RICE EARS AND CATTLE TAILS:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RURAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

IN YUNNAN, SOUTHWEST CHINA

by

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ABSTRACT

This is an anthropological study of peasant economy and culture, derived from field research on patterns of social organization and production of two ethnically different rural communities (Han and Mosuo) in northwest Yunnan, China. Its aim is to explore the local contexts for understanding the changes that recent economic reforms have brought to peasant life, and the cultural as well as ecological factors that constrain peasant economic activities.

Current economic reforms have been accompanied by institutional changes, of which the most important for this research is the change in political relations between local and central governments. The expansion of local autonomy has had significant implications for the management of resources. The study shows that the behavior of the two local governments has had remarkably different economic consequences.

The most noteworthy policy change in the economic reforms affecting rural society has been the implementation of the household responsibility system which brought down the twenty-year old collective system and has since altered the economic landscape of the countryside. This study emphasizes how kinship systems affect the form of household organization in both Han and Mosuo communities, and how existing social relationships are manifest in economic activities.

"Rice Ears" and "Cattle Tails" are images drawing attention to the culturally salient differences in the patterns of production of the two communities. Rice ears constitute a cultural image of subsistence security in the Han community; and cattle tails constitute a cultural image of prosperity and development in the Mosuo community. Apart from the ecological factors which give rise to the particular patterns of livelihood in each community, cultural values associated the particular pattern of production account for many of the economic choices of the peasants and the persistence of economic forms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF PLACE NAMES

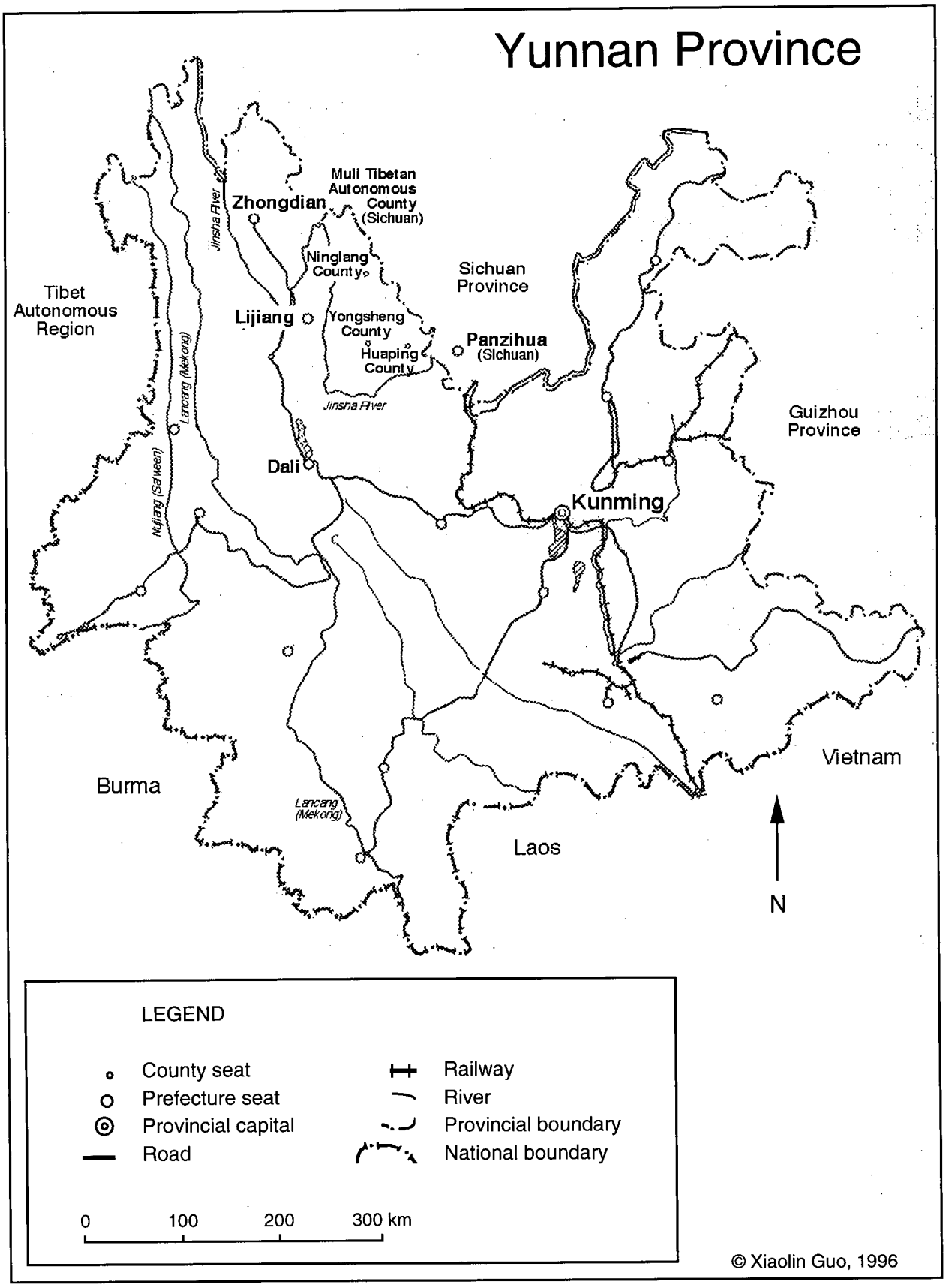
Cuihu	village in Jinguan township
Da Liangshan	Yi inhabited area in Sichuan province
Dali	second largest city in Yunnan province
Dapo	Mosuo hamlet in Yongning township
Gesawa	Mosuo hamlet in Yongning township
Guizhou	province east of Yunnan
Jinguan	township in Yongsheng county
Kunming	capital of Yunnan province
Lijiang	prefecture under which Yongsheng county and Ninglang county are administered
Neiba	Han hamlet in Yongning township
Ninglang	Yi autonomous county under which Yongning township is administered
Pijiang	Naxi hamlet in Yongning township
Sichuan	province north of Yunnan
Wengpeng	village in Jinguan township
Xiao Liangshan	Yi inhabited area in Ninglang
Yongning	township in Ninglang county
Yongsheng	county under which Jinguan township is administered
Yunnan	province

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Maps

Plates

Figures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Muli Tibetan Autonomous County (Sichuan)
Zhongdian
Jinsha River
Ninglang County
Sichuan Province
Tibet Autonomous Region
Lijiang
Yongsheng County
Huaping County
Panzihua (Sichuan)
Lancang (Mekong)
Jinsha River
Guizhou Province
Dali
Nujiang (Salween)
Kunming
Vietnam
Burma
Lancang (Mekong)
Laos
N
LEGEND
County seat
Prefecture seat
Provincial capital
Road
Railway
River
Provincial boundary
National boundary
0
100
200
300 km
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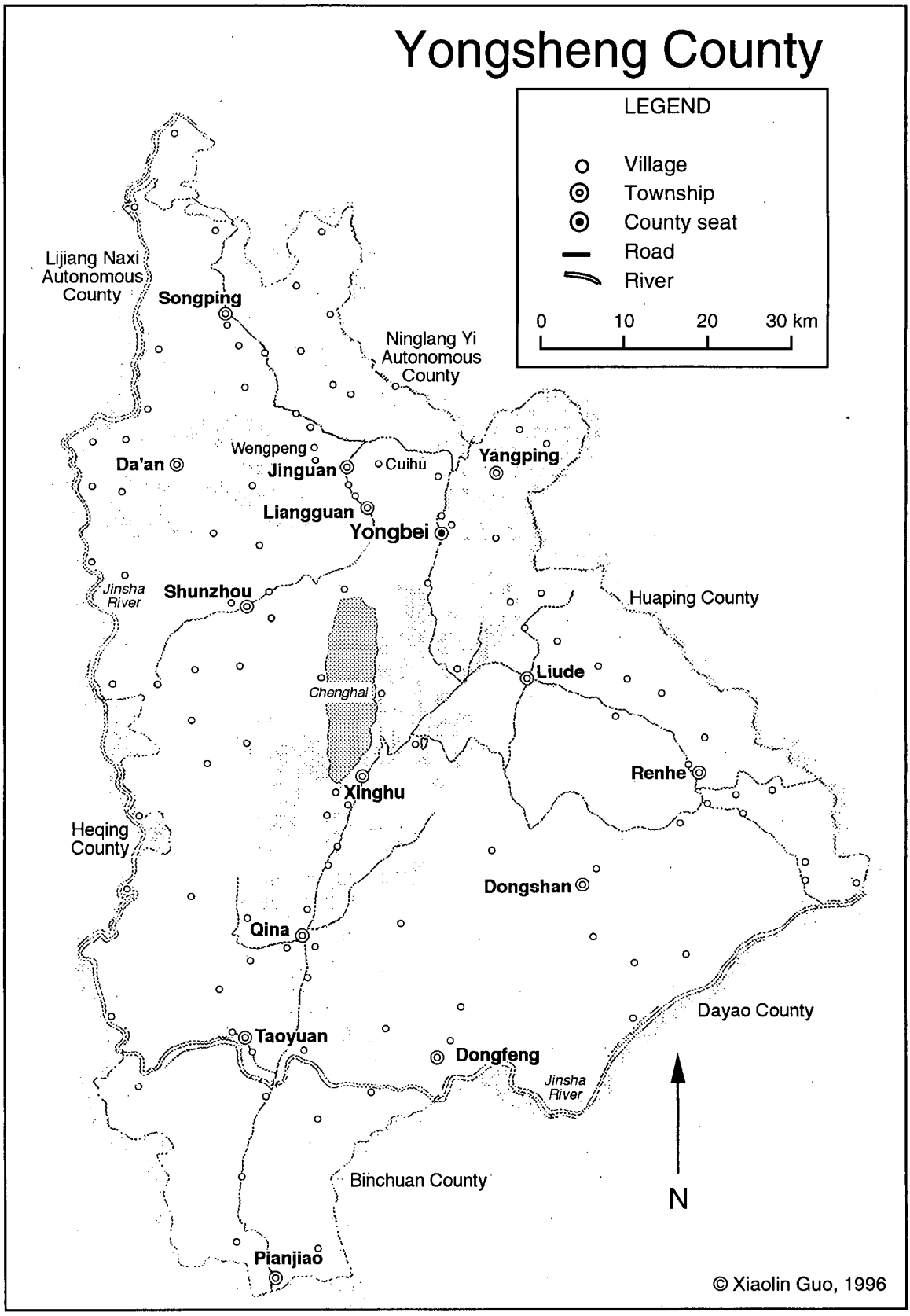
Yongsheng County
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Village
Township
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Wengpeng
Da'an
Jinguan
Cuihu
Yangping
Liangguan
Yongbei
Jinsha River
Shunzhou
Huaping County
Liude
Chenghai
Renhe
Xinghu
Heqing County
Dongshan
Qina
Dayao County
Taoyuan
Dongfeng
Jinsha River
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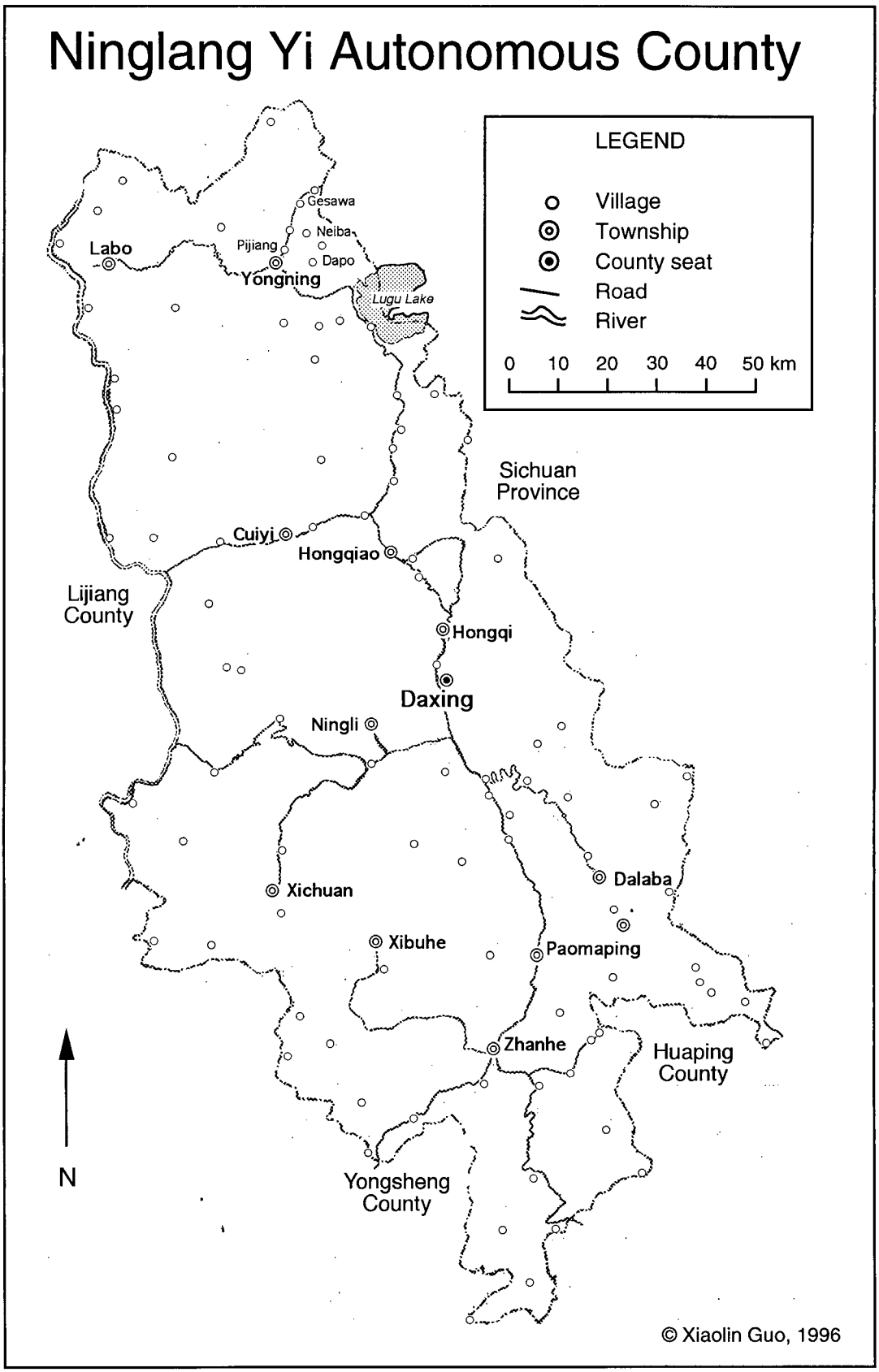
Ninglang Yi Autonomous County
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Gesawa
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Pijiang
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Labo
Yongning
Lugu Lake
Sichuan Province
Cuiyi
Hongqiao
Lijiang County
Hongqi
Daxing
Ningli
Dalaba
Xichuan
Xibuhe
Paomaping
Zhanhe
Huaping County
N
Yongsheng County
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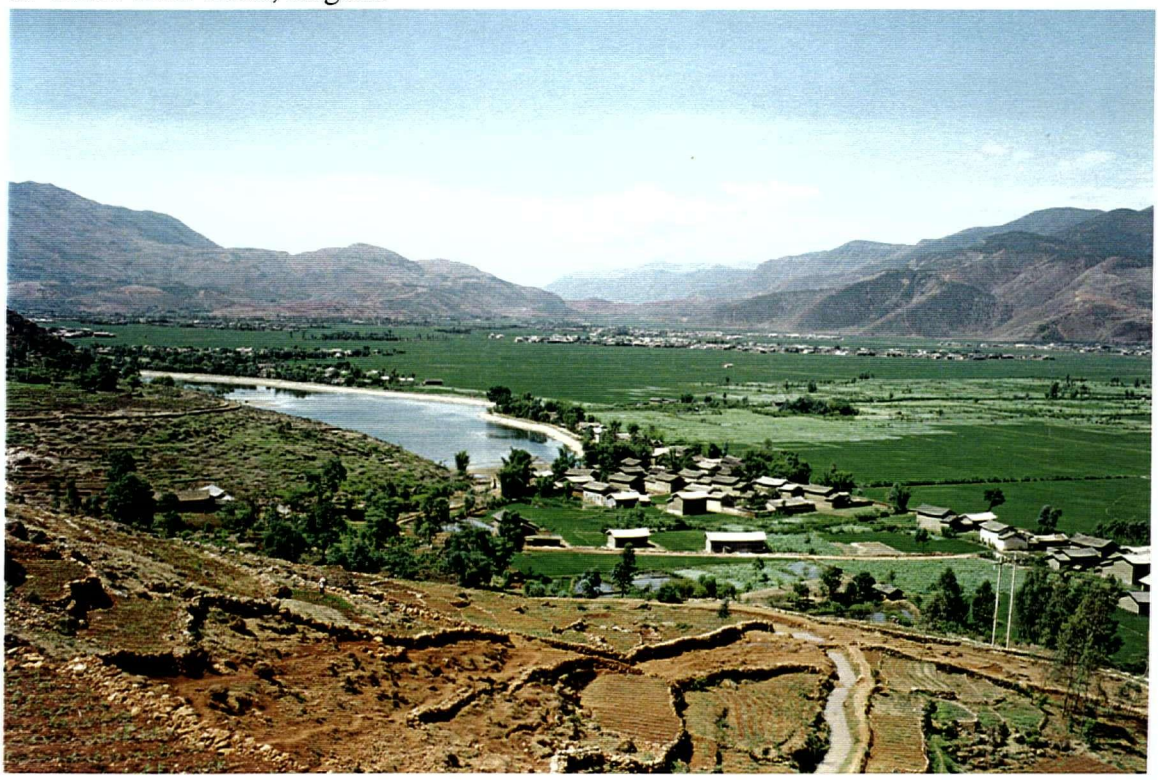
PLATES

1. Three-river basin, Jinguan



2. Cuihu village, Jinguan

3. Newly-built peasant house, Jinguan

4. Tobacco fields in Wengpeng village, Jinguan

5. Mosuo residence on hillside, Yongning

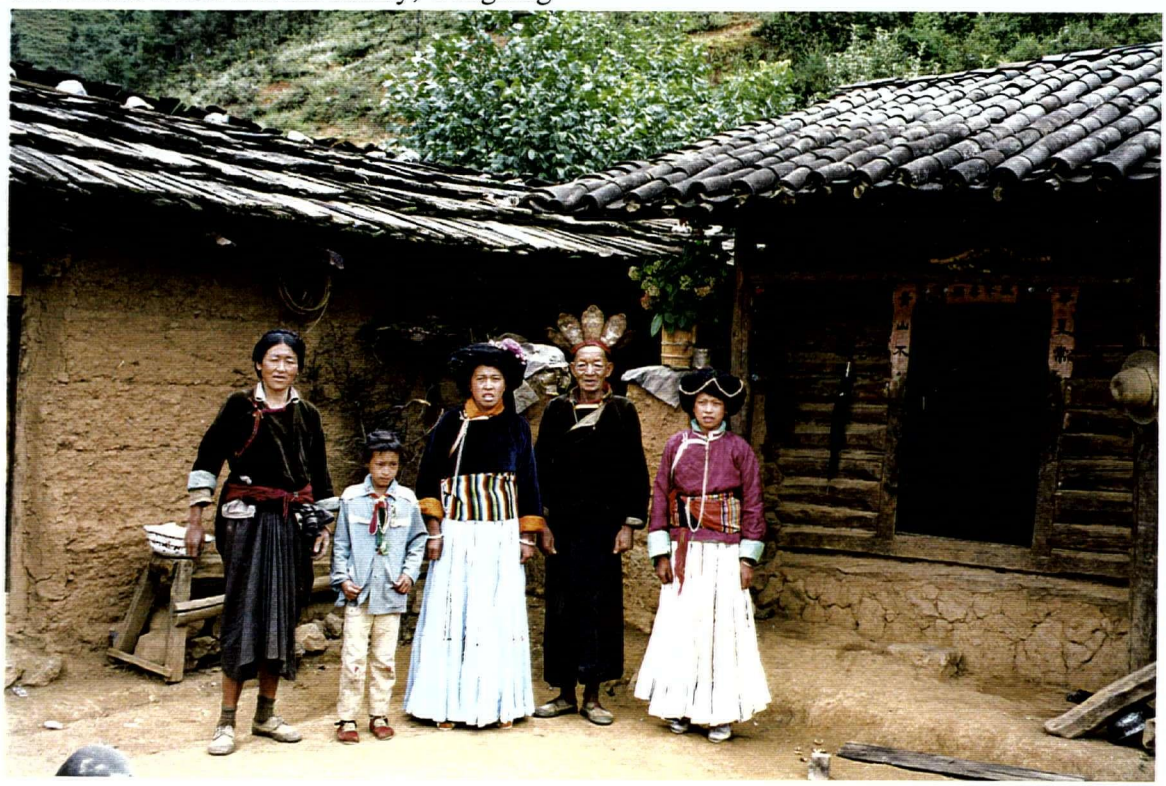
6. Everyday market, Yongning

7. Cattle grazing in harvested corn fields, Yongning

8. Barbyard grass fields, Yongning

9. Lamasery under construction, Yongning

10. Mosuo *Daba* and his family, Yongning



AUTHOR'S NOTES

Anonymity

Proper measures have been taken to disguise the identities of individual persons and households that appear in this dissertation.

Transliterations of Language

Chinese terms are transliterated according to the standard Chinese phonetic alphabet (*hanyu pinyin*) system throughout this dissertation. In view of the absence of a written Mosuo language, Mosuo terms are transliterated according to the international phonetic alphabet and presented in a close approximation. Both Chinese and Mosuo terms are in *italicized* form.

Plates

The photographs (Plates 1-10) included in this dissertation were taken by myself during the fieldwork, and selected for the purpose of providing ethnographic background information.

Measure Units

jin = 0.5 kilogram

mu = 0.0667 hectares, or 0.1647 acre

Currency Exchange (1992)

1Yuan (RMB) = US$ 0.125

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Among all and above all, Michael is the one who–apart from sharing much of my research interest as well as frustration–has, in the past years, taken upon himself a heroic role as a sympathetic listener and at the same time a critical reader, and for all of which, many, many thanks.

To my parents

INTRODUCTION

This study of rural economy concerns social and economic changes in China in the first decade of economic reform. The period covered is from 1983, when decollectivization took place in my field sites, to 1992 when the field work was carried out. Jinguan and Yongning are two townships selected for the study, both located in China's southwestern province of Yunnan. Jinguan is a community with a majority population of Han; and Yongning is a community with a majority population of Mosuo, one of China's numerous ethnic minorities.

From 1949 when the People's Republic was founded till today, China's rural society has undergone many changes, and a succession of political movements has had tremendous economic impact upon the life of Chinese peasants, most significantly the land reform of the late 1940s to mid 1950s; the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s; and the economic reforms of the 1980s. All these movements had specific ideological goals which, in turn, had different economic consequences.

The land reform was launched soon after communist power was first established, in some places as early as 1946 (e.g. in the old revolutionary bases) and in others as late as 1956 (e.g. in the border regions and minority areas). The historical significance of the land reform was to overthrow the old economic and political relations which had persisted in the Chinese countryside for hundreds of years (Shue 1980). To the vast number of Chinese peasants, the land reform was a movement of *fanshen*, an expression which literally means "to turn the

body," or "to turn over." This, in the revolutionary context, means "to stand up, to throw off the landlord yoke, to gain land, stock, implements, and houses" (Hinton 1966). The land reform movement thus succeeded in depriving the old elite of their social and economic privileges, and gave the land to the common poor. At the end of this movement, an elementary cooperative organization of production gradually took shape in the countryside, and later expanded and grew into an advanced cooperative organization.

The Great Leap Forward that followed was a disastrous nationwide mass movement in which all of Chinese society was mobilized in a radical attempt to realize the ideals of developed communism within the time span of one or more Five Year Plans. In the countryside, the movement took the form of the People's Communes (*renmin gongshe*).[1] It was a communal organization of the peasantry described in the media at the time as "the gateway to paradise," by merging small-scale agricultural cooperatives established at the end of the land reform into large cooperatives. The People's Commune was a collective economic organization characterized by the "three-tier-accounting system" of commune (*gongshe*), brigade (*dadui*) and production team (*shengchan dui*), operated on the basis of public ownership. The principal communist ideal of the Great Leap Forward was "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need," which at the time was interpreted as "Everyone who is able to work is able to eat his fill." The movement ended with three years of bad agricultural harvests and a catastrophic famine, yet the People's Communes survived for almost a quarter century.

The recent economic reforms, in a sense, can be seen as a continuation of the Chinese revolution in modern history. But CCP policy has, to a considerable extent, been modified, and demonstrated notably favorite treatment toward the peasantry compared to the past. The economic reforms began to have their impact on rural society nationwide in 1979 under the central government's policy "to change the backward situation of China's agriculture, to

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[1]For a review of the establishment of the People's Communes, see Hudson (1960); for a critical account of Mao's ideological construct of the Great Leap Forward, see Schoenhals (1987).

accelerate agricultural development, to lighten the burden of the peasants, and to increase peasant income" (*Xinshiqi Nongye* 1992: 31). In the initial process, a new framework of agricultural production was popularized. It was known as "contracting output to the household" (*baochan daohu*);[2] and later evolved into "contracting everything to the household" (*baogan daohu*).[3] The establishment of the household responsibility system ended the collective management of production and distribution in existence since the establishment of the People's Communes. Under the household production responsibility system, the household became the basic unit of production–managing its own contracted land and making independent decisions. This system allows the peasants to dispose of their produce for household consumption and for market transaction once the specified quotas, taxes and levies demanded by the state and village collective have been fulfilled.

In most parts of China, the household production responsibility system was implemented between 1980 and 1983.[4] It was implemented in Yongning in 1980, and in Jinguan (the Han population area) in 1983. The difference reflects a general trend in that the poorer an area was, the earlier the implementation of the household production responsibility system took place. This is the result of the flexibility of central policy at the beginning of the economic reforms towards the regions where economic development lagged behind the rest of the country. The production teams which had lived on state resold grain, state loans and state subsidies were allowed to contract land to the households as soon as this was desired by the local population (*Xinshiqi Nongye* 1992: 60). This policy was an attempt to provide peasants in

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[2]In this, the production team contracts work and assigns target output to households that are responsible for production and cost. The annual output is divided between the collective and individual households with a bonus given to the households on the overfilled portion of output.

[3]In this, the individual households manage production. The output–except for the amount extracted for agricultural tax and collective funds–is retained by the contracted households.

[4]As estimated, by the end of 1980, thirty per cent of all production teams had implemented household contracts, and by the end of 1982, ninety per cent of China's production teams had embraced some form of responsibility system on a household basis (Ash 1988).

poor areas with incentives to in raise productivity. On the other hand, the reason for the postponed implementation of the household production responsibility system in Jinguan is that it is one of the most important grain production bases in Yongsheng county, and the county government's reluctance in implementing the household production responsibility system in Jinguan was a measure to protect the grain production in the area.

The implementation of the household production responsibility system was soon followed by, if it did not lead to, a fundamental institutional reform in rural society. This was the so-called "decollectivization," which means the dismantling of the People's Communes. Twenty-five years after the "merger of government administration and economic management" (*zhengshe heyi*) during the Great Leap Forward, the government reversed its policy and advocated the "separation of government administration from economic management" (*zhengshe fenkai*), a policy formally put forward at the end of 1982 (*Xinshiqi Nongye* 1992: 170). From a political economy point of view, the separation of government administration from economic management was intended to ease state control over rural production and distribution, and to create a new relationship between the peasantry and the state (Walker 1988). By 1984, the People's Communes had been dissolved throughout the Chinese countryside.

Along with the institutional change, there was a notable ideological change represented by a shift from "taking class-struggle as the key link" toward an advocacy of individual material interests. The ideology of class struggle was, as a matter of fact, propagated during land reform. The whole idea of the class struggle was then motivated by breaking up the old elite network and creating a new leadership in the countryside under the total control of the communist party, the economic aim of which was to "spur economic growth by eliminating much luxury consumption and make more peasant families solvent by curbing exploitation" (Shue 1980: 43).

Thirty years after the land reform, the ideology of class struggle was abandoned by the central government on the assumption that "the landlord and rich peasant elements have, in the past twenty to thirty years, reformed themselves into laborers living by their own hands "

(*Xinshiqi Nongye* 1992: 12). The elimination of class status was part of the incentive systems intended by the central government to bring every positive factor into play, which had great social impact on the internal relations of peasant society as well as on the state-peasant relations.

The incentive systems also include "material interests" which ironically resemble those used by the CCP during the land reform. In both periods, such incentive systems are officially formulated as "getting rich" (*zhifu*). However, the motivations of the government behind the incentive systems during the land reform and current economic reform are far from alike. There are two major differences: (1) while the land reform was meant to bring social and economic equality among the population, the current economic reform was set to combat egalitarianism; and (2) while the land reform mobilized the peasantry to merge into various socialist corporations from the elementary to the advanced, the current economic reforms have encouraged peasants to break away from the collectives.

Why is the idea of the peasantry getting rich so pronounced in the CCP policy? What is in the interest of the central government to let peasants get rich? These questions concern the whole importance of the economic reforms, and the bottom line is the national economic development and social stability. Because agriculture plays a crucial role in China's economic revival and the peasantry forms the majority of the Chinese population, the importance of reviving the rural economy is described by the central planners as: "The situation in the countryside is a crucial element which determines the situation of the whole country. If the countryside is stable, China will be stable; if the peasants live well, the whole country will lead a good life; when the countryside is modernized, our country will be modernized" (Du 1985: 26). The urgency of improving peasant living conditions was further spelt out as:

> We cannot allow tension to persist everywhere, and should begin by pacifying the peasantry. Once the peasants have grain, resolving issues like cotton, non-staple food, cooking oil, sugar and other cash crops will no longer pose a problem. Having stabilized the situation among the peasants means having stabilized the situation among the majority of the population; and bringing peace to over 700 million people means bringing peace to the land under heaven. . . We must relax the situation in the countryside and give the peasants some breathing space. Otherwise, I fear the peasants might rebel (*Xinshiqi Nongye* 1992: 6).

These words reveal what Susan Shirk calls "the political logic of economic reform" in that she argues that "the real challenge of economic reforms was the political one" (1993: 6). The political logic as such resembles the CCP policy during the land reform which is referred to as pragmatic in that "the Party's efforts to accommodate the day-to-day practical interests of the mass of peasants" (Shue 1980: 334). The central government's policies of the present economic reforms are indeed pragmatic by linking the political and economic interests of the nation to the individual self-interests of the peasantry.

The ideology of "getting rich" has had a strong appeal to the peasants, and the household production responsibility system has proved to be the most effective means so far to accelerate rural economic growth. While the land reform is characterized as *fanshen*, a change of social status, the current economic reform in the countryside is characterized by *fanfan*, meaning doubling or multiplying output. The statistics show a remarkable growth of China's economy in the ten years between 1983 and 1992: the gross output value of agriculture in 1992 had tripled from what it was in 1983; and the rural per capita income had more than doubled since 1983 (*Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian 1984*; *Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian 1993*).[5]

Still some questions remain. Have the peasants become rich? If so, how have they become rich? If not, why not? The present study is interested in finding out: when political control over the rural production has presumably been relaxed and administrative interference in peasant life has been significantly reduced, how is the peasant economy organized and what are the political, cultural and ecological forces that exist and put constraints on peasant economic choices? With these questions in mind, I carried out my field research in Yunnan.

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[5]For a general review of agricultural change in the 1980s, see also Kueh and Ash (1993).

Fieldwork

My fieldwork was conducted during a period of nine months from April 1992 to January 1993. The reason why I selected Yunnan province was mainly due to the nature of the comparative study of economies between two ethnic communities. For the comparative purposes, it is important that the two field sites share a similar geographical situation. The two communities chosen for the present study are both located in the northwestern highland of Yunnan. The two townships, Jinguan and Yongning, respectively, belong to two counties under one and the same prefectural jurisdiction (i.e. Lijiang).

Given the particular geographic situation in Yunnan, travelling is not an easy experience. A half century ago, travellers in Yunnan mostly went on horseback or on foot. Today, the extensive road networks have made travelling by motor vehicles possible and much easier, but the mountainous roads in most parts of Yunnan still present certain difficulties. From Kunming to Lijiang (the prefectural seat), it is a two-day trip with a stop-over in Dali, the capital of the ancient southwestern kingdom from 937 to 1253 and now Yunnan's busiest commercial center second only to Kunming (see Map 1). The alternative trip is an overnight bus ride of 16 to 18 hours from Kunming directly to Lijiang.[6] From Lijiang, it takes another three or four hours by bus to get to my first field site Jinguan. My second field site Yongning is further north, and it takes another eight hours by bus, which usually needs to break into two days to fit in the daily bus schedule.

I arrived in Jinguan on a fairly warm day which happened to be a market day. I was accommodated at the township government guest house, and joined the township government staff in their communal canteen for meals. The township government seat is by the market which convenes every five days. In ordinary days, there are scores of shops on the streets

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[6]Air links between Kunming and Dali and between Kunming and Lijiang became available in 1995.

supplying many articles of daily use. Post comes every day from the county seat, but is only delivered every three days.

A week after I came to Jinguan, the rice transplanting season began. Peasants were busy, and I realized that I had to wait for the season to be over before I could begin my household survey. While waiting, I worked on the township statistics. After getting some idea about the basic situation in the eleven villages in the township, I selected Cuihu and Wengpeng for my household survey. The household registrations with the township public security office were not complete because household divisions and other demographic change are not frequently updated. Instead, I borrowed from the local cadres the agricultural tax registrations which are most efficiently updated. Thirty households in each village were selected by random sampling for my household survey.

When the survey began in Jinguan, I went to the village every day except on market days when the streets were crowded and the peasants normally hang around at the market and are seldom home. It took me some twenty minutes to cycle from the township seat to either of the villages. Peasants generally responded to my interviews positively, and were reasonably cooperative. In the beginning they were a little concerned about why his or her household was chosen for the survey, but when I explained that their names were selected by random sampling, but not on purpose, they seemed to be more at ease.

My interviews were conducted in the peasant households. Sometimes I was received in their main room, and sometimes in the yard. I asked questions and elicited answers face to face with the interviewees, sometimes the head of the household, and other times the whole family. Being in the household enabled me to observe more carefully the situation and add more information to the questionnaire. After a dozen households or so, I became familiar with the interviewing situation and began to engage in conversations with the peasants more naturally. In the course of my interviews, I noticed that peasants had difficulty in understanding and giving direct answers to terms such as output, gross income, net income, as they calculate them in different ways. Some peasants liked to exaggerate their output, income and expenditure; and

others tended to understate. Some inaccuracies were innocent, and others were deliberate. With the assistance from my local guides, these problems were easily solved.

The household survey in Jinguan went smoothly; and by the end of August I had finished my work there. When the rainy season was almost over, I packed up and headed for the north to my second field site Yongning.

In Yongning, I also stayed in the township government guest house. The township government has a small collective kitchen, but meals were not as regularly served as in Jinguan mainly because there were not many cadres around in the office building. Because of the poor communications in Ninglang county, post comes to Yongning every four days. The *Yunnan Daily* (the provincial government newspaper) usually arrives one week late. The situation became worse in the rainy seasons and in winter when the road was interrupted by rain or snow, and the post did not come at all. The poor communications make Yongning a very isolated place.

It was one month before the autumn harvest when I arrived in Yongning, and I had no time to waste. I quickly went over the township population census and some other statistics as a base for my selection of hamlets. The settlement in Yongning is different from Jinguan. The hamlets are more dispersed. This, in a way, makes the village administration a loose organization as it has to cover a fairly large area. The composition of the ethnic population was crucial in the selection of hamlets for my household survey. Two Mosuo hamlets were ideal in size, about thirty households in each. In addition, I selected one Han hamlet and one Naxi hamlet, for comparative purposes. These two hamlets were both bigger than the Mosuo ones, and I further selected the appropriate number of households through random sampling, twenty households in each hamlet.

When my household survey began in Yongning, I cycled to the hamlets in the morning and returned in the afternoon. From mid-October, there was an unusual torrential rain which lasted literally non-stop for more than two weeks. It interrupted all the public roads and village tracks and abruptly brought the temperature down nearly to the freezing point. The rain washed

away parts of the river dam which led to a power failure. This was the time when most of the township cadres were back home on harvest leave, and the repair work was suspended. During the two or three weeks, even water supply became a problem. The snow came in the first week of November when the only power station of the township was out of service. My little electric burner on which I relied for cooking and heating became useless.

In spite of all the difficulties and inconveniences, my household survey went well. Towards mid December, I concluded all my work in Yongning and withdrew. On my way back to Kunming, I stopped in Yongsheng and Lijiang for three weeks to check some data. Then, my whole fieldwork was completed just before the Chinese New Year.

I had different experiences in the Han and the Mosuo communities. In Jinguan, the local cadres were more responsive than the peasants. The initial reluctance of the peasants in engaging in conversation was much related to their concern of possible political and economic consequences. Their worries were understandable and justifiable considering all the political upheavals the peasants have been through and the hard life they have been living in the past decades. The local officials in Jinguan township and Yongsheng county showed considerable understanding of my research and provided me with great help. They managed to spare one bicycle for me to use; they introduced me to the village cadres; and they were willing to provide assistance in any situations. Staying in the government guest house turned out to be a privilege. It gave me opportunities to make friends with the cadres. I spent most of my time outside the household survey chatting with them; and occasionally they invited me for meals. As many of the cadres come from the villages nearby, their views of events in the villages are particularly interesting and precious. Although they live in a very isolated environment, they took much interest in the on-going events in the world which were brought to them by television. Being with the local cadres, I learned about a great deal of their value system, the implication of their official performance and the meaning of their personal sentiments. This special experience opened a window for me to observe and understand the state-peasant relations.

In Yongning, my relationship with the local cadres and the ordinary peasants turned out to be the other way round. The Mosuo peasants were warm, hospitable and friendly from the beginning to the end. Most of the time, I was treated as a guest and offered butter tea and other home-made snacks. To most of my questions, the Mosuo peasants gave frank answers. They were cooperative and spontaneous in conversations, and seemed not worried about exposing their economic situations. The village and hamlet leaders were also friendly and helpful. The township cadres were reasonably cooperative in many matters, although most of them were often not at work. There was a clear expression of reservation among the cadres in the beginning. The situation was somewhat improved later as they learned that I was there studying "economy" but not "matriarchy." I could see that we gradually came to terms of understanding each other.

Their reservations seemed to have derived from some kind of local exclusionism–the same sentiments shown towards the commercial traders and peddlers on the market. As the traders are seen flagrantly making money out of local community by taking their produce (e.g. mushrooms, herbs, etc.), the "cultural people" (which are collectively called as *wenhua ren* by the locals, including journalists, novelists, film-makers, anthropologists and alike) are equally regarded as making a fortune out of the local population by writing books or shooting pictures about the local life. The local cadres (many of them are Mosuo) are sensitive at the mention of "matrilineal society" (*muxi shehui*) by accidental tourists, as it has been perceived by Chinese society as something "exotic" and "primitive."[7] The conflict of cultural and economic values between the locals and the non-locals and between the Mosuo society and the larger Chinese society, is observable; and an outsider needs to show a considerable understanding in the situation as such.

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[7]Much of the resentment resulted from the publications of Chinese ethnographies on the Yongning Mosuo in the 1980s, in which the Mosuo are perceived as "living fossils" of the ancient society.

In both field sites, my household survey was assisted by local guides, one from each village as in Jinguan, and one from each hamlet as in Yongning. My guides worked both as my interpreters (especially in Yongning) and as *liaison* between me and the peasant households. They introduced me to every household and assisted me with interviews. Apart from occasionally chasing away fierce guard dogs and clarifying misunderstandings, they provided me with valuable information about the village, hamlet and individual households. They also helped me duplicate village maps, work out the farming calendar and inform me of local customs. The local status of the guide is important. In Jinguan, an ordinary peasant was better qualified to be a guide than a village leader because the peasants in general are suspicious about cadres. In Yongning, the hamlet leaders turned out to be a better choice of guide because they are authoritative and respectable in the eyes of their fellow hamlet residents.

Understanding local dialects was also a challenge in my fieldwork. When I first arrived in Kunming, I could hardly understand a word when people spoke at a regular speed. In Jinguan, the local speech was even more difficult to understand. But, after the first three or four weeks, I got used to the local accent, and was able to talk to the peasants on my own. In Yongning, the Han Chinese language (*Hanhua*) is commonly used in the government institutions and on the market because population there is multi-ethnic. Most of the young and middle-aged Mosuo speak *Hanhua* fluently. All my Mosuo and Naxi guides were very efficient in interpreting and translating conversations between the interviewees and myself. After a while, some Mosuo terms in frequent use became familiar to me, which to certain extent, helped smooth the procedure of interviews.

I have benefitted greatly from my different experiences in the two field sites. They have taught me how to observe different social and economic realities; how to appreciate the people of different backgrounds; and how to compare their life with ethnographic open-mindedness.

Primary Sources of Data

One difficulty with this study is the limited literature available. There have been some previous studies of rural Yunnan between the 1920s and 1940s, but most of the works are based on the peasant life in the central-eastern part of Yunnan (e.g. Fei and Chang 1945; Hsu 1949). Systematic ethnographic studies of the rural society in northwest Yunnan are almost non-existent.

Yongsheng county to which Jinguan township is administratively subordinate, for example, "has not been studied by anybody," as the local officials put it. The major sources of reference are two editions of a county history: one compiled in the Qing Dynasty titled *Yongbei Fuzhi* (1992, reprint of 1765), and the other compiled a few years ago titled *Yongsheng Xianzhi*(1989) which was constructed on the basis of *Yongsheng Lishi Ziliao Huiji* 1-12 (1962), a collection of historical materials held at the Lijiang prefectural government archives. Other written materials include three volumes of *Yongsheng Wenshi Ziliao Xuanbian* I, II, III (1989; 1990; 1991); *Yunnansheng Yongshengxian Diming Zhi* (1988) and one volume of *Zhonggong Yongsheng Difangshi* (1990). In addition, there is a small collection of the old county government's documents in the county archives, a pile of some 100 rolls of papers which, as I was told, have not been sorted since 1948 when the county magistracy court was set on fire by bandits.

The literature on the Yongning site is comparatively rich. There have been many Chinese ethnographic monographs and reports, in addition to bits and pieces in the Chinese historical records. The county history *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* (1993) was available in manuscript version at the time of my fieldwork, and published a year later. The Chinese ethnographies and reports are mainly based on the research from the 1960s to the 1980s. The two major monographs are titled: *Yongning Naxizu de Azhu Hunyin he Muxi Jiating* (Zhan et al., 1980); and *Yongning Naxizu de Muxizhi* (Yan and Song, 1983). The richest materials come from three volumes of research reports titled: (1) *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Naxizu Shehui ji Jiating Xingtai Diaocha* I (1986); (2) *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Yongning Naxizu Shehui jiqi*

Muxizhi Diaocha II (1986); and (3) *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Yongning Naxizu Shehui jiqi Muxizhi Diaocha* III (1986).[8] These volumes contain extensive materials about the political system, religious practice and kinship relationship of Mosuo society.

The existing English language literature includes notes of Western explorers and ethnographies. The most notable Western ethnographer in the early period, who has contributed the most interesting and detailed ethnographies about the native peoples of northwest Yunnan, was an American botanist named Joseph Rock. He first came to Yunnan on an assignment to work for the United States Department of Agriculture, and later for the National Geographic Society, but his stay in Yunnan extended beyond his official assignments. Between 1920s and 1930s, Rock travelled extensively and collected massive materials about the nature and society of Naxi (or in Rock's term: Na-khi) and Mosuo (or in Rock's term: Hli-khin). His ethnographic studies on the history, political systems, folklore and religions were later published in a series of research volumes. *The Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China*, Volume I and II (1947) consists of over 400 pages on the geography of northwest Yunnan, history of the Naxi (Nakhi) society, and the livelihood of the Mosuo (Hli-kin). Rock's other writings include *The Na-khi Naga Cult and Related Ceremonies* (1952) which is about the Naxi religion (and its Bön origin) and ceremonies; and *The Zhi mä Funeral Ceremony of the Na-khi of Southwest China* (1955) which is a collection and descriptions of Naxi funeral rituals.[9]

The more recent English language literature on Mosuo society are two doctoral dissertations (Shih 1993; Weng 1993), which only became available a year after I had returned from my field work. Both studies of the Mosuo are focused on kinship, gender relations and myth, but neither of them deals with the economic life of the people in the society.

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[8]Naxi is the Chinese official ethnic identification for Mosuo, used in the government documents and many academic works.

[9]In about the same period, Peter Goullart wrote *Forgotten Kingdom* (1955) which contains some ethnographic materials in this part of Yunnan.

Aside from the publications and manuscripts, local statistics provided a useful source of information, and helped in the selection of a desirable field site. My major concerns in selecting townships were the population composition and economic situation; and the local statistics at county-, township- and village-levels have the figures necessary for this purpose.

Many researchers are skeptical about the reliability of government statistics and they have good reasons to be so. The main problem with the statistics emerging from my fieldwork was that certain statistical categories may not represent what they appear to be. The reason for this is often related to administrative constraints. The local cadres know how the statistics are compiled, and are often sarcastic about the work they do themselves under the circumstances. They refer to their compilation of statistics as "market-supply" responding to "market-demand" by higher authorities. Therefore, ambiguities are sometimes made deliberately for administrative convenience. The usefulness of local statistics, however, overrides such problems, if one knows how the figures are compiled. It is fair to say that all statistics are based on something, and one only needs to be alert and find out what exactly the category includes, and for what purpose it is included. Some dubious information can be easily tested in the household survey and during interviews with the local cadres and peasants. Without the local statistics it would have taken me longer to understand the general demographic and economic situations.

The most substantial sources of my research come from my household survey which consists of over one thousand pages of household records, and an equal quantity of field notes. The household survey includes information on household organization, land contracts, crops, output, income, expenditure, investment, social network, social welfare, and so on. It was conducted through prepared questionnaires and spontaneous interviews. The questionnaire contains over one hundred questions (see Appendix). Half of them are open questions which enabled me to elicit a great deal more information than what the questions might superficially suggest. The advantage of using the questionnaire was that they saved me from the initial awkwardness of not knowing what to ask and losing directions.

But I did not distribute the questionnaire to the peasants and later collect the answer sheets from them, because no matter how simple the vocabulary one uses in designing the questionnaire, one has a lot to explain in the real situation. Otherwise, many misunderstandings will arise and lead to confusion and inaccuracies. The records of household surveys conducted with the help of the questionnaire provide the contents of the major chapters of this dissertation.

Economic Anthropology and Peasant Studies

The present study is intended as a contribution to economic anthropology. Economy is perceived by anthropologists as a group or groups of people utilizing a common set of resources. It concerns a process of production and the circulation of material goods. Because the material wealth of societies is produced by human beings, production and distribution do not only involve individuals and activities, but also a set of social relations that people establish in the process of production and reproduction. In this approach, economy is a "total social phenomenon where religion, politics and the like find simultaneous expression" (Gregory and Altman 1989: 198), which is what economic anthropologists refer to as "embeddedness" of economic activities.

In this "embeddedness" of economic anthropology, kinship and political-religious relations constitute the "invisible part" of the mode of production (Godelier 1977). The importance of kinship relations lies in their function as a social condition of the abstract appropriation of nature and its resources; as the basis of the social organization and cooperation of individuals and groups in the various concrete processes of material exploitation of resources; and as the framework for their distribution (Godelier 1986: 139). In this respect, economic anthropology is committed to the task of studying two aspects of one issue: social relations of economy and economic dimension of social relations. The significance of the association of social relationships with economic activities is, as argued by Firth that: "most social relations have an economic co-efficient; many social relations are primarily concerned with economic values" (Firth 1951: 122). In this dissertation, the focus of the study of social

organization on local government and households is intended to highlight economic relations between peasants and the state, and economic relations within the kinship system. It compares the mechanisms of how these political and social relations function in the economic activities in the two communities.

Peasant society and peasant economic behavior are the center of the study.[10] The peasantry has been broadly defined in terms of its residence, type of production, relation to the market and class segment (Cancian 1989, Shanin 1988). By residence, peasants are rural; by type of production, peasants are mainly subsistence cultivators employing simple technology; by relation to the market, peasants are incorporated into a local community where social relationships are established through transactions of local produce surplus; and by class segment, peasants form a subordinate group in relation to the urban population and the government.

Peasants are sometimes distinguished from other groups in society by their *cultural status* which is a combination of world-view, value system and life style (e.g. 1989; E. Wolf 1957; Foster 1965; Fei and Chang 1945). Sometimes they are distinguished by their *economic status* which is "occupational," indicating that peasants are subsistence-oriented agricultural producers (e.g. Firth 1951; Dalton 1969). They are also distinguished by their *political status* which means that they have a subordinate relationship with the larger society (e.g. Shanin 1988). However, none of these categories is so clear-cut in that one excludes another. Rather, as Geertz argues, the dimensions are interrelated in demarcating the boundaries of "both the part-society and part-culture of the peasantry" and in delineating the "relation of the peasantry to the wider civilization within which it exists" (Geertz 1961: 4).

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[10]The term "peasant" used here refers to the rural residents–regardless of their specific occupations (e.g. farmer, artisan, building contractor, peddler, etc.)–whose productive activities constitute part of household economy. In this context, the controversy about whether "peasant" should be understood as a more derogatory term than "farmer" (see for example, Myron Cohen, 1993) is not relevant.

The traditional Chinese peasantry has been perceived as "a way of living, a complex of formal organization, individual behaviour, and social attitudes, closely knit together for the purpose of husbanding land with simple tools and human labour" (Fei 1988: 57). In a general sense, this is still the picture of Chinese peasantry today. In this study, the peasantry is presented as an economic category as well as a social category. As an economic category, the primary distinctive trait of peasantry is its form of livelihood;[11] and as a social category, the peasantry shares certain culture, economic life and polity with the larger society, but at the same time retains its own tradition and social organizations.

Outline of the Study

The dissertation embodies studies of social organization and patterns of production. They incorporate culture and economy into one which illustrates how the peasants live under the given social and economic conditions, and why they live the way they do. The result of the research will show that the two communities–the Mosuo and the Han–have different priorities and choices in their economic activities largely due to differences in social institutions, economic environments and cultural values.

The main body of the dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter one presents the local history, natural and cultural environments. The descriptions of topography, geography and communications of the field sites reveal the grim situations of frontier life in the past and the nature of the economies at present in this part of highland Yunnan. The 600 hundred years of garrison history of the Han peasants in Jinguan and the political and religious systems of Mosuo society provide a cultural background for our understanding of the peasant economy in the two communities.

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[11]It has been noted that in the Chinese context, "a fair proportion of the population designated as rural obtains its livelihood not from agriculture but from the extensive range of rural industries, social services and government administration" (Hussain and Feuchtwang 1988: 36).

The central part of the dissertation begins with social institutions that have undergone dramatic changes along with the economic reforms. The social institutions that have had direct effect on peasant economy are the administration of local government and the form of the peasant household (patrilineal in the Han community and matrilineal in the Mosuo community). The study of these social organizations is focused on economic relations between peasants and the state, and economic relations between the members of the peasant household.

Chapter two mainly deals with functions of the local administrations at county and township levels. It focuses on how the economic reforms have strengthened government autonomy at local levels, and how this has affected the local management of economic resources. The pursuit of these questions leads to an understanding of the role that the local government play in deciding the course of local economy, and the effect of ethnic status and poverty on local politics and peasant life. The behavior of the local government has impact on the state-peasant relations which are dealt with on two levels. One is the relationship between the central and local governments; and the other is the relationship between local cadres and peasants. In this context, the peasant concept of the state is dealt with in terms of moral economy. The village administration here is presented as an semi-governmental and semi-collective organization; and the change of its functions also has impact on the state-peasant relations.

The household is the center of peasant life. It is an economic entity and at the same time a descent organization. Household organization is associated with a set of principles regarding descent and affinal relations, and influences the local people's idea of social institutions such as marriage and adoption. In the different household organizations of the two communities, and by different descent rules (patrilineal and matrilineal), the particular kinship systems embody economic obligations and responsibilities.

Chapter three is about the household organization of the Han peasants in Jinguan. It centers on the patrilineal concepts reflected in the descent system and institutions of marriage and adoption. The discussion revolves around the relationships between parents and children,

siblings, husband and wife. The analysis of the social obligations and responsibilities entailed by these social relationships reveals a network of economic relations in and outside the peasant household.

Chapter four concerns the household organization of the Mosuo peasants in Yongning. It focuses on the descent system along the female line, the institution of "walking marriage," and the special sibling relationships. The particular form of matrilineal household in Mosuo society is characterized by the exclusion of affinal relations and the interdependence of sisters and brothers. This particular household organization has a direct influence on the pattern of production in Mosuo society.

The differing patterns of production in the Han and Mosuo communities are dealt with in chapters five and six respectively indicating how the pattern of production in Jinguan concentrates on rice farming, while the pattern of production in Yongning concentrates on cattle breeding. "*Rice Ears*""*and "Cattle Tails*" are used in this dissertation to point out to different models of production for the two communities. They are anthropological models which are constructed on the basis of participant observation, and represent the ethnographer's understanding of the world of the local people (see Holland and Quinn 1987; Lakoff 1987; Gudeman 1986).

Each model reflects an image of a particular peasant economy and denotes a value system. While the image of Rice Ears is associated with the cultural cognition of subsistence security and the production-consumption loop, the image of Cattle Tails is rooted in the cultural cognition of wealth and development. The contrast of the peasants' enthusiasm between rice cultivation and cattle production illustrates different economic forms in that both economic and cultural values are accommodated.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY AND SETTLEMENTS

This chapter outlines the natural and cultural environments of the societies under study and aims to provide background information for the reader to understand the social organization and patterns of production dealt with in the chapters to follow. A general account of topography and a graphic display of the economic status of Yunnan sketch the economic situation of the field sites. An account of the garrison history and the Han immigration to Yunnan indicates how the Three-River Basin came into being as we see it today, and why rice farming predominates in the economy in Jinguan. The picture of Yongning differs in population and economic environment. There the old political and religious systems offer important clues to understanding the particular social organization and economy dominated by cattle breeding in Mosuo society. The immigration history of the Yongning basin not only has impact on ethnic relations, but also has implications in economic development in the area.

Yunnan Province

Yunnan is a province situated in southwest China. It borders Sichuan province in the north (an area that used to be known as Xikang, or Hsi-k'ang), Guizhou and Guangxi provinces in the

east, Tibet in the northwest, Burma in the west and south, and Laos and Vietnam in the south (see Map 1). Yunnan has an area of 394,000 square kilometers of which ninety-four per cent is mountainous. The highest point is in the northwest, with an elevation of 6,740 meters; and the lowest area is the river valley in the southeast which is only 74.6 meters above the sea level. Three major rivers flow right through this undulating land in the southwest. They are the upper reaches of the Yangtze (known as Chang Jiang in Chinese, and this particular part of Chang Jiang flowing in Yunnan is called Jinsha Jiang, or "Gold-Sand River") from the west to the east, the Mekong (Lancang Jiang) and the Salween (Nu Jiang) from the north to the south.

Yunnan literally means a place "south of the clouds," which gives an impression of its geographical remoteness from the central China, and at the same time, signifies the mysterious nature of the place. Almost all Chinese writings about Yunnan favor the expression "three-dimensional" (*liti)* because the topography creates diversities in climate, flora and fauna distributions and levels of economic development.

The mountainous topography gives Yunnan difficult access to the outside world. It was not long ago that horseback was still the major means of transportation in Yunnan. The only railroad from before 1949 was built by the French in the first decade of the twentieth century. It is a 464 kilometer long narrow gauge railway (1,000 mm) from Kunming to Hekou on the border with Vietnam, and still in use today.[1] The earliest public highway in Yunnan was 34 kilometers long, built in 1928 around the capital Kunming. The Second World War promoted some expansion of communications in Yunnan for the province was the military base used by the Allies. At that time, the Yunnan-Burma road was built. It was 955 kilometers long. The conditions of public transport in Yunnan have significantly improved since the 1950s, owing to the forestry development. Since the 1980s, many "state standard highways" (*guodao*) have

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[1]Yunnan is the only province in China to have both standard and narrow gauge railways in operation (I owe this information to Thomas Kampen who has done extensive research on Chinese railway system). Along the 464 km long railway, there are 182 bridges and 171 tunnels (*Yunnan Shengzhi* Vol. 34, *Tiedao Zhi*, 1994).

been built. They are mainly sightseeing routes around and between the capital Kunming and other major cities. Entering the 1990s, several air links between cities were established to ease the travelling difficulties within the province.

Probably due to the geographic situation as such, Yunnan was almost out of the reach of the Central Court of China before the 13th century. The first military invasion to Yunnan was launched by the Yuan Emperor. In 1252, Kublai Khan came from the North to conquer the Dali Kingdom.[2] Henceforth Yunnan became one of China's provinces. Following this military conquest, a century later, the Ming court began to send garrison troops to Yunnan from China's central plains (mainly Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi and Jiangsu provinces), which began the history of Han immigration to Yunnan. The garrison troops were ordered to support themselves by farming while guarding the borders. As estimated, the Ming troops and their dependents soon brought the number of Han immigrants to nearly one million cultivating 1.3 million *mu* of land which was about 42 per cent of the total arable land in the province at the time (*Dangdai Zhongguo de Yunnan* I 1991).

Today, Yunnan has a population of 38.3 million (1992). One third of it is composed of peoples of scores of ethnic groups other than the Han. Of the total population, 87.5 per cent is agricultural. The economic development in Yunnan is, among a few other hinterland provinces, lagging behind other parts of China. The general economic status Yunnan is illustrated in Figures 1-3.

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[2]The Dali Kingdom in 937 AD was preceded by the Nanzhao Kingdom set up in 649 AD by the peoples known in the Chinese literature as the "black barbarians " (perhaps including the ancestors of Yi, Lisu, Naxi and Mosuo) and "white barbarians" (i.e. the Bai) in the territory of today's Yunnan province, the south part of Sichuan province and the west part of Guizhou province.

Figure 1.
Gross national product by province (1991)

Source: *Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian 1993*

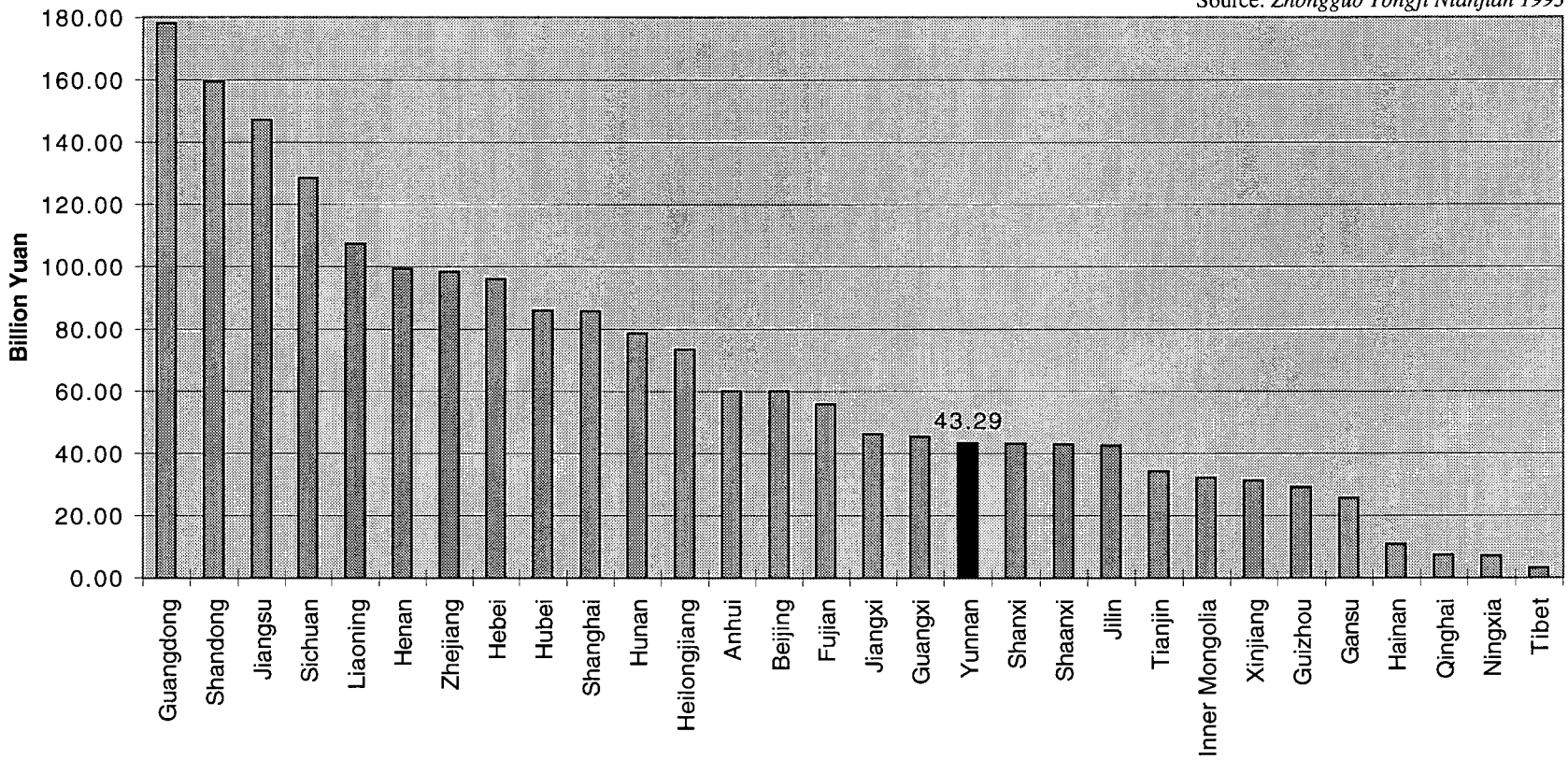


Figure 2.
Total output value of society by province (1991)

Source: *Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian 1993*

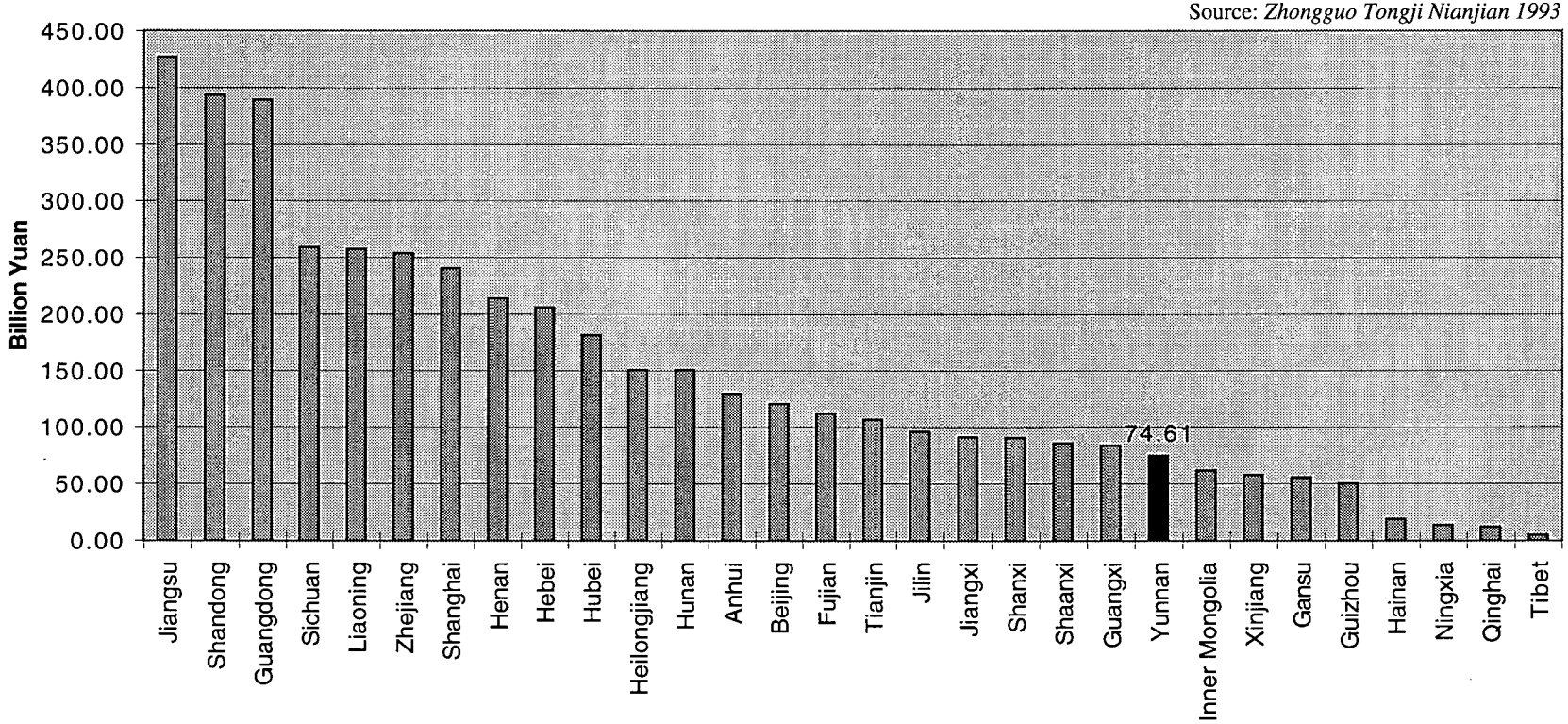
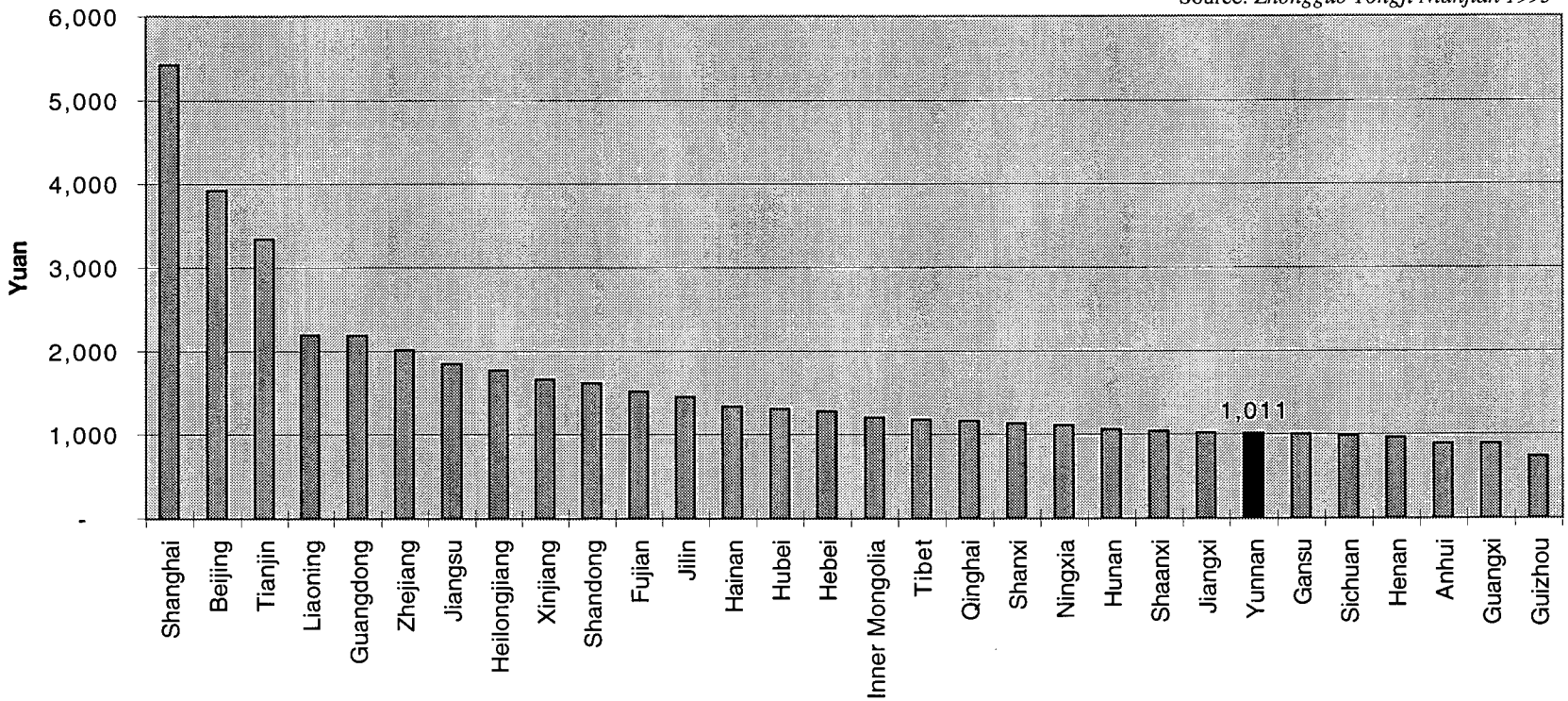


Figure 3.
Per capita income by province (1991)

Source: *Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian 1993*



The Yangtze River is sometimes analogized with a dragon image to refer to China's economic development, in that the east and southern coastal regions form the dragon head and the western hinterlands compose the tail. As shown in the figures above, though the economic status of Yunnan is not quite at the tip of the dragon's tail, 102 out of 127 counties in the province are financially subsidized by the state *(Dangdai Zhongguo de Yunnan* I 1991: 709). In 1992, Yunnan had forty-one state designated poverty-stricken counties; and in 1994, thirty-two more counties were added.[3] The 73 state poverty-stricken counties in Yunnan province constitute 12 per cent of the total number of state poverty-stricken counties in the country; and the 7 million population living below the poverty line constitutes 8 per cent of the total population living below the poverty line in the whole country (*Wanxiang Shenzhou* 1994).

Both Yongsheng county (in which Jinguan township is included) and Ninglang county (in which Yongning township is included) are in northwest Yunnan located in Lijiang prefecture (see Map 1). Yongsheng is in the category of Yunnan's 102 state subsidized counties, and Ninglang is one of Yunnan's 73 state poverty-stricken counties. The primary feature of the economy in these two counties is strictly subsistence agriculture. Yongsheng had the highest economic development and living standard among four counties in Lijiang prefecture with a rural per capita income of 380 Yuan (1991). Ninglang was the poorest county in Lijiang with a rural per capita income of 259 Yuan (1991) which was one third lower than in Yongsheng.

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[3]One of the reasons for the increase of the state poverty-stricken counties is that the state raised the poverty line. In 1986, China classified 328 state poverty-stricken counties as in need for state priority support, and the official poverty line at the time was 150 Yuan (net) per capita income in general, and 200 Yuan (net) in minority areas and the old revolutionary bases (*Zhongguo Pinkun Jingji Kaifa Gaiyao*1989). In 1994, the poverty line was redefined and became 400 Yuan (net) per capita income (the elevation of the poverty line should reflect the inflation rate over the years), and the total number of state poverty-stricken counties reached to 592 (according to the Office of the Leading Group of Economic Development in Poor Areas under the State Council.

Yongsheng County

Yongsheng is some 600 kilometers northwest of Kunming (see Map 1). In the old days, when draft animals were the exclusive means of long distance transportation, it took 18 days to get to Kunming on horse back. The people in Yongsheng were so cut off from the outside world that they had not much idea about what was going on when seeing the American and British planes flying over their villages (during World War II), nor did they understand what Liberation was about when they were liberated, as the locals say. The first public road in Yongsheng was built in the early 1940s when the Republican government retreated to Chongqing city, Sichuan province. From 1958 to the present, several major public highways have been built leading to Lijiang, Binchuan (south of Yongsheng, between Yongsheng and Dali), Huaping (east of Yongsheng, between Yongsheng and Panzhihua, a industrial center in the south of Sichuan province) and Ninglang (north of Yongsheng).

With the same military settlements in other parts of Yunnan in the late 14th century, Ming troops came to be stationed in Yongsheng. The military unit at the time was called Lancang *Wei*: Lancang as the name of the military district, and *wei* as designation of the military unit (one of forty in Yunnan). The garrison settlement in Yongsheng consisted of three thousand soldiers and officers and some six thousand dependants (*Yongsheng Xianzhi* 1989). They brought seeds and tools with them from home in the central plains, and turned some 36,000 *mu* of shrub land into paddy fields. Thus began the rice farming history in the area (ibid.). Most of the troops in Yongsheng came from Changsha Fu (prefecture) in Hunan province. Even today, the people in Yongsheng still speak with a particular Changsha accent which is remarkably different from other places in Yunnan.

Yongsheng county today has a population of 357,515 (1991). Seventy per cent of it is Han. The rest of the population is composed of ethnic minority groups including: Yi, Lisu, Naxi, Bai, Dai, Shuitian, Taliu, Liude and Hui. The Han and Hui generally inhabit the basin

area. Dai, Bai, Shuitian, Taliu and Liude live in the river valley. The Yi, Lisu and Naxi dwell in the mountains.

