

London School of Economics and Political Science

**The Everyday Life of Chinese Migrants in Zambia:
Emotion, Sociality and Moral Interaction**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology of the London
School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

London, September 2014

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Abstract

In recent years, Chinese engagement with Africa has expanded dramatically but has also become increasingly diverse as a wide range of Chinese institutions and individuals have undertaken activities on the continent. This phenomenon has attracted significant interest from scholars in different disciplines; however, most of the research carried out to date has been relatively macro-level, e.g. looking into international political-economic relations between states. This thesis aims to contribute to the recently emerging research perspective that focuses on Sino-African interactions from the ground up. It is based on sixteen months of ethnographic fieldwork carried out mainly in two sites near Lusaka, Zambia: a Chinese state-sponsored 'agricultural technology demonstration farm' and a private farm that is owned and run by a Chinese family. With their respective modes of organization and operation, fieldwork in these two farms provided access to very different types of interlocutors and situations. The primary focus in the thesis, building on data from these two contrasting settings, is on everyday situational interactions within the Chinese community itself and, to a lesser extent, between Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts. The daily patterns of interaction among the Chinese migrants illustrate the essential role that emotion plays in forming and reproducing social relations and groups. On the one hand, in the Chinese folk understanding emotions are stressed and they are seen to be more important than instrumental exchanges when it comes to achieving sustainable relationships. On the other hand, as they are embedded in everyday moral interaction and conversational situations, the empathetic realization of embedded emotions is held to encourage convivial communication and group formation. At the pragmatic level, I argue that the significant role given to emotion within the folk understanding of social life may actually hinder interaction with 'outsiders'. This can be manifested in the form of mismatched ethical practices in the course of everyday interaction. In this particular setting, it therefore causes tension between Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts. Theoretically, against Potter's claim that emotion is largely irrelevant in Chinese society, I argue that emotion, with an extensive connotation, is in fact the fundamental factor in the formation and reproduction of Chinese social relations.

Acknowledgements

As I am writing these acknowledgements, my mother Lijuan Liu has just left the hospital for her second operation because of cancer. Being unable to look after her when she is in need will be one of my regrets in life, not only due to the fundamental Chinese ethics of filial piety but also because of love. Compared with her unconditional love to me, mine becomes trivial. Worrying about my health and safety when I was little and showing concern for my marriage and career so far, my parent's continuous and intensive daily care demonstrate their great love to me which I can never fully repay. In China, people often refer to love as a kind of debt; nevertheless, it is the debt that I am willing to take on. To some extent, this thesis is me saying thank you to my parents. Without their unconditional support and faith in me, I would not have been able to finish this work.

I also want to thank my supervisors, Professor Charles Stafford and Professor Stephan Feuchtwang, for their endless help since I began the programme at LSE. I appreciate their prompt and insightful feedback on my dreadful drafts. In the last five years, I have learnt a great deal from them. They have shown me not only what a serious scholar ought to be but also how caring a supervisor can be. Specifically, I want to thank Charles for his perceptive advice and steady encouragement which kept me going through some tough phases during the programme. It is also Charles who has taught me how to convey a clear and consistent argument, which I consider an essential capacity of academics. Equally, I benefited enormously from my discussions with Stephan. He has been exceptionally inspiring and understanding. Every talk with him is a chance to broaden my horizons. He has an academic depth which I can only admire but never dare to achieve.

For sure, there are many others who have helped me during my PhD and I owe them great gratitude. I want to thank all my peers whom I have the honour to work with, especially those who advised on my drafts in the departmental writing-up seminars which I attended from

2012 to 2014. Moreover, I need to thank the Newby Trust for sponsoring my fieldwork in Zambia. Without their financial support, I simply would not have been able to conduct 16 months fieldwork. Finally, a special thank you to all of my friends in Zambia, particularly Zou family and staff of the Demonstration Center. I am deeply grateful for their kindness and hospitality. Without their help during my fieldwork, this thesis would not be in the present form.

