

Introduction

How does one describe the cultural specificity of the production of *guanxi* in Fengjia? Marcel Mauss's conception of a "total" social phenomenon . . . at once legal, economic, religious, aesthetic, morphological and so on" (1967:76) is a compelling starting point. In at least two senses, *guanxi* "totalize" phenomena often assumed to be separate. First, as suggested by Mauss's concept of "total prestation" and Sun's theorization of *ganqing*, *guanxi* simultaneously produce individuals and the social. Second, the production of *guanxi* simultaneously creates human feeling and material obligation.

To emphasize the material obligations involved in *guanxi*, some sinologists translate the term as "particularistic tie" (e.g., Jacobs 1979; Walder 1986). By occasionally using *guanxi* to refer to the more material aspects of social reciprocity in Fengjia and *ganqing* to refer to the human feelings involved, I in one sense follow this translation. However, I also mean to critique it. *Guanxi* involve human feelings and *ganqing* involves material obligation. The terms are often interchangeable, and my usage reflects this mutuality.¹ The more *ganqing* there is, the closer the *guanxi*. The closer the *guanxi*, the more it can be relied upon to bring economic, political, and social benefits. Such benefits in turn produce stronger *ganqing*. At most, *ganqing* and material obligation are analytically separable as moments of (what Mauss recognized as) a single process. In practice, Fengjia residents did not usually undertake one to gain the other, a notion difficult to convey in English sentences.

Several pitfalls should be avoided here. An economism that privileges material motives in *guanxi* must be shunned.² Likewise, the view that *guanxi* is a sort of dialectical operation that bridges a Cartesian divide between material and spiritual relations is inappropriate. Economic relationships are severed from neither emotional relationships nor the production of self, so there is no divide to bridge. In *guanxi*, feeling and instrumentality are a totality. Additionally, one should not romanticize *guanxi*. First, just as one may abuse, cheat in, and lie about

either affairs of the heart or economic transactions, so may one abuse, cheat in, and lie about *guanxi*. Secondly, the unity of economy and *ganqing* implies that matters of the heart involve economic calculation as much as it implies that exchange has a moral dimension. As Jonathan Parry (1986) points out (cf. Bloch 1989:168–169), Mauss is often misread as opposing morally governed gift exchange to amoral commodity exchange. A more nuanced reading sees the gift as transcending the Western bourgeois opposition of amoral commodity exchange and moral kinship. Likewise, in Fengjia, *guanxi* can be seen as unifying what Western bourgeois relationships separate: material exchange and affectionate feelings.

However, though *guanxi* may be more total (in a Maussian sense) than Western social relationships, they do not constitute a generic form of social totality. As Bloch (1989) points out, Mauss uses his notion of total social phenomena to discuss “the forms and functions of exchange” in all “archaic” (i.e., noncapitalist) societies. What Mauss saw as a similar totality in the nonbourgeois exchange of so many times and places, I prefer to see as a series of contrasts to the unique singularity of modern, Western, bourgeois exchange. There are many, historically situated ways for social practices to be “total,” and the production of *guanxi* is just one of these. If one follows writers like Mauss and Polanyi (1957), the Western bourgeois revolution was precisely one of prying economic relationships out of their embeddedness in social life. Consequently, Western states that have experienced bourgeois revolutions have seen the emergence of two separate spheres of human relations: one venal and “self-interested,” governed by contracts and the rules of the market; the other pure and altruistic, governed by emotional spontaneity and above economic considerations. Thus, to say that *guanxi* are a “total social phenomenon” in a sense says more about ourselves than about the Chinese. Our history is one of the bourgeois reification of economic activity. Chinese history is not.³

The six chapters of part I present specific practices of *guanxi* production in Fengjia village from 1988 to 1990. Some might sum up these activities with the term “village reciprocity” and leave it at that. However, a generic “village reciprocity” is no more revealing than a generic “total social phenomenon.” Both are empty labels that derive their significance primarily from the contrast they evoke with the West, where they are supposedly absent. To go beyond such contrasts, toward an understanding of local forms of intersubjectivity and local processes of inclusion, exclusion, and power, one must examine the details of actual practice.