The Yongsheng county seat is at an elevation of 2,140 meters. The county has an area of 5,000 square kilometers of which 23 per cent is basin, a strip of paddy fields stretching from north to south between two mountain ranges. Yongsheng is one of the most important grain production bases in Yunnan. There are three agricultural zones featured by varieties of produce: grain crops, cash crops and animal husbandry and logging. The grain producing area is the basin and the main crops are rice and broad beans. The cash crop producing area is in the south, and the main crops are sugar cane, tobacco, cotton and peanuts. Animal husbandry and logging are located in the mountains. The grain cropping area has two harvests a year, and the cash cropping area has three or more.

The development of industry in Yongsheng is not significant. It only includes some small scale machine repairing; grain, sugar and tobacco processing; power and timber plants; mining, porcelain, garment and building material manufacture. Its output value constitutes only 20 per cent of the total output value of society (1991).

Jinguan and the Three-River Basin

Jinguan is one of eighteen townships under the jurisdiction of Yongsheng county. The township is twenty-eight kilometers northwest of the the county seat (see Map 2). Jinguan is one of the biggest market centers in Yongsheng county, and situated on the major communication link between Yongsheng and Lijiang. It has an area of 205 square kilometers and occupies the middle and upper parts of the Three River Basin (see Plate 1). The basin derives its name from the three rivers named Meng, Hui and Ji flowing through it.

The Three-River basin is probably the most fertile land in northwest Yunnan province, and has the highest rice yield in Yongsheng county. The basin has 63,418 *mu* of arable land

supporting a population of more than 50,000 in two townships: Jinguan and Liangguan. The basin itself is 1,550 meters above the sea level. The annual rain fall is 821 millimeter and the frost season is 96 days (*Yongsheng Xianzhi* 1989). The primary livelihood of the people in this area is rice farming. The 1991 rural per capita income was 543 Yuan which was the highest of all townships in Yongsheng.

Jinguan has 8,165 households with a population of 34,402 (1991). It administers eleven villages and 84 hamlets. Ten of the eleven villages in the township have access to electricity and public roads. The evidence of the history of the Ming military settlement is still reflected in place names. The name of the township Jinguan, for instance, means an officer (*guan*) surnamed Jin. Many hamlets in the township were originally the bases of the garrison subdivisions, and many of them were named after the officers of the troops stationed there.

Among the eleven villages, I chose two to conduct my household survey. They are called Cuihu and Wengpeng. Cuihu village is 3 kilometers east of Jinguan township (see Plate 2). It consists of four hamlets (or "natural villages"): Guguan (after a Ming officer's name), Ruiguan (after a Ming officer's name), Bashang ("on the dam") and Longtan ("Dragon Lake"). They were included in Cuihu administrative village in the 1950s. The name Cuihu meaning "green lake" is derived from the numerous lotus ponds in the village. The village has 881 households and 3,589 residents. Most of them are the descendants of Ming troops. They cannot remember how many generations they have been there, but all know very well that their forefathers came to this place from Hunan province during the reign of the Hongwu Emperor (1368-1398).

Wengpeng is 5 kilometers northwest of the township seat. It is a semi-mountainous village (see Plate 4). The village name comes from the surnames of Ming officers' called respectively Weng and Peng. There used to be 5 hamlets all of which are named after the garrison officers. The hamlets were finally integrated into Wengpeng village in the 1950s. Wengpeng has 505 households and 2,200 residents. The physical layout of the village consists of a dozen homestead clusters spread along the foot of the mountains. Because the residences

are so dispersed, the village was divided into eleven production teams under the collective system (while Cuihu with nearly nine hundred household had only five production teams). This particular settlement is a result of a mixture of immigrating households from different periods of time. Some came with the earliest garrison settlement from Jiangxi and Hunan provinces, and others from Sichuan province and other places such as Ninglang county in more recent history. The most recent immigration started around 1940. Forty per cent of the households under my household survey migrated to Wengpeng after 1940. The main reasons for the recent immigration are adoption and flight from famine, bandits, military conscription or debt.

Ninglang County

The county seat of Ninglang is 116 kilometers north of the county seat of Yongsheng and 216 kilometers east of the prefectural capital, Lijiang (see Map 1). It is at an elevation of 2,200 meters, and is considerably more modern and in better shape than the 600 year old town of Yongsheng. The name Ninglang is an abbreviation of two place names: Yongning in the north and Langqu in the south (where the present county seat is located). These two places used to be territories of two Mosuo Tusi ("aboriginal headmen"). In 1936, Langqu and Yongning merged into one administrative unit under the Yunnan provincial government.

Ninglang has a total population of 204,403 (1991), 59.2 per cent of which is Yi. The second largest population in the county is Han which makes up 22.2 per cent of the total population. The third largest population segment is Mosuo which is 7.4 per cent of the total. The Pumi population is the next largest to the Mosuo, though it only consists of four per cent of the total population in Ninglang. The rest of smaller ethnic groups are Lisu, Naxi, Zhuang, Bai, Tibetan, Miao and Hui. Because the majority population is Yi, Ninglang was designated as the Yi Autonomous County in 1956.

Ninglang has an area of 6,025 square kilometers. The highest point is 4,510 meters above sea level, and the lowest is 1,340 meters. Fifty-four per cent of the area is at an elevation between 2,800 and 4,500 meters, where the annual temperature is 8.5°C on average with a frost season of 240 days and annual rain fall of 996 millimeters. The area between 2,100 and 2,800 meters above the sea level is 26.5 per cent of the total area, where the average annual temperature is 10-12.7°C with a frost season of 160-200 days and annual rain fall of 1,012 millimeters. The area at the elevation between 1,500-2,100 meters is 18.3 per cent of the total area, where the average annual temperature is higher than 16°C with a frost season of less than 160 days and annual rain fall of less than 800 millimeters. The area of the lowest elevation between 1,340-1,500 meters is only 0.55 per cent of the total area, where the average annual temperature is 20°C with a frost season of no more than 110 days and annual rain fall of less than 700 millimeters.

There is a general pattern of association between elevation and the residence of ethnic population. The Yi mainly live in the mountains at elevation of 2,500 meters and above, the Mosuo, Pumi and Han reside in the highland basin at elevation of 2,000 to 2,600 meters, and the areas of the lowest elevation is the Jinsha River valley occupied by mostly by the Zhuang.

Communications in Ninglang are difficult compared to other counties in Lijiang prefecture. Though there are bus services daily to the county seat of Ninglang from Yongsheng, Huaping (south of Ninglang) and Lijiang (passing through Yongsheng), the narrow winding mountainous roads make travel very difficult. The road condition is poor. Soon after crossing the border with Yongsheng, the asphalt surface ends and the road becomes narrower and narrower as it enters the mountains deeper and deeper. The mountains are mainly inhabited by the Yi. Their timber cabins sit on the hill slopes around which buckwheat is sparsely planted. In the distance, some forests are visible.

Due to the particular topographical situation, the Ninglang economy has a different emphasis from Yongsheng in terms of exploiting natural resources and economic development.

While Yongsheng is one of the most important grain production bases in Yunnan, Ninglang is one of the most important forestry and animal husbandry bases.

Ninglang has some three million *mu* (200,000 hectares) of pasture-land which is about forty per cent of the total area in the county. Livestock farming in Ninglang is divided into three zones. At an elevation of 3,000 meters in the south, sheep, goats and oxen are grazed. The sheep stock in Ninglang is the second largest in Yunnan province. In the basin area at an elevation of 2,000 meters and above, the main livestock are pigs (making up 37 per cent of the total number in the county), buffalo (making up 98 percent of the total number in the county) and other draft animals such as horses and mules (making up 44 per cent of the total number in the county). The area in the lowland along the Jinsha River is less significant as far as animal husbandry is concerned. The animals raised here include pigs and goats which contribute some twenty per cent of the total output of animal husbandry in the county. (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 342-3)

Forest resources in Ninglang are abundant. The forest area is 460,000 hectare (6.9 million *mu*) which is 76 per cent of the total area of the county. The forestry produce consists of two categories: agricultural and industrial. Agricultural produce includes saplings, firewood, pine seeds and mushrooms. Industrial produce includes logging and transportation, timber processing, and so on. The revenue from both agricultural and industrial forestry production contributes over 70 per cent to the county's total revenue income (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 320).

The 446,000 *mu* of arable land only amounts to five per cent of the county's total area. Agriculture in Ninglang can be divided into four zones by elevation and crops. At an elevation of 3,500-4,500 meters (mostly inhabited by the Yi), the main crops are buckwheat, oats and tubers (potato and *wuqing*).[4] Farming in this area used to be slash-and-burn. Forests were

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[4]*Wuqing* is locally called *yuangen*, i.e. "round root." Its Latin name is *Brassica rapa*. It is grown for food and fodder.

cleared between August and October every year, crops were rotated (buckwheat-oats-potato) for two or three years, then the land was abandoned and people moved to another place. After 2-3 decades of government interference and administrative control, most of the Yi were forced to settle down and give up the slash-and-burn agriculture.

At an elevation between 2,600 and 3,000 meters, the population is mixed with Yi, Pumi and Mosuo. The main crops are corn, buckwheat, potato and beans. The basin area is at an elevation between 2,000 and 2,600 meters. Ninglang has ten big and small basins, the total area of which is about 145,500 *mu* which is no more than 1.6 per cent of the total area of the county. The economy in the highland basins is the most flourishing in Ninglang. The majority population of the basin area is Mosuo, Pumi and Han. The main crops are rice, barnyard grass, cereals and vegetables.

At the lowest elevation of 1,400 to 2,000 meters, the main inhabitants are Lisu, Zhuang and Mosuo. This is the warm temperature area. It is the only place in Ninglang where two harvests a year are possible.[5]

Yongning and Its Peoples

Yongning is located at the north end of the Ninglang county border, 96 kilometers away from the county seat (see Map 3). There is a daily bus from the county seat to the Yongning township seat under normal conditions. But the service is often interrupted in the summer and autumn whenever there is a heavy rain and in winter whenever there is snow.

Yongning is known to the outside world for two attractions. One is the natural wonder of the Lugu Lake and the other is the cultural myth of the Mosuo matrilineal family. Lugu lake

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[5]The descriptions about the natural and economic environments are mainly based on the sources from *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993, and *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Gaikuang* 1985.

is 50 kilometers in circumference and 73 meters in depth. The surface of the lake is 2,700 meters above sea level, which is one hundred meters higher than the basin. The border line between Ninglang county and Yanyuan county in Sichuan province passes through the middle of the lake. The lake abounds with a variety of fishes. Fishing is the major sideline production of the households along the shore. The management of fishing in the lake is under the supervision of a joint committee between Ninglang and Yanyuan counties.

Tourism has slowly increased in the lake area. There are now a dozen restaurants plus lodges erected on the lake shore. The delicatessen offered to tourists are fresh fish from the lake and home fed chicken. Canoeing is a popular tourist program. The canoe is hand-made out of the trunk of a huge tree, and paddled by a pair of people, mostly Mosuo women from the two hamlets ashore. An hour trip is to Bird Island in the middle of the lake; and a day trip takes one into Sichuan province. Bird Island is covered in woods. On the top of the hill, there two sightseeing sites: a newly built Lamaist temple and a white pagoda which is a tomb of a Yongning Tusi.[6]

On the north end of Lugu lake, there lies a mountain known as Lion Mountain. The name is gained from the look of the mountain which resembles a lion lying prone with head raised facing south and tail stretching to the north. It, in the Mosuo language, called *Hidi Gamu*, a goddess worshipped by the people in Yongning. At the foot of the Lion Mountain, lies the Yongning basin which is 27 kilometers north of the Lugu lake. The basin is the largest basin of the county which is 2,600 meter at the sea level (a hundred meter lower than the lake). It has distinct dry and wet seasons. The dry season is between November and May and the rainy season is between June and October. The frost season is from the end of October through mid April.

Yongning is one of Ninglang's sixteen townships, and has a population of 16,875 (1991). Its largest population is Mosuo which amounts to 37.7 per cent of the total. The second

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[6]Tusi Ah Yunshan died in the 1930s.

largest population is Han amounting to 26.3 per cent of the total. The third largest is Yi amounting to 16.9 per cent of the total. The fourth in the rank is Pumi which is 10.2 per cent of the total. The remaining 9 per cent of the population is composed of the ethnic groups such as Zhuang, Naxi and Tibetans.

Ninety-six per cent of the Yongning population lives on agriculture. The main livelihood of the Mosuo in Yongning is a combination of crop faming and animal husbandry. The per capita income of the Yongning township in 1991 was 418 Yuan (which was 125 Yuan lower than in Jinguan). With a population less than 20,000, Yongning is classified as a *xiang* comprising six villages which administer sixty-six hamlets and 3,006 households. Less than half of the hamlets have access to electricity and public roads.[7] Kaiji village has the largest Mosuo population of all. It consists of 18 hamlets, 954 households and 5,827 people (which is more than 90 per cent of the Mosuo population in Yongning). The four hamlets that I selected for household survey are all included in Kaiji administrative village.[8]

Compared to the concentrated residences in Jinguan, the hamlets in Yongning are much smaller in size and more sparse in space. Gesawa is located in the north, half way up the mountain; Dapo is situated in the southeast, at the foot of the mountain.[9] Both these hamlets are inhabited by Mosuo. Gesawa has 29 households and 225 people; and Dapo has 32 households and 270 people. Neiba is situated right in the middle of the basin. Residences are concentrated, and the entire population is Han. This hamlet did not even exist fifty years ago. According to one of the oldest Han settlers, Neiba hamlet only had 13 households in 1953, but now it has 103 households and 570 people. Pijiang hamlet is situated on the same street where the township government and the market is located. It has 106 households and 536 people. The

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[7]Of the total 66 hamlets in Yongning township, only 26 hamlets have access to electricity, and a number of them have already lost lamp poles and wires.

[8]The name of the administrative village is changed.

[9]The names of the two Mosuo hamlets are changed.

residents of Pijiang hamlet are mixed. Many of them are Naxi, and the rest are Han, Mosuo and Tibetan. The majority of the residents were originally artisans and traders. This was how the hamlet gained its name Pijiang, meaning "tanners." The name was once changed into Pingjing, meaning "peace," after the hamlet was burned in a blaze by the rebels in the spring of 1956.[10] Accidentally, *pingjing* ("peace") in the Naxi dialect sounds almost identical to *pijiang* ("tanner").

The Mosuo

China has fifty-five officially classified ethnic minorities, and there are twenty-four of them living in Yunnan. However, Mosuo is not a designated nationality (*zu*). Mosuo might have been once included among some 260 names of ethnic minorities in Yunnan (and some 400 in all over China) submitted to the central government for identification in the early 1950s, but its insignificant size (in addition to all other historical circumstances) has not won an official recognition of its ethnicity. Instead, it has been defined as a sub-division of a larger ethnic group: Naxi.[11]

Ethnic identity in the Tibeto-Burmese Highland in southwestern China is very complex as the ethnic groups are numerous but the population of each group is small; and those peoples have lived in this area for so long and yet there is so little written history about them. In addition, one often finds that the existing history and local legends, the other- and self-identifications do not necessarily coincide with each other.[12]

The total Mosuo population in China is estimated at around 40,000 of which 15,000 live in Ninglang, 20,000 in Yanyuan and Muli and the rest in Yanbian, Xichang and other places (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 178). There are different names used to refer to the same

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[10]See Liangshan rebellion in Chapter 3.

[11]For an official review of China's ethnic identification, see Hsiao-Tung Fei (1981).

[12]See, for example, Stevan Harrell (1990): "Ethnicity, Local Interests, and the State: Yi Communities in Southwest China."

group of people which I call, in this dissertation, Mosuo. Mosuo is a phonetic transliteration of a Chinese term which is an other-referent as well as self-referent used by the peoples (Mosuo and non-Mosuo) living in Yongning today. In the Chinese historical records and contemporary ethnographies, Mosuo and "Moxie" are the commonly used names. In the English literature, there are various terms and forms of transliteration: Hli-khin meaning "the basin people" (Rock 1947: 355); "Moso" (e.g. Jackson 1979; Shih 1993); and "Naze" (e.g.Weng 1993; Harrell 1995). As far as the provincial government is concerned, the Mosuo in Yongning are Naxi, or a branch of the Naxi. Since the 1950s, the term Naxi has been widely used in the academic research and public media which cause considerable confusion as to which group the name actually refers.

As a matter of fact, the Mosuo were recognized as a *zu* or nationality in Ninglang county and in Yunnan province until 1959 (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993).[13] Following the official ethnic identifications embarked by the central government in the 1950s throughout China, the Mosuo in Yunnan was recognized as the subdivision of Naxi and henceforth incorporated into Naxi *zu*; and at the same time, the Mosuo in Sichuan were included in Menggu *zu* or Mongolian (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 176). Since 1978, the Ninglang county government–on behalf of the Mosuo community–has lodged several petitions to the provincial and National People's Congresses for rehabilitation of the Mosuo ethnic identity. In 1990, the Mosuo in Ninglang were officially granted a title of Mosuo *ren* ("people"), but still remain as a sub-group of the Naxi *zu*. However ambiguous the re-definition is, the partial recognition of the Mosuo identity is a political compromise that the Mosuo and the government has so far reached. The Mosuo cadres are not content with this result because the title *ren* does

[13]The term *zu* is officially translated as "nationality." In China, the officially recognized *zu* are 56 (including the Han).

not entitle the community and the individuals of the community to certain rights and privileges in both political and economic terms.[14]

The Naxi and Mosuo are believed to be the descendants of the same people, that is the the legendary Qiang (or Chi'ang) from northwest China. Both historical records and my observations in the field suggest that the Mosuo might have been related to the Naxi, but lost contact at some point in their history for uncertain reasons. At present, the Naxi and Mosuo appear to be two different groups of peoples living on two sides of the Jinsha River. The Naxi are concentrated in Lijiang on the west bank of the river; and the majority of Mosuo are located in Yongning (Muli and Yanyuan as well) on the east bank of the river. The main differences between the Naxi and Mosuo in political system, religious practice, language and social organization are roughly as follows.

- The Naxi used to be ruled by the Tusi ("aboriginal governor") surnamed Mu; and the Mosuo were subjects of the Tusi surnamed Ah. The Naxi commoners share a single surname He (there are more varieties of surnames in modern times), while the Mosuo commoners carry individual family names with double or multiple syllables similar to those of Tibetans.

- The Naxi aboriginal religion is *Dongba* which has pictographic scripts, and the Mosuo one is *Daba* which has no written script. Under the influence of the Tibetan Buddhism, the Naxi were converted to the Red Sect (of Lamaism) in the 1600s; and the Mosuo were converted to the Yellow Sect (of Lamaism) in the 1700s (see *Mosuo Religion* below).

- The Naxi and Mosuo have different languages of which about thirty per cent of the vocabulary is mutually intelligible.

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[14]One immediate concern of being recognized as Mosuo *zu* for the local leadership is the legitimacy of establishing the ethnic autonomous township (*minzu xiang*). At present, although the majority population in Yongning is Mosuo amounting to nearly 40 per cent of the total, Yongning township is not entitled to be an ethnic autonomous township because the Mosuo are not recognized as a separate "nationality" (*zu*).

- The Naxi are patrilineal and the Mosuo (in Yongning) are matrilineal.

- The Naxi bury their dead while the Mosuo cremate them.

- The Naxi women wear trousers and a cap, the Mosuo women wear a skirt and a turban.

None of the evidence provides a solution to the puzzle of the relation between the Naxi and Mosuo, and probably will "ever remain a moot question," as Rock suggested a half century ago (Rock 1947: 4).

Some Mosuo claim to be Mongolian (Weng 1993; Li 1994). Consistent with what has been elaborated by Shaoming Li (1986) and Xingxing Li (1994) about the relationship between Mosuo (or Naze) and Mongolian, the local people in Yongning gave me an account of the Mosuo identifying themselves with the Mongolians. It is said that the Mosuo do not celebrate the Moon (mid-autumn) festival like the Han and Naxi do. This is because the Moon festival originated from the local uprisings against the Mongolian rulers, and the Mosuo apparently sided with the Mongolians for one reason or another (either ethnic or political). Some Mosuo youth claim that their boots and knives are of the Mongolian tradition.

Some historical records and ethnographies make the Mosuo Mongolian connection plausible. The Mongolian identity of the Mosuo is apparently associated with the Mongolian presence in the Yunnan-Sichuan border area: once on their way to conquer Dali in the 13th century led by Kublai Khan, and the other time in the 14th century when the Mongolians retreated to the Yunnan-Sichuan border area under the suppression of the Ming garrison troops.[15] Lincan Li and Joseph Rock, during their ethnographic research conducted separately a half century ago, noted that the Yongning Tusi family claimed to be the descendants of a Mongolian officer left behind by Kublai Khan (Lincan Li 1984; Rock 1947). But by studying

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[15]Lancang *wei* of the Ming garrison troops stationed in today's Yongsheng was apparently related to this event.

their family nomenclature and ethnic history, both Li and Rock concluded that the Yongning Tusi were not Mongolian but Mosuo. The same conclusion is also reached by other scholars (e.g. Shaoming Li 1986; Xingxing Li 1994). In spite of the lack of support for the Mongolian origin of the Mosuo Tusi, the historical fact is that the establishment of the Tusi system is certainly a legacy of the Mongolian invasion to Yunnan.

The Tusi System

Tusi is a Chinese transliteration which literally means "aboriginal governor." As the Ninglang county history records, Kublai Khan and his troops passed Yongning in 1253 on their journey southward to Dali. The emperor named the place Yongning for it is a good omen as *yong* means forever and *ning* means peace. In the meantime, the aboriginal governor submitted himself and his subjects to the rule of the emperor; and in 1279, Yongning became a prefecture of the Chinese empire (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 46).

The establishment of the Tusi system in Yongning (as well as in Langqu) took place in 1381. It was the central policy to let the aborigines rule the aborigines.[16] Once the Tusi system was established, the succession of the Tusi position was required to have the consent from the central court. The Tusi succession followed the patrilineal line specified by the central court. This is probably the reason why the Tusi family in Yongning was patrilineal while the ordinary Mosuo families are matrilineal. Along with the establishment of Tusi system, the system of tribute (from the local Tusi to the central government) and the system of reward and punishment (from the central government to the local Tusi) were enforced.

In the Ming dynasty, the central court reformed the Tusi system for the purposes of restraining the power of the aboriginal rulers in the southwest. This reform is known as *gaitu*

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[16]The Tusi system can be compared with the present ethnic minority autonomous administration, but the Tusi government in the past was far more powerful than the ethnic leadership today.

guiliu ("submitting aboriginal governors to the control of the imperial commissioners"). At this time, Yongning and Langqu were brought under the jurisdiction of Beisheng prefecture (i.e. today's Yongsheng county). In some places of the southwest China, the aboriginal reigns were gradually abolished in the Qing dynasty, but the Tusi in Yongning and Langqu persisted until the 1950s.

The Yongning Tusi was the ultimate owner of the land and mountains in the area. Under him, there were two powerful administrative positions called Zongguan ("governor") and Kenbu (head of the Lamasery). These two positions were held by the Tusi's most trusted relatives in the patrilineal line. Under these two top ruling positions, there were several subdivision chiefs. They were all related to the Tusi family and shared the same surname Ah. All the relatives of the Tusi were called Sipi which in the Mosuo language means "landlords" who received enfeoffment from the Tusi. The Tusi and Sipi families received a Chinese education and spoke mandarin Chinese. In the Tusi administration, some Han people were employed for bookkeeping.

Under the Tusi system, the Mosuo society was differentiated by a hierarchy. The commoners were called *tongren* who farmed the Tusi land and were subject to paying certain tributes each year. The lowest class was *piazi* or *wo*. They either worked as corveé labor for a period of time each year to offset tribute payments, or as long-term farmhands of the Tusi family (or household slaves). Children born into the *piazi* family became Tusi household slaves after they had their puberty ceremony at the age of 13.

The last Yongning Tusi governor was Ah Shaoyi. According to his living relative in Dapo (the grandson of one of Ah Shaoyi's wives' sister), Ah Shaoyi had three wives, two locals and one from Lijiang. The only known offspring of the Tusi was a daughter born by his Naxi wife from Lijiang, but the child died of illness at the age of seven or so. Ah Shaoyi himself survived Liberation and was appointed county deputy chief from 1950 to 1959. He died in 1967.

Although the Tusi system has long been abolished, the prestige and spiritual power of Tusi have, to some extent, remained. The old Tusi residence is located in Zhongshi, 3 kilometers south of the township seat, and well maintained. It is managed year round by a relative of the old Tusi family. The master of the residence is the younger brother of the late Tusi. He has two roles, and both symbolic. On the one hand, he holds a position with the United Front Organization in the county government; and on the other, he is the head of the Yongning Lamasery. He is worshipped by the Mosuo as the "Living Buddha." When he returns to his home from the county seat on the Lunar New Year, the Mosuo visit the Tusi residence to show respect and receive blessing from the "Living Buddha."

The traditional Mosuo society is said to be a society where political and religious power merged. Today, the political power of the Tusi family has become totally symbolic, but the religious function is maintained. Different from the people of other ethnic groups living in the Yongning basin, religion plays an important role in the Mosuo life.

The Mosuo Religions

The Mosuo religious system consists of *Jabba*, or Lamaism; and *Daba*, an aboriginal shamanic practice.[17] The Mosuo in general believe in both. The priests of both religions–*Jabba* and *Daba*–are regarded as the most knowledgeable and highly respected people in Mosuo society.

The Mosuo *Jabba* religion derives from the native Tibetan Bön religion in combination with Buddhist religion. According to David C. Graham (1961), Buddhism entered Tibet in the

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17. Lama and *Lama jiao* (Lama religion) used in the texts are the Chinese translation of the Mosuo term *Dabba*. The reader should bear in mind that the term Lamaism used here to refer to the Mosuo religion may be controversial in terms of the strictest definition of the Tibetan-related religions. Without a discussion of the series of reforms of Buddhist religions in the Tibetan-Burmese highland, the complicated religious systems cannot be fully understood. As this study is not about religion itself and the purpose of introducing the Mosuo religion is for understanding the Mosuo culture and society, I choose to use *Jabba* (Mosuo Lamaism) for the convenience of the reader.

7th century during the reign of Srongtsan Gampo following the arrival of his two wives, one from India and the other from China. In the first few centuries, Buddhism encountered resistance from the native Bön religion until Padma Sambhava from India brought with him Tantric Buddhism and founded the Red Lamaism (or Nyingmapa). The Red Lamaism succeeded owing to the emphasis of Tantric Buddhism on magic and the exorcism of demons, similar to the Tibetan Bön religion. Between the 10th and 14th centuries, the conflicts between the Bön religion and Buddhism continued and led to further religious reforms in Tibet. In the 14th century, Tibetan Lamaism was reformed by Tsong-ka-pa who established the "victorious sect" (i.e. the Yellow sect of Lamaism, also known as Gelugpa) which introduced ceremonial garments (yellow hats and robes), elaborated rituals and enforced celibacy. From then on, three main sects of Lamaism co-existed in Tibet: Red Lamaism, Yellow Lamaism and Black Lamaism (i.e. the original Bön religion).[18]

Rock noted that the residents of Yongning were "adherents of the Black Bön sect" before Lamaism penetrated the south (Rock 1947: 356). Anthony Jackson believes that the Naxi King of Lijiang was converted to the Red Sect of Buddhism around 1600 A.D. and that the Hli-khin [Mosuo] were converted to the Yellow Sect of Buddhism around 1700 A.D. (Jackson 1979: 35). No matter how and when this Tibetan religion entered Yongning, the Yellow sect of Lamaism is the dominant religion among the Mosuo living in Yongning today. It has been estimated that one third of adult men were Lamas in Yongning before the 1950s (Zhan et al. 1980; Yan and Song 1983; Zhao 1987). This estimation is not very far from Graham's estimation that one out of five persons in Tibet is a Lama and that "every family contributes at least one son to the priesthood" (Graham 1961: 99).

The Yongning Lamasery is located in the vicinity of the township seat (see Plate 9). The highest leader of the Lamasery is the younger brother of the late Tusi. The old Lamasery has

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[18]The above account of Tibetan religions is largely based on the description by David C. Graham (1961: 97-9); and the two Tibetan terms for the Red and Yellow sects of Lamaism are suggested by Stevan Harrell (1995).

been under reconstruction since the 1980s. Every year, it holds regular meetings and attracts thousands of worshippers. There are currently some 100 Mosuo Lamas or *Jabba* in Yongning. Most of them live at home in the hamlet, and provide religious services to the local residents. There are four *Jabba* in each of the Mosuo hamlets that I studied. All of them have received religious education in Tibet and possess scriptures written in Tibetan. *Jabba* are invited to provide services mainly at funerals to comfort the soul of the dead, and are sometimes consulted for naming, healing wounds and curing illness assisted by herbal medicines. The Lamaist influence is pervasive in Mosuo society.

Different from the *Jabba* religion, the master of *Daba* does not possess any written scriptures and the religious knowledge is his living memory. According to the local people, in ancient times, there were four Mosuo tribes migrating from the north. Each of the them had a *Daba* who possessed the knowledge of the history of Mosuo society. Today, Yongning has only one *Daba* who is 74 years old, living in Dapo hamlet (Plate 10). He has had several disciples, but none of them is, at the moment, considered suitable to succeed him. The *Daba*'s successor is chosen through ritual performances. It is said that the magic and power of a *Daba* are transmitted through mind and spirit. When he foresees his death, the *Daba* will hold a dance ritual at which his disciples dance in front of him; and judging from the individual performance, the *Daba* selects his successor.

Both *Jabba* and *Daba* are influential in Mosuo life. In some circumstances, people send for a *Daba* when they are ill; and in others they prefer to consult a *Jabba*. The *Daba* is believed to possess supernatural forces, prophesy ominous events (e.g. death), and communicate with the spirits of the dead. The *Jabba*'s function at funerals is to release the soul from purgatory, while the power of the *Daba* is believed to put the soul at rest especially when dealing with accidental death in which the soul of the dead is believed to be harmful to the living.

The Pumi living in Yongning claim that the Mosuo *Daba* religion is very similar to their native religion. The Pumi used to be known as Xifan. In the 1960s, the official name for the Xifan living in Yunnan became Pumi, while the Xifan living in Sichuan province and Tibet

became Tibetan.[19] Culturally, the Mosuo are more similar to the Pumi than to the Naxi. The Pumi living in Yongning all speak Mosuo. The Pumi language–which contains more Tibetan vocabulary–is only spoken among the Pumi. Their residences are mingled with the Mosuo's in the hamlet. While the Mosuo have two poles (respectively standing for female and male) in the middle of the main house, the Pumi have only one pole in the middle of the house, which is known as "male pole." This architectural difference is consistent with the difference in social organization: the Mosuo are matrilineal, the Pumi are patrilineal with preference for the marriage between mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's son.[20] In spite of the differences, the Pumi, like the Mosuo, are legendarily believed to be the descendants of the Qiang.

The ethnic entanglement between Pumi and Mosuo is as complex as it is with Naxi.[21] Some believe that the Mosuo ancestors first came to settle down in Yongning after defeating the Tubo at the end of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. - 220 A. D.) (Lincan Li 1984: 251).[22] Other historical sources suggest that between 7th and 9th centuries, the Xifan were sent by the Tubo government down to the south to occupy the areas along the Jinsha River (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 220). Rock was inclined to believe that the aborigines of Yongning were Xifan (or Pumi) before the Mosuo migrated from the north (Rock 1947). This is consistent with Gong's study of the Tusi system, in which he claims the ethnic identity of the Yongning Tusi to be Pumi (Gong 1992).[23] If the Mosuo do have some historical connection with the Naxi, it is

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[19]The total population of Pumi in China is around 30,000, concentrated in Lijiang, Nujiang and Diqing prefectures in Yunnan.

[20]Due to the interactions with the Mosuo, the practice of "walking marriage" characteristic of Mosuo matriliny, is nowadays not uncommon among the Pumi in Yongning.

[21]See Stevan Harrell (996): "The Nationalities Question and the Prmi Prblem."

[22]Tubo is a Chinese term originally for Tibetans. In Yuan and Ming history, Tubo refers to the aborigines (including Xifan) living in the Tibeto-Qinghai highland. Shaoming Li suggests a connection between some ancient Qiang tribes and Tubo, and the subsequential influence of Lamaism among those Qiang tribes (Li 1981: 69-70).

[23]This can be another explanation, in addition to the Mongolian origin, for why the Yongning Tusi was patrilineal while the rest of Mosuo society is matrilineal.

reasonable to assume that the Mosuo should be even closer to the Pumi. As estimated, the Mosuo had lived in Yongning for some 700 years before Kublai Khan passed this basin in the 13th century (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 178). By this calculation, the history of the Mosuo inhabiting Yongning is about one and a half millennia. Therefore, it is more than reasonable to say that both the Mosuo and Pumi–whether they are of the same people or not–are *de facto* natives of Yongning. The significant immigration of other ethnic populations to Yongning began only two and half centuries ago.

Immigrants

Immigrants in Yongning include the Yi, Han, Naxi, Tibetan and other minor ethnic groups. The massive Yi immigration started two and half centuries ago, when several Yi clans moved into the Yongning-Langqu area from the north, an area known as Greater Cold Mountains (Da Liangshan) in Sichuan province. While some of them migrated further south into Huaping and Yongsheng, five clans stayed in Ninglang. The Yi tribal leaders first rented lands and forests from the Mosuo Tusi. As the Yi population expanded and their power grew (mainly through opium cultivation in the mountains), some parts of the Mosuo Tusi mountains eventually fell into the hands of the Yi. By the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), the Yi population in Ninglang had reached twenty thousand. In 1956, the first census showed that the Yi population in Ninglang was nearly fifty thousand (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993). Today, most of the Yi inhabit the mountains in the middle and southern parts of Ninglang. Because the Yi originally came from the Greater Cold Mountains (Da Liangshan), the mountainous area that the Yi live in today in Ninglang is called the Lesser Cold Mountains (Xiao Liangshan).

The first Han immigration to Ninglang started in 1838. Most of them were attracted by the silver mine in Langqu. A majority of miners came from Sichuan province; some came from the south of Yunnan. In 1908, the silver mine was closed down, and the miners became farmers and settled in the basin area near today's county seat. But the Han–owing to the

Yongning Tusi's strict rules–were essentially kept out of the Yongning basin until the 1940s. The massive Han immigration into Yongning was, in a way, encouraged initially by the Republican government. In 1933, the government launched a rural economic reform to develop China's southwest. Land survey was conducted as the government believed that the actual amount of arable land was more than what was shown in the statistics. As recorded, on the basis of the land survey in the first ten counties (out of the total 98 at the time) in Yunnan, the government concluded that the actual amount of arable land was up to three times higher than previously assumed (*Yunnan Sheng Nongcun Diaocha* 1935). This land survey was motivated and accompanied by taxation enforcement in the border regions. In Ninglang, the land survey was conducted around 1937; and in the following year, the provincial government issued assignments of land tax to Ninglang. Due to the resistance from the local Tusi, the tax assignment was not fulfilled which eventually led to the removal of two Ninglang government officials from their posts on charges of duty negligence (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993).

The first Han household settled in Yongning in 1940. Old Huang (now in his 60s) whose family came to Yongning among the first few told his story. His great grandfather (whose forefathers were originally from Nanjing and had been drafted in the garrison troops to Yunnan) came to Ninglang from the Kunming area to work in the silver mine. After the mine was closed down, the great grandfather assumed farming in a basin area around Langqu. In the generation of Old Huang's father, life became more and more difficult: land became scarce due to the population expansion in the basin and the constant looting by the Yi in the mountains which contributed more to the subsistence crisis. As Old Huang's father was looking for a way out, he met a government official who came to Ninglang after conducting the land survey from Lijiang through Yongning. Sympathetic with the situation associated with Old Huang's father, the official suggested that he move to Yongning where a large area of land had not been cultivated. But at the time, everybody knew that the Yongning Tusi did not allow the Han to enter the Yongning basin. The official assured Old Huang's father that the government had notified the Tusi that if he continued to refuse letting the Han migrate into the basin, the state

would confiscate the waste land. This is how Old Huang and his family came to Yongning. At that time, he was 9 years old and had six siblings (four brothers and two sisters). His father rented land from one of the Mosuo landlords, and began to grow rice.

Since then, Old Huang's family has lived in Neiba hamlet for four generations, and grown into 14 households of 95 people today. The Han population in Neiba hamlet is divided into a Yunnanese group and a Sichuanese group. The people of the Yunnanese group are those whose ancestors were originally the Ming troops from Jiangxi, Jiangsu and Hubei, and who have long settled down in other parts of Yunnan before coming to Yongning. The people of the Sichuanese group are the peasants who were driven by poverty and migrated directly to Yongning from the southern part of Sichuan.

Before the Han immigration, the Naxi were already in Yongning. The first Naxi family from Lijiang settled down in Yongning about one hundred years ago. Unlike the Han immigrants who were farmers, most of the Naxi immigrants were artisans. This is how the name of the hamlet Pijiang ("Tanners") came into being. In the early 1950s, Pijiang hamlet had some 50 households. Half of them were professional tanners, silversmiths, copper smiths and blacksmiths. The other half of the 50 households comprised traders, a mixture of Naxi, Han and Tibetans. The tanners made Tibetan boots for sale outside Yongning, tanned skins, sewed ordinary leather shoes and fur coats, and made leather harness cords for the locals. In the 1950s, the tanners were organized and worked in the cooperative, which was dissolved at the same time as the the household production responsibility system was implemented. In recent years, the growth of the local market and the availability of consumer goods have put the tanners and silversmiths out of business. Today, there are only three tanners left in the hamlet, and many silversmiths have retired without successors.

The Naxi in Yongning have the highest percentage of employment outside agriculture. Some of them work in the government institutions, and others are engaged in food processing and trades. All residents of Pijiang hamlet including the Han and Mosuo speak the Naxi language. The Naxi can understand the Mosuo language but rarely speak it. The Naxi in

Yongning do not have their own religion, and it would appear as if the early Naxi immigrants had left their religion behind when they came to Yongning from Lijiang. For some religious purposes, the Naxi in Yongning consult the Mosuo *Jabba*. Occasionally, older Naxi women are seen going to the Yongning Lamasery to worship and make offerings.

The Han and Naxi immigrations have had much impact on the Yongning economy in terms of the development of both rice cultivation and commercial trade. In day-to-day life, the Han and Naxi have had much interaction with the Mosuo. In the early years of the settlement, the Han exchanged rice and vegetables with the Mosuo for salt and tea, and exchanged bean curd for home-brew. Today, this exchange relationship is still maintained. Every year, the Mosuo go to the Han hamlet for rice seeds, and the Han go to the Mosuo for firewood. Many Han in Yongning understand the Mosuo language. The younger generation can understand some 50 per cent of the Mosuo language and the old generation understand more. This suggests that either the Han had more and closer contact with the Mosuo in the past, or more Mosuo today have learned to speak the Han language.

By comparison, the relationship between the Naxi and Mosuo is less on the subsistence level, due to the nature of the Naxi crafts which are somewhat commercialized. The Naxi crafts have provided the Mosuo as well as the Han with daily necessities from shoes to utensils. Today, much of the Naxi produce is still much appreciated by the locals such as corn spirit, processed food (e.g. *doufu*, and pea jelly), and copper and silverwares.

Despite the contacts, intermarriage between Mosuo and Han is rare (though a couple of Han households under survey have Mosuo wives). This social distance, according to the Mosuo, is not a matter of prejudice, rather a matter of custom. Apart from religion, social organization and the related customs are the main factors that maintain the cultural diversities among the peoples in Yongning, which have direct and indirect influence on their economic activities.

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMIC AUTONOMY

The institutional changes brought about by the economic reform have had significant impact on China's economic development; one of the most important institutional changes has been the decentralization which has altered the political relations between the central and local governments and had great implications for the management of local resources.

In the past decade, the reform policies have allowed local governments more and more latitude to manipulate political and economic means to accelerate economic development. The transition to a market economy and increased productivity have helped strengthen the power of local governments. The decentralization–characterized by revenue sharing and a shift in power from the central government to the local governments–has been noted as the direct outcome of the national fiscal reform in the 1980s (Oksenberg and Tong 1991). The economic incentives for the local administrations and the political tolerance of the central government have created a situation where local officials take great initiative in the reform. The economic authority assumed by local officials during the process has been referred to as "local state corporatism" (Oi 1992), "neolocalism" (Nee 1992), and "federalism" (Montinola et al. 1995), and these terms all suggest a greater or lesser degree of local autonomy.

However, it is important to note the extent to which the economic basis of this local autonomy differs in different parts of China. In most coastal and economically more advanced

regions, local power has been built and strengthened through the accumulation of revenues generated by a rapidly developing local industry. In many other places in the hinterland where the economy remains less developed, the economic autonomy of the local administrations has been benefitted largely from the state preferential treatment including financial subsidies, relief funds and the like.

The governments of the two counties included in the present study both fall within the latter category. Their power is built upon–apart from a monopoly of local economic resources–a broad range of bargaining strategies for dealing with the higher authorities who for a variety of reasons do not want to alienate the local governments. Not surprisingly, one government has more to bargain with than the other, owing to its "locality uniqueness in policy implementation," a common political phenomenon in China under the economic reform (Zweig 1992: 341). The locality uniqueness in this study (despite the two counties being under the jurisdiction of one prefecture) is their ethnic and poverty status. In both counties, the bargaining relationship with the state has fostered a local autonomy characterized by a greater or lesser degrees of freewheeling local leadership, and it has had highly significant economic consequences.

The decisive role that the local government plays in the local economy is the focus of this chapter. It centers on a range of economic incentives that guide local cadres in the implementation of economic policy, and the extent to which the policy and its implementation interferes with peasant economic life. The chapter begins with an introduction to the government organizations as a framework to understand the bureaucratic relations. The position of each level of government in the bureaucratic system and the hierarchical interrelationships between them illustrate how bargaining relationships are formed. The county government in this study is placed as the first level of local administration. Its economic autonomy is reflected in the management of local finances and natural resources. The difference in ethnic and economic status in the two counties highlights the particularity of local autonomy.

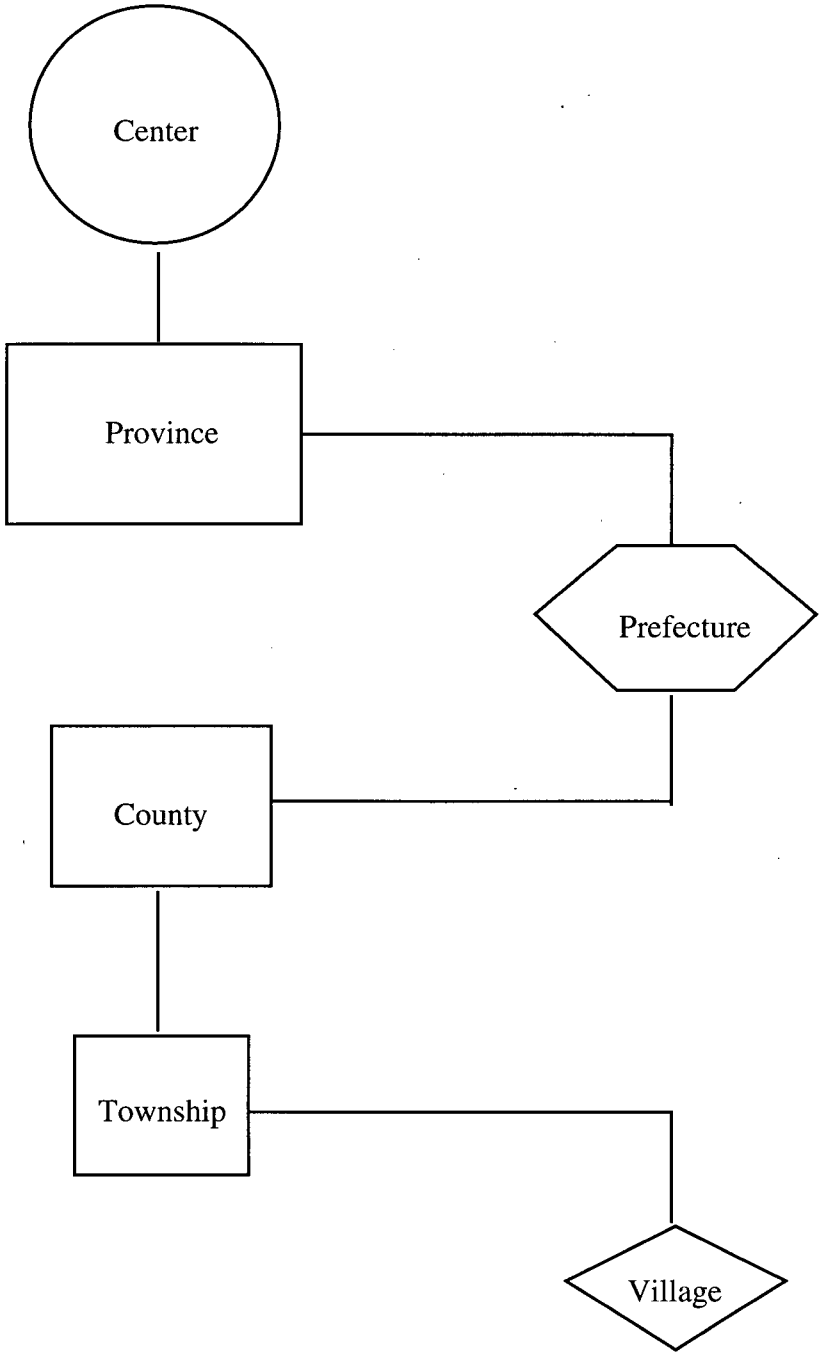
The township government is at the interface between the state and the peasants. On the one hand, it represents the state; and on the other, the local residents. The political and economic power of the township government is manifested in its administrative and redistributive functions. As an agent of the township government, the village administration uniquely assumes a semi-governmental and semi-collective role. The change in the village administrative functions in the aftermath of decollectivization has impacted the peasants' attitude towards public welfare. The conflict between "public" and "individual" has complicated the peasant-state relations; and much of the situation is, to a great extent, related to the behavior of local cadres.

The discussion of all these issues associated with local administration in this chapter is intended to provide a perspective which will facilitate a better understanding of the relation between the roles of the local government and economic change in rural society in a remote province like Yunnan.

Bureaucratic Structure of Government Administration

In the contemporary Chinese bureaucratic system, there are four levels of government (*siji zhengfu*), namely the *center* represented by the State Council, *province* (including municipalities directly under the central jurisdiction or *zhixia shi*), *county* (and its urban equivalent, city or *shi*) and *township* (and its urban equivalent, district or *qu*). Through this bureaucratic hierarchy, a high degree of central control is achieved. The bureaucratic system of government is illustrated in Figure 4 on the following page.

Figure 4. Levels of government administration



As shown in the figure, each level of government--except for the center-- is subordinate to the upper level and at the same time superior to the lower level. The two rhomboid signs in the chart indicate two special organs: the prefectural (*diqu*) and village administrations. Neither is defined as a level of government, but both are attached to, and included in the government administrative system.

The prefectural administration is an intermediate unit between the provincial government and county governments. In the bureaucratic jargon, it is a "dispatched organ" (*paichu jigou*) of the provincial government. Up till 1975, the official title of the prefectural governor was "commissioner" (*zhuanyuan*), and the prefectural administration was called the "commissioner's district" (*zhuanyuan qu* or *zhuanqu*). The role of the commissioner (or prefectural governor) is that of an agent of the provincial government, and the function of this dispatched organ is to supervise the work of county governments on behalf of the provincial government. Yongsheng and Ninglang in this study are two of the four counties under the jurisdiction of the Lijiang prefectural government.

Another dispatched organ shown in Figure 4 is the village administration. It is metaphorically described as a "leg" of the township government. The intermediate position of the village administration is between the township government and peasant households. It is officially called "administrative village" (*xingzheng cun*) because its organization is not based on the naturally formed settlement. The administrative village is a collective organization since it functions as the headquarter of several subordinate hamlets. At the same time, because it is a "leg" of the township government, the village administration may well be defined as a government agency. The village administration in contemporary rural China is, therefore, best described as a semi-governmental and semi-collective organization.

The local administrations in this study are mainly at two levels: county and township. From the administration of the county government, we shall see how local political and economic autonomy are gained and maintained; on what basis the local government bargains with the state; and what impact the local autonomous administration has on the local economy.

Because the township government is positioned between the county government and village administrations, subordinate to the former while superior over the latter, it ends up playing a dual role: to the higher level of the government it represents the local peasants; and to the local peasants it represents the higher level of government (or the state). The dual role that the township government plays inevitably involves conflicts and tradeoffs between state and local interests. In these two levels of government, we shall see many important aspects of state-peasant relations unfold.

Political and Economic Autonomy of County Government

In late imperial China, the county magistracy was the lowest level of state bureaucratic administration. The average population under each county jurisdiction in the 1800s was around 300,000. Because of the "law of avoidance" which prevented Chinese officials from serving in their own home province, the county magistrate was always an outsider; this rule of government contributed to the situation where a "thinly spread and weakly rooted state apparatus had a limited ability to penetrate local society and much of the governance fell to local elites operating outside the formal bureaucracy" (Esherick and Rankin 1990: 3).

This situation began to change at the turn of the twentieth century when commercialization and industrialization gradually became salient along with the introduction of Western style education and the subsequent abolition of imperial examination systems (ibid). This change was followed, after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, by a strengthening of state power by the Republican government especially in the 1930s referred to as "state making," and characterized by a deeper bureaucratic penetration initiated and rationalized by revenue extraction (Duara 1988). This indeed coincided with what was happening to the government administration in Yongsheng and Ninglang during the same time.

Throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties, Yongsheng was a prefecture (*zhou*, or *fu*).[1] At the beginning of the Republican era, Yongsheng became a county (*xian*) which had jurisdiction over Ninglang. In the mid 1930s, Yongsheng and Ninglang were separated and became two county administrations: Yongsheng county (*xian*) and Ninglang Administration Bureau (*shezhi ju*), respectively under the jurisdiction of the Yunnan provincial government (*Yongsheng Xianzhi* 1989; *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993). Following the establishment of the Ninglang Administration Bureau, the provincial government enforced control over taxation. According to the official history of Ninglang, two years after the Ninglang Administrative Bureau was established, in 1938, the provincial government started to issue annual tax assignments to Ninglang.

Since 1950, these two counties have been administered by the Lijiang prefectural government. Today, the Yongsheng county government administers eighteen townships and a population of 335,000 (1991), the majority of which is Han. Ninglang county has a population of 204,403 (1991) and its government administrates sixteen townships. Because the majority of its population is Yi, Ninglang is a Yi autonomous county. In addition, it has remained a "state designated poverty-stricken county" (*guojia ji pinkun xian*) since 1986.

In the past decade of economic reforms, the county governments in both Yongsheng and Ninglang have gained much juridical power. Due to differences in the ethnic composition of the population and economic state of affairs, the two county governments employ different administrative strategies in their political and economic leadership. The local autonomy and distinct functions of the county government are manifest in three crucial aspects of administration, namely local leadership, local management of finance and monopoly of local resources.

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[1]Due to the changes in jurisdiction, the organization of *zhou* and *fu* switched back and forth. In the Ming and the early Qing dynasties, it was Beisheng *zhou*. Around the end of 17th century, it became Yongbei *fu*; and later became Yongbei *zhiliting* (*Yongsheng Xianzhi* 1989).

Ethnic Leadership and Local Autonomy

The Yi population comprises about sixty per cent of the total population in Ninglang. In the county capital, the Yi language is commonly spoken, or at least understood, by many peoples of different ethnicities. Mandarin Chinese, locally called *Hanhua*, is only the second commonly spoken language, but it is the official language, i.e. the language used in government documents and school textbooks. Most of the county leaders are locals. As the county officials estimate, sixty per cent of the middle- and high-ranking cadres of the county government are Yi. The county magistrate is Yi, and many government bureau chiefs are Yi.

The ethnic composition is the core of the legitimacy of the local administration. This is a lesson learned by the central government from a period and an event in contemporary Ninglang history known as the "Cold Mountain rebellion" (*Liangshan panluan*). The rebellion was mainly led by the Yi. It began in the Greater Cold Mountains in neighboring Sichuan province, and soon spread to the Lesser Cold Mountain areas in Ninglang county, and further to the Yi and Lisu areas on the Yongsheng border. The rebellion in Ninglang broke out in April of 1956 when the land reform was just under way. It was an almost simultaneous uprising in several townships. The political message of the rebellion was to let the locals rule the locals.

The rebellion was put down by thousands of troops sent from the Kunming Military Region, Yunnan Military District and Lijiang Military Sub-District plus hundreds of local militia from neighboring counties (*Yongsheng Xianzhi* 1989). In the Cold Mountain areas, many rebels took refuge in the mountains. In Yongning, some rebelling Lamas tried to escape to Tibet, and a few made it while the rest were arrested. According to the locals in Yongning, the current head of Yongning Lamasery (the younger brother of the late Tusi) was shot in the leg on horse back when fleeing from Yongning.

It took about two years before the situation in Ninglang finally calmed down in 1958. It is noteworthy that it was not a coincidence that Ninglang was granted the title of Yi autonomous county by the State Council in September 1956, five months after the rebellion broke out. It was also not coincidental that the magistrate of the newly established Yi autonomous county

was a Yi, while his three predecessors from 1950 to 1956 had been Naxi and Han. This situation changed again during the Cultural Revolution when turmoil swept the whole nation. From 1967 when military control was imposed to 1980 when the Revolutionary Committee was dissolved and the county government was reinstated, the county was headed by Han officials. Since 1980, the ethnic status of the county magistrates as well as the first county party secretaries has remained Yi. (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993)

The importance of the ethnic identity of the local leadership lies in enabling the officials to act as the legitimate representatives of the locals with whom they share culture, language and religion. However, all levels of local governments are, in theory, agencies of the state. In this respect, the ethnic status of the local leadership creates a special relationship between the local government and the state. This special relationship involves many sensitive political issues which often have economic bearings. It is, in short, a bargaining relationship between the local government and state, and between the local government and the local population. This bargaining relationship also exists in non-ethnic autonomous counties such as Yongsheng where the economic situation, though better than the average in the prefecture, is still dependent on state support. But the mechanisms of the bargaining relationship work differently in the two counties. One important aspect of the differences in the two government administrations is manifested in the management of local finance.

Financial Management: A Crucial Aspect of Local Autonomy

Management of local finance is an important aspect of the government administration. Not only does it mirror the economic situation of the region, it also reflects the power of the local government in political bargaining and the latitude of the local government in manipulating economic resources.

The power of local governments in finance management may be attributed to the fiscal reforms of the 1980s. The fiscal policy of the central government in 1980 was formulated as "dividing revenue and expenditure" (*huafen shouzhi*) and "target assignment by level" (*fenji*

baogan). This policy is metaphorically described as "eating from separate pots" (*fenzao chifan*). In this system, the revenues and expenditures of the central government and all levels of local government were fixed on the basis of the 1979 budget. The target assignments defined the amount of revenue to be turned over to the central government, the portion to be retained by the local and the figure to be subsidized. In 1985, the fiscal system was redefined as "dividing tax types" (*huafen shuizhong*), "settling baselines for revenue and expenditure" (*heding shouzhi*), and "target assignment by level" (*fenji baogan*). This system is a continuity of the 1980 policy and further specifies the fixed amount of the central and local revenues and the fixed amount of the revenue shared between the central and local governments (*Caizhengbu Difang Yusuansi* 1992).

Both of the reforms are intended to regulate expenditure and stabilize revenues at all levels of governments. The mechanisms of the revenue and expenditure regulations designated by the fiscal reforms were intended to work to the advantage of both central and local governments. The revenue and expenditure responsibility system termed "target assignment by level" has eased the financial burden of the central government; and by allowing the local governments to retain the excess-quota income, it has created incentives for the local governments. In the revenue sharing agreement between the central and local governments, the share of the overfulfilled revenue quota is retained by the local government as an extrabudgetary fund, and the use of the extrabudgetary fund is within the power of the local government.[2] The overfulfilled revenue quota is divided between the higher and lower levels of government by ratios of 30 to 70, 40 to 60 or 50 to 50. In Yongsheng, for instance, the percentage of revenue shared between the county and township governments is 50 to 50. This system is intended by the central government to stimulate the local government to generate revenues.

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[2]Extrabudgetary fund (*yusuanwai zijin*) is, by definition, a fund that exists outside the state budgetary plan, which is managed and disposed by the local finance. It is composed of various tax surcharges, revenue shares, special appropriation funds, and other administrative incomes. See also Jean Oi (19992: 105).

In the poor areas that suffer from chronic budget deficits, the financial arrangements between the central and local governments are different. In these areas, both budgetary and extrabudgetary revenues often depend on subsidies from the central government.

Yunnan is one of the "eight minority provinces/regions" (including five ethnic minority autonomous regions and three provinces with a large ethnic minority population) that enjoy favorable treatment from the central government in economic development.[3] In the fiscal reform of 1980, the policy of "dividing revenue and expenditure" and "target assignment by level" granted fixed amounts of subsidy to these areas with an annual increase of 10 per cent.[4] As estimated, during the 12 years between 1980 and 1991, the financial subsidy that the central government issued to the eight minority provinces/regions amounted to 120 billion Yuan, or on average 10 billion Yuan a year (*Caizhengbu Difang Yusuansi* 1992: 8). Most of these areas are categorized as "old-minor-peripheral-poor" (*lao shao bian qiong*) referring to old revolutionary bases, ethnic minority areas, remote regions and poverty-stricken areas. The central financial subsidies in these areas embrace moral intention. To the so-called old revolutionary base areas, the central government is indebted for their contribution to the revolution in the past; to the ethnic minority regions, the central government is compelled to provide support for their symbolic role in the nation's unity; and to the poverty-stricken areas, the central government is obliged to provide help for they are lagging behind the national economy for a variety of reasons. The aim of the financial subsidies is twofold: a long term interest in economic recovery and a short term guarantee of regional stability.

Yunnan has a reputation for "subsistence finance" (*chifan caizheng* or "bread and butter finance"). This refers to a situation where local revenue can barely sustain the administrative body (paying salaries and expenses for the maintenance of bureaucratic organs), but lacks the

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[3]The five ethnic minority autonomous regions are Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang (Uighur), Guangxi (Zhuang), Ningxia (Hui) and Tibet; the three provinces are Yunnan, Guizhou and Qinghai.

[4]The 10 per cent annual increase was discontinued in 1987 due to the financial strain on the central government. Instead, the amount of subsidy for each area was fixed for five years.

strength to support economic construction. In fact, 102 out of 127 county-level administrations (eighty per cent of the total) in Yunnan are in financial deficit.[5] This means that even the "bread and butter" needs to be subsidized by the central government. Both Yongsheng and Ninglang are in the category of the 102 finance deficit counties. Among the four counties in Lijiang prefecture, Yongsheng county has the highest output value and per capita income, and Ninglang is the poorest. By the special financial arrangement for the eight minority provinces/regions, each of the two counties receives a fixed subsidy of over 10 million Yuan a year since 1984-85. Because Ninglang is an ethnic minority autonomous county and at the same time a state designated poverty-stricken county, Ninglang is in a more favorable position to receive more financial subsidy. According to the Ninglang county history, from 1953 to 1989, the state subsidy amounted to 71.39 per cent of the total revenue income of the county (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 426).

Given the population difference, the discrepancy in local revenue per capita, state subsidy per capita and government expenditure per capita between the two counties is remarkable. On the basis of the sources available, a comparison of county finances is shown in Figure 5.

While the local revenue does not show much discrepancy, which would suggest that the economic situation in both counties in 1985 was almost equally poor, there is a large discrepancy in state subsidy per capita and consequently in expenditure per capita. As recorded, the state subsidy received by Ninglang county in 1989 exceeded 20 million (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 427).

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[5]It should be noted that the actual financial situation in the 102 counties may not be consistent with the official definition, as the county governments have considerable leeways to manipulate statistics for the purpose of receiving state financial support.

Figure 5. Comparison of finance situation between Yongsheng and Ninglang

	Yongsheng county	Ninglang county
Population	331,445	180,135
Local revenue	6,597,000	3,258,000
Per capita (Yuan)	19.90	18.08
State subsidy	11,438,000	12,031,000
Per capita (Yuan)	34.50	66.78
Total expenditure	15,805,000	14,069,000
Per capita (Yuan)	47.68	78.10

SOURCES: *Yongsheng Xian Zhi* 1989; *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993.

The ethnic status of the population earned Ninglang its title of autonomous county. The ethnic autonomy of the Ninglang county government today exists not only in name as many outsiders would assume. In terms of financial management, the county government of Ninglang certainly enjoys tremendous autonomy compared to Yongsheng. By bureaucratic arrangement, the county bureau of finance is subject to the dual leadership of the county government and the prefectural/provincial bureau/department of finance. To the former, its relation is administrative; and to the latter it is operational. The administrative leadership is basically personnel control. Though the county bureau of finance is subject to the administrative orders of the county government, the operational discipline controls the actual financial management such as drawing up budgets and appropriating funds. In the operational system, the county bureau of finance is supervised by the prefectural bureau of finance on behalf of the provincial department of finance.

Although the county bureau of finance in Ninglang is subject to the dual leadership of the county government and prefectural/provincial bureau/department of finance, it operates in a different way. The difference is reflected in a weak operational link which means that the higher-level financial authorities (prefecture and province) have less control over its actual

operation. In other words, the bureau of finance in Ninglang is more responsible to the county magistrate and his leadership, than to the prefectural and provincial superiors in the financial operational system. This particular situation makes the bureau of finance in Ninglang less powerful than its counterpart in Yongsheng in terms of appropriation of funds and expenditure control. In fact, its role is no more than the county government's cashier, which means that the bureau of finance appropriates funds according to the orders of the county leaders, regardless of the actual financial situation.

The weak financial system in Ninglang is also attributable to the county's economic situation. That is, there is little revenue to be extracted, and therefore, there is not much for the bureau of finance to control. According to the county history and my interviews with the county finance officials, between 1979 and 1984, a series of deductions in agricultural taxes and state grain procurement quota was granted to Ninglang. Since 1985, all townships of Ninglang have been exempted from agricultural taxes on grain and animal slaughtering by the provincial Department of Finance.[6] This situation is likely to remain for as long as Ninglang retains its status of poverty-stricken county.

The combined status of an ethnic autonomous county and state poverty-stricken county have provided financial advantages to Ninglang. The gap between its revenue income and expenditure is covered by various state subsidies and earmarked funds which are issued through the provincial Department of Finance. In addition, the status of poverty-stricken county also entitles Ninglang to a series of state loans on favorable terms (i.e. central-finance subsidized low-interest loans) which are issued by the Bank of Agriculture, a special agency through which much of the state poverty alleviation funds are channelled. This special loan is called "central interest subsidized loan" (*zhongyang tiexi daikuan*). The monthly interest of the

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[6]In technical terms, agricultural taxes consist of three major items: grain tax, animal slaughtering tax and property transaction (e.g. house) tax. In the tax exemption, property transaction tax was not specified. According to the township finance office, the property transaction tax has never been enforced in Yongning.

loans set aside by the Ministry of Finance is 0.74 per cent in which 0.5 per cent is subsidized by the central finance. According to the county government's poverty-alleviation office, between 1986 (when the state poverty alleviation program started) and 1992, Ninglang county received a total of 18.18 million Yuan (on average 2.6 million Yuan a year) in interest-subsidized loans.[7]

Because the finances of Ninglang are under the autonomous administration of the county government, the management of state subsidiary funds and loans is totally in the hands of the county government administration. This means, once the funds are available, it is up to the county leaders to dispose of them in whatever area and in whatever way. In the past few years, much criticism has been directed at the state support to the poor areas and many questions have been raised about the effect of poverty alleviation (e.g. Zhou 1992; Park and Rozelle 1994; Larsen 1992; *Jiushi Niandai de Fupin Zhanlue* 1993). However, the problems involved are many-fold and the explanations are complex. Many say that the poorer the county, the richer the county government, which may not be an over-statement. It is common knowledge in Lijiang prefecture that Ninglang (the only state poverty-stricken county in the prefecture) has more and fancier official motor vehicles than any of the three counties in the prefecture. The means at the disposal of the local government in poor areas deserve attention in studies of local economy.

As the county government of Ninglang enjoys large amounts of state subsidies in various forms, one may expect a lack of administrative momentum in generating revenue since

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[7]One of the major projects of poverty-alleviation in Ninglang is the much advocated "Project 3358." It was launched in 1987 and is part of the county's 7th Five Year Plan (1986-1990). It aims at utilizing the county's unexploited mountain areas. The four digits of the project designation respectively stand for the development of 30,000 *mu* of plum trees, 30,000 *mu* of pepper trees, 50,000 *mu* of apple trees and 80,000 *mu* of alfalfa. The centrally subsidized loans have been used primarily to subsidize orchard construction, nurseries (saplings are provided to peasants for free), and training of technicians. It is still too early to tell how successful the project will be since it will take a few years before the trees bear fruit. Also, because the 190,000 *mu* of orchards are contracted to individual peasant households, it may be difficult to estimate the actual return on the government investment.

deficits can be set off by subsidies and even loans demand no rush repayment.[8] Yongsheng county, on the other hand, enjoys less favorable treatment because it is neither an ethnic minority autonomous county nor a poverty-stricken county. The county leaders of Yongsheng have mixed feelings about their economic status. On the one hand, they are proud of being the number one in the prefecture with its highest output value and per capita income; and on the other, they quite envy the favorable treatment accorded their neighbor Ninglang by the state. They think if Yongsheng were a poverty-stricken county, they would receive more state subsidies and their economic construction would be much easier.

Though Yongsheng finances have also been substantially subsidized by the provincial government, the financial arrangement between county and province (the policy of setting the baseline for revenue and expenditure, and target assignment) does not permit Yongsheng to rely completely on the state support. Rather, it is being forced to solve, at least partially, its financial problems by generating more revenue on its own. Since the latitude that Yongsheng has to bargain with the state for subsidies is limited, the county government resorts to the promotion of a cash economy. The urge to generate higher revenue has made the county administration so desperate that it had to exert coercive power. The development of cash economy in order to raise government revenue took the form of tobacco production, which created conflicts between the local government and peasants.

Monopoly of Resources

Due to the differences in government administration and finance management in the two counties, each government administration employs different economic strategies to its own

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[8]At the time of my interview with the official of the county government office of poverty alleviation, the repayment of the first loans issued in 1987 was not yet due. The official made it quite clear that his duty is to approve projects and distribute funds, while collecting payments is the responsibility of the Bank of Agriculture.

advantage. The different strategies involve different measures of resource monopoly which have had different economic consequences for the local communities.

Forests are among the richest natural resources in Ninglang. Seventy-six per cent of the total area of the county is forest which contrasts sharply to the arable land area amounting to only five per cent. The industrial exploitation of forest resources began in the mid 1960s. At the time, two Forest Industry Bureaus were set up in Ninglang, both subject to the leadership of the provincial government. In succession, seven logging centers were established under the management of the two bureaus (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 330). For nearly twenty years, logging was under the monopoly of the provincial government. In 1982, the provincial government transferred the management of the logging industry to the Ninglang county government, and at the same time the state monopoly on timber sales was abolished. In 1986, the two Forest Industry Bureaus were dissolved. The forest resources and industry today are in control of the county government.

Logging is the most profitable industry in Ninglang. The annual volume of logging in the 1980s was around 180, 000 to 200,000 cubic meters, and most of the timber–about 50 to 70 per cent–was sold outside the county, mainly to Sichuan, Hubei, Henan, Shandong, Zhejiang and Shaanxi provinces. Part of the timber is sold for cash and part in exchange for materials like steel, cement, plastic film, diesel and grain. The revenue from the logging industry and other forest products contributes seventy per cent of the county's total revenue income (ibid.: 320).

The autonomous administration of Ninglang county gives the local government considerable leeway to monopolize natural resources and manipulate revenue income. The county government has a special forest fund which exists outside the budget, called the "petty cash bank" (*xiao jinku*) though the amount of the fund is by no means "petty." The existence of this fund is public knowledge but its exact size is not known. This special forest fund operates under the direct control of the county government. The fund is accumulated on the profits made

from timber sales.[9] Apart from the state owned forests which are under the direct control of the county government, there are also collectively owned forest areas. Each year, the county forest fund committee issues commercial logging quotas to townships and villages.[10] The purchase of timber is monopolized by the county government, i.e. the forest fund committee. As for how this forest fund is used, it is strictly the business of the county administration–partly appropriated for subsidizing township finances, partly for subsidizing residence construction (e.g. helping the Yi people settle down), partly for the construction of the county capital (including building and recreational establishments), and partly for subsidizing various administrative expenses, most notably feasts.

The ethnic and poverty status of Ninglang also makes the economic development in the area assume priority. The year after the former provincial Forest Industry Bureaus were dissolved, the Ninglang county government proposed to set up a pulp mill to utilize its abundant forest resources and to create employment for some 900 persons. The proposal was approved by the provincial government in 1991. The total capital investment in the construction amounted to 150 million Yuan, some 60 per cent of which came from the state special allocation and poverty-alleviation fund, and the rest from loans of different channels.[11] Ever since Ninglang

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[9]It mainly consists of the division of revenue on timber sale. Up till 1994, 10 per cent of the profit was retained by the county's special forest fund. After that, the percentage retained by the county government was raised to 15.

[10]Yongning is not a logging center, and logging quotas are not as high as in the mountainous areas. In 1991, the village where I conducted fieldwork received a logging quota of 192 cubic meter from the Yongning township. The village administration office redistributed the quota to the 18 hamlets; then the hamlet leaders divided the quota and assigned it to the households. Each household with the quota assignment needed to obtain a logging permit stamped by the township Forest Control Station from the village administration office. According to the village book keeper, as long as the peasants have the logging permit, the actual felling volume is not strictly controlled. In 1991, the actual volume of timber cut was between 500-600 cubic meter–twice higher than the quota allowed; and in 1992, the actual volume of timber cut was three times higher than the previous year. According to the township cadre who is in charge of logging quotas in the township, the government purchases timber from peasants at a price of 100 Yuan per cubic meter, and sells outside the county for 360 Yuan.

[11]The construction of the pulp mill was completed in 1995.

made the decision to set up the pulp mill, the neighboring counties Yongsheng and Huaping have complained for fear of the water contamination in the rivers flowing down through their paddy fields. But the provincial government has chosen not to interfere mainly for two reasons: (1) Ninglang is an ethnic minority autonomous county; and (2) Ninglang is a state poverty-stricken county. Fro these two reasons, if the provincial government were to interfere, it would be under pressure to cough up a large amount of fund to compensate the loss of opportunity for Ninglang to "get rich."

In Yongsheng, forest resources do not constitute an economic advantage, but the county has fertile arable land. Grain crops in Yongsheng have the highest yield in Lijiang prefecture and a yield higher than in most places in Yunnan. But the price for grain products is relatively low. In order to increase its revenue, the county government cast its eyes on a theoretically high profit product: tobacco.

Tobacco is a major cash crop in Yunnan. The climate in many places is suitable for tobacco cultivation. In 1991, the tobacco sown area in the province amounted to 46 per cent of the total cash crop area (*Yunnan Tongji Nianjian* 1992). Tobacco production makes a significant contribution to the provincial economy, as there is no other agricultural product that generates more profits. Cigarette manufacture is the most profitable industry in Yunnan. The output value of the tobacco manufacturing sector in 1991 was over 10 billion Yuan which made up thirty per cent of the Gross Product Value of Industry in the province (*Yunnan Tongji Nianjian* 1992).

Beginning in the 1980s, the provincial government of Yunnan offered preferential conditions for new tobacco-growing counties by suspending provincial or central taxes during the first five years of production. For the county government, tobacco production is profitable since a 38 per cent sales tax can be extracted (which is much higher than agricultural taxes and any other taxes). Tobacco sale is monopolized by the county government through its purchasing agencies in the townships. There is no tobacco market outside the government channels. This monopoly guarantees the control of profits by the county government and eliminates commercial competition.

Eleven out of eighteen townships in Yongsheng were assigned tobacco growing areas in 1991 and 1992. Only the townships in the mountainous areas were spared for a lack of the necessary conditions such as warm temperature and a secure grain base. In order to encourage township governments to implement the tobacco production policy, the county government provided economic incentives by giving target revenue assignments, and allowing for the overfulfilled revenue to be shared between the county and township governments. In this revenue-sharing system, the county government receives 30 per cent while the township government retains 70 per cent.

The county government's decision to promote tobacco production, at first, did not appear irrational considering the history of tobacco cultivation in Yunnan and the presence of the necessary conditions in Yongsheng: climate, irrigation, trained technicians and so on. However, it became problematic in practice. To the individual cultivators, tobacco cultivation runs counter to their economic interests (see Chapter 5). Encountering reluctant response from the peasants, the county government decided to make tobacco production compulsory.