Table of Contents

Introduction	8
Into Africa: the New Chinese Arrivals	11
China in Africa from the Ground Up	21
Investigating Everyday Sociality from a Chinese Perspective	27
Introducing my Field Sites – Stories of Two Chinese Farms	39
Organization of the Thesis	45
Chapter One: Living with Strangers, Anxiously	49
Noon, September 23 rd , 2011	56
Afternoon, September 24 th , 2011	61
Evening, September 25 th , 2011	63
September 26 th , 2011	68
October 1 st , 2011	70
Morning, October 2 nd , 2011	73
Chapter Two: Suspicion, Interactional Affection (<i>jiaoqing</i>) and Voluntary Cooperation	78
Mistrust and Suspicion	83
Faction in Action: the ‘Bottle Neck Effect’ of Chinese Private Business in Lusaka	91
Anti Anti-Affection as a Way of Cooperation	95
Conclusion	107
Chapter Three: Leadership, Dependency and Asymmetrical Attentiveness	110
Introduction	112
One Educational Farm and One Construction Team	117
Direction of Attentiveness I: the Zambian Case	120
Direction of Attentiveness II: the Chinese Case	124

Conclusion	138
Chapter Four: Virtues Lay In Between	142
Beyond Good and Bad: From Morality to Ethics	143
To Steal or Not to Steal	149
To Be Cruel or Not to Be Cruel	160
To Sympathize or Not to Sympathize	165
Conclusion: Towards Ethical Action with Moral Sentiment	171
Chapter Five: The Art of Speaking	174
Communicative Capacity I: Indirect Speech	180
Communicative Capacity II: Contextualization	187
Talking with Affection	191
Speech Capital I: Speech, Work and Favouritism	194
Speech Capital II: Speech, Network and Profits	199
Conclusion	204
Conclusion	207
The Hypothesis of Emotion in China and its Critiques	209
Redefining Emotion	213
A Chinese Contribution to the Anthropology of Emotion	219
The Embedded Significance of ‘Emotion’ in Chinese Sociality	221
Bibliography	223

Introduction

On my British Airways flight direct from London to Lusaka, my mood was unsettled. What was fieldwork going to be like in Zambia? How would I be treated? Many questions went through my mind. Lonely, uneasy, worried, being the only Chinese person on the aircraft did not help me either. The moment I stepped out of the plane, the bright sunshine half-blinded me. Vaguely, the symbol for the ‘Bank of China’ came into view not far away on a big advertisement board near the terminal exit. As I approached, the picture became clearer: Chinese people dressed in red and navy blue uniforms and smiling broadly. ‘Bank of China welcomes you’ (*zhongguoyinhang huanyingnin*), proclaimed a line of Chinese characters above the image. Suddenly, a complex feeling was aroused in me. As an anthropology student trained in Britain, the link to economic imperialism and domination automatically came into my mind; whereas, being a Chinese, the familiar images, symbols and its placement offered me reassurance and slightly eased my tension. Following the herd of ‘white travellers’ just off the British Airways flight, I very quickly passed the immigration control without being questioned or checked. (Only months later, after I had helped my Chinese interlocutors several times to meet their friends from China at the airport, I realized that not all flights or passengers could enjoy such smooth transit.) Walking past the luggage check, I spotted a young Chinese guy at the other end of the barrier holding a sign with my name.

‘Hello, I am Liū Danhan. Director (*zhuren*) Lū asked me to pick you up today. He is waiting for you at the hotel. How was the journey? You must be tired now.’ Xiao Liū greeted me after I introduced myself. Then he took my luggage, turned around, passed it to the Zambian following behind him and said, ‘Thomas, get the car. We go back to the hotel.’ No formal introduction was made between Thomas and me.

En route to the hotel, Xiao Liū told me that the ‘China-Zambia Agriculture Technology Demonstration Center’ farm was still a couple of months away from completion so they were all staying at Mother (*dama*) Liū’s hotel in the Western suburb of Lusaka. Then he briefly told me the story of Mother Liū, a well-known business woman in

Zambia, whom I had already heard of from other researchers in the UK and read about in Chinese newspapers even before my fieldwork. He suggested I should interview her if I was interested in Chinese businesses in Zambia. While we were talking, the car approached a checkpoint but Thomas did not intend to slow down. Instead, he drove past the queuing cars and, to my surprise, one of the police officers even saluted us. Seeing my astonishment, Xiao Liü explained that the priority came with the car and its registered plate. ‘Only government ministers in Zambia use a Toyota SUV. Plus, the plate shows the car is registered with the Ministry of Education. So they think the Minister of Education must be inside. This plate saves us a lot of trouble.’