1 Everyday *Guanxi* Production



In 1988–90 Fengjia, every time one asked for or granted a favor, expressed sympathy, or called on a friend—that is, every time one invoked *guanxi* to achieve something in the world—one metonymically¹ re-created that *guanxi*. Thus, in addition to the elaborate organization of *guanxi* production on ritual occasions, Fengjia residents (re)produced *guanxi* in their daily lives. Indeed, many of the techniques of ritual *guanxi* production—labor exchange, the use of kinship names, the embodiment of *ganqing*—came from everyday activity. After a brief introduction to a local typology of interpersonal relationships, this chapter examines the everyday techniques of *guanxi* production.

Types of *Guanxi*

In 1988–90 Fengjia, most residents recognized four basic categories of friendly relationships: family members (*benjiaren*), relatives (*qinqi*), fellow villagers (*xiangqin*) and friends (*pengyou*). These categories overlapped, and the same person (even within the same relationship) could be seen as a member of several categories, depending on the circumstances. Family members certainly included all those who lived together as one economic unit. Following village administrative categories, I refer to such units as households (*hu*). Depending on context, members of agnatically related households might also be considered family members. However, such agnates could also count as fellow villagers (*xiangqin*). The flexibility of the term “family member” and the importance of the category “fellow villager,” which included households of different surnames, reflected the near absence of formal lineage organization in 1988–90 Fengjia.²

Affines were usually referred to as “relatives” (*qinqi*), a term embracing three major categories: mother’s sister’s family (*yiyi jia*), father’s sister’s family (*gugu jia*), and mother’s mother’s family (*laolao*

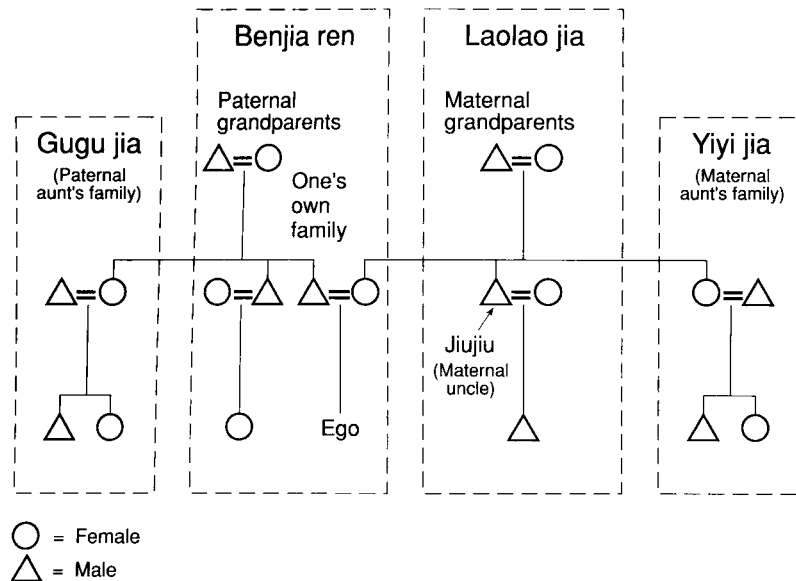


Figure 5 Kinship relations in Fengjia.

jia). Since village kinship was reckoned patrilineally, the last category (*laolao jia*) additionally included all of the mother's brother's (*jiujiu*) families. Because of a tendency toward village exogamy, these relatives usually lived in different villages. However, where they had married within the village, they also counted as fellow villagers.

Villagers had friends living in and outside of Fengjia. However, a friend from within the village was usually categorized as a fellow villager. One exception (and an example of the situation specificity of relationships) was at wedding ceremonies, where those who gave "congratulatory gifts" were considered "friends" whether they came from inside or outside the village.

