Burton Pasternak, *Kinship and Community in Two Chinese Villages* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972); see also his articles, "The Sociology of Irrigation: Two Taiwanese Villages," in Arthur P. Wolf, ed., *Studies in Chinese Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), pp. 199-219; and "Economics and Ecology," in Emily Martin Ahern and Hill Gates, eds., *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1981), pp. 151-83. Sung Lung-sheng has found size of a long-established *jia* estate to be a persuasive factor in extending *jia* longevity. See Sung Lung-sheng, "Property and Family Division," in Ahern and Gates, pp. 361-78. Cohen found labor demands and the need of coordination of economic activities inherent in the

tobacco economy to be powerful incentives for keeping the *jia* estate undivided, the *jia* group in an extended arrangement, and the *jia* economy in corporate form. Where local irrigation needs require careful attention and cooperation, Pasternak found, *jia* groups were more likely to maintain unity, prolonging the life of an extended *jia*. Sung found that if a *jia* estate was largely an inheritance passed down through the generations rather than a current creation of individual *fang* economic activities, extended *jia* arrangements were common; if, however, the current contributions of the *fang* were the larger share or a high proportion of the *jia* estate, individual *fang* were likely to withdraw from the *jia* group, demand their share of the relatively small estate, and thenceforth rely strictly on their own economic endeavors. Whereas Confucian ideological pressures motivate Taiwanese folk to strive for the extended family form, fragile human relationships generally threaten to undermine that ideal; the economic advantages or disadvantages of the extended *jia* as an arrangement usually tip the scales one way or another.

18. Hsieh Jih-chang, "Meal Rotation," in Hsieh Jih-chang and Chuang Ying-chang, eds., *The Chinese Family and Its Ritual Behavior* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985), pp. 70-83.

19. Margery Wolf, "Child Training," pp. 224-31; Yang, pp. 57-58.

20. Emily M. Ahern, *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1973), pp. 149-62.

21. Chen Chung-min, in Hsieh and Chuang, pp. 124-26.

22. Maurice Freedman, *Lineage Organization in Southeast China* (London: Athlone Press, 1958), and his *Chinese Lineage and Society* (London: Athlone Press, 1966). See also Baker, pp. 49-67, and the following articles in Hsieh Jih-chang and Chuang Ying-chang, eds., *The Chinese Family and Its Ritual Behavior* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985): Burton Pasternak, "The Disquieting Chinese Lineage and Its Anthropological Relevance," pp. 165-91; David Y. H. Wu, "The Conditions of Development and Decline of Chinese Lineages and the Formation of Ethnic Groups," pp. 192-209; and Myron L. Cohen, "Lineage Development and the Family in China," pp. 210-18.

23. David Wu, pp. 195-96 and 204-7.

24. Yang, pp. 69-72.

25. Bernard Gallin and Rita S. Gallin, "Matrilateral and Affinal Relationships in Chinese Society," in Jih-chang Hsieh and Chuang Ying-chang, eds., *The Chinese Family and Its Ritual Behavior* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985), pp. 101-16.

26. David K. Jordan, "Sworn Brotherhoods: A Study in Chinese Ritual Kinship," in Jih-chang Hsieh and Chuang Ying-chang, eds., *The Chinese Family and Its Ritual Behavior* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985), pp. 232-62.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

28. Emily Martin Ahern, "The Power and Pollution of Chinese Women," in Arthur Wolf, ed., *Studies in Chinese Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), pp. 269-90.

29. Marjorie Topley, "Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwangtung," in Arthur Wolf, ed., *Studies in Chinese Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), pp. 247-68.

30. Wong, pp. 1-26.

31. Chen Chung-min, in Hsieh and Chuang, pp. 122-23.

32. Tang Mei-chun, "Equal Right and Domestic Structure," in Hsieh Jih-chang and Chuang Ying-chang, eds., *The Chinese Family and Its Ritual Behavior* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985), pp. 61-69.

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