Almost an hour later, we drove through an iron gate and into a courtyard surrounded by tall stone walls. There were two seniors chatting and laughing while we were parking the car. Seeing our arrival, they stopped their conversation to greet us.

‘How was your flight, Xiao Wu?’ the older man asked me.

‘This is Director (*zhuren*) Lü,’ Xiao Liü immediately told me. Acknowledging that this older man was the person who had agreed for me to do fieldwork at the farm, I thanked him and presented a small gift which I had brought from London to show my gratitude.

[Director Lü]: ‘Aiya, you are too courteous (*keqi*). Your father asked me to take good care of you when you are here. Feel free to ask anytime if you need anything.’

[Me]: ‘This is what my father asked me to bring. I am afraid that I will give you extra troubles (*tianmafan*) when I am here.’

[Director Lü]: ‘Oh, this is Mother Liü. She is a true ‘Old Zambia’ (*laozanbiya*)¹. She has been here for decades. If you need anything while I am away, just ask her. The conditions (*tiaojian*) in Zambia are not as comfortable as in China, especially the food. Come here sometimes when you are really hungry (*chan*). I am sure she will feed you well. Isn’t that right, Mother Liü?’

Director Lü turned his body slightly towards Mother Liü.

[Mother Liü]: ‘Sure. Come along anytime. I will host you with the nicest meals and then Director Lü will pay the bills!’

¹ This term is used by Chinese migrants in Zambia to refer to the senior Chinese immigrants who came to Zambia around the 1990s. ‘Lao’ means senior. ‘Zambia’ here does not denote nationality.

Director Lü and Mother Liü both laughed out loud.

[Director Lü]: ‘What do you study?’

[Me]: ‘Anthropology (*renleixue*)²’

[Director Lü]: ‘Zambia is the right place to study that. They (Zambians) have not evolved yet! They sleep on the ground with a piece of cloth and pick up fruits from the trees when they are hungry. Isn’t it right, Thomas?’

Thomas took several steps forward once he heard his name called; however, as Director Lü was using Chinese, he could not understand what it was about, so he asked Xiao Liü to translate but Xiao Liü ignored him. As to me, considering it was our first encounter and Director Lü is senior to me, with regards to age as well as office, I chose not to correct his statements but kept silence.

[Mother Liü]: ‘Hmm there was a girl here before who studied anthropology.’

Mother Liü suddenly stopped smiling and looked rather concerned.

[Director Lü]: ‘Teacher (*laoshi*) Bao is inside. Drop your luggage first then say hi to him. We are going to meet the South African sprinkler supplier this afternoon. Xiao Liü has other things to do so we need you to come with us after lunch for translation.’

I followed Xiao Liü to the accommodation building while he explained to me that the anthropological student who previously stayed with Mother Liü had caused her a few problems and in the end the Chinese Embassy intervened — so Mother Liü was a bit sensitive to the term ‘anthropology’.

This is the first ethnographic vignette I ever documented in my fieldwork notebook. Looking back four years later, this vignette of the first encounter very well encapsulates and represents almost all of the characteristics of my field sites and my research approach – there are newly arrived Chinese migrants from various backgrounds (official/private, senior/junior, male/female, researcher/informants), initial intense contacts, everyday social interactions and Chinese perspectives on Zambian society.

² Anthropology in Chinese is ‘human-kind study’. Morphologically, the term places more emphasis on the biological aspects; hence, the following response of Director Lü based on his understanding of evolution.

Into Africa: the New Chinese Arrivals

In recent decades, China's engagement with Africa has experienced tremendous extension, not only in terms of quantity of capital and the speed of investment, but also in respect to the variety and scale of activities. In 1999, the value of bilateral trade between China and African countries was only US\$6.5bn; by 2008 the total investment was fifteen times greater. And in November 2009, the Chinese government announced another new project on Africa which includes a further US\$10bn of financial investments (Raine 2009). Sino-African trade has reached a historical record high of US\$198.5bn in 2012 and enjoyed an average annual increase of more than 30% in the last ten years. In 2012 alone, direct investment from the Chinese government to African countries increased by more than 20% (*Xinhua*, 29/08/2013)³ while Chinese financial loans to Latin American countries dropped from US\$17.8bn billion in 2011 to US\$ 3.5bn in 2012 (*China-Latin America Finance Database*).