Two caveats further complicate this terminology. First is the messy fact that in patrilocal marriages women "change" families. The completeness of this transfer, I will argue, was a constantly negotiated social problem. As a consequence, married women at times referred to their natal relatives as "family members" instead of "relatives." Second, relationships were constituted between households as well as between their individual members. Because the general unit of economic accounting was the household, and because *guanxi* always involved material obligation, the *guanxi* of individuals always involved the other members of

their households. Though household members might differ over which *guanxi* were most important, gifts were usually seen as coming from households as units.

Embodying *Ganqing*

To convey *ganqing*, it must have a discernible form. Gift giving, toasting, and serving food at banquets, and ritualized decorum like bows and *ketou* (kowitz) are all methods of materializing *ganqing*. Here, I would like briefly to describe the generation of *ganqing* through its direct embodiment in specific human emotions. This embodiment should not be understood as the external representation of an underlying pre-given reality. Rather, it is a claim about what one wants a relationship to be in the future that participates in the reconstitution of future reality. The sentimentality of the present shapes the future rather than representing a static past.³

The embodiment of *ganqing* was important to both ritual and everyday practices of *guanxi* production. In ritual, such embodiment was orchestrated or at least expected. At funerals there were specific times for women to wail and for *xiaozhe* (direct patrilineal descendants of the deceased) to weep. The GPCR ban on interclass weeping at funerals was clearly aimed at prohibiting the interclass *guanxi* production that results from such embodiments of *ganqing*. At weddings the bride was expected to act embarrassed, the groom's father happy, and the groom ambivalent. At a "dowry party" (*song hezi*)⁴ the bride's parents should be sad (because their daughter is about to leave home). That these *ganqing* were expected in no sense made them less "authentic." When witnessing such displays, I was always moved by the embodiment of powerful *ganqing*. However, such orchestration does imply a notion of emotional authenticity different from that typically recognized in American pop psychology. Few in Fengjia would acknowledge a "true" emotional life, where "spontaneous" feelings well up from an utterly individual heart regardless of the surrounding social circumstances.

Though not orchestrated, embodied *ganqing* played an important role in everyday *guanxi* production as well. On the few occasions when I was sick in the village, I received a stream of visitors. Though I only wanted to rest by myself, read English novels, and generally pretend I wasn't in Fengjia, I had to deal with well-meaning friends. On one such occasion I must have let my irritation show; one man said, "You should

be happy to have so many people embody concern [*guanxin*].” “Why?” I asked. “Because if they didn’t embody concern, they wouldn’t be your friends any more.”

On another day there was a fire in the cornstarch factory. People throughout the village grabbed buckets and ran over to the factory. There were two faucets near the fire where buckets could be filled. After filling their buckets, these helpers ran them over to men standing on ladders who passed them to others on the roof who doused the fire. There were more people filling buckets than the faucets could accommodate; lines formed behind the faucets; people began pushing and butting. Eventually, the fire was put out without much damage. Afterwards, I asked Teacher Feng why people would butt in line in such a situation. He explained “when a lot of collective equipment is endangered, everyone wants to communicate concern.” Embodying concern generates a collective *ganqing* and helped Fengjia residents manage both their individual *guanxi* and their *guanxi* with the village as a whole.

Of course, individuals also embodied *ganqing* on more mundane occasions. Once a man selling watermelons bicycled into the village loudly hawking his produce. A woman immediately walked out from her courtyard and yelled at him, angrily proclaiming that he had cheated another resident on his last trip. No one bought anything and the hawker went on to the next village. The anger of the woman embodied a *ganqing* in sympathy with her previously cheated fellow villager that seemingly swayed all those who might otherwise have bought some watermelon. I would not reduce all emotional activity in Fengjia to the single dimension of *guanxi* production, but I believe that in many contexts the embodiment of emotion is interpreted in precisely this fashion.

Visiting, Exchanging Favors, Helping Out

Visiting, whether to lend a hand or to socialize, was another important practice of *guanxi* production. In hot weather, those with free time set up stools outside their doors and encouraged friends and relatives to sit and chat. In the winter, friends gathered around stoves and drank tea. At times of special need the visiting of friends and relatives was especially significant. It fulfilled and re-created material obligations, materialized *ganqing*, and hence metonymically reproduced *guanxi*.