It started in 1991. Many peasants resisted the coercive order passively, and some expressed their defiance explicitly. At the end of the year, several peasants in Jinguan delivered a petition to the provincial government protesting the coercive order of tobacco production imposed by the county and township governments and claiming their rights to choose what to grow on the land contracted to their households. The provincial government did not want to get involved in the local conflict, and transferred the petition to the county government, demanding that a local settlement be reached. Since the peasants were under the magistracy who promoted tobacco production in the first place, the local settlement could not possibly have ended in their favor. However, the county government had no intention to magnify the matter, being well aware of the unpopularity of the tobacco policy. Eventually the case was settled quietly "out of court," and the incident did not have much impact on government policy.

In 1992, when I was in Jinguan, the conflict between township cadres and peasants became more acute as the assignment for tobacco growing area was increased, and the township

government took formal coercion to enforce the tobacco policy (see *Economic Intervention* below). A year later, tobacco production ended in disaster after the autumn harvest. The disaster was initially caused by the poor harvest. Then, the harsh conditions set by the government agencies for purchasing cured tobacco added burden to the peasants and fueled their pent up discontent. Finally the peasants took violent action towards local cadres. All this was happening in the vicinity of the county capital, and the government was much shaken by the consequences of its policy. In 1994, the compulsory tobacco production was abolished.

The development of tobacco production in Yongsheng is a product of the power expansion of local autonomy. The power is both economic and political. On the economic level, the circumstances provide the county government with incentives to generate revenue. On the political level, the local autonomy of the county government enables the administration to employ coercive means to exploit local resources to achieve its economic goals.

In the past few years, there have been many spectacular incidents of peasant uprisings against excessive levies, delayed grain purchase payment, embezzled compensations and all kinds of bullying by officials reported in the media (see, for example, Wedeman 1996). Much of the blame has fallen on the central government. While the central government is responsible for many undesirable situations and outcomes of the economic reforms, some other explanations are certainly worth seeking at lower levels in the same bureaucratic system. Why did peasant uprisings take place in some counties but not in others? Why are peasants more exploited in one place but less in another? If we acknowledge the trend of decentralization in Chinese politics, we should recognize the considerable autonomy of the local governments that has been significantly expanded and strengthened in the past decade of economic reforms, and has had a tremendous impact on the development of rural economy. When we come to scrutinize these problems, we shall discover that, at least, part of the responsibility may very well lie with the local administrations.

Local Autonomy and the State: A Bargaining Relationship

What factors have strengthened local autonomy? On what basis has the local autonomy of Yongsheng and Ninglang county governments been sustained? These issues concern diversities of politics at all levels of government, which create latitude for political bargaining. Recently, there have been notable studies on the spatial aspects of power between the central and provincial governments though mainly concentrated on the eastern coastal regions.[12] However, there have been comparatively few studies dealing with bargaining relationships between county governments and the state.

Both Yongsheng and Ninglang are financial deficit counties. Once the local government has deficits, it relies the state for support, otherwise even the administrative body cannot be sustained. As stated earlier, both Yongsheng and Ninglang receive about the same amount of fixed financial subsidy (around 10 million a year each) according to the special financial arrangement for the eight minority provinces/regions, despite the population in Ninglang being no more than 60 per cent of the population in Yongsheng. But this subsidy is far from sufficient to make ends meet in either county. So each county has to apply for additional subsidiary funds from the state. The amount of the additional funds is, however, not fixed. As for how much each county can get depends on how well the local administration can bargain with the higher authorities. As for how well each local administration can bargain, it depends on what chips it has to bring to the bargaining table.

Ninglang's combined ethnic minority and state poverty-stricken status provides the county government with solid bargaining power and entitlement to state support. This is regarded by outsiders (people in Yongsheng, cadres in Lijiang and officials in the central institutions of poverty alleviation, whom I have interviewed) as the "advantages of being poor." Though it may sound blunt and unsympathetic, such a remark does nonetheless tackle the core

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[12]Jae Ho Chung (1995) offers a useful summary and critique about studies in this field.

of the matter. By comparison, Yongsheng has less of an advantage in bargaining as it is neither an ethnic minority nor a state poverty-stricken county. The latitude of bargaining, therefore, is comparatively restricted. The differences in bargaining by the two local governments have resulted the substantially large state subsidy flowing into Ninglang and administrative interferences with peasant production in Yongsheng.

In the bargaining relationship, the state and local government have different goals and gains. Generally, the state subsidies are viewed as having more social effect (*shehui xiaoyi*) than economic effect (*jingji xiaoyi*). It is clear that the special efforts that the central government has made in recent years by providing billions of Yuan in subsidies to the "old-minor-peripheral-poor" areas, is motivated by a desire to safeguard social stability in these areas. To some extent, the poor financial situation and slow economic development which are *de facto* problems of the local government have become the *de jure* problems of the state. In the bargaining relationship, the political interests of the state are realized in exchange for economic gains of the local governments. At the end of the bargaining, the state retains the peace and the local governments gain the wealth.

The political and economic behavior of local administrations is much related to the relationship between the state and the local government. The different relationships between the state and local governments determine the different degrees of political and economic autonomy in different localities. The different degrees of local autonomy, in turn, have much influence on economic polities in the area. The impact that monopoly of resources by the county government in both Yongsheng and Ninglang has had on the peasant economy can be observed further from the administration of township government which–situated between the county government and villages–carries out the policies from the higher authorities while managing its day-to-day agenda of administration work in the local community. The study of township government administration shows how the state reaches the grassroots society and how the peasants interact with the state on both practical and symbolic levels.

The Grassroots Leadership: Township Government

Townships are called either *xiang* or *zhen* in Chinese. By official definition, the pre-condition for the establishment of *zhen* is a township with a total population less than 20,000 and an urban population in excess of 2,000; or a township with a population of over 20,000 of which the urban population comprises over 10 per cent (*Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian* 1993: 93)[13] By this definition, Jinguan is a *zhen*, and Yongning a *xiang*. The additional conditions that Jinguan possesses to qualify as a *zhen*, according to the township head, are being a market center and having access to fairly convenient public highways. Generally speaking, *xiang* seems more rural than *zhen*.

Evolution of Township Administration

The official history of Yongsheng county indicates that the township, as a government administration, only emerged in the mid 1930s. It was first called *qu* and later changed into *xiang* and *zhen* (*Yongsheng Xianzhi* 1989: 39). This establishment of township administration as a sub-county government coincided with what has been called the "state making" and "state strengthening" of the Republican era in the wake of the disintegration of state bureaucracy in the late imperial time (Duara 1988). Since 1950, the official name of the township government has been subject to a series of changes, as has that of the village administration. Throughout the government documents and records of modern history, we find various official names used to designate township and village administration.

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[13]The official definition also indicates that exceptions apply to ethnic minority areas, sparsely populated remote and mountainous regions, small-scale mining-industrial areas, small port and tourist areas, etc. where the urban population may be less than 2,000.

Figure 6. Rural administration in Yongsheng

	Township	Village*
1988-	*xiang/zhen*	*cungong suo/banshi chu*
1984-87	*qu*	*xiang*
1968-83	*gongshe*	*dadui*
1962-67	*qu*	*xiao gongshe* (or sub-commune)
1960-61	*gongshe*	*dadui*
1950-59	*qu*	*xingzheng cun*

SOURCE: *Yongsheng Xianzhi*, 1989: 47-55.

*Generally called *xingzheng cun* ("administration village") in contrast to *ziran cun* ("natural village" or hamlet).

Figure 7. Rural administration in Ninglang

	Township	Village
1987-	*xiang/zhen*	*cungong suo/banshi chu*
1984-86	*qu*	*xiang*
1969-83	*gongshe*	*dadui*
1962-68	*qu*	*xiang*
1958-61	*gongshe*	*dadui*
1950-57	*qu*	*xingzheng cun*

SOURCE: *Ninglang Xianzhi*, 1993: 49-53.

Figures 6-7 show how these official names have changed repeatedly in the two counties during different periods of time from 1950 to the present. Each time, the change of institutional names involved institutional rearrangement of merger or separation; and all changes have turned out to be related to the general political situation in China at different times:

• 1958 was the year when the People's Communes were established nation-wide, as well as in Yongsheng and Ninglang, though Yongsheng did not officially use the name of Commune until 1960. However, the official history of Yongsheng county does indicate that the three-tier accounting system characteristic of the communes was adopted in 1958, which suggests that there was indeed an institutional change.

• 1962 was the year following the severe three-year famine caused by the Great Leap Forward. With the intention to alleviate the burden of the peasantry and come to terms with the drop in productivity, the Party abandoned many of the key policies of the original Commune movement. In the autumn of 1962, the Party Center passed the "Regulations on the Work of the Rural People's Communes (Revised Draft)" (*Zhongguo Nongye Dashiji*, 1982: 106).[14] Following various "liberalizing" decisions, the Communes were dissolved in some parts of China, especially in the poor and remote areas such as Yongsheng and Ninglang. The earlier *qu* and *xiang* administrative division was thus revived. The production teams were replaced by the earlier co-ops, and private plots were restored. In the remote regions, household farming was permitted.

• 1968-1969 was the high point of the Cultural Revolution following the imposition of military control over parts of China. The People's Communes all over the country were encouraged by the national media to "Learn from Dazhai," a so-called model brigade in Shanxi province, which practised such radical policies as the abolition of private plots and extreme "self-reliance." By 1969 at the latest, it would appear as if all the *qu* and *xiang* administrations that had survived since 1962 had again been redesignated People's Communes which persisted throughout the 1970s.

• 1982-1984, rural China was subject to administrative reform following the implementation of the household production responsibility system.[15] At the end of 1983, the

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[14]It is also known as the "Sixty Articles on Agriculture."

[15]From this period on, political changes are preceded by economic reform which is completely different from what had happened from the late 1940s to 1970s.

policy of the "Separation of Government Administration from Economic Management" (*zhengshe fenkai*) was formally put forward by the central government (*Xinshiqi Nongye,* 1992: 220-2). Further institutional change came along in the years that followed. Eventually, Commune as the name for township administration was abandoned, and the *qu* administration was resumed.

• 1986-1987 is an important period during which "Strengthening the Rural Grassroots Government Power" was brought forward on the CCP agenda (*Xinshiqi Nongye*, 1992: 411-9). Following this, townships became *xiang* or *zhen*, and this seems to have concluded the institutional change of the current economic reform so far. This is the time when the economic power of the local government began to expand.

Institutional Organizations and Roles of Township Cadres

The present township government consists of a core leadership and two or three dozen officials. The core leadership is the Party secretary and his two deputies, the township chief (*zhenzhang* or *xiangzhang*) and his two (and sometimes three) deputies, the chair of the People's Congress (*renda zhuxi*), and the administration clerk (*zhengfu mishu*). Under this leadership, there are offices responsible for various affairs such as Party school, Party organization, youth league, women's work, civil administration, legal affairs, township enterprise management, local militia, land management, township construction management, accounting, statistics and general service. Each of these offices is usually held by one or two officials. The township government also administers several agencies dispatched by the county government, e.g. family planning, rural economic development, fishing (in Jinguan) and orchard development (in Yongning) agricultural technology and land administration. The number of the township personnel varies according to the size of the population under its jurisdiction. In Jinguan, the total number of township officials is around forty, while in Yongning it is around thirty.

Many township government officials come from the same township, and some from other townships within the county. Township cadres from other counties are rare. All the township cadres–except for the employees under special contracts–are on the state pay-roll; have urban household registration (which entitles them to monthly commercial grain ration, but not contracted land); and enjoy state welfare benefits. The appointment of township cadres is based on two prerequisites: education and experience. Generally speaking, the township cadres in Jinguan have a higher level of education than the cadres in Yongning. Most of the young officials, especially those who hold specialized and technical positions (e.g. as agricultural technicians, accountants, statisticians) have their job assigned upon graduation from secondary technical schools or senior middle schools. The senior positions are held by middle-aged and old cadres whose appointments are based on experience and who are likely to be transferred from one township to another, or in the most successful cases, from the township to the county government. Needless to say, personal connections always play a role in the assignments of jobs.

The ethnic identity of cadres is not important in Jinguan, but it is in Yongning where the majority of the population is Mosuo (see *Ethnic Leadership and Local Autonomy* earlier in this chapter). In Yongning, more than one third of the township cadres are Mosuo. As a matter of fact, about 80 per cent of the township cadres in Yongning are a combination of Mosuo, Pumi, Naxi, Yi and Tibetan. The top leadership, i.e. the township head and the Party secretary are both Mosuo. The three township deputy heads are respectively Mosuo, Yi and Han; and the two Party secretary deputies are both Pumi.[16]

The township cadres in Jinguan and in Yongning hold different attitudes towards the changes brought by economic reforms in the last decade. The basic ideological difference can be illustrated by the two heroes respected by the majority of the cadres in the two places: Mao

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[16]The personnel of the township leadership, mainly the party secretary, township chief and their deputies, are frequently changed.

Zedong in Jinguan and Deng Xiaoping in Yongning, the former representing tradition and the latter representing change. From my daily contacts with them in the fields, I observed that Jinguan cadres have mixed feelings about economic reforms–they praise the household responsibility system, but at the same time they are rather negative and ambiguous about other concurrent changes which pose threat to social and personal security. By comparison, the township cadres in Yongning seem to enjoy every freedom and benefit that the economic reform has brought along to them; and are much more relaxed and pragmatic about what is happening to them and to life in general in their territory.

In Jinguan, the administrative work of the township government is both year round and seasonal. By year round, I mean that the cadres in general work seven days a week.[17] Many of them take regular days off once a month to see their families. By seasonal, I mean that much of the administrative work is concentrated in the busy farming seasons. In Yongning, the administrative work proceeds in a different pattern. The three-floor office building is vacant most of the time with only three or four cadres (sometimes one or two who happen to have families living in the office compound) holding the fort. The majority of cadres are invisible on ordinary days and many of them only appear once a month briefly on the payday. The real busy working season for the township government in Yongning is in the winter around the end of year when all offices are required to submit statistics and annual reports.[18]

Despite the significant institutional changes in the countryside brought by economic reforms, the township government remains functional. The basic functions of today's township government, in theory, can be generalized as follows: implementing policies, maintaining social

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[17]From 1995, they began to have weekends off.

[18]One of the economic advantages for the township cadres in Yongning in the reform era is the opportunity to be engaged in some kind of moonlighting business including pool houses, video-rentals, mushroom and herbal sales and other trades. Some of these businesses are run by their families (e.g. wives and brothers), but often the cadres themselves are directly involved in the businesses. Doubtlessly, the official positions held by the cadres permit their family business to gain access to important social and economic resources.

order, protecting public property, enforcing contracts, managing irrigation systems, administering state subsidies and relief funds, and supervising economic activities in general. The most important functions which have direct effect on peasant life are redistributive administration, irrigation management and economic intervention. Generally speaking, the cadres in Jinguan are more conservative and politically conscious of their roles as government cadres and more active in performing their duties. The cadres in Yongning, on the other hand, seem to have less administrative pressure imposed on them by the higher authorities and are therefore less inclined to interfere with the local life.

Redistributive Administration

The township redistributive administration mainly involves social relief (*shehui jiuji*), disaster relief (*zaiqing jiuji*) and poverty alleviation (*fupin*). The government institutions involved in these affairs are the civil administration (*minzheng*), and finance (*caizheng*) offices. The redistributive mechanisms work differently in Jinguan and Yongning. By comparison, the poorer the township is, the more redistributive funds are available to be manipulated, and consequently the more powerful the local government becomes.

Social relief consists of state-resold grain (*fanxiao liang*), cash subsidies, and interest-subsidized loans (*tiexi daikuan*). These relief materials are aimed at supporting the individuals or individual households that live below the "subsistence level" (*wenbao xian*). In Jinguan, the township chief estimates that about ten per cent of the households in the township live below the subsistence level. In Yongning, according to the township Party secretary, about 6,000 people (or about thirty-five per cent of the total population) live below the subsistence level, and most of them are the mountainous or semi-mountainous dwellers. The reasons for living conditions being below the subsistence level are varied, but mainly the result of a shortage of labor force in the household, chronic illness of family members, or cyclical economic burdens.

State-resold grain is part of the grain procured by the state from the peasants in the previous year which is resold to peasants whose annual output is not sufficient to meet the basic

food needs. The state-resold grain is usually a combination of corn, wheat and rice. The price is lower than both the state grain purchase price and the market price (on average about 40 per cent lower). For the households that do not have money to buy the state-resold grain, there is a small amount of cash subsidies, on average 30 Yuan per household.

The distribution of state-resold grain is controlled by the township government and village administration. The list of households in need of relief is first drawn up by the village administration office, then submitted to the township government. Every year, the township government, based on the list provided by the village offices, applies to the county government for state-resold grain and corresponding subsidiary materials. Once the subsidies are granted, the township government redistributes them to the village administration offices which further allocate to the households. According to the township social relief officer in Jinguan, the subsidy materials arrive twice a year: in winter (or early spring) and in mid summer. The difference related to the situation of state-resold grain between Jinguan and Yongning is shown below in Figure 8.

Figure 8. State-resold grain in Jinguan and Yongning

	Jinguan township	Yongning township
Total state-resold grain received (kg)	17,835	190,385
Percentage of the total annual procurement	0.7	55
Total number of households in the township	8,165	3,006
Number of households benefiting from the state-resold grain	620	1,034
Total population of the township	34,402	16,875
Number of people benefiting from the state-resold grain	2,579	5,996
Average amount of state-resold grain per person (kg)	6.9	31.8

SOURCES: Jinguan Township Statistics 1991; Yongning Township Statistics 1991.

In the two townships, the ways of distributing the state-resold grain are different. In Jinguan, it is distributed to the households with special difficulties (*tekun hu*); in Yongning, in one Mosuo hamlet the state-resold grain is distributed evenly to every household and in another it is used to subsidize the households that have had funerals in the year.[19]

While the state-resold grain is intended as an immediate relief of subsistence difficulties, the state interest-subsidized loans are aimed to support rural production and development. In the mid 1980s, the township government in Jinguan started to issue centrally interest-subsidized loans to peasant households. The loans come from two channels: the civil administration office and finance office. The amount of loans controlled by the civil administration office is smaller than that controlled by the finance office. Up to 1991, the total amount of loans issued by the

[19]The major Mosuo household expenditure is on feasts and gifts involved in funerals.

township civil administration office in Jinguan was some 3,000 Yuan. The amount given to each household was between 300 and 500 Yuan. The finance office of Jinguan township offered loans to the peasant households for the first time in 1985. The amount was 20,000 Yuan. The maximum amount of loan each household received was 200 Yuan and the minimum amount was 20 Yuan. For the loan issued by the township civil administration office, a 3 per cent administration fee is charged, and the repayment period is one to two years. According to the civil administration officer, most of the households have paid back the loans. No interest is charged on loans issued by the township finance office, if they are paid back within a period of three years. Up to 1992, eighty per cent of the loans had been paid back, and the rest was "hung up" waiting to be written off by the higher authorities.

In Yongning, the township finance office started to issue loans in 1980. In the first four years, the total amount of loans was 320,000 Yuan and no interest was charged. These loans were aimed at supporting peasant households developing sideline production, i.e. raising pigs and chickens. The loans were issued through the village administration offices. The average amount of loans each household received was between 30 and 500 Yuan. From 1987, the township finance office started to collect the loans issued in the early 1980s, and the result was meager. For this reason, a new regulation was imposed by the county government that the amount of the loans that the township finance office receives each year is linked to the repayment of the previous year. That is, the amount of the loan payment collected in the previous year is the amount of the loans to be issued in the next. Between 1987 and 1992, the amount of loans that the township Finance Office received each year from the county government and in turn, issued to the village administrations was 20,000 Yuan on average. This time, 0.24 per cent monthly interest was imposed. The loans were primarily issued to the households to develop small enterprises such as apple orchards. The average size of the loan received by each household rose from 500 Yuan to 3,000 Yuan.

According to the cadres in both townships, the interest-subsidized loans issued in these years have, to some extent, served social purposes, but have so far had not much economic

effect. This is because the amount of the loans is too small to be used for any substantial investment in production. Instead, many peasants just used the loans for temporary relief, e.g. buying some rice and other food stuff from the market, or other commodities. For this reason, the township finance office in Jinguan no longer issues such loans to peasant households. The finance office in Yongning complained that it is difficult to pursue loan payments for the reason that the money was spent but not invested. But, different from the finance office in Jinguan, it continues to issue such loans.

Disaster relief is different from social relief. In social relief, the relief materials are provided on a regular basis (annually or monthly) and the beneficiaries are selected according to certain criteria. In the case of disaster relief, the relief funds are issued after natural disasters occur, and the beneficiaries are the households in the disaster-stricken area. The disaster relief consists of "tax exemption" and "subsidies for farmland restoration," both handled by the finance office. In 1989, the farmland of several hamlets in Wengpeng village was flooded. The township finance office in Jinguan issued relief funds to the peasant households to restore the land destroyed by pebbles and sand. For every *mu* of land, the compensation was 25 Yuan. In 1991, Wengpeng was struck by a hail storm which damaged the rice harvest. At the end of the year, the government subsidized the peasants by paying for the grain extracted for agricultural tax: for every *jin* of grain, the peasants received a compensation of 0.25 Yuan. The amount of disaster relief that the government provides is not significant–if compared to social relief–because natural disasters are comparatively rare in the basin areas.

Poverty alleviation is especially relevant to Yongning because it is under the jurisdiction of a state designated poverty-stricken county, Ninglang. Owing to this poverty-stricken county status, peasants in Yongning (as well as in other townships all over Ninglang county) have been exempted from the payment of agricultural tax, and the state grain procurement is no longer compulsory.[20] Besides, every year Yongning receives various forms of agricultural aid

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[20]The exemption means that the entire output of the household is retained by the peasants. Before the exemption, the agricultural tax rate in Yongning was already much lower than in

from the government: subsidized grain seeds, nursery stock, plastic sheets and chemical fertilizer. In addition to the chemical fertilizer ration at subsidized price rewarded by the state for the fulfillment of grain procurement (see Chapters 5-6), the peasants in Yongning receive an extra 2 kg chemical fertilizer subsidy for every *mu* of contracted land plus 7.5 kg more for every *mu* of corn cultivated.[21] Both of these additional rations are not available to the peasants in Jinguan.

The residence subsidy is also special in Ninglang. Since the mid 1980s, Ninglang county government has provided subsidies for residence building in the rural areas. This residence-building subsidiary fund (*minfang buzhu kuan*) is issued under the county's policy of "Three Settlements" (*san ding*): "settlement of mind" (*ding xin*), "settlement of roots" (*ding gen*) and "settlement of residence" (*ding ju*). This policy aims to help, particularly the Yi, abandon their slash-burn agricultural tradition. Because most of the peasant houses in Ninglang are built out of timber and in order to save forests, the residence-building funds are especially used to subsidize the cost of bricks and other building materials like cement.

The total amount of residence-building subsidiary funds issued through the Yongning township government from 1986 to 1990 was 252,931 Yuan which benefitted 565 households. On average, each household received 300-500 Yuan (the per capita income of 1991 was 418 Yuan). However, the number of households that benefitted from the residence-building funds was not even in the four hamlets under my household survey. In Pijiang hamlet (where the Naxi are concentrated), about 1.1 per cent of households received the subsidy; in Neiba hamlet

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Jinguan. According to the Mosuo hamlet leaders, on average for every *mu* of land, the tax was 2-3 kg of grain, while in Jinguan, the average tax rate is 40-50 kg per *mu* . Originally, the exemption of agricultural tax in Ninglang was partly intended to reduce the state-resold grain, but the amount of the state-resold grain has, in fact, remained about more or less the same with a slight increase in the past years in Yongning (the township has the highest grain output in the county). Although the state grain procurement is no longer compulsory, the peasants in Yongning still choose to sell their grain surplus to the state granary for the price is guaranteed and the grain sale is attached to rewarding rations of some production materials.

[21]Because corn is a high yield crop, the chemical fertilizer subsidy is intended to encourage peasants to grow corn.

(Han hamlet), 1.4 per cent; in Gesawa (Mosuo hamlet), 27.5 per cent; and in Dapo (Mosuo hamlet), 40 per cent. The markedly higher percentage of beneficiaries in Dapo is not accidental. Neither is it because the residents there are more in need for help than others. Rather, the favorite treatment is a result of that one of the residents in the hamlet happens to be the most powerful person in the local administration.

The redistributive administration has provided the township government much power to manipulate resources. The power of the township government plays a crucial role in deciding who enjoys the benefits, and who gets more and who gets less, while negotiating with the higher authorities for relief materials. This redistributive function of the township government and the associated power is likely to persist as long as the area remains poor and as long as state subsidies are available to the administration. The socio-political and economic differences in these two areas have resulted in differences in the categories of state subsidy and differences in redistributive administration. They also have influence on the government behavior in the two townships in control of local resources, namely, irrigation, land and rural enterprises.

Irrigation Management

The government control over irrigation has been described as characteristic of the "Oriental Despotism" (Wittfogel 1959). Despite the criticism of the "universal applicability of the irrigation hypothesis" by Julian Steward and others (Ulmen 1978), the importance of irrigation management to the government is obvious, as irrigation systems are referred to as "heavy water works" which "feed the ultimate agrarian producer one crucial auxiliary material: water;" and "fulfill important protective functions for the country at large" (Wittfogel 1959: 28). Water conservancy has long been regarded as the lifeline of agriculture in China. Irrigation construction after 1950 has been largely managed by the government by providing substantial funds, while labor force (known as "voluntary labor") and small funds (known as "collective funds") have been contributed by local communities.

A large scale construction of irrigation systems was launched during the 1950s and 1960s throughout China. At that time, rural labor was organized by the Communes which made endeavors that required much concentration in manpower easy and possible. In Jinguan, there are three major irrigation facilities. One is the Dragon Lake dam built in the 1950s; the second is the Grand Northern Canal built in the 1960s; and the third one is the Grand United Canal built in the 1970s. When these projects were underway, up to 60 per cent of the able-bodied labor force was mobilized and engaged in the intensive construction work. The agriculture in the Three-River basin has since benefitted from them.

The household production responsibility system has, in fact, made government control of irrigation in terms of operation and maintenance even more necessary. By comparison, irrigation management work in Jinguan is more demanding than in Yongning. This is perhaps explained by the fact that the more intensive the agriculture is in an area, the more organized work is needed (in addition to the difference in general administrative performance of the township cadres).

In Jinguan, one of the most important seasonal tasks of the township government is irrigation management. Before the transplanting season, the township cadres are mobilized to inspect the condition of major canals and to draw up irrigation schedules for each village. When the transplanting season begins (at the end of April and beginning of May), the cadres are organized in small teams and dispatched to the villages to supervise the irrigation process. The villages along the main water routes in particular require strong supervising teams. Each year, as reported, there are dozens of disputes over water between villages, hamlets and households, and the role played by the township cadres in policing the irrigation system is crucial. The coordinative roles that the township cadres and the village leaders assume in irrigation control may be described as "over-all organizers" and "on-spot disciplinarians" (ibid.: 26). The township government issue orders to the villages. When water passes through the village, the village director (*cunzhang*) takes charge of the main canals. Because the work is demanding, he usually employs a "water officer" (*shuiguan*) to assist. The water officer gives orders to the

team leaders who further guide the peasant households to water their land in due time. The cadres work on day and night shifts throughout the season. Conflicts that cannot be settled between households are mediated by village cadres; and problems that cannot be solved between villages are handled by the township officials. Interventions from the township-village cadres are generally effective. As far as irrigation is concerned, there is only administrative management involved, but there is no control by any kin-based organizations, nor individual rights that may exert influence on irrigation management.[22]

The water station in Jinguan is a cooperative unit that manages the routine technical work and collects water fee. The water fee is 1.50 Yuan per 100 cubic meter, and the cost for watering one *mu* of land is 4-5 Yuan. In Yongning, there is no fee charged for irrigation. Each year, the state provides funds for maintenance of the irrigation system. The annual amount that Jinguan township receives for irrigation construction is between 300,000 to 400,000 Yuan. The huge cost is owing to the extensive irrigation system involving the frequent redirecting of courses and flood control in the major rivers flowing across the Three-River basin, in addition to the maintenance of reservoirs and a power station. The heavy investment of the state in the irrigation work in Jinguan is to protect the important grain production base. By comparison, the scale of irrigation work in Yongning is far smaller, and there is no major construction for flood control on a regular basis. The annual fund from the state ear-marked for irrigation maintenance is around 10,000 to 15,000 Yuan which is mainly used for subsidizing hamlets in purchasing building materials and tools for maintaining ditches. The maintenance of major canals and other large construction, if needed, are supported by other special appropriated funds.

The actual repair work of the water ways is organized by the village and hamlet leaders. Since land was contracted to the households, organization of water way repairs has become more difficult than under the collective system. The problem is twofold. On the one hand, the

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[22]The individual right over land and water as discussed by E. Leach (1968) is not relevant here because in China only land is contracted to the individual peasant household while the whole irrigation system remains under public control.

village collective has become less effective in manipulating the labor force since production is no longer organized by the collective; and on the other, since land was contracted to the peasant households, peasants have showed less interest in collective work and public activities (see Village Administration: the Semi-Governmental Organization).

While the administrative intervention in irrigation management by the township government seems to be necessary under the circumstances and has a positive effect on the organization of production in the village, some other forms of resource management in the two townships show a rather more controversial aspect of township administration.

Economic Intervention

The main issues of economic intervention by township government discussed here concern ownership and government jurisdiction. Under the economic reform, the development of two forms of property have made the control of resources, e.g. rural enterprises and land contracts, more complicated. The administrative strategies of the two township governments in Jinguan and Yongning in the management of resources reveal different political motives which are related to ethnic and poverty situation and have had different economic impact on the peasant economy in the area.

Unlike other parts of China, neither Jinguan nor Yongning has significantly developed township enterprises (*xiangzhen qiye*). In the two townships, the governments have different attitude towards, and apply different definitions to township enterprises. The attribution of ownership and the management of township enterprises by the township government illustrate from yet another aspect how the local leadership can manipulate economic resources, and how they serve the political careers of the local cadres.

In statistical terms, Jinguan has five "township enterprises." They are the construction company, the Qinghe power station, the machine repair shop, the garment manufacturer and the zinc melting workshop. The construction company is a privately managed business with scores of employees. The power station is a collectively run enterprise with a dozen employees. The

machinery repair shop and the garment manufacturer used to be two cooperative organizations that employed scores of workers who now work on an individual basis. The zinc smelting workshop is jointly organized by seven households. None of these enterprises has anything to do with the township government in business management, but each has somehow become involved with the township government in one way or another.

The arrangement between the construction company and the township government in designating the business as "township enterprise" is that the company pays an annual "administration fee" (*guanli fei*), 1,000 Yuan to the township government. In exchange, the township government allows the company to use the official title of the administration (Jinguan township government) to sign contracts. This gives the construction company access to the official letter-head, which is believed to have favorable effect on winning contracts. Other than the administration fee to the township government, the construction company does not even pay income tax, according to the township chief, because it is privately run, plus it is difficult to calculate and estimate the company's income because most of its business is contracted outside the township.

The Qinghe Power Station has a similar arrangement with the township government. It also pays an annual 1,000 Yuan of administration fees. Because this enterprise is locally based, there is no use of official letter-head involved. The function of the township government involved in this collective enterprise is nothing more than official supervision.

Following the implementation of the household production responsibility system, the machine repair shop and the garment manufacturer were dissolved. Though the workers are still engaged in machinery repair and garment manufacture, they are no longer collectively organized. But, the income of these individuals is still included under the category of township enterprises. Aside from this formal arrangement, there is no fee charged by the township government, nor any production supervision involved.

The zinc smelting workshop consists of several furnaces built on public property–abandoned farmland (which used to be a farm of urban school graduates in the early 1970s)

under the control of township government. The land lease was a lump sum payment of 1,500 Yuan which is a security deposit–in case the land cannot be restored when the zinc smelting workshop withdraws from the site. In addition, there is an annual charge of administration fee of 1,000 Yuan by the township government. The appropriation of the working premise which is public property apparently legitimizes the zinc smelting workshop as a "township enterprise."

The logic of including these enterprises under different arrangements into "township enterprises" seems to be a pure administrative strategy. When asked what township enterprises they have, many of the the local cadres would respond: "We do not have any township enterprises by definition; and those we have are for the purpose of statistics." The "purpose of statistics" is partly related to the cadres responsibility system which is called "target administration responsibility system" (*mubiao guanli zerenzhi*). Under this system, the official performance of the township administration is measured by assignments or quotas.[23] As the government statistics act as a kind of formal control over the administrative work and the existing category such as "output value of township enterprises" serves as an index demonstrating economic accomplishment, the local administration is compelled to come up with figures to meet the administrative requirements.

Different from the Jinguan township government, the Yongning township government does not seem to have the need to include township enterprises in statistics. In statistical terms, there is no "township enterprise" listed. However, there are two enterprises which are more qualified as "township enterprises" than the five in Jinguan.

One of the enterprises is the yak farm first established in 1958. The livestock was originally confiscated from the former Tusi and Sipi (landlords). Under the ownership of the township government, the yak farm operated under a collective accounting system, though the

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[23]The responsibility system contains two categories of administrative achievements: ideological (*sixiang*) and economic (*jingji*). The full accomplishment of the tasks in each category is marked by 100 points. Bonuses are rewarded for high point and a salary deduction is forced upon low points.

yaks were kept and raised by individual households. The yak farm remained as the only township enterprise in statistics until 1980. When the household responsibility system was implemented, the township government contracted the total of 824 head of livestock to sixteen households living in the mountains. Under the contract, the township government still holds the ownership of the 824 head of yak, on which the township government each year collects 4 Yuan of administration fees per head. The contracts allow the contracted households to make and retain the profits from the reproduction of the livestock. As estimated by the Party secretary of the township government, the size of the herd has already grown to some two thousand head.

Another enterprise in Yongning which is not listed as a township enterprise in the government statistics but produces a significant income for the township government is the government guest house. It was built in 1990, partly on a special development fund and partly on the centrally subsidized loans acquired by the township government, for a total amount of 420,000 Yuan. The two-storey building has about two dozen rooms. Four of them are reserved for the township government's guests, and the rest are leased to a migrant from Sichuan who has turned the guest house into a public hotel. The lease specifies a monthly administration fee of 400 Yuan to be charged by the township government. Together with the guest house, the township government also leased its canteen which was built on a separate fund of 60,000 Yuan to the same entrepreneur who has turned it into a public restaurant. This lease specifies a monthly administration fee of 500 Yuan to be charged by the township government. These two leases alone bring the township government an extra income of more that 10,000 Yuan a year (which is about 5 per cent of the total budget of the township government).

Comparing the "township enterprises" in Jinguan and Yongning, there is a difference. In Jinguan, the five enterprises claimed to be township enterprises are in fact privately and collectively organized businesses. The establishment of these businesses and the management of the production in these enterprises do not involve the township government, but by some special arrangements, they all became township enterprises. In Yongning, despite the yak farm

and guest house having been contracted to individuals, their assets are owned by the township government and the government is directly involved in the business contract. However, neither of the enterprises is claimed to be a township enterprise. This difference is a result of different government administrations in the two townships.

"No industry, no richness" (*wugong bufu*) is a set phrase used by the local officials in both Jinguan and Yongning when explaining their economic situation. However, this phrase has different meanings when spoken by different government administrations. When the Jinguan cadres say "no industry, no wealth," they refer to developing local enterprises as the only way to get rich. However, the lack of resources, technology and market sets obstacles. Under these circumstances, to the cadres, to include the enterprises that are not really township enterprises as township enterprises is better than nothing–at least, it satisfies the needs of their political career. In a different context in Yongning, this administrative strategy seems not necessary. When asked about their township enterprises, the township leaders would simply reply that they do not have any. When asked what was the reason for not having township enterprises, I was told: "First of all, the quality of the people (*ren de suzhi*) here is low; and secondly, we do not have capital to invest." The argument that the slow economic development (especially in the ethnic minority areas) is related to the "quality of people" often conveyed in Chinese writings, has been much criticized by Western scholars as an expression of great Han chauvinism. But why do the ethnic minority cadres make exactly the same reference to their own people? On another occasion, the township leader voiced his opinion of getting rich: "We are waiting for others to get rich first, they they can help us." This attitude suggests that (if not a matter of indifference to the local economic development), the situation of "no industry, no richness" (*wugong bufu*) is not really a problem for the government administration in Yongning. This is, no doubt, related to the availability of state support in the ethnic and poverty area.

The differences of the government's involvement in township enterprises illustrate differences in political motivation and economic incentives for the local administration. These

differences are also observable in the government's interference with the peasant household production in the two townships. In Yongning, the township government generally does not step in the normal economic activities of the peasants. The township government in Jinguan, on the other hand, exerts much influence and has much tougher hand on the peasant livelihood. An example of this is the implementation of tobacco production.

Tobacco production was advocated by the county government in Yongsheng for the first time in 1985. In the first few years, it remained as a kind of experiment which was termed "free development" (*ziyou fazhan*). Six years later, tobacco cultivation became the subject of a coercive order from the county government. In some villages, the tobacco assignment was evenly distributed among the peasant households, and in others, the assignment was sub-contracted to a number of households. In whichever arrangement, the village administration encountered a great deal of resistance from the peasants.[24] In order to accomplish the task given them by the county government, the township cadres had no choice but to get directly involved in enforcing tobacco production.

In 1992, soon after the rice transplanting season was over, the township government switched their central work to tobacco production. In order to avoid tension between village leaders and peasants, the township cadres descended in person to the villages to solve the toughest cases that the village administration had difficulties handling. The township cadres first persuaded the peasants themselves to pull out the rice or corn seedlings planted in the designated tobacco areas themselves, and to plant tobacco instead. But if the peasants did not comply with the orders, the cadres would pull the seedlings out for them.

The tobacco work teams were larger than the work teams organized for irrigation management. Each team was usually composed of one dozen or more cadres, sometimes accompanied by one or two policemen. The size of the team was to ensure that there was enough manpower to pull out the seedlings if necessary; and to provide moral support and

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[24]Reasons for this will be discussed under peasant economic concepts in Chapter 5.

security for the cadres involved. In most cases, problems were solved without making much of a scene on either side, that is, the peasants gave in after one or two sessions of talk. But, there were a few serious incidents in which confrontations intensified to the point where there was vocal abuse and fights erupted. On one occasion, a peasant was arrested by the township police accused of "interfering with the government's administrative work."

Despite the efforts that the township government has made, of the 3,300 *mu* tobacco assignment in 1992 (about 10 per cent of the total arable land in Jinguan), only 2,500 *mu* were actually planted. Later in the summer of the year, the township cadres already found themselves having to cope with the tobacco assignment for 1993, the sown area of which was as twice high as the previous year. The tobacco production in 1993, however, ended in disaster. The bad harvest was caused primarily by the weather (drought in the early growing period and severe water-logging in the later period) and insect pests. On top of this, the government purchasing agents set harsh conditions on the grades of cured tobacco which reduced the peasant income considerably. This added anger to the peasants' frustration already caused by the crop loss in the bad harvest. Some peasants became so enraged that they simply dumped the rejected tobacco leaves on the road in protest. What happened in Jinguan was not as serious as in another township located in the vicinity of the county seat where 12,000 *mu* of tobacco was cultivated that year but only half was harvested, and the peasants' protest turned into an uprising. They went to the government office to protest; they hit and wounded the purchasing-agents; they stopped the cars of the county officials and asked them to take the tobacco leaves to the provincial government; and the township chief there was forced to take refuge in the police station.[25]

After these quite unexpected incidents, the Jinguan township government was forced to back off, and the county government leaders had to abandon the coercive order of tobacco cultivation. The change in local policy, however, coincided with the central promulgation of the

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[25]I learned about these incidents through my correspondence with people in Jinguan.

Agricultural Law in 1993, wherein the contractor's decision-making power over production and management was clarified.[26]

It has been assumed that the decollectivization in the Chinese countryside has significantly reduced the power of government administration on production. The argument has been made that: "As long as peasants remain farmers, they do not need to submit themselves to the power of local officials" (Zweig 1992: 358). However, the implementation of tobacco production in Jinguan by the local government may suggest that this general assumption needs to be qualified. This situation, on the one hand, is an outcome of the specific pattern of local administration in areas associated with particular economic problems (e.g. finance deficit, insufficient state support); and on the other, there is a matter of the peasant position in society. Compared to the bargaining relationship existing between government administrations as discussed earlier, while each level of government has something with which it can bargain in its relation with the other, the peasants at the grassroots level have little to bargain with; and the likely choice for them is to obey orders from the local government on which they depend for state redistributive goods.

The enforcement of tobacco production by the township government, however, would not have been achieved without the coordination of the village administration that demarcated land area for tobacco cultivation, assigned quotas to the peasant households, and assisted the township work teams to enforce disciplines. Compared to the township government, the village has more interactions with peasant households in day-today life due to its position. The

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[26]In Agricultural Law of 1993 specifically states: "Unless stated otherwise in the agricultural work contract, a contractor shall enjoy decision-making power over production and management, as well as the right to dispose of products and earn profits; it must also fulfil the contractual obligations" (*Agricultural Law* 1993: 17-8). In contrast, the earlier Land management Law published in 1986 only states: "The collective or individuals under the land contract have obligations to protect and utilize the land according to the contractual agreement. The land contract and management right is protected by law" (*Xinshiqi Nongye*, Article 12, 1992: 533).

coexistence of governmental and collective functions of the village administration enable the village administration to play a unique role as a bridge between the state and peasants.

Village Administration: the Semi-Governmental Organization

The term "village" used here refers to what is known as *xingzheng cun*, or "administration village." Because Jinguan is a *zhen*, the village administration offices in the township are called *banshi chu*, and because Yongning is a *xiang*, the village administration offices in the township are called *cungong suo*(see Figures 6-7). Each village office administers several hamlets (a sub-village unit, also known as "natural village" or *ziran cun* which is officially called "villagers' committee" or *cunmin weiyuanhui*).[27] The village administration in the collective era was called brigade,[28] and most of the hamlets formed production teams. More than ten years after the dissolution of the People's Communes, peasants in the two townships today still call the village administration office "brigade" (*dadui*) and refer to the hamlet as "team" (*xiaodui*) or alternatively, "small village" (*xiaocun*). This appears to be just a matter of habit.

In Jinguan, Cuihu village which has 881 households and 3,598 residents consists of four hamlets: Guguan, Ruiguan, Bashang, Longtan. They used to be organized in five production teams (Ruiguan hamlet was divided into two), and are now organized in three villagers' committees (the two smaller hamlets: Bashang and Longtan are merged into one). Wengpeng village consists of five hamlets: Lüguan, Shangtian, Lujia Jie, Wengguan, Xinying.

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[27]The organization of the villagers' committee is more or less on the basis of the hamlet. Sometimes, smaller hamlets may be emerged into one villagers' committee,while larger hamlets may be divided into two villagers committees. The same with the organization of production team in the collective time.

[28]Before 1950, under the old *baojia* system, the village administration was called *Bao gongshu*.

They used to be organized in eleven production teams, and are now in seven villagers committees.

Unlike in Jinguan, the hamlets in Yongning are much more dispersed. Kaiji village consists of eighteen hamlets. The large land area and comparatively sparse population contributes to the geographic distance between the hamlet settlements which, in turn, makes the function of the village administration in Yongning weaker. Due to the particular features of the settlements, the boundary of the local community is confined to the hamlet and the peasants identify themselves more with the hamlet than with the village.[29] In other words, the hamlet organization, to the peasants in Yongning, is more important than the village.

Village and Hamlet Leadership

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the village administration is "a leg of the township government." In a central document, the village administration is defined as both the "grassroots organization of the Party and government in rural areas" and the "basic-level popular self-governing organization" (*Xinshiqi Nongye* 1992: 644; 650). These definitions of village functions demonstrate a semi-governmental and semi-collective administrative body. In 1991, some new regulations were adopted in appointing the village leadership in both Jinguan and Yongning, of which the most noteworthy arrangement was incorporating the village administration into the bureaucratic system–represented by the appointment of village leadership by the township government and having the village leaders listed on the state payroll. But due to the differences in local government administration, different rules apply to the village organization in the two townships.

In Jinguan, the village administration is under a core leadership composed of the party secretary (*shuji*) who is responsible for "grasping ideology" (*zhua sixiang*); the general director

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[29]When asked about participation in community activities, the peasants in Yongning only mention the ones that take place in the hamlet. By contrast, many community activities in Jinguan are organized on a village basis.

(*zhuren*) who is assigned to "grasp economy" (*zhua jingji*) or "grasp grain" (*zhua liangshi*); and the book keeper (*wenshu*) who safekeeps documents and takes care of statistics. The officially designated division of labor, however, does not necessarily make a difference in their roles in the eyes of ordinary peasants–to whom, the party secretary, general director and book keeper are all the same village cadres (*cun ganbu*). By requirement, the party secretary and the general director are not to be natives but must come from other villages within the township. This condition is obviously a strategy to combat parochial loyalties by separating the leaders from their kin connections. The positions of the village leaders are appointed by the township government. The office term is, in theory, three years during which they receive salaries from the township government on a monthly basis, and are subsidized with monthly rations of commodity grain (while their land contract remains intact). However, unlike the township cadres who are state employees, the household registration of the village leaders remain rural during their office term; and they enjoy no pensions when the term ends.

Despite its smaller population, the village administrative body in Yongning is larger than in Jinguan. In Yongning, the village leadership is composed of five persons: the party secretary, the general director and his two deputies, and the book keeper. All five of them are from the same village–obviously the non-native requirement in the appointment of village leaders in Jinguan does not apply in Yongning. All these five cadres receive salaries from the township government. On average, their salaries are 40 Yuan (about 30 per cent) higher than the salaries of the cadres in Jinguan (while the per capita income in Yongning is 30 per cent (125 Yuan) lower than in Jinguan).

The appointment by the higher level of government and the salary from the government payroll make the village leadership institutionally state agents. The work of the village leaders is to assist the township government to implement policies from higher authorities, to safeguard collective property (e.g. land, canals, mountains), to enforce contracts, to supervise production in general (e.g. irrigation management), to redistribute subsidies (e.g. chemical fertilizer and

relief materials), and to manage collective funds and the general affairs in the village (such as mediating conflicts and settling disputes).

In Jinguan, each village administration contains special organizations such as militia, family-planning, and retired cadre association.[30] The village militia consists of scores of young men between the age of 18 and 28. They are subject to special assignments to aid in emergencies such as floods, forest fires, and crop watch. The family planning personnel is a middle-aged woman who is also the village midwife employed by the village office to enforce family planning policy. The work of the village militia men and the family planning personnel is subsidized from the collective fund. In Yongning, the village administration employes more personnel to assist with village work. There are two planning personnel, two forest control personnel and two agricultural technicians. They work under contract and receive salaries from the village administration office whose fund directly comes from the township government, but not from the peasant households like in Jinguan.

Villages in both Jinguan and Yongning have elementary schools. There are two kinds of elementary schools. One is called "complete elementary school" (abbreviated as *wanxiao*) which contains five grades; the other is called "hamlet school" (*cun xiao*) which contains one or two grades. The complete elementary school is run by the village, and the hamlet elementary school is run by the hamlet. The school houses are provided by the villages, in some cases, with government subsidies (as in Yongning). There are "public teachers" (*gongban jiaoshi*) as well as "village teachers" (*minban jiaoshi*). The public teachers are government employees, and the village teachers are paid by the village or villagers. In Jinguan, all elementary school teachers are village employees, and their salary comes from the students' tuition (as in Cuihu); or from the village collective fund (as in Wengpeng). In Yongning, most of the elementary school teachers (both complete elementary schools and hamlet schools) are government employees who receive salary payment from the township Education Bureau.

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[30]There is also the Youth-League, but it is generally not functioning.

If the village administration is called the "leg" of the township government, the hamlet leaders can be compared to the "feet" dangling at the end of the leg. Hamlet leaders are mostly elected by the hamlet residents, and in some cases they may be appointed by the village administration office. In Jinguan, right after the dissolution of the brigades, hamlet leaders were elected by the peasants. Later, for a variety of reasons, some hamlet leaders resigned and others were asked to leave their post; and their replacements were appointed by the village administration office. The hamlet leaders are paid by the village administration office. On average, the payment is 40-50 Yuan (depending on the size of the hamlet) which comes out of the village collective funds. The main duties of hamlet leaders are to collect collective funds, organize voluntary labor and mediate family conflicts and disputes between households.

In Yongning, the Mosuo hamlet leaders are elected by the peasant households. They receive an annual payment of some 200 to 300 Yuan (again the difference depends on the size of the hamlet), which also comes from the collective funds. The Mosuo hamlet is not a kin group but united like an extended family. Each of the Mosuo hamlets has an open area in the center of the hamlet which serves as a meeting place and ceremonial center for the residents. There are many activities like festival dancing and basketball matches, organized by the hamlet, in which all households participate. Besides, many productive activities are collectively organized, and many cooperative organizations of labor help are maintained. These communal activities and the need to organize such activities require the Mosuo hamlet leader to play important roles as supervisor, disciplinarian, mediator (between households), negotiator (with other hamlets) and broker (between the hamlet and the higher authorities: village administration or township government).

The Mosuo hamlet leaders, if compared to the Han and Naxi hamlet leaders, are more respected by, and have more authority among the hamlet residents. The respect and authority that the Mosuo hamlet leaders enjoy come from several sources. Firstly, there is a greater internal solidity within the hamlet which can be seen from the collectively organized activities on

hamlet basis;[31] secondly, the hamlet leaders control certain resources such as residence-building subsidies, state-resold grain, logging quotas, levying communal labor and so on; thirdly, the legacy of the Tusi system in the past under which the hierarchy of different social classes–Tusi (governor), Sipi (landlords), Huotou (governor's agents in the hamlets), *tongren* (common people), corvée labor and household slaves (*piazi*)–was strictly observed, may have effect on the peasants' obedience; and fourthly, the personal character and ability of the individual leaders–after all they are democratically elected by the residents in the hamlet–may contribute to the respect they enjoy. The authority of the Mosuo hamlet leaders certainly contributes to their efficiency in organizing various communal activities, both social and economic.

In both Jinguan and Yongning, all village and hamlet leaders (not including the contracted employees of the village office) are men. Despite the matrilineal character of Mosuo society, there are hardly any women holding public posts.[32] In Jinguan, there are women working in the township government, but there are none in Yongning except for a contract worker–the wife of a township leader–whose job is to boil water for the office staff in the morning; and even the township government family planning personnel is a man. One straightforward reason for this situation is the comparatively lower educational level among women in general–as cadres must handle documents and statistics. According to my household survey in the two Mosuo hamlets, of the 339 female and 317 male population between the age of 7 and 70, about 57 per cent of the women have no eduction at all while the illiteracy rate among the men is 22 per cent lower.[33] The reason why the Mosuo men have more

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[31]The solidity may also be related to the small size of the hamlet.

[32]Ironically, matriliny has been interpreted as matriarchy in many Chinese writings contending that women hold power over men. See my Editor's Introduction in *Chinese Research on Matrilineal/Matriarchal Systems in Minority Societies* (1993).

[33]Apart from government employment, the higher eduction level among the Mosuo men is probably the reason why men are more likely involved in making bigger economic decisions and engaged in cash-earning activities in Mosuo society (see Chapters 4 and 6).

opportunities to go to school is two fold: one is the traditional Lamaist eduction to which only men had access; and the other is the domestic role of women in the households (see Chapter 4).

Despite the differences in personnel organization, the village and hamlet leaders in both Jinguan and Yongning–apart from administering the residents on behalf of the township government–assume responsibilities for maintaining public order and managing social welfare.

Management of Public Affairs

Under the collective system, the village administration, i.e. brigade, had two important social and economic functions. One was looking after the Five-Guaranteed households; and the other was managing collective funds.[34] These two functions have been weakened since the economic reform when the accounting function of the production team ceased to exist, and the public welfare fund of the village was significantly reduced. As a result, some of the collective responsibilities have shifted onto individual households and government.

In Jinguan, there are 47 five-guaranteed households. Some of them have private support arrangements with neighbors; and others are admitted into the Old People's Home. In the mountainous village Dayuan in Jinguan, the five-guaranteed households are still looked after by the collective. This is because that life is hard there and no individual household can afford to take on an extra burden; and the collective can still afford to provide for the five-guaranteed households because the mountainous area with ethnic minority population receives comparatively more state relief subsidies than the villages in the basin.

The private arrangements of support for the five-guaranteed are established through negotiations between the two parties: the supporting and the supported. Usually, they are

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[34]The five guaranteed system was established in the 1950s during the agricultural cooperative transformation. The five-guarantees include (1) food, (2) clothes, (3) fuel, (4) education and (5) burial. The people who are provided with the Five-Guarantees are those who are elderly, orphan, infirm and solitary. In other words, they are the people who are unable to provide for themselves and have no family to support. Part of the collective funds was used to provide food and shelter for the Five-guaranteed households.

neighbors and get along well. Sometimes, the village administration office helps the five-guaranteed household to find a supporter. Once the conditions of the support arrangement have been decided upon by the two parties, a contract is drawn up and certified by the township legal affairs office. In the documents kept by the township legal affairs officers, the general conditions of most contracts are: (1) the land contracted to the five-guaranteed is cultivated by the supporter; (2) the supporter is responsible for providing food, clothes, shelter, medical care and eventually a proper burial; and (3) the supporter is entitled to inherit the property of the supported and takes over his or her contracted land. With the private arrangement of support, the township government civil administration continues to provide a small amount of subsidies (basically grain and winter clothes) to the five-guaranteed households on an annual basis.

The old people's home in Jinguan is located in Yangwu village. It was established in 1984. Yangwu is one of the richest villages in the township and happened to have rather a large number of five-guaranteed households. The old people's home is a village-run institution but financially subsidized by the government civil administration (*minzheng*). The first admission comprised thirteen people. Their contracted land and houses were handed over to the village; and the village provides food, shelter, some petty cash and medical care for them. For large medical expenses, the village receives subsidies from the county government civil administration via the township government civil administration office.

Yongning township also has a old people's home set up in 1986 which has been subsidized by the government civil administration. About a dozen persons have been admitted, while other five-guaranteed households remain in the hamlet. The material subsidies (13 Yuan per person monthly according to the township cadres) to these households come from the township civil administration office. In the Mosuo hamlets, there are no five-guaranteed households. This situation is owning to the special social organization, i.e. matrilineal extended household, where hardly anyone lives without family support (see Chapter 4).

In the past, a very important economic function of the former brigade was to control two kinds of collective funds: the public accumulation fund (*gongji jin*) and the public welfare fund

(*gongyi jin*). The public accumulation fund was designated for aiding production and community construction such as road repair, canal maintenance and flood control. The public welfare fund was designated for social security and welfare, e.g. supporting the Five Guaranteed households, subsidizing households in financial difficulties and so on. According to the local cadres, when production was under collective management, these two funds were extracted from the gross income of the production teams at a rate of about 5 per cent, and managed by the Brigade. After decollectivization, these two funds still exist in name, but the sources of money have changed, and the use of the funds has also changed.

The collective fund is now called "extractive fund" (*tiliu kuan*), levied on individual households. This is prescribed by the land contract defined by the township land management officer in Jinguan as "three-land system" (*santian zhi*), which includes "subsistence land" (*kouliang tian*) designated for food supply, "tax-quota land" (*gong-yu liang tian*) for fulfilling agricultural tax and state grain procurement, and "collective-fund extraction land" (*jiti tiliu tian*) for contributing to the collective fund.

Because the hamlet organization and the village administration function differently in different townships, the arrangements for collective funds are also different in Jinguan and Yongning. In Jinguan, since the village collective has shifted its responsibility for the five guaranteed households onto individuals and the government, the public welfare fund is basically used to cover village administrative expenses for public meetings, salaries to village-employed cadres, and other public functions. Since there is no longer a collective organization of production, the public accumulation fund, nowadays, is mostly used for community construction purposes. In the first few years after decollectivization, the collective fund was collected and disposed by the hamlet (or former production team) leaders. Peasants then complained about the lack of transparency in the use of the collective funds. From 1991, each village administration in Jinguan employs a general accountant (*da kuaiji*) specially supervising the collection and utilization of the collective funds.

In both Cuihu and Wengpeng, the collective fund is collected once a year on the basis of population under the land contract. The rate varies from one hamlet to another due to differences in water fees and other expenses. In Cuihu village, the average rate is 8 Yuan per person. My household records show that the amount of the collective fund paid by each household is around 41.8 Yuan which is about 1.5 per cent of the average household gross income. Of the total amount of the collective fund collected in each hamlet, about 30 to 40 per cent is submitted to the village administration office for united management. The sum retained by the hamlet is used for water fees, flood control and small construction work like road repairs and canal maintenance. In Wengpeng village, the management of the collective fund is a little different. The average amount collected is 18 Yuan per household which is about 1.6 per cent of the average household gross income. The total amount generated from the hamlets is turned over to the village administration office. Part of the collective fund is used for construction works, and the rest is used for administration, including payment to village-employed staff such as the women's director, general accountant and village school teachers.

In 1991, two out of thirty households interviewed in Cuihu did not contribute to the collective fund; and fourteen out of thirty households in Wengpeng managed to evade their duty. There are mainly two reasons for the failure in contributing to the collective fund. One is that the household had no money to spare; and the other is that the peasants regarded the imposition of the collective fund as unfair.[35] In Jinguan, some villages (such as Cuihu) employ tough measures to deal with the households that delay or fail to pay the collective fund. The common counter-measures are to suspend the issue of loans, or notify the township grain

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[35]Some villagers in Wengpeng insisted that the village administration owed them money. This was a left-over problem from the implementation of the household responsibility system in mid 1980s. At the time, some of the collective-owned property was sold off to the households. Since every household had a share of the property, the households that got the machinery, barns, or other forms of property were supposed to pay cash to the households who did not get anything. But it turned out that many households failed to make the payment, and the village failed to pursue it. As a result, those households that did not receive any collective property accuse the village of embezzling their money; and therefore, they refused to pay to the collective fund.

station (that procures grain on behalf of the state) of the names who have arrears of funds.[36] In other villages (such as Wengpeng), failures to pay duties are generally ignored, for these village administrators are either sympathetic with the peasants, or simply do not want to be bothered.

In Yongning, the arrangement of the collective fund is less complicated than in Jinguan. There is no distinction between public accumulation fund and public welfare fund. Unlike in Jinguan, the village administration in Yongning does not control the collective fund (except in statistical forms), because much of the administrative expenses and construction costs are specially appropriated from the township government. The major purpose of extracting the collective fund is to provide income for the hamlet leaders. Throughout the hamlets in the township, the amount of cash that each household is required to contribute to the collective fund is an annual flat fee of 2 Yuan per person under the land contract, which is about three times lower than in Jinguan.

Collecting the collective fund is the duty of hamlet leaders, and the use of the fund is decided upon by the hamlet leaders (as mentioned earlier, the hamlet leadership is more effective than the village administration in Yongning). Instances of payment refusal are not common in the Mosuo hamlets. In both Gesawa and Dapo, all households (except one who claimed to have no money) paid into the collective fund in 1991. Because the major part of the collective fund is used to pay the salary of the hamlet leader, the hamlet leader has all the incentives to collect the money–if he cannot collect enough money, he will not get enough pay. Sometimes, a small amount of the fund is used for community activities, such as repairing the school houses and roads.

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[36]This is a local policy to combat the over-due payments, either loans or collective funds. Every year after the autumn harvest, the peasants go to the township grain station to hand over their grain for paying agricultural tax and fulfilling the state procurement. Because the grain station only handles grain but not currency, the peasants receive a slip endorsed with the due amount of payment to be cashed at the township Credit Cooperative. In the case that a peasant has over-due loan payment, the Credit Cooperative will deduce the due amount from his grain payment according to the payment slip endorsed by the grain station.

Another management of public affairs by the village is known as "voluntary labor" (*yiwu gong*). Since the land was contracted to the peasant household, voluntary labor has been levied on the individual households. It is enforced and supervised by the village administration office. The organization of voluntary labor is mainly for the purpose of community construction including canal maintenance and road repair.

Construction is mostly concentrated in winter when harvests and all farm work have been completed. The work is assigned by the village administration to the hamlets, and the hamlet leaders perform as on-the-spot organizers. In Jinguan, the average levy of voluntary labor is 10 to 15 days a year per household, but the working days are often discounted by the peasants. In my interviews, some households contributed 10 days, many did three to five days, and others none at all. In addition to canal maintenance and road repair, the construction work in Yongning often includes farmland construction, for example, building terraces. In Yongning, the peasant households contribute more or less the same amount of voluntary labor as in Jinguan, but the rate of attendance is much higher than in Jinguan–all households in Gesawa and Dapo contribute all the labor days required. The reason for this is again related to the authority of hamlet leaders.

In has been suggested that under the current economic reform the village collective has been removed from the equation by the central leaders in order to strike a balance between the state, collective and peasant households (Zweig 1985). The removal of the the village collective is understood as a situation where the village administration, though still functioning, has been far less effective than it was during the collective time. As it has lost much of its economic power (collective organization of production and distribution), the village administration has been less competent in financing and organizing community activities. The result of the weakness of the collective organization has been manifested primarily in a decline of public welfare and deterioration of public facilities. In the matter of public welfare, the responsibility has fallen between the individuals and the government. In public construction, though the state continues to finance large infrastructural projects such as irrigation (though the amount available

is limited), much of the community construction is left for the locals to attend to. However, the locals do not necessarily feel like assuming this responsibility. Such problems are ultimately rooted in the peasant ideas of "public" and "state."

Concepts of "Public" and "State": Peasant-State Relations

The idea of public and state here concerns peasant-cadre and state-local relations. Public, in Chinese, is *gongjia* which literally means "common-family." State is *guojia*. which means "country-family." Both terms share one semantic feature that is the root *jia,* meaning "home," "family" and "household;" and both terms are in contrast to the original *jia* which has a narrower meaning indicating the individuality of the household or family (see Chapter 3 for peasant concept of *jia*). The connotations of these terms–*jia*, *gongjia* and *guojia*–distinguishes things and events inside and outside the peasant household, and inside and outside the village community. They embody the logic of the peasant economic decisions and social behavior in utilization of public resources and participation in community activities.

Public and State

To the peasant, public or public property is everything outside his residence and contracted land. It is understood by the peasants that public property does not belong to any individual; but on the other hand, every individual has a share. The contrast has become more pronounced since decollectivization, as the social distance between individuals and the collective has been increasingly widened. As a result, conflicts have arisen between peasant households and the village collective, most of which are related to the use of public resources. In order to expand the size of contracted land, some peasants dig into dykes, ditches, canals and roads–all

designated public property.[37] In order to transplant in time, they cut the road open, block and redirect water routes. These actions have directly caused the deterioration of public facilities. Since the land was contracted to the peasant households, the dykes have shrunk year by year, and ditches and roads have been constantly disrupted. This is one of the serious problems of post-decollectivization.

As the condition of the infrastructure is getting notably worse, the maintenance of facilities is much neglected. The negligence is attributed to the "dialectic" attitude that the peasants hold towards public and public property. On the one hand, every individual is assumed to have a share in the public property. Yet on the other hand, the maintenance of the public property is not perceived as a responsibility that an individual must assume. This logic of distinction between public share and individual responsibility largely attributes to the reluctance of peasants in participating in activities for community construction.

While "public" is conceptualized by the peasants as something related to collective and community, the idea of "state" is far more complex, and it transcends the collective and the village community. In other words, if public refers to the collective and is contrasted with the individual, the state refers to the government and is contrasted with the local. The complexity here revolves around the ambiguity related to the concept of state, from which several questions derive: What is state to the peasants, and what is it to the local administration? Where does state refers to an institution and where does it become a person? The present study finds that the social distance between different social categories (e.g. peasants, village, township government and county government), marks the boundary between state and local. Therefore, state has a different meaning to different social strata. To the provincial government, the state is Beijing or the central government; to the county government, the state is the provincial government; to the township cadres, the state is the county government; and lastly to the peasants, the state is the

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[37]These incidents are rare in Yongning. One reason for this is that there is much less pressure on the land.

township government. All these levels of state are created by bureaucratic hierarchies (see Figure 4), in that the state is always the higher authority which has power to influence and control the level below.

Peasants and State

Half of the peasant population in Jinguan (under survey) had not been to the county seat which is some twenty kilometers away; and even fewer of them had ever visited Kunming, the provincial capital. To the ordinary peasants, the county government is already far away from their day-to-day life. The township government, on the other hand, is close and more concrete. The location of the township government at the center of the market, its redistributive administration, and its economic intervention all make the peasants aware of the presence of the state. "Government" (*zhengfu*) is how the peasants refer to the office compound of the township government. The officials who work in the building are called by the peasants: "the government's persons" (*zhengfu de ren*). When conflicts arise in the village and the settlements by the village leaders are not satisfied, the peasants "go to see the government" (*zhao zhengfu*). In short, the township government, to the local peasants, is the state which has legislative power to hold authority.

As the government is part of the state, the township cadres are collectively seen by the peasants as the personalized state. Therefore, what the township cadres do to the peasants is what the state does to them; and what the peasants expect the state to do and not to do to them is what they expect of the township cadres. In this respect, peasants see that the township cadres are in a position to provide support for them; and at the same time, they have the power to interfere with, and control their livelihood. With such a notion of state, the peasants' relation with the township cadres constitutes one important perspective of peasant-state relations.

The peasants' image of the state is largely related to the township government's administrative and redistributive functions. Most of the peasants expect the state to provide relief support in bad years; and to control the supply of chemical fertilizers and other production

materials in good years.[38] Some peasants express no interest in whatever the state can do for them, as they say: "We do not need the state;" and those who are discontent about the village and township cadres in general regard "The state only rips us old peasants off!"

The peasants' attitude towards the state obviously has a moral content. The demand of the peasants for state support is based on their fulfillment of the duty to pay the agricultural tax annually. The resentment expressed in the words that they do not need the state only reflects the somewhat indifferent attitude of the comparatively well-off peasants who have neither received nor expect to receive any state subsidies. And accusing the state of ripping off the old peasants alludes to official interference, such as the enforcement of tobacco production. Here, what the township cadres do to the peasants is seen as the fault of the state.

Much of the moral implication in the peasant view of state lies in "a right to subsistence" (Scott 1976), which is used by the peasants in Jinguan to judge what they should be given and what should not be taken from them. In the summer 1992 during the the slack farming season, the township finance cadres resumed their work of collecting loan payments from the villages. One day, they went to a household that had failed to pay its loan. Having been pursued several times by the officials for his long overdue loan, on this last occasion, the man (the head of the household) counter-attacked the officials as his means of defence. No sooner than the cadres had entered the house and before they had even said anything about the loan, the man exploded: "You must give me state resold grain. Otherwise, I'll stop paying agricultural tax!" This took the cadres somewhat by surprise, and they wondered what exactly the state-resold grain should have anything to do with his loan payment. But the claim for state-resold grain seems to make a moral statement of the right to subsistence (as the peasant sees it)–he had borrowed the loan because he needed it; he could not repay the loan because he had no money; he had no money because he was in difficulty; and therefore, instead of pursuing the loan, the cadres should

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[38]There are certain items of production materials that are state monopoly goods, rationed to the peasants at subsidized price. When supplies of these state controlled goods are insufficient, the peasants have to buy at market price which is often two or three times higher.

provide him with grain relief. This right to subsistence is the moral claim that the peasants hold in their relation with the state, and it forms the basis on which the behavior of the local cadres is judged.

In the past (as in late imperial times and the early Republican era) when the state bureaucracy was not powerful enough to reach the rural society, the peasant's moral claims were laid on the local elite or the gentry. The elite position of the gentry was known to be founded on family wealth, literati connections, and personal influence on lineage organization and religious activities. The gentry elite played the role of political brokers between the state bureaucracy (county magistracy) and the local villages; and at the same time, they acted as patrons to the villagers in the community. The relationship between the gentry and villagers is thus termed patron-clientship.

In the patron-client relationship, the patron offered social and economic protection, which was returned by the client with loyalty and service. The relationship between patrons and clients is described as reciprocal, yet it is by no means equal and symmetrical because the patron was always the dominant party and the client the dominated (Duara 1990, Rankin and Esherick 1990). This kind of brokerage and patron-client relationship was eliminated in the late 1940s and early 1950s when land reform overthrew the old political and economic relations in rural society. The grassroots leadership was then replaced by state cadres whose social and economic backgrounds were very different from those of the gentry elite in the past. Instead of family wealth, literati connections and influence on lineage organization and religious activities, the local cadres were recruited generally on the basis of their loyalty to the party or the state (Shue 1988; Siu 1989).

The nature of the local leadership may have changed, but the patron-client relationship has remained. In the modern patron-client relationship, the exchange parties are local cadres and peasants. This kind of patron-client relationship has become more salient since the economic reforms along with the revival of local traditions and strengthening of kinship ties. However, because the social and economic background of the modern cadres is different from that of the

gentry elite, the modern cadre-peasant relationship is somewhat different from the old patron-client relationship. While in the old patron-client relationship, much of the exchange initiated by the gentry elite was intended to accumulate political capital and social prestige, we found there is less emphasis on such symbolic value in the modern patron-client relationship. Social prestige is no longer required in the modern cadre-peasant relationship because local cadres (village and township) are generally appointed by higher authorities; and therefore political reputations and personal loyalty within the community as such have become less crucial.

The other major difference between the old patron and modern cadre is that the former gained his elite position by manipulating his personal resources (social and economic), while the latter pursues his goals the other way round: using his official position and privilege to gain economic resources (although this by no means suggests that the exchanges that the old gentry sought were not in economic terms, e.g. labor and service). As far as political means are concerned, the modern cadre is more powerful because the official position he holds provides him with access to public resources and enables him to manipulate.

The modern patron-client relationship is often between relatives and neighbors (sometimes referred to as friends) in the village; and the cadres involved in such relationship are those that come from the local villages. This kind of relationship is personal and generally reciprocal. Despite differences in social positions of the two parties, subordination does not necessarily apply.

What the township cadres can do in their official position for their clients is of course what no ordinary peasant can have access to–from gaining employment opportunities and allocation of restricted resources (such as favorable land contracts, loans, state subsidies) to mitigation of official punishments and other kinds of social and economic conveniences.[39] This

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[39]The change of the economic basis for the village and hamlet leaders have had an impact on the formation of patron-client relationships. Under the collective system when production was organized on the basis of production teams, the team leaders had more economic means to control, and therefore they had "the most direct impact on each peasant's well-being" (Oi 1989: 132). The hamlet leaders (the equivalent of the team leaders in the past) nowadays, in fact,

has resulted in a situation where the relatives of township cadres can manage to evade tobacco assignments; and the higher state subsidies often go to the hamlets where the local leaders reside. The common return from the clients is labor help. Like in the patron-client relationship in the past, the exchange between patrons and clients are not necessarily always comparable or measurable (Oi 1989: 146). But the core of the exchange can be expressed by one word: "favor," the exchange of which is between sentiments (*renqing*) and help (*bangzhu*).

The local sentiments are important motives for the cadres engaging in the patron-client relationship. As a native from the village, the township cadre is often concerned with how he might be judged by fellow villagers, especially his relatives. Any reluctance to provide help may be seen as a social distance which implies that he is no longer one of them. Caught between being a "government person" and a brother or nephew, the cadre needs to strike a balance between his official position and his sentimental attachment to the village. Then, using his official position to help his relatives can certainly achieve the goal. However, public duties and local sentiments inevitably result in conflict between the cadre's commitment to the state and his loyalty to the villagers. In this respect, the cadre's adjustment of his official duties and local interests has implications on the relations between local leadership and state in that we see: under some circumstances, the local cadres become victims as a result of being state agents.

Local Cadres and the State

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the township government plays a dual role as the state agency and as the body representing the local peasants. The duality of roles places township cadres in a constantly shifting position between the interests of the state and the welfare of the local peasants. Although the duality of roles is a common situation among "line officials" in a bureaucracy, the situation of the township government is special, as it is situated

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possess few economic means to manipulate. This is the reason why the patron-client relationship on this level is not salient.

at the bottom of the bureaucratic hierarchy and right above the peasant community from which many of the officials/cadres come.

With this special situation, the township government's duality of roles often cause dilemmas for the cadres who from time to time find themselves trapped between their official duties and personal sentiments. The dual role of the township cadres creates dual identities. The cadres are loyal to the state when they act collectively in office, and become sympathetic with the peasants when they behave like individuals. In other words, in different situations, the township cadres are different social beings: state agents or peasant representatives. These identities are constantly shifting and being adjusted. If asked how much the local cadres represent the state and how much they represent the local peasants, we shall find the answer dependent on when and where the cadres identify themselves with the state, and when and where they identify themselves with the local peasants. The dilemma that local cadres face is because the cadres are "held increasingly accountable to their political superiors, who gave them power but at the same time imposed harsh discipline," while they must deal with the "moral and economic expectations of fellow villagers" (Siu 1989: 168).

The tobacco situation in Jinguan demonstrated a split of loyalty among the township cadres under pressure from both the county government and the local peasants. Most of the township cadres took sides with the peasants and understood the peasants' economic preference for grain crops. Some of the cadres even questioned (though not in public) the legitimacy of the township government in enforcing tobacco production under the land management law. Nevertheless, when it came to taking collective actions to implement the tobacco policy, that is going to the villages to pull out seedlings, hardly any of them neglected their official duties.