Historically, modern Sino-African relations start from the Bandung Summit of 1955⁴ and CCP policy guided by Mao's theory of the 'Third World'. The main focus then was predominately political: namely, to set up and enhance political alliances—so-called 'South-South Cooperation'—against colonialism. While China was assisting African countries with liberation and independent political movements, African countries were supporting the newly founded People's Republic of China to step onto the international diplomatic arena (Mwanawina, 2008). This guideline was the foundation of China's foreign policy towards African countries and, later on, the discourse of Sino-African brotherhood and friendship based on shared colonial history against the West was repeatedly invoked in mutual diplomatic activities (Alden, Large & De Oliveira ed. 2008).

This focus on political alliance shifted to economic cooperation after

³ http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2013-08/29/content_2476529.htm

⁴ The first contact between China and Africa could be traced back to the Ming Dynasty; nevertheless, since the thesis is focusing mainly on engagement by the People's Republic of China, previous fragmented Sino-African contacts have been selectively omitted. This omission does not deny the significance of this historical engagement for China's current involvement in Africa. Undeniably this historical contact is constantly being invoked by the Chinese government to demonstrate 'mutual reliable partnership' and to seek cooperation. For more details, see Philip Snow, *The Star Raft: China's Encounter with Africa*. (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1988) and Chris Alden et al (eds.), 'Introduction' in *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and a Continent Embrace* (London: Hurst, 2008).

Deng Xiaoping's 'Open Door' policy in the 1980s and 90s. The main basis for the cooperation was made clear by Jiang Zeming in 1996: seeking mutual economic benefits and common development. There has been frequent emphasis on equality with regard to political relationships, which are said to be defined by 'mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs' (Waldron ed. 2008: xii). Under Jiang's further policy of Chinese enterprise 'going out' (*zouchuqu*) in the late 90s, Chinese enterprises began setting up their business and massive populations started migrating to Africa: 'Over 800 Chinese companies are doing business in 49 African countries' (Alden 2007:16). In South Africa, there were 4,000 Chinese in 1946 but the number rose to between 300,000 and 400,000 by 2006. Alden reports that 'The Chinese community in Nigeria is estimated to be 100,000 (2006) while Ethiopia and Kenya are host to 5,000 and 4,000 Chinese respectively.' (Alden 2007:52).

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit in 2006 upgraded Chinese engagement in Africa and opened a new chapter in Sino-African relations. The forum was held under the new guideline of Hu Jintao's government to establish Chinese 'Soft Power' in the 21st century, so the focus of Sino-African co-operation turned to strengthening mutual communication and promoting 'Chinese culture' in Africa. By the end of 2009, sixteen Confucius Institutes had been established in thirteen African countries (Raine 2009:85). As of 2012, 350,000 Chinese experts (in agriculture, engineering, medical and education) had been assigned to Africa and 53,700 Africans had been granted Chinese government scholarships to study in China. In his recent visit to Africa, Premier Li Keqiang further confirmed the importance of communication between China and Africa and pointed out that China and African countries could learn from each other's culture (*wenhua hujian*) and developmental experiences (*People's Daily*, 5/2014)⁵.

The relationship between China and Zambia follows the current of Sino-African relations above. Nevertheless, Zambia enjoys a unique position as the show-piece of the success of Sino-African relations as well as the 'experimental region' of new Chinese diplomatic policies in Africa. First of all, Zambia is one of the African countries

⁵ <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/8198/384439/>

which have the longest-standing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Not only did China help Zambia in the independence movement against British colonization, but it also actively assisted the reconstruction of the Zambian economy in the 1960s. Of all Chinese aid to Africa, the Tanzania-Zambia railway construction in the 1960s and 70s has been the most significant project. It took more than ten years from planning to completion and involved around 12,000 workers in total. To this day, it remains the symbol of 'Sino-African friendship' (Yu 1971; Raine 2009). Indeed, this symbol makes Zambia a well-known and popular African country at the grassroots level in China and attracts more migrants in because of the image of Zambia, promoted by Chinese government, as a 'safe, politically stable and friendly' country.

Moreover, because of this historically close relationship between the two countries Zambia has the most dependent relationship with China. It has also always been chosen as the experimental region to trial new Chinese-African policy. According to statistics from the Zambia Development Agency, China occupied 47% of total Zambian foreign direct investments in 2007. The areas of investment include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, health and communication and transport (Mwanawina 2008:7). Furthermore, Zambia has secured all of the most up-to-date Chinese projects since the 2006 FOCAC. These include two Special Economic Zones, one agricultural technology demonstration centre, two rural schools and one hospital (Raine 2009; Rotberg 2008). Zambia's strategic position in Chinese policies towards Africa has also brought in more and more Chinese professionals, experts and labourers to work in Zambia.