As my own experience demonstrated, illness was an important occasion for visiting and embodying concern. Many considered the *ganqing*

created in illness visits as actively contributing to curing the sick. The temporary misfortunes of the Zhang family can serve as an example. Mr. Zhang’s grandson, Ying, had broken his leg. Originally it didn’t affect Mr. Zhang too much. There were lots of people visiting his grandson, so he could go out if he needed. However, then Mr. Zhang’s wife got sick. He said, “After Ying broke his leg, she worried so much she didn’t eat right. Then she got a fever.” With two close relatives sick in different households, his visiting burdens were doubled and he couldn’t go out any more. Many fellow villagers visited the boy. Mr. Zhang divided his time between Ying and his wife. Mr. Zhang’s two daughters, who had long been married and were living in different villages, took turns visiting their mother. They came on alternate days. After two weeks Zhang’s wife got better, and he started going out again.

If an old person became seriously ill, friends, relatives, and fellow villagers visited from all around. They often brought gifts of food and were given tea to drink. As mentioned in the introduction, my visit to the family of a stroke victim led to some of my closest field relations. During that visit the house was full of visitors. One of the victim’s sons told me that his relatives had come out of filial piety and respect (*xiao* and *zunjing*). He said, “Old people’s lives haven’t been easy, they suffered a lot to bring us up, so we are very happy that everyone could come today.” The wife of the stroke victim seemed surprisingly relaxed. I suggested, “This must be worrying for you.” She replied, “Why should I worry when so many people have come to visit?” For this woman and her son, the *ganqing* and *guanxi* created by so much visiting allowed an otherwise depressing situation to become somewhat positive.

Ellen Judd (1989), who also did research in Shandong Province in the late 1980s, writes of the important “affective and moral ties” (I would say *ganqing* and *guanxi*) between a bride and her natal home (*niangjia*) and argues that a woman’s natal home and mother-in-law’s home (*pojia*) make competing claims on their daughter’s time and services. This tension was directly relevant to visiting practices. Women often returned to their natal villages to socialize, embody concern for sick parents, participate in rituals, or just help out. Some women took turns working each others’ fields so that each would have regular opportunities to return to their natal villages. However, in contrast to Judd’s emphasis on the competitive aspect of these relationships, I only once heard a woman complaining that her daughter-in-law was spending too much time at her natal home. More often I heard the calculation that a daughter-in-law’s natal visits could improve affinal *guanxi*.



Figure 6 Neighbors assisting with house construction.

The larger life projects of house building and marriage provided opportunities for the exchange of favors and *guanxi* building that were neither matters of daily activity nor formal ritual. Almost all marriages in 1988–90 Fengjia were negotiated through matchmakers (*meiren*). Households relied heavily on their networks of friends and affinal relations to help find spouses. The successful location of a marriage partner often led to a long-lasting *guanxi* between the new couple's families and the matchmaker. Villagers also invoked *guanxi* when undertaking large construction projects (figure 6). For example, one household decided to enlarge the gate to their courtyard so that they could more easily move a newly acquired horsecart in and out of their yard. The project involved tearing down the old gate and adjacent brick wall and building new ones, including an ornate frontpiece. The family acquired the building materials and informed their friends and neighbors. On the arranged day, scores of young and middle-aged men came over. Households friendly to the family in question all tried to send someone. Some households also sent women who helped serve tea and informal meals when the men took breaks. The project was finished in one afternoon and seemed as much a social occasion as a building project.

Patterns of regular interhousehold help varied extensively among families. Practical needs and abilities dictated the availability of opportunities to exchange favors and create *guanxi*. However, a few examples can illustrate the more typical sorts of exchange. One childless,

elderly widow looked after her neighbors' grandchildren and in turn received help with her fields. A household that ran a commercial vegetable garden took advantage of their frequent market trips to shop for their neighbors. In turn, they asked for help when the labor demands of vegetable gardening exceeded household capacity. Once, I watched an old man spreading his wheat out in the street to dry. A sudden change in the weather threatened to soak his grain, but a half dozen men and women from neighboring households came running over and managed to sweep it up before the rain began in earnest. He told me his son had done the same for his neighbors on other occasions.