Local sentiments giving way to official consciousness was a direct outcome of the nature of the cadres' employment which makes them vulnerable to the state (or the higher government authority). In the conflict between local sentiments and official duties, the cadre's political careerism becomes entangled with economic incentives. The existing cadre responsibility system known as "target administrative system" (*mubiao guanli zerenzhi*) is a

powerful control of cadres' behavior (see under *Economic Intervention*).[40] Within this political framework, the cadres are interested in both holding on to their job as well as receiving a bonus. In the countryside where the main economic resources for the majority of the population are land and agriculture, the position of a government employee, to an individual, means privileges in both political and economic terms (not to mention the social prestige plus leisure and comfort); and the state pay-roll provides security and welfare. These benefits are naturally too precious for anyone in the position to give up. Therefore, the predicament of the cadres, in fact, does not leave them with much choice. As government employees, they are obliged to do whatever they are request by their positions, that is to comply with the orders from the higher authorities. This is how the tobacco policy in Jinguan was implemented.

Compliance with state interests makes the township cadres state agents; and at the same time, the sacrifice of their personal sentiments turns them into victims of their political career. Under pressure from both higher authorities and the local peasants, the Jinguan cadres sometimes try to strike a balance to justify their official conduct–as they did during the tobacco campaign–by stressing the economic interests of the county which is raising local revenue for economic construction. In so doing, they managed to seek some kind of compromise to reduce the tension between themselves and the peasants (without intentionally resisting the administrative order from the above). Despite the limited space to maneuver, the township cadres adopted a passive strategy by taking less efficient action, e.g. sending less personnel to the villages; spending longer time on each spot; ignoring the unfulfilled assignment until the last minute when it was too late for transplanting. The effect of these actions showed that some twenty per cent of the tobacco quota assigned to Jinguan in 1992 was not fulfilled. This result, however, was tolerated and overlooked by the county government for it was fully aware of the difficulties that the township cadres encountered in enforcing tobacco production, and their

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[40]Yongning township has the similar cadre responsibility systems, but they do not seem to affect the behavior of the local cadres.

further cooperation was needed in the future (though it turned out that there was not much in the future).

Chinese economic reforms have brought about changes in state-peasant relations. In some places, the change is marked by either intensified parochial loyalties of the local cadres (e.g. Perry 1985); and in others, it is seen as decrease in the power of local cadres (e.g. Kelliher 1992). The outcome of these situations is represented by either involvements of the local cadres in rural violence as described by Perry, or collaborations of local cadres with peasants in cheating and fighting with the state as presented by Kelliher. While the main determinant for the rural cadres coming to "identify more and more with their local units" is attributed to the fact that the cadres receive fewer benefits from the state (Perry 1985: 430-1), the important reason for the local cadres giving it all up is said to be a result of "peasants challenging their authority and the state failing to back them up" (Kelliher 1992: 82). Neither of these situations applies to the behavior of township cadres in Jinguan.[41] Although the cadres there may have become closer to peasants in social distance than ever as a result of strengthened traditional ties in the aftermath of decollectivization, the change has not been significant enough to provide the cadres in Jinguan with sufficient incentives to choose to side with the peasants.[42] On the other hand, given the position of the local cadres who are locally rooted, it is impossible for them to completely take the side of the state. The cadres in Jinguan today are seen standing astride over two boats: the government institution and the peasant community. Consequently, their loyalties work in both ways.

While the various responsibility systems have spurred the economic incentives for the local government and have accelerated household production, the target administrative system at

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[41]Because there is a general absence of administrative interference from the township administration, the conflict between the local cadres and peasants in Yongning is not visible.

[42]There is no evidence that the cadres in Jinguan (either township or village) are actively involved in lineage-related feuds. This may attribute to the local immigration history which resulted in generally lose lineage ties in this area (see Chapter 4).

the township level has certainly restricted the cadre's behavior. The township cadres are powerful to the local peasants because of the official position they hold, but the powerful position is given by the higher authorities and this fact subjects the township cadres to discipline imposed by the higher authorities. This is why, in the balance between the political loyalty and local sentiments, the cadres in Jinguan tilted towards the former. Different from the cadres' behavior described by Kelliher that cadres in the predicament were either "left behind or joined peasants in improvising rural policy" (Kelliher 1992: 56), the cadres in Jinguan chose to surrender themselves to their official duties in the conflict involved in tobacco production. There may be two reasons to explain the behavior of the Jinguan cadres: firstly, the township administration had strong backup from the county government in implementing tobacco policy; and secondly, the cadres would have too much to lose if they did not comply with the orders from above.

There is no doubt that "the priorities of the various state systems could not have penetrated local society had it not been for the initiative of the ambitious individuals who actively pursued the symbols of power recognized by the state tradition" (Siu 1989: 293). Although careerism is accountable for explaining the behavior of the township cadres, political ideology seems to have become less and less relevant in the present political situation. In the case of Jinguan township cadres, the consciousness of political careerism may make more sense if it is understood as a strategy of survival– the cadres' compliance with the state is, in a way, a guarantee of livelihood.

The behavior of the local cadres reflects the mode and function of the government administration at local levels in Chinese society. Despite considerable differences in their behavior, there can be no doubt that the role that local cadres play is crucial. Regardless of

whether they are active or passive, or whether they are pro-local or pro-state, their behavior has direct influence (negative or positive) on the peasant economic life.[43]

The institutional change that has affected the relation between state and local governments has had significant implications for the peasant economy in the two communities. While the administrative control under the local autonomy has much effect on the utilization of resources and general trends of economic development in the area, household organization plays a significant part in the actual organization of production. The decollectivization and implementation of the household production responsibility system in the early 1980s (which marked another significant institutional change under the economic reform) put the management of rural production and distribution on a household basis. This change increased the significance of a study of the peasant household for our understanding of the rural economy, since household structure has a direct effect on the organization of production, and many economic activities are regulated by the peasant social relationships in and outside the household. The patrilineal and matrilineal households in the following two chapters (3-4) demonstrate how generation-gender relationships and division of labor are organized under different descent principles, and how economic relations are formed in a given kinship system.

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[43]This conclusion may contradict what Kelliher has argued that, by virtue of their predicament, "the rural cadres played a striking small, ineffective part in the events of the reform years" (Kelliher 1992: 82).

CHAPTER 3

PATRILINEAL HOUSEHOLD

The key characteristic of the Chinese peasant household is said to be the "smallness of the cooperative group" (Fei 1988: 57). Such a cooperative group is called *jia*. The peasant *jia* in Jinguan is patrilineal. The main feature of the patrilineal household is that the size of the household is small (compared to the matrilineal household which will be discussed in the following chapter), but kinship relations are complex. The particular kinship relations of the *jia* determine the household structure, household reproduction and fragmentation. Such organization of the *jia* has effect on the peasant economic activities. The main subject of this chapter revolves around the cultural definition of *jia* and its associated social and economic relations.

The *Jia* and Household Organization

The Chinese word *jia*, when translated into English, can be "family," "household," or "home." The traditional Chinese *jia* is generally perceived as an extended family, a group in which the members "possess a common property, keep a common budget and cooperate together to pursue a common living through division of labor" (Fei 1943: 27). In the modern era, though

the composition of family (or household for that matter) has undergone changes, the Chinese family, as argued, still "remains a real institution reducible neither to an ideology nor to the households within which people live" (Stacey 1983: 264).

In different contexts, *jia* to the peasants in Jinguan, has different references. In terms of residence, the *jia* is a combination of house, grain storage, pigsty, chicken coop, garden plot, farm tools, pots and pans, sacks and rags. It is a shelter and a base of production and wealth. In terms of descent, the *jia* is a genealogical organization tied to the patrilineal descent system. In terms of marriage, the *jia* is a jural (or contractual) organization in which gender relations are embodied and expressed. The cultural meaning that the word *jia* bears is the core of household organization and social relationships. The *jia*, in short, is "a cultural construct that enables the natives to make common sense of the diverse range of activities in which overlapping groups of people engage" (Yanagisako 1984: 332).

Jia is both a social and an economic unit, which is to say that "The *chia* [*jia*] is a group of persons who not only have kin ties to each other, but also have a series of claims of one sort or another on the *chia* as an estate" (Cohen 1978: 187). In this chapter we shall see how the peasant idea of *jia* and the structure of *jia* construct social relationships; how they form the economic reality in terms of organization of production and decision making; and on what cultural and economic basis the *jia* as a living unit as well as a kin group is sustained and perpetuated.

Jia *as a Living Unit*

The physical base of the *jia* is the residence. The common peasant residence in Jinguan consists of a main house in addition to a kitchen, a pigsty (and maybe also a chicken coop) and a garden plot. The main house is a two-storey building about ten to twelve meters in length and five to six meters in width (Plate 3). The ground floor is the living quarter which is divided into three rooms. The middle room, locally called *tangwu* ("hall") is the activity room, where guests are received and ancestors are worshipped. On each side of the *tangwu*, there is a bedroom. A

porch is extended about two or three meters extended from the front wall. It is used for drying grains, in addition to many other purposes. The upper level is the attic about one and half to two meter high. It is commonly used for storage of grains, seeds, fodder and preserved food. Besides, farm tools, building materials, and articles that are not in frequent use are also placed here.

People who live in this residence are considered to be members of one family (*yijia ren*). Following the implementation of the household production system, the land under collective ownership was divided and contracted to peasants. Though the land, in theory, was contracted to individual peasants (as the land allocation was based on the population of the production team), the *jia* (or the household) pooled its economic resources–land and labor–and became a production unit. It is on this micro management level that the members of the household are engaged in decision making, labor deployment, product distribution, daily consumption and social and economic reproduction. In short, the *jia* is both a production unit, and a consumption unit.

As a production unit, the *jia* sets its overall plans for farming activities concerning planting and harvesting schedules, seed selection, fertilizer application, organizing labor for watering, weeding, pest prevention and so on. Apart from the major crop farming activities, every *jia* manages its sideline production which normally consists of raising pigs and chickens, growing vegetables, and other cash-earning occupations such as skilled labor (e.g. carpenter, bricklayer, etc.) and contract labor. The scale of sideline production depends primarily on the availability of a surplus labor force in each household.

With the common management of production, and with the members of the *jia* contributing to the common economic activities, the *jia* also acts as a common budget unit. The household income from the land as well as from the sideline production is under the household management. The *jia* is officially registered as a domestic unit which is subject to tax and levy impositions. In addition, it is a unit entitled to borrow loans, and under certain circumstances, receive the state redistributive materials.

The *jia* as a consumption unit is often conceptualized as "sharing one stove" or "eating from the same pot." The people of the *jia* live under one roof and eat in the same kitchen. In the peasant residence, kitchen is an important component. It is usually a separate building, or a separate room attached to the main house. An ordinary kitchen is equipped with one or two stoves–either fueled by firewood or methane gas, a cupboard containing food and utensils, a table and several benches. Cooking is usually done by a family member who does not work in the fields, or who returns from the fields earlier. It is mostly the housewife, occasionally assisted by her children or elderly members of the family. Having meals is always a family gathering, in the kitchen on ordinary days, and in the fields during the busy farming seasons.

The saying "eating from the same pot" also means to share household property. Apart from day-to-day expenses, the household has its long- and short-term budgets for large expenses on house construction, investment and ritual ceremonies (see Chapter 5). Although weddings and funerals are concerns of the individuals, they are the responsibilities of the whole household. No matter how small or large the expenses are, they are decided by the household, and every individual's demand is subject to the control of the household.

Production and consumption are fundamental features of the household as a living unit. As the production and consumption cycle revolves year in and year out, the *jia* reproduces and perpetuates itself. The social function of the *jia* is that "children are raised and socialized to the demands of the adult world. Old people may be cared for until their death. . . Marriage provides sexual satisfaction, and relationships within the unit generate affection which ties the members to each other" (E. Wolf 1966: 13). Naturally, the *jia* becomes expanded when marriages occur and when children are born. For the same reason, the *jia* becomes divided when children grow up and get married. These fissions and fusions are said to be the "history of a China family" which is "one of regular expansion and contraction" (A. Wolf 1984: 279).

My household survey in Jinguan shows that the average household has 4.8 people, and the largest household has seven. Given that each couple has two children under the current family-planning policy, the average household size shows that most of the *jia* compositions are

largely what is called "nuclear" families, except about half of them also include aged parent(s) living together. Households that exceed two generations and one conjugal pair are generally understood as extended households. In most of the extended households in Jinguan, the parent(s) living with an adult son and his wife and their children is common (which may also be referred to as stem household). But households of more than one conjugal pair (among siblings) living under one roof with or without aged parents are rare.

According to the old residents of Jinguan, there used to be more "big families" (i.e. extended households). The decline in family size has been noted and treated as one important social transformation in the wake of economic reform. As it has been stated: "In terms of average household size, families became noticeably smaller over the decade of the 1980s, and the number of households grew at a faster rate than the population" (Davis and Harrell 1993: 7). However, the problem remains, as noted: "While it is clear that average household size declined, it is still not clear to what extent the reforms have altered family composition or the meaning of joint budgets and shared property" (ibid.: 8). In Jinguan, the older generation blames the rapid household division on the change of values in the younger generation as they have become less responsible for communal welfare. My observation of the family relations in Jinguan suggested to me that the fundamental force driving the changes in household organization appears to be both institutional and economic, which of course contributes to the change of values among the people.

Under the current land system, land is allocated to individual peasants.[1] This has, in fact, given the individuals much more autonomy in deciding whether to keep the land in the household or separate from it. Since every one has a portion of land, there is no need for

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[1]Land was contracted to the peasant household in Jinguan in 1983. The basic unit of land allocation at the time was the production team; and the amount of land allocated to the individual households was determined by the size of the team. All population under registration at the time was entitled to a portion averaging one *mu* per person. The land contract has since been adjusted twice (in 1985 and 1989), in adaptation to demographic changes in the households (e.g. births, deaths and marriages).

individuals to rely on cooperation any more in the same way as before. The land contract thus has influenced, and further changed people's ideas–the ideas that people had come to hold about the shared economy since collectivization. It ultimately has led to the realization that the smaller the household is, the more economic control rests with the individual. The present state of household structure in Jinguan is, therefore, primarily related to the economic change which, in turn, has affect on people's idea of *jia*. If in the past, the maintenance of extended households was, by and large, motivated to pool economic resources (for instance, accumulating work-points in the collectivization era, see later in the chapter under *Uxorilocal Marriage*), the implementation of household responsibility system has, in a way, promoted the fragmentation of household.

In addition to the land contract which is potentially in favor of individual cultivators, the house construction boom which has been made possible by the increased productivity and raised income has also encouraged household division. In the past, when there was only limited grain surplus and restricted residential space, household division appeared to be difficult even it was desired. Today, the situation has changed which has made the problem of household division easier to solve.

The major cause of household division in Jinguan is tense relations between affines, between siblings, and between parents and children, mainly over disputes about equalities in labor contribution and in distributive share.[2] Many households in Jinguan nowadays divide as soon as the adult son gets married. Some newly-weds remain in the big household with the parents and siblings for one or two years, others stay only for a couple of months.

Household division is locally called *fenzao* ("dividing stove") which again reflects the peasant concept of *jia*. It involves contracts and negotiations between the dividing parties

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[2]This, however, is a common phenomenon of Chinese family relationship throughout the history; and by no means new or special in the economic reform era. For an account of economic conflict between brothers, see Maurice Freedman (1979): *The Study of Chinese Society*.

(parents and sons; brothers) about property allocation and arrangements for supporting the elderly. The common property that a *jia* holds includes the real estate: namely the residence and garden plot;[3] and movables: crops from land, domestic animals, farm tools, utensils, grain storage and cash savings. In some cases, a new house is built for the moving-out household to move in right away; in other cases, the moving-out household continues to live in the same residence, if a new house is not affordable right away. In either case, the cost of building a new house for the moving-out household is shared by the members of the old household. By the local custom, if there are two sons in the old house, the one who moves out sells his half to the one who remains. In the case that the moving-out household has to remain in the old residence waiting for a new house, there must be separate kitchens which is indeed what "dividing stove" means. The movable property is often divided in great details: grain from the last harvest is weighed, expenses for the wedding are calculated, loan payments and other income as well as debts are listed. Dividing land is comparatively simple since the individual's portion is specified in the original land contract. Together with the land reallocation, the household registration must be changed for tax and other official purposes. The arrangement of household division also reflects that *jia* is ultimately a property-owning unit which has functions in both production and consumption.

For whatever reason–whether demographic or economic–that the household division occurs, and whether the size of the household is big or small, the peasant household remains as a kin group. This is the other aspect of *jia* to which the peasants in Jinguan attach their emotion and that provides the peasants with sense of identity.

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[3]As the land in the village is collectively owned, peasants who build houses need to apply for permission. Although the ground is part of the collective property, the house built on the collective-owned ground is considered private property.

Jia *as a Kin Group*

As mentioned above, the *jia* is composed of people that are collectively called *yijia ren* ("one-family people"). Being engaged in production and reproduction, this "one-family people" present themselves as an economic unit tied by kin relations, or as a kin group tied by economic obligations.

The issues of kinship and economy focus on how kinship is reflected in economic relations, and how economic relations are restrained and regulated by kin relations. With an interest in pursuing the peasant economy from a cultural perspective, this study intends to present kin relations in their economic context, and treats kinship as a cultural component of economic relations. This analytical preference, however, is not what Marilyn Strathern criticizes as equating persons with things (Strathern 1985). For the same reason, the kinship system and the economic system, in this study, are not anthropologically assumed categories (as criticized by Strathern). Rather, like the peasant cognition of *jia* in which the cultural and economic components are combined, kinship and economy in this study are constructed as one complex meaning-system to demonstrate how people are related socially in their economic activities; and what influence is exerted by economic activities on the social relationships.

Jia is a kin group whether it is an extended or a nuclear family. However, in day-to-day life, "kinsmen" may also refer to people who do not live in the same residence, and on many social occasions, kinship extends to include the agnatic as well as affinal relations. In this way, the category of "one-family people" is conceptually extended. Consequently, the *jia* expands, too. While these extensions and expansions add meaning to the concept of *jia* and the concept of *yijia ren*, they merge different levels of social relationships which mark culturally defined distances. To the "one-family people" (in a restricted sense) who live under one roof and share one stove, their agnatic kin are closer than affines. On the next level, the affines are closer than all other non-kin. When these relatives outside the ring of the original *yijia ren* are considered as of one family in various social and economic situations, certain cultural rules apply to differentiate the extended *yijia ren* from other non-kin in their social behavior.

The underlining rules involved in the expansion of *jia* and the extension of *yijia ren*, derive from the fundamental patrilineal principle which formulates the concept of descent and regulates various interrelationships between kinsmen. The core of the patrilineal descent is the relationship between father and son. Therefore, the traditional moral economy of the Chinese peasantry is said to be "a patriarchal family economy" (Stacey 1983: 255). This may well be regarded as the analytical link between the patrilineal kinship and the peasant economy in the present study.

Social Institutions of Patrilineal Descent

The ideology of patrilineal descent that revolves around the father-son relation is realized through various social practices that help to maintain and perpetuate the descent system. Under the specific historical, cultural and geographical environments, ancestor worship, virilocal and uxorilocal marriages, maiden aunt and adoption are important social institutions in which the patrilineal descent is organized and adapted.

Ancestor-Descendant Complex

As Stacey argues, "The patriarch's goal was to maintain an unbroken lineage which would reside together on the ancestral property for all time–past and future" (Stacey 1983: 32). Here, the *unbroken lineage* and the *past* and *future* are the key points for our understanding of the patrilineal concepts–the concern of which is to maintain the relationship between forefathers and descendants. This concern is demonstrated in the ritual of ancestor worship and the cultural preference for male offspring.

Ancestor worship is regarded as part of the kinship system in a real sense, which is constituted by the relations of living persons to their deceased kindred as well as to one another (Radcliffe-Brown 1979: 53). The relation between the deceased (i.e. ancestors) and the living

(i.e. descendants) is reciprocal as well as obligatory. In Chinese society, ancestor worship is viewed as the "continuation of the parent/child dependence" (Baker 1969: 72), which emphasizes respect (for parents), obeisance (in children), sacrifice (from the living), and blessing (from the dead).

In Jinguan, ancestor worship ritual is performed by the individual *jia*, that is, the group of people who live in the same residence and eat in the same kitchen. Ancestors worshipped by the family seldom exceed two generations. They are usually the immediate relatives, i.e. parents, grandparents, and sometimes uncles (father's brothers) and aunts (father's brothers' wives) who used to be part of the family. The local people used to keep ancestral tablets. Nowadays, the tablets are often replaced by photographs of the ancestors.

The ancestor worship ritual is conducted during the slack season in the late summer starting on the first day of the 7th Lunar month when ancestors are invited back home, and it lasts through the 14th day of the month when ancestors are sent away. The ceremony is conducted in the hall (*tangwu*), the main room of the peasant residence. On the first morning, incense sticks are placed on the high table–locally called *shen'an* ("spiritual altar")–on which photos or tablets of ancestors are displayed.[4] The evening meal is a family feast prepared to receive the ancestors. The feast usually contains rice, meat (home-made ham, or chicken) and vegetable dishes. Having made the offering–food ladled out from each dish and put in several bowls on the high table–the family start to eat. At dusk, the family take the offering to the entrance of the gateway where they light incense, burn paper, and kowtow. Then they withdraw. On the path between the gateway and the house, they hold the offering in hands, plant one burning incense stick on the path every few steps, and summon their ancestors by calling out their kin titles. It is believed that the ancestors will follow the light (burning incense)

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[4]The use of the high table is usually for ceremonial purposes, while family meals on ordinary days are often eaten by a low table.

and the food to come home. After returning to the house, the family again burn more paper and kowtow.

The next day and the days through the 13th day, incense keeps burning in the house, and three meals a day are offered to the ancestors. On the 14th day, the family prepare to send their ancestors away. The ritual is similar to the first day when the ancestors were invited home. Before the evening feast, the family members add fresh incense, then burn paper money and other paper images such as clothes, shoes, bags and so on in front of the ancestors' photos or tablets displayed on the high table. The paper images symbolize the articles the ancestors might need in the other world. The family also prepare a feast similar to the one on the first day of worship, except that the offering is less plentiful. The offering is placed on the table while the family enjoy the feast. After eating, the family take the offering outside to the gateway, and spread it along the path to the street. The food, this time, is for wandering ghosts: the dead who have not been invited back home.[5] At the same time, the family members insert the burning incense sticks in holes along the walls fencing off the yard, and burn some paper at the foot of the walls. The fires light up the path along which the ancestors return to their resting places. At this time of the evening, children are not allowed to play on the streets in case they should block the traffic for the departing ancestors, or even worse, bump into any wandering ghosts which may cause illness and misfortune.

As a general rule, families that had relatives die in the previous year start the ritual to invite ancestors on the first day of the 7th Lunar month. For the families whose relatives passed away quite some time ago, the timetable for the worship ritual is flexible. Some families conduct the ritual from the first day of the 7th Lunar month through the 14th day; others may begin on the 6th or 7th day. Many people like to start right after a market day (Jinguan market convenes every five days) because it is convenient to purchase and prepare food. Those families

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[5]The wandering ghosts particularly refer to the people who are left out of the patrilineal descent for various reasons, e.g. as results of sudden and inauspicious death before marriage.

that have little money to spend may have to shorten the period of ancestor worship by inviting them back on the 13th day, and send them away on the 14th. The ritual arrangements of ancestor worship– burning incense, folding paper images, preparing meals and so on–are generally attended to by the housewife. The ceremony itself–inviting and sending away the ancestors–are performed by the adult members of the family. Children's participation in ancestor worship is part of the process of socialization. They are, most of the time, standing by and watching; and only join in to kowtow when asked by their parents.[6]

The ritual of ancestor worship functions as a connecting link between the dead and the living; and between older and younger generations. It symbolizes family identity as well as continuity. As much as the presence of the ancestors is important for the family identity, ancestor worship would be meaningless if there were no descendants. In this respect, the rite of ancestor worship is "a function of descent" (A. Wolf 1978: 146). As mentioned earlier, the relationship between father and son is the core of the kinship in the patrilineal family system; and the fundamental patrilineal principle is to maintain the unbroken lineage, the guarantee of the patrilineal continuity lies in male descendants. The emphasis on the male child is symbolically understood as to "insure the continuation of the smoke from the incense at ancestral shrines" (Hsu 1949: 76).

Patrilineal descent in China has been widely associated with the inheritance of land property, the vital living resources of the family. As argued: the land was the "basis of family wealth and the most important form of property" which had "symbolic as well as economic values" (Baker 1969: 13); the importance of the possession of land to the peasant families was the "decisive factor in determining an individual's standard of living and in determining whether or not he shall enjoy the privilege of leisure" and as the "driving force behind much of their activities" (Fei and Chang 1945: 109); and "land was the major form of property that passed

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[6]I personally observed the ancestor worship upon an invitation of a peasant family in Jinguan. Some details of the ritual described in this section are added by the local residents.

exclusively to sons through the male lineage and thereby perpetuated the desired goals of family continuity and prosperity" (Stacey 1983: 32).

One could hardly argue otherwise about the link between the patrilineal descent system and land inheritance in the given situation. At the same time, one could also wonder whether the ideology of patrilineal descent would still hold if land were not a form of property to inherit. This study of patrilineal descent in Jinguan found that there is more to the persistence of cultural preferences for male children than just concerns for property. For instance, if one assumes that patrilineal succession is designed because father needs a son to pass on his land and other property, then why do people with little property still want to have sons? If, as assumed, the patrilineal descent system is designed to protect and pass on the land, then why do people still show preference for sons when even the land is not privately owned (regardless of the inheritance of user's rights)? In this respect, the idea of patrilineal descent appears to have far more implications than merely material interest.

The cultural preference for sons, in a way, embodies the devaluation of daughters which is widely accepted. The devaluation is often explained in terms of social arrangement that daughters are born to be married away and do not bear responsibility for supporting the parents and perpetuating the patrilineal descent line. This reasoning is ultimately responsible for the logic that raising daughters is not economically viable. This economical explanation may not be so valid as it appears, considering the fact that raising a son may turn out to be far more expensive than raising a daughter, as discussed in the following pages. On a non-material basis, the cultural preference for sons can be seen deriving from the patrilineal concepts that emphasize the unilineal line of succession through the male relations, i.e. from father to son; and the idea of patrilineal descent does not have to have a material basis. In this sense, the son can be seen as a symbol of family wealth and family perpetuation.

The current Chinese family planning policy allows each couple with rural household registration to have two children (meanwhile the government employees and others with urban

household registration are allowed to have only one child).[7] In Jinguan, some peasant households have one son and one daughter; some have two sons; and some have two daughters. Generally speaking, the ones that have sons feel satisfied; and the ones that have only daughters do not. Women–both with rural and urban household registrations–admitted that they live with pressures from families and relatives during their entire pregnancy knowing that they are expected to give birth to boys. The cultural expectation of male child is also reflected in naming. In Jinguan, a common pet name for girls is Lanlan. In the local speech, the word *lan* (orchard) is homophonic with the word *nan* which is "male" or "boy." So, naming a girl Lanlan–usually the first born–expresses a wish to bring a male child along.

With this cultural expectation for male children who uphold patrilineal descent, society must create corresponding measures to satisfy the need. Marriage and adoption are the common measures to acquire male descendants). In Jinguan, the common marriage types are virilocal and uxorilocal. In addition, there is a custom known as *zhaipo*, or "maiden aunt." Cases of adoption exist, and the rules concerning adoption are generally flexible. All these institutions reflect the patrilineal ideology which has "moral significance" and upholds "right living" (E. Wolf 1966: 96).

Virilocal Marriage

The term virilocal (or patrilocal) marriage used here is in contrast to the uxorilocal (or matrilocal) marriage. In virilocal marriage, the woman is married away, which in the local saying is called *chujia*, indicating that she moves out from her parents' household and settles in her husband's household; the man, on the other hand, is obtaining a wife which in the local saying is *qu xifu*. For both parties, *chujia* and *qu xifu* involve a series of changes in the status of individuals, kin relations, and economic responsibilities.

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[7]The family planning policy in the ethnic minority areas, such as Yongning, is different. See Chapter 4.

In Jinguan, most of the marriage partners are sought in the local community. My household survey shows that all the 28 wives in Cuihu village come from the same township, and more than half of them were born in the same village; while in Wengpeng village, 14 out of 28 housewives are from the same village, 12 from the same township and 2 from outside the township. Marriages in Jinguan are either arranged by the partners or by their relatives. In either way, a go-between is involved. The stages of preparation of a marriage are from "proposing a relation/marriage"(*tiqin*), to engagement (*renqin*) and finally to wedding (*jiehun*).

By local custom, girls must be proposed to before they reach the age of twenty. Exceptions are considered embarrassing. "Proposing a marriage"is the task of the go-between hired by the groom's family. Even in free-will marriages, *tiqin* has to be symbolically carried out between the two families with the help of a go-between. In the marriage arrangement where the future bride and groom meet through a third party, the go-between functions like a referee. She (usually woman) checks "credentials" including birth details, personal character (appearance, temperament, level of education, possession of skills, etc.), family economic conditions, and social relations.[8]

The engagement is a step towards social recognition of the conjugal union. As *renqin* literally means "recognizing relatives," this ritual is a formal occasion to initiate the establishment of affinal relations. On this occasion, the groom visits the bride's family with his parents, and some relatives including father's sister, mother's brother and sister; and the bride's relatives, namely father's sister, mother's brother and sister are also present. The gifts to the bride's family usually include brown cane sugar, tea bricks, biscuits, sweets, fruits, and a small amount of cash (about 100-200 Yuan). The gifts to the bride may be as ordinary as two or three sets of clothes plus fabrics and yarn; or as luxurious as a wrist-watch and a pair of leather

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[8]The birth details must be examined by a fortune-teller to make sure that the girl's Eight Characters are not in conflict with the boy's. The Eight Characters are arranged in four pairs (each pair consisting of one Heavenly Stem and one Earthly Branch) indicating the year, month, day and hour of a person's birth.

shoes. The gift in return to the groom may be a set of ordinary clothes, a pair of leather shoes, and perhaps plus a sweater. The groom and his relatives are entertained with a special meal prepared by the bride's family, the expense of which is actually covered by the cash contributed as a gift by the groom's family.

The time between engagement and wedding may last from a few months to a couple of years. There are many possible reasons for the delay of the wedding, for instance, the groom's family needs time to build house and accumulate cash; or the bride's family needs her to contribute labor before her brothers grow up. During the waiting period, the bride-to-be prepares her dowry–in addition to her own clothes and necessities, she makes shoes for her future in-laws. This is an old custom as a way to test capability of the bride-to-be. Nowadays, many young people do not bother to make shoes by hand any more, instead they buy them from shops instead. The old custom, however, remains.

The wedding time is decided by the groom's family, and it is considered disgraceful if it is raised by the bride's family. The exact date of the wedding ceremony is selected in consultation with a fortune-teller. Wedding invitations are supposed to be sent out at least 15 days ahead of time. Two or three days before the wedding, a number of relatives and neighbors are invited to help with decorating the bridal chamber (in the groom's house), sorting out the dowry (in the bride's house), and cooking (in both houses). The wedding itself is a symbolic performance which has social, cultural and economic implications. As Eric Wolf suggests:

> Thus, a marriage does not involve merely the passage of a spouse from one house to another. It also involves gaining the goodwill of the spouse-to-be and of her kinfolk; it involves a public performance in which the participants act out, for all to see, both the coming of age of the marriage partners and the social realignments which the marriage involves; and it involves also the public exhibition of an ideal model of what marriages–all marriages–ought to do for people and how people should behave once they have been married. (E. Wolf 1966: 7)

Commonly, the season for weddings is late autumn and winter. This is the time when all farm work has come to an end, and the households have just acquired more income. Also, this time

is good for holding feasts because food keeps. Any other time for wedding is not conventional, and is usually accompanied by suspicious thoughts as to why the the couple cannot wait.

The wedding I attended in 1992 was one of the accidental ones. This hasty wedding was not, as many locals suspected because the bride was pregnant. The story was however quite peculiar. According to a relative of the bride, the groom had been engaged to another woman, but she suddenly called off the engagement a month before the wedding. Agonizing over the humiliation and struggling to maintain his masculine pride, the groom swore that he would get married within a month. The new bride was already 20 years old when the go-between approached her family, and there was no objection to the marriage on the bride's side. Since the groom's family had long prepared for a wedding, the date was easily set and the wedding proceeded. That was in the middle of the summer, and I was invited to participate in the ceremony.

Wedding ceremonies were held by both bride's and groom's families. On the wedding day, the relatives and friends of the bride were gathered in the bride's house to see her off; and the relatives and friends of the groom were gathered in the groom's house to receive the bride. The ceremony began early in the bride's house. By 9 o'clock in the morning, guests had arrived and were seated at the feast tables laid out in the courtyard where the dowry was displayed. Close relatives bring gifts when attending the wedding. Ordinary guests contribute cash 5 to 10 Yuan (depending on the person's relationship to the family), locally called *guazhang*. Usually one or two men hired by the family for book keeping collect the money and record the names of the cash contributors. Towards noon, the feast was over, and the guests sat together chatting, sipping tea and nibbling snacks. At this time, the groom arrived with his "best men" who were relatives or close friends, to fetch the bride. As soon as the groom entered the house, the bride's mother started to weep which marks the imminent social separation. The mother's weeping is one of the ritual scenes of the wedding which is often enhanced by the participation of other sobbing women closely related to the family.

Soon after the groom had arrived, the wedding ceremony began. The master of ceremonies (usually the bride's mother's brother, or the bride's brother) summoned the couple to bow first to the Heaven and Earth, then to the bride's family ancestors, and finally to her parents. Having had blessings from the God and the family forebears, the groom took the bride away, together with a pick-up truck loaded with her dowry. At this point, the guests of the bride's family followed the bride in a symbolic gesture to see her off, while the bride's parents stayed in.

The groom's house was half an hour walk from the bride's natal home. At the gateway of the groom's house, a path was covered with pine needles for the bride to walk on. Some people say that pine needles symbolize luck; other say that it is a new version of old custom to prevent the bride's feet from touching the earth when entering the groom's house. At the end of the path, a person held a pine torch waiting. The bride stopped and the torch circled around her body. This represents the breaking of the bride's ties with her natal family. Following this, the bride and groom were led to bow once more to the Heaven and Earth, to the family ancestors and to the groom's parents. Thus, the conversion of the bride's filial relationship to her husband's patrilineal descent seems to be complete.

After this, another feast is served by the groom's family. The dishes are more or less the same as the ones provided by the bride's family.[9] There was no more ceremony after the feast. Men were chatting in the yard, and women were gathered in the bridal chamber admiring the furniture and decorations. By the local custom, pregnant women are forbidden to attend the wedding because they are believed to be harmful to the bride's fertility. For this reason, many brides wear a gold plate over the neck for protection; and the groom's family may also kill a chicken and let the bleeding chicken circle around the bride in order to expel evil spirits. Quilts are sewn by women who have many children; and in each corner of the quilt are inserted

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[9]By general standard, the wedding feast contains nine or eleven dishes (per table) with a combination of fried or steamed meat and vegetables.

chopsticks (*kuaizi*), peanuts (*huasheng*) and sunflower seeds (*guazi*). Picking one syllable from the vocabulary of each item: *kuai* from chopstick, *sheng* from peanut and *zi* from sunflower seed, the combination makes a new phrase by homophone: *kuai-sheng-zi*, meaning "quickly have sons." By local custom, the bride will visit her parents on the next market day; and return to her married home on the following market day. After the journey, the rite of passage is completed.

The wedding ceremony embraces and manifests symbols of alliance formation, kinship relations, patrilineal descent and perpetuation of *jia*. Marriage marks adulthood for the man although it does not change his status as a son. For the woman, marriage provides a change of identity from daughter to daughter-in-law, and the wedding marks a new stage of her life as wife and mother. The conjugal pair now not only share new social relationships, but also new economic responsibilities.

The economic relations between the bride's and groom's families is, in fact, already established at the engagement–beginning with the gift exchange at the first meeting when the groom's folks visit the bride's. This is then followed by the bride payment from the groom and finally by the dowry delivery by the bride. The current wedding expenses on the groom's side are estimated at around five thousand Yuan (which is about ten times the average annual per capita income in Jinguan). About half of this sum goes to the bride payment, a gift from the groom's family to bride's family, valued at two to three thousand Yuan.

The bride payment generally contributes to the bride's dowry. In well-off families, the parents may add a small sum (500-1,000 Yuan) to the bride payment for their daughter's dowry. In less fortunate families, a portion of the bride payment may be used to supplement the household expenditure and to cover the wedding feast. The dowry of the bride whose wedding I attended was luxurious by the local standard. It contained a washing machine, a sewing machine, an electric fan, a bicycle, two suitcases, a pile of beddings and blankets, a number of thermos bottles, a copper basin, and other utensils. Many of these items are purchased by the

bride using the gift money from the groom. Some of the items like suitcases, beddings and blankets are presents from close relatives.

The bride payment and dowry are often related to the issue of women's inheritance of male property, which implicates women's economic positions in society. The inheritance is generally understood as direct and indirect dowries. The direct dowry is the "property passed from 'parents' to a daughter on her marriage;" and the indirect dowry is the "property passed by the groom to the bride at marriage" (Goody 1988: 11). In Jinguan, whether there is a "direct dowry" is a matter of prestige of the bride and her family. The local people say that a large dowry shows not only that the bride's family is reasonably well-off, but also that the bride's family care for their daughter seriously. On the other hand, a small dowry is usually associated with a poor family background and sometimes, the greediness of the bride's family who are often accused of using their daughters' marriage to make money. The bride with a large dowry often enjoy more respect from her in-laws, while the bride with a small dowry may suffer from less favorite treatment.

Despite the cultural preference for male children and the consequential devaluation of daughters, parents in Jinguan–rich and poor–try to do their best to make their daughters' life easier in the married home. This is symbolically illustrated in the arrangement of the dowry. One piece of dowry that every bride must have–no matter how poor the bride family may be–is a wooden trunk prepared by her parents. It contains the bride's belongings such as clothes and other trinkets. The bottom of the trunk is stuffed with walnuts, sunflower seeds, tea bricks, sweets and rice. This is locally called "filling the trunk bottom" (*dian xiangdi*), a symbol of basic material support and life guarantee. Walnuts, sunflower seeds, tea and sweets are prepared for the bride to entertain guests and friends in her married home; and rice is prepared for the bride to fill her stomach in case she should not have enough to eat at her married home. In the past, the "trunk bottom" might have provided the bride with substantial help, today these items have little economic value. However, the parents' concern for their daughter's well being symbolically remains.

The bride payment and dowry, "form part of a system of circulating or on-going exchange" (Goody 1988: 11); and this on-going exchange is, as Goody argues elsewhere, "involving the transfer of rights in the fertility of the woman (rights *in genetricem*)" (Goody and Tambiah 1973: 12). Being dominated by the patrilineal principles, the rights of control over women's fertility is to guarantee the propagation and perpetuation of the patrilineal household. However, the transfer of rights is not only limited to the woman's fertility, but also includes the control of the woman's labor power. In this respect, the transfer of the woman between her male kin (i.e. father and husband) bears both ideological and economic value.

Despite the difference between having or not having direct dowry and the difference between a large and small dowry that affect the the family pride as well as the social and economic position of the woman being transferred, the elaboration of the wedding ceremony, the accumulation of dowry, and the transfer of status from daughter to wife (mistress of a new household) construct the ideals of marriage for young women in Jinguan. For some women, the marriage does not go through the process of transfer; nor does it have what they call the "excitement of receiving gifts and preparing dowry." This is the uxorilocal marriage in which the wedding is much less elaborate, and normally bride payment and dowry are not involved. While missing many social changes as a bride (as some of them feel), the woman in the uxorilocal marriage is compensated by being the legal heir to the family property which, in fact, favors the woman's economic status in her marriage life.

Uxorilocal Marriage

Uxorilocal marriage is, using Goody's term, a form of adoption, in which the daughter is the residual heir in the absence of brothers (Goody 1988). Uxorilocal marriage is a cultural invention to adapt to the situation where the patrilineal descent is endangered for lack of a male child. In uxorilocal marriage, the woman remains in her natal family, and has her husband move into the household.

In other parts of Yunnan, uxorilocal marriage has been recorded as constituting about one third of marriages; and there, uxorilocal marriage was not regarded as degrading as elsewhere in China (Hsu 1949: 99).[10] Although the percentage of uxorilocal marriage in Jinguan is not as high as one third, they are quite common. In Cuihu, three households out of thirty, and in Wengpeng, six out of thirty households are constituted by uxorilocal marriages where the husbands move into their wife's residence. Besides, there are a number of men who moved out of the villages by uxorilocal marriage. In Jinguan, for the man, the uxorilocal marriage is called *shangmen* (literally "moving up to the door"); and for the woman, it is called *zhao guye* (literally "recruiting daughter's husband").

Although the devaluation of daughters is not so pronounced in Jinguan, people do have a clear preference for male children; although having no male child is not quite a family shame, it does add inferior feelings to the family. The uxorilocal marriage is thus a temporary solution to the lack of male heir, and a measure to save the fate of the family. In Jinguan, it is generally considered not a disaster if only one generation has no male child which can be remedied through the uxorilocal marriage of the daughter. However, if the next generation–having adopted a son–still cannot produce a male child, the ill-fortune will become a curse, in which case, the ancestors are blamed for their evil conduct.

In terms of family transmission and propagation, the man, by patrilineal concepts, is regarded as "bone" and the woman as "flesh."[11] Being "bone," the man carries and passes on the family name. In uxorilocal marriage, the marrying-in husband functions like a son to pass on the family name; and when he dies, he is buried in his wife's family graveyard and becomes

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[10]The composition of ethnic population in this area may contribute to the difference.

[11]"Bone," as the substance of patrilineal descent, has been analyzed elsewhere in Taiwanese funeral rituals. Stuart Thompson suggests that the metaphor of "bone" which is associated with male descendants derives from the local conceptualization of "bone" associated with "semen" (Thompson 1988: 93). The contrast between men associated with "bone" and "*yang*,"and women associated with "flesh" and "*yin*" is also made by James L. Watson who maintains that the realm of the ancestors is maintained as men reproduce themselves "though the flesh of women they take from alien lineages" (Watson 1982: 179).

his wife's family ancestor. In the old days, the man of uxorilocal marriage must adopt his wife's family name as he becomes the heir of the family by marriage, and his children must all take their mother's family name.[12] Old man Liu is in his 60s. He is originally from another village and was married into his wife's family. Upon marriage, he adopted his wife's family name Liu, and all his children are named Liu. A few years ago, his wife died. Old Liu remarried, but still remains in his late wife's household as her family's heir.

Nowadays, the rule concerning changing family names has become relaxed. Many young and middle-aged men do not change their own family names upon marriage. In some families, the first child takes the mother's family name, and the second takes the father's. This flexibility in family names cannot be enjoyed by people in virilocal marriage where children must take their father's family name only. In the virilocal marriage, the married woman cannot return to her natal family and inherit; but in the uxorilocal marriage, the married-away son can always return to his natal home and live there and inherit, because, no matter where he is, he is considered by his natal family as "bone"–the man's substance does not change with the uxorilocal marriage.

There are also cases where uxorilocal marriage has nothing to do with the patrilineal transmission and propagation. In central Yunnan, Fei observed exceptional cases of uxorilocal marriage in that "a daughter who has brothers may also remain in her father's house after marriage and share her brothers' privileges" (Fei and Chang 1945: 113). Fei attributes the existence of this exceptional pattern of uxorilocal marriage to the "result of influence by the aboriginal inhabitants, of the important role played by women in farming" (ibid). While the important role that women play in agriculture may very well be attributed to the garrison history, as expressed in the local phrase *Yiniang Hanlaozi* (see *Conjugal Relations*), the exceptional cases of uxorilocal marriage in Jinguan seem to be motivated by other intentions

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[12]In cases where the marrying-in husband wishes to keep his own family name, he uses his original family name as the middle name (usually Chinese names have three characters with the family name in front).

such as recruiting labor, expanding household and old-age support, which have not much to do with patrilineal propagation nor ethnicity.

Chunju has three younger sisters and one brother. When she reached her marriage age, her sisters and brother were still young. Her parents requested that she remain at home and have her husband move in. But looking after younger siblings was not the only reason for Chunju's parents to keep her at home. Because Chunju's parents have only one son, they feared that if the four daughters were all married away, the *jia* would shrink. Therefore, to have Chunju stay and have her husband move in would prevent the *jia* from shrinking. Chunju and her husband now have two children, a daughter and a son. Both children take their mother's family name. Since Chunju's brother is the heir of the family and Chunju has no responsibility for passing on the family name, why must her son take her family name? As far as Chunju is concerned, because she remains at home, her son is her successor and responsible for supporting her in her old age. She said that if she had two sons, she would probably let one of them take his father's family name.

In another village, Yunying has two older sisters and two brothers. The eldest sister is married away, but the second sister, at her parents' request, remained at home and recruited her husband. That was in the mid 1970s. In addition to the extra pair of hands that the daughter provided in managing housework, the marrying-in husband contributed to the household income by earning extra work-points during the collective time. The couple have one daughter and one son. Because the uxorilocal marriage was intended for other reasons than the patrilineal propagation, the son takes his father's family name, and the daughter takes her mother's. A few years after the land was contracted to the household, they divided the household with her old parents and grown-up brothers, and moved out.

Another reason for the existence of the exceptional pattern of uxorilocal marriage where the woman has brothers is related to the landless workers.[13] Most of them are artisans and

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[13]The landless immigrants involved in uxorilocal marriages were also noted by Fei and Chang (1945).

government employees who are not native but make a living in Jinguan. Since they are far away from their folks, uxorilocal marriage provides them with homely comfort. Some of these people adopted their wife's family names, and others did not. In some families, the children took their mother's family name, and in others, they took their father's family name, depending on the situation. Whichever the case, the uxorilocal marriage seems to be a fair exchange between the man and the recruiting family–the former obtains a home and the latter acquires a adult son.

In Jinguan, men of uxorilocal marriages do not seem to be socially inferior–at least, there is no evidence of discrimination against them. But one thing is clear that in uxorilocal marriage, the economic conditions of the bride's family are generally superior to that of the groom's. This is probably the reason why uxorilocal marriage is locally called *shangmen*, implying up-marriage. People say that the families that have only daughters tend to work very hard to improve the living conditions so that it will be attractive to the marrying-in husband. The men in uxorilocal marriages are usually from large families of more than one son. Often these families have poorer economic conditions, and cannot afford to get a wife for everyone of the sons. This is the reason, as stated earlier in this chapter, why having more sons does not necessarily make the household rich; and due to the wedding cost, raising sons is, in fact, more costly than raising daughters.

In uxorilocal marriage, the woman assumes many more responsibilities inside and outside the household than in virilocal marriage, because the husband is after all an outsider who tends to be less concerned about the well-being of the household. Despite the status of *de jur*e family heir and the superior economic conditions that the women enjoy in the uxorilocal residence, no women in Jinguan would choose to have an uxorilocal marriage if it were not requested by their parents. All the women of uxorilocal marriages that I interviewed preferred, without exception, a conventional virilocal marriage. To them, all social events associated with *chujia*–the anticipation for gifts, the excitement of preparing the dowry and the elaboration of wedding–are the most thrilling life experience; and one feels deprived for not having been able to go through these events.

Apart from the ceremonial events, what the women do not experience in the uxorilocal marriage is the social transfer (from the natal home to the married home), and the change of domestic status (from daughter to daughter-in-law). Many women have ambiguous feelings about their position at natal home as a married woman. To them, the married home should be a different environment from the one in which they were born and grow up. The ambiguous feeling of the women towards uxorilocal marriage, in a way, reveals a sense of unfulfilled life experience. The reluctant attitude and the unfulfilled feeling derive from their idealized model of marriage which is ultimately influenced by the ideas of *jia* and patrilineal descent. But, compared to the woman who remains all her life as maiden aunt, uxorilocal marriage may appear to be rather eventful.

Maiden Aunt

The term "maiden aunt" is a synonym for life-long spinster that appears in Jack Goody's account on the institution of never-marrieds (Goody 1988). The situation with regard to never-marrieds, as Goody maintains, is "clearly consistent with certain other social institutions," which include the "existence of sacred spinsters and bachelors, those who have consecrated their life to religious ends;" the "system of preferential primogeniture" in which the "role of the unmarried daughter was often to look after her father and mother when they become old and incapacitated;" and lastly the "obligation to stay unmarried which was a feature of various forms of rural employment, either for males on the land or for females in domestic service" (ibid: 58). The same with the situation of maiden aunt in Jinguan which serves the patrilineal descent in addition to other domestic needs.

Maiden aunt in Jinguan is called *zhaipo*, which is said by the locals to be a special phenomenon of the Three-River basin.[14] There are unmarried women everywhere in China, but

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[14]In my household survey, *zhaipo* are only found in Cuihu village. Because most of the residents in Cuihu are the descendants of the Ming troops from Hunan province, while the residents in Wengpeng are rather mixed, some from Jiangxi province and others from Sichuan

the maiden aunt as a social institution functioning to sustain the patrilineal descent system is, however, not common in most parts of China. The term *zhaipo* has two components: *zhai*, in its original meaning, refers to practising abstinence from meat for religious reasons; and *po* is a respectful form of address for senior women. Similar to uxorilocal marriage, *zhaipo* stays at home at her parents' request. But, different from the uxorilocal marriage, *zhaipo* does not have a husband. In short, *zhaipo* is a woman who stays at her natal home, and remains unmarried all her life for either religious or other social reasons.

In most cases, a *zhaipo* is the eldest daughter of the family. There are generally three main reasons for the *zhaipo* practice in Jinguan. In well-to-do families, having a *zhaipo* at home to read scriptures is considered a blessing for the family. Also, only the well-to-do families can afford to hire religious masters to teach the girls to read scriptures. Apart from this religious reason, there are two secular reasons. One is that the girl herself wishes not to get married for personal reasons. Cases like this are rare, and some women are engaged in religious practice, while others are not. The most common reason for the families to retain their daughters at home is to look after younger siblings, especially brothers, and ease the burden of their brothers in supporting the parents in their old age. In cases like this, the women do not necessarily read religious scriptures. Their domestic role is to be both a guardian to the younger brothers and a housekeeper in general.

In the old days, women's marriage status was marked by their hairdos.[15] Young women before getting married wore a hoop made of black cloth in their hair. When they got married, they removed the hoop, and tucked their hair into a bun at the back of head and wrapped it in black cloth. Like the married woman, a *zhaipo* also went through a rite of passage which was marked by a simple ceremony at which she changed her hairdo. The ceremony was

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and Ninglang, the presence of *zhaipo* in Cuihu and the absence of *zhaipo* in Wengpeng would suggest to me that *zhaipo* might be a traditional practice in Hunan.

[15]Most of the senior women still keep the tradition nowadays, but the young women no longer do.

conducted at home by an old *zhaipo* invited by the girl's family. After a scriptures reading, the hair hoop was removed from the young *zhaipo*'s head, and the hair was tucked in a bun on the top of her head (which was different from the married woman who tucks her hair bun at the back of the head), and wrapped in black cloth.

Mother Xu had three sisters and one brother. Upon her parents' request, the eldest sister stayed at home and became a *zhaipo*, in order to look after her younger siblings. The second older sister also remained at home out of her own wish not to get married. The eldest sister practised worshipping *guanyin* (the "goddess of mercy") and abstaining from meat, while the second older sister did not. These two maiden aunts lived with their younger brother all their life. When the younger brother grew up, he got married and had four children: three daughters and one son. Then the family history repeats itself: doting on the only son, the parents (the younger brother who was brought up by his eldest sister, and his wife) decided to let their eldest daughter stay at home to look after her younger brother when he is young, and later to share the burden of her brother in supporting their aged parents.

One may ask what difference it makes if *zhaipo* had her husband move in like in uxorilocal marriage, in which case, she could still perform her duty of looking after her younger brothers while managing the housework and supporting her old parents? This again concerns the well-being of the patrilineal family. As the local people see it, if a *zhaipo* had her husband move in, it would complicate the family relationships and conflicts would be more likely to occur when two sets of affines–the marrying-in husband (of the *zhaipo*) and the marrying-in wife (of the brother)–came into contact. As the family is designed to perpetuate the patrilineal line, the brother's interest should be protected at the expenses of his sister.

Zhaipo is a social phenomenon corresponding to the idea of patrilineal descent. Young women in Jinguan today think that the custom of keeping *zhaipo* at home resulted from the patrilineal ideology which regard the male as superior to the female (meaning that the welfare of the male child in the family must be placed first). The practice of *zhaipo* was abolished after Liberation following the imposition of the Marriage Law which propagates the freedom of

marriage, condemns arranged marriages by parents and other forms of oppression of women.[16] Nowadays, there are no more women becoming *zhaipo*. The old ones are all around the age of 70 or older. Some old *zhaipo* got married in the 1950s; others remain and live with their younger brothers after the death of their parents.

A *zhaipo* does not cease to serve the patrilineal family when her brother grows up. Her duty extends to the next generation. In the households that have *zhaipo* today, they all live with their brother's sons and their children. In these households, *zhaipo* is respected as a parent or grandparent. She manages the household when she is able to work; and she is looked after by her brother's sons and their children when she enters old age. Some special kin terms distinguish *zhaipo* from other relatives, such as aunt and grandmother who are married. To the first generation of her junior (i.e. the children of her brother), *zhaipo* is Niangniang which is a term for father's (and mother's) sister, but often used as a generic term for unmarried women. In some families, *zhaipo* are called *Daniang* (literally "old aunt"). *Niangniang* (or *Daniang*) is thus differentiated from *Guma* who is also father's sister but married. To the second generation of her junior (i.e. the children of her brother's son), *zhaipo* is *Laoye* (literally "old grandfather") which is differentiated from *Gu nainai*, a term used for father's father's sister who is married. This deliberate gender switch in the address term again emphasizes the unmarried status of the *zhaipo*.

Despite her unmarried status and childless life, *zhaipo*–unlike other members of the family who die young before marriage–is included in the patrilineal ancestry. She is supported by her nephews (her brother's sons) and their children in her old age; buried in the family graveyard when she dies (sometimes a tombstone inscribed with "chastity" i.e. *lienü* marks the special life she had); and worshipped by her nephews and their sons who were brought up up by her. In a way, *zhaipo* does have descendants.

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[16]For an account about the promulgation of the Marriage Law, and the subsequent changes in marriage institution, See Elisabeth Croll (1981).

Adoption

In virilocal marriage, uxorilocal marriage and maiden aunt, we see how these institutions are designed to maintain patrilineal descent in terms of producing and protecting male heirs. But, what does a family do in a situation where there is neither a male child (as in virilocal marriage), nor female one (as in uxorilocal marriage)? The solution is adoption.

Adoption is regarded as a "method of ensuring posterity" (Baker 1969: 81). In the imperial code of adoption, one can see a manifestation of patrilineal ideology in the institution of adoption, as follows:

> When any person is without male children of his own, one of the same kindred of the next generation may be appointed to continue the succession, beginning with his nephews as being descended from the nearest common ancestor, and then taking collaterals, one, two and three degrees further removed in order, according to the table of the five degrees of mourning. If all these fail, one of the kindred still further removed may be chosen, and finally any one of the same family name (ibid.: 81-2).

The words "male," the "same kindred," "succession," the "nearest common ancestor," and "the same family name," are important to understand the ultimate concern for the maintenance and protection of the patrilineal descent. The imperial rule on adoption no longer applies today. In Jinguan, although the people's first choice for adoption still is within the "same kindred" or by the "same family name," adoptions do occur between families that have no genealogical relations.

Goody maintains that the act of adoption, "involves the transfer of an individual from one filial relationship to another, from a 'natural' relationship to a 'fictional' one" (Goody 1988: 69). Despite differences in the social functions of adoption throughout the world (those may be associated with caring for orphans; social progeny; and property inheritance, as maintained by Goody), the institution of adoption can be seen universally as a transfer from a "natural" relationship to a "fictional" one, which concerns a shift of "filial relationship." The culturally specific explanation of adoption, however, lies in how the natural relationship and fictional

relationship are understood by the people involved; and what they do according to the code represented by these relationships.

In Jinguan, adoptions occur between families of the same lineage as well as between families of different surnames. Some adoptions are aimed at family transmission, and others are primarily intended for old-age support. In the former case, the adopted child takes the surname of the adopted family; and in the latter case, the change of surname is not necessarily involved, or neglected after one generation. Adoptions of the same lineage can happen between brothers, between sisters, or between a sister and a brother. Adoptions between non-kin families are often between families of poverty and families of childless couples. The kin relations in the adoptions between non-kin families often tend to be complicated. Here I select three cases of adoption. One is between families of the same lineage; and the other two are between non-kin families.

Lanlan was adopted at the age of five. The man she now calls father is the younger brother of her biological father. Lanlan's biological parents have five children altogether: three daughters and two sons; and she is the second eldest daughter of the family. Originally, Lanlan's father and his younger brother lived together in the same household with their wives. The younger brother had no children for many years. According to Lanlan, the adoption was a gradual one which did not cause much disturbance for her. She remembers her uncle (father's brother) and aunt (father's brother's wife) first giving her some goodies; and later her parents encouraging her to eat and sleep in her uncle's house. After a while Lanlan went back to her parents' house, but her parents chased her away telling her that she belonged to the other *jia* at the other end of the courtyard. Thus, Lanlan ran back and forth between the two *jia* for a year or so, and finally settled down with her uncle and aunt. She lived with her adopted parents as their only daughter until her adopted mother passed away. After wards, her adopted father remarried, and acquired two children, a boy and a girl.

Lanlan now still calls her uncle father (and at the same time refers to her aunt as mother), and addresses her biological father as *Dadie* (a term for father's old brother) and her

biological mother as *Dama* (a term for father's older brother's wife). At the age of 20, Lanlan got married; and her marriage was an uxorilocal one because at the time of engagement she was the only daughter of the family. She now has two sons. The older one takes her family name, and the younger takes his father's family name. In theory, Lanlan does not have the responsibility for carrying on the family since her adopted father already has a son. But why her elder son must take her family name? This is because, as Lanlan sees it, to her late (adopted) mother, she is the only daughter and her son is also her mother's descendant. This again reflects the ancestor-descendant complex as discussed earlier.

The second case is different. Yunhua's father is surnamed Kang (addressed as Father Kang below). His natal home is in another hamlet (of the same village), surnamed Chen. The Chen family had two sons. In the old days, their father was an opium addict. After the Chen family sold their last piece of property, the house, they had nothing to live on and had to give away their younger son.[17] At the age of 8 months, the child was adopted by the Kang couple who at the time did not have any children, but later had three sons. Having grown up as a son of the Kang family, Father Kang regards himself as an heir of the Kang family, and the three step brothers as his own. Despite the blood relationship, his natal brother of the Chen family is, by comparison, less brotherly to Father Kang. As a matter of fact, this "less brotherly" feeling has little to do with the actual relationship between Father Kang and his natal brother. It is rather a matter of the filial relationship bound by the social rules regarding to adoption.

The adoption and the maintenance of relationships by Father Kang with his step-brothers and with his natal brother has, in fact, created a bilateral agnatic kinship. On the side of his step-brothers of the Kang family, the agnatic kinship is descent-oriented and related to inheritance. On the other side, his relation with his natal brother of the Chen Family constitutes what may be termed a pseudo agnatic relation. The former relationship is, ironically (despite the

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[17]According to my local guide, this kind of adoption usually does not involve payment, as the people who are forced to give their child away do not want to have a reputation of selling their child for money.

lack of blood relation), naturally nourished because the step-brothers are bound by common descent. The latter relationship, though genealogical in origin, is only maintained by application of kin terms and ritual exchanges.

Father Kang now is in his 50s and has three sons. He lives with his eldest son Yunhua, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters. While Yunhua and his brothers regard their father's step brothers and their children as "of one family" (*yijia ren*), they keep a close relationship with the sons of their father's natal brother of the Chen family. Yunhua and his brothers address their father's natal brother *Dadie*, a term normally used for father's older brother. When the *Dadie*'s son got married, Yunhua and his brothers sent him brotherly gifts that according to the local custom are heavier than gifts from other relatives (see discussion on sibling relations below). Generally speaking, the relationship between Father Kang and his biological brother is more symbolic, while his relationship with his three step-brothers is more substantial, in terms of patrilineal descent.

The last case of adoption is the Xu family. The adoption and the later expansion of the family have created complicated kin relations. Nanying is 55 years old. He was born to a family surnamed Mei in another township. When he was 15, he was adopted by a peasant couple surnamed Xu in Wengpeng. In his twenties, Nanying was married into his wife's household (*shangmen*). Different from other uxorilocal marriage, Nanying took his adopted parents with him (apparently the Xu family was too poor to get their adopted son married in their own household). His wife's family name is Yang. Nanying has five sons. The eldest son takes his father's adopted surname Xu; the second son takes his mother's family name Yang; and the remaining three sons take their father's original family name Mei. Despite being married into his wife's household, Nanying was officially listed as the head of the household at the time of my interview. A few years ago, Nanying's adopted mother passed away. His adopted father lives with Nanying's eldest son who shares the same surname with the grandfather Xu, and is married and lives in a separate household with his wife and children.

These three cases presented here show how adoptions serve different purposes such as posterity, family transmission and old-age support. In the case of Lanlàn, the adoption is between blood brothers. Although there is a transfer of residence, a transfer of family name is not involved. Although kin terms are switched, a transfer of filial relationship does not necessarily apply. Therefore, the transfer from the "natural" relationship to the "fictional" is not salient. The absence of a drastic change experienced by both the adopted child and the two sets of parents is due to the fact, as discussed earlier, that agnatic kin relations are often conceptualized as one family.

In the discussion of the Banaban kinship related to adoption, Martin Silverman suggests that the identity (i.e. common substance) remains between the adopted child and his natal family but the kinship code for conduct changes (Silverman 1971: 233). This may just about explain the relationship between the Kang and Chen families. It is clear that what Father Kang (and his children) and his natal brother (and his children) share is a common identity, that is the blood relationship. Yet, this cognition of blood relation has little to do with the patrilineal descent and inheritance. Referring back to what Goody has pointed out about adoption involving a transfer from a "natural" relationship to a "fictional" relationship, we see the adoption of Father Kang has, in fact, resulted in a qualitative change in that the genealogical relationship (in a literal sense), becomes figurative in terms of patrilineal relations.

Unlike the first two cases, the adoption of the Xu family does not seem to emphasize either blood relationship nor family transmission. The initial adoption and the later uxorilocal marriage are primarily intended for practical reasons such as old-age support. However, the adoption and the later uxorilocal marriage have made the family kin relations the most complicated: not only is the household composed of people of three different surnames, but also the five brothers carry different family names, and so will the grandchildren. These differences present an interesting situation, that is, the five blood brothers become descendants of three different families that were originally not genealogically related; the blood brothers and their children will worship different ancestors; and eventually the blood brothers and their children

will develop three patrilineal descent lines. This situation is bound to create new family identities and new codes for social relationships.

Identities and duties that are involved in adoption as well as in marriage are related to the whole organization of kinship system in the patrilineal household. In the patrilineal system, kinship relations are designed to differentiate biological bond and affinity. In the people's categorization of these kin relations, there are certain values attached to the identities and duties.

Kin Relations in Economic Context

The social institutions such as marriage and adoption, as discussed above, are intended to maintain and protect patrilineal descent, and they all involve changes in social relationships. The adjustment and maintenance of these social relationships not only have symbolic meaning in the context of the patrilineal ideology of descent, but also bear significance in economic relations. The economic relations are the ties bound by various obligations and responsibilities towards the people who are connected by different relationships. In the peasant household dominated by patrilineal ideology, there are three sets of social relationships that have specific roles and behavior. They are namely, biological kin, conjugal relations and affinal relations.

Biological Kin

In the patrilineal kinship system, the relationship between father and son forms the core of the agnatic relations in that "All other relationships in the family group are regarded as extensions of the father-son relationship or subordinate or supplementary to it" (Hsu 1949: 58-59).[18] The extensions of the father-son relationship in the patrilineal kinship and the

[18]As much as the father-son relationship is essential in the formation of patrilineal family, it is also seen as important in the partition of patrilineal family (e.g. Freedman 1979: 236).

subordinate and supplementary relationships of the father-son relationship are manifest in the range of kinship systems and nomenclature used by the peasants in Jinguan.[19] The core of father-son relation, as the most prototypical model of kinship, is also reflected in the local people's categorization of kin relations. When the individual villagers are asked to list the kin terms, they always begin with the father's line from the senior generation to the junior generation, then move to the mother's line. The terms for agnatic kin are constructed on the terms for father and son. The agnatic kin of the father's generation and the generation above–namely, father, father brother and father's father–are presented in characters that all bear a particle *fu* (father). The agnatic kin of the son's generation and the generation below–namely son, brother, father's brother's son, grandson–are presented in characters that all bear a suffix *er* or *zi* (i.e. son).

The patrilineal kinship system has two emphases: one is on agnatic kinship and the other is on seniority in generation and age. The emphasis on agnatic kin is because, by the patrilineal concepts, father is bone and mother is flesh. Being bone, father passes on the family name. Therefore, relatives on the father's side are closer than relatives on the mother's side. The patrilineal kin terms used by the Jinguan people are classified into address and reference terms (see Patrilineal Kinship Terms). Most of the patrilineal kin terms in Jinguan serve both address and reference functions. The terms that are exclusively used for referring purposes are the terms for persons of inferiority in age and generation, or persons of affinity.

In the patrilineal family, there are two sets of family relations that have genealogical and biological connections. One is the parent-son relation and the other is sibling relations.[20] Different from others, these relations are bound by common substance, that is blood. The parent-son relation is seen as "central to the operation of the the family as a continuing and strong unit" (Baker 1969: 71). It is bound by reciprocal duties. As the locals like to say: "The

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[19]See Appendix 3 for a complete list of patrilineal kin terms.

[20]The grandfather-grandson relationship here is seen as an extension of father-son relationship.

parents' responsibility is to bring up the children and get them married when they become adults; the children's duty is to support their parents when they are old (*yanglao*) and bury them properly in the end (*songzhong*)." In other words, as parents, their social duty can be only fulfilled when their children are married, or settled by other arrangements; and as an adult son, his social duty is to raise his own children on the one hand, and to support his aged parents on the other.

Thus, many social and economic obligations are bound by the parent-son relationship. In my household interviews, when I asked the peasants about their major economic concerns, their answers were always either children's marriages, or old parent's funerals. If a family has a son and expects him to get married at the age of 20, the parents may have to start collecting building materials when the boy is still a toddler. Weddings are costly (5,000 Yuan or more, see under *Virilocal Marriage*), and usually consume years of family savings. By comparison, the funeral expense is smaller, from 500 Yuan to 1,000 Yuan (depending on the household economic condition). Still, this sum requires careful budgetary planning for which the family may have to cut down meat consumption as pigs have to be sold to raise the funeral fund.

If the family only has one son, he is the only one that the parents can rely on in their old age. If there are two or more sons, the responsibility of supporting the parents is shared. As discussed in the context of household division, when the brothers are grown up and married, the household tends to divide. When the old household is divided, the responsibility for supporting the parents are shared by the brothers. According to the local custom, if the parents have two sons, the elder one takes care of the father; and the younger one takes care of the mother. This arrangement may very well be related to the primogeniture tradition of the patrilineal system, but it is by no means a fast rule. Nowadays, there are different family arrangements of old-age support. In some cases, both parents live with one son, and others make material contributions: food, clothes and medical expenses. In other cases, the parents (or the surviving parent) rotate from one son's household to another on an annual or monthly basis.

In whichever arrangement, the cost of supporting the parents is shared by all the sons; and finally, expenses for the parent's funeral are jointly covered by all brothers.

The duty of the sons towards their parents reflects the bond of siblingship. My household survey in Jinguan shows that one of the most important social resources (mainly in financial assistance and labor help) comes from siblings. As siblings, they were born, and grow up in the same household. Despite the social separation created by individual marriages, ties between brothers, between brothers and sisters, and between sisters are ritually and conventionally maintained. The ideal of the brotherhood is expressed as the harmony which is "from the same sources" and "greatly desired in order to maintain and enhance the father-son relationship" (Hsu 1949: 61).

In Jinguan, the idea that "brothers are from the same sources," is symbolically conveyed through a ritual locally called "shoulder-pole" (*yitiao*) exchange. The "shoulder-pole" literally refers to two baskets attached to a carrying pole. It is a category of prestation. One shoulder-pole gift usually consists of 80-100 *jin* of husked rice, a whole piece of home-cured ham, a blanket, a carton of cigarettes, lumps of brown sugar, tea bricks and a couple of bottles of liquor. The shoulder-pole gift is worth 150-200 Yuan. It is usually presented from one brother to another on occasions of household building, their children's weddings, and parent's funerals.[21] If the brothers do not live in the vicinity (e.g. are married away by uxorilocal marriage, or have employment in town or city), they visit each other on an annual basis. On such an occasion, the shoulder-pole gift is presented. Although nobody is actually seen carrying a shoulder-pole with gifts loaded in two baskets, the expression "shoulder-pole" has become a local standard for *zhongli* ("heavy present"), a category which differentiates close relatives from distance relatives.

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[21]As mentioned above, by the local customs, the father lives with the elder son, and the mother with the young son. In case that the father dies, the younger brother (who lives with the mother) will send a shoulder-pole gift to his elder brother. Similarly, in case that the mother dies, the elder brother (who lives with father) will send a shoulder-pole gift to his younger brother.

The relationship between brothers and sisters is said to be less well defined and socially emphasized than that between brothers (Hsu 1949: 63). Despite the male dominance reflected in the brothers' authority (second only to that of the father) and their privileges in inheritance in the patrilineal system, the relationship between brothers and sisters in Jinguan is courteous and reasonably good. Although the shoulder-pole gift may not be exchanged between sisters and brothers, there are other rituals through which the sibling sentiments are manifested. Jinguan has a custom called *shaoguo* ("burning cauldron") which is quite similar to the Western custom of house-warming. When a married-away sister divides household with her in-laws and builds her own house, her brothers come to congratulate and provide moral and material support. They bring gifts such as rice, home-cured ham, pots and pans, accompanied by fire crackers.

By comparison, the relationship between sisters is "informal and without socially defined content;" and their relationship is "a matter of personal adjustment rather than of kinship" (Hsu 1949: 64). The relationship between sisters is not necessarily bound by any duties like the ones between brothers. Although the relationship between sisters is not as dramatized as the one between brothers manifest through the ritual exchange such as the "shoulder-pole," it can be said the most enduring. Sisters are the first source of help that can be counted on in ordinary days as well as in emergency situations. During the busy farming seasons, sisters provide one another with a reliable hand in the fields as well as in the house. During the slack seasons, they frequently visit one another, sometimes just to chat if nothing else needs to be done.

The blood relationship that binds parents and son and siblings symbolizes something which is referred to by Schneider as "a common identity" (Schneider 1968: 25). The local expressions with regard to step-sibling relationships reveal more vividly the cognition of common identity. As they say, siblings of the same mother but of different fathers are "separated by the mountain, united by the sea" (*geshan gonghai*); and siblings of the same father but of different mothers are "separated by the sea, united by the mountain" (*gehai*

gongshan). The metaphor "mountain" here used as a symbol for paternity emphasizes the patrilineal solidity.

As the relationships between parents and son, and between siblings are natural and enduring, the common identity is a cultural construct that is ritualized by obligations and liabilities. In society, parents, sons, brothers and sisters, each have a socially defined role and duties bound by biological substance and they behave accordingly in their social interactions. By contrast, the conjugal relationship which is established through marriage lacks natural substance; and therefore, their relation is contractual and the responsibilities they share differ from ones shared between biological kin.

Conjugal Relations

In the traditional view, the Chinese wife in the patrilineal household is seen to have an asymmetrical relationship with her husband (and his family) and be placed in a powerless situation where she plays a insignificant economic role and her personal identity is manifested through her son (e.g. Wolf 1974). This is not a picture of women in Jinguan today, where husband and wife assume shared social and economic responsibilities and, despite the pronounced patrilineal ideology, the personal identity of the women does not have to be realized through sons.

According to the legend of the local people, some 600 years ago, the Hui in Yongsheng created a disturbance in Yongsheng, and the Ming court sent troops to suppress them. After the uprising was put down, the troops were ordered to remain, and engaged in *sanfen caolian, qifen tuntian* ("three tenths drilling; and seven tenths farming"). As the troops stayed on, some soldiers sent for their families from home towns in Hunan province, and others took wives of the aboriginal Yi women. This is the legendary origin of the local saying: *Yiniang Hanlaozi* ("Yi mother, Han father"). It is believed to be attributed to the social and economic status of women in Jinguan. The women's status in Jinguan can be observed firstly from the local model of

women being associated with home (*jia*), and secondly from women's role in household production.