Nevertheless, this historical image of a 'healthy Sino-Zambian brotherhood' and Zambia's position in China's African policy has been seriously challenged by the anti-Chinese political campaign that has surfaced there since 2006. This sentiment has grown due to everyday accusations of low wages and ignorance of safety procedures among the Chinese businesses in Zambia, and was accelerated by several shooting accidents during protests (Hare 2007). The anti-Chinese political campaign reached its peak during my fieldwork when Michael Sata, the leader of the Patriotic Front Party, was elected President of Zambia. This political event added to the uncertainties of Chinese migrants and forced them to reconsider their initial plans of migration, a point I will discuss further in the next chapter.

This historical trend of Sino-African relations (Sino-Zambian relations specifically in my case) provides the background for trajectories of Chinese migration. In general terms, Chinese migration into Zambia has gone through three major phases. Although in each period migrants had distinctive motivations, the Chinese state has always played a significant role on the demographic flow. The first phase was during the Tanzania-Zambia Railway construction period. As mentioned above, about 12,000 Chinese workers were involved in the project. No official statistics record how many Chinese workers stayed in Zambia after the construction was complete; however, when visiting the Leopards Hill Memorial Park in Lusaka, one learns that hundreds of Chinese workers died in Africa when building the TAZARA (Tanzania-Zambia Railway). During my fieldwork, I did not encounter any Chinese migrants or descendants of migrants who came to Zambia in this historical phase.

The second phase was after the implementation of the Chinese government's 'Going-Out' (*zouchuqu*) policy for improving the Chinese market economy in the 1990s. Hundreds of state enterprise and other organizations flooded into Africa to work on national projects, followed by millions of Chinese workers. The majority of Chinese workers are recruited in China under short-term contracts and brought to their country of employment (in my case Zambia). They are either employed to construct buildings and roads, maintain dams, cultivate the land and exploit natural resources, or assigned to carry out domestic services (usually cooking) for the work team. Once the project is finished, the company will relocate, either to another African country or back to China.

Most workers follow their companies out of Zambia but a few have chosen to stay and start their own businesses, especially if they secured enough capital or social network during their employment. Those who did choose to stay in Zambia are described by other Chinese migrants as *laozanbiya* which means 'senior migrants to Zambia'. After a few years of pioneer work, their families typically join them in Zambia to work in their private businesses; meanwhile, they would also bring over their friends, usually from the same region, to Zambia. At my field sites in Lusaka, there were fewer than thirty *laozanbiya*. They are well-known due to their senior position among migrants. Although they have settled in Zambia for more than two decades, theoretically *laozanbiya* still need to be

classified as first-generation migrants.

The real boom in China-Zambia migration came after the 2006 Summit and intensified in 2009 when the world-wide economic crisis hit the Chinese domestic market. There has been no official survey of Chinese migrants in Zambia. Nevertheless, according to the *laozanbiya*, the number of migrants rose from thousands in the early years of the new millennium to about 30,000 in 2010 and is still increasing rapidly. The trajectory of migration is continuing in the pattern of the 1990s but the migrants have diversified. The majority of new arrivals are still workers for the Chinese national projects; however, more migrants from various professions are appearing due to the shift of Chinese foreign policies towards Africa – from predominately achieving economic cooperation to encouraging cultural communication. During my fieldwork in Lusaka, I met agricultural professors, adventurous backpackers, language tutors from the Confucius Institute, volunteers, exchange students, Chinese *Gongfu* (martial arts) artists and acrobats, not only officials and private entrepreneurs. Another new inclination is that more and more young Chinese are migrating to Zambia with ‘true pioneer spirit’. These Chinese were mostly born between the mid-1970s and the 1980s. Instead of relying on a chain of social networks (family or government), they usually come to Zambia by themselves, either as individuals or in groups of two or three friends. With the advantage of capacity in English language, they set up small joint ventures and start businesses from international trade in petty products. Certainly, compared with the mass of migrants who follow the state to Zambia, the number of independent young Chinese business people is very small. Nevertheless, they are beginning to show distinctive characteristics when interacting with Zambians (Dobler 2009; Arsene 2014), which I will describe more through the thesis.