The exchange of *ganqing* within households likewise depended on particular circumstances. The taking over of certain chores by a family member—say, clothes washing for a daughter-in-law or draught animal care by a grandfather—constituted an interdependence that continually re-created the *guanxi* of that household. Special care in the performance of more personal duties—preparing bath water for a tired and dirty farmworker, mending a cherished shirt, or cooking a favorite dish—embodied particular *ganqing*. Tensions between household members could be alleviated or exacerbated by the manner in which such duties were performed. Perhaps most basically, eating together (both in the sense of consuming the same dishes at the same time and in the sense of utilizing foodstuffs purchased from a collective budget) constituted household relationships. Not only was sharing meals a matter of spending time together and collectively enjoying the fruits of family labor, it also was an occasion for specific contributions to the family economy through frugality. By eating less expensive items or by consuming only what would have otherwise been wasted, particular family members, often older ones, embodied *ganqing* for (and made claims on) the other members of their household.

Certainly the everyday exchange of favors within and between households has always been a practical matter contextualized in the ever-changing socioeconomy of the present. The daily patterns of *guanxi* production were quite different during the precommunist era of household land tenure and the Maoist era of collectivized farming. They also vary from village to village. Judd (1994:202–212) demonstrates how patterns of interhousehold help in three other Shandong villages during the 1980s varied with each village's economic base. During my 1992 visit to Fengjia, I sensed that an increase in household entrepreneurship was again inducing changes in the patterns of interhousehold exchange. A man building a chicken factory relied on friends and relatives to raise

capital and find a construction team, yet he would not directly call on them for labor. He purposely hired an out-of-village construction team to build his factory and paid them cash. Another woman who had just opened a store told me it was wrong to ask friends for help in running a profit-making enterprise. However, she also said that her friends and neighbors were her best customers. These two entrepreneurs both relied on friends, relatives, and fellow villagers in some aspects of their businesses but avoided them as sources of labor. In contrast, the commercial vegetable gardener described above continued in 1992 to call on the labor of his fellow villagers in exchange for shopping services. In brief, the creation of *ganqing* through the exchange of favors should not be viewed as an unchanging essence of Chinese village life. Especially over the past half century, the types and organization of labor in Fengjia have been changing rapidly.

Kinship Terms and Names

Routine terms of address also constituted an everyday method of *guanxi* production. When I was in Fengjia, all older relatives were called by relational kinship terms. This form of address was considered respectful and was an acknowledgment of the obligation that junior people owed to their older relatives. Language learning itself started from kinship terms. Small children were constantly being told “call that man *shushu*” (father’s younger brother) or “call her *yiyi*” (mother’s sister) and rewarded if they managed to use the correct form of address. The term *ren qin* (to recognize or acknowledge relatives) was closely related to kinship terms. When a child began to call a friend of his father’s “*shu-shu*,” the child could be said to have “recognized” (*ren*) that man as a relative. In Fengjia, the title teacher (*laoshi*) was also used like a kinship term. One man said, “Once they teach you, you call them *laoshi* for their whole life.” At times, children addressed their parent’s teachers with the terms for paternal grandmother or grandfather (*nainai*, *yeye*).

In some settings the use of a kinship term could be highly charged. I spent the first day of the Chinese New Year with a woman who was old both in terms of actual years and in terms of generations (the woman’s late husband had a generational name as old as or older than anyone else living in the village).⁵ That morning the village secretary, who in age was only twenty-five years younger than this woman but who belonged to the generation three levels below her, came and paid his customary

respects. After he left, she said, “Secretary Feng is so good to me. Did you see that he called me great grandmother [*laonainai*]?”