In Jinguan, the peasants often say, "A *jia* needs a man as well as a woman." This saying, on a level of social relationship, refers to the conjugal union of the couple establishing the institution *jia*; and on the level of economic relation, indicates the complementary roles that man and woman play in production. In Beijing, when people tease their opponents at games for being too serious, they like to say: "Look, it is not a matter of losing your *house* and *land*." In the similar circumstances, the Jinguan people would say: "Look, it is not a matter of losing your wife." When I pointed out the difference to the local men and asked why they put such an emphasis on the wife instead of land and house, they explained: "If a man loses his wife, he will have no home to return to." This could be taken as an off-handed tongue-in-cheek remark under the circumstances. But if one knows what role women play in and out the household, one can easily understand what the wife means in the peasant idea of *jia*.

To the local peasants, the wife is an indispensable component of *jia*. The generally assumed devaluation of daughters does not seem to affect the women's status as wives. It is socially believed that a man only reaches his adulthood when he has a wife; and parents cannot be at rest until their son gets married. To many peasants, the purposes of getting a wife are manyfold: bearing offspring for patrilineal descent, obtaining an extra pair of hands in production and managing house chore. As much as the wife is associated with the reproduction of patrilineal family, the role of women in production is quite prominent. Most of the housework is done by women all year round. They work as much as men do during the busy farming seasons (i.e. transplanting and harvesting), and are constantly tied down by various field and house chores during slack seasons when most of the men enjoy leisure.

Despite the local association of women's status with the legend "Yi mother and Han father," the men's leisure and the women's non-stop toil around the agricultural cycle, however, do not necessarily suggest a subordinate position of women nor indicate a distinctive division of labor. The dominant role of men in agriculture is often suggested to be associated

with advanced agriculture (Boserup, cited in Goody 1988: 33); and with the men's control of farming implements such as ploughs and livestocks (ibid.: 35). These historical materialistic approaches to the division of labor are largely responsible for the traditional, and once-dominant analytical assumption of women's association with the domestic sphere and men with the public; and by such an assumption, women's work is universally devalued.[22] In this approach, the assumption of women's association with the domestic (in contrast to men being associated with the public) and the subordination of women in many analyses of gender relations is materially based. In gender relations as such, the dominant status of men is perceived through their control over the women in production and reproduction (e.g. Meillassoux 1986).

Along with the materialistic approach to the division of labor (or the exploitation of women's labor), women's domestic status in the Chinese context has been attributed to the property relations. As Fei maintains: "The principle of patrilineal inheritance excludes the females from the privilege of land ownership. Women never bring land to their husbands' families. . . Since women have no rights in the land, their right to share in its products must be validated by the contribution of their labor" (Fei and Chang 1945: 66). Institutionally speaking, women in patrilineal/patrilocal marriage are being transferred from one group of males to another and shifted from the control of one group of males to that of another; and by the principle of the patrilineal descent, women are not considered as heirs and are therefore deprived of inheritance (regardless of the limited amount of dowry). But, the materialist basis does not speak of the husband-wife relationship in Jinguan where women's contribution of labor has little to do with her share of product in relation to the rights in the land, as Fei suggested.

In Jinguan, neither men nor women ever suggested that women and their status is affected by the inheritance of family property. By the patrilineal principle, when the woman is

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[22]A critical view of the traditional assumption that women are universally associated with the domestic and men with the public and hence the subordination of women, is offered by contributors in Collier and Yanagisako eds. (1987).

married into her husband's household, she automatically becomes the member of the household, and has a share of the family property–she has a portion of land to cultivate to feed herself; she has a place to stay; she is provided with support in her old age; and she is buried in her husband's patrilineal graveyard. As for how much the individual women are involved in the decision-making and control of resources is another matter. But, to say that women are totally excluded from the patrilineal inheritance and use it as the sole basis for analyzing women's social status ignores many other aspects of women's social and economic roles. This issue concerns how the relation between what women do and their identity as a social being should be interpreted.

In Jinguan, the household organization and the economy on household basis provide an environment in which men and women share common social and economic resources. Although the man and woman each may occupy his/her own social autonomies, the roles they play in production and reproduction are complementary. In the eyes of the Jinguan women, the social role of husband and wife is thus defined:

- We (i.e. the wives) manage "trivial" things and they (i.e. the husbands) deal with "important" matters.
- We do "light" work and they do "heavy" work.
- Our activities are "inside" home and they take care of things "outside" home (e.g. negotiating).
- We "keep" the home and they "protect" the home.

All these contrasts of "trivial" and "important," "light" and "heavy," "inside" and outside," "keep" and "protect" are culturally constructed ideas. But, these differentiations do not necessarily have any reference to unequal status between men and women. As much as that "women's identity as persons does not have to rest on proof that they are powerful in some domain created by themselves, nor in an ability to break free from domestic confines constructed by men" (Strathern 1984: 18), the Jinguan women being domestic does not necessarily mean that they are subordinated.

In the household economy, men are not necessarily perceived as "provider," given that both husband and wife participate in production. But they are often credited with being "protectors." From an ideological point of view, this status of men as being protectors of *jia* may have more to do with patrilineal ideology than the actual social and economic function of the men. As a matter of fact, many of my interviews suggest that the women tend to consider themselves to be the most responsible persons taking care of the household, despite their associations with "trivial" and "light" tasks. Most of the housewives cook, feed pigs, look after children, go to the market, tend the garden plot, pickle vegetables, mend, patch, and so on. Even when nothing needs to be done in the fields (e.g. during summer when transplanting is finished), they still go to the fields inspecting water and weed conditions, in their words, "Just to make sure." All the work that women do suggests "a matter of her emotional and rational commitment" (ibid.: 31).

The peasants, both men and women, in Jinguan insist that they do not have a specific division of labor. When asked about their household division of labor, they generally found the question irrelevant and would just reply: "We are of one family and do not distinguish; whoever has time takes care of whatever needs to be done in the fields as well as in the house." It is true that women do most of the farm and house work, but this does not mean that men in general do not do the work that is supposedly for women. In many households that I interviewed, men cook when their wives are in the fields (especially in the transplanting season); and feed pigs when their wives are not around. Equally, women are found cutting firewood in the mountains; and use ploughs, though the work as such may be considered "heavy" and exclusively for men.

It may be reasonable to argue that men and women may not be equal in terms of the amount of work, as the women's labor input, time- and energy-wise, exceeds that of men's. However, the amount of work that women and men contribute, respectively, can only be interpreted as their individual share in production, but not as any base for gender inequality. In terms of decision-making, however, the relative power of husband and wife varies. It is more equal in some households, and less so in others. In my interviews, I had a question who is

responsible for making decisions in production, daily spending and gifts and loans. In most cases, decisions concerning these three domains are made jointly by both husband and wife. In some cases, the husbands claim to be in charge of production and their wives are responsible for daily spending and gifts and loans. In a small number of households, the husbands are not interested in making any decisions at all, and enjoy all the leisure they can get. The situations with decision-making are very individual, depending on personality as well as other social factors.

While the husband and wife that both farm belong to the same domestic world (regardless of the different roles they play) and generally have a fair share in decision-making, in the household where the wife is a farmer and the husband is a cash earner, there is a tendency for the husband to become dominant in decision-making. This dominance, however, does not necessarily have anything to do with the evaluation of economic contribution (e.g. salary versus grain). Rather it is related to the social or political position that the husband holds (e.g. as a government official, school teacher, doctor). In this respect, the husband-wife relationship is hierarchical. The hierarchy derives from the fact that the cash-earning husband (or his position) represents a certain prestige which is socially considered superior to the wife as an ordinary farmer.

In the household economy that relies on its own labor force and manages its own activities, the husband and wife are bound to play complementary roles. Although one may find the historical background of the garrison settlement–when men performed military duties women were left to work both in the fields and in the house–accountable for the women in Jinguan contributing most of the farm and house work, the nature of the work that women are engaged in actually does not bear reference to their status as being lower or higher than the men. The dichotomies of responsibilities–such as "trivial" and "important;" "inside" and "outside"–that women and men assume as illustrated above may have presented a tendency to differentiate domestic roles, the peasants in Jinguan do not consider them as unequal. The conjugal

relationship further has effect on the affinal relations in which common identity is absent but mutual interest persists.

Affinal Relations

Given that "gender and kinship are mutually constructed" (Collier and Yanagisako 1987: 7), the domestic position of women inevitably has effects on the relationships between affines. In turn, the emotional ties with, and economic contributions by the affinal relatives may have influence on the women's position in their married households.

Marriage is said to be "involving both attachment and separation, both social conjunction and social disjunction" (Radcliffe-Brown 1979: 91). The separation and disjunction are symbolically represented by the wedding ceremony as discussed earlier. Following the separation and disjunction, the attachment and social conjunction take place. In the patrilineal system, either virilocal or uxorilocal marriage involves a readjustment of social position by the marrying-in spouse. This readjustment is symbolically represented by adaptation in kin relations.

To the people in Jinguan, once the daughter is married away, she becomes other's folk. Though the women in modern times no longer change their family names upon marriage, they are incorporated in their husbands' kin group and address the kinsmen the way their husbands do. For a married woman, her husband's mother is her mother and his father is hers. Though there are special terms for father-in-law and mother-in-law, they are only used for reference purposes. This change is common in other parts of China. But what is not quite common is the change of sibling terms between the married woman and her brother in the virilocal marriage. In the married home, the woman's husband's brothers become hers; and at the same time, her own brothers in her natal home become the equivalent of affinal relation (despite the sentiments attached and expressed on rituals of *shaoguo* as discussed earlier). This is demonstrated by the term *Jiu laogong* that the married woman use to refer to her brother instead of *Xiongdi*. This term *Jiu Laogong* actually indicates the relationship between the woman's husband and his

wife's brother. This change of sibling term seems to mark particularly the separation of the married woman from her patrilineal descent carried on by her male siblings. The social separation (of the woman from her natal kin) is simultaneously accompanied by the social conjunction which is marked by the adoption of the kin relations upon marriage in that the woman's own blood relationships become an "outside" category and her husband's kins become her own.

Because a kinship term is "a piece of verbal compression, a symbol for a set of ideas and attitudes, a guide to a norm of behaviour" (Firth 1983: 250), the adoption of a different kinship term initiates change in social behavior. The switch of filial relationship and identity of patrilineal descent has a more distinctive expression in the uxorilocal marriage. Because the marrying-in husband is a socially adopted son who is supposed to pass on the family name, he becomes the center of kin relations. Aside from adopting his wife's mother as his own mother and his wife's father as his own father, other kin relations also change to adjust the role of the marrying-in husband as son. If it is virilocal marriage, the husband to his wife's sisters is *Jiefu*, meaning sister's husband, In uxorilocal marriage *Jiefu* becomes *Gege* which is older brother. This switch of terms is based on the cultural assumption that *Gege* is of a family relation and *Jiefu* is an affinal relation. Unlike the wife moving into her husband's household in virilocal marriage, the marrying-in husband in the uxorilocal marriage is not regarded as affine rather as a descendant of the family. Similarly, while in virilocal marriage the mother's sister is addressed by the children as *Yima* (or "aunt mother"), in the uxorilocal marriage, the "aunt mother" becomes *Guma*, a term for father's sister in virilocal marriage. In this way, the wife's sisters become the marrying-in husband's because he is considered as the descendant of the family. Normally, the mother's brother or male cousin (e.g. her father's brother's son) to her children is *Jiujiu*. The children of uxorilocal household address their mother's male cousin *Dadie* or *Baba* which is father's older or younger brother. This kind of social practice, however, should not be understood as giving the moving-in husband high social status. Rather, these changes of kin relations demonstrate an adaptation of the patrilineal idea of descent to the

matrilocal marriage. In this cultural adaptation, the image of the spouses alters in that the "moving-up to-the door" husband is not a son-in-law but a son; and the daughter is not a daughter any more but she is the wife of the (adopted) son. This change of social image thus results in a series of alterations of kinship terms.

The patrilineal kin terms used by the peasants in Jinguan consist of two groups of relation terms that only have reference function but not address function (see Patrilineal Kinship Terms). One of the groups is the genealogically related persons of juniority in age and generation, and the other group is affinal relations.[23] The absence of the address function in the first group suggests a lack of emphasis on respect from the senior persons in age and generation towards the junior persons in age and generation, while the absence of address function in the second group indicates some kind of social avoidance.

The social avoidance in the social relationships between affines does not necessarily result in social distance. In fact, this kind of relationship has much material basis, despite the lack of property relationship. Different from what has been argued elsewhere that once married, a woman "retained only fragile ties to the domestic group in which she grew up" (Wolf 1874: 158), my household survey in Jinguan shows that one of the primary sources of financial assistance and labor help in peasant households comes from the wife's natal family including her siblings and sometimes her parents (see Figures 9-10).

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[23]The kin terms for the genealogically related persons of seniority in age and generation have both address and reference functions.

Figure 9. Sources of financial help in peasant household

Ranking	Cuihu village	Wengpeng village
1	neighbor	credit-coop
2	wife's natal family	siblings
3	credit-coop	wife's natal family
4	siblings	father's siblings and children
5	father's siblings and children	neighbor
6	friend	mother's siblings and children

SOURCE: My household survey.

Figure 10. Sources of labor help in peasant household

Ranking	Cuihu village	Wengpeng village
1	wife's natal family	neighbor
2	siblings	siblings
3	neighbor	wife's natal family
4	friend	mother's siblings and children
5	mother/father's siblings and children	friend and married-out daughters
6	married-out daughters	nominal kin

SOURCE: My household survey.

The financial and labor help provided by the affines, again, is an issue of the wife's position in relation to her natal family's support. As discussed earlier under *Virilocal Marriage*, most of the marriages in Jinguan are locally arranged. The preference of local marriage is obviously in favor of maintaining the relationship between the marrying-away daughter and her natal family. In the same way as the parents would make effort to enlarge their daughter's

dowry, the financial support and labor help provided by the wife's natal family are intended to make their daughter's position in her married home more comfortable.[24]

Despite the lack of affection, the relationships between the affines are generally well maintained for different social and economic reasons. In this relationships, there seems to be a mutual need of support between the affinal parties. In a way, the affinal relations can be seen as parallel to the conjugal relations in contrast to the biological relations. While the mutual support is obligatory and taken for granted in the biological relations, the lack of the shared substance in the affinal relationship is compensated with mutual contribution, the same as the complementary role that the wife and husband play in the household.

Unlike other parts of China–Guangdong and Fujian in particular–where village settlements are largely based on single lineage (e.g. Freedman 1971), lineage organization in Jinguan as either political or economic corporation has little role to play. The insignificance of the lineage organization may again be attributed to the garrison history. Perhaps, because the peasants are all in one way or another immigrants, there are no surname groups that are predominant in village activities. In both Cuihu and Wengpeng villages, there are no lineage halls. The reason is, as the Wengpeng residents say, that there are too many surnames. In Wengpeng village, due to its particular settlement, in some hamlets, big surnames amount to as much as 75 per cent of the total households; but in others, mixed surnames comprise as much as 60 per cent of the total households. In Cuihu village, each hamlet has four or five big surnames plus other mixed small surnames. The Cuihu residents say that because households are constantly divided, people's idea of lineage has become diluted.

This situation can be also related to the lack of lineage estates which in other parts of China forms the core of lineage solidarity (e.g. Potter 1970). But, the most important factor

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[24]The social function of support from the wife's family is also noted by Emily Ahern who maintains that the lavish gifts from wife-giving affines validate their superior status (Ahern 1974: 288).

seems to be the type of life that the peasants in the Three-River basin have led. Because life has been relatively easy–given the fertile land, abundant water resources and comparatively small population (in contrast to the places in the eastern coastal region), there seems to have been not much of a need to create lineage solidarity for protection of the individual or collective interests. In Jinguan, conflicts over land and water are common, and there are even incidents of homicide provoked by theft or adultery. But none of these conflicts and incidents are surname groups or lineage mobilized.

The absence of lineage organization is in contrast to the predominance of *jia* in the life of the Jinguan people. Despite the economic changes in the past decade, the *jia* remains the center of peasant life. The *jia* is both a social and economic entity; and the perpetuation of the *jia* relies on the persistence of the idea of patrilineal descent and its ability to sustain production. The biological relations, conjugal relations and affinal relations in the patrilineal household discussed in this chapter illustrate different social obligations and economic responsibilities. While the shared patrilineal identity designates obligatory duties among the biological relations, the lack of common substance (i.e. blood) between the affinal relations is compensated by voluntary support.

The economic relations maintained between affines, in a way, remedy the undesired outcomes in the organization of patrilineal household. Because the social relationships in patrilineal household are complex, the household has higher chance to divide; and because the household frequently divides, the size of the household is relatively small. As production is managed on household basis, the small size of household encounters problems mainly due to insufficient labor supply and limited household budget. Because of the nature of rice farming which is intensively labor demanding, it is very difficult for a household to manage production without any labor help particularly during the transplanting and harvest seasons. All households under survey have received help on one occasion or another; and by the principle of reciprocity, many of them have provided help to others. The financial help from the affines has been largely used to assist activities such as weddings and household construction. The role that the affinal

relations play in providing the economic assistance is notable. The small size of the patrilineal household and the economic relationship between affines set a sharp contrast to the matrilineal household (to be discussed in the following chapter) where social relationships are less complex, the size of household is relative large and there are no affinal relations. Differences in the organization of patrilineal and matrilineal households and economic relations have different effects on household production, which will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 4

MATRILINEAL HOUSEHOLD

On a misty and drizzling autumn morning, I began my household survey in my first Mosuo hamlet. As I cycled to the edge of the hamlet, I saw a young woman dressed in plain Han Chinese clothes walking slowly uphill with two buckets slung from a shoulder-pole. I got off the bicycle by a tiny water hole on the road side–from which she had drawn water, and wondered which path I should take to find the house of my local guide. At this time, the woman turned around and stopped. I quickly walked up towards her, and asked where Dashi's house was. She nodded and motioned that I go with her.

Half way up the hill, she entered a gateway. I followed her and found myself in a muddy courtyard. The woman (at this point I still did not know her name) removed the pole from her shoulder and poured water into a wooden container made of a thick tree trunk. It was about one and half meters long lying horizontally outside a log cabin which I assumed was a kitchen. The woman invited me to enter the kitchen. The front wall of the kitchen had a square opening on the left which obviously functioned as a door. The threshold was unusually high–about two to two and half foot above the ground. I strode over it and landed in complete darkness. I could hear rustles around me, and even a baby crying in the distance, but could not see a thing. The awkward feeling lasted for a few seconds before I was caught by a dim light at the far end of the room. It was a ray of light beaming down from the roof. Though the size of

the spot it lit up was no bigger than an A-4 sheet of paper, it was good enough for me to make out some objects in the room. Right underneath the light, there was a faint fire, and I walked over and sat on a bench.

Presumably, this was the house of Dashi whom I met a couple days ago and who had agreed to be my guide in the hamlet. The woman who brought me here belonged to the same household. After I became accustomed to the darkness, I noticed a young woman about 20 years old sitting by the door (where I had come in) having her breakfast. She was the eldest daughter of my hostess (later I learned that she was adopted) and the mother of the crying baby. The first impression of the family relationship came into my mind: the mother, the daughter and the grandchild. Then, "Dashi must be the father," I almost took it for granted. But for some reason, I kept quiet about my assumption of the family relationship. I chatted along with my hostess, and learned that she had three more children, a girl and two boys at the ages of respectively fourteen, nine and six.

At what I thought an appropriate moment, I asked if she was the head of the household. She said: "No, my brother is the head of household." "Your brother?" I reacted with a little surprise. Perhaps she noticed it, or maybe she did not. Nonetheless, she explained: "Dashi is my brother, and we live together." It suddenly dawned upon me: this, of course, was a sibling group of a matrilineal household!

Eventually, Dashi came in with a young man who was introduced to me as a friend and also a business partner. As soon as the two men walked in, Dashi's sister withdrew. From the way he talked and the way he moved around, I noticed that the friend was quite at home; and even at one point, he claimed to be a relative of the family. After a chat with Dashi and his friend about the forthcoming harvest, about the hamlet and my fieldwork, I proceeded to my household survey (by random selection, Dashi's household happened to be included). The friend stayed on. On several occasions, he added some information, which made me even more convinced that he had a close relationship with this family though he was not a registered member. In the context of labor help relations, it turned out that he was the father of the three

younger children of Dashi's sister, and lived in another household in the same hamlet. At this point, a picture of matrilineal society became more vivid to me; and there I had more questions to follow.

The *Yidu* and the Social Institutions of Matrilineal Descent

The matrilineal household organization in Yongning differs from the patrilineal household household organization in Jinguan in many aspects. First of all, the size of the patrilineal household is small–commonly containing the conjugal pair with children and sometimes aged parents. Secondly, the center of the social relationships in the patrilineal household is the father-child relation. Thirdly, the affinal relations in the patrilineal household have an active role in economic activities. In this chapter, we shall find that the size of the matrilineal household is comparatively large; the center of the social relationships is the mother-daughter relation; and the kinship system is much less complex.

However, this is by no means to suggest that every aspect of matrilineal household is the inverted image of patrilineal household. As this chapter will show, in terms of descent ideology, the matrilineal household emphasizes "bone" as much as the patrilineal household; in terms of gender relations, the domestic role played by the sister and brother in the matrilineal household, in a way, resembles the one shared by the husband and wife in the patrilineal household; and in terms of social obligations and economic responsibilities, the descent group in both matrilineal and patrilineal households forms a property holding unit, except in the former it is less hierarchical.

This study of the matrilineal household provides a cultural background for understanding the Mosuo peasant economy in Yongning. The central issue of concern is how the organization of the matrilineal household and the descent system have effects on social relationships which, in turn, function to maintain the household structure; how the economic

relations are structured by the given kinship relations and how they are manifest in the organization of production and consumption. Like the chapter on patrilineal household, the analysis of the matrilineal household here is focused on the relation between social organization and economic reality.

Mosuo Residence

A typical Mosuo residence is a fenced-in compound usually with four buildings surrounding a courtyard, and a garden behind the main house (Plate 5). The houses are commonly built of logs, sometimes reinforced by earth-punched walls. The main house–though it is not necessarily the largest one–is the kitchen which in the Mosuo language is *yeemei.* Opposite to it, is the bedroom building which is called *nidjayee*. On the sides of *yeemei* and *nidjayee*, there is a religious hall which is called *gerlayee*; and a stable which is called *yee-boo* or *rah-boo*.

The kitchen (*yeemei*) is the most important building of a Mosuo household. When a household is divided and new residence is built, the first building erected is the kitchen. It is not only a kitchen where food is stored, and meals are cooked and eaten; it is also an activity room where the family gather during day and guests are received on occasions. The size of the kitchen is between 30 and 40 square meters, and it has only one storey (but a high ceiling). About half the size of the main room is floored by wood planks, placed some 10 centimeters above the ground. A hearth is situated at the center of the platform, where the fire is constantly burning year round. The hearth is for cooking as well as for heating as the platform also serves–in addition to dinner table–as sleeping quarters for the family's elderly and children. In the middle of the room, there is another hearth for cooking which is bigger than the one on the platform. On each side of the kitchen, there is a separated den called *gerpa* and *merpa*. *Gerpa* is a place where women give birth and where a dead body is temporarily buried prior to the arranged funeral; and *merpa* is a place where pig feed is cooked and farming tools are stored. In short, the kitchen (*yeemei*) is the center of family life.

The religious hall (*gerlayee*) has two storeys but the lower one usually has no front wall and is used mostly for storage of firewood and farm tools. The upper level is one big room where religious services are conducted: daily worship of Buddha and festive scripture chanting. In some families, the religious hall is attached to a small cabin on the side. It is usually furnished with a single bed and a charcoal burner. This place is occupied by the *Jabba* (the Mosuo Lama) in the family, and sometimes by the senior man in the household.

The bedroom building (*nidjayee*) is another two-storey building, more lavish in style than any other buildings on the compound with color-painted pillars and railings and carved windows. Like the religious hall, the lower floor is open and used for storage. On the side of the building, there is a staircase leading to a veranda with access to four or five separated bedrooms. The bedrooms are small. Each has space of some 8 to 10 square meters, furnished with twin beds. This sleeping quarter is exclusively for the women of the household: young and middle-aged. This privilege reflects the central values of the matrilineal society; and such a residential arrangement is the locus of the Mosuo *tississi* institution which constitutes the base of the matrilineal household reproduction.

The Tississi *Institution*

The Mosuo *tississi* in the Chinese ethnographies is termed *adju* marriage. *Adju* in Mosuo language means "friend." The use of the term *adju* marriage by the Chinese researchers derives from a concept that this particular social relationship is not a marriage institution in a conventional sense due to the lack of certain formalities and social transformations.[1] The term

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[1]While the term *adju* marriage has more of a descriptive function, a scientific name is given by the Chinese researchers for the purpose of theoretical analysis. That is *duiou hun* which is the Chinese translation of the term "pairing marriage" used by Engels (1985: 76, 99) and syndyasmian marriage used by Morgan (1963: 394, 462). Because the Chinese research on the Mosuo matrilineal society was initially based on the concept of social evolution, the *adju* marriage was used to prove the development of family in human history. As some of the researchers maintain: "Engels had highly appraised Morgan's theory about the patrilineal gens having been preceded by the matrilineal. Furthermore, Engels applied historical materialism and dialectical materialism to expound on the evolution of marriage in human history–from consangunity to group marriage (Punaluan) and from the pairing marriage to monogamy. The

adju is said to have derived from the term *ashiao* which literally means "a lying down companion" (Yan and Song 1983: 81). Because it has overt sexual implications, the Chinese researchers maintain that people tend to avoid using the word in public and alternatively choose to use *djutsi djumi* which has a straight forward meaning of friend(s); and later, the Mosuo adopted the term *adju* from the Pumi to replace *djutsi djumi* as *adju* is terse and easy to use (ibid.).

However, neither *adju* nor *djutsi djumi* is commonly used by the Mosuo to refer to their special relationship between a man and a woman today. During my fieldwork in Yongning, I noticed that the Mosuo mostly use two terms to refer to this special relationship: *tississi* in the Mosuo language; and *zouhun*, or "walking marriage" in Chinese. They think it is appropriate to translate *tississi* into "walking marriage" because that is what it is. As for *adju*, they say: "Nobody refers to his partner (*chumi*) or her partner (*hachubau*) as *adju* because *adju* or *djutsi djumi* means a friend with whom one hangs out in pool houses or does business." In accordance with the Mosuo explanations of the relationship, I choose to use *tississi* or "walking marriage" here.

Tississi is actually a compound word: *ti* literally means "walking about" or "moving back and forth;" *ssi* literally means "making contact," and the duplicate form *ssissi* simply suggests the recurrences of the movement. *Tississi* is therefore, used to describe social visits to one's partner on frequent basis with a specific reference to a sexual relationship between a man and a woman. It refers to a social relationship that is organized without marriage contract, without residential settlement, and without legal obligations. Because it is always the man that

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Yongning Naxi [Mosuo] marriage and family as they existed before the Democratic Reform were at the transitional stage, and demonstrated without doubt that they had derived from the group marriage. Therefore, it is only natural to find residues of group marriage and remnants from the matrilineal gentile commune in the Naxi [Mosuo] marriage." (Zhan et al. 1980: 21) While the *adju* marriage is regarded by some as the pairing marriage–a transitional stage from the group marriage to monogamy–as stated above, others categorize the *adju* marriage as group marriage beginning to transform to the pairing marriage (Yan and Song 1983: 107).

goes to see his wife, *tississi* is often expressed as *chumi tissi* (*chumi* as wife, and *ti* as going and *ssi* as making contact).

The establishment and the duration of the *tississi* relationship do not change the original household arrangements of the partners: the man continues to live with his own mother and siblings; and the woman with her own mother and siblings. In this relationship, the man goes to his wife's house in the evenings and returns to his mother's house in the mornings. The economic relation is maintained at the minimum level: gifts to each other and the occasional labor help are regarded as tokens of affection rather than obligatory exchange. Children live with their mother and are regarded as the heirs of her family; and the man has no claim to either his wife or his children.

The *tississi* institution itself is very similar to the *sambandham* or "joining together" practised by the Nayar (Gough 1961a: 359-60). Although there are no marriage contract, residential settlement or legal obligations involved as in the conventional marriage in the patrilineal system, the Mosuo *tississi* relationship is a sexual bond which is socially recognized by family and community; and to some extent, it is subject to social rules and sanctions. The characteristic of the *tississi* has a number of implications for our understanding of the social organization and economic relations in Mosuo society.

As it has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, the union of the conjugal pair in both virilocal and uxorilocal marriages in the patrilineal household leads to a series of change and adjustments in social relationships on both the wife's and the husband's sides. But such changes and adjustments do not occur in the Mosuo *tississi* institution because neither the woman nor the man changes her/his relationship with her/his natal family; and therefore, there are no new social relations created. In the "conventional marriage" of the patrilineal household, the woman goes through transitions from daughter to daughter-in-law and from sister to wife. In the Mosuo *tississi*, the status of women as daughters and sisters remains, and there is no conversion of filial relationship involved. In addition, there is no "giving party" nor "taking party" in the *tississi* relationship; and therefore, the partners stay as equals. While in the African

matrilineal systems marriage, payment is regarded as an exchange for the man's sexual right over his wife and legal right over his children (Fortes 1964; Richards 1964), the Mosuo men do not acquire by engaging in a *tississi* relationship any rights of possession over their wives and children. In the Mosuo *tississi* relationship–one which Radcliffe-Brown would have called "the purest form of system" (Radcliffe-Brown 1964: 75)–gifts from the man to his wife and her family are not compulsory or obligatory and the amount is too insignificant to be labelled as "bride payment"; and the labor help from the man to his wife's family is voluntary and often reciprocal and therefore it cannot be compared with "bride service." For this reason, there is no transfer of rights over women's fertility and labor; and there is no transfer of affiliation and succession concerning children.

The absence of marriage contract and the non-enforcement of legal obligations in the *tississi* relationship actually contributes to social stability. In Mosuo hamlets, people may fight over water, land and other resources, but they do not fight over *tississi* partnerships and the *tississi* partners seldom fight with each other. The main reason for this is a lack of economic relations. As one of my Mosuo guides talks about his *tississi* relationship: "We do not live together. We are not economically involved. I do not spend much money on her, nor does she expect me to do so; and vice versa. Having no economic responsibilities makes things much simpler. If we do not get along, we just let it go; and there is no need to fight over anything."

Despite the lack of marriage contract and the absence of transfer of rights over women, there are certain rules applying to the establishment of *tississi* relationship. They are expressed through the practices of social avoidance and moral sanctions. The following accounts reveal a general attitude of Mosuo towards their *tississi* relationship. From these social practices, one can see how the rules are created to protect the heir of matrilineal household, and ultimately the matrilineal descent. On one of the occasions during my usual evening gathering with the young people living on the government compound, they told me a story about the initiation of a *tississi* relationship. Apart from the description of the actual event, the story also tells how this social custom is observed by people of different age groups and social relations. The story goes:

A young man had just started to date a girl. One night he came to her house as previously arranged. The gate was ajar (deliberately done by the girl), and he tiptoed into the yard. Everything was calm and quiet. Suddenly the family dog jumped up and barked fiercely. The young man panicked and slipped into the stable by the gate. There he stirred up trouble– horses and mules began to whinny. It happened that the family was expecting their mare to give birth that night. Hearing the sound, they rushed out of the kitchen to the stable with a torch. Instead of seeing a foal, they spotted a pair of man's shoes sticking out of a heap of hay in a corner where the poor chap was hiding. It became all clear to them what was going on, but none of the family said a word and quietly withdrew to the kitchen.

By the social custom, the *tississi* relationship is usually kept secret in the early stage. The family of either party is not informed. After a few visits, the partners may gradually reveal the existence of their relationship, if they will. Still, the family members of both the man and the woman are not supposed to discuss the matter openly. But this rule is more relaxed among peers of the same sex, and young men, in particular, like to make fun of each other. This is why in the above incident, while the girl's family kept quite about what had happened in their stable, the boy's peers could not help teasing him: "What were you doing in the stable that night, trying to give birth to a foal?" No doubt, what happened to the boy that night was unusually funny, because under the normal circumstances, the *tississi* dating does not attract much attention.

The Mosuo do not talk about their *tississi* relationship among family, nor do they like being asked about it by others when family members are present. The social avoidance is especially observed by siblings. Within a household, it is strictly forbidden for brothers to discuss their *tississi* relationship in front of their sisters and their daughters. It is considered bad manners if one makes inquiries about male guests accidentally appearing in the household. As a rule, when visiting a household and seeing a male stranger, one is not supposed to ask who he is or how he is related to the family because it is very likely that the man is *chumi tissi* ("visiting wife"). If someone calls upon a man who happened to be out *chumi tissi*, the family would not

inform the visitor of his whereabouts. If asked, they would simply say: "He is not in the house."

Though the *tississi* relationship involves two parties, the maintenance of the relationship only goes in one direction–the man pays visits to his wife, the man brings gifts to the children, and the man offers labor help. Women never go and visit their men. Caier is 24 years old. She has two children and lives with her mother, brother and sister. In my interview, Caier's mother told me that Caier's partner comes often to visit and helps with chores; and when his family needs help she sends her son over. When I asked why Caier herself does not go and help her partner's family since she is the one related to him, Caier's mother said: "That would be embarrassing." This is what the *tississi* or *chumi tissi* is about: the man visits the woman, but not the other way around; women only go to their partner's house on special occasions, e.g. on funerals or in emergencies.

Because in the tississi relationship, the man goes to the woman's residence, there are rules applied to men, which may or may not have derived from incest prohibition. It is regarded not socially acceptable for the members of the same family to visit women living under the same roof (e.g. mother and daughter, or sisters). It is considered especially shameful for related men of two generations (e.g. mother's brother and sister's son) to be engaged in the *tississi* relationship with two sisters or mother and daughter in another household. As for why such rule is enforced, the Mosuo say, if the uncle and nephew visit the women in the same house, it only suggests that one of them (either the uncle or the nephew) cannot find a partner on his own but must rely on his relative.

Another type of social avoidance derives from the local belief in *doo*, which is *gu* in Chinese according to the young Mosuo in Yongning (a dictionary definition of which is a legendary venomous insect). No one among my young friends in Yongning can tell what the *doo* creature looks like, but all know what becomes of it. *Doo* is said to grow out of a mixture of reptiles such as snakes, frogs, centipedes, lizards, scorpions (dragonflies and butterflies are also added in some people's opinion). It is believed that the persons who raise *doo* can do

harmful things to others by releasing the evil spirit to cause physical pain, illness and death as well as economic catastrophe. My young friends in Yongning all admitted that they have never seen *doo*. Then again, they all know who raise *doo*. According to their estimation, there are ten families in the hamlets surrounding the Yongning basin possess *doo*. Knowing which family in the hamlet has *doo* is part of the social education that youngsters receive from their senior family members (e.g. mother, grand-mother, or mother's brother); and as they grow up, they are reminded not to establish the *tississi* relationship with the person whose family raises *doo*.

Among the Mosuo in Yongning, *doo* is believed to pass on from the mother to her children. Elsewhere, there are accounts of women associated with *doo*. In Muli, for example, it has been noted that: "Whenever du is transferred to a household, the female head of the household usually becomes the vehicle of the du. She is the person who feeds the venomous creature and practices witchcraft in the household" (Weng 1993: 147). This coincides with what Fortes refers to as a phenomenon of "special theoretical interest," that is, while "mother stands for unquestioning protection and support against the world at large. . . she also stands for the source of the most dangerous occult force that can impinge on his life, that of witchcraft (*bayi*)" (Fortes 1964: 264). Neither Fortes nor Weng provides any theoretical analysis of the implications of this role of women in either society. Should the sorcery practice be regarded as an extension of the mother's protection for her child; or should the association of women with the sorcery practice be considered in any way as complementary to women's status in general in society? Since my ethnographic data do not elucidate the association of *doo* with women or mothers, these questions will have to remain, for the moment, as of "theoretical interest."

Although the *tississi* institution does not confine a woman to a one-man relationship, nor a man to a one-woman relationship, the sexual relationship is subject to family approval which is rested in the moral conventions of the society. This can be seen as an effort to regulate the women's sexuality and to protect the harmony of matrilineal household. Despite the general tolerance of the family towards the individual *tississi* relationship and the lack of family interference in the initial stage of the relationship, the *tississi* relationship must have the

approval of the family of both parties. Because there is no economic relation attached, the general concern of the family for their daughters or sisters is the personal character and reputation of the *tississi* partner. Because the family control over women's sexuality is intended to maintain family harmony, men's choices of women are less interfered with by the family because the relationship that men are engaged takes place outside the household.

Because the *tississi* relationship is established voluntarily, the choices of the *tississi* partners are mostly sought within the Mosuo community. Because most of the *tississi* relationships are established within the hamlet or its vicinity, who dates whom is often a public knowledge which forms a kind of social pressure on individuals (with the exception of *tississi* relationship at the initial stage). From my household survey on family relations, one can see that many of the *tississi* relationships are stable, especially when the couple have a number of children together. In the Mosuo hamlet, people do raise their eye-brows at what they think is outrageous. A young woman was heavily fined (2,000 Yuan) by the village authorities for giving birth to twins. The fine was not a penalty on extra-quota birth as the woman had only one child before the twins, but it was issued as a punishment for "loose" conduct, as the hamlet leader explained to me, because the father of the twins is a married man living in another hamlet with his wife and children. This man happens to be Naxi who do not practise *tississi*, but the incident seemed not to have any ethnic implications.

Another incident of family interference was different in character which had a greater impact on my understanding of Mosuo *tississi* relationship. Lacuo is a woman in her 50s. She lives with her elder brother, three adult sons, two adult daughters and two grandchildren. At the time of my interview, Lacuo appeared to be under great stress. She told me that she was beaten by her family and showed me her face, half of which was in black and blue. As she was talking to me (she spoke very good Chinese, better than the average women of her age), her son and daughter stared at her angrily and now and then threw some harsh words (in Mosuo which I did not understand) at her. Throughout the interview, I could tell that my guide knew about the whole situation, but chose to remain silent. When we left the household, I asked my guide if he

could explain what was happening in that household. He told me that Lacuo used to have a partner in a nearby hamlet, who was the father of the five adult children. A few years ago, the man died. Recently, Lacuo has been seeing another man. The man's visits to their mother had irritated the children as well as their mother's brother, and they demanded that she stop the relationship with the man. But Lacuo ignored and continued the affair. This turned the whole family against her.

I was a little surprised at the family's reaction to Lacuo's affair given that the *tississi* relationship, in principle, is established on free-will with minimum social interference. But, I was in no position to comment. Instead I asked my guide what he thought of this. He expressed all his sympathy for Lacuo's children and brother, and gave me reasons why he felt so. As he explained, according to the Mosuo custom, it is perfectly acceptable for a woman in her 30s or 40s to start a new relationship with another man, but it is shameful for a woman like Lacuo to start this relationship in her 50s when she has already grandchildren. For me, it is difficult to judge why the family react in such a way towards Lacuo's *tississi* relationship without knowing the personality of her *tississi* partner and other related circumstances. However, I do not think that the age itself is the matter that concerns the family; rather I see that the family interference capped with moral judgement demonstrates a concern for family harmony and household integration.

All these rules and sanctions concerning women in *tississi* relationship reveal the society's protection for women. This protection is aimed not only to guarantee the household harmony, but also to control women's fertility. This social practice also influences the implementation of government policy. Due to the nature of the Mosuo *tississi* practice, the family planning policy in Yongning has been somewhat modified.[2] Under the current family-

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[2]According to the township and village family-planning personnel, the family planning policy was first introduced in Yongning in 1979. Although it was stipulated that each couple was allowed to have three children (while the quota for government employees is two), the distribution of quotas and the enforcement of penalties were not actually introduced until 1982. At the time, the fine was 420 Yuan for the first excess-quota child, and 630 Yuan for the second. In 1988, the fine was raised to 700 Yuan per excess-quota child. In 1992, the family-

planning policy, each couple of ethnic minority population is allowed to have three children (while a government employee is allowed to have two).[3] Because the Mosuo practise *tississi*, the birth quota is granted to women, that is, each woman is allowed to have three children regardless of how many partners she may have.

It is difficult to calculate the average birth rate, because the Mosuo household often has two or more generations living together and several women of the same generation give birth to children. In a number of households, there are as many children as eight to ten; and in others there are four to six. However, my household surveys shows a slight decline in child births after 1982. In the households where women are in their twenties and thirties, the average number of children per woman is between three to four. There are cases of extra-quota birth in both Mosuo hamlets, but most of them are not subjected to the imposition of a fine. This is because the extra-quota births are often absorbed by the Mosuo style of adoption in that if one woman has one child too many, her sister living in the same household who does not have any or enough children can adopt the child; or her brother, especially if he is *Jabba* (Mosuo Lama) can also adopt one or two. Although this adoption practice is only a measure combating family-planning policy, it reflects the Mosuo ideology of matrilineal consanguinity (see below).

Because of the *tississi* practice, marriage registration is not imposed in Yongning. The peasants do not register for establishing *tississi* relationship, nor do the government employees. But this has not always been the case. Since 1950, the Mosuo have at varying intervals experienced "monogamy movements" when marriage registration was imposed upon them. The

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planning policy was modified but without much substantial change. It is now stipulated that in principle each couple is allowed to have two children, but if one of the couple is a member of ethnic minority, the couple may apply for an extra quota (which is often automatically granted) to have a third child when the second child reaches the age of three. By the same stipulation, a Han couple may apply to have a third child if their first two children are girls. The fine for excess-quota births has been raised to 1,500-1,950 Yuan. Fines are collected by the township family-planning personnel. However, the fines are rarely imposed for the Mosuo have a special adoption practice (see below).

[3]In Jinguan, each peasant couple is allowed to have two children, while a government employee is allowed to have one, the same as in the urban areas elsewhere China.

period between 1973 and 1975, to the Mosuo, was the "years of one-wife and one-husband" (*yiqi yifu nanian*) when the provincial government dispatched work teams to Yongning to implement the monogamous system.[4] At the time, the work teams ordered the *tississi* partners to organize a family, and stipulated that if the walking couples continued to "walk," their would lose their work points, and even threatened that they would be publicly denounced and imprisoned.[5]

Under pressure, some couples moved into each other's households, or established their own households. When the situation became relaxed a few years later, many returned to their mothers and siblings while some couples remain the *status quo* in their separate households. It was also during the "years of one-wife and one-husband," the Mosuo were urged to register for marriage; and the work teams even held collective wedding ceremonies for the couples who were willing to establish their own households. The collective wedding ceremony in Chinese is advocated as *jiti hunli* which is held at the same time for several couples. Because the Mosuo resented the idea of the monogamy imposed on them, they twisted the idea and called it *qunhun* which in Chinese means "group marriage." This is however not coincident, as *qunhun* or "group marriage" is the very term that the Chinese anthropologists use to refer to the origins of the Mosuo *tississi* marriage (as discussed earlier). This, nonetheless, gives the local people a good reason to contest, as expressed by a local leader: "Why on earth this 'group marriage' should be considered more civilized than our walking marriage?"

Despite official pressure and the influence of Chinese culture, the Mosuo today still practise *tississi* and most of them live in the matrilineal extended households. In addition to the

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[4]This is a period when a nation-wide ideological campaign was launched to criticize Lin Biao (the former defense minister and once Mao's appointed successor) and Confucius. The campaign was to attack traditional morals and ideas, and any associated retrogressive practices (Lin's ideas were allegedly analogous to those advocated by the ancient sage). In Yunnan province, the campaign was directed at the social customs of the minority societies. In Yongning, the Mosuo *tississi* practice was targeted as a legacy of primitive society.

[5]According to the locals, none of these punishments were really imposed in the end.

Jabba religion, the *tississi* institution and the matrilineal social organizations shape the fundamental ethnic identity of the Mosuo. The *tississi* institution is an important part of the matrilineal descent system. Without the *tississi* practice, the matrilineal descent would be difficult to maintain; and without the matrilineal household and matrilineal descent, the *tississi* practice would not be necessary. The purpose of the inter-dependent between the *tississi* practice and matrilineal household is to maintain the matrilineal descent because the extended matrilineal household guarantees the heir, and the *tississi* institution serves to protect the integration of the matrilineal household by keeping away affines as potentially subversive to the harmony of the matrilineal household. The organization of matrilineal household is based on the ideology of matrilineal descent which has emphasis on female heir and a sibling bond as a common property holding group.

Yidu *and the Ideology of Matrilineal Descent*

The special practice of the *tississi* relationship provides a basis for our understanding of the Mosuo descent system, as the function of the institution is much related to the structure of the matrilineal household. The Mosuo matrilineal household is basically a mother-child bond and a sibling group. In the senior generations, there are mother and her sisters and brothers; mother's mother and her sisters and brothers. In the junior generations, there are daughters and sons; and daughters' children. The household is usually three to four generations in depth, and some households may have five generations living together. The average size of the matrilineal household is 8.3 people. The household members form a descent group; and are identified with the consanguineal bond which is either biogenetic (by birth) or social (through adoption). The household as such is called *yidu*.

Yidu in the Mosuo language refers to a homestead where people are sheltered and domestic animals are kept. Similar to the Nayar *taravad*, the Mosuo y*idu* stands for both settlement and descent (Gough 1961a: 323). As a living unit, the members of *yidu* form a corporation engaged in production and consumption. As a kin group, the members of *yidu* are

bound to matrilineal descent. In terms of social and economic functions, there are some similarities in between the matrilineal *yidu* and the patrilineal *jia* (as discussed in the previous chapter). The fundamental difference between the *yidu* and the *jia* is that the descent system in the former follows the mother's line while in the latter follows the father's line.

Each *yidu* has a family name which is different from the surname (*xing*) in the patrilineal household. Not only it commonly has two or more syllables (while most of the Han surnames have single syllable), the Mosuo family name or the name of *yidu* is a collective identity of the people who live in it.[6] The *yidu* is headed by a *dabu*. In most of the households, *dabu* is a woman; yet in some, the *dabu* is a man. Because the matrilineal household is based on the idea of the mother-child bond, the succession of the matrilineal household is, in a strict sense, from mother to daughter. In most of the *yidu*, the position of *dabu* is passed from mother to daughter; but there are exceptions that positions of the household head (*dabu*) are passed from one sibling another, or from mother to son.

Because the succession in the Mosuo household is through the female line, the desire for a female child is intense. In the *yidu* that has only one daughter, the puberty ceremony tends to be the most lavish. The only female child in a household is often spared from hard work and doted upon by her mother and brothers. If a family has only sons, it will keep on trying until a daughter comes along. If a family has no daughter at all, it is considered most regrettable–using the local metaphor, the "bone" (*ah*) of the family is broken. In one household, a woman household head has four grown-up sons but has no daughter living with her older sister who is paralyzed and has no children. Most of the house work falls upon the shoulders of the household head. When she talked about how she managed the household, she revealed much regret for not having a daughter to help, and broke down. Clearly, her sadness had more to do

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[6]The individual Mosuo who have a employment outside home or occupy some kind of public position usually do not use their family name. Instead, they adopt a single-charactered Han surname (Yang, for example, is a popular surname adopted by the Mosuo as well as Naxi living in Yongning).

with the psychological pressure of having no heir than the physical burden of house work. As the woman sobbed: "No daughter, no grandchildren. All grandchildren are in others' houses." Despite two of her three sons have children, none is the heir of her *yidu*–because in the tississi relationship, children belong to the mother and her household.

The importance of daughters in the Mosuo household is the same as the importance of sons in patrilineal household. In patrilineal ideology as discussed in the previous chapter, the symbolic meaning of bone is attached to the son; and being the family bone, he bears the responsibility for carrying on the family name and perpetuating the descent line. In the matrilineal system, the Mosuo use the same concept of bone to refer to the matrilineal heir, i.e. daughter. It symbolizes substance and identity; and in short, an image of the fundamental structure of the descent.[7]

In the patrilineal system, the perpetuation of the household and descent system relies on sons because sons remain the permanent members of the household (while daughters are married away). Similarly, the succession of matrilineal household and descent depends on daughters, because they remain the permanent members of the households and have claim on their offspring. Thus, the mother-daughter centered household is the base of the matrilineal descent system. Just as many families in the patrilineal system have no sons, the Mosuo *yidu* sometimes are found to have no daughters. In the patrilineal system, when the family has no son, the solution is to marry in the son-in-law who, as an adopted son, can pass on the family name and prevent the family "bone" from being broken (see *Uxorilocal Marriage* in the previous chapter). The same with the matrilineal household. When a *yidu* has no daughter, a daughter-in-law (i.e. the *tississi* partner of one of the sons) is adopted as a daughter to protect the "bone" from being broken.

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[7]The metaphor of "bone" used by the Mosuo is similar to the metaphor "womb" and "breast" used by the Bantu (Richards 1964: 207) and to metaphor "one blood" used by the Ashanti (Fortes 1964: 257) to symbolize the shared substance. But, different from the Bantu and Ashanti metaphors, the Mosuo ideology of "bone" does not necessarily reflect people's ideas regarding procreation.

Adoptions are common in Mosuo society. In Gesawa, there are six (out of twenty-eight Mosuo households under survey[8]) adoptions; and in Dapo, there are also six (out of thirty-two households). Some of the adoptions occur within the same matrilineal descent; some between different matrilineal descents; and some even through patrilineal line. Among the six cases of adoption in Gesawa, one girl was adopted from a sister at the time of household division; one woman born in another hamlet was adopted by her father's brother; one woman born in another hamlet was adopted by her own father; and three women were adopted from other households either in the same hamlet or from a neighboring hamlet. The father who adopted his own daughter was once engaged in a *tississi* relationship with a woman in a neighboring hamlet and had a daughter. Because he lived alone, he asked his partner if he could take their daughter home to live with him, and she agreed (she had other children); and the daughter then became the heir of her father's household who already has four children of her own. The circumstances under which the man adopted his brother's daughter was similar–his brother moved into his wife's household in another hamlet and had several children. The other four adoptions do not involve the relation to fathers

Among the six adoptions of daughters in Dapo, five came from other households either in the same hamlet or in the neighboring hamlet; and one was adopted from a sister when the old household was divided. In addition, my household survey in the hamlet included four households that had given their daughters away to the neighboring hamlets. These households have many daughters and sons (one of them had six daughters and four sons); and the households into which these daughters were adopted do not have daughters of their own.

In the two Mosuo hamlets, the practice of men entering their partners' households is more common than that of women entering their partners' households. There are several reasons for such what may be called uxorilocal residence. One is that the female heir does not have many siblings, and having her partner move in is one way to recruit labor force and

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[8]One household in Gesawa immigrated from another township 18 years ago as a result of family conflict. The members of the household are Zhuang.

expands the household (similar to the exceptional cases of uxorilocal marriage in Jinguan). The second reason seems to be related to family conflict where the man was driven out of his *yidu* by his siblings or left voluntarily. The third reason is attributed to the earlier monogamy campaigns, as my household survey shows a the majority of the incidences of men entering their wives' households took place in and around 1975.

Adoptions in Mosuo society are regarded, by some, as diluting the blood of matrilineal descent. In this regard, Shih maintains that "A Mosuo *yidu* is not a descent group by definition." The reason given by Shih is that because "Ideally, a *yidu* is supposed to include only those who are related by blood through mother or mother's mother or mother's mother's mother" (Shih 1993: 109). Support for this argument may be found in David Schneider's definition of descent as forming "a unit of consanguineally related kinsmen" (Schneider 1961: 2). However, the "consanguineally related kins" here must not be understood in literal terms. As stated earlier, the bone as an identity of descent is both biogenetic and social. Therefore, the consanguineal bond can be figurative and does not have to be biogenetic.

As mentioned earlier, the members of *yidu* identify themselves as a descent group on the basis that they share common blood relationship and property ownership. Both or either of these identities is substantial in claiming the membership of the *yidu*. In cases of adoption, although the blood relationship in the literal sense is absent, the property-ownership still holds. That is to say, while the blood siblings have an equal relationship, the adoptee is on an equal footing with the rest of the family because she/he shares the same property.

The perspective of figurative consanguinity may help us understand the ultimate purpose of household reproduction, that is the continuity and perpetuation of the physical existence of the household. Therefore, arguing that *yidu* is not a descent group appears contradictory to the Mosuo practice of the adoption which is aimed at achieving the continuity of matrilineal descent. In the adoption practice, the membership in property ownership is, in fact, more important than the membership determined by blood relationship. For instance, once the adopted child leaves her natal *yidu* she loses her membership of her natal *yidu* (as she no longer belongs to the same

property group). Despite the blood relationship, the adopted child is regarded by her natal *yidu* as "belonging to the other's house;" and subsequently, her children become "theirs." In the households interviewed where daughters had been adopted by other *yidu*, the family referred to their daughter having entered her husband's households as "to their house she went;" or "in that hamlet she has been recruited." The children of the daughter, therefore, are no longer considered as the heir of her natal *yidu*.

The consanguineal bond of the matrilineal household where members are biologically related co-exist with the matrilineal household with adoption where some members are socially but not biologically related. The two households illustrated in Figures 11-12 demonstrate two prototypes of matrilineal descent.[9]

As shown in Figure 11, the Guma matrilineal descent contains five generations. The oldest living member is in G+2, that is the younger sister of the grandmother of the interviewee (G0). The two sisters and one brother of G+1 used to live in one *yidu* with the sisters' children (G0). The old *yidu* was divided in 1973 when it became crowded with the arrival of the G0 sisters' children (G-1). Now, the two sisters (G0) of one mother live in one *yidu* with their children (four daughters and one son), and their mother's brother (G+1); and the brother and sister (G0) of a different mother live in a separate *yidu* with the sister's children (two daughters and two sons) and grandson (G-2). Both *yidu* share the same family name and identify themselves as Guma.

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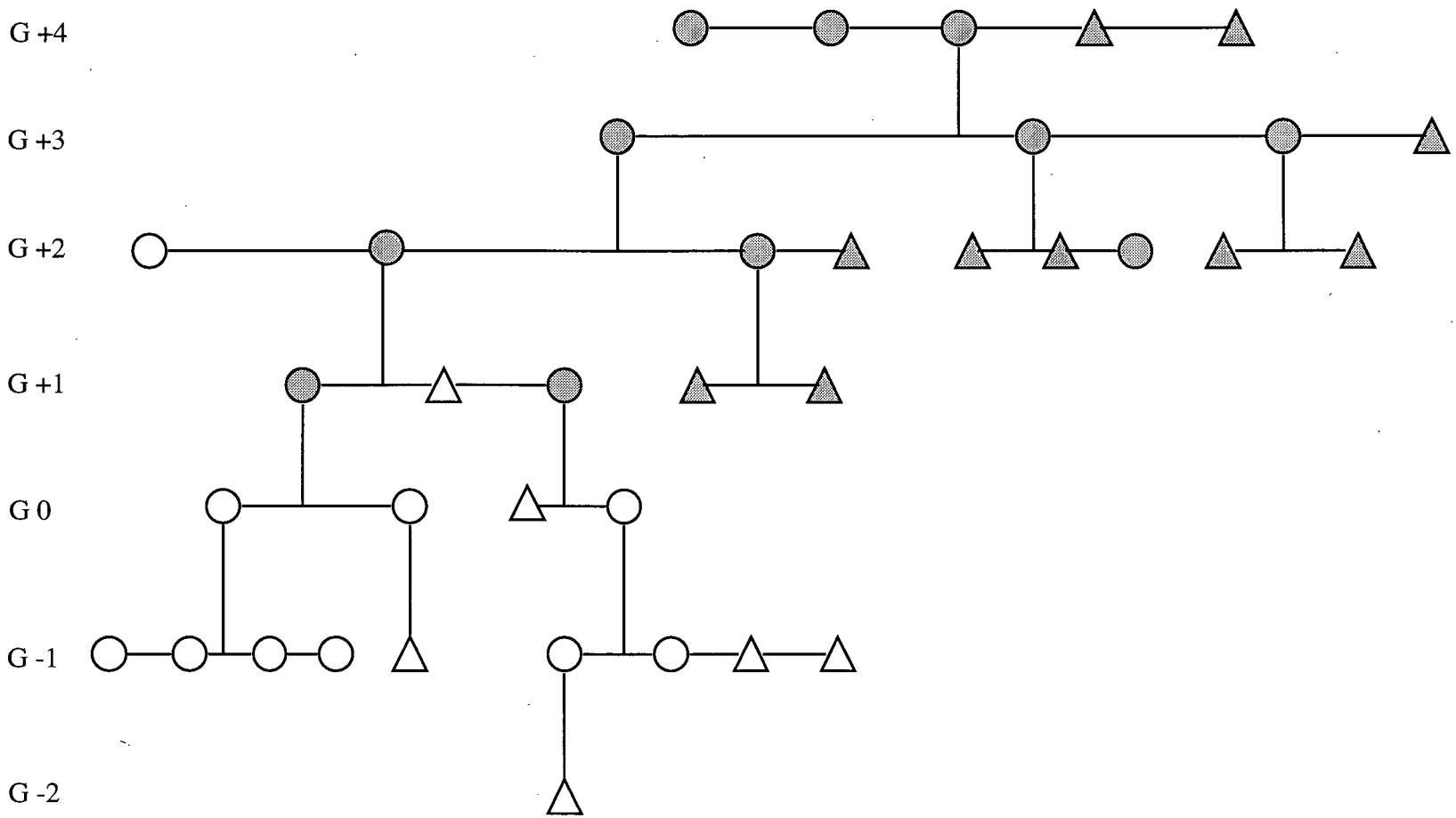
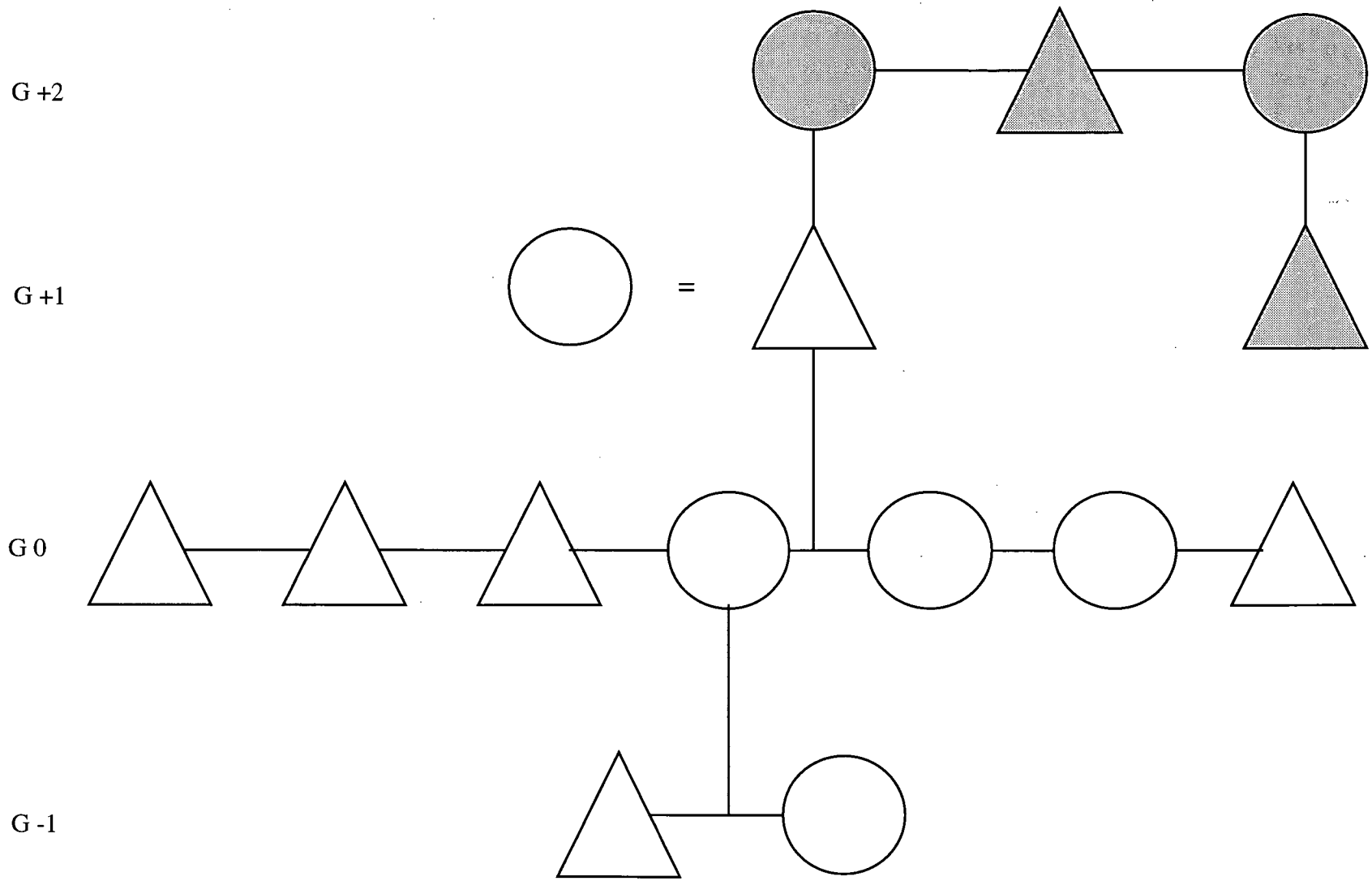
[9]The members included in the figures are the ones that the living members of the family still remember at the time of interview. The shaded signs indicate the descent members who no longer live today.

Figure 11. Matrilineal descent: Guma family



Source: My household survey

Figure 12. Matrilineal descent: Kuaha Family



Source: My household survey

The Kuaha family in Figure 12 shows a descent group which was, at one point, not carried through the female line in the biological sense. The head of the household was one of the two brothers in G+1. He was the only child left to carry on the family after his older brother went to India in his teens and never returned. The only male heir of the family then, married a woman from another matrilineal descent group. The couple have seven children (G0), and the Kuaha descent are maintained. Although the marrying-in woman did not necessarily replace her spouse as the family heir, she in fact became the "bone" of the descent as her children remain in the family and bear the responsibility for carrying on the descent. From G0, the Kuaha *yidu* returns to a bond of mother-child and sibling again, and one of the sisters has already produced the new matrilineal heir.

The basic difference between the two descent groups is that the Guma family is strictly a sibling group in every generation, while the Kuaha family contains a conjugal pair (G+1). From the organization of the Kuaha *yidu*, one can see that the adoption (marrying the woman from another descent group) is a temporary solution to household reproduction. Once heirs are acquired, the sibling group continues to be core of the household and all family relations revolve around the mother-child bond again. The same as the uxorilocal marriage of the patrilineal system where the remaining female heir does not convert the patrilineal descent into matrilineal, the virilocal marriage in the matrilineal system–where the male heir remains–does not change the nature of the matrilineal descent either. As shown by the two types of matrilineal descent, the Mosuo rule of descent seems to be: whoever lives in the *yidu*, owns the property and bears the responsibility for carrying on the family name. In this respect, we see that the ideology of matrilineal descent is closely related to the inheritance and succession in both materialistic and symbolic terms. This has implications on the relationship between siblings which will be discussed later in this chapter.

As much as the Mosuo *yidu* remains a descent group no matter whether the consanguineal bond is biogenetic or figurative, the residential settlement–either the woman moves into her partner's household or the man moves into his partner's house–has nothing to

do with social evolution of the family as Chinese anthropologists have suggested.[10] Given the strong desire of keeping the family bone in form and making effort to prevent the family bone from broken in both patrilineal and matrilineal societies, the use of the same metaphor "bone" in both patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems suggests that in the idea of bone, the reference to a particular gender is not really relevant. What is important is the emphasis is on continuity and perpetuation of descent.

The *yidu* is the pivot of the matrilineal descent. However, the social organization of matrilineal descent does go beyond the *yidu* as it expands and divides. The divided *yidu* keeps the same family name, and the members continue to identify themselves with *njawo* which means "old house." If the *yidu* is newly divided, the people in the divided *yidu* are still related as brothers and sisters like in the "old house" (e.g. Guma descent). But, once the division took place two or three and even more generations and the size of the descent group has been significantly expanded, the members of these *yidu* are known as *dja-ah*, *dja* means "line" and *ah*

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[10]Based on the same evolutionist notion that the Mosuo *tississi* relationship (or *adju* marriage as it is called in the Chinese ethnographies) derived from the group marriage prevailing in the primitive society, the absence of the conjugal bond in the matrilineal household suggests to the Chinese researchers that the matrilineal household does not belong to the category of family. As they argue: "As for the family, it is based on the relations between husband and wife and between parents and children; it is a union of people who are related by marriage, blood or adoption. Family [as a form of social organization] appeared at a rather late stage. It was a product of the later gentile society. The family that is based on the conjugal relation is different in nature from the Naxi [Mosuo] matrilineal kin group based on consanguinity. Because the matrilineal kin group does not include the husband-wife relation nor the father-child relation, we do not think that the matrilineal kin group should be categorized as family, and therefore it is not appropriate to call it matrilineal family" (Yan and Song 1983: 71). Then again, because the pairing marriage is said to have existed in the middle of the social transformation from "lower" to "higher" stages (see Footnote 1), the different arrangements of *tississi* relationships (e.g. the male partner moving into the female partner's household; or vice versa) are regarded as evidence of family transformation from pairing to monogamy. Zhan and Li claim that three forms of marriage (namely, *adju* marriage on a temporary basis; *adju* co-residence on a more permanent basis and formal marriage) have led to the formation of three family types: matrilineal, matri-patrilineal and patrilineal family (Zhan and Li 1980: 86-7). The matri-patrilineal household is thus represented as social transformation (or social evolution). As they maintain, in the case of the woman moving into the man's household, "the patriarchal element has developed as the man begins to have children to succeed him;" and with the man moving into the woman's household, "the patrilineal member is added to the matrilineal household which objectively has impelled the transformation from matriliny to patriliny" (ibid.: 88-9).

means "bone," and the combination of the word *dja-ah* is an equivalent of lineage. The category of *dja-ah* in Mosuo society includes a group of people (of the same "bone") who are engaged in a series of ritual exchanges. Similar to the events of ancestor worship, wedding and house construction to which the patrilineal kinsmen attend and offer help as discussed in the previous chapter, the puberty initiation, funeral and house building are the major occasions when the matrilineal descent group is gathered.

The Mosuo puberty rite *richi* is not quite like the Nayar *tali* rite where immature girls are ritually married to their husbands described by Gough (1961a: 357), although both *richi* and *tali* are associated with legal status, adulthood and sexuality. The Mosuo *richi* is held for boys and girls in the 13th year of their birth.[11] For girls, the puberty ceremony is called *tadje*, meaning "dressed in skirt;" and for boys it is called *hidje*, meaning "dressed in pants."

The ceremony is held on the lunar New Year's Day in the *yeemei* (i.e. kitchen). It is organized by the *dabu* of the *yidu*, and attended by people of *dja-ah*. If it is *tadje*, the mother coordinates the ceremony by helping the girl to dress in a brand new skirt and put on a turban–a thick coil of plait made of real hair and decorated with silk threads. If it is *hidje*, the mother's brother helps the boy to dress in a pair of brand new pants and put on a felt hat.[12] Feasting and dancing are also part of the ceremony. Children under initiation receive gifts from the relatives attending the ceremony. The puberty rite is the most ceremonious when it happens to be the eldest or the youngest child of the family. When the *yidu* has only one girl in that generation,

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[11]The age is computed on the basis of the cycle of the Twelve Earthly Branches. Each of the branches is represented by an animal sign with which a person is associated. As the cycle is twelve years, a new cycle starts on the thirteenth year. This is when the same animal sign encounters the person once again. Upon the first complete cycle, a person is considered to have reached his/her adulthood. There is another saying about the 13 year of puberty age that, according to the Mosuo legend, once upon a time, dogs lived for 65 years while humans lived for 13 years. Later, dogs exchanged the life expectancy with humans, and humans began to live longer. In memory of the dogs' sacrifice, humans decide to have the puberty initiation at the age of 13.

[12]The Mosuo pants used to be home-made of linen. Nowadays, many people prefer to buy ready-made pants from shops. If the family can afford it, the boy will have a pair of leather shoes to match the new trousers.

the *tadje* tends to be extravagant. The whole ritual of puberty ceremony manifests a bond of sentiments and symbol of descent continuity.

While weddings are the most costly of all ceremonies among the Han peasants in Jinguan, the funeral ceremony is the most elaborate and costly event among the Mosuo in Yongning. On this occasion, a large amount of money is spent on feasts which often last for days, and on the services provided by *Jabba* (Mosuo Lama).

By Mosuo custom, the dead body is cremated. Before cremation, the body is placed in a pit dug in the den (*gerpa*) attached to the kitchen and covered with a cauldron sealed with mud which prevents the body from decomposing during the period of the ceremony.[13] *Jabba* (Mosuo Lamas) provide religious services throughout the funeral. First, a burial date is selected according to the dead person's animal sign and birth hour, date and month. During the waiting period (for cremation), *Jabba* chant scriptures in the religious hall of the household for days. The length of time often depends on the financial situation of the *yidu*. The wealthier the family, the more *Jabba* are invited and the longer the period of the scripture chanting.

The funeral ceremony (*hibu*) is organized by the *yidu*, and attended by the people of *dja-ah*, as well as neighbors in the hamlet (usually one representative per household). The number of people attending the funeral can be from a few dozen up to a hundred or more. The feast is prepared by the *yidu*, and the close relatives living in the same hamlet–usually the siblings that used to live in the same *yidu*–often share the burden by offering feasts to the attending guests. There is no standard funeral feast. In the well-to-do *yidu*, large animals such as cow or oxen are slaughtered. In the ordinary *yidu*, pigs are slaughtered, or *mucha* (the Mosuo home-made bacon) is offered. The cost for scripture chanting is high, between one to two thousand Yuan, and may be more. This sum of money is often contributed by the people of *dja-ah*. "Showering

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[13]The body of a dead person is buttered, wrapped up in white cloth and tied up in a sitting position with knees bent in front–believed to be like the fetus in womb.

money" is the expression that the Mosuo uses to refer to the financial contribution made by relatives.

The funerals for the most senior members of the family are the most elaborated, and feasts are sometimes accompanied by dancing.[14] The Mosuo say that dancing is a celebration of life fulfillment. For the same reason, people do not dance at a young person's funeral. In any case, the elaboration of the funeral ceremony functions to enhance the descent solidarity (the people of the *dja-ah* getting together) and continuity (the link between the dead and living). For the same reason, there are annual festivals which are marked by ancestral worship, mainly three times a year in late spring (5th lunar month), late autumn (11th lunar month) and the New Year (1st lunar month). On these occasions, the people of one bone (*dja-ah*) visit each other from one *yidu* to another and have feasts. Neighbors and *tississi* partners (affines) generally are not invited to ancestral worshipping feasts, although they do appear on occasions of funerals and house building.

House building is an important social event that brings the lineage (*dja-ah*) relatives together. On the occasion of building a new house, neighbors and relatives all come to help. Neighbors are generally providing labor help; and relatives come to share the economic burden. In Yongning, the cost of building materials is not significant as timber and earth–the major building materials–can be acquired from the mountains and fields within the local community. The economic help offered by relatives is mainly to cover the cost of meals for the laborers. Each meal is composed of twelve dishes; and the contributions of relatives from several *yidu* in providing these meals are usually needed. Relatives also provide labor help.

Labor help offered by neighbors is reciprocal in either house building or farming activities. On the occasions such as puberty and funeral ceremonies, neighbors present small gifts, and these gifts are carefully recorded in the *yidu* gift account, because the same amount

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[14]In Gesawa, people dance at funerals for the most senior person in the family, while in Dapo, dancing is not a custom for funerals.

must be returned on similar occasions. In all family events, relatives provide substantial help. While small gifts from neighbors to neighbors are counted and recorded, the contribution from the people of *dja-ah* are not included in the *yidu* gift account. This is because that the financial help among the relatives is not necessarily reciprocal. The contribution from relatives to relatives is intended to share the economic burden.

The economic content embedded in the social relationships of the matrilineal household is similar to what has been analyzed in the context of patrilineal household in the previous chapter. Similar to the sibling relations in the patrilineal household organization, the ritual exchanges among the people of the same matrilineal descent group are involuntary and obligatory. But, as the social relationships in the matrilineal household are differently categorized, the economic responsibilities shared have a different emphasis from the ones in the patrilineal household. These differences are manifest in the kin identity and code.

Household Organization and Kin Relations

The character of matrilineal kinship is that siblingship constructs the core of descent and property relations, while affinity bears little symbolic or economic significance.

Siblingship

As discussed in the previous chapter, the father-son relation forms the core of patrilineal kinship, and other kin relations are in part elaborations of the significance of that relation. In Mosuo society, the core of matrilineal kinship is the mother-daughter relation, and other kin relations can be seen as elaborations on that relation in the same sense. In the Chinese patrilineal system, the predominance of the father-son relation has its root in the Confucian ideology of filial relation which dominates not only the father-son relation, but also sibling and conjugal

relations–all ranging on a hierarchical scale on the basis of generation, age and gender. The Mosuo kinship ideology is not hierarchical in the same way.