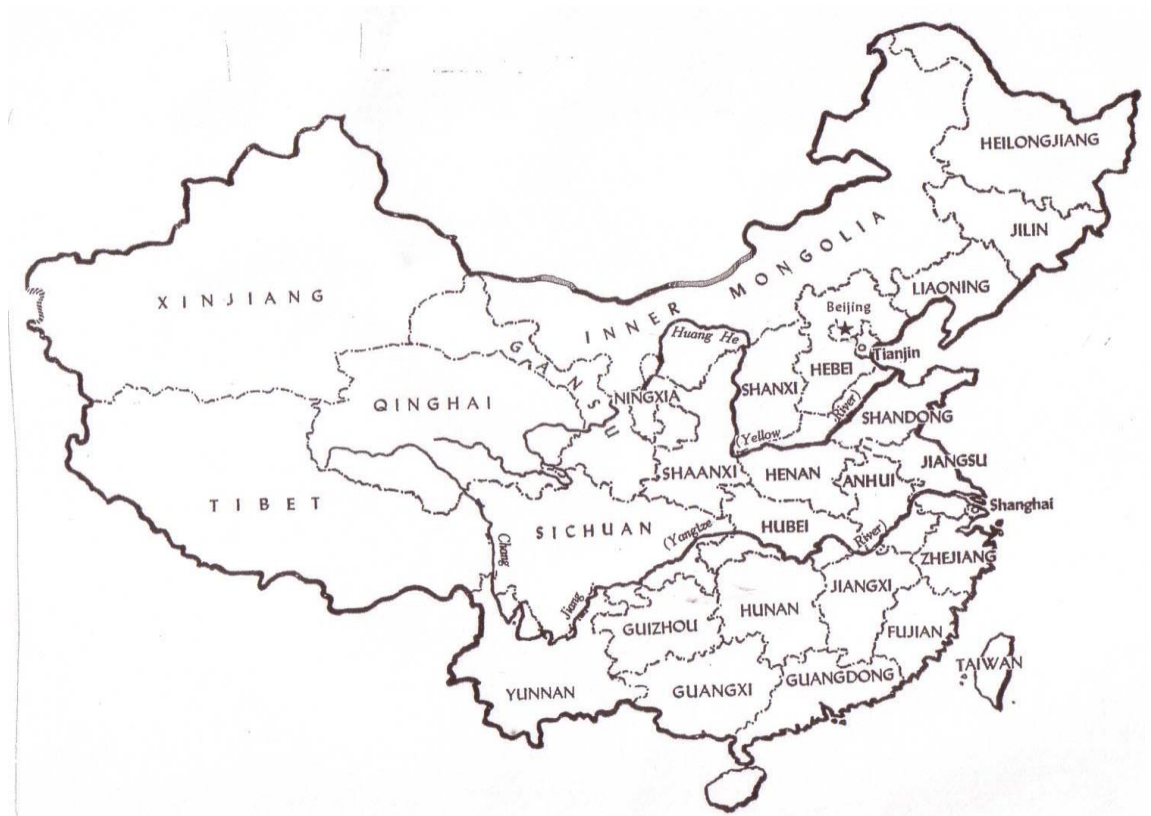
This historical shifts and diversifying trend of Chinese migration patterns to Africa have made the ‘Chinese in Africa’ far more than a homogeneous category. The ‘Chinese community’ across Africa displays great diversity and complex stratifications. In her study of Chinese migrants in Zanzibar, Elizabeth Hsu (2007) categorizes the ‘Chinese community’ into three different groups: the ‘*huaqiao*’ (overseas Chinese) community which can be traced back to 1930s; government-sponsored teams of experts; and ‘come-and-go’ Chinese business people arriving from the 1990s onwards. As Hsu points out, the inter-group

interactions are few and different groups have variable allegiance to the local community and to China considering their various socio-economic backgrounds. Similar categories are provided by Ma Mung. He distinguishes Chinese migrants in Africa into three types: temporary workers for government projects, independent entrepreneurs and ‘a proletarian transit migration flow consisting of people trying to sell their labor in western countries while waiting in Africa for opportunities to enter those countries’ (2008). Because of the great variety of social backgrounds among migrants, echoing Hsu, Dobler argues not only that ‘ethnic solidarity and local ethnic network do not play a significant role for Chinese traders’ (2009:710) but also social stratification is formed in the migrant community following the length of their settlement and their degree of integration into the host society.