Recent Chinese films provide several more examples in which the emotional climax comes when one character acknowledges a relationship by calling another by a relational kinship term. In the movie *Old Tales South of the City Wall* (*Cheng Nan Jiu Shi*), a woman who thinks she has found her abandoned daughter prepares to run away with her, but just before they are about to go she realizes the young girl has not yet addressed her. She says, “You still haven’t called me, call me just once (*Ni hai mei jiao wo, jiao wo yi sheng*).” The child calls her “Ma” and they run off in a haze of rain and confusion, only to be run over by a train. The stepson’s use of “father” in Zhang Yimou’s *Ju Dou* and the young boy’s use of “maternal grandfather” in Sun Zhou’s *Heartstrings* (*Xin Xiang*) provide equally compelling and perhaps better known examples.

In Fengjia, kinship terms were extended to everyone older, regardless of surname. Families of different surnames worked out generational equivalencies so that usages between different family members would be consistent. Fei Xiaotong (1939:90–91) noted a similar pattern in a Yangtze Plain village during the 1930s and suggested that attached to each kinship relation is a certain attitude and level of respect that is extended to each person addressed by a given kinship term. In Fengjia village, Fei’s explanation also illuminates. When paying respects to one’s older relatives on the Chinese New Year (by going to their houses, addressing them by the appropriate kinship names, bowing, and wishing them well for the new year), “fictional” kin relations were given the same respect as “actual” ones.⁶

Like many of the practices discussed in this book, Fengjia use of kinship names echoes the *Analects of Confucius*. “Confucius says . . .

When names are not properly ordered, what is said is not attuned; when what is said is not attuned, things will not be done successfully. (Book 13.3, cited in Hall and Ames 1987:269)

Usually referred to as the “rectification of names” (*zheng ming*), the principle elaborated in this passage is interpreted by David Hall and Roger Ames as follows: “Acceptance of a name as appropriate involves a disposition to act. Language is dispositional and the ordering of names is per se an ordering of dispositions” (1987:299). In brief, names do not serve as “labels” for unitary, individual subjects; rather their usage implies a “disposition to act” that is appropriate to the *guanxi* that their

usage reproduces. In some places party activists may also have been concerned with this implication. In Shen Rong's fictional account of a Chinese village in the late 1970s, a party cadre questions the extension of kinship names to those with bad class labels (Shen 1987:302). The logic is similar to Fengjia's cultural revolution ban on interclass funeral weeping. Practices that created *ganqing* between members of different classes were suspect.

Though residents of Fengjia generally addressed each other with relational kinship terms, they also had names, and it is worthwhile to consider how they were used. At "twelfth-day parties" (*guo shier tian*, banquets held twelve days after birth or shortly thereafter), parents gave their babies a *xiaoming* (baby name). Thereafter all villagers of an older generation or of the same generation but older in years, used this name to address that person.⁷ When children entered school, their first-grade teacher, sometimes with the help of their parents, also gave the child a *xueming* (school name). For school purposes and all official purposes outside the village, a person would be known by his or her school name. Only fellow villagers would know one's baby name and only one's elders could use it. Some villagers also had nicknames, but only close friends of the same generation, age, and gender would use them.

Daughters-in-law and spouses were problematic in this method of addressing people. Since a daughter-in-law often came from outside the village, elders did not feel comfortable using her baby name. Because she was a family member, using her school name was inappropriate, and because of her youth a relational kinship term was too respectful. In the past the term *nizi* (girl or lass) was used to address daughters-in-law, but by the 1980s this term was considered abusive. After a woman gave birth to her first child, village elders and her husband would most likely call her (if the child's baby name were Cuicui) "mother of Cuicui" (*Cuicui niang*). The young mother might call her husband "father of Cuicui" (*Cuicui die*). Before the birth of her first child, some families called their new daughter-in-law "young lady" (*qingnian niang*); others began using a common urban form of address, also reportedly widely used in neighboring Jiuhu township, in which one says the woman's natal surname preceded by the word *xiao* (young or little). A few young people, purposefully rejecting other rural conventions as "feudal," called their spouses by his or her baby name.

One old man had a serious conversation with me about forms of address. Because his parents had died in their youth, he had raised his younger brothers himself and had had no children of his own. Thus,

he could not call his wife mother of anyone. He told me that the term *nizi* was abusive, and went hand in hand with the slave-like position of daughters-in-law, and discrimination against women in general, of the old society. I then asked him what he called his wife. After some thought he replied, "Me and my wife are completely equal. If I need to get her attention I say 'hey,' and if she needs to get my attention she also says 'hey.'" Especially for older people, first names were not appropriate to use when addressing one's spouse.