Siblings share a common identity as children of one mother and residents of one *yidu*. This common identity provides siblings with equal status and complementary roles. This contrasts with the patrilineal system where although brothers and sisters share the same identity (that is blood relationship), they are not equal because brothers belong to the same property group whereas sisters do not; also because brothers remain and bear the responsibility of carrying on the family, while sisters are married away and incorporated into other's descent group.

In Mosuo society, the relationship of sisters may resemble the relationship of brothers in the patrilineal household in that sisters are the heirs of the matrilineal household and bear the responsibility for perpetuating the matrilineal descent. The identity that the sisters share determines their status in the household. This status is seen as an image of extended motherhood; and at the same time, as a corporative body holding the same property group. It is very common in Mosuo society that there are two or three, or even more sisters living in one *yidu*. In my household interviews, I noticed that the *dabu* (the head of household, usually a woman) normally numbered all the children in the household from senior to junior, but did not differentiate between which child is hers or which is her sister's unless she was asked to specify. Similarly, children use the same term *Emi* to address and refer to their mother and as well as to their mother's sisters. In the situation where the status needs to be specified, suffixes are added: *Emidj* or "big mother" for mother's older sister; and *Emidje* or "small mother" for mother's younger sister. This differentiation, however, does not necessarily have a hierarchical reference.

That a single term is used for two kinds of relatives suggest that the two relatives by the same term have similar social status and roles to the person who addresses or refers to them. The similarities of social status and role between mother and mother's sisters derive from the rule that the relationship between sisters is extended from the mother-daughter relation–the core

of matrilineal kinship. In a way, the non-distinction between mother and mother's sister in kinship terms reflects the Mosuo concept of siblingship, consanguinity and identity of descent. As all sisters are equally the heir of the *yidu*, all children born to them are equally the successors to the descent. Therefore, to the Mosuo, there is no need to distinguish the individual bond between mother and child from others in the same *yidu*. All women are responsible for the children of their own and their sisters; and all the children are responsible for supporting their mother and all her sisters.

While the status and role of sisters are identical, there is a difference of the status and role between sisters and brothers. This difference is reflected in the complementary role that sisters and brothers play in the household. This may be symbolically demonstrated by the two main pillars in the middle of the main room of the Mosuo residence, called *yeemei*. One pillar is said to be "female" and the other "male." It has been noted in other places (such as Zuosuo), the two pillars are called "sister and brother," or as "husband and wife" (Yan and Song 1983: 153).[15]

That the Mosuo gender relations between sisters and brothers parallel the relations between wife and husband in the patrilineal household is manifested in the social and economic responsibilities shared by sisters and brothers.[16] The relationship between sisters and brothers is best described as interdependent. In this interdependent relationship, a sister depends on her brother for protection, children's discipline, economic contributions, and all that a wife can expect from a husband with the exception of sex; and on the other hand, a brother depends on her sister for procreation, management of housework and farm work, and all that a husband can expect from a wife with the exception of sex.

The special relationship between sister and brother has direct effect on the relation between the mother's brother and sister's son. The nature of this relation is a mutual

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[15]The concept of husband and wife associated with the architectural design is said to have derived from the development of patriliny (Yan and Song 1983: 163).

[16]The similar comparison has been made by Fortes (1964: 274).

dependence. To the mother's brother, his sister's children are his children–they live with him, respect him, support him in old age and inherit from him when he dies. To the sister's children, their mother's brother is their parent who provides for them, disciplines them and protects them. I noticed in my interviews, when a Mosuo man says "my kids," he means his sister's children. Many Mosuo men admit that they feel much closer to their sisters' children than to their own. A child may be disobedient to his own father, but must be obedient to his mother's brother. A man, on the other hand, is not be obliged to support his own children, but he must take care of his sister's children. If a man possesses special skills, he passes all his possessions (skills and tools) onto his sister's son but not to his own son (unless his sister's son has no intention to inherit the skills and tools from him). No matter what a man possesses, the first beneficiary is always his sister's child.

The substance of the relationship between the mother's brother and sister's child derives from the sister-brother relationship. Despite the lack of blood relationship between them, the common identity between mother's brother and sister's child is maintained by the ideology of matrilineal descent, the core of which is formed by the siblingship. This common identity of the matrilineal descent designates (and at the same time differentiates) a series of social and economic obligations. As the sister's child is the heir of the mother's brother, whatever a man does for his sister's child is conventional and obligatory; and on the other hand, whatever he does for his own child is optional and voluntary. The common identity shared by siblings and the special relationship between mother's brother and sister's son have much effect on the relationship between father and child; and they are the reasons for the absence of affinity (in the legal sense) in the Mosuo household.

Affinity

There is no category of affinity among the Mosuo matrilineal kinship system as there is in the patrilineal system.[17] In his encounter with the Mosuo (or Hli-khin), Joseph Rock was struck by the absence of a father's role in the society. As he wrote:

> The moral state of the Hli-khin population is certainly a peculiar one. The word father is unknown, and it is next to an insult to inquire of a Hli-khin boy as to the whereabouts of his father. They all say they have no father. They all possess an A-gv (maternal uncle); this may be the brother of their mother or their actual father, without their being certain who their father is. They know and acknowledge only an A-gv (Rock 1947: 391).

The Mosuo have one term *Awoo* to address both mother's brother and father. The sharing of the same term between the mother's brother and the child's father has been analyzed as a legacy of consanguineal marriage which is believed to be associated with primitive society. Based on the understanding of classificatory terminology of the Morgan tradition, the use of *Awoo* for both mother's brother and father is interpreted by Chinese researchers as a remnant of consanguineal family.[18] The evolutionary interpretation suggests that in the consanguineal marriage (i.e. between blood relations) in ancient society, there was no distinction of status between mother's brother and father; and consequentially, people apply the same term to mother's brother and father. As Yan and Song explain:

> Since the Malaysian kinship system was based on the marriage between brothers and sisters, consanguinity and affinity would have merged into one. Thus, people would customarily address each other in consanguineal terms rather than affinal terms. This is because, first, consanguineal relations do not change, whereas affinal relations only exist upon marriage. It is then pointless and absurd as well for a daughter begin addressing her mother as mother-in-law [*Popo*] upon marriage; or for a son addressing his mother mother-in-law [*Yuemu*]. Secondly, the consanguineal and affinal relations were very close. Many ethnographic studies have shown that the kinship system only contained consanguinity but not affinity when marriages occurred within certain blood

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[17]Although "affinity" is not a cultural category used by the Mosuo, the term here is solely used for the purpose of analysis, as it functions to contrast the descent relations.

[18]For a definition of consanguineal family, see Morgan (1963: 410-27).

> relations. Only when marriages occur between non-consanguineal members, is there a need to create a set of affinal kinship terms to express the bilateral relations. . .
>
> From a utilitarian point of view, the consanguineal kin terminology was sufficient to express the relation between the marriage partners among the consanguineal members. Affinity was naturally embedded in consanguinity. Therefore, the affinal kin terminology and the terminology of patrilineal consanguinity would seem to have emerged later, and could not possibly have existed at the same time as the terminology of the matrilineal consanguinity. (Yan and Song 1983: 231-2)

This explanation does not seem to be relevant to the Mosuo household organization nor touches upon the essential social meaning of the use of the term *Awoo* in addressing both mother's brother and father in Mosuo society, as none of the *tississi* relationships under my survey was found to be based on the blood relationship of brothers and sisters, and the father's role in propagation is not unknown to the Mosuo.

To understand the double usage of the term for mother's brother and father, one needs to look at the Mosuo household organization that is, all Mosuo kin relations revolve around the mother-daughter core. As children in the matrilineal descent system belong to the mother, the father shares no identity with either the mother or the child and consequently, has no social status in the mother's *yidu*. The *tississi* practice characterized by no legal obligations and the sibling bond in the matrilineal household exclude all affines from the Mosuo kinship system. But, why does father share one term with the mother's brother?

The cross use of kin terms has been suggested as "a term of courtesy" (Fortes 1964: 264); or "a tactical use of kinship terms" (Bloch 1971). Whether it is a term of courtesy, or tactical use of kinship terms, *Awoo* for mother's brother and father is not one deriving from the other since the two social beings belong to two different categories in terms of identity and code and their relations to the person who uses the term are mutually not extendible. However, in the household composed of a conjugal pair (e.g. the man moves into his partner's household in the absence of her male sibling), one can assume that the role that father plays is not very different from that of the mother's brother in the ordinary matrilineal household. This is because, as discussed earlier in this chapter under adoption, the moving-in partner is regarded in reality as

an adopted son who shares the descent identity and kin code by being a member of the property holding group of the *yidu*.

While the moral meaning of the term *Awoo* used for a mother's brother and father living in the same household (with the child and his/her mother) who is a member of the same *yidu* is clear in terms of identity and code, the question of the moral meaning of *Awoo* as used for father who is only biogenetically connected but has little social and economic significance, still remains. Despite the same address and reference term being used for mother's brother and father, these two social categories are mutually exclusive in the matrilineal descent system.[19]

The absence of identity and code of father in the Mosuo matrilineal household corresponds to the exclusion of affinal relations in that the descent bond stands versus the conjugal bond. The central issue of the exclusion of affinity is then related to the maintenance of the matrilineal household (see for example, Gough 1961a: 357; Schneider 1961: 21; Richards 1964; Fortes 1964; Radcliffe-Brown 1979: 37).

The potential conflict in the contact between the bonds of marriage and the bonds of descent is obvious, because both the woman's and man's conjugal ties may be subversive to the unity of the matrilineal household. In the case of woman, a stronger conjugal tie may violate the household's possession of children; and in the case of man, a stronger conjugal tie may cause his negligence of duties and obligations towards their sisters and their children. Thus, the solution to the potential conflict and tension between the bond of marriage and the bond of

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[19]It has been suggested that the Mosuo in recent history have learned to differentiate mother's bother and father by using the term Ada for father. This is interpreted as a sign of social progress or evolution, implying a transformation from matrilineal to patrilineal society (Zhan et al. 1980: 247; Yan and Song 1983: 214). Weng notes that *Ada* is similar to the Yi language for father (Weng 1993: 126). The use of the term *Ada* (or *Ade* as used by the Naxi) by the Mosuo then seems to be the result of cultural diffusion. However, I did not come across the term Ada in Yongning. On the contrary, I noticed that either in the household where the child lives with his/her mother and her brother, or in the household where the child lives with his mother and father, the term that a child uses to address his/her father is, without exceptions, *Awoo*. Furthermore, the father-child relationship is not necessarily taboo (as suggested by Rock, cited earlier), since many Mosuo did reveal this relationship to me when it became relevant, sometimes by themselves and sometimes by my guide, as it was inevitable to meet somebody's 'affine" in the same hamlet.

descent is as what Fortes describes about the Ashanti: "that a man and his wife's brother (*akonta* reciprocally) are never found as members of a common household and that it is uncommon (though not unknown) for a woman and her husband's sister (*akonta* or *kunma*, lit. female husband) to reside together" (Fortes 1964: 262).

The exclusion of the conjugal bond protects the matrilineal descent bond. The *yidu* household organization is designed to allow only one set of gender relation to exist at a time. This is how one sees that during the day, the dominant gender bond is sister and brother; and at the nightfall, it is shifted to the bond of "man" and "wife." This arrangement is facilitated by the *tississi* institution: when the "husband" enters the *yidu*, the brother leaves; and when the brother returns, the "husband" withdraws. The exclusion of affinity forms the dichotomy of production and reproduction of the Mosuo matrilineal household.

The exclusion of affinity in the matrilineal household is, by some, theorized as a strategy for dealing with male authority. As Schneider maintains, the difference between the wife settling in her husband's household in the patrilineal system and the husband settling in his wife's household in the matrilineal system is that in the patrilineal system the line of authority and the line of descent run through men, while in the matrilineal descent the line of authority also runs through men but the line of descent runs through women (Schneider 1961: 7). Thus, the divergence between the male authority and female descent line becomes a source of conflict between the matrilineal members and in-marrying affines over the control of female sexuality and children; and in this respect, it is believed that "the sex role of men makes them more difficult to manage as in-marrying affines than women, and hence in-marrying men are a special source of potential strain for matrilineal descent groups" (ibid: 18).

In Mosuo society, however, the social practice of exclusion of affinity does not appear to have anything to do with restraining male authority, as the rule does not only apply to a sister's "husband" but also applies to a brother's "wife." The pattern of exclusion is even reflected in the adoption practice, as many adoptions take place in households where the sibling group is minimal and often the sibling of opposite sex is absent. In this respect, the exclusion of

affines in the Mosuo household is rather related to the ideological concept of matrilineal descent and the economic reality. As the matrilineal household is a corporate group in terms of production and property ownership, the household organization itself has its ultimate economic interest in utilizing its labor power and holding its property. In this respect, it is important to preserve internal harmony. Since affines are potentially unstable elements (because they are not the "children of the same mother" and not "part of the same bone"), it is more difficult to handle affines (either men or women) than siblings who were born by the same mother, as the Mosuo say. Therefore, in the matrilineal *yidu*, not only are the male spouses (i.e. sister's partners) not welcome in the matrilineal descent group, the female spouses (i.e. brother's partners) are not welcome either. Since there is no discrimination against either gender in the exclusion of affinity, the sex role of the men as being authoritative is not really a relevant issue here.

The exclusion of affines is a principle of matrilineal descent, but this does not mean that the affines remain strangers all the time. While a brother's sister and brother's "wife" seldom meet (because in the *tississi* practice, women are not supposed to visit men), encounters between a wife's brother and sister's "husband" may be frequent, either at family meals, or in production assistance. The relationship between a sister's husband and a wife's brother can be friendly, courteous, as well as tense and estranged. If they get on well with each other, a man can be a brother to his wife's brother, and they help each other. But if they do not get along, they may not even speak to each other.

The matrilineal household organization works best when it avoids affines. The exclusion of affinity and possession of children are fundamentally important to the maintenance of matrilineal system. The rule of exclusion is aimed to protect the harmony of the household for the benefit of preserving the strong bond of siblingship. This is the reason why many matrilineal households are large in size and able to incorporate all sisters and brothers, and sisters' children and so on. The interdependence between the siblings and all the members of household has economic implications as the matrilineal *yidu*, in addition to being a descent organization, is a production-consumption unit.

Economic Matriliny

On the same theoretical basis that associates group marriage (from which pairing marriage is said to have derived) with "gentile" society, the Chinese materialist approach to social evolution maintain that the low level of productivity is determined by women's role in the matrilineal organization.[20] Generally speaking, the association of matriliny with "primitive" society and patriliny with "advanced" society derives from the mistaken assumption that matriliny preceded patriliny. The relation between the existence of a matrilineal system and a particular pattern of production seems to lie with other factors, such as adaptation to ecological conditions, the prolonged absence of men, and the mechanism of social and economic relationships within the household.

Economic Environments

In his comparative study of matrilineal systems, David Aberle links the issue of matriliny to ecological and economic conditions in that he treats matriliny not as a stage of cultural organization but as a social consequence of economic relations. As he argues:

> Matriliny is not a stage in general evolution, just as red-skinned as opposed to black-skinned reptiles are not a stage. Red coloring may be adaptive for reptiles in particular environments–and for other animals as well. Matriliny may be adaptive in certain niches, in the same way. Even if we could assert confidently that matriliny first arose in

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[20]As Yan and Song argue: "Matrilineal gentile society was established on the basis of the very lowest productivity, corresponding to the production in the Stone Age. Along with increased productivity and the development of division of labor, men began playing a more and more important role and women began retreating to a secondary position" (Yan and Song 1983: 418). As for why the matrilineal system in Yongning has survived for so long, "the fundamental reason is related to the development of productivity" (ibid.: 423). Because the level of productivity is low, the claim is made that "the men's subjective initiative in production under the matrilineal system was severely restricted and suppressed" (ibid.: 424).

> conjunction with horticulture, or that it is an invariant feature of first adoption of horticulture everywhere, it still would not be a stage in general evolution. (Aberle 1961: 658)

Aberle generalizes that matrilineal systems are "relatively rare in association with pure or dominant pastoralism, hunting, gathering, and fishing;" and "infrequent in those areas of the world where plough cultivation dominates, where there is intensive wet-rice agriculture, or where there are extensive irrigation works coordinated and maintained by supra-community organizations" (ibid.: 664-7). In addition to the general rule, Aberle maintains: "Where matriliny systems survive in plough areas or wet-rice irrigated areas, they tend to appear in highland refuges, based on dry rice or wet rice without extensive irrigation and lacking the plough. Such, for example, is the case for the Garo and Khasi of the Assam Hills, the hill Karen of Burma, and the Belu of Timor" (ibid).

The rare occurrence of matrilineal systems in these environments is attributed to various factors such as subsistence types, agricultural technology, division of labor and the specific ways of control of resources. In this context, the central reason for the occurrence of the matrilocal residence and the matrilineal descent group (although these two do not necessarily co-exist according to Aberle and Gough) is related to the organization of women's work and the resource bases that women control (ibid.: 661). In other words, that matrilineal societies are not likely to appear in these areas–characterized by dominant pastoralism, hunting-gathering, and advanced agriculture, men play the major role–is because the nature of subsistence management and the control of resources are not women-based.

The ecological environment of Yongning is close to what has been described above by Aberle. The Mosuo live in the Yongning basin on the south-eastern tip of the Tibetan plateau. The population is sparse compared to other large basin areas in Yunnan. Agriculture is the main livelihood of Mosuo society. The irrigation system is not extensive but fairly sufficient for rice cultivation. Animal-driven ploughs and iron tools have long been used in farming. Rotation and fallow systems are practised. Despite the extensive farming areas in the basin, each household

keeps a fairly large size wall-fenced garden attached to the residence, in which vegetables and fruit trees are grown. Aside from crop farming, cattle raising is an important form of production. Almost every household is engaged in raising livestock and relies on it for meat, dairy products (though the amount is small), as well as for ritual ceremonies and social prestige.

The special adaptation of the Mosuo matrilineal society is an economic system in which the base of production is largely the hamlet, and the management of production falls mostly upon women. Men's economic activities often extend beyond the homestead. Although resources are communally controlled by the household collective (men and women) in theory, the actual management of resources–farming, cooking, food processing, raising domestic animals (pigs and chickens)–is largely in women's hands. Owing to the particular organization of the matrilineal household, women are gathered and working as a group in many economic activities. All these economic arrangements have implications for gender relations in matrilineal society.

Economic Gender Relations

It has been noted in the previous chapter that women in Jinguan play an important role in agriculture–doing most of the housework and spending much more time in the fields than men. Men are seen at leisure from time to time during the agricultural cycle, but women always have their hands full in and out of the household. In Yongning, the division of labor shows a similar pattern in that most of the agricultural work and house work is done by women. Similar to the men in Jinguan engaged in seasonal contract labor, many Mosuo men are engaged in non-farming or cash-earning work or business. But much of the non-farming work revolves around cattle raising. Although small animals such as pigs and chickens are kept at home and tended by women, cattle grazing and transactions constitute economic niches for men.

Besides, the economic environment in Yongning and the Mosuo religion have effect on the men's economic role outside household. Yongning has a history of horse-train trading. A large portion of the male population was engaged in the horse-train trade, estimated up to 59.5

per cent (Yan and Song 1983: 427). Today, the horse-train trade is less common as communication between Yongning and outside world has much improved and a commodity market has been established in Yongning. But, men still hang on to the cash-earning business: collecting and selling local produce like mushrooms, herbs, animal skins, and so on. For these cash-earning opportunities, they spend most of the time at the marketplace.

The Mosuo Lamaist (*Jabba*) practice is also attributable to the less active role of men in agriculture. It has been suggested that about one third of the male population were *Jabba* in the past (Zhan et al. 1980: 286; Zhao 1987: 72). This has nothing to do with the residence of *Jabba*, since *Jabba* nowadays mostly stay at home. The reason for the *Jabba* not being involved in farm work is, according to the locals, that by religion, *Jabba* abstain from exploiting animals. Therefore, they must stay away from ploughing, transporting, and any other work that may involve the use of animals. Most of the *Jabba* stay at home when they do not attend religious services. Some offer help to their sisters with house chores: drying beans, sorting fodder, minding small children and so on, while others are found sit in the religious room all day long chanting or merely enjoying the coziness by a charcoal burner. From my observation of what the *Jabba* do at home and how they are treated, the minor role of *Jabba* in agriculture–in addition to the religious avoidance of utilizing animals–seems to be related to the high social prestige that *Jabba* enjoy in society, which is incompatible with the toiling task in the fields.

Apart from the *Jabba* practice that creates a social hierarchy between the *Jabba* and the rest of the family, men's less active role in agricultural and household work does not have much relevance to their gender position as dominant or subordinated in the household. However, a household is a social organization and it is managed under some kind of authority. There is a question of who is in a position to make important decisions. As mentioned earlier, each Mosuo household has a head or household manager/ess (*dabu*). Most *dabu* are women, but male *dabu* are not uncommon in the two Mosuo hamlets I studied. Usually, the position of *dabu* is succeeded by a daughter from her mother. The successor is often the eldest daughter of the family, but the rules for selecting a successor are flexible. It all depends on the availability of

daughters and the capability of the individuals. Under certain circumstances, the *dabu* in some *yidu* is a younger sister while in others, it may be an elder brother.

In one household where seven siblings live together, the second eldest sister, Duma, succeeded her mother to be the *dabu* just before her mother passed away. Among her two elder brothers, one elder sister and one younger brother and two younger sisters, she was chosen by her mother because she is the most capable person in the family. Duma is in charge all the housework and farm work with the assistance of her elder sister. She assigns work to each individual member of the household, supervises the household spending, and manages the household consumption. When some important matters involving handling large household property–such as building house, selling or buying livestock, dividing household (in case one of the siblings moves out either into his *tississi* partner's household, or establishes a separate household)–need to be decided, Duma must discuss with all her sisters and brothers living in the household.

In some other households, men are seen assuming the role of making important economic decisions. This situation is often where the man has a senior position in the household (e.g. the eldest brother or son); or often the man is regarded by the household as contributing the most to the household economy. Sometimes, in the households where women are *dabu* in name, many important decisions are reached through consultation with elder brothers or mother's brothers.

Jizuo in his 30s has three sisters but he succeeded his mother to be the *dabu* of his *yidu*. First of all, this is because he is the eldest child of the family; secondly, he has shown great ability in organizing production and managing the household; and thirdly, he possesses some non-agricultural skills such as driving a walking tractor and engaging in petty trades of local produce. Above all, he is the most important cash-earner in the household. These qualities earned him the position of *dabu* and his power in economic decision-making. He is the one in the household who decides what crops to plant, assigns work to each member of the family,

and controls the household budget. He said himself that all his sisters listen to his orders, and even his mother cannot make any decision without consulting him first.

In another *yidu*, the *dabu* Erche is the eldest sister. She manages both house and farm work, and controls the household budget. But, when making important decisions such as what crops to plant, how much should be spent on gifts and feasts, what guests should be invited, and how disputes should be settled, she must consult her 64 year-old mother's brother who lives in the same *yidu*.

In terms of decision-making, the gender relations in the matrilineal household between sisters and brothers (or sister's daughter and mother's brother) are similar to what has been said about the husband and wife in the patrilineal household in the previous chapter. That is, the woman and man play complementary roles. When both genders take part in decision-making, there are individual cases where either the man or the woman may assume a more dominant role. Generally speaking, male authority in either economic decision-making or in other social and jural matters is not as evident in Mosuo society as it is in some other "classic" matrilineal societies (Richards 1964; Fortes 1964; Gough 1961a). This is because both sisters and brothers in the Mosuo household hold equal positions in relation to the household property (even in the household composed of conjugal pairs, there is little bride wealth , the transfer of rights are not involved, and furthermore, the moving-in-partner is often treated as adopted heir).

Despite the generally less pronounced male authority, men's position in Mosuo society should not be characterized as "marginalized," as maintained by Shih: "Through the functions of the architectural structure and the residential arrangement, it is clear that among the Moso women are constantly situated at the center of household life, whereas men are marginalized throughout their lives" (Shih 1993: 145-6). The inference to men's domestic status is based on the fact that men do not occupy a sleeping place in the *yidu* while women are "privileged to enjoy the convenience, privacy, and comfort" in the *nidjayee*. That the adult men in the matrilineal household do not occupy a special sleeping quarter is, in fact, part of the institutional design to accommodate the *tississi* practice. As discussed earlier under *affinity*, in the

dichotomy of the Mosuo household production and reproduction, the brother's absence is filled by the sister's husband (or *tississi* partner). This is the fundamental rule of the Mosuo household organization in that the presence of the sister's husband excludes the wife's brother, and vice versa. Therefore, as much as women are not necessarily subordinate because they do most of the farm work and most of their activities are home-based (see *Conjugal Relations* in the previous chapter), whether men have a place to sleep does not determine their social status. Therefore, the claim of men being marginalized seems to overlook the broader economic and ritual relations between women and men in Mosuo society.

Despite the cultural preference for daughters in terms of descent succession in Mosuo society, boys and girls are both appreciated (or "useful" as the Mosuo say), as far as household production is concerned. This is why in some households where there is no girl, they will have one of the son's *tississi* partner move in; and in other households where there is no boy, they may have one of the daughter's *tississi* partner move in. Apart from the need for acquiring heirs, both adoptions are aimed at recruiting labor force and extending the household.

Unlike in the patrilineal household in Jinguan where men sometimes do women's work such as cooking, feeding pigs, and minding children and women sometimes do men's work such as ploughing and cutting firewood, Mosuo men are seldom seen taking upon the tasks of feeding pigs or cooking. The economic niches of women and men in Mosuo society are much more distinctly marked than in Jinguan. As Weng remarks: Women are associated with nature and men with culture; women are associated with birth and men with death; and women handle grain while men handle meat (Weng 1993: 60-63; 214; 78-9). The perception of women as nature suggests motherhood, and of men as culture implies men's social role as a parent; the association of women with birth is consistent with the perception of women as nature referring to the tie between women and heirs of the matrilineal household, while the association of men with death may be related to men's culturally assumed roles in religion (both *Daba* and *Jabba* religions are practised by men, and they have the mission to communicate with the spiritual and supernatural world); and lastly, that women handle grain reflects women's active role in

agriculture, and that men handle meat can be seen as being associated with their task in cattle raising.[21] These ideological associations with the division of labor illustrate the complementary role that women and men play in Mosuo society.

Matrilineal Household and Economic Reality

Women doing agricultural labor, the predominance of horticulture or the agriculture with minimum use of plough and irrigation (or the combination of the two) are regarded as the key elements for the existence of matrilineal system (Gough 1961b: 550-1; Aberle 1961: 670; Goody 1988: 4). This suggests a link between matrilineal household and lower productivity, but does by no means allude to social development in association with women's roles. Productivity in Yongning is characterized by large labor input and small output. Again, the large labor input is not concentrated on crop farming but on cattle rearing. This type of production is related to the specific economic relationships embedded in the particular organization of household and the nature of subsistence activities. In this respect, there is a large size of household, the communal organization of production and consumption, mutual assistance as well as interdependence–all have influence on the pattern of production. In a sense, the economic reality is a consequence of social organization.

The economic reality in Yongning–apart from high altitude and limited irrigation system–is attributable to the availability of labor in contrast to the availability of land (population/land ratio), the deployment of labor power (in crop farming and cattle grazing), and the mutual dependence of the members of the large household. In the ecological environment of Yongning, the inverse ratio between resources and labor force directly resulted in a need to pool

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[21]In a different context, rice is used as a symbol associated with men; and meat (or pig) as a symbol associated with women (Thompson 1988). This may be related to the ideology, as maintained by Stuart Thompson, that rice is the substance of patrilineal ancestor; and in this patrilineal ideology, the function of meat is to make rice tasteful, implying the women's function in reproduction. The reversed duality (that women handle grain and men handle meat) in Mosuo society may suggest the same thing that grain symbolizes the substance of the matrilineal descent, and in the matrilineal society it is associated with women.

collective household labor, and to keep a large household. If the goal is to maintain a large household, the matrilineal system is the best solution because its fragmentation is far from frequent. As stated earlier in the chapter, the matrilineal household compared to the patrilineal household is large in size but the kinship relations are less complex. The less complex kinship system results in a higher degree of interdependence.

The matrilineal descent system shows certain advantages in managing common resources; to guarantee mutual help; to avoid affinal conflict and maintain relative stability. This stability follows from communal management that minimizes inequality and dissatisfaction. However, as such stability may also lead to a high degree of interdependence, it may also lead to a lack of individual incentives. Some young people in Yongning say that the matrilineal household is not good for the economy because the household members rely on each other too much. This realization about the matrilineal household organization in relation to economy is becoming a potential driving force for household division, especially among those who have access to cash income. As there are more and more business opportunities available, men–especially those who possess special skills–are more tempted to set up their own family. This idea does not necessarily have anything to do with descent or succession, rather it is related to individual control of economy. However, encountering the decision of household division, especially in a large matrilineal household, the support for the young, elderly, infirm and less capable individuals still remains the concern of the family.

The three brothers of the Kuaha *yidu*, for instance, all possess some special skills for earning cash: one drives walking tractor, one is a carpenter and one is a petty "cattle merchant." Two of the brothers intended to move out of the old house and join their *tississi* partners (both partners are the only daughters of their families). But the head of the household, the eldest brother, did not give his permission. He said that he would not allow any of them to move out unless the two younger sisters had someone who would look after them, which meant unless their partners turned out to be able to make enough money and willing to move into this *yidu*. Despite the economic changes and the incentives of the individuals, the strong sense of

responsibility that brothers have towards their sisters has not changed. In another large household of matrilineal sibling group, the female head of the household insisted that she would never allow her family to split, except for one reason, namely, if the residence became too crowded for people to live. The economic reform in the past ten years has improved peasant life in the Yongning basin. But the impact has not been strong enough to completely change the household economic relations; and for this reason, the organization of production still remains compatible with the matrilineal household.

The economic reality in Yongning is much related to the Mosuo matrilineal household organization. On one occasion during my fieldwork, I had a conversation with my local guide about household production. He said to me: "In the collective time, production was controlled by production team. Now, the land is contracted to the household; and each household becomes a production team." This analogy with production team seems to be quite accurate in explaining the function of matrilineal household where resources are pooled and collectively managed; the head (or *dabu*) of the unit is responsible for organizing production; and all the individuals of the "team" share the common property. The association of the household with the production team was, however, never encountered among the people in Jinguan whose household organization takes a different form.

The particular form of household organization in Mosuo society has sustained the pattern of production which requires huge labor input and communal cooperation. The pattern of production in Yongning shows an adaptation to the ecological environment and a set of cultural values that contrasts to that of Jinguan. The differences in the organization of production and consumption between the patrilineal and matrilineal households will be illustrated in the following two chapters. Each deals with a particular form of household production which is associated with a particular ecological environment and cultural values.

CHAPTER 5

RICE EARS—CULTURAL IMAGE OF SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

Rice economies have been presented as characteristic of Asian societies and "peasant economies" (Bray 1986: 170), in that household production and individual management of resources play an important role. The important issues involved in the study of rice economies are: (1) the ecological system and demography in relation to the existence of rice economy; and (2) the subsistence concepts of the population engaged in rice production in relation to the persistence of rice economy. This chapter presents the peasant household economy in Jinguan, where the predominant livelihood is rice farming and the main subsistence is rice. This particular economic system is composed of, and regulated by, both the local ecological situation and the peasant cultural concepts of production and consumption.

The image of rice ears illustrates the economic system of Jinguan. Rice is both substantial and symbolic. It is pervasive in every corner of the peasant living environment: in the fields, on the dining table, in the storage and on the market. Rice ears thus symbolize a typical agrarian culture, a subsistence economy and a particular way of life. Through an analysis of the ecological situation, productive activities and peasant economic decisions, the study of rice ears in this chapter intends to unfold the cultural construct of the peasant economy. It embraces two themes which I call the subsistence-security complex and the production-consumption loop. The subsistence-security complex, on the one hand, explains why rice

farming stands in opposition to cash crop farming (e.g. tobacco cultivation); and on the other, it dichotomizes "grain" and "cash" in the peasant economic concepts that have direct influence on the pattern of household spending. The production-consumption loop, in turn, is dominated by the idea of self-sufficiency, a principle regulating household consumption and market activities. It reflects the "cultural idea of necessity" (Gudemen 1978: 38), and imposes key constraints on peasant economic behavior. The emphasis on rice farming in the economic system of Jinguan in this chapter sets a contrast to the predominance of cattle production in Yongning to be discussed in the following chapter.

Ecosystem and Agriculture

The Three-River basin where Jinguan is located is situated between two mountain ranges. It is a long strip of land stretching from north to south. The three rivers: Meng Chuan, Hui Chuan and Ji Chuan flow right through the over sixty thousand *mu* of arable land, and form the major water resources for irrigation in the area. Jinguan is located in the northern part of the Three-River basin and occupies some thirty-four thousand *mu* of arable land. The altitude of the arable land and most of the homesteads is 1,550 meters above sea level. There are four distinctive seasons with three quarters of the year frostless. With generally mild temperature all year round, there is plenty of rainfall concentrated in the summer and autumn. The mountains, rivers, land, climate and vegetation constitute a particular ecological system and form the characteristic landscape of the Three-River basin (Plate 1). In the summer, the fields are green with growing rice plants and in the autumn they turn golden with ripening rice; and in the winter the fields become green again with newly grown broad bean shoots .

All this presents what Bray terms a "self-sustaining ecosystem"(Bray 1986: 132), in that paddy is for rice farming, dry land for cereals cultivation, ponds for raising fish, marsh-land for growing lotus, sandy land for planting mulberry (for raising silkworm), garden plots for

vegetables, and grain surplus for domestic animals. This self-sustaining ecosystem in Jinguan is both a natural and cultural heritage that has become a kind of local identity. The people of the Three-River basin view themselves as privileged, compared to the population living in the surrounding mountains. The privileges, as perceived by the peasants, are a combination of fertile land, rich water resources, abundant rice harvests, varieties of vegetables, and satisfactory supply of meat and fish. By contrast, the life of the mountain dwellers is said to revolve around a miserable five-day-cycle in that they chop wood for three days; then carry the wood bundles down the mountain on the fourth day; and finally sell them at market on the fifth day and return to the mountains with a pocket of rice purchased with the money earned from selling firewood.

Land is the major source of livelihood in the Three-River basin. The amount of arable land is comparatively small, barely one *mu* per person on average, but the land utilization is intensive and crop yields are generally high. In 1991, the total arable land in Jinguan was 33,910 *mu*.[1] It consists of *shuitian* ("irrigated land"), and *handi* ("dry land").[2] About ninety percent of the arable land is *shuitian*, and *handi* only constitutes less than 10 percent. *Shuitian* is a generic term for paddy which is designated almost exclusively for rice (planted in spring) and broad beans (planted in winter) cultivation. The best quality of paddy can produce up to 1,400 *jin* of rice; the medium paddy can produce some 1,200 *jin* of rice; and the poor quality of paddy can produce around 1,000 *jin* of rice.

The cultivating area of rice and broad beans amounts to 80 to 90 per cent of the total sown area. Although the broad bean output is low (see Figure 16), the advantage of growing broad beans is to help fertilize the soil of the paddy fields. Furthermore, the cultivation of broad beans is not labor demanding and easy to grow. Besides maintaining the fertility of the soil, the

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[1]Jinguan Township Statistics 1992.

[2]The *shuitian* also includes a small amount of *leixiangtian* ("thunder land"). This is basically non-irrigated, but has the advantage of retaining water when it rains. It is used to cultivate rice and various other crops.

double cropping maximizes the use of the limited land resources which is crucial in sustaining the subsistence economy. With rice planted in the spring and broad beans in winter, the actual planting area in fact doubles which raises the land productivity.

Handi is a generic term for the land on or around the mountain slopes. It is generally used for growing cereals or cash crops. Due to the limitation of the dryland, those crops are only grown in small amounts. Whichever crop is cultivated in *handi*, there is only one harvest a year.

Generally speaking, the population in the central basin (like Cuihu) is denser than in the semi-mountainous areas (like Wengpeng); and therefore, the land area in the former is comparatively smaller that in the latter. The comparison of land area and population between the two villages is shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Population and land in Jinguan

	Cuihu village	Wengpeng
Number of households	881	505
Population	3,589	2,200
Total arable land (*mu*)	3,187	2,705
Land per capita (*mu*)	0.89	1.22

SOURCE: Village Statistics.

Despite the difference in population and land area, crops cultivated in these two villages are about the same. The general situation of land use and crop cultivation is illustrated in Figure 14.

In addition to arable land, Cuihu village has some 300 *mu* of low marsh land locally called *outang* ("lotus pond"); and Wengpeng has several hundred *mu* of *shatandi* ("sandy land") along the old river beds in the valley. Both *outang* and *shatandi* are not officially registered as arable land, but they are utilized and contribute to some cash crop production. *Outang* are used

to grow lotus and to raise fish; and most of the *shatandi* is used to grow mulberry trees for raising silkworms.

Generally speaking, cash crops do not contribute much to the peasant economy in Jinguan as they are grown in limited quantity and variety, due to the constraints of land. Since the mid 1980s, tobacco has been introduced as a profitable cash crop. But tobacco production is much opposed by the peasants. The fundamental reason for the resistance to tobacco cultivation is that it conflicts with the peasant's economic concept of subsistence and security.

Figure 14. Arable land and crop sown area (*mu*)

	Cuihu village	Wengpeng Village
Arable land	3,187	2,705
Total area cultivated*	5,669	5,391
Rice sown area	2,840	2,183
Broad bean sown area	2,100	2,058
Corn sown area	100	141
Other crops	629	1,009

SOURCE: Village Statistics 1992.

*With both spring and winter crops.

Land has been associated with different economic realities wherein "social security" stands in contrast to "asset" and "profit" (Kojima 1988). The association of the land with "social security" reflects the peasant's reliance on agricultural products for his and his family's subsistence. To the peasant the land is an "asset" meaning that he is engaged in non-agricultural production while sub-leasing his rights over the contracted land. The land associated with "profit" implies that the peasant turns his agricultural products to the market for sale instead of self-consumption. In the majority of households in Jinguan, land is "security" on which the

peasant livelihood is dependent. The limited amount and intensive utilization of land makes the arable land in Jinguan the most important source of life subsistence.

Agricultural Calendar and Organization of Production

Pantian is what the Jinguan peasants use for cultivating land. *Pan* is a verb for building, and *tian* is field. In the peasant *pantian* system, there are many activities revolving around the crop farming. The organization of production itself primarily refers to timing and labor deployment.

The calendar used by the peasants is the Lunar calendar (*yinli*). It is also called *nongli* ("agricultural calendar") as it contains extensive references to farming seasons. The Chinese agricultural calendar is in fact a combination of both solar and lunar systems, called *yinyang heli*. In this system, an ordinary year is composed of 12 months; and the leap year of 13 months. The length of the month follows the movement of the Moon. Some months have 30 days, and others 29. Thus, every agricultural year has 354 or 355 days (which is 10 or 11 days less than the public calendar). This gap is made up by leap years–approximately one in every three years (strictly speaking, there are seven leap years in nineteen years)–when one month is added (Zeng and Hu 1993; Gu 1993). The agricultural calendar as such comprises twenty-four divisions, each of which indicates a position of the Sun on the zodiac. The movement of the cycle regulates the farming activities throughout the year. Figure 15 illustrates the main farming seasons and activities.

Figure 15. Farming seasons in Jinguan

Division	Approx. date in public calendar*	Farming activity
Chunfen	March 20	first division of the Lunar Calendar; agricultural cycle begins
Qingming	April 5	broad bean harvest begins
Guyu	April 20	fields ploughed, manured and flooded for rice transplanting
Lixia	May 5	rice transplanting begins
Xiaoman	May 20	rice transplanting completed
Mangzhong	June 5	rainy season begins; prepare for planting corn and tobacco
Xiazhi	June 20	summer slack season begins
Qiufen	September 20	rice harvest begins
Shuangjiang	October 20	prepare fields for planting broad beans
Lidong	November 5	winter slack season begins
Lichun	February 5	Chinese New Year begins
Jingzhe	March 5	24th division of the Lunar Calendar, the end of winter resting period

SOURCE: My household survey.

*For the convenience of the reader, the approximate date used here is merely to indicate the period of time, which not necessarily the exact date on which the farming activity assume.

The Chinese New Year marks the end of all farming activities in the season. It is a month or so after the autumn harvest and the winter planting season; and a month or so before all farming activities are resumed. In Jinguan, the agricultural cycle starts around *chunfen* (1st division). The first task is to prepare seedling beds for rice transplantation. At this time, broad bean plants are in the later stage of ripening. A small amount of broad beans are cut first to

make room for the rice seedling beds. Preparing the seed bed is men's job. It includes harrowing the soil, building dykes, and watering. When the seed bed is prepared, women sow seeds. The rice seeds were selected after the autumn harvest. When the seeds are sown, the seed bed is covered with plastic sheets for about ten days. Then, the sheets are removed during the day and restored again in the evening to protect the seedlings from frost. This task is attended to by women. Shortly thereafter, chemical fertilizer is applied, and the plastic sheets are no longer required.

While the rice seedlings are growing quietly, the broad bean harvest begins. It is between *qingming* and *guyu*. In the broad bean harvest, most of the work is done by women: cutting, threshing, and airing. While women are busy with the broad bean harvest, men are engaged in preparing the fields for rice transplantation. The work is to plough (or dig) the soil and building dykes. Ploughs are driven by buffaloes or oxen. Draft animals are used more in Wengpeng than in Cuihu. Because Wengpeng is closer to the mountains, there seem to be more advantages in raising livestock. In Cuihu, the households that possess draft animals are few. Raising draft animals there is generally considered not economically viable, because the annual labor and fodder input is too costly compared to the actual use of the draft animals which is only for a few days during the ploughing seasons. Consistent with this view, the peasants in Cuihu believe that turning up the soil by hand gives better results than ploughing because by using hoes the soil can be turned much deeper. The hoe for turning the soil is a special tool. It is long and wide, and rather heavy. Turning up the soil is mostly men's work. The households that need use draft animals for ploughing often hire buffaloes or oxen from the ones who raise them. A cattle labor (*niugong*) is one buffalo plus one driver (usually the cattle owner), the cost of which is 10 to 12 Yuan cash plus two or three meals. This is the most expensive of all labor employment.

After the soil is turned and dykes have been built, the fields are flooded and manure is applied. Now, it is time to transplant rice. This is the busiest season of the year. It is around *lixia*, and lasts for about two weeks. Transplanting is almost exclusively women's work. This

is probably the only time of the year when men stay at home cooking, feeding pigs, and minding children.

Watering schedules are arranged by the village and hamlet, and flooding the paddies and transplanting must be coordinated. This makes rice transplanting the most intensive work in terms of labor deployment. All women of the households–adult, elderly and even children–are out in the fields and work all day long from dawn to dusk. They eat and drink at the edge of the fields. Food and tea are delivered to the fields by the male adults in the household. Men seldom offer a hand in transplanting. Even when they are out in the fields, they only inspect the condition of ditches and dykes, and mend them if necessary. The transplanting is done by hand, with one person occupying a meter wide space moving backward while dibbling the seedlings in the water at certain space. The particular way of rice transplanting determines the need for several pairs of hands working simultaneously in one plot. This requires labor help from relatives and neighbors outside the household. Most of the labor help comes from within the local community–village and township, and this labor help relation is generally reciprocal. The cooperative team works in turns in each household's fields. The transplanting schedules are carefully planned and adapted to various conditions such as the availability of labor force, the distance between the divided plots of the individual households involved, the watering schedule, and so on.

Xiaoman is the deadline for the completion of rice transplanting, which the locals refer to as *guan yangmen* ("closing seedling door"). It is the point when the fields suddenly become quiet, and more people are seen in and around the village. But this is not yet the slack season, although the intensity of farm work is much reduced. Women tend the fields on a daily basis inspecting water levels, weeding and applying chemical fertilizers. A week or so after the seedlings are transplanted, chemical fertilizer is applied to the fields, then weeding follows. Weeding is done by chemicals which are blended in the soil and spread in the fields. During this time, the amount of water in the fields is carefully watched. If there is too much water, the fertilizer may be too diluted to be effective; or if there is too little water, the concentrated

chemical fertilizer may leave the plants "burning." Either of the conditions results in a poor harvest.

The rainy season comes after *mangzhong*. Around this time, women stay at home apprehensively waiting for the time to plant corn. Because the corn fields are non-irrigated, the rain is crucial. If the seeds are sown long before the first rain, they will not sprout and may die of drought; but if dibbling is postponed for too long, the planting season may be missed. Some people follow their experience in the previous years, sow the seeds and hope for the best. Others sit at home betting their luck on the first heavy rainfall. When the rain eventually comes, those who have not planted rush out to sow the seeds before the soil dries up again; and those who have planted long before the rain may have to re-dibble the seeds. Dibbling corn by hoe is a comparatively light task. It is usually done by one woman, sometimes with the help of a child carrying a seed bag. The hoe for dibbling corn seeds is much smaller than the one used for turning up the soil. About two weeks after the corn is planted, the soil needs to be loosened, weeded and fertilized. Again, all this is women's work.

About the same time, tobacco is transplanted. Seedlings are first fostered in the special "nutrition pockets" (plastic bags) provided by the government agricultural technicians. Because tobacco is not a traditional plant cultivated in this area, peasants do not have much experience with it. This alone may contribute to a considerable labor input in tobacco cultivation. In the households that grow tobacco, both men and women are involved in the work from transplanting tobacco seedlings to harvesting. The whole tobacco growing period demands constant attention as pests can cause serious problems.

From *xiazhi* to *bailu*, it is the summer slack season. During this period of time, there is less need to water the paddy or otherwise manage the fields. Apart from occasional field inspections to make sure that weeds and pests are eliminated, women direct their energy to other activities such as tending vegetables in the garden plot and gathering fallen leaves and grass gathered from the woods in the mountains to cushion the pigsty. Men, on the other hand, are generally at leisure. In the households that have tobacco fields, the men may have to spend

some time monitoring the growing situation of the plants. In recent years, more and more men join the work teams for contract labor outside the village, and they normally leave home at this time of the year.

The slack season lasts about three months or so until the autumn harvest. The rice harvest starts around *qiufen*, usually right after the Moon (or Mid-Autumn) festival. Shortly before the rice harvest, corn and tobacco are harvested. Given the small quantity cultivated, the corn and tobacco harvests are only minor work compared to the rice harvest. At the time of the rice harvest, the men who work outside the village return home and help. Both men and women participate in the rice harvest. Three weeks before the harvest, water is drained from the paddy to allow the soil to dry, and make the surface firm enough for threshing. This is important, not only because it makes cutting and threshing easier, but also because it prevents harvested rice from getting soaked and rotten. Although it is the end of the rainy season, heavy and continuous rains are quite common. To minimize possible damage, the rice harvest is extremely labor intensive, and turns the rice field literally into a racing ground. Women cut rice (with sickles) and men pick it up and thresh (usually done by a foot pedaled machine). Afterwards, men carry the sacks with threshed rice grain back to the village (sometimes push-carts are used for transportation). While men are transporting the rice sacks, women tie the rice stalks into bundles that are left in the fields until all rice fields have been harvested. Unlike the rice transplanting when labor help from outside the household is required, rice harvesting is usually carried out independently by the individual household though occasionally some help is needed for special reasons (e.g. people may be too elderly or infirm to accomplish the work).

Now, the rice is harvested, but the agricultural cycle is not yet completed. Once all the rice sacks and straw bundles are back at the house, it is the time to prepare for broad bean planting. This is around *shuangjiang*. Again, men prepare the fields levelling soil and applying manure, and women dibble seeds. Broad beans are a crop which does not need much care. Once it is planted, it takes care of itself until the time of harvest.

After *lidong*, it is slack season again. At this time, men who are engaged in contract labor may leave the village again for another period of work before the Lunar New Year. Many events take place during this period, such as building new houses and holding weddings. This is also the time when festival food is prepared. Pigs are slaughtered; rice is ground and made into noodles and cakes; and so on. The New Year is the first day of the Lunar month around *lichun*. The New Year festival lasts for two or three weeks during which the peasants enjoy the fruits of the harvest, and rest from the hard work in the past year. This is also a time for relatives to visit each other. The New Year is followed by a break of a month or so till *jingzhe* (24th division). After that, a new agricultural cycle starts all over again.

Productivity

Rice is said to be a swamp plant by nature; and it is extremely adaptable (Bray 1986: 11-12). The two most common sub-species of domesticated rice in Asia are named *indica* and *japonica*. The spread of these two species is believed to be related to differences in altitude, as it is noted:

> A study of cultivated rices in Yunnan province in the Chinese foothills of the Himalayas showed that *indica* varieties predominated up to 1,750 m and *japonica* varieties over 2,000 m, while in the zone between 1,750 and 2,000 m intermediate varieties were found. (Ding Ying 1964 as quoted in Bray 1986: 12)

Indica and *japonica* are found separately in Jinguan and Yongning. The Three-River basin of Jinguan is situated at the altitude of 1,580 meters, and the reddish and long-grained rice cultivated there is apparently of *indica* variety. The Yongning basin is situated at the altitude of 2,600 meters, and semi-transparent and round grained rice cultivated there is apparently of *japonica* variety. The yields of *indica* varieties are higher than the yields of *japonica* varieties (see below and Chapter 6). The quality of the two rice varieties is different. The long grains of *indica* rice turn dry and loose when cooked, while the round grains of *japonica* rice tend to be mushy and sticky.

The rice cultivating area in Jinguan dominates up to 90 per cent of the arable land; and of all cultivated crops, the rice has the highest output (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Crop unit output in Jinguan (*jin*)

Crop	Average output/*mu*	Maximum output/*mu*
Rice	1,100	1,400
Broad beans	300	400
Corn and other cereals	500	600

SOURCE: My household survey.

By comparison, the rice output is higher in Cuihu where it is around 1,200 *jin*, and lower in Wengpeng where it is around 1,000 *jin*. Generally speaking, with two harvests a year, the land productivity of the paddy reaches some 1,200 to 1,400 *jin* of grain (per *mu*). This roughly corresponds with the Jinguan township statistics which show that the average grain distribution per person in 1991 was 1,270 *jin*. Given that the average market price for grain is some 0.40 Yuan per *jin*(1991), the average income per *mu* of land, at a rough calculation, is about 500 Yuan.

The production cost amounts to 10 to 15 per cent of the income from crops. The calculation of production by the peasants is related to the peasant idea of spending (see later in the chapter) in that human labor and time are not included. The production cost as calculated by the peasants, therefore, only includes the expenses on commodity goods such as chemical fertilizers and pesticide (and herbicide). Pesticide and herbicide are relatively inexpensive, and cost an average of 5 Yuan per *mu* of rice paddy. Chemical fertilizers, on the other hand, are more expensive.

Chemical fertilizers are said to first appear in the Chinese market around in the late 1920s and early 1930s to increase rice output (Bray 1986: 49). According to the residents in Jinguan, their first encounter with chemical fertilizers was in the mid 1960s. Due to its high

cost, the production teams were not quite able to afford it, and only small amounts of chemical fertilizers were basically used to foster seedlings. Since 1983 (after the land was contracted to the household), the use of chemical fertilizers has increased.

The most common chemical fertilizers are nitrates and phosphates. The peasants in Jinguan particularly like nitrates. They are used for rice cultivation. Phosphates are optional and often used for broad bean cultivation, and applied at intervals of every other year or every third year; and some households do not use them at all for economic reasons. These two kinds of chemical fertilizers are applied in the early growing period of the plants. The nitrates are good for stimulating the growth of rice plants. The phosphates, in addition to being nutrient, increase resistance to cold climate which is important given that broad beans grow in winter. Every *mu* of paddy (of double cropping) needs some 50 to 60 kg chemical fertilizer; and every *mu* of corn needs 30 kg chemical fertilizer per year. The price of nitrates in 1992 was 41.50 Yuan for a packet of 40 kg.[3] The cost of phosphates is lower, at a price of 18 Yuan per packet. If, on average, every *mu* of paddy needs 30 kg of nitrates and 30 kg of phosphates, plus 5 Yuan for pesticides, the total production cost is around 50 Yuan per *mu*, which is about 10 per cent of the total output of one *mu* of land. Some households may well exceed this percentage given the particular problems with pests, seed varieties, and so on.

The amount of chemical fertilizer used is crucial. If too little is applied, it will not be effective enough to stimulate the growth of the plants; but if too much is applied, it causes lodging (or leaning head down) and a subsequent yield fall. The general situation in the two villages of Jinguan is that the higher the output, the more chemical fertilizers have been used; and the lower the output, the less chemical fertilizers have been used. How much chemical fertilizers the peasants choose to use is often determined by the economic means available. The supply of chemical fertilizers is through two channels: the state monopoly and the market. The state supplies chemical fertilizers at a subsidized price, the amount of which is based on the

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[3]This price was 1.2 times higher than the price ten years ago (1983).

grain procurement contract (see *Household Consumption* below). As the supply of the subsidized priced chemical fertilizers is limited, an alternative source is the market supply of chemical fertilizers at a negotiated price. In 1992, the chemical fertilizers sold in the market cost 67 Yuan per packet, which is 50 to 60 per cent above the state subsidized price. If the peasants cannot afford more chemical fertilizers at the market price, they must make up the fertilizer insufficiency with farm manure.

Farm manure is good for sustaining the fertility of the soil, and also softens the soil. It is applied early during the period of field preparation, i.e. while ploughing and watering. Therefore, it is called "base manure" (*difei*). The farm manure is collected from both animal dung and human wastes. The labor involved in gathering manure is tremendous: cushioning the pigsty with greens and stalks, maintaining the methane gas pit, excavating manure from the pit and carrying the loads to the fields. The average amount of manure used for every *mu* of paddy is–in addition to chemical fertilizers–around 1,500 kg for rice and about the same amount for broad beans.

Apart from applying fertilizers, seed selection is also a measure to guarantee high yields. In the subsistence economy, the farmer's utmost concern is to secure high crop yields and prevent disastrously low yields. Therefore, planting several different varieties of rice in any one season is one way of minimizing risks (Bray 1986: 17). In Jinguan, the peasants households change rice seeds, on average, every two or three years (sometimes less frequently, in every five years). The seed varieties are obtained from the experimental fields for rice varieties that are cultivated by selected households under the supervision of the county and township agricultural technicians. Many peasants in Cuihu go to a neighboring village in the basin (in Liangguan township) to get new rice varieties. The exchange is directly between the peasants and the cultivator of the experiment plots. One *jin* of rice seeds (*daozhong*) is traded against an equal amount of husked rice (*dami*). Because most of the households have two and three, or even more scattered paddy lots, two or three different varieties are usually acquired to adapt to the

different qualities of soil. The periodical change of rice seeds and the selection of seed varieties are important measures taken by the peasants to avoid risks and guarantee the highest yields.

The consumption of rice seeds is small in contrast to its output. The comparison of the seed consumption of different crops shows an interesting trend that the larger the size of the grain is, the higher the amount used for seeds. Among the three major grain crops, the seeds and output are in inverse ratio. That is, the higher the output, the lower the consumption of seeds (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Seed consumption in Jinguan

Crop	Amount of seed used (*jin/mu*)	Percentage of average output
Rice	10	1
Broad beans	40-50	16
Corn	15-20	2-3

SOURCE: My household survey.

Rice production is the most labor intensive among all the grain crops. From transplanting to harvesting, rice cultivation consumes 25 labor days per *mu* (the casual labor during slack season, e.g. women's inspection of field conditions, is not included here). This is about 70 per cent higher than the labor input in Yongning (see Chapter 6). Corn cultivation consumes 15 labor days per *mu*. The labor input in broad bean cultivation is the least. Because broad beans grow in winter, there is little trouble with weeds and pests. The only time labor is needed is at the time of sowing and harvesting, which consumes altogether 10 labor days per *mu*. Until the introduction of tobacco cultivation, rice farming was by far the most intensive of the crops cultivated in this area.

The labor force is generally sufficient in most households (except for the rice transplanting season) in Jinguan, and the labor productivity is relatively high. Strictly speaking,

in a household of four or five people (two adults and two children, and perhaps one elderly person), one to one and half laborers year-round is sufficient to cope with the family grain crop farming. The labor surplus is primarily due to the limited land resources in relation to a large population. The limited land resources and the labor surplus, on the other hand, make it necessary and possible for the households to develop sideline production. My household survey shows that the better economic conditions in some households are linked to the labor surplus engaged in sideline production which contributes cash income. In most households, women manage most of the work inside and outside the household during the slack seasons, whether men are at home or not. Therefore, women prefer their husbands or adult sons to have some kind of employment outside farming. As they calculate, if the men stay at home, they still need to be fed; but if they have employment outside the home–even if it does not provide much cash income–at least the men can earn enough to feed themselves.

The labor surplus, however, is not the only variable for a household to be engaged in sideline production. The development of sideline production is also restricted by local resources and economic opportunities. In Jinguan, there are limited kinds of sideline production, and the choices for each household depend on individual circumstances.

Sideline Production

Sideline production is in line with the peasant's consumption aspirations "to turn some special skills of his own into a part-time occupation capable of earning him money, or to integrate some specialty with his agricultural cycle" (E. Wolf 1966: 45). In Chinese, sideline production is called *fuye–fu* means auxiliary, subsidiary or secondary; and *ye* is production. Sideline production thus contrasts the grain crop farming which is understood as primary production. While grain crop farming provides subsistence, sideline production brings in cash. Therefore, sideline production can be simply understood as cash-earning occupation providing for consumption above subsistence.

There are basically three types of household sideline production in Jinguan. The most common one is the general household management of domestic animals and cultivation of greens. This includes raising pigs and fowl, and growing vegetables. The second category includes occupations demanding special skills: carpentry, blacksmith, bricklayer, basket weaver, butcher and so on. The third category is off-season contract labor. The first category is mainly for household consumption, and is mostly taken care of by women. The second and third categories provide extra cash income, and they are mostly men's occupations.

Every household keeps a pigsty in the residential compound. Pigs are raised mainly for household consumption, and some are for sale in emergencies or for special ceremonies. The growing period from piglet to ready-to-slaughter pig is seven to eight months during which a pig can reach to a weight of 200 *jin*; and in one-year time, a pig can grow to a weight of 300 *jin*. If it is for sale, 200 *jin* is the desirable weight; and if it is for household consumption (i.e. *nianzhu*, slaughtered for the New Year), 300 *jin* is a good weight. People do not tend to feed a pig any longer than one year, as pigs consume a large amount of grain fodder.

The pig feed is usually a mixture of grain and greens. The common grain fodders are broad beans, corn, rice fragments and chaff. The common green fodders are those grown in the garden plot or dry land such as leaf beet or chard (*Beta vulgaris cicla*) locally called *niupi cai* ("ox-skin vegetable"), radish, squash and so on. To raise a pig up to 200 *jin*, the consumption of grain fodder is 300 to 500 *jin*. My household survey shows that the annual average amount of grain fodder consumed in raising domestic animals in a household is between 1,000 to 1,600 *jin*, slightly lower in Wengpeng than in Cuihu. If taking labor input into consideration in addition to the fodder input, raising pigs would seem not quite a profitable venture. However, it makes perfect sense in the peasant conceptual framework regulated by the production-consumption loop in that labor input and household produced goods are not calculated as cost.

In recent years, some compound pig feed has been introduced to the peasants on the market (there was a big commercial promotion when I was there). As advertised, it contains more nutrients than the ordinary household blend of pig feed; and the use of the compound pig

feed saves much grain and guarantees a fast growth of the animal. But, most of the peasants in Jinguan have been reluctant to use the compound pig feed for they believe that the pork will not taste the same. Some peasants try the compound pig feed on pigs raised for sale, but meanwhile continue to feed the pigs raised as *nianzhu* ("New Year's pig") with the usual household blend fodder. One important reason why the peasants do not want to use the commercial compound pig feed, however, is because it costs since it must be purchased in the market, but not produced by the household.

Compared to pigs, raising chickens qualifies as the sideline of sideline production, as far as energy input and cash value are concerned. Chickens are generally raised for household consumption. A meal with a chicken (or a few eggs) usually marks a special occasion–entertaining guests, receiving ancestors, or providing the sick or the women after labor with extra nutrients. At times, some households may choose to sell a chicken or two (or a dozen of eggs) in exchange for a small amount of cash to cover minor household expenses. As it does not require much labor–even a child can look after them during intervals of plays–raising chickens is a low-cost and popular form of sideline production among the peasant households.

Vegetables are mostly grown in the peasant garden plots, and some such as squash and chard are grown on the edges of dryland. Apart from the greens used for fodder, chili pepper, tomato, bitter gourd (*Momordica charantia*), green cabbage, turnip, sweet green pepper, cucumber and scallion are the main vegetables for human consumption. Because of the limitation of land and the large quantity of green fodder needed to raise pigs, vegetables grown in the garden plots in most peasant households are just enough for household consumption; and from time to time, many households need to purchase a small amount of vegetables from the market. In some households, there may be some vegetable surplus for sale in the market. But the market price for vegetables is low, and many peasants do not consider growing vegetables for sale worth the trouble.

Aside from raising pigs, chickens and growing vegetables, there are other kinds of low-cost and relatively profitable sideline production, but not as common as those mentioned above.

Fish is locally considered fancy food, and is eaten only on special occasions. Its price is often higher than pork. Raising fish is a privileged production, and only a small number of households in Cuihu are engaged in fishery under a special contract with the village. In one household, the annual income from fishing (managed by one man only) alone is up to 3,000 Yuan (net).

Raising silkworms is probably the least costly sideline production of all, which is more popular in Wengpeng than in Cuihu, due to its environment suitable for growing mulberry trees. The growing period of silkworms is during the slack season in the summer. This makes good use of labor surplus. The work is usually done by children and young women. Elderly people are not much involved in this work because it requires energy to walk around gathering mulberry leaves and a good eye sight to detect the movements of silkworms in the dark rooms. The silkworm growing period is approximately one month. Each summer, an average household can work two or three cycles and make an income up to 600 Yuan from silkworm cocoons. This is a considerable amount of income given the insignificant input in the process of production.

In the category of occupation with special skills, the artisans work within the village as well as outside the village. As workers with special skills, the payment for their work is high, at a rate of 5 to 10 Yuan per day. Because of their special skills, many of them (except for the butchers) join the teams of contract labor.

Contracted labor is individually or collectively organized male labor mainly engaged in house building, bridge and road construction in other townships or counties, and sometimes in other provinces (e.g. Sichuan and Guizhou). This kind of organization of labor first appeared in 1975 under the leadership of the village collective (the brigade at the time), as a measure to increase income to make up for insufficient income from agriculture. Today, contract labor is mostly organized by private building contractors in the township; some peasants find work opportunities through fellow villagers who have worked outside for a long time. The contracted workers usually leave the village after the rice transplanting season and return before the rice

harvest. Some people work for a few months, and others for a year or longer. The lucky ones may bring some cash back home, but the unlucky ones (especially those who leave home to seek opportunities on their own) may not be able to earn enough to cover their own travel expenses. The income from contract labor is not stable and the opportunities for such employment are not guaranteed. In Cuihu village, eight households out of thirty surveyed are engaged in contract labor; in Wengpeng, only three households out of thirty have income from contract labour.

The income from sideline production on the whole contributes only a minor portion to the peasant household economy in Jinguan. In an average household, the income from sideline production is less than one-third of the total. The average annual income from sideline production is between 500 and 1,000 Yuan. Among the sixty households interviewed in both villages, sixteen (ten in Cuihu and six in Wengpeng) do not have income from sideline production at all.[4]

Despite the varieties of non-agricultural activities, cash income (and spending) does not play a significant role in the peasant livelihood. The limited resources and opportunities for sideline production make the subsistence economy with an emphasis on grain crop production even more pronounced.

Subsistence-Security: Cultural and Economic Values of Rice

Rice cultivation is the main livelihood of the peasants in Jinguan. In the Three-River basin, three seasons of the year are dedicated to rice farming; and in the whole cycle of agricultural activities, much energy is devoted to rice farming and many economic decisions revolve around

[4]Income from sideline production is calculated on the basis of the products sold on the market, but not on the basis of the products consumed by the household.

rice cultivation. Rice is valuable to peasants for many reasons. Rice is an important item of food contained in three meals a day; rice in storage provides security for the bad years; rice surplus can be sold in the market for cash to be used for purchasing household necessities; and rice wrapped up in gift packages is a sign of good wishes which is an important of social exchange. The image of rice ears thus represents the essence of the peasant livelihood, and embodies a series of cultural, economic and moral values.

Rice Identity and Staple Food

Rice as a symbol of cultural identity has been used to describe Japanese society, where rice contains the "soul" which distinguishes "self" from "other." The cultural linkage of rice to self has been associated with different social realities over time, and transcends the subsistence importance of the crop (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). The symbolic value is expressed in the association of rice with "our ancestral land," and "own seeds" (ibid.: 98) nationally, and has led to the opposition to the products of foreign land (namely Californian rice), which asserts a kind of cultural superiority in addition to self-protection in economic consideration.

In Chinese society, rice as a symbol has been analyzed as ancestral substance and descent identity. This derives from the concept that "rice is the product of the land worked by and inherited from ancestors" (Thompson 1988: 93) Rice ears in Jinguan do not necessarily have spiritual value, but are attached to cultural values crucial to the peasants' economic decisions. In Jinguan, rice includes two local expressions: *guzi* referred to both rice plant and rice grain, and *dami* which is husked rice. On many occasions during my interviews with peasants, when I asked directly or talked indirectly about what they regard as most important in their life, the answer was either *guzi*, or *dami*. The high yields of *guzi*, and plenty of tasty *dami* are regarded by the residents of the Three-River basin as a source of their superior livelihood, compared to the surrounding mountaineers whose diet is composed of potatoes, corn and other cereals. While there was often not enough rice to eat during the collective period, today the three meals a day with rice are certainly a sign of improved life.

As rice is the staple food in the composition of diet in Jinguan, it stands for subsistence security. When the local peasants encounter something that violates their subsistence security, the preference for rice cultivation becomes more pronounced. The association of subsistence security with rice gives an explanation to the economic choice that the Jinguan peasants make between grain and cash crops.

Rice versus Tobacco

Earlier in this chapter, the economic system of Jinguan is presented as a self-sustaining ecosystem. In this economic system, the peasants have their own ideas about how the system works, and why it works. These ideas guide their economic activities and determine their priorities of production. The priority of rice production in the Jinguan economy creates potential conflicts with cash crop production.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, tobacco production was promoted by the local government in order to raise revenue income. In 1991, Jinguan was assigned an area of 1,500 *mu* to grow tobacco. In 1992, this assignment was raised and the area became 3,300 *mu*, or more than double that of the previous year. Despite the relatively insignificant area under cultivation (no more than five percent of the total arable land in 1991 and no more than ten per cent in 1992), tobacco production caused much resentment among the peasants, as it disturbed the traditional pattern of production in Jinguan.

Growing tobacco, the situation differed from village to village. In some cases, dryland was appropriated for tobacco cultivation; and in others, rice paddies were appropriated. As for exactly which plot was to be utilized, it was a decision made by the village administration office. Some households received assignments to grow tobacco, others did not. Because it was compulsory, those–who had been given tobacco assignments but did not want to cultivate–were required to surrender the designated plot (the size of which is from a few *fen* up to one *mu*) to the village administration office. The plot was then re-contracted to other households. To the household that sub-contracted the plot from another household through the village

administration, growing tobacco was not a problem since the sub-contract did not really violate the subsistence production on its originally contracted land. The income from the sub-contracted tobacco plot went to the cultivator, from which a small amount of fees (from 50 to 70 Yuan per *mu*) was subtracted by the village to compensate the household that had surrendered the plot for tobacco assignment.

All households tried to get away from the assignments, but some were lucky and others were not. The peasants in Wengpeng had a special excuse claiming that tobacco plants interfere with mulberry. They insisted that if tobacco were grown next to the mulberry trees, the nicotine would infect the mulberry leaves and subsequently poison the silkworms. In the end, because the village administration did not want to take the responsibility for the possible loss of income from peasant sideline production, it stopped interfering, and the hamlets where many households raised silkworms and grew mulberry trees managed to escape their tobacco assignments.

Those unlucky ones who were bold enough would use a variety of tricks to avoid planting tobacco on their contracted land. At first, they just ignored the orders and went ahead to plant rice (in paddy) or corn (in dryland), and waited to see what would happen. After a while, some peasants became intimidated by the village and township cadres, and pulled out the rice or corn seedlings themselves and planted tobacco. Other peasants continued to resist the pressure from above with great persistence. They replanted and replanted grain crops each time after the local cadres pulled out the seedlings for them. The most stubborn ones–though only a small number of them–won out in the end, as the seesaw games between the peasants and local cadres dragged on and the planting season for tobacco was finally missed.

Given that extra cash income was not exactly unwelcome and that tobacco is, technically speaking, a potentially high profit product (in southern Yongsheng, the income from tobacco can be as high as 1,000 Yuan per *mu*), why were the peasants in Jinguan so resistant to tobacco production? This question has both moral and economic implications.

The moral issue is much related to the peasants' perception of the user's rights under the land contract. In his approach to the local model of peasant economy, Gudemen maintains that "Crops were to the land, as human hair was to the head" (Gudemen 1986: 5). This model outlines the right of the cultivator to the product of the land. This analogy is roughly equivalent to the user's right under the current land system in China. In the first few years after the land was contracted to the peasant households, the peasants enjoyed the freedom of managing their land and production, while dutifully contributing agricultural tax. But the implementation of tobacco policy makes the peasants feel insecure, and they fear that the land will, one day, be under collective management again as before. The compulsory tobacco production is therefore regarded by the peasants as violating their users rights.

On the economic level, the main problems are related to production cost, output and market. Tobacco is grown in both paddy and dryland. In either type of land, there is only one harvest a year. Although the growing period of tobacco is shorter than rice, the labor input is much higher. While rice cultivation requires 25 labor days per *mu* (already the highest among all other crop cultivations), the labor input in tobacco production is estimated about three times as high, amounting to 72 labor days. The amount of labor input is seen by the peasants as depriving them of leisure. As they say, one can stay at home resting or take care of other sideline production after rice transplanting; but if one grows tobacco, one has no choice but to keep oneself busy in the fields throughout the summer.

The high labor input in tobacco production is largely owing to a lack of technology and experience. Throughout the whole process of tobacco production, the biggest headache for the cultivator is pest control during the growing period. Peasants complained that it is difficult to predict and prevent pests and other infections by diseases. To eliminate pests and diseases, large amounts of chemicals are used (yet it is often not easy to decide which kind of chemicals to use). Pest control alone makes tobacco cultivation costly (not to mention the cost of chemical fertilizers). Furthermore, tobacco production is not completed when the harvest is over. The leaves need to be cured before they can be sold for cash; and tobacco curing is again costly. The

curing kiln is an oven about five meters high and two meters in each of the other two dimensions. During the curing procedure, the temperature in the kiln is kept at between 35 and 60 degrees centigrade. It is fueled by coal which has to be purchased. Although the building of kilns was partly subsidized by the local government (100 Yuan per kiln), few peasants consider it worth having one in their yard. But if the household that grew tobacco does not have a kiln, it will have to pay others to cure the tobacco leaves. This further adds to the production cost and makes the net income even slimmer.

However, the high production cost and high labor input involved in tobacco cultivation do not necessarily result in high output. According to the peasants in Jinguan, the average income from tobacco in 1991 was between 200 and 300 Yuan (net) per *mu*, the output is about half lower than growing grain crop. Considering the difference in income between rice production and tobacco production and considering the work spent on it, tobacco production is regarded by the peasants as not rewarding at all.

Apart from the problems involved in the production process, the income from tobacco is also discredited due to the monopoly of the tobacco market by the local government. Tobacco is purchased by contract. The county government appoints the township government to set up purchase stations; and peasants are required to sell their cured tobacco leaves within the boundary of the township where they reside. The ones who do not follow the rules do not receive the county government's subsidies to tobacco production (including grain, chemical fertilizer, pesticide, fuel, and seeds).[5] These regulations are made to ensure that the local government collects the full profits from the tobacco sale. But this administrative control leaves the peasants with no latitude to maneuver and maximize their own income.

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[5]For every kg of tobacco leaves, 1 kg of husked rice is subsidized for loss of grain; and 0.14 to 0.26 Yuan cash is subsidized for fuel. In addition, for every *mu* of tobacco grown area, 30 kg chemical fertilizers are provided at the state control price, plus 5 Yuan cash to subsidize the cost of pesticide.

The technical and administrative problems certainly present the disadvantages in tobacco cultivation. But given the limited amount of land used, the economic loss in tobacco production is not significant. There is something else deeply rooted in the peasant economic concept which created the conflict between growing rice and tobacco. This is the subsistence-security complex which is a set of cultural values constructed on the distinction between food stuff and non-food stuff.