Nonetheless, admittedly, in the chain of migration, affinity and locality are still the main motor pulling Chinese private migrants to Zambia in general. Compared with Chinese migrations to other developed countries (mainly Western Europe and North America) (Benton & Pieke, 1998; Bell, 2011; Christiansen 2003; Pieke, 2002; Wickberg, 2007), however, there are three distinctive characteristics worth noting. First, as described above, the Chinese state and its policies play a significant role in bringing people to Zambia. Although most of the workers only remain with state enterprise for the short term, the governmental policy of ‘*duikou yuanjian*’ (provincial assignment for project construction) provides the base for future private migrants’ strategies and their decisions on settlement; therefore, it could be argued that the state indirectly maps out the demographic spread of Chinese migrants in Africa in the long run. ‘*Duikou yuanjian*’ as a policy is designed to exploit the comparative advantages among different Chinese provinces in production and construction. Typically, once a new kind of project is agreed between the Chinese central government and African governments, the task will be allocated to several Chinese provinces which have similar experience and particular advantages in carrying out the project. Each province will be dispatched to one African country. Then a provincial company or organization will be sent to the assigned African country to operate and manage the project. Partly under the influence of China’s *hukou* (household registration) system⁶, provincial

⁶ Household registration (*hukou*) has long attracted scholarly attention. It was implemented during the Maoist period to regulate the distribution of the Chinese population. It mainly impacts on the allocation of

companies tend to recruit workers within the same province. As a consequence, many Chinese from the same region will tend to flow into one particular African country. In the long run, the phenomena of provincial division to different African countries are formed. For example, Lusaka is dominated by Chinese migrants from two main provinces, Henan and Jiangxi. They refer to each other as ‘*Henan Bang*’ and ‘*Jiangxi Bang*’ (*Bang* is a Chinese cultural term roughly equivalent to ‘group’ or ‘gang’ in English). According to my interlocutors, there could be around 3-4,000 Jiangxi people currently settled in Zambia.



Map 1: Sketch Map of China

Another consequence of ‘*duikou yuanjian*’ is that the division of profession or area of trading by Chinese migrants in Africa corresponds to their provincial origin. Since ‘*duikou yuanjian*’ concentrates on one type of project, the employees arriving in Africa for the project usually master specific professional skills. As mentioned before, the

welfare, such as work, educational, medical, housing resources and so on. The system has been heavily criticized and subject to reform for a long time. For an overview, please see, Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang (1999), ‘The *Hukou* System and Rural-Urban Migration in China: Processes and Changes’ in *China Quarterly*, 160: 818-855. For recent reform, see Kam Wing Chan and Will Buckingham (2008), ‘Is China Abolishing the *Hukou* System?’ in *China Quarterly*, 195: 582-606.

settlers usually first came to Zambia with their companies. During the contractual period, they got the chance to know the local market and establish social networks via their companies' business. Therefore, when they leave the company and decide to settle in Zambia, they will set up their own business based on skills, knowledge and contacts they already gained in Africa. In other words, the settlers stick to the professional area which they practice when they are in the company. This phenomenon could easily be observed in Zambia, where migrants often generalize that *Henanren* (people from Henan province) are doctors and *Jiangxiren* are builders; that is, nearly all of the Chinese clinics in Lusaka are opened by settlers from Henan, and Jiangxi firms occupy the biggest portion of the Zambian construction market (the two biggest Chinese private construction companies in Zambia are both owned by the settlers from Jiangxi province). The fact that Henan settlers are doctors is because Henan province took charge of Chinese medical aid to Zambia during the 1990s. Similarly, Jiangxi Province received the task to help Zambians build infrastructure so they stayed afterwards in the construction business.