During my first summer in Fengjia I spent a fair amount of time updating our version of the village's household registration booklet. Compiled in the early 1980s, the booklet listed the head and members of each household in the village. Old women were often listed by their natal surnames and the character *shi*, a word that might be translated by the French usage *née*. When looking for such an elderly woman, I would first go to the house where I thought she lived. I would ask (for example) if Zhang Shi or "Mrs. Zhang" (*Zhang Taitai*) was there. Usually, even when I posed it to the old woman for whom I was looking, the question led to utter confusion. I found that my best strategy was to first find some younger relatives of the woman and then ask if their eighty-year-old grandmother was around. After finding her, it was still difficult to confirm her name. When asked who she was, the woman might point and say "I'm his mother," or "She calls me 'grandmother.'" At best, after going over the household registration booklet with me, a younger, literate relative might tell me "Yes, that must be her." As these people were generally being very helpful, I did not consider these instances purposeful obstinateness toward a rude foreigner. Rather, I believe these women had either forgotten their names or could not comprehend anyone attempting to address them by one. Officially, all they had left was a natal surname. Moreover, for perhaps decades (since their own elder, natal relatives had died) they had been called nothing but relational kinship terms.⁸

Rubie Watson (1986) suggests that the use of kinship terms to address rural women reflects their deficit of "personhood." Naming practices in Fengjia suggest a reframing of Watson's analysis. Though Ha Tsuen, the village in the New Territories of Hong Kong where Watson did her research during the late 1970s, and Fengjia are separated by both a distance of over a thousand miles and distinct political economic contexts, several parallels in naming practices emerge. Watson is surprised that Ha Tsuen villagers address both older men and older women only with kinship terms. She attributes this practice to older men's diminishing

role in controlling family and corporate resources and suggests that for both men and women to be addressed with kinship terms is to lose personal power and be defined by their relationships to others. Certainly kinship terms do define people in terms of relationships. However, I believe they do so in a positive and power-producing manner. If a child calls her parents “mother” and “father,” while the parents use the child’s given name, should we conclude that the child is more of a person than the parents? If a daughter-in-law calls her mother-in-law by a kinship term, should we conclude that the mother-in-law has no power? The circumstances that denied many Chinese rural women official names and power are not identical with the processes by which women earned kinship names and an intrafamilial power.

In Fengjia, old women’s lack of names admittedly reflected their lack of educational opportunities and a shielding from the privilege/burden of interacting with bureaucracies that would need to label one with a name. However, in the context of everyday village life, being called by relational kinship terms instead of a name was considered a privilege. Furthermore, lack of clarity about names was not limited to old women (though it was most extreme with them). Several times I came across ten- to thirteen-year-old children who did not know their parent’s first names. In addition, I often ran into the problem of what character to write for a given name. One villager would state that the character written in the household registration booklet for their name was incorrect. Others might join in and there would be a discussion among several literate people about which of several homonyms was the correct character for a given person’s name. Even the village household registration booklet occasionally contradicted itself, using different characters (all homonyms) in different places for the same generational name.

What then is the significance of this looseness about names and corresponding emphasis on relational kinship terms? First of all, it indicates the importance of using relational terms of address as a practice of *guanxi* production. Every time a relational kinship term is uttered, a specific relationship—and the *ganqing* and material obligation it should involve—is re-created. The fact that in many village contexts relational terms of address are used to the exclusion of names demonstrates the emphasis placed on *guanxi* production in general.

Secondly, the type of subject construction that relational kinship terms enact likewise reflects the *guanxi* construction involved. A name stays the same no matter with whom one is speaking. It remains at-

tached to a single body and implies a single, continuous, and unitary subject. In contrast, a kinship term may apply to any number of bodies of the same gender and approximate age; further, a single body may be called many kinship terms by different people on different occasions. The subject created is neither individual nor unitary. Each time one utters a name, one implies the existence of, and reproduces, a single or discrete subject who is labeled by that name. A kinship term instead reproduces a (hierarchical) relationship.