It has been argued that the increment of risk in shifting from subsistence production to cash cropping results from the perception that "a successful subsistence crop more or less guarantees the family food supply" but "a bumper cash crop does not, by itself, assure a family's food supply" (Scott 1976: 20). There is a similar distinction between "food supply" and "non-edible cash crop" made by the peasants in Jinguan in assessing the value of rice and tobacco. By comparison, rice has all the consumption value but tobacco does not. To the peasants, every part of the rice plant is useful: rice grains for food, rice stalks for fodder, and the remnants for cushioning materials in the pigsty to generate manure. Tobacco, on the other hand, has little practical usage in the household consumption for either human beings or domestic animals. The only credit tobacco has is its cash value, but in the subsistence economy the value of cash crops is overridden by the consideration for subsistence security. The distinction between food supply and non-edible cash crop which has resulted in the conflict between rice and tobacco can be further observed from the dichotomy of *liangshi* and *jingji* that has influence on the peasant economy concept.

The Concepts of Liangshi *and* Jingji

In plain Chinese language, *liangshi* is "grain;" and *jingji* literally means "economy." Although they are not completely irrelevant to each other, "grain" and "economy" can rarely be used as a contrasting pair. But, in peasant economic concepts, these two terms constitute two economic categories, representing different values.

During my interviews, when asked about their household income (*shouru*), most of the peasants would ask me to specify whether I meant *liangshi*, or *jingji*. Sometimes they told me that they did not have much to tell because "We do not have much *jingji*." This answer at first puzzled me somewhat. Having paid attention to their use of the two terms under different circumstances, it became clear to me after a while that *liangshi* and *jingji* are two quite distinct economic concepts that the peasants have, in that *liangshi* is the product of the land and *jingji* is cash earned from sideline production and other employment. Each term has a metonymic usage: *liangshi* standing for "subsistence" and "security;" and *jingji* standing for "money" or "cash." They embody two economic categories in the peasant household production.

In Jinguan, income from the land is valued differently from cash earned from sideline production. Because the cash economy is relatively insignificant and there is but a limited amount of cash to spend, most of the financial calculations that peasants make are in terms of rice and broad bean output. In responding to inquiries about their household economic situation, grain output is the answer. "The income is good" means a high yield of rice and a reasonably fine harvest of broad beans. "The income is not so good;" or even "the income is bad" means a unsatisfactory yield of rice and maybe a poor broad bean harvest. When asked about the exact income of the household from farming, instead of figures indicating how many *jin* or kilogram, the peasants would give me a number of sacks, e.g. twenty-five or forty. This is because, at the time of harvest, threshed grains are filled in sacks, mostly used chemical fertilizer bags; and the total output is calculated in sacks. One sack of rice is between 70 and 80 *jin* on average.

In contrast to *liangshi*, *jingji* is supplementary in the composition of income and in the peasant concept of economy. In the subsistence economy, the household's priority in farming is to feed its members; then to increase its income for security (e.g. by maintaining a moderate grain storage). Only after these requirements are met, can one spend money on commercial goods other than those directly serving the needs of filling stomach, clothing and sheltering. The dichotomy of *liangshi* and *jingji* not only provides guidelines for the peasants in making

economic decisions, but also sets constraints on the peasant idea of household consumption. In the peasant household economy, production and consumption are closely connected which reflect the idea of self-sufficiency and regulate the pattern of household spending.

Production-Consumption Loop: the Principle of Self-Sufficiency

Peasant economy has been commonly understood as production for use rather than production for exchange. In other words, goods produced are primarily for use within the household where they are evaluated in terms of their productive and consumptive qualities (Gudemen 1986). In the peasant economy of Jinguan, the relation between production and consumption is that the former is conducted directly for the purpose of the latter; and the latter reflects the meaning (or makes sense) of the former.

By "the production-consumption loop," I simply imply a system in which one produces what one consumes, and one consumes what one produces. The consistent peasant idea of spending and the pattern of household consumption can be observed from market activities and the management of household expenditures.

Markets

Markets in Yongsheng existed as early as in the Ming Dynasty. They were prosperous in the Qing Dynasty and in the Republican period, but experienced ups and downs from the early 1950s to the late 1970s. In 1954, grain trade in Yongsheng was abolished following the establishment of the state monopoly purchase. During the period of 1958-1960 (known as the Great Leap Forward), all markets were shut down completely. In 1961, markets were reopened, but plunged back to a standstill again during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960 through the early 1970s. In 1978, grain, meat, egg and cattle trade resumed; and in the next two or three years, most of the old markets in Yongsheng were restored and reopened. (*Yongsheng*

Xianzhi 1989) These ups and downs of the rural market reflect the changing political situation in different periods of time accompanied by significant economic changes over the years.[6]

Currently, there are thirty-two markets in Yongsheng county. Most of them are concentrated in the basin area (see Figure 18). There are nine big markets, each of which holds more than five thousand participants on each market day. All market centers have fixed convening dates, generally following a five-day cycle on different combinations of dates: one-six; two-seven; three-eight; four-nine, five-ten. On each of the opening days, five or six markets are open.

Jinguan is the biggest market in Yongsheng. It opens on a periodicity of four and nine dates: 4th, 9th, 14th, 19th, 24th and 29th of the month (in the public calendar). The estimated number of participants is 15,000 to 20,000 on each single market day. The market is situated at the center of a major transportation network. Because Jinguan is so close to the county seat–which is a main transportation junction in northwest Yunnan, and the only route linking Yongsheng and the adjacent counties to Lijiang, the prefectural seat, a number of buses pass Jinguan daily. On a market day, there are three or four additional charted buses carrying traders and goods in and out of Jinguan.

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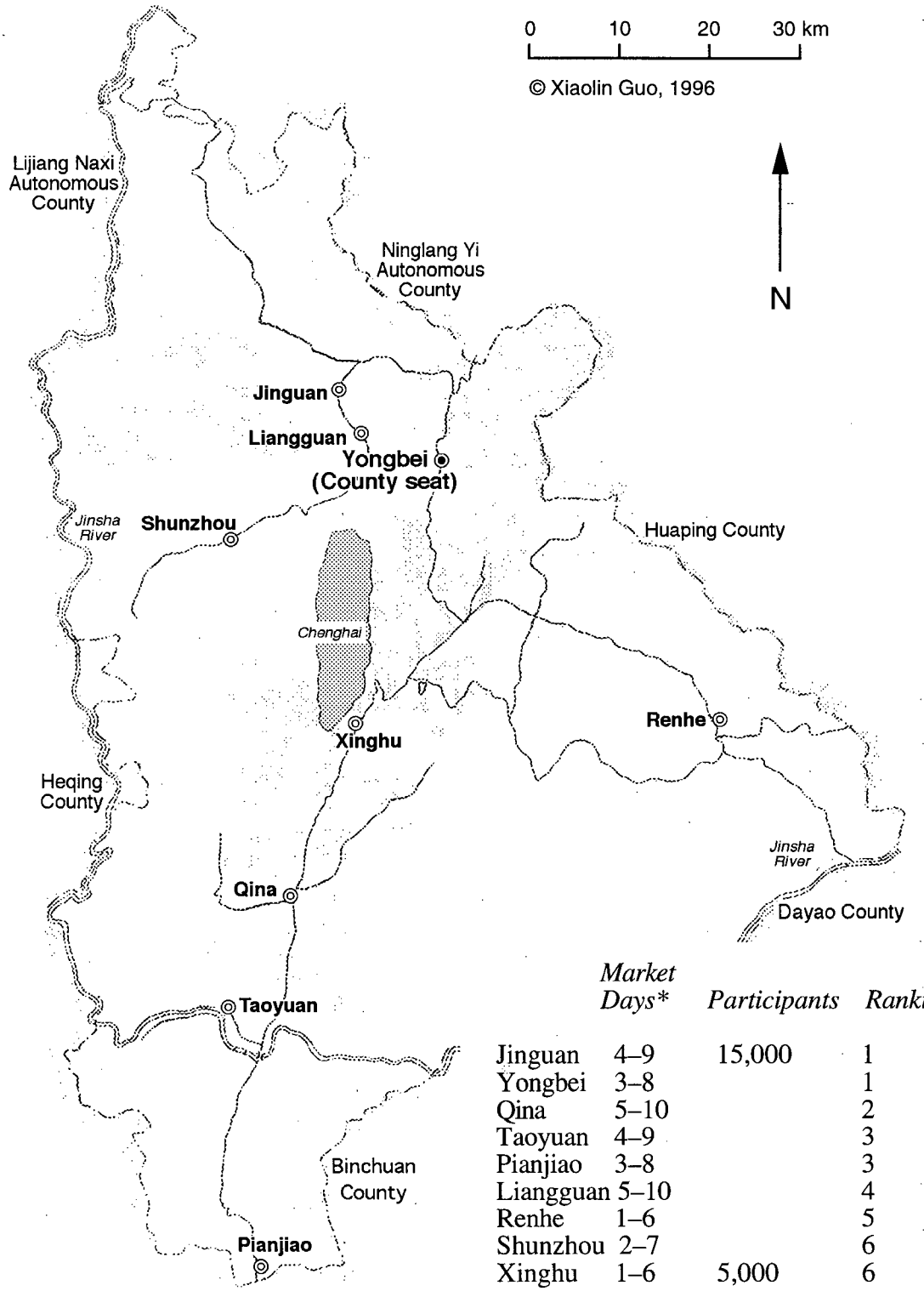
[6]Cf. G. William Skinner's account of the policy cycles of government interference in the market (1985).

Figure 18. Yongsheng markets



	*Market Days**	*Participants*	*Ranking*
Jinguan	4–9	15,000	1
Yongbei	3–8		1
Qina	5–10		2
Taoyuan	4–9		3
Pianjiao	3–8		3
Liangguan	5–10		4
Renhe	1–6		5
Shunzhou	2–7		6
Xinghu	1–6	5,000	6

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* Dates are listed according to the solar calendar, e.g. a "4–9 market" meets on the 4th, 9th, 14th, 19th, 24th and 29th of the month.

The Jinguan market is a "standard market" in Skinner's term. It meets "all the normal trade needs of the peasant household: what the household produced but did not consume was normally sold there, and what it consumed but did not produce was normally bought there" (Skinner 1964: 6). The sustaining of such a standard market is based on the self-sufficiency of the peasant economy. This probably coincides with the periodicity of market convention which is said to suit the mobility of the entrepreneur who must calculate the demands for his product and the distance to travel; and to meet the subsistence needs of the consumer of the peasant household whose livelihood was much dependent on the household produce (ibid.: 10-11). The market in Jinguan seems to resemble the same pattern. The periodicity allows the non-commercial producer enough leeway to gather the salable amount of produce, and to pack and arrange transportation to the market. As the consumer mostly relies on household produce in daily life and hardly has cash to spend on a daily basis, the market periodicity allows the consumer to manage the limited household cash more economically by concentrating it on the most needed goods.

The market day is called *gaizi tian* or *gai tian* by the local people. *Gaizi* is "street," and *tian* is "day." In the local speech, street and market are the same. Going to market is locally expressed as *gan gai* ("catch the street"). The market day begins at daybreak. In the summer, it is around 6:30 to 7 o'clock when the buses begin to roll into the Jinguan town. The carriages are always packed with people, and the roof is loaded with bundles, sacks and baskets containing various goods. The early arrivers are the long-distance travellers from other townships in Yongsheng. Some of the traders possess private transportation such as walking tractors or animal-drawn wagons. The late arrivers are the traders living in the vicinity who come to the market by bicycle or on foot. All stalls are set and ready for trade by 8:30 am. After an hour or so, the consumers pour in and the market begins to boil.

Stalls are lined up along the four main streets of Jinguan. There are designated sectors for certain goods. Vegetable stalls (usually two baskets attached to a shoulder pole) and meat stalls (a large wooden surface under a sunshade) are on one street. Around the corner, is the

sector for live animals (pigs, sheep/goats) and poultry, and eggs and other home processed food such as *doufu* (soybean cake), rice noodles, *huotui* (cured ham), pickles and so on. The street parallel to the vegetable-meat street is piled with firewood, farm tools, household utensils, hardware, incense, various religious decorations and other hand crafts. Turning around the corner, there are garment stalls on one end, and on the other end there are stalls selling brown sugar, peanuts, dry food stuff (e.g. mushroom, *huajiao* or prickly ash pepper, chili, etc.), fresh fruits, fish and animal skins. In the middle of this street, the bus parking lot serves as a grain market.

Most of the goods are locally produced, and some are imported. Most of the goods are for local consumption, and some are exported. Vegetables that are commonly seen–green pepper, fresh chilies, tomato, cucumber, squash, turnip, cabbage, sweet corn, ginger, garlic, and so on–are partly local produce and partly imported from the townships in southern Yongsheng. The vegetables sold in the market are mainly for local consumption. Grains–rice, broad beans, soybeans and corn–are mostly sold by the locals. The grain purchased by the locals is mostly for fodder, e.g. broad beans and corn. Much of the grain from Jinguan, especially rice, is purchased by dealers and exported to places outside Yongsheng. The luxury food stuffs such as rape oil, brown sugar and peanuts are mostly imported from southern Yongsheng. Meat (mainly pork, beef, and mutton) and poultry are largely locally supplied, and buyers are mostly locals.

Most of the goods sold on the market are produced by the peasants themselves, but a certain amount of goods are transacted by peddlers. The local residents can tell what goods are self-produced, and what are handled by peddlers. The trick is to see the combination of goods exhibited on the stall. If the stall carries a combination of produce that by nature do not grow together (given the requirements of different climates and soil conditions), the produce cannot be self-produced, but gathered by peddlers. Therefore, goods on the stalls put up by the producers themselves tend to lack variety, while the stalls set up by peddlers contain more varieties as peddlers are in a position to gather all kinds of goods from different localities. Not

surprisingly, the self-produced goods are generally fresher as they are only handled by the producer and come directly from the fields. Also, the goods sold by peddlers tend to be more expensive (though the difference may be insignificant to outsiders) than the self-produced goods sold by the peasants themselves.

Market trade subsides around 2 o'clock in the afternoon when most of the buyers have purchased the goods they need and it is time to return home for lunch. Most of the small stalls set up by the peasant producers are, by this time, empty. The peddlers still linger on. This is the time for them to purchase cheaply from the peasants the goods left unsold. After 3 o'clock, the market becomes quiet.

Even when the market is not open, Jinguan is a major trade center in the Three-River basin area. For this reason, the local people call Jinguan a *tiantian gai* ("everyday market"). There are scores of commercial and service shops on the streets of Jinguan that open for business everyday: grocery, hardware, electrical appliance and repair, restaurants, tailors, barbers, and so on. Most of the businesses are run by locals. There are altogether some 20 restaurants, of which 70 per cent are run by locals and the rest by the immigrants from Sichuan. Of the some 30 tailor shops, 80 per cent are local. All the barber shops are run by local people. The rest of other businesses are all locally operated.

In the "everyday market," there are state agencies of commerce and trade. The most important ones are the Grain Station, the Bank of Agriculture, the Credit Coop, and the Supply and Marketing Coop. The grain station is the township granary situated in a large compound converted from an old temple in the 1950s. This is where the peasants hand in grain to pay the agricultural tax, and to fulfil the contracted state procurement quota. The Bank of Agriculture is, in addition to being an ordinary savings bank, an important organ through which many of the government subsidies and loans are channelled. In its daily transactions, the bank mainly deals with the township government institutions and business cooperatives. The ordinary peasants seek their banking services, savings and loans in the Credit Coop. The Credit Coop and the Supply and Marketing Coop, by definition, are collective organizations, but they function like

the state agencies. The business management of the Credit Coop is, to some extent, supervised by the Bank of Agriculture. The Supply and Marketing Coop handles the state monopoly goods such as chemical fertilizers, pesticide, plastic sheeting, seeds and so on that are crucial to the peasant production. In addition, it purchases special agricultural products such as tobacco and rape seeds on behalf of the government.

While the state agencies in the market place mainly function to enforce contracts and regulate the flow of important economic materials, the private stalls and businesses cater to the consumption needs of the peasant households. The market periodicity and much of the market transaction are regulated by the principle of self-sufficiency linked to the connection of production and consumption. This is reflected in the household consumption in that living on what one produces is considered a virtue and marketing surplus is not as desirable as minimizing spending on goods, especially those which can be self-produced.

Household Consumption

Household consumption addressed here mainly includes food, clothes, gift, production costs, taxes and fees. The consumption pattern of the peasant household in Jinguan reveals the peasant's idea of spending which is tied to the production-consumption loop. The peasants' categorization of cost and non-cost is much based on whether the goods are purchased or self-produced. Therefore, the consumption of food (or fodder for that matter) is not considered as a cost since it is self-produced (rice, vegetables, meat, etc.); and on the other hand, expenditure on clothes is considered as a cost because they are purchased in the market. With the same reasoning, a gift is not a cost if it only consists of household-produced goods (e.g. rice and cured ham); but if it purchased, it is a cost. This explains why in the peasant's economic calculation, the concept of net income is rarely used. That is because much of the production input–labor, manure and food–is not calculated. The only cost of production to the peasants is what they purchase with cash, e.g. chemical fertilizers, pesticide and herbicide.

Similarly, the agricultural tax is not considered as a cost because it is paid in kind, while fees (collective fund, tuition, etc.) are costs because they are paid in cash. The agricultural tax is called *gongliang* ("public grain") because it is collected in the form of grain. As Jinguan has two harvests a year, *gongliang* is collected both in the form of rice and broad beans. In theory, rice comprises 70 per cent of the *gongliang* and the rest is paid with broad beans. But, the township grain station and the finance office generally do not make a fuss about the ratio as long as the total figure is finally met. Because there is a great demand for broad beans for fodder and rice output is high, the peasants tend to keep broad beans and choose to pay more rice. The agricultural tax is levied on the basis of an average output fixed in 1962. Because the land situation varies from village to village and in different production teams, the agricultural tax rates are slightly different in Cuihu and Wengpeng, but the average rate is 80 to 100 *jin* per *mu* of land. This amount of the agricultural tax paid by the household is about five to six per cent of the gross income from the land.

But, when one asks about the agricultural tax, the figure given by the the peasant is usually higher. This is because many peasants do not differentiate between *gongliang* ("public grain") and *yuliang* ("surplus grain"), though *gongliang* is a tax and paid to the state without compensation and *yuliang* is purchased by the state through order or contract. *Yuliang* used to be called *tonggou* ("monopoly purchase"), but was changed to *hetong dinggou* ("purchase by contract") in 1985, and a year later it was changed to *guojia dinggou* ("state purchase by contract") in Jinguan.[7] Despite the change of term, the nature of the state grain procurement remains much the same. The main difference is that by "contract" the state was compelled to make an effort to bring the purchasing price to the level not too much lower than the market price; and the "state procurement" helped to stabilize the market grain price.[8]

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[7]The reason for the change from *tonggou* to *hetong dinggou* is related to the stimulation of rural grain market (Ash 1988). The reason for the later change from *hetong dinggou* back to *guojia dinggou* is probably a policy adjustment to reinforce the state capacity in control of grain.

[8]In Jinguan, the state grain procurement price is about the same as the market grain price.

The rate of "surplus grain" purchased by the state is also based on the land contract, and on average is 300 *jin* per person who has contracted land. There are three kinds quotas with different prices. In 1991 and 1992, the price for the first 150 *jin* (which is half of the quota) was 0.256 Yuan; the price for the next 150 *jin* was 0. 42 Yuan (which is 60 percent higher); and the price for the grain above the 300 *jin* quota was 0.41 Yuan which was about the same as the market price at the time. The fulfillment of the state procurement is rewarded by state subsidized goods such as chemical fertilizers, pesticide, plastic sheeting and diesel. For every 100 *jin* of the "surplus grain," 8 kg chemical fertilizer is supplied at a subsidized price which is 41.50 Yuan per packet which is about 60 per cent of the market price. Given that Jinguan has abundant grain harvest and travel between Jinguan and large markets outside is not really convenient, the peasants regard the state "purchase by contract" as the main channel to sell their surplus grain.[9]

In most peasant households, the major part of the income comes from crop farming. With the production and consumption constraints, the land is valuable to the peasants because most of their subsistence comes from it. Even the peasants who have significant cash income from non-agricultural occupations, regard the land as valuable because one needs not to spend on what the land can produce. A young woman from Cuihu village was hesitating to take on a cash-earning job outside the township because it meant that she would lose the produce from the land, because if she were to go, she had to let others to farm her contracted land (her husband was already away). Currently, people pay 100 Yuan for renting one *mu* of land, which is about 15 per cent of the potential output of her land. As she calculates, without cultivating the land herself, she would lose not only most of the family consumption (i.e. grain), but also the

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[9]In the winter of 1992, there was s discussion at the county level about abandoning the state "purchase by contract," which meant the township grain station would not be responsible for purchasing the surplus grain from the peasants. This aroused much anxiety among the local cadres as they feared the market would not be strong enough to absorb the grain surplus.

grain surplus and the sideline produce (e.g. meat and vegetables), all of which can hardly be compensated by her monthly wage.

The nature of the subsistence economy in Jinguan makes household consumption very much dependent on the produce from the land (as well as garden plots). Based on the same principle, produce from sideline production supplements household consumption, if not on daily basis, on special occasions. In a way, raising domestic animals is a small-scale accumulation of funds.

The purpose of raising pigs and chickens is mainly for household consumption and accumulating funds for large household expenditure. While most of times chickens are delicacies on the family dining table or contribute a sum of petty cash to cover shortages of cooking ingredients, pigs are relied on for bringing in a large sum of cash to cover expenses on special family events, in addition to the household consumption of meat. Raising pigs in the peasant household is an investment. To the peasants, a pig is, first of all, a *huafei chang* ("[chemical] fertilizer factory"). It generates manure for grain production. Not only is the manure valuable as *difei* (base manure) applied before transplanting, it is also useful as a substitute for chemical fertilizers which are costly. A pig, is also a *xiao yinhang* ("little bank"). For some family events such as weddings, funerals and house building, a large sum of money is needed to cover the expenses of the feasts and the cost of labor employment. Because the peasants do not have regular income and normally have no savings, it is difficult for an ordinary household to come up with a sum of 500 Yuan at a time. But if the household has pigs in the pigsty, it can always count on the grown pigs to contribute cash when the household needs it.

As a large amount of grain and green fodder is consumed in addition to the human labor input, raising pigs seems not to be profitable in a pure economic sense. However, the concept of "little bank" still makes sense if we follow the logic of the peasants' calculation. Fei once suggested that the cost involved in raising pigs in central Yunnan is largely theoretical as "the materials used for feed need not be purchased, and there is little market for them, since pigs are not raised with purchased feed" (Fei and Chang 1945: 50).

In Jinguan, the peasants reason in the similar way: "The grain and chaff are there, if you sell a few kilograms of grain on the market once at a time, it brings you some money, but it is not enough for any good use. But, if you feed the grain into a pig, the fortune grows as the pig fattens like a bank deposit, and eventually one has a large sum of money." Given that the fodder is household-produced and the labor input is free, raising pigs is not costly, rather it is profitable in the peasant concept of economy.

In my interviews, the majority of peasants maintain that the most important factor in material security is rice. Some added meat and fat. Only a few consider money to be important. Rice is the dominant staple food included in the three meals a day. The average rice (*dami*) consumption is one *jin* per person per day. By comparison, rice consumption in Wengpeng is a little higher than Cuihu. This difference may suggest that the Cuihu residents consume more other non-grain food stuffs such as meat and vegetables than the Wengpeng residents. Aside from rice, there are a number of food stuffs important in the local food composition, namely *youcha* ("oil tea"), *lazi* (chili), *huotui* (cured ham) and *lasheng* (pickled turnip). Although these are not "staple foods" like rice, the typicality of these food items constitutes part of the local identity, like any other kind of food stuff functioning as a cultural mark which differentiates one group of people from another (Chang 1977). In this sense, these typical local food stuffs can be seen as additional parts of subsistence. More importantly, the main ingredients of these food stuffs are basically home-produced.

Youcha is a kind of tea served at breakfast.[10] It is made of brick tea (*zhuan cha*) and rice grains roasted in lard (*chaomi*). The tea is boiled with roast rice over a slow heat in a small clay pot, and added with salt or brown sugar. The tea added with sugar is considered more of a luxury than the tea with salt, because sugar is many times more costly. Because of this local diet, the household consumption of brown sugar is quite remarkable. According to the expenditure counts in my household records, in a household with a medium standard of living,

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[10]The tea drunk during the day is ordinary tea leaves brewed in hot water.

the annual consumption of brown sugar alone as an ingredient for *youcha* is 20-30 *jin*. The rich ingredients like fat and sugar make *youcha* the necessary drink, especially during the busy farming seasons when much energy is required.

Lazi is a very important ingredient in the local food. There are fresh chili and dried chili. Fresh chili peppers are available in large quantities in the summer, the dried chili is preserved for consumption year round. Dried chili is crushed in a mortar, then added to hot cooking oil (usually rapeseed oil) which brings the fragrance of the chili and helps keep the chili tasty. Among the households, rich and poor, the amount of chili consumed is more or less the same. My household survey shows that in a five- or six-person household, the annual consumption of dried chili is 10-12 *jin*. Many households grow chili peppers themselves, but they may not be enough to sustain the household consumption throughout the year. The insufficient portion of chili is purchased in the market, the supply of which mostly comes from southern Yongsheng.

Huotui ("smoked leg") is home-cured ham. It is the whole leg of pig from the trotter to the upper joint. The season for making *huotui* is in winter. Between November and December when most of the farm work is finished, peasants start to prepare food for the New Year. At this time, *nianzhu* ("New Year's pigs) are slaughtered. Pork legs are cured to preserve (and sometimes the belly part, too). The curing procedure is to soak meat in salty water for weeks up to two months; thereafter it is hung up to air dry. Once the moisture of the ham is reduced to a condition under which the meat can be preserved, it is buried under stove ash which prevents the ham from going rancid. Before eating, the meat is steamed, or sometimes boiled. In ordinary days, one may find a few slices of ham in the rice bowl daily or every other day. Because the ham keeps for a long time, it is a handy way of having meat in the house year round. It is especially convenient for entertaining guests, when the market is closed and fresh meat is not available. Each year, a household of four persons consumes one to one and half pigs; and a household of six to eight persons consumes two to three pigs.

Lasheng is shredded turnip pickled in the left-over juice of previously cured ham. Because the liquid contains the blood from the meat, the best *lasheng* is supposed to come out

really red. *Lasheng* is often made in jars in fairly large quantities. It is an important source of fresh vegetable substitute, appearing most often on the family dinner table. It is convenient to serve, only few drops of chili sauce (i.e. *lazi* fried in oil) makes it tasty. Turnips are grown mostly in the peasant garden plots, and also can be purchased from the local market.

The peasant income per capita of Jinguan township in 1991 was 543 Yuan. My household records show that in Cuihu village, the average per capita income from farming is 592 Yuan with differences between the highest of 1,000 Yuan and the lowest of 250 Yuan; and in Wengpeng, the average per capita income from farming is 533 Yuan with differences between the highest of 900 Yuan an the lowest of 250 Yuan. In a majority of peasant households, income and expenditure are communally managed under the common budget. The annual expenditure of a household with five or six persons is estimated at around 2,000-3,000 Yuan (including both self-produced and purchased goods).

Food constitutes a significant part of household expenditure. My household records show that the total cost of food in a household is from 70 to 90 per cent of the total household expenditure; and the self-produced food contribute 60 to 80 per cent of the food consumption. The main items of food stuff that peasants purchase from the market are tea, sugar, liquor, cigarettes, cooking ingredients such as soy sauce and salt. Food stuffs such as meat, vegetables and edible oil are purchased from the market when the home-produced quantity is not sufficient.

By comparison, household expenditure on clothing is small. The peasants' calculation of expenditure on clothes is based on one person one set of clothes a year. The average cost of one set of clothes by local standards is between 40 and 50 Yuan. This puts the average amount spent on clothing at five to ten percent of the total household expenditure.

Household expenditure on gifts has increased in the past few years as the enlarged income has made it possible for the peasants to spend money on gifts. In my records of household expenditure, all the sixty households but one under survey had big or small amounts

of expenditure on gifts.[11] The average expense is around 250 Yuan which is about seven per cent of the household total income. In some households, the amount spent on gifts is as small as 50 Yuan; and in others, it can be as high as 600 Yuan. Generally speaking, the gift exchange is more or less balanced, that is, the amount given is usually offset by the the amount received. Though the spending on gifts can be said beyond subsistence needs, gifts are part of the peasants "consumption necessities" as such material prestation is an important social mechanism to facilitate the maintenance of the social relationships.

Household expenditure on the additional category of miscellaneous items such as utensils, tuition, recreation and transportation, is relatively small. Pots and pans are generally quite durable in the peasant household. A purchase of a couple rice bowls and tea cups adds little to the household expenditure. The annual cost of tuition for an elementary school child, is around 50 Yuan and the cost of tuition for a secondary school child, is about 80 Yuan. The average amount of tuition paid is about 4-5 per cent of the total household expenditure. There is limited expense on creation (mainly going to movies). About half of the households under survey in either village do not have expenses on creation at all. Expenses on transportation are minimum as the ordinary peasants seldom travel–given most of the affines are within the local community.

Self-sufficiency makes the peasants in Jinguan take great pride in the fact that they have plenty to eat. As they say: "We do not calculate what we eat because we eat what we have in the house." This pattern of consumption dominated by the principle of self-sufficiency determines that spending money on what can be self-produced is not desirable. Restaurants on the Jinguan streets mainly serve the non-local people: peddlers, businessmen or visitors. Ordinary peasants are seldom seen eating in the restaurants. It is not that they cannot afford it; rather that the expense is considered unnecessary. As they reason: "What is the point in eating in the restaurant

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[11]The one household that did not have any expense on gifts had just built a new house (which was half complete) and was deeply in debt.

when your home is just around the corner?" A local cadre was once in a good mood and treated himself and his wife (who farms in the village) to a meal in a restaurant after spending a long day in the market. According to the cadre, the meal cost only 6 Yuan (the equivalent of 10 *jin* of husked rice, or three quarters of a chicken at the market price at the time), but his wife kept nagging at him for three days afterwards. It was not that the meal was not good or the expense was beyond their means, but the money was considered not worth spending.

The peasant living standard in Jinguan took a big leap forward in 1985-86 when productivity surged to its highest point following the implementation of the household production responsibility system. Since then, the peasants have had more cash to spare spend on non-subsistence goods such as ready-made garments, leather shoes, wrist watches, bicycles, sewing machines, and even cassette players and television sets. By local standards, bicycles, sewing machines and black-white television sets are middle-level durable goods, and the majority of households can afford them. On a higher level, color television sets, electric fans and washing machines are rare, and only the minority of households can afford them. Among all, the largest spending in the peasant household in the past decade has been on house construction. Although it is beyond the immediate subsistence need, house construction follows the same pattern as in the ordinary household consumption which embraces the principle of self-sufficiency. This can be observed from the accumulation of materials and funds, sources of financial and labor help within the peasant community.

Subsistence Value and Household Construction

Having enough rice to eat is no longer a problem in a majority peasant households in Jinguan at present. In some households, the grain surplus in storage may be sufficient to provide the family with food for another year. While many of the productive activities are still aimed at fulfilling the household consumption needs which are much regulated by what the household produces within its limited resources, more surplus has been accumulated along with the raise in productivity and cash-earning opportunities in recent years (the increased grain

output has, in a way, promoted the household sideline production; and the development of sideline production has provided the peasant households with more cash income).

However, a majority of households during my interviews claimed to have no cash savings, either in the house or in the bank. While it is quite possible that some peasants simply do not want to acknowledge their savings for various reasons, the claim may still be true if we take the pattern of household spending into consideration. Generally speaking, the peasants do not "sit on the money doing nothing," as the local cadres put it. This means, to the peasants in the subsistence economy, the first necessity is food; once this need is fulfilled and there is surplus (no matter how limited), they build houses.

Different from the household consumption on food stuff aimed to sustain the population, household building is an absorption of surplus which leads to expansion of material possessions. Although the implementation of the household responsibility system has given the peasants the user's rights to cultivate the contracted land and the right to distribute the products from the land, land is by definition still under public ownership. Although the user's rights under the current contract is inheritable, the land that each individual household cultivates cannot be expanded as land transaction is forbidden by law under the present land system. But, residence is another matter. Although peasants are required to apply for permission and quota for house construction purposes, the residence itself is private property and the individual households have the rights to dispose of it. This may provide the peasants with incentives in house construction, in addition to the practical need for spacious housing in response to population growth and household division.

In the past ten years, house building in Jinguan has been quite noteworthy. There are newly built houses in every village. Almost all households interviewed have built or at least renovated houses. The average household spending on house building is between two and five thousand Yuan (depending the building materials used). It is a considerable resource consuming venture in terms of finance and labor input. Although one house may be built within a few months, it takes years to accumulate the building materials. Some households may choose to

sell two or three sacks of rice in exchange for a couple of dozen of poles this year, and a fat pig in exchange for a couple of thousand pieces of tiles and bricks next year (prices for building materials shown in Figure 19).

Figure 19. Prices of building materials in Jinguan

	Unit price (Yuan)	Approximate use of materials for building one house*
Tile (piece)	0.1	4,000
Brick (piece)	0.1	9,000
Timber (cubic meter)	300	10

SOURCE: My household interview.

*Standard peasant house in Jinguan, see Chapter 3 and Plate 3.

While new houses are being erected each year, some buildings are left incomplete-either without windows or front walls–due to the constraints on resources. There are cases where the householders have had to deprive themselves of meat consumption and sell their New Year's pigs in order to pay off the debts incurred in house building. In the worst cases, investment in house building has had an adverse effect on production as they spare no money for chemical fertilizers. The huge financial burden forces many peasant households to rely on financial assistance from outside the household. Outside financial help is mainly from relatives, neighbors and the Credit Coop. The availability of the different sources of financial help to individual peasants depends on the preference of the people and the relationship between the borrower and lender. Although applying for a bank loan is quite straightforward and the interest charged by the Credit Coop is low–at a monthly rate of 1.14 per cent, peasants prefer to manage on private sources–first they rely on the household income; then borrow from relatives or neighbors. In the peasant social network, neighbors are the people who live in the same hamlet; they may be related or may not be related by kinship. Friends include classmates, colleagues,

fellow craftsmen and business partners; but sometimes, they also can be neighbors. Relatives include agnatic as well as affinal kin (and in some cases, nominal kin). Figure 20 presents the sources from which the peasants seek financial help in house building.

Figure 20. Sources of financial help in house building

	Cuihu village	Wengpeng village
Total number of cases of borrowing	90	37
Borrowing from relatives	39	22
Borrowing from neighbors	36*	4
Borrowing from friends	3	1
Borrowing from Credit-Coop	12	9
Usury	0	1

SOURCE: My household survey.

*One household borrowed 30 times.

As shown in Figure 20, about 80 per cent of the borrowing cases (86 per cent of the Cuihu and 73 per cent in Wengpeng) involve relatives, neighbors and friends. The loans from relatives and neighbors do not carry interest, but this kind of support is generally expected to be reciprocal. Among the relatives, financial help comes mostly from the siblings and wife's natal family.[12] A similar pattern is found in the labor help.

The dependence on social relationships within the peasant community to finance house building ventures reflects, in principle, the same values as in ordinary household consumption based on the idea of self-sufficiency, the core value of the subsistence economy. The absorption of surplus presented by the peasants' investment in house building in Jinguan is, in a way,

[12]The nature of the sibling relationship and the affinal relationship and the cultural significance of these relationships in the peasant society have been elaborated in Chapter 3.

similar to cattle production in Yongning where the accumulation of cattle herd is equivalent to the storage of wealth in the peasant concept of economy. The economic priority in cattle raising forms a different pattern of production which is in contrast with rice production in Jinguan. But as rice production is conceptualized as subsistence and security, cattle production in Yongning is associated with different cultural values deriving from a different adaptive strategy to the ecological conditions and different economic relations within the household.

CHAPTER 6

CATTLE TAILS—CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

As Rice Ears form the image of economic life in Jinguan as discussed in the previous chapter, Cattle Tails in the present chapter illustrate a particular pattern of production in Yongning where cattle has both economic and symbolic value. While in Jinguan, rice production is the most culturally salient economic activity, in Yongning it is cattle farming for the Mosuo. Crop farming and cattle raising in Yongning constitute the Mosuo livelihood. This type of production is a cultural adaptation to the ecological situation. In the mixed economy of crop and cattle farming, cattle production in particular demands considerable energy input. The scale of cattle production and the high energy input can only be managed by a large household where the labor force is concentrated and grain surplus is pooled (as discussed in Chapter 4).

General Economic Situation

The Yongning basin is situated 2,600 meters above sea level at the foot of Lion Mountain. In the 1930s, the basin with only half of the plain under cultivation reportedly supported 300 families (Rock 1947: 388). Today, the Yongning basin is sustaining ten times as many families–3,006 households with 16,875 people–though the population is only half of that of

Jinguan. Along with improved irrigation and technology in the past decades, the pattern of crop cultivation in Yongning has changed; and with Yongning opening up to the outside markets in the past decade, the economic life of Yongning has assumed a variety of forms.

Ecological Situation

The Yongning basin has 41,077 *mu* of arable land. The land-population ratio is much more favorable than in Jinguan, though it is uneven among the hamlets. In general, the Mosuo hamlets have more land than other hamlets (see Figure 20).

Figure 21. Population and land in Kaiji village

	Gesawa hamlet	Dapo hamlet	Neiba hamlet	Pijiang hamlet
Number of household	29	32	103	106
Population	225	270	570	536
Total arable land (*mu*)	498	888	905	1,202
Land per capita (*mu*)	3.2	4.4	1.65	2

SOURCE: Kaiji Village Statistics 1992.

The land per capita is based on the figure of land allocation at the time when land was contracted to the peasant household in 1980. The population has since changed. The favorable land condition in Dapo can be attributed to the fact that the hamlet used to be the residence of one of the largest landlords (Sipi) in Yongning, while Gesawa has no such privileged connections.

The Yongning basin enjoys a plentiful water supply. The major source of irrigation comes from the Kaiji River, winding through the basin from southwest to northeast. There are

several types of land: irrigated paddy, marsh land, dry land (irrigated and non-irrigated). The classification of land is illustrated in Figure 22.

Figure 22. Arable land in Yongning

	Area	Percentage of total arable land
Total arable land (*mu*)	41,077	100
Paddy (*mu*)	7,845	19
Dry land (*mu*)	33,232	81

SOURCE: Yongning Township Statistics 1992.

The paddy area grows rice. The irrigated dry land grows corn and other cereals. The non-irrigated dry land grows potato and other tuber crops. About three per cent of the total arable land, or about one thousand *mu*, lies in fallow each year. This is because firstly the land is too much to cultivate for the labor force available in the households; and secondly the land is not fertile enough to be cultivated without resting in between.

Less than two per cent of the total arable land in Yongning is used to grow cash crops. The common cash crops are: (1) sunflowers and soy-beans which make up about 60 per cent of the cash cropping area; (2) hemp which makes up 22 per cent of the cash cropping area; (3) herbs which make up 11 per cent; (4) tobacco which is less than one percent; and (5) the rest is for squash. Soy-beans, sunflower seeds, herbs and squash seeds are mostly sold on the market for export to other cities. They are profitable in the sense that the prices for these products are much higher than the price for grains, but the growing area is considerably smaller. Hemp and tobacco are for household consumption. Hemp is processed and woven into fabric to make sacks, ropes and clothing materials. The tobacco (different in kind from the one cultivated in Jinguan) is a special crop cultivated at high latitude with low temperature. The leaves are not cured and the smoke gives a pungent smell.

Vegetables are grown in garden plots. The Mosuo generally have large gardens. The vegetable varieties are limited compared to Jinguan. The common items are turnip, cabbage, pumpkin, green leaves, and chili pepper. Fresh vegetables are consumed in the summer and autumn. In winter, the household largely relies on dried and pickled vegetables. The dried vegetable is often turnips which are cut into slices and left to dry on the roof. Cabbages are pickled in jars with salt and chili pepper. Each year, every household pickles a large amount of vegetables, about 100-200 *jin*, the consumption of which lasts for four to six months.

Surrounding the Yongning basin, there are vast mountain slopes for cattle grazing, and in recent years the development of apple orchards. The township statistics show that in Yongning, the number of livestock in hand in 1991 was 12,020 head including bovine cattle (e.g. water buffalo, ox and cow) and equestrian stock (e.g. horse, mule and donkey). On average, every person of the rural population possesses 0.7 head of draft animals. In addition, every household has numerous pigs (as well as goats or sheep) and chickens. My household survey shows that each household has, on average, a dozen and more pigs and goats or sheep, plus scores of chickens.

In Yongning, cattle tails are seen waggling everywhere–in the residential yard, village tracks, main roads, in the fields and on the mountain slopes. Cattle production in Yongning is a crucial part of the Mosuo life in both economic and cultural terms. The economic value of cattle is associated with household production and consumption. Water buffaloes/oxen are exploited in farming; mules and horses are used as means of transportation; and cows provide meat and dairy products for human consumption. The emphasis on cattle production, in a way, also reflects the ethnic identity perceived by the local people, which explains why the Mosuo take such pride in their cattle and invest so much energy in cattle production.

The mountain slopes and the climate in Yongning provide suitable conditions for developing apple orchards. This is a new economic venture developed along with the major poverty-alleviation project in Ninglang county (see Chapter 2). The project in its entirety includes thirty thousand *mu* of pepper plants (or Chinese prickly ash), thirty thousand *mu* of

plum orchard, fifty thousand *mu* of apple orchard, and eighty thousand *mu* of green manure crop. Yongning has an assignment of ten thousand *mu* of apple orchards. By 1992, Yongning had developed 5,000 *mu* of apple orchards, according to the township economic forestry development personnel. Developing apple orchards is a low cost venture. The individual households that wish to launch such a venture contract an area of mountain slopes from the hamlet at a one Yuan per *mu* charge of administration fees. Saplings are supplied by the county nursery financed with the county poverty-alleviation funds. In 1992, Dapo peasants began to turn their mountain slopes into apple orchards. The first apple orchard was 50 *mu* contracted to two households. Two thousand apple trees were planted, but the yield will not be known for a few years. The hamlet leader expected that there would be more households opening up orchards in the years to come as apples can be potentially profitable, and there is a vast area of waste mountain slopes.

Because of the nature of the crop farming and other factors such as the soil conditions and climate, the grain output in Yongning is much lower than in Jinguan. The average grain distribution per person in Yongning is 458 kg which is 177 kg less than in Jinguan (where it is 635 kg).[1] There is discrepancy in income per capita between the two Mosuo hamlets under survey (see Figure 23).

Figure 23. Income per capita (Yuan).

Township average	418
Gesawa hamlet	447
Dapo hamlet	588

SOURCE: Kaiji Village Statistics 1992.

[1]Township Statistics 1992.

The discrepancy is due to several factors. First of all, Gesawa has less land per person; secondly, Gesawa is located in the northwest end of the Yongning basin and has disadvantage in irrigation; thirdly, there is different emphasis on crop farming between the two hamlets; and lastly, the two hamlets perhaps do not have the same opportunities of cash income.

Yongning Market

The Yongning market came into being in the late Qing and early Republican period. The place, though quite isolated itself, has long existed as a trade center in this part of the Yunnan-Tibetan highland, and an important trade transfer station or pathway between the deeper mountains (e.g. Yanyuan, Muli) and the larger towns and cities (e.g. Yongsheng, Huaping, Lijiang, and Zhongdian) (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993). Trade in the past was concentrated on exporting local produce like fur, leather, meat and other animal products, herbs and other forestry products to the outside market; and importing goods of necessity such as salt, tea, sugar, cotton fabric, etc. to Yongning. It is said that the earliest traders in Yongning were Tibetans, and they were followed by Han and Naxi (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Yongning Naxizu* II 1988). The so-called "horse train" (*mabang*) trade culture was brought to Yongning by the Tibetans. In the 1930s and 1940s, Yongning began to develop its own "horse trains," and it is estimated that about one third of adult men in Yongning were in engaged in the "horse-train" export-import trades (ibid.). The "horse-train" trade, in a way, stimulated the raising of livestock in the area, particularly mules and horses. Even with today's communications facilitated by modern roads and motor vehicles, horse trains are still frequently seen drifting through Yongning with bell ringing.

The business pattern in Yongning market today remains more or less the same as in the past, except the scale has been expanded as the modern transportation has helped bring more people in and out of Yongning on a more frequent basis. As much as the demand for local produce from outside markets grows, the demand for manufactured goods in the local market increases. The Yongning market today has numerous stalls and shops: two dozen grocery

stalls, half a dozen tailors, a number of garment stalls, a score of restaurants and inns, shower houses and barbers, a couple of utensil stalls and repair shops. Most of these enterprises are privately run, some by local entrepreneurs and others by people from Sichuan, Yongsheng and Dali. The owners of the garment stalls came a long way from Zhejiang and Hubei provinces (in the eastern part of China).

The vegetable and butcher stalls are run by the locals. The number of fresh food suppliers varies from season to season. Generally speaking, there are up to twenty vegetable stalls in the summer and autumn, and about half remain in the winter. There are two or three meat stalls appearing in the market from the autumn through the winter. One is run by a professional butcher from Pijiang hamlet, while the rest run by ordinary farming households. The vegetables sold on the market come almost exclusively from the Han hamlet Neiba. The supply of vegetables decreases dramatically when the frost sets in. When the local supply of vegetables becomes scarce, some enterprising peasants travel to the south and gather some vegetables from the market at the county seat; then sell them in Yongning. Such a collection of vegetables is often small and the price is doubtless high.

Co-existing with the private enterprises, there are some state-run businesses. The department store and hardware store–one next to the other on the main street facing the township government office compound–are in fact the Supply and Marketing Coop. They supply most of the daily necessities–from cigarettes and clothes to household utensils and farm tools. As in Jinguan, there are also public enterprises such as the Bank of Agriculture, the township Credit Coop, the township grain station, the pharmacy and the post office.

The business sector is located on the street right outside the township government office compound. While the Jinguan market is open every five days, the Yongning market is an "everyday market." It is almost lifeless (in both private and public sectors) before 10 o'clock in the morning, and already closed by 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The market is twenty times smaller than in Jinguan. If the Jinguan market is a standard market in Skinner's terms, the Yongning everyday market is a "minor market" (Skinner 1963: 6), although it is more than a

"green vegetable market." Many of the goods and services in the Yongning market cater to the needs of the in-coming traders rather than the local population. Even the fresh food stuffs like vegetables and meat are largely consumed by the local restaurants and government institutions. The peasants in Yongning (Mosuo and Han alike) very much depend for their livelihood on what they themselves produce in the fields and raise in the homestead.[2] "Catch the street" (the phrase used by the Jinguan residents for going to market) is, therefore, not something that the ordinary peasants in Yongning do on regular basis.

In a majority of households, there is enough grain produced to feed the human population and domestic animals. The peasants do not purchase grain from the market; nor do they have a grain surplus to sell, except for the state grain procurement quota. Daily consumption items such as meat, eggs, diary products, vegetables and alcohol drink are mostly household produced. In many households, daily living has little to do with the market. At times, when some food stuffs are urgently needed (e.g. when entertaining guests), the Mosuo go to their neighbors to *ter*–meaning "borrow" or "buy on credit." Spending on market goods is very limited.

The common goods that the Mosuo households purchase from the market include salt, tea, soy-sauce, cigarettes, and candies. In Jinguan, the peasant households have very limited spending on goods which can be self-produced. In Yongning, the peasant households depend largely (more than the Jinguan peasants do) on the self-produced goods simply because they do not have that much cash to spend. The limited spending on market goods is a direct result of cattle production, in which all grain surplus and cash income of the household are invested.

The Yi living in the mountains also appear regularly on the Yongning market. Most of them are women with bundles and sacks arriving towards noon and gathering on a corner at the edge of the market. The common goods that the Yi sell in the market are firewood and tuber

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[2]The Naxi in Yongning are different. As most of them do not farm, their life very much depends on the market goods.

crops. Because the Mosuo have their own supplies of firewood and the many Han and Naxi households in the basin purchase their firewood from the Mosuo, there is not much demand for firewood in the market.[3] One bundle of tree twigs (that one person can carry while walking for three or four hours in the mountains) sells for 2 or 3 Yuan only. The tuber crops include potatoes and turnips (*Brassica rapa*), locally called *yuangen* ("round root"). The Yi potatoes are welcome in the basin as they are of good varieties and tasty. The money that the Yi make from selling firewood and tuber crops is sometimes spent on a lunch–usually a bowl of Naxi pea jelly; or on a small bag of rice and other household necessities.

Late summer and autumn is the busiest season of the year in Yongning market. This is the time when peddlers come to purchase mushrooms, herbs, squash seeds and other local produce. They specially pay a high price for one particular mushroom (about 40-50 Yuan per kg) for export to Japan, and other ordinary kinds of mushrooms are bought at a price between 20 to 30 Yuan per kg. Mushrooms are purchased fresh from the peasants, then soaked in salt water in plastic barrels. Eventually they are transported to city centers like Dali, Kunming and Chengdu. The business season usually lasts for two or thee months. Many incoming traders stay in the local inns around the market place. This, in a way, contributes to the demand for consumer goods and services.

The local peasants active in the market are the suppliers of the local produce. Commonly in the Mosuo household, women and the elderly take care of most of the house work while the adult males are engaged in cash earning activities. The Mosuo men like to see themselves as "cash earners." During my household interviews, when I asked a man what he usually does, the reply was often: *zhaoqian* ("looking for money") as they say in Chinese. The common "looking-for-money" activities are the mushroom-herb business and cattle trade

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[3]My household survey shows that the annual consumption of firewood in a Mosuo household is between 18,000 *jin* and 24,000 *jin*. Firewood is the only fuel available to the majority of the peasants in Yongning (methane stoves are rare and electricity supply is insufficient, and both costly); and firewood is used both for cooking and heating purposes.

(though opportunities are rather limited). The mushroom-herb business is conducted in the market, but cattle trade is not. Despite the popularity of the mushroom-herb trade, no more than one third of the households have the opportunity.

The "looking for money" men thus linger around the market whenever they can during the day seeking business opportunities. Everyday, the public bus brings in more traders to Yongning; and everyday there are new buyers. Yongning market is a popular place for men of any kind to hang out. The Han peasants who have few opportunities in either forestry (mushrooms and herbs) or animal products mostly hang out in the market for labor contracts. The township government cadres also like to hang out in the market, but they mostly enjoy the leisure rather than do business. Because there are so many people of different sources coming together in the market, the languages spoken in the market are a mixture of Mosuo, Naxi and Han.

The market plays an important role to open up Yongning to the outside world, which has exerted subtle influence on the local people's life. Apart from the commercial trades, the market place is becoming a cultural center for entertainment and recreation. The cinema is a busy place during the day as well as in the evenings. There are five or six shows (films and videos) per day. Half of the films shown are domestic and the other half are Hong Kong-, Taiwan-, or foreign-made. Most of the movie-goers are young people. The next popular place is the pool houses. There are four of them on the main street. At any time of the day, the pool tables are surrounded by young men engulfed in thick smoke playing and chatting. Some of the pool house owners are planning to add bars and Karaoke to further improve the business on their premises.

Ever since the Tibetan horse trains entered Yongning, Mosuo life has been changing. The Tibetan horse train was followed by the Naxi immigration that introduced more consumer goods–from silver/copper wares to leather shoes and to corn spirit; and later the Han immigration that brought rice cultivation (and at the same time a large population) and changed the traditional Mosuo crop farming system and further disrupted the land-population balance.

However, the increased economic opportunities, the commercialization and the contact with the outside world in the past decade may have had much more of an impact on the peasant life in Yongning than the earlier Naxi and Han immigration, although at present the main livelihood of the Mosuo peasants still largely depends on crop farming and cattle raising in a more or less the traditional way.

Crop Farming

In the 1930s, Rock noted that the main crops cultivated in Yongning were maize (corn), barley, buckwheat and round peas; and rice was prohibited from being grown for political reasons (Rock 1947: 388). The Chinese research of 1960s suggests that the cultivation of oats and buckwheat had the longest history in Mosuo society because oats used to be the most important item in the tributes paid to the Tusi in the past and buckwheat was one of the most important items offered in the religious rituals (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Yongning Naxizu* III 1986: 92). The other oldest cultivated crops in Yongning are highland-barley and barnyard grass. Corn and potatoes are crops introduced to Yongning in the present century. Rice is the latest crop introduced to Yongning, and its cultivation has only some forty years of history.

Crop cultivation in Yongning is extensive compared to Jinguan. The extensive cultivation here is characterized by a minor degree of field management meaning low labor input and a low level of fertilizer application which result in low productivity. In Yongning, the average land area is about three times higher than in Jinguan, but the average grain distribution (per person) in Yongning is some 300 *jin* less than in Jinguan. While in Jinguan there is little difference in the selection of crops between villages, there are more crop varieties cultivated in Yongning. The particular cultivating system in Yongning may be adapted to two factors: one is the quality of land, and the other is labor deployment.

Crop Cultivating System

The Mosuo do not measure land in *mu* as the peasants do in Jinguan. The Mosuo unit of land is *jia* (literally harness). It refers to a plot that one pair of water buffaloes or oxen can plough in one day. As some plots are easier to plough than others due to the difference in soil quality, the size of *jia* varies–roughly between 2 and 3 *mu* in the Chinese measurement.

Ploughing in Yongning is driven by water buffaloes or oxen, and there is a plentiful supply of draft animals available. The fields are ploughed twice a year, once before spring planting time and once after autumn harvest. Ploughing is mostly men's work (except *Jabaa*). Draft animals such as horses and mules are also employed in production mainly for transporting manure from home to the fields, and harvested crops from the fields back to the homestead. There are generally no machines employed in crop farming. Iron tools, such as hoes, rakes and sickles, have long been used in Yongning. The wooden handles of the tools are made by carpenters in the hamlet; and the iron parts are purchased from the hardware store on the Yongning street.

The generic term for grain in the Mosuo language is *haa*. The common grain crops cultivated in the Yongning basin are rice, corn, barnyard-grass, oats, potato, highland barley, kidney-bean and soybeans. The land generally produces one harvest a year. The total crop sown area crop sown area is illustrated in Figure 24 below. The percentage figures demonstrate the economic emphasis. Given that rice, wheat and half of the potatoes are for human consumption (soybeans are mostly sold for cash, corn and cereals are generally used for animal fodder), a fairly conservative estimation would be that about two thirds of the cultivating activities are conducted to satisfy animal consumption.

Figure 24. Crop sown area

Crop	Sown area (*mu*)	Percentage of total sown area
Rice	7,845	18.9
Potato	8,364	20.1
Corn	16,766	40.4
Other cereals*	7,250	17.4
Wheat	950	2.3
Soybean	371	0.9
Total	41,546	100

SOURCE: Yongning Township Statistics 1992.

*Including oats, kidney beans, highland barley and buckwheat.

The rice growing history is related to the Han immigration to the Yongning basin. Before 1940, rice was not cultivated in Yongning because the Tusi forbade it. This did not mean that the Tusi held anything against rice itself as the Tusi family did consume rice.[4] Forbidding rice cultivation was a political strategy to keep the Han population–whose mainly livelihood is rice–from moving into the Yongning basin which was feared to lead to the Han Chinese government interference. But this local policy was eventually overridden by the government decrees. Following the land survey launched by the Republican government in the 1930s in Yunnan, the Tusi was forced to let the Han enter the basin (see Chapter 1). In the early 1940s, the Han began to settle in the Yongning basin.[5] At the time when the Han moved into Yongning, the main crops that the Mosuo grew were barnyard grass, buckwheat and potatoes.

[4]The supply of rice to the Tusi family came from other basins in the southern part of the Tusi territory where the Han had long before settled.

[5]Before the large Han immigration into the Yongning basin, some Han households had already settled down by the Lugu Lake.

According to one of the first Han immigrants in Neiba, with the initial interaction between the Han and Mosuo in exchange for food stuff such as rice with *mucha* (the Mosuo home-cured bacon) and *doufu* with the Mosuo home-brew, the Mosuo began to learn to grow rice. But rice cultivation had not been popularized in Yongning until the 1950s when the irrigation system was extensively improved.

Rice (*shi-lu* in the Mosuo language for both plant and grain) grown in Yongning is round grains of *japonica* varieties which are different from the long grains of the *indica* varieties grown in Jinguan (see Chapter 5). The method of cooking rice in the two places is also different. In Jinguan, rice is first boiled in plenty of water over high heat for a few minutes; then ladled in a covered container and steamed over the heat of the remaining water. In Yongning, only a small amount of water is added and rice is cooked in a heavy iron pot (about 20-25 centimeter in diameter) over a slow heat with lid covered throughout. Rice contributes to the staple food of the peasants in Yongning.

The Yongning basin is 100 meters lower than the Lugu lake. At the time when Rock visited Yongning in the 1930s, the eastern and north-eastern end of the Yongning basin was marshy, and Rock concluded that Yongning basin was "undoubtedly a lake" in the remote past (Rock 1947: 388). This explains why Dapo located in the eastern part of the Yongning basin possesses some marsh land, while Gesawa located in the northwestern part of the basin does not. Before the large-scale irrigation projects came into being, much of the basin area was low marsh land. The marsh land is locally called "cold-wet land" that retains water throughout the year; and it is believed to be no good for any crops except barnyard grass.

The barnyard grass grown in Yongning is identified as *Echinochloa oryzicola Vasing* which is believed to be related to *Echinochloa crus-galli*, a common food crop grown in eastern Asia.[6] This crop is said to have adapted to the cold weather and poor irrigation conditions

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[6]My thanks to Prof. Tomosaburo Yabuno of Osaka University who identified the barnyard grass from the panicles that I collected in Yongning. His article "Japanese Barnyard Millet (*Echinochloa utilis*, Poaceae) in Japan" (1987) analyzes the Japanese barnyard millet which is believed to be identical to the one found in Yongning.

(Yabuno 1987). It is a close relative to the weedy type of *Echinochloa oryzicola Vasing* grown in paddy fields. Both types are called *baizi* in Chinese. This is why the Jinguan peasants are puzzled by the Mosuo cultivating a crop as a food stuff which to them is a weed. The difference between the two varieties of barnyard grass is that the one cultivated in the paddy fields has a "shattering habit" which has undesirable consequences, i.e. spreading weeds, while the other has a "non-shattering habit" which is apparently a cultural selection for staple food stuff in this particular ecological situation.[7]

The barnyard grass (or *ji-lu* in the Mosuo language) grown in Yongning looks very much like rice at the early growing stage (Plate 8). The seedlings are all green and the shapes of the blades are similar (at least to me). During the ripening stage, these two plants are easily distinguished, as the barnyard grass turns darker bearing a brownish color, while rice becomes bright golden yellow. At the time of harvest, barnyard grass reaches a height of one meter, about a quarter of meter higher than rice. The grains of these two crops are also different. The barnyard grain is smaller than rice, more like millet grain, and hard. For human consumption, the grains need to be crushed before cooking. Since rice has been largely cultivated in Yongning, barnyard grass is no longer a staple food for people and the sown area of barnyard grass has dramatically decreased.[8]

The abandonment of barnyard grass cultivation by the Mosuo is a selection against its low yield and inferior taste as a food stuff. The persistence of barnyard grass cultivation (despite the small area), on the other hand, is mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, the cultivation

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[7]The "shattering" and "non-shattering" features of the two varieties of barnyard grass were explained by T. Yabuno in correspondence with me between 1994 and 1995.

[8]As a matter of fact, the barnyard grass sown area and output are no longer listed on the statistics. But, the sown area can be deduced from the ratio of marsh land to total arable land (because only barnyard grass is grown on marsh land), which is about one per cent. But, given that a certain percentage of marsh land is laid fallow every year, the actual barnyard sown area might be even less than one per cent. Very possibly, the insignificant output is incorporated into the category of "other cereals" which is not easy to single out.

utilizes the marsh land which is not suitable for growing any other crops; and secondly, barnyard grass is a good ingredient for making the local home-brewed drink, called *sulima*.[9] Apart from barnyard grass, barley, buckwheat, wheat, and rice can also be used to make the home-brew. The Mosuo *sulima* is a low-alcohol drink (containing about 20 per cent of alcohol), if compared to the ordinary Chinese grain spirit. It has a strong fragrance and sweet taste. Some households make five to ten jugs of home-brew each year; and others make thirty to fifty. When the Han first migrated into Yongning, they exchanged rice with Mosuo for their home-brew drink. Later the Han learned to make the home-brew themselves. In Yongning, Naxi are said to make the best spirit. It is made of corn, and contains about 35 per cent of alcohol.

Corn covers the largest grain crop sown area in Yongning.[10] It is grown mainly for animal consumption. Because corn has a relatively high yield, its cultivation has been encouraged by the county government in recent years by subsidizing chemical fertilizers. Corn is often inter-cropped with other cereals. The cereals including oats, kidney beans, soy beans, buckwheat and barley have fairly large cultivating area about the same size as rice. They are mostly inter-cropped with corn. Kidney beans are cultivated for animal fodder. Soy beans are sold for cash.[11] Oats (also buckwheat) are not only a precious food as roasted *zanba*, but also commonly used in religious rituals. With blessing from *Jabba* (Mosuo Lamas), they are offered in worshipping the mountain goddess and to protect the household livestock.

Potatoes are planted in the non-irrigated fields, mostly on the mountain slopes. There is a large consumption of potatoes as human food as well as animal fodder. In the human food

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[9]About 40 *jin* of barnyard grass makes one jug of home-brew (one jug contains 10 *jin*). The season to make the home-brew is in the winter after the harvest, and it is women's work. According to the locals, the grains are first boiled in a cauldron, and ladled out and cooled. Then, they are blended with yeast and put into jugs sealed and buried in hay. After five to eight days, the fermented stuff is taken out and distilled in a special wooden barrel.

[10]It is noted that corn was first adopted as a high yield crop early in this century (*Yongning Naxizu* III, 1986: 92).

[11]Because the price for soybeans is higher than that of rice, many peasants choose to sell soybeans for the state grain procurement.

composition, potatoes are fried as a side dish, and sometimes cooked in water or roasted in the open fire for breakfast. My household survey shows that the average annual consumption of potatoes per household is one to three thousand *jin*.

The crops cultivated in the two Mosuo hamlets are not quite the same. Both have rice, corn, soybeans, kidney beans, potato, buckwheat and oats. In addition, Gesawa has wheat and barley and Dapo has barnyard grass. Both hamlets have crop rotating systems that are adopted to sustain the fertility of the soil and satisfy the household consumption demand for various crops. In Gesawa, corn rotates with oats and wheat, while in Dapo corn rotates with oats and sometimes kidney beans rotate with potatoes. The other differences between the two hamlets in cultivation are that Gesawa does not have a land fallow system while Dapo does; and Gesawa has winter crops while Dapo does not. The reasons that Gesawa does not have fallowing system are because firstly, it has smaller land area; and secondly, it does not have marsh land. The reason that Dapo does not have winter crops is because cattle graze in the fields which interferes the growth of crop seedlings. The winter crops grown in Gesawa are wheat and barley. Every year, between January and April, the hamlet dispatches crop watch personnel to guard the seedlings against the intrusion of grazing cattle.

As much as different crops are cultivated for different purposes of consumption for both human beings and domestic animals, one advantage of cultivating so many varieties of crops in Yongning is to relax the concentration of labor input. Due to the large land area, there is a great demand on labor input especially at transplanting and harvesting time. The different timetables for planting and harvesting different crops can reduce the intensity of the labor input.

The farming seasons in Yongning are slightly later than in Jinguan and the crop planting seasons are different due to the difference in climate–while the frost season in Jinguan lasts less than 100 days, it is 60 to 100 days longer in Yongning. The agricultural cycle in Yongning starts around the end of the 2nd month and beginning of the 3rd month of the lunar calendar, or early April (see Figure 25).

Figure 25. Crops and farming seasons in Yongning

Crop	Planting time	Harvest time
Potato	3rd Lunar month (towards the end of April)	as early as in June and lasts till September
Corn	about the same time as potato	9th Lunar month (or early October)
Buckwheat	about the same time as corn	7th Lunar month (towards the end of August)
Oats	about the same time as or a little earlier than corn	about the same time as buckwheat
Soybean	about the same time as corn with which often inter-cropped	8th Lunar month, about one month after buckwheat and oats harvest
Kidney beans	about the same time as soybean, often inter-cropped with corn	about the same time as soybean*
Rice	4th Lunar month (or mid May) and last for two weeks	9th Lunar month (towards the end of October)
Barnyard grass	right after rice transplanting, usually after the first rain fall	slightly ahead of rice harvest

SOURCE: My household survey.

*At about the same time, squash, sunflowers and other cash crops are also harvested.

The first task is to prepare the fields, and the work involved consists of transporting manure, ploughing and building rice seedling beds. The spring planting begins with potatoes; then corn and runs into the busiest season of rice transplanting. The arrangement of different planting and harvesting times help to disperse the labor input and at the same time guarantee the sufficient time for the crops to grow in the given climate. Apart from the difference in crop variety, farming activities in Yongning differ much from that in Jinguan. The corn growing period in Yongning is much longer–in Jinguan it is planted after rice transplanting, while in Yongning, it is planted before rice transplanting. Like in Jinguan, rice transplanting is mainly

done by women, and lasts about the same period of time (about two weeks), although the rice grown area in Yongning is far smaller.

From the end of the 4th to the 7th Lunar month (from end of May through August) is the slack season, during which peasants cut firewood, gather grass and tend to garden plots. The pattern of harvest is also different from Jinguan. Harvesting in both Mosuo hamlets is a collective action. The collective harvest is organized by the hamlet and led by the hamlet leader. All the households in the same hamlet must start on the same day and on the same hour. Because immediately after the crops are harvested, cattle are let into the fields to graze. If the harvest does not take place simultaneously in the adjacent fields, some crops may be destroyed. The coordination between hamlets is also important for the same reason. It is the duty of the hamlet leader to carefully watch the activities of the neighboring hamlet, and disputes between hamlets stirred by uncoordinated harvests–should any occur–must be settled between hamlet leaders.

The real autumn harvest in Yongning begins with corn harvest. Because corn has the largest sown area, the harvest is intense and usually the whole family participates in the corn harvest. The corn is cut half-way down the stalk (a half meter from the root). The upper parts (with cobs) are tied in bundles and transported by draft animals back to the hamlet. The stalks left in the fields will be first chewed by animals (see Plate 7) then turned over by plough into the soil for fertilizer. Owing to the help of draft animals used for transportation and the simple procedure, the corn harvest only lasts for three to four days.

Rice is harvested last. Immediately before the rice harvest, barnyard grass is harvested. The procedure and amount of work involved in the two harvests are similar. Because rice (and barnyard grass) is threshed in the fields, the harvest has to wait until the rainy season is over. Both men and women participate in rice harvest. Rice is cut at the root and tied into bundles. Threshing is done manually with the help of a tool which looks like a whip. The handle is a pole one and half meters long and made of shrub stalk; and the lash is made of a long twig, about two meters. When threshing, three or four (or more) people stand in a circle around the

rice bundles, and take turns flailing. After the grains are beaten out, they are put into sacks and transported back home by horses and mules. The straw bundles are left in the fields. After all the rice has been threshed, the straws are scattered and flailed. This is to make the straws tender and easy to digest for the cattle. This special care for animals involves much labor input.

The rice harvest lasts for one week to ten days. A month or so after the rice has been harvested, the fields are ploughed. This is about the end of the crop farming calendar. Towards the middle of the 12th Lunar month (mid January), the peasants begin to rest and prepare for the lunar New Year. A month or so after the New Year, productive activities resume.

Productivity

Grain output in Yongning is much lower than in Jinguan. Among all the crops cultivated in Yongning, the output of rice is the highest, yet it at best is only half as much as in Jinguan. There are mainly two factors related to the low output: one may be attributed to the crop varieties, and the other the general farming management.

As it has been noted in the previous chapter, different rice varieties are found at different altitudes–at the altitude of 1,580 meters in Jinguan *indica* varieties are cultivated and at the altitude of 2,600 meters in Yongning, *japonica* varieties are cultivated. The *indica* varieties have high yields, and *japonica* varieties have low yields. The average rice output per *mu* in Jinguan is between 1,000 to 1,200 *jin*, while in Yongning it is 400-600 *jin*. Corn also has a fairly high output. The output of the rest of the cereals is markedly lower. Figure 26 shows the output of different grain crops cultivated by the Mosuo in Yongning.

Figure 26. Crop unit output in Yongning

Crop	Average output (*jin/mu*)	Maximum output (*jin/mu*)
Rice	400	600
Corn	400	500
Barnyard grass	300	400
Soybean	300	400
Kidney beans	300	400
Oats	200	300
Buckwheat	200	300
Barley	150	200
Potato	1,000	1,500

SOURCE: My household survey.

As in Jinguan, the peasants in Yongning calculate their output by number of sacks (used chemical fertilizer sacks), but the weight is different due to the different varieties of grains. In Yongning, one sack of rice weighs 70-75 *jin*; one sack of barnyard grass weighs 45-50 *jin*; one sack of corn weighs 80 *jin*. Potatoes are measured by basket–one basket of potatoes weighs 100 *jin*.

As in Jinguan, household production in Yongning is largely for household consumption; and in a majority of households, there is enough grain to feed the family and their domestic animals. But unlike Jinguan where peasants have more grain surplus in the storage and for sale, the Mosuo peasants have little to spare and they do not have grain to sell in the market except for the state grain procurement. Ninglang county has been exempted from agricultural tax since 1985 owing to its status of poverty-stricken county. With the exemption of the agricultural tax, the state grain procurement quota remains but is not enforced. Because the grain procurement quota is attached to the state-supplied goods at subsidized price, such as

chemical fertilizers, the peasants in Yongning consider it worthwhile to sell grain to the state. My household survey shows that the average amount of grain sold to the state was between 70 *jin* to 150 *jin* per person under the land contract.[12] The amount of state-procured grain in Yongning was 4.5 per cent of its total grain production in 1991.[13]

The state supply of chemical fertilizers in Yongning quantitatively exceeds the amount in Jinguan. In Yongning, every 100 *jin* of grain procurement entitles one to 15 kg of chemical fertilizer at par price while in Jinguan the corresponding amount is 8 kg. In addition, every person under the land contract in Yongning is entitled to 2 kg of chemical fertilizers; and every *mu* of corn-sown area entitles the household to 7.5 kg of chemical fertilizer–this bonus comes from the local government's promotion of corn cultivation as high yield crop. These additional supplies of chemical fertilizers are special, which the non-ethnic and non-poverty counties do not enjoy; and they are granted regardless of whether the grain procurement quota is fulfilled or not.

The annual grain output in Yongning is about 400 *jin* per *mu* on average which makes 160 Yuan. The grain output is low in Yongning, and so is the production cost.[14] The low production cost is mainly due to the small volume of chemical fertilizer used, and the relatively low price of chemical fertilizers. Given that Yongning does not grow broad beans and there are few winter crops, the chemical fertilizer used is limited to nitrates. It is only applied in rice and corn fields in addition to the base manure applied at the time of planting. The average use of chemical fertilizer in the rice paddy amounts to 5 to 10 kg per *mu*. Many households apply chemical fertilizer to corn fields twice during the growing period, and the volume used amounts

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[12]In Jinguan, however, the amount of state procured grain was 300 *jin* per person under the land contract in addition to 80-100 *jin* paid in agricultural tax.

[13]Yongning Township Statistics 1992.

[14]Again, the production cost here only includes expenses on goods which are not home-produced, e.g. chemical fertilizers, pesticide and herbicide.

to 40 kg per *mu*. The cultivation of barnyard grass, buckwheat and potatoes only requires base manure but not chemical fertilizers. Other cereals need neither chemical fertilizer nor farm manure. The discrepancy in the amount of chemical fertilizers used for crop cultivation between Jinguan and Yongning is quite striking (see Figure 27).

Figure 27. Chemical fertilizer application in Jinguan and Yongning

	Jinguan	Yongning
Annual consumption per household (kg)*	171	120
Average amount used per *mu* of land (kg)	41	8

SOURCE: Jinguan Township Statistics 1992; Yongning Township Statistics; and my household survey.

*The land area in Yongning is 3-4 times of that in Jinguan.

In addition to the low amount used, the low price for chemical fertilizer in Yongning also contributes to the low production cost. A packet of chemical fertilizer is 30 Yuan which is about 70 per cent of the price in Jinguan.[15] The average expense on chemical fertilizer per *mu* of land in the Mosuo household is 6-7 Yuan. The cost is considerably low compared to the the amount spent in Jinguan which is 45 Yuan per *mu* (with double cropping).

Pests do not seem to be much of a problem in Yongning, possibly owing to the low temperature. According to my local guide, pests strike the corn fields every 7 to 8 years and DDVP is sprayed as a counter measure. In other crop fields, stove ash is spread to eliminate the pest. The agricultural chemicals used in ordinary years are mostly for weeding purposes. Herbicides are 2.60 Yuan per packet. The average use of herbicide is 1 to 1.5 Yuan per *mu*. The total cost of chemical fertilizer and herbicide is 8.5 Yuan on average. This is about 5 per

[15]The lower price in Yongning may be attributed to the extra government subsidy on production materials in ethnic minority and poverty-stricken areas.

cent of the land output value. Compared to Jinguan where the average expense in chemical fertilizers and herbicides amounts to 10 per cent of the land output value, the production cost in Yongning is low.