Tani Barlow (1989a:1-15) has noted the tension created by early-twentieth-century Chinese feminism, in which a biologized, universal “female” (*funu*) was appropriated from Western discourse to oppose the oppression of women as subjects created through the Confucian discourses of relational kinship. In rejection of the gender hierarchies implied in Confucian relational kinship terms, early-twentieth-century Chinese feminists wrote of women as “females” rather than as wives, mothers, or daughters. In so doing, they attempted to replace a contradictory, relational subject with a unitary, individual one. We can view the tension between kinship terms and names in Fengjia similarly. When young couples call each other by their names because other conventions are too “feudal,” they are rebelling against a system of terminology in which hierarchies (of age as much as gender) are implied every time one addresses someone. At the same time, however, they are replacing a contradictory, relational subject with a unitary, individual one.

The difference between names and kinship terms also separates the sphere of the bureaucratic workplace from that of village life and work. Local officials who were on familiar terms called each other by their surnames preceded by “old” or “young” (*lao* or *xiao*), depending on the age difference. In introductions they were referred to by their surname and title. In contrast, Fengjia residents often introduced me to their relatives by saying “He calls me *shushu* [father’s younger brother]” or “I call her *gugu* [father’s sister]” (*Ta jiao wo shushu* or *Wo jiao ta gugu*). This usage is doubly significant. Not only is a kinship term used instead of a name, but the verb “to call” is used instead of the verb “to be.” In introducing someone as “she whom I call *gugu*” rather than “she who is my *gugu*,” the importance of *calling* someone a kinship term as a practice of *guanxi* reproduction is clearly indicated.

To sum up, using kinship terms, visiting and helping out, and embodying *ganqing* in specific human emotions all involved Fengjia residents in the daily production and reproduction of *guanxi*. Like other

practices of *guanxi* production, these everyday actions involved a type of subject construction that was shifting and contested—a personhood subject to the claims of others, that in turn made its own claims. The next four chapters examine Fengjia *guanxi* production in more formal contexts.

2 Guest/Host Etiquette and Banquets



“No,” said Chao Gai. “Since ancient times ‘the strong guest must not exceed his host.’ Strong I may be, but I’ve only recently arrived from distant parts. I cannot assume high command.”

Lin Chong pushed him into the leader’s chair. “This is the time. Don’t refuse.” . . . [After two pages more of discussion and deferral, the first four leaders are seated in the first four seats.]

“Song and Du should now be seated,” said Chao Gai. But Du Qian and Song Wan absolutely refused. They begged Liu Tang, Ruan the Second, Ruan the Fifth, and Ruan the Seventh to take the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth places respectively. Du Qian then accepted the ninth chair, Song Wan the tenth and Zhu Gui the eleventh.

From then on, the positions of the eleven heroes were fixed in Liangshan Marsh. . . . Oxen and horses were slaughtered as a sacrifice to the gods of Heaven and Earth, and in celebration of the reorganization. The leaders ate and drank far into the night. They feasted in this manner for several days.

(Outlaws of the Marsh, Shi and Luo 1986:135–138)

When asked about the importance of seating at banquets, a retired cadre said, “etiquette emphasizes respect for position” (*lijie jiangjiu zunjing dengji*), and suggested that I read *Outlaws of the Marsh*, a classic novel about Song dynasty rebels.¹ Several sections of the book, including the passage quoted above, devote considerable attention to practices of seating. Seating was also important in the guest/host etiquette and the banquets of 1988–90 Fengjia, though the hierarchies and *guanxi* involved differed considerably. This chapter examines how Fengjia residents constructed and manipulated *guanxi* and hierarchies through practices of banqueting and guest/host etiquette.

The etiquette of banqueting (*yanxi*), hosting (*zuozhu*) and guesting (*zuoke*) involved skills important to all types of *guanxi* production. Though most used these skills on occasion, some people, because of