The insufficient use of fertilizer is one of the crucial factors directly related to the low crop productivity in Yongning. Not only is the volume of chemical fertilizers small, the use of farm manure is also limited. Each basket of farm manure weighs 40 kg. On average, the annual amount of farm manure used is one to two thousand baskets per household, which is about half of the amount used in Jinguan. The reason for the shortage of farm manure in the Mosuo household is because the only source of farm manure used in the fields comes from animal dung. This is an important side product of cattle production. In recent years, the county government has been encouraging and subsidizing the peasants to grow green manure crops–as part of a poverty-alleviation project–to solve the problem of insufficient fertilizers.

While the production cost is low, the amount of seeds used is comparatively high in contrast to output. The Mosuo standard measure of seeds is a wooden container resembling a tankard. It contains 2-3 *jin*, the discrepancy depending on the size and substance of the grain varieties (see Figure 28).[16]

Compared to Jinguan where the amount of rice seeds is merely one per cent of the rice output, the cost of seed is very high in Yongning. The Mosuo change rice seeds from time to time but not as often as the peasants in Jinguan. Rice seeds are mostly obtained from the Han in Neiba. Corn seeds are changed every two or three years (more frequently than rice seeds). There are two varieties of corns: the local and the non-local. The local one has a shorter growing period and low yield, but is tasty, according to the peasants. The non-local one has a longer growing period and higher yield, but is less tasty. The local variety is obtained from the

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[16]The average output of the grains included here is also consistent with the statistical figures. However, these figures do not agree with the figures provided in the early Chinese research (e.g. *Yongning Naxizu* III, 1986) in which the average output is much higher and consequently its percentage is much higher in ratio to seeds.

neighboring hamlets in Yongning; and the non-local seeds are supplied by the state-run agricultural technology station at the township seat; and therefore, they are called by the Mosuo, "state seeds."[17] Because corn is mainly used to feed animals, many households prefer to plant the "state seeds" that have a high yield.

Figure 28. Seed consumption

Crop	Amount of seeds used (*jin*)	Percentage of average output
Rice	20	4
Corn	15	3
Barnyard grass	20	5
Oats	40	15
Soybean	30	10
Kidney beans	40	13
Potato	200-300	20

SOURCE: My household Survey.

As shown in Figure 28, it seems that the older (or more traditional) the crops the higher the amount of seeds used. Among all, the highest seed cost is found in potato cultivation. In most Mosuo households, there is a large consumption of potatoes by both humans and domestic animals, and often there is not enough potatoes preserved for sowing. The Mosuo often buy potatoes (or exchange with rice) from the Yi living in the mountains. The Yi potatoes are considered the best varieties.

Generally speaking, crop cultivation in Yongning is characterized by a minimum degree of field management referring to labor input and use of chemical fertilizers. Apart from the

[17]The modification "state" is generically used by the Mosuo to distinguish things that are not local or not originally Mosuo.

possible poor quality of the soil and the deficiency of fertilizer, the low labor input further contributes to the low productivity. The highest labor input in Yongning is in rice and corn cultivation, each requiring only 15 labor days per *mu* (while in Jinguan it requires 25 labor days in rice cultivation and 15 labor days in corn cultivation). Barnyard grass, buckwheat and potato cultivation equally demand 5 labor days per *mu*. The lowest labor input is in oats and bean crop fields which is 3 labor days per *mu*. This pattern seems to show that the higher the amount of labor input, the higher the output of the crop.

Low productivity is however compensated by the large land area in Yongning. As a result, there is more than enough grain food stuff for human consumption. As a matter of fact, the average grain distribution in 1991 (970 *jin* per person) was about twice as much as an average person can consume in a year. But, none of the Mosuo households under survey sold any surplus grain on the market. The grain surplus seemed to have all been consumed by domestic animals.

In Jinguan when asked what is most important in life, the answers from the peasants were unanimously focused on *liangshi* ("grain") or *dami* ("husked rice"). In Yongning, the same question elicited various answers. Many of them considered "everything" to be important which means not only grain but also meat, fat and money. In Jinguan, when asked what they would do to *fazhan jingji* ("develop economy"), most of the peasants insisted on raising rice output. In Yongning, though grain is admittedly important, grain production does not seem to be the center of Mosuo life. Instead, to the Mosuo, the expansion of their cattle herd is the goal of a developing economy and the way to achieve economic success. The economic emphasis on cattle production can be seen from the input by the Mosuo; and the passion for raising cattle is reflected in the Mosuo idea of development and ethnic identity.

Cattle Production

The importance of livestock to the Mosuo life can be observed from the residential structures, and also from the organization of production. The design of Mosuo residences illustrates an inseparable relation between human life and domestic animals. In the Mosuo residence, a very important component–perhaps second only to the *yeemei*–is the stable. It is a two storey building. The upper level is stacked with hay, stalks and all kinds of grain fodder. The lower level is divided into several pens, or *boo* in the Mosuo dialect. *Yee-boo* is for water buffaloes, oxen and cows; *rah-boo* for horses and mules; and *bu-boo* for pigs. The draft animals are out grazing during the day and retire to separate pens in the evening. Pigs and fowl (chicken is *an* in Mosuo) are generally home-based and run around in the courtyard. Half of the courtyard is in fact occupied by animals. It is muddy throughout the year and full of dung over which animals freely tread and roll.

One thing that will arouse one's attention when going to the Mosuo hamlet is the presence of dogs (which is not very common in Jinguan). Almost every household has at least one. Dogs are not pets but raised for guarding the residence. In every corner of the hamlet, one can hear dogs barking loudly and fiercely. The vicious ones are often chained or penned in the yard, while others linger around at the yard gate. They are quite aggressive to strangers; and it is almost impossible for a stranger to visit a household without giving a notice before-hand or being accompanied by a local guide. The primary purpose of keeping dogs in the residence is presumably for the safety of the household livestock, since no other property in the household appears to be as precious as them. This precaution may have had a long history since in the remote past when the Yongning basin form time to time suffered from looting of animals by interlopers from the north and west.

The Mosuo take their livestock seriously. Aside being guarded by dogs, the cattle are spiritually protected by the Mosuo *Jabaa*. In the Mosuo residence, a small hemp parcel tied with a string is often seen hanging above the main gate. It is not for decoration but a talisman. The

parcel contains grains of oats and buckwheat that have been ritually manipulated by the Mosuo *Jabaa* to bless the well-being of the household livestock.

The domestic animals in Yongning include draft animals and animals for household consumption. Most of the bovine cattle are water buffaloes. The other common draft animals include horses and mules. Figure 29 below presents the livestock situation in Yongning.

Figure 29. Livestock in Yongning

	Number of head	Percentage of total
Buffalo/ox/cow	7.014	58.3
Horse	4,071	33.8
Mule	921	7.6
Donkey	14	1.1
Total livestock	12,020	100

SOURCE: Yongning Township Statistics 1992.

Most of the livestock is concentrated in the Mosuo hamlets. For various reasons, some Mosuo hamlets have more cattle than others. The difference between Gesawa and Dapo is shown below in Figure 30. The obvious natural advantage that Dapo has in outnumbering the cattle herd in Gesawa is its large area of arable land which means more grain output for fodder and higher income to invest in raising cattle (e.g. purchasing calves and foals).

Figure 30. Draft animal holding in Mosuo hamlets

	Gesawa hamlet	Dapo hamlet
Total draft animals	153	265
Number of household	29	32
Average holding per household	5.28	8.28

SOURCE: Kaiji Village Statistics 1992.

The animals for household consumption are mainly pigs and chickens. The average number of pigs and chickens raised in the Mosuo household exceeds by far the highest number of those raised in the Han households in Jinguan. Almost every Mosuo household under my household survey has a large crowd of pigs, on average 13 head. The number of chickens raised in a year is from twenty to fifty.

It is difficult to assess the output value of cattle production and the actual percentage it contributes to the gross production value from the statistics because only slaughtered animals are calculated in cash value. However, one good way of assessing the significance of cattle production in Mosuo economy is to calculate the energy input that includes labor input and grain fodder. The contrast between the labor input in cattle production and the labor input in crop farming and the contrast between the amount of grain fodder consumption used in cattle raising and the grain consumption for human beings effectively illustrate the proportion of cattle farming in the Mosuo household production.

Input and Output

In pure economic calculations, the input of cattle production involves "land" specifically exploited for cattle grazing, "time" that is the duration of raising the cattle and "other," e.g. labor and feed; and the output is referred to as the "most satisfaction" that the cattle owner can achieve through the amount of time spent and other inputs (Crotty 1980). In Mosuo cattle

production, the relationship between inputs and outputs needs to be understood from a cultural perspective in addition to economic values. In this perspective, the important issues involved here in the understanding of the relationship between inputs and outputs can be formulated in the following questions: In what sense, is any of the inputs–land, time, labor and feed–perceived as cost, and in what sense it is not? What are the actual economic functions of cattle production, and what is the meaning of cattle production when the economic functions are not visible.

Cattle raising in Mosuo households requires a tremendous labor input. While crop farming has busy and slack seasons, cattle raising needs constant labor input all year round. All day long from morning to evening, at least two adult laborers are involved in raising animals in every household.[18] Assuming that two laborers per day are needed for cattle farming, there will be 730 labor days a year which by far exceeds the labor input in crop farming. If the average labor input per unit in crop farming is 10 days (as noted earlier in this chapter, 15 days in rice and corn cultivation, 3-5 days in barnyard grass and other cereals), the minimum 730 labor days in cattle production could be used to cultivate 73 *mu* of land which could be twice as much (or more than) the actual arable land area that an average household has in Yongning. This comparison suggests that more than half of the labor force in the Mosuo household is used for cattle raising. This is the result that as some young educated Mosuo in Yongning put it, "People are busy not for themselves but for cattle."

In Mosuo households, children, adult and elderly men are, to some extent, all involved in cattle grazing. The first thing that children do after getting up in the morning (before breakfast) is to go out and gather grass. Fresh grass is always better than hay to feed the draft animals, and also to bed down stables and sties. The teenage boys are good enough to mind water buffaloes (they are often seen riding on the buffalo back strolling along the ditches by the

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[18]Weng notes that three to four laborers are needed for each Naze household to herd their livestock (Weng 1993: 14).

fields). Adult men graze horses and mules because these animals are more precious and need more care. Cattle graze in the common land mainly on mountain slopes and in the fallow land within the territory of the hamlet. In winter, animals also graze in the harvested fields; and that is why fields in Yongning are not immediately ploughed after (especially corn and bean) harvest–the residual grains and straws are good for grazing cattle (see Plate 7).

Different hamlets have different grazing systems. In Gesawa, every household takes care of its own herd. The ones that have little labor force to spare may ask others to graze for them, letting their own cattle join the other's herd. This kind of labor help is not necessarily reciprocal but acknowledged and rewarded on special occasions, e.g. the New Year and the "minor New Year" (which they say in Chinese, *xiaonian*, in the middle of 11th month of Lunar calendar) when the herders are given some presents, mainly food stuff.

Dapo hamlet has a cooperative herding system as a method to save labor force. All the cattle in the hamlet join the herd under organized supervision. The herding arrangement rotates among all the households in the hamlet–basically one household per day. If one household is small and needs to combine force with another household, the two households herd for two days. Every morning around breakfast time, every household drives its own cattle to the common ground at the center of the hamlet. Breakfast time in Yongning is quite late because of house chore, much of which involves cattle care–children going out gathering grass, women cooking pig feed and men arranging harness and getting ready for herding. Between 9 and 9: 30, the herd is all gathered and slowly drifts out of the hamlet along winding tracks.

The cooperative herding bars the "naughty" cattle from joining the herd to avoid troubles. Water buffaloes seldom graze with other animals because they easily get into fights. If a household does not have spare labor to herd water buffaloes separately, the animals have to stay at home being penned. On many occasions when I was doing interviews in the Mosuo households, I saw water buffaloes standing in stables with their heads sticking out looking frustrated. Animals are said to have tempers and mood swings. According to the Mosuo, if the animals meet one another every day, they stay relatively in peace; but if one is absent for a

period of time (a few weeks will do), its reunion with the herd often stirs up violent fights. The fight, according to the herders, is an exercise to warm up the relationship. However, it can be dangerous, and the fight may end in fatal disasters if the animals fall down the mountain slopes. Usually, there is nothing one can do to prevent the animals from fighting with each other if they decide to do so. The only thing that the herders can do is to make sure that the animals fight on fairly flat ground so that they will not fall and get themselves killed. At this time, extra hands are needed for emergency help that often neighbors are much obliged to offer.[19]

While men are mostly involved in taking care of draft animals, women are left to tend to pigs and chickens. Different feeding methods are applied to pigs at different growing stages. In the Mosuo feeding system, there are four categories: piglet, feeder pig, fattening pig and sow. The feeder pig is between the piglet and fattening pig. The fattening pig is equivalent to what the peasants in Jinguan call *nianzhu* ("New Year's pig"). The fattening pigs and piglets are fed at home while the feeder pigs and sows are let out to graze in the ditches or in the harvested fields. Often toddlers and the elderly are assigned to look after the feeder pigs grazing outside the home. The pigs staying at home are fed three times a day usually after each meal of the householders. The Mosuo believe in feeding pigs with cooked feed. This makes raising pigs even more energy consuming in terms of both human labor and fuels. The labor involved in feeding pigs is to carry water, gather firewood, chop fodder, and cook the feed.

The division of labor in cattle production is strongly linked to cattle ownership in the pastoral or semi-pastoral societies in Africa where the cattle ownership is vested in men because cattle are men's business (Evans-Pritchard 1969; Rigby 1969). In Yongning, the division of labor in cattle production has little implication for ownership. Although cattle are grazed by men, utilized by men, slaughtered by men and transacted by men, men are not entitled to the

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[19]One morning, my guide in Gesawa suddenly disappeared from my interview appointment. Later he told me that he was on emergency call by his neighbor to help with cattle fighting. It took quite a long time before everybody was sure that nothing bad would not happen to the animals.

exclusive ownership. In the Mosuo household (most of them are matrilineal), cattle are corporately owned by all the members of the household. In terms of ownership of household property, all members are equally entitled without discrimination of sex or age.[20] When a household divides, the cattle herd may also be divided, but the division of the cattle herd must be discussed with all members of the household.

Households owning cattle are said to be often larger than those do not (Barrett 1992: 23). This is mainly due to the need in labor management. In Mosuo society, the matrilineal household provides favorable conditions for cattle production. Different from the pure economic calculations, the labor input in Mosuo cattle production is not counted, neither is time. This is because the household-deployed labor and time are not conceptualized as cost. The same concept applies to fodder consumption, which is similar to the notion of peasant spending discussed in the previous chapter, wherein household-produced goods are not calculated in monetary terms. Fodder, therefore, no matter how much is consumed, is not considered as cost as long as it is self-produced.

Grain fodder is another form of the huge energy input in cattle production apart from labor. The amount of the grain fodder input in cattle production can be observed from the percentage of the crops used for cattle production (see Figure 31). Of all the crops, rice is the major food stuff for humans (in addition to wheat); potatoes are for both human and animal consumption; corn is the main grain fodder for pigs; kidney beans, barley and buckwheat are for draft animals; and soybean is for sale.

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[20]See Chapter 4 about the sibling relationship in the matrilineal household.

Figure 31. Total crop output in Yongning

Crop	Output (ton)	Percentage of total
Rice	1,609	21.56
Corn	3,439	46.08
Potato	1,240	11.61
Other cereals*	892	11.95
Soybean	166	2.22
Wheat	118	1.58
Total	7,464	100

SOURCE: Yongning Township Statistics 1992.

*Including oats, buckwheat, highland barley and kidney beans.

The percentages in Figure 31 show that the grain crops for human consumption constitute less than one third of the total grain output. This means that the grain crop production in Yongning is largely for the purpose of raising domestic animals. As the food consumption by humans may remain relatively stable, the grain surplus–however large–is turned into fodder consumed by domestic animals. This pattern of production presents a circle of production and consumption in that even more grain is produced on the land, the more is consumed by domestic animals. Therefore, no matter how high the grain output is, there is hardly any surplus. This is the reason, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, that the Mosuo peasants do not have grain surplus to sell in the market.

Raising pigs is the most grain fodder consuming of all. A pig growing period in Yongning is fairly long–twice as long as in Jinguan. It is about two years–from piglet to feeder pig in the first year and from feeder pig to fattening pig in another year. The long growing period consumes a great deal of fodder which puts much burden on human labor and fodder supply. The pig feed is a mixture of grain, chaff and greens. The amount of grain that pigs

consume varies from household to household depending on the individual situation. In a reasonably well-to-do household (the upper middle level in the Mosuo hamlet) with ten people raising five or six feeder pigs, twenty piglets and one sow in a year, the amount of feed consumed includes 50 sacks of corn (about 4,000 *jin*), 20 baskets of potatoes (2,000 *jin*), and a couple of thousand *jin* of squash. The feeder pigs, because they are not for immediate slaughter, are not given much grain and most of the time, are let out wandering in the fields and on the streets looking for food themselves. The sow is raised for having piglets only, and therefore, in the opinion of the Mosuo peasants, she does not deserve proper feed like the fattening pigs, though she may be given some special feed around the time when she gives birth to piglets. Of the total amount of grain fodder, the fattening pigs consume as much as 70 per cent, and the rest is for feeder pigs and the sow. Because of such a demand in grain fodder in raising pigs, the poorer the household, the longer the pig's growing period appears to be. The grain fodder insufficiency is probably one of the reasons why pigs in Yongning do not grow big–they are often slaughtered at a size of 40-50 *jin*.[21]

The outputs of cattle production in Yongning are mainly draft power (as in plough and transportation), minimum dairy product, festival and ritual consumption of meat, dung and some cash income. The bovine cattle are mainly exploited in ploughing. Water buffaloes are more popular than oxen as they are said to have more strength than oxen, and are especially good at ploughing sticky soil.[22] Horses and mules are largely used for transportation. During planting and harvesting seasons, they shuttle between the hamlet and fields carrying manure and crops. While water buffaloes and oxen are idle through the slack farming seasons, horses and mules are still employed in transporting firewood from the mountains.[23] In addition, horses are

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[21]Some Mosuo say that they like the meat from young pigs.

[22]The Chinese sources indicate that buffaloes became popular in Yongning after an epidemic earlier in the century which destroyed a large ox population (*Ninglang Yizu* II, 1986: 7).

[23]Every year, a male laborer per household on average spends up to six months gathering firewood.

used as an ordinary means of transportation between the basin and inner mountains where there is no bus service and the distance is too far for using bicycles.

As traditionally among Nuer and Gogo in Africa, a large cattle population consists of cows because milk is important to the local human diet; and cattle are not slaughtered for meat. In Yongning, milk is not a dairy product in the human diet and some cattle (cow or ox) are slaughtered for meat. The only dairy products from cows include butter and cheese. Every 30 *jin* of milk makes 2 *jin* of butter. The residue is processed into cheese in a form of crispy flakes. Butter is precious in the Mosuo diet. It is mostly added to tea. Normally, only the households that raise cows or yaks (the best butter is said to be produced by yaks) can afford to consume butter, as the market price for butter is very high, 15 Yuan per *jin* which is nearly 40 times as much as the price for rice. Therefore, butter tea is not an ordinary drink, but only offered on special occasions. In other words, an offer of butter tea in the Mosuo household is definitely a sign of hospitality. The Mosuo make and drink butter tea by the fireplace in the kitchen (*yeemei*). First, water is heated in a small clay pot by the open fire. Once it boils, a lump of brick tea and a pinch of salt are added. After a minute or so, the pot is removed from the fire, and butter is added. Then a small broom-like whisk is used to blend the tea.[24] After a few minutes, the tea is ready, and poured into small cups and served with roasted oats powder, locally called *zanba*. Some people eat the oats with a spoon, and others mix the powder with butter tea and knit into a lump to chew. The butter tea is very strong, and tastes quite bitter and salty. Because butter is precious and usually preserved at room temperature for months or up to a year, the tea inevitably gives off a pungent smell of rancid butter.

Cows or oxen are sometimes slaughtered on occasions like funerals and the New Year. One may argue that cattle are not slaughtered for meat consumption but for religious or ritual

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[24]A more formal manner of making butter tea is to boil tea in a big pot then pour the liquid into a bamboo tube about 10 cm thick and half meter long in which butter is added. A wooden whisk is used to press down and pull up intensively for several minutes before the tea is well blended. This way of making butter tea is for a large group of people.

celebration. In the past, it might be very possibly that the sacrifice of cows and oxen served purely religious and ritual purposes. But, in Mosuo life today, the cattle are slaughtered mainly to provide meat for feasts which may or may not have religious purposes (despite the ritual expressions in the organization of labor help in slaughtering, distribution of meat to kinsmen and making offerings). Beef is usually cooked in big chunks in water. Sometimes, the meat is cured and preserved–cut into strips, salted and aired dry. The meat that the Mosuo consume on a daily basis mainly is pork.

Pigs are raised solely for household consumption. Pigs are slaughtered after the rice harvest. Slaughtering animals is men's work and usually done in a ritualized manner.[25] It involves cooperation between several households, and the people who offer hands are rewarded a portion of the meat or viscera. Immediately following the slaughtering pig, some fresh meat is distributed among the close relatives living in the same hamlet. The rest of the meat is preserved. Unlike the peasants in Jinguan, the Mosuo in Yongning seldom eat fresh pork. Their traditional way of consuming pork is making *mucha* (or home-cured bacon). The curing process is very simple. After the pig is slaughtered, its belly is cut open vertically from which all the viscera, bones and lean meat are removed. Then, a large quantity of salt is applied into the hole and the belly is sewn up and let dry. After a year or so, the meat is ready to eat. Because much of the *mucha* is fat, the Han Chinese call it *zhubiao* ("pig fat"). An average *mucha* weighs 100 *jin*–the small ones can be 50-60 *jin* and the bigger one may make 200 *jin*. Customarily, the *mucha* is consumed from the pig tail upwards. Pig head is mainly offered at funerals. Trotters are saved for children on the occasion of "minor New Year" (*xiaonian*) in the early winter.

Mucha provides the major source of protein in the Mosuo diet. In the average Mosuo household, *mucha* is consumed in small portions everyday, mostly using the fat to cook

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[25]In Chapter 4 in the context of gender roles, it is noted that men handle meat while women handle grain.

vegetables. At intervals, a chunk of *mucha* is cooked (steamed or boiled), and each person can have one or two slices (each about one centimeter thick, two or three inches long). The food as such is usually equally distributed among all household members. In Mosuo life, *mucha* is not only a delicious food, but also a form of accumulated wealth. The more *mucha* one has, the longer the meat supply lasts. The actual collection of *mucha* also has symbolic values as it functions as a sign of wealth. To the Mosuo, the longer *mucha* is kept in the household, the stronger the economic base. This is why the Mosuo think that the longer the *mucha* keeps the better it tastes. They say that if it has been preserved for long enough (5-6 years), the *mucha* becomes so "ripe" that it does not need cooking, and is most delicious. In the past, the Mosuo customarily collected dried pig bladders each time they slaughtered a pig. At the time, because *mucha* was consumed in limited amount and did not last very long, the number of bladders–indicating the number of pigs slaughtered–hung in one corner of the kitchen was to show the strength of the family wealth. Those days have gone past and people no longer collect bladders anymore since every household nowadays can afford to slaughter several pigs every year and it takes too much space if all bladders are collected. Bedsides, as more and more pigs are slaughtered, there is more *mucha* that the Mosuo household can consume and display. *Mucha* is often kept in the kitchen (*yeemei*) on top of the cupboard. The higher the stack, the wealthier the household.

Chickens in the household are consumed on special occasions such as when receiving guests and festivals. At times, one or two chickens may be sold in exchange for salt, tea and other daily necessities. Chickens are also common gift items.

To the Mosuo, one of the purposes of raising domestic animals–probably next important to providing for draft power–is to collect dung. The output of dung in cattle production seems to offset the input of time. In this sense, the duration of time in raising domestic animals is in direct ratio with the accumulation of dung. As stated earlier, the pig growing period in Yongning is about two years which is twice long as in Jinguan. But this does not seem to be a bother. To the Mosuo, the long growing period is not necessarily a waste of time and energy,

because the longer the growing period is, the more dung is generated. This in turn saves the expense on chemical fertilizers.

The number of draft animals raised in each Mosuo household is much higher than in Jinguan. However, this is by no means an indicator of higher living standard; nor does the large number of pigs raised in the Mosuo household mean that the Mosuo consume more meat than the peasants in Jinguan. In fact, my household survey shows that only one third or less of the pigs raised in the Mosuo household (on average 13 head per household) are slaughtered every year. Because the growing period of pigs in Yongning is long and often pigs are slaughtered before they grow big enough (and some may die of disease or accidents in the growing process), there are really not enough fat pigs in the household for sale.

Despite the huge labor and fodder input, domestic animals, in general, do not contribute much to the cash income in the Mosuo household. Although the Mosuo like to say that they raise cattle to increase income, draft animals are not commonly sold for cash. Yongning does not have a cattle market, and this would seem to indicate a lack of frequent cattle transactions. There are a number of cattle dealers in the Mosuo hamlets. They mostly go to other counties to buy and sell. The current price in cattle deals between peasant households is listed in Figure 32 below.

Figure 32. Average cattle price

Cattle	Price (Yuan/head)
Water Buffalo	500
Ox	500-600
Cow	300
Mule	2,000-2,500
Horse	800-1,000

SOURCE: My household survey.

It takes three or four years to raise a mule from foal to adult; and it takes about the same period of time to raise a water buffalo from a calf to adult. The discrepancy in the prices between these draft animals seems to have little to do with the time of raising. Rather it may be related to the actual use of the animals in farming and other commercial activities (e.g. the difference between buffalo used in ploughing and mule used in horse train trade). Among sixty households interviewed, only seven households sold cattle for cash in 1991. The total number of cattle sold was nine, and all were in Dapo hamlet. On average, each of the seven household made 300 to 600 Yuan. Most of the cattle sold were oxen and water buffaloes. The Han peasants in Neiba sometimes purchase water buffaloes or oxen from the Mosuo and use them mainly to plough. Cows are seldom sold because they are raised for reproduction which in the Mosuo concept is "development." Also, because the price for cows is lower than other cattle, it is not worth selling them. Some households are interested in exchanging cattle, e.g. between ox and horse. The basis of this kind of exchange is not usually the market price, rather it is according to individual preference and needs. For instance, a household needs an ox for funeral. Instead of spending money to purchase an ox, it may choose to exchange its young horse for an ox with a neighbor who may be in need for a horse.

That only a small number of cattle are sold may also be attributed to the fact that the boom of cattle production only started after the implementation of the household production responsibility system. During the collective system, the cattle herd was owned by the hamlet (or production team). Each household was assigned to take care of one or two head of draft animals for earning two work-points per head a day. At the time when land was contracted to the household, the collective livestock were allocated to the individual households: one head per household; and the rest were sold to the households that could afford to buy. From one or two head per household ten years ago to five to eight head today, the size of cattle herd has grown quite impressively. But, the herd is apparently not big enough for sale. Nonetheless, the average households seem to have more enough cattle as far as the production use is concerned. Apart from the on-farm output value (e.g. draft power and dung), the reason that the peasants

retain a cattle herd which is bigger than is needed in production is related to the local conceptualization of cattle as representing a more reliable financial security and a worthier possession than cash. This issue touches upon the Mosuo idea of development and related cultural values.

The Idea of Development and Ethnic Identity

Given the tremendous energy input, cattle raising in Mosuo society cannot be regarded merely as sideline production. The considerable high energy input in and the insignificant cash income from cattle production may appear to make little economic sense, but the significance of cattle production in Mosuo society cannot be judged solely by market values. From what Mosuo say about cattle and what they do for them, one can observe that the passion for cattle is rooted in the Mosuo idea of development and ethnic identity.

Despite the majority of households have more draft animals than they actually need for production and consumption purposes, their ambition to further increase the number of livestock seems to never cease. To the Mosuo, the more cattle the merrier. During my interviews with the Mosuo, when asked what future plans they would have for their household economy, the common answer was "Raising more cattle" (this contrasts the answer from the peasants in Jinguan, which is: "Raising rice output). Then, when asked again why they needed to raise more cattle since they have already had so many of them, they replied: "*dju-ke-bey*." In Mosuo language, this phrase means "need to develop;" "need to increase." In short, it is a matter of prosperity.

Dju-ke-bey thus expresses the Mosuo idea of development. This notion of development is similar to the African concept of cattle being a storage of capital or accumulation of wealth. In the context of Gogo pastoralism, it is maintained that livestock is "really the only medium in which wealth can be accumulated over a considerable length of time" (Rigby 1969: 54). In the central Tanzania, the process of cattle grow is viewed as a process in which wealth in grain is converted to livestock; and the capital growth is in the reproduction of the cattle herd (Barrett

1992). The idea that cattle is a medium for accumulating wealth addresses the relation between crop production and cattle production; and it probably the reason why it is generally estimated that incomes of households owning cattle are substantially higher than those that do not. This can be seen from the income discrepancy and cattle holding discrepancy in the two Mosuo hamlets in Yongning. By comparison, Dapo has higher average income than Gesawa (see Figure 23) and the average cattle herd of the households in Dapo is larger (see Figure 30). However, this does not mean that a larger cattle herd actually brings in higher income. Rather, the association of cattle with wealth may be seen from the perspective that sustaining a large cattle herd relies on sufficient grain surplus. As mentioned earlier, the obvious natural advantage that Dapo has over Gesawa is a large arable land area (as shown in Figure 21). The large land area means more output and income; and the more income the household has from grain crops, the more can be invested in cattle production. In this logic, the wealthier the household the larger cattle herd it can afford to keep.

When cattle are regarded as a storage of capital or an accumulation of wealth, they acquire functions of financial security serving as the basic "value units" which "can be used to evaluate anything from wives and children. . . to the seriousness of offence, and the number of bags of grain borrowed in a famine year" (Rigby 1969: 47). The Nuer traditionally have the similar notion that cattle are "the most cherished possession, being an essential food-supply and the most important social asset" (Evans-Pritchard 1969: 18). The ritual use of cattle as value units and social assets is not prominent in Mosuo society. One reason is that the Mosuo do not have marriage institution; and there are no other social functions that involve large payments and transactions. But the concept of the "storage of wealth" may have a similar implication as in the peasant investment logic in house building in Jinguan. While land is under public ownership (and because there is plenty of land to cultivate, increasing land area is not a Mosuo's desire anyway), cattle are private possessions. In the same way as the house in Jinguan, the cattle herd can be expanded. Both are accumulations of wealth.

The value system in which cattle act as a storage of wealth is said not to be simply the "individual responses to concrete situations of environmental use and animal production," but also to reflect "capabilities which are institutionally shaped, both by the patterns of activity proper to pastoralism and by the cultural strategies and formal classificatory systems collectively encoded for carrying out pastoral tasks" (Galaty 1987: 6). Such institutionally shaped capacities are found in the local cognition of Mosuo ethnic identity.

Cattle are central not only to the Mosuo idea of development, but to the local cognition of ethnic identity as well. Often, Mosuo can be heard passionately explaining: "We Mosuo just love cattle; and we love to do everything that is related to cattle." Local historical legend has it that the Mosuo were the descendants of the "Yak Qiang" (or *maoniu* Qiang) who were nomadic and lived in the region (of today's Qinghai) and Gansu in the ancient time (*Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Zhi* 1993: 177; *Ninglang Yizu Zizhixian Gaikuang* 1985: 10-11; S. Li 1986). In addition, the Mosuo in Yongning sometimes claim to be descendants of the Mongols (see Chapter 1). Today there are no traces of yak herding in the basin, although yak butter is sometimes available for purchase in the market. In the mountains, on the other hand, at an altitude of 3,000 meters, there lives a yak herd which is the largest livestock herd in Yongning.[26] Despite a lack of archaeological evidence to support the claim to a historical link to either "Yak Qiang" (or Mongols for that matter), many Mosuo insist and appear to firmly believe that their ancestors were nomads.

Cattle and cattle herding are also invoked as key factors to explain local patterns of hamlet settlement, i.e. facing the basin and leaning on the mountains, and to distinguish the identity of ethnic minorities from that of the Han. The Mosuo say that "We *minzu* [ethnic minority people] like to live close to the mountains; and only the Han choose to settle in the center of the basin." To the Mosuo (and many other ethnic minorities such as the Pumi and Yi

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[26]They were originally confiscated from the Tusi and Sipi in the 1950s, and were once under collective management. In 1980, the yak farm was dissolved, and yaks were distributed to sixteen households living in the mountains. At the present, the herd has grown into some one thousand head.

living in the area), living close to mountains has clear advantages as far as production and sideline production are concerned, as mountains provide grazing ground for cattle, a convenient access to forest produce–firewood, timber, and all kinds of mountain vegetation.

That cattle can play a crucial role not just in economic but in cultural terms has been noted by others. The claim has been made that the economic functions as well as the cultural values of cattle make cattle the dearest possession of the Nuer who "gladly risk their lives to defend their herds or to pillage those of their neighbors" (Evans-Pritchard 1969: 16). Although the Mosuo do not necessarily fight for cattle like the Nuer, their devotion to cattle is amply demonstrated by their particular pattern of production wherein so much of what the Mosuo household produces is aimed exclusively at retaining and increasing the size of the herd. The true significance of cattle is reflected in the proportion of energy input in cattle breeding, and not in the actual income that cattle production provides.

It has been noted that cattle are not necessarily "produced as commodities per se, but as objects of multiple use and personal ties" (Galaty 1987: 5), and that in fact the on-farm use of the cattle and the cognition of cattle as storage of wealth may constitute that which gives "most satisfaction" to the cattle owner. The Mosuo take immense pride in the crowdedness of their stable and regard it not only as a sign of economic success, but of life fulfillment as well. They are anxious if their family does not have daughters; and equally worried if they do not have animals mooing and whinnying around them. To the Mosuo, a large household and a crowded stable as a guarantee of prosperity in both social and economic terms. Herein lies the core of the set of cultural values that underlie the Mosuo notion of "development" (*dju-ke-bey*) and dominate household production in Yongning.

CONCLUSION

This study has concerned itself with the economy of two rural communities in the wake of the first decade of economic reforms–reforms that aimed at letting the population "get rich." It begins by posing the questions to what extent this goal has been achieved and what the forces are that have helped or hindered the achievement. This thesis then sets out to present the relevant forces which are institutional, social and cultural, in addition to ecological.

Part of the thesis is laid out to examine the key institutional changes brought about by the reforms and their influence on the peasant economy. They are, namely, what has been commonly understood as decentralization, and the implementation of the household responsibility system. In this context, the thesis has scrutinized the roles that the local governments and household organization play in shaping particular pattern of production and way of life in each community. The government administration at the grassroots levels and social relationships in the peasant household are found to form the social bases of the economic realities in the two communities. The other part of the thesis deals with non-political aspects of peasant economy. It focuses on the ecological situation and cultural cognition of local economy. The particular pattern of production is seen both as a cultural adaptation to the ecological condition and as a function of peasant values. Within this scope of research, this comparative study of rural economy covers not only economy and society, but ethnic issues as well.

Decentralization and Rural Economy

The central question in the chapter on Local Administration and Economic Autonomy is: What has the political change of Chinese economic reform characterized by the widely recognized decentralization of the current bureaucratic system done to the development of the rural economy? This question precisely concerns the roles that the state (i.e. the central government) and local officialdom have come to play in the economy subsequent to the changing relationship between central and local governments. One of the conclusions reached in this study is that the different political, social and geographical relations that the local governments have with the central state inevitably create regional differences in economic development; and this situation allows the local government to play a role which has never been so important in both political and economic terms.

The economic reforms, especially the fiscal reforms in the 1980s, have created unprecedented economic autonomy for the government administration at local levels across China. One crucial aspect of the autonomy of local governments is reflected in increased power in the management of resources (local and state), which has in turn served to further reinforce local autonomy. There are, however, differences in the power bases on which local autonomy is founded in rich and poor areas. While in the rich areas, local governments have grown powerful mainly through control over an increasing revenue from local industries, local governments in poor areas have become powerful largely through management of local natural resources and state funds. The power of the local government here is not to be understood in terms of income, rather it is an issue of how much the local administration can manipulate economic resources in its territory. Yongsheng and Ninglang are both located in one of the poorest areas of China; and the thesis has shown that the local autonomy in these two counties finds expression in coercive interference with local production and bargaining with the state for subsidies. Between the two counties, the degree of autonomy varies depending on many political, social and economic specifics. Despite the better economic situation in Yongsheng, both counties rely on a considerable amount of state aid. But, as far as the local autonomy is

concerned, the greater the redistributive function of the local administration, the greater its power.

The account of local administration in Chapter 2 points at some of the key social, political and economic factors which have resulted in observable differences in government behavior in Yongsheng and Ninglang. Generalizing the data presented in that chapter, these factors are summarized here in order to highlight the basic differences between the two counties from which different government economic strategies have derived (see Figure 33).

Figure 33. Factors affecting economic strategies of local administrations

	Yongsheng county	Ninglang county
Special designation	finance-deficit county	finance-deficit county, state-poverty stricken county, ethnic minority autonomous county
State support	aid to administration, ear-marked for economic construction	aid to administration, ear-marked for economic construction, special fund for supporting the "old-minor-peripheral-poor" areas, poverty-alleviation schemes including central subsidized loans, aid for work, etc.
Other preferential treatments		exemption of agricultural tax

That the economic situation in Yongsheng is better than Ninglang is represented by its per capita income which is 30 per cent higher than in Ninglang. But in terms of state financial subsidy, the amount per capita in Ninglang is about 94 per cent higher than in Yongsheng. These facts are the bases for the differences manifest in government behavior between the two counties. At the grassroots level (township), we see that in one place (Yongning), there is a lack of enthusiasm on the government side for generating local revenue and a minor degree of government intervention in peasant life; and in the other (Jinguan), the government is much

motivated and determined to increase local revenue at the expense of the immediate economic interests of the peasants. These differences in economic policy seem to present an inverse correlation between the degree of government intervention and the actual availability of economic resources. In Jinguan where the land area is relatively small in comparison to the size of the population, the government has enforced tobacco production in order to increase local revenue, in spite of rice being regarded by peasants as subsistence security. On the other hand, in Yongning where the land area is vast, administrative interference in land use, however, has been minimal which presents a situation of *de facto* privatization.

The similar pattern of government interference and non-interference has also been identified in the management of rural enterprises. While the township government in Jinguan plays an active role in asserting its ownership, the township government in Yongning takes little interest in local enterprises. As shown in Chapter 2, this disparity is rooted in the presence or absence of incentives which are associated with different degrees of administrative career pressure on local officials and the amount of state support available to each community. The government intervention in peasant economy in Jinguan clearly reflects the increased power of local autonomy. The power is institutional and based on a monopoly of resources provided by various responsibility systems. The relaxed situation of government administration in Yongning, on the other hand, also reflects an expanded local autonomy deriving from a special property relationship between the state, village and peasants.

The findings in this thesis show that the changes in state-local relations since the beginning of economic reforms has obvious moral implications. This is how in the poor areas of northwest Yunnan, the state generally plays a "benign" role, judging from the substantial financial aid provided to the area. In a subsistence economy with restricted access to markets, the state monopoly supply of chemical fertilizers and other production materials, social and disaster relief are generally appreciated by the peasants. As far as the state (i.e. the central government) is concerned, economic development in the *lao shao bian qiong* areas is more of a political issue than an economic one. The state poverty-alleviation programs have been fueled

by the moral concerns to achieve the goal of social stability. Hence, in the first decade of economic reform, state aid to the poor areas has been increasing. In view of this, the political agenda has come to form part of the moral economy.

The concept of moral economy also has influence on the peasants' perceptions of their relation to the state. As Chapter 2 has shown, despite an increase in state subsidies, the two counties face growing problems in infrastructural construction and maintenance. There are two explanations for the problems: one is institutional and one conceptual. The institutional explanation concerns the weakened function of village administration in generating collective funds and motivating the labor force; and the economic policy pursued by the local government–which is increasingly autonomous–setting its own economic agenda and enjoying almost total discretion as to which use its funds–local revenue and state subsidies alike–are to be put.

The conceptual explanation is related to how the peasants perceive individual and public responsibilities. In the equation between public and state, the maintenance of public facilities, to the individual peasants, is the "problem of the state." The peasant-state relation is a complex issue. As shown in Chapter 2, the peasants' conceptualization of their relation with the state is ultimately shaped by their relation with the local cadres. In this respect, the role played by local cadres is crucial to our understanding of peasant-state relations. Contrary to the argument held by some scholars that local cadres have played less significant role in the course of economic reform as a result of their weakened power in redistribution (economic reason), their declining morale (ideological reason), this study finds that whether the local cadres choose to side with the peasants or with the state, the role they play has significant implications for the local economic development. The importance of the role of the local cadres must therefore be understood in the context of relation between political institutions and economic reforms.[1]

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[1]Susan Shirk (1993) argues that the Chinese economic reforms have been facilitated, to a large extent, by the form of the political institutions.

Economic Aspects of Household Organization

In this study, household organization is seen as culturally constructed. It is therefore directly related to the ethnic differences between the Han in Jinguan and the Mosuo in Yongning. The household (either *jia* in Jinguan or *yidu* in Yongning) is a living unit as well as a kin group. As a living unit, the household is an economic entity (property holding group) which exercises corporate management of resources and a common budget–it is, in other words, both a production and consumption unit. As a kin group, the household is a center of social relationships bound by particular descent rules. Chapters 3-4 have introduced the different structures of patrilineal and matrilineal households, and analyzed differences in descent system as well as in economic relations. Some features that contrast the household organization in the two communities are generalized and presented below in Figure 34.

Figure 34. Comparison of household organization

	Jinguan township	Yongning township
Ethnic status	Han	Mosuo
Descent rule	patrilineal	matrilineal
Average size of household (person per household)	4.8	8.3
Core kinship relation	father-son	mother-daughter
Gender relation	husband-wife	sister-brother
Role of affinal relations	important	not important/non-existent

The patrilineal household is organized following the principle of patrilineal descent. The perpetuation of the patrilineal descent is through various arrangements of social institutions such as marriage and adoption. Depending on the circumstances, the virilocal and uxorilocal

marriages, *zhaipo* and adoption practices in Jinguan provide solutions to the needs of maintaining patrilineal descent as well as old-age support.

This study has analyzed a number of cultural explanations for why siblings and affines make significant economic contributions (i.e. in financial and labor help). In the patrilineal household, social relationships are centered on father-son relations, and the primary biological relations are those between parent and children and between siblings. By sharing common substance, people regard the social and economic responsibilities towards one another in this relationship as involuntary and obligatory. By contrast, the conjugal relations are contractual and complementary because they lack the common substance. The nature of social relationships–biological and conjugal–results in different economic relations and responsibilities among the members of the household. While the obligatory rights and duties between the biological relations are naturally inherited and generally taken for granted, the contractual rights and duties between the conjugal relations are negotiated.

By treating the kinship system as a cultural component of economic relations, the study has shown that social relationships and the adjustment of social relationships involved in the institutions of marriage and adoption have important consequences for the economic relations in the peasant household. Taking issue with some simplified assumptions concerning gender status, the analysis under *Conjugal Relations* of the patrilineal household shows that women's position should not be judged solely by the type and the amount of work they do. Only when the local perception of women's role in both production and reproduction is taken into account, can one arrive at a fuller understanding of gender relations. In this context, the cultural idioms of gender relationship that men are associated with "important" responsibilities and the "outside" sphere, while women are associated with "trivial" matters and the "inside" quarter in the patrilineal household, do not necessarily imply a dominant-subordinated relationship between husband and wife. Rather they express a complementary role that the conjugal pair play in economic activities.

The matrilineal household in Yongning presents a very different arrangement. The core of the kin group is the mother-daughter relation. While in the patrilineal household, affines are added and daughters are subtracted, in the matrilineal household neither daughters nor sons are subtracted, but affines are not added. Apart from the mother-child relation, a distinctive feature of the matrilineal household is the bond of sister-brother relationships. The analysis of siblingship in Chapter 4 argues that the relationship between sisters and brothers in the matrilineal household bears some resemblance to the conjugal relationship of wife and husband in the patrilineal household. The common identity that the sisters and brothers share in the matrilineal household determines their specific social and economic responsibilities to each other. These shared social and economic responsibilities, in turn, create a strong interdependence between sisters and brothers. In this particular household organization, economic relations are different from those in the patrilineal one. While brothers and sisters in the patrilineal household do not have equal shares in the family property, the siblings in the matrilineal household do. As a common property group, all economic resources in the matrilineal household–labor, land, cattle, income–are pooled.

Owing to the absence of affinal relations, the kin relationships in the matrilineal household are much simpler than those in the patrilineal household. Different from the patrilineal household, the affinal relations have little social and economic importance in the matrilineal household. The exclusion of affines is a guarantee of the integrity of the matrilineal descent. The exclusion of affines is achieved through the practice of *tississi* ("walking marriage"). In the absence of affinal partners (the equivalent of husband or wife), sisters and brothers play complementary roles in the matrilineal household. The social organization as such retains the household internal harmony which prevents the members of the property group from splitting. This is shown in the study as an important example of how the particular form of social relationships in the matrilineal household affects the organization of the household.

The comparison of the two household organizations in this study highlights the extent to which different social relationships have practical economic implications. Both patrilineal and

matrilineal households are corporate property groups that rely on the labor force of the household in production. For this reason, the distinctively different household organizations in Jinguan and Yongning are seen to be related to two different patterns of production due to differences in the management of labor and forms of resource control.

The size of the household does seem to have an effect on productivity and economic growth. A general comparative pattern in this study shows the smaller the household, the more intensive the production; and the bigger the size of the household, the higher the degree of interdependence among the family members. The observed difference in productivity between Jinguan and Yongning is vaguely consistent with the assumption that matriliny is associated with local productivity.[2] A valid reason for this association seems to lie with the size of the household in relation to the degree of interdependence of its members.

By comparison, the patrilineal household has a stronger tendency to divide due to social and economic conflicts, while the matrilineal household appears to have remained relatively stable. This is the main reason why the matrilineal household is larger than the patrilineal household. The large matrilineal household and its relative stability is not only a result of the cultural idea of mother-child and sibling bonds, but also the ecological situation. With a comparatively large land area to cultivate and a cattle herd to raise, the extended matrilineal household has adapted itself to the special needs of production and reproduction by pooling its resources.

Culture and Economy

The two patterns of production in Jinguan and Yongning reflect differences in natural environments, social organizations, cultural values and economic choices. The two economies included in this study–the rice cultivation in Jinguan and the cattle production in Yongning–are shown to be shaped by interactions between culture and ecological situation. While the

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[2]As discussed in David Aberle (1961): "Matrilineal Descent in Cross-Cultural Perspective;" and Kathleen Gough (1961b): "Variation in Residence."

ecological situation in each community provides certain natural advantages for the particular pattern of production, the cultural cognition of economy (as well as social norms) of the local population also serves to reinforce such forms of economy. In this context, Rice Ears and Cattle Tails are both seen as institutionally shaped patterns of production which are associated with the local concepts of economy and cultural identity.

Chapters 5-6 have shown that in Jinguan, agriculture is characterized by intensive land utilization (e.g. double cropping) and high productivity, while in Yongning, it is a mixture of crop farming and cattle raising characterized by abundant land resources and low output. Despite the differences in input and output, rice farming and cattle raising are the most energy-consuming economic activities in the two communities. Rice farming in Jinguan is dominated by the peasant concept of subsistence and security, and cattle raising in Yongning is dominated by the notion of wealth and development. Some statistics indicate the general differences between the patterns of production in the two communities (see Figure 35).

Figure 35. Comparison of basic production situations

	Jinguan township	Yongning township
Land-population ratio (*mu* per person)	1: 1	4: 1
Average rice unit output (*jin* per *mu*)	1,100	400
Labor input in rice farming (labor day per *mu*)	25	15
Per capita grain distribution (*jin*)	1,270	970
Livestock holding (head per household)	4.37	0.65
Per capita income (Yuan)	543	418

Rice ears in this study are used as an image of particular livelihood in Jinguan where rice to the peasants has both symbolic and substantial values. Rice production in this area constitutes the major part of household income. In an economy dominated by the concept of subsistence security, there is a strong link between production and consumption. This production-consumption loop not only sets constraints on the household production, but also shapes the pattern of household spending. The concept of subsistence security regulated by the production-consumption loop in the Jinguan peasant economy guides peasant economic activities, and helps determine their economic choices. The conflict between grain crop cultivation and tobacco cultivation clearly illustrates the peasant economic principle characterized by the production-consumption loop. The conflict between rice and tobacco also reflects the dichotomy of *liangshi* and *jingji* in the peasant economic concept. All this presents a set of cultural values embedded in the subsistence economy.

The pattern of production in Mosuo society is quite different from that in Jinguan. It is a mixture of crop farming and cattle raising. Like rice ears, cattle tails are used as an image of particular livelihood in Yongning where cattle dominate the scene of the peasant economic life. Though land is the main source of subsistence of the local population, crop farming is not the most energy-consuming activity. The most energy-consuming activity is cattle production. Although cattle are not necessarily associated with the subsistence needs of the human population, they constitute the local concept of wealth and economic development.

By comparison, rice cultivation in Yongning is less intensive, and the unit output is low. The reason for the low productivity is two-fold: one is that the land area in Yongning is vast, which in a way compensates the low yield; the other is simply enormous amount of labor input in cattle production. The labor input in cattle production is twice, or even three times, as high as it is in crop farming. Moreover, up to two thirds of the grain produced is spent on feeding domestic animals. Despite the huge energy input in cattle production, cattle bring in little cash income to the Mosuo households. Nonetheless, the on-farm use of the livestock and the cultural values associated with wealth and development make the cattle production highly

meaningful to the Mosuo. To the Mosuo, the cattle not only have economic functions as they are employed in farming and everyday life; they are also regarded as a storage of wealth in spite of the insignificant amount of cash that cattle bring to the household. The association of cattle with wealth shapes the cultural cognition of economic development. The idea of cattle as wealth and development is largely responsible for the particular form of production and the present way of life in Mosuo society.

The passion for cattle is central to the ethnic identity of the Mosuo. In this study, the hypothetical connection between Mosuo and the nomadic Qiang (as well as the Mongolian soldiers) is used to constitute the local conceptualization of ethnic identity. Despite the legendary nature of the nomadic origin, the importance of the legend of nomadic Qiang is to understand how vital cattle production is to the Mosuo.

Among all the dissimilarities in the patterns of production between the two communities, the commonality shared by the peasants in Jinguan and Yongning is their understanding of production cost. In both places, neither labor or time is conceptualized as cost. This concept is directly reflected in the peasant consumption of household produced goods, which is responsible for the large amount of fodder input in raising domestic animals in contrast to the limited return from that input.

The center of the cultural understanding of peasant economy dealt with in Chapters 5-6 aims to bring forth what is important to the local population; and why the local people attach such importance to the particular type of production. The two economies in Jinguan and Yongning reflect differences in political structures, social organizations, cultural values and local/ethnic identities. These differences, in turn, have effects on the growth of local economies and the way of life in communities.

Remaining Issues

Since the early 1980s, productivity in the two places has been greatly raised. Not only have the households had more than enough to eat, the grain surplus has provided them with

moderate financial strength which allow them to achieve some prosperity. The most striking expression of this improvement in Jinguan is the boom in house construction; and the foremost sign of prosperity in Yongning is the growing herds of livestock.

Despite the growth in output and income, the peasants in Jinguan now say that the household responsibility system has had its day (*dao tou le*).[3] By this they mean that output can no longer be raised because there is a limit to the fertility of land and availability of land. Clearly, the strain on land has become acute. In the area where land is the main livelihood and constitutes the major source of income, the strain on land poses the major problem for the economic development.[4] Given the limited amount of land available to sustain the population, growing cash crops may be an alternative way to raise income and break the stagnation. In many other agricultural areas, cash crops have been commonly adopted as means to increase income. Still, the development of cash crops does not seem to present a viable alternative in Jinguan, even though a large grain surplus does not contribute much cash to the household since prices for grain crops are generally low. As has been shown, the resistance to tobacco production has both economic and cultural reasons. While a lack of technology and markets plus high production cost and bad harvest together constitute the immediate economic disadvantages, the peasant idea of production related to subsistence security forms an even stronger opposition to cash crop production.

If land does not provide the solution to economic growth (meaning increasing income), would the development of rural enterprises help? While rural enterprises in other parts of China have turned out to be sources of considerable prosperity, places like Jinguan and Yongning seem to have remained unaffected. While the output value of rural enterprises in 1992 amounted

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[3]By comparison, Yongning has smaller population and a larger land area, and the strain on land is therefore not so acute as it is in Jinguan.

[4]This is consistent with what has been said about China's agricultural stagnation. See for example, Robert Ash (1992).

to 64 per cent of the average total output value of rural society nation-wide, the output value of rural enterprises amounted to no more than 10 per cent of the total output value of rural society in Jinguan, and the figure in Yongning is even lower.[5] The weak development of rural enterprises is a problem arising from a combination of factors including a lack of resources, markets and investment capital. *Wugong bufu* ("no industry, no richness") is what the local people say about the economic situation in both Jinguan and Yongning. This expression, on the the one hand, voices their desire to get rich; and on the other, it underscores why the rural economy in this part of Yunnan is still lagging behind.

[5]*Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian* 1993; Jinguan Township Statistics 1992.

CHINESE GLOSSARY

bailu	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
baizi	paddy weed, barnyard grass
banshichu	village administration office under *zhen*
bangzhu	help, assistance
baochan daohu	contracting output to the household
baogan daohu	contracting everything to the household
caizheng	finance
chifan caizheng	subsistence finance
chujia	marry out
chunfen	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
cun	village, hamlet (see *xingzheng cun* and *ziran cun*)
cunganbu	village cadre
cungongsuo	village administration office under *Xiang*
cunmin weiyuanhui	villagers' committee,
cunxiao	hamlet school which has only two grades
cunzhang	head of hamlet
dadui	brigade
dami	husked rice
daotou le	reach the top

daozhong	rice seed
Dayuejin	Great Leap Forward
dianxiangdi	"filling the trunk bottom," dowry
difei	base manure
dinggen	settling roots
dingju	settling living quarters
dingxin	settling mind
doufu	bean curd
fanfan	double
fanshen	turn the body
fanxiaoliang	state-resold grain
fazhan jingji	develop economy
fen	measurement, 1 *fen* = 0.1 *mu*
fenji baogan	target assignment by level
fenzao	dividing stove, household division
fenzao chifan	eating from separate pots
fu	prefecture
fupin	poverty-alleviation
gaitu guiliu	submitting aboriginal rulers to the control of imperial commissioners
gaohuo	liven up
gehai gongshan	"separated by the sea and united by the mountains," metaphor for siblings of the same father and different mothers
geshan gonghai	"separated by the mountains and united by the sea," metaphor for siblings of the same mother and different fathers

gongban jiaoshi	government-employed teacher
gongjia	public
gongji jin	public accumulation fund
gongliang	"public grain" or agricultural tax
gongshe	commune
gongyi jin	public welfare fund
guyu	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
gua qilai	suspend, hang up
guazhang	contributing cash
guanli fei	administration fee
guan yangmen	close seedling door, end of transplanting season
guanyin	goddess of mercy
guodao	state standard highway
guojia	state, country
guojiaji pinkunxian	state designated poverty-stricken county
guzi	rice plant or rice grain
Hanhua	Han speech; Mandarin Chinese
handi	non-irrigated land
heding shouzhi	settling baseline for revenue and expenditure
hetong dinggou	purchase by contract
hezuo she	Co-op
huafeichang	chemical fertilizer factory
huafen shouzhi	dividing revenue and expenditure
huafen shuizhong	dividing tax types
huajiao	Sichuan pepper, *Zanthoxylum bungeanum*

huasheng	peanuts
huotui	"smoked leg," home-cured ham
jia	household, family, home
jiehun	getting married
jin	measurement: 1 *jin* ≈ 0.5 kilogram
jingji	economy
jingji gaige	economic reform
jingji xiaoyi	economic effect
jingzhe	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
jiti jiehun	collective wedding
jiti tiliu	extraction for collective funds
kouliang	subsistence grain
kuaizi	chopsticks
kuaishengzi	"having son soon," well-wishes for newlyweds
lama jiao	Lamaist religion
laoshaobianqiong	old, minor, peripheral and poor
lazi	chili pepper
leixiang tian	"thunder land," land watered by rain
lengjintian	marsh land
liangshi	grain
lidong	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
lichun	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
lienü	chastity
liti	three-dimensional

mabang	horse train
mangzhong	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
minban jiaoshi	village-employed teacher
minfang buzhukuan	residence-building subsidy
minzheng	civil administration
minzu	nationality
Mosuo	name of an ethnic group
mu	measurement: 1 *mu* = 0.0667 hectares, or 0.1647 acre
muxi	matrilineal
nan	male
Naxi	name of an ethnic group
nianzhu	New Year's pig
niugong	cattle labor
outang	lotus pond
paichu jigou	dispatched organ
panluan	rebellion
putong hua	standard speech, Mandarin
Qiang	legendary ancestor of Mosuo and Naxi
qingming	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
qiufen	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
qu	district
quxifu	obtaining wife
ren	people, human being
Renda zhuxi	chair of People's Congress
Renmin gongshe	People's Commune

renqin	engagement
renqing	favor
sanfen caolian, qifen tuntian	"three-tenths drill, seven-tenths farming," military task for the Ming garrison troops
shangji buzhu	subsidy from above
shangmen	"moving up to the door" referring to man in uxorilocal marriage
shaoguo	"burning cauldron," house warming ritual
shehui jiuji	social relief
shehui xiaoyi	social effect
shen'an	spiritual altar
shengchandui	production team
shezhi ju	county administration in the Republican time
shi	municipality, city
shuijiaodi	irrigated land, not paddy
shuji	secretary
shuitian	irrigated land, or paddy
siji zhengfu	four levels of government
sixiang	ideology
songzhong	bury in the end
tangwu	hall
tiqin	proposing a marriage
tiexi daikuan	interest-subsidized loan
tubo	name for ancient Tibetan regime, and aborigines living in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau
tugai	land reform
tusi	aboriginal governor

wanxiao	elementary school with five grades
wei	unit of garrison troops
wenbaoxian	subsistence line
wenhua ren	cultural people
wenshu	book keeper
wubao hu	"Five Guaranteed household"
wugong bufu	no industry, no money
xiang	township
xiangzhen qiye	township enterprise
xiaojinku	petty cash bank
xiaoman	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
xiaonian	minor New Year
xiaoyinhang	little bank
xiazhi	one of 24 divisions of the agricultural calendar
Xifan	alternative name for Pumi
xingzheng cun	administrative village
yanglao	old-age support
yangli	solar calendar
Yi	name of an ethnic group
yifu yiqi	monogamy
yijia ren	one family people
Yi niang Han laozi	Yi mother, Han father
yinli/nongli	lunar calendar/farming calendar
yinyang heli	Lunar-solar calendar
yitiao	one-shoulder pole, referring to heavy gift
yiwugong	voluntary labor

Yuan	Chinese currency (RMB)
yuangen	turnip, *Brassica rapa*
Yunnan ribao	Yunnan Daily
yusuanwai zijin	extra-budgetary fund
zaiqing jiuji	disaster relief
Zang	Tibetan
zhaipo	maiden aunt
zhao guye/nüxu	"recruiting son-in-law," referring to woman in uxorilocal marriage
zhaoqian	looking for cash
zhen	township
zhenzhang	head of township government
zhengfu	government
zhengfu de ren	government officials
zhengfu mishu	administration clerk
zhengshe fenkai	separating government administration from economic management
zhengshe heyi	merging government administration with economic management
zhifu	getting rich
zhixiashi	municipality directly under the central government
zhongli	heavy gift
zhou	prefecture
zhua jingji	grasp economy, administration work
zhua liangshi	grasp grain, administration work
zhua shengchan	grasp production, administration work
zhua sixiang	grasp ideology, administration work

zhuanyuan	commissioner
zhuanyuanqu/ zhuanqu	prefecture
zhuren	director
ziran cun	hamlet
ziyou fazhan	free development
zouhun	"walking marriage" among the Mosuo
zu	nationality, ethnic group

PATRILINEAL KIN TERMS

Local Term	Equivalent in English (A=address term; R=reference term)
die	father (A/R)
ma	mother (A/R)
erzi	son (R)
guniang	daughter (R)
sunzi	son's son (R)
sun guniang	son's daughter (R)
waisun	daughter's son (R)
waisun guniang	daughter's daughter (R)
gege	older brother (A/R)
saosao	older brother's wife
jiejie	older sister (A/R)
jiefu	older sister's husband (A/R)
xiongdi	younger brother (R)
dixi	younger brother's wife (R)
meimei	younger sister (R)
meixi	younger sister's husband (R)
dadie	father's older brother (A/R)
dama	father's older brother's wife (A/R)
baba	father's younger brother (A/R)
shenshen	father's younger brother's wife (A/R)

zhi erzi	brother's son (R)
zhi guniang	brother's daughter (R)
yeye	father's father (A/R)
nainai	father's mother
laozu	father's grandfather (A/R)
laotai	father's grandmother (A/R)
waigong	mother's father (A/R)
waipo	mother's mother (A/R)
gonggong	husband's father (R)
popo	husband's mother (R)
lao zhangren	wife's father (R)
lao zhangmu	wife's mother (R)
erxi	son's wife (R)
guye	daughter's husband (R)
jiudie	mother's older brother (A/R)
jiujiu	mother's younger brother (A/R)
jiuma	mother's brother's wife (A/R)
jiu laogong	wife's brother
jiu laotai	wife's brother's wife (R)
guma	father's older sister (A/R)
gudie	father's sister's husband (A/R)
yima	mother's older sister (A/R)
yidie	mother's sister's husband
niangniang	father's and mother's younger sister (A/R)
qingjia	daughter's or son's parents-in-laws (A/R)
qingdie	brother's or sister's father-in-law (A/R)
qingma	brother's or sister's mother-in-law (A/R)

MOSUO GLOSSARY

Mosuo Term	English Translation
adju	friend
ah	bone
an	chicken
ashiao	sleeping companion
bu-boo	pigsty
chumi	female *tississi* partner
Daba	Mosuo native religion; religious practitioner
dabu	head of household
dja'ah	descent, of one bone
djukobei	develop, increase
djutsi djumi	friend
gerpa	storage on the left side of the Mosuo kitchen *yimei*
gerlayee	religious room
haa	grain
hachubau	male *tississi* partner
hibu	funeral
hidje	"putting on pants" i.e. puberty ceremony for boys

Jabba	Mosuo Lamaist religion; priest
jia	measurement, 1 *jia* = 2-3 *mu*
jilu	barnyard grass
merpa	storage on the right of *yimei*
mucha	home-made bacon
nidjayee	bedroom building, bedroom
njawo	old house
piazi	slave, corvée labor
rah-boo	stable for horses and mules
richi	ritual, attending feast
shilu	rice
Sipi	landlord
sulima	home-brew
tadje	"dress in skirt" i.e. puberty ceremony for girls
tississi	walking marriage
yee-boo	pen for bovine animals
yidu	household; dwelling; family; descent group
yeemei	kitchen; activity room
zanba	roast oats

MATRILINEAL KIN TERMS

Generation	Term	Relationship
G+4	*ala*	ancestress
G+3	*esi*	mother's mother's mother; mother's mother's mother's sister; mother's mother's mother's brother
G+2	*aiyee*	mother's mother; mother's mother's sister
	apu	mother's mother's brother
G+1	*emi*	mother
	emidj	mother's older sister
	emidje	mother's younger sister
	awoo	mother's brother
G 0	*amoo*	elder brother or sister
	geetse	younger brother
	germee	younger sister
G+1	*muo*	daughter; sister's daughter (to woman)
	tzuo	son; sister's son (to woman)
	tzimee	sister's daughter (to man)
	tziwoo	sister's son (to man)
G-2	*rumee*	granddaughter
	ruwoo	grandson

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HOUSEHOLD SURVEY[1]

1. County_____

2. Township_____

3. Village_____

4. Date_____

5. Household No._____

6. Respondent:

Name	Sex	Age	Schooling	Occupation	Birthplace

7. If not born here, when did you move into this village?

8. For what reason?

9. Have you ever lived in other places?

10. If yes, where?

11. What did you do there?

12. How many generations has your family lived here?

13. When did your family move into this village?

14. For what reason?

[1]The major body of the questionnaire was originally prepared by Stephan Feuchtwang for the project "Rural Social Support Arrangements and the Transformation of Local Traditions in China," in which I took a part and conducted my fieldwork in Yongsheng. Some of the questions were modified in view of the actual situation. In addition, my interviews also included scores of supplementary questions mainly concerning household production and consumption. Most of them were open questions, and are not included here.

15. Household members:

No.	Relation to respondent	Age	Schooling	Occupation	Birthplace	Reason for moving into the household

16. Total number of the household members:

17. Head of the household:

18. Do you have more than one stove in your household?

19. Members of the divided stove?

20. Has there been any family member not living here?

21. Information of these members:

No.	Relation to respondent	Age	Schooling	Occupation	Birthplace	Reason

22. Has there been any non-family member living in this household for a long period of time?

23. Information of these members:

No.	Relation to respondent	Age	Schooling	Occupation	Birthplace	Reason

24. Nominal kinship:

(a) Member of the household who is a nominal parent of a person in another household

Household member	Term of the related person	Base of the relationship	Residence	Time when the relationship began	Reason for establishing the relationship	How the relationship is maintained

(b) Member of the household who has a nominal parent in another household

Household member	Term of the related person	Base of the relationship	Residence	Time when the relationship began	Reason for establishing the relationship	How the relationship is maintained

25. Compared to others, how do you assess the economic situation of your household?

	Very rich	Generally comfortable	Fairly poor	Very poor
Present				
Before reform (1970s)				
1960s				
1950s				
Pre-land reform				

26. Amount of cultivated land (*mu*):

Total	Paddy	Dryland

27. Amount of cultivated land in the separated household (*mu*):*

Total	Paddy	Dryland

*Only if the household was recently separated.

28. Gross income from land in 1991:

	Total output	Yuan (current market price)
Rice		
Broad beans		
Corn		

29. Net income from land in 1991 (Yuan):

Gross income	
Agricultural tax	
Seed consumption	
Fertilizer	
Pesticide/herbicide	
Total cost	
Net income	

30. Gross income of the separated household from land in 1991:*

	Total output	Yuan
Rice		
Broad beans		
Corn		

*Only if the household was recently separated.

31. Net income of the separated household from land in 1991 (Yuan):

Gross income	
Agricultural tax	
Seed consumption	
Fertilizer	
Pesticide/herbicide	
Total cost	
Net income	

32. Gross income from sideline production:

	Yuan
Pig	
Chicken	
Artisan	
Contract labor	
Other	

33. Net income from sideline production (Yuan):

Gross income	
Total cost	
Net income	

34. Income from salary (Yuan):

Member of the household	Occupation	Salary

35. Percentage of the total income from the above going into the household common budget:

36. How is the household expenditure controlled:

	Member of the household
One person	
Two persons	
More persons	

37. Decision-making in the household:

	Member of the household
Production	
Daily expenses	
Gift and loans	

38. Percentage of individual income included in the household common budget:

	Amount submitted (Yuan)	Percentage of total income
Household member		

39. Income of individual household members retained:

	Amount retained (Yuan)	Percentage of total income
Household member		

40. Housing condition:

Number of dwellings	
Number of rooms	
Total square meters	

41. Means of production:

Item	Amount	Responsible person
Land (plot)		
Cattle (head)		
Transportation vehicle		
Machinery		
Other		

42. Endurable goods:

Item	Cost	Classification

43. Are you satisfied with your household income last year?

44. If not, why?

45. What plans do you have for increasing your household income?

46. Household expenditure in 1991:

	Amount (*jin*)	Market Price (Yuan)
(a) Household produce		
Grain		
Vegetables		
Meat, chicken and egg		
Firewood		
Sub-total		
(b) Market goods		
Grain		
Vegetables		
Meat, chicken, fish and egg		
Cooking ingredients		
Tea		
Liquor		
Cigarettes		
Snacks		
Clothes and linens		
Fuel (inc. electricity and water)		
Utensil		
Tuition fees		
Recreation expenses		
Transportation expenses		
Gifts and feasts		
Subtotal		
Total expenditure		

47. Has there been any shortage of the goods listed above?

48. When did that happen? What was the cause of it?

49. List three kinds of goods which have been in severe shortage:

1

2

3

50. How did you manage to solve the problem?

51. From whom did you seek help?

52. Rank three of the most helpful relations:

Relation to respondent	Residence	Nature of help

53. Have you sought other help from relatives, friends and neighbors?

Relation to respondent	Residence	Nature of help

54. In the past 10 years, has the household had any large expenses on (a) family event, (b) emergency and (c) investment?

52. Family events (e.g. wedding, funeral):

Type of event	Year

55. Total expense (Yuan)_____

56. Sources of finance: (a) savings (b) partly saving and partly outside aid (c) totally outside aid

Source	Amount (Yuan)	Percentage of total expense

57. If savings, where are they kept (bank/coop, home, or other)?

58. Percentage of the total savings used_____

59. If partly savings and partly outside aid, percentage of the expenses covered by the outside aid_____

60. Details of the outside aid:

Relation to respondent	Amount received (Yuan)	Residence of the person who provided the aid	Gift/loan	Interest of loan	Repaid or not

61. Did you, out of economic or other concerns, seek any assistance from people to provide information or exert influences?

62. What kind of assistance?

63. Details of two persons who provided assistance:

Relation to respondent	Occupation	Residence	Is the same service expected to return?

64. Emergency events (e.g. illness, natural disaster)

Type of emergency	Year

65. Total expense (Yuan)_____

66. Sources of finance: (a) savings (b) partly saving and partly outside aid (c) totally outside aid

67. If savings, where are they kept (bank/coop, home or other)?

68. Percentage of the total savings used_____

69. If partly savings and partly outside aid, percentage of the expenses covered by the outside aid_____

70. Details of the outside aid:

Relation to respondent	Amount received (Yuan)	Residence of the person who provided the aid	Gift/loan	Interest of loan	Repaid or not

71. Did you, out of economic or other concerns, seek any assistance from people to provide information or exert influences?

72. What kind of assistance?

73. Details of two persons who provided assistance:

Relation to respondent	Occupation	Residence	Is the same service expected to return?

74. Investment (e.g. house building, production implements)

Type of investment	Year

75. Total expense (Yuan)_____

76. Sources of finance: (a) savings (2) partly saving and partly outside aid (c) totally outside aid

77. If savings, where are they kept (bank/coop, home or other)?

78. Percentage of the total savings used_____

79. If partly savings and partly outside aid, percentage of the expenses covered by the outside aid_____

80. Details of the outside aid:

Relation to respondent	Amount received (Yuan)	Residence of the person who provided aid	Gift/loan	Interest of loan	Repaid or not

81. Did you, out of economic or other concerns, seek any assistance from people to provide information or exert influences?

82. What kind of assistance?

83. Details of two persons who provided assistance:

Relation to respondent	Occupation	Residence	Is the same service expected to return?

84. Have your household required any labor help?

85. Labor help:

Type of help	Year	Occasion

86. Persons who provided the help:

Relation to respondent	Residence

87. Have you ever been asked by others to provide labour help?

88. Did you provide the help?

89. Labor help provided:

Type of help	Occasion	Year

90. Persons who requested the help:

Relation to respondent	Residence

91. Have you ever failed to provide labor help requested by others?

92. Failed labor help:

Relation to respondent	Residence	Year	Occasion

93. Have you and your family taken part in any of the following activities (a) mutual saving, (b) collective feasts and (c) other?

94. Do you often visit people in other villages?

95. People you often visit:

Relation to respondent	Residence	Occasion

96. Is there any the local credit-loan institutions other than the agricultural bank and the Co-op?

97. Apart from the agricultural tax, what other fees and funds do you contribute to the local community?

Title of fees	Amount

98. What have you benefitted from it?

99. Have you and your family ever made any contribution to public affairs in the past 10 years?

Project	Contribution

100. What have you and others benefitted from it?

101. What are the annual festive activities held in village, township or other places in which you participate?

102. Which activity do you like most?

103. What do you think of the life here? Are you happy about it?

104. Why/why not?

105. In the future, would you manage the expenses in the same way as you have if the similar family events occur?

106. If not, how would you manage otherwise?

107. In the future, would you manage the expenses in the same way as you have if the similar investment events occur?

108. If not, how would you manage otherwise?

109. In the next 10-15 years, what is the biggest risk or difficulty that you and your family face?

110. Who will look after you in your old age?

111. Do you know any person in the village who needs support but does not have? How should the problem be solved in your opinion?

112. What kind of help can you rely on in the situation where a natural disaster strikes, or market collapses?

113. What kind of state support/subsidy have you or your family received in the past years?

Item	Amount	Year

114. What kind of expectations do you have for your children?

115. What are the major worries for you and your family in the near future?

116. Do you take part in any religious activities?

117. Have you and your family ever been to: fortunetelling, geomacy, drawing lots and other?

Type of institution	Member of household who visited	Reasons for the visit	Year	Result