Second, Chinese migration to Zambia takes place in the context of China's rise as an international power, which impacts on the social status that Chinese migrants take in the host societies as well as their interaction with the locals. In studies of Chinese migration to Southeast Asia in the past, overseas Chinese have been described by scholars as 'pariah capitalists' (Hamilton 1978) or 'middleman minorities' (Bonacich and Modell 1980) in the receiving communities. As Ellen Oxfeld summarized, 'The key characteristics of all such groups are a fair to high degree of economic success coupled with lack of political power and social status' (1993:12). Gary Hamilton reasons that 'the essence of pariah capitalism...is a structure of power asymmetry which enables an elite group to control and prey upon the wealth generated by a pariah group' (1978:4; cited in Oxfeld, 1993:14). Research on Chinese migration to developed English-speaking countries (e.g. Britain, Canada and USA) show that Chinese children's choices in education and employment are subject to the local class and racial structures (Louie, 2004). In Britain, children from Chinese catering businesses are inclined to project their own failures in competition for professional employment with their British counterparts so they choose to stay in the catering trade (Chan, 1986). Invoking Bourdieu, Bell points out the Chinese

children in Edinburgh suffer ‘internalised limits’; that is, they as ‘members of subordinate groups adjust their personal aspirations downwards because of constraints which are really external to themselves’ (2011:59).

By contrast, because of the rapid economic and social development in China, the Chinese migrants now in Zambia hold a much higher opinion of their own status in the host society than they would have had a generation ago. African countries are widely considered as ‘backward’ (*louhou*), ‘poor’ (*qiong*), ‘remote’ (*pianyuan*) and ‘chaotic’ (*luan*) by most of my Chinese interlocutors. Migrating to Africa is normally undesirable and regarded as socially downgrading; therefore, for many people it is the last option. As my interlocutors often mention, only when one could not survive by any means in China, does one move to Africa. Similar statements are documented by Terence McNamee while comparatively studying Chinese traders in five African countries (South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia and Angola). He claims that ‘Africa is the bottom-rung destination for China’s migrants. The continent draws the poorest and least educated of the Chinese diaspora. Nearly all are in Africa because they could not make a living in the pressure-cooker that has become China’s job market. If they had a choice, they would be elsewhere, but only Africa possesses the minimal entry requirements and light regulations that enable Chinese migrants with limited capital and low levels of skills to compete.’ (2012:4-5)

This negative perception of Africa – regardless of its fairness or accuracy – can also be spotted in the policy published by the Chinese government regarding the differential allowances to Chinese aid workers in foreign countries. To attract people working in Africa, Chinese state-owned companies and organizations pay Chinese staff (officials as well as workers) special allowances called ‘*jianku buzhu*’: an allowance for working in regions of ‘poverty and bitterness’. The amount of allowance is classified by the Chinese government not only according to the worker’s administrative ranking but also according to its projection of a region’s level of development and ‘poor and bitter’ standard of living. The rationale embedded in the classification of ‘*jianku buzhu*’ is that, the less developed a country is, the more a Chinese worker will suffer, so the more allowance the government shall grant. According to the policy, there are five classes in total, and as the projected degree of ‘bitterness’ ascends from class one to five so does the allowance (there is no allowance

granted to Chinese workers working in a class one region). For example, South Africa is in class one and Zambia with Cuba, Mongolia etc. are class two regions. Sudan is a class five region. Staff working in Sudan will get more than twice the allowance of the ones working in Zambia.

Bearing in mind this negative image ('Africa is backwards'), Chinese migrants arrive in Africa with a pre-existing sense of their own cultural advancement and are in the local market where they can make profits, Chinese enterprises (state as well as private) are actually becoming the main players in the Zambian economy, actively involved in infrastructure investment, and sometimes even amending the rule-books of the host society, especially in certain areas of trade that are dominated by Chinese migrants, for instance, construction in Zambia. Furthermore, as shown below, Chinese migrants tend to send their children to developed countries for education and Chinese children (at least the ones I met in Lusaka) do not plan to work in Zambia despite the success of their family businesses.

Third, because people consider Zambia undesirable for permanent settlement, many migrants who decide to stay in Zambia after a national project is over intend to migrate to developed countries in future. In other words, they use Zambia as a jumping board for a long-term strategy of migration. Their plans could be well demonstrated by their choices of schooling for their children. *Laozanbiya* (senior migrants to Zambia) tend to sponsor children to study abroad, usually in Britain, USA, Australia and Canada, and hope one day their children could work and form a family there so they can join them. While being educated in Lusaka, the children of Chinese families rarely go to local Zambian schools. Before the age of five or six, they normally attend a day nursery which was founded by six successful Chinese entrepreneurs. Children are taught in English and Chinese by Chinese volunteers; nevertheless, the nursery does employ local Zambian women to look after the children while playing in the field after class. By the age of six or seven, the children will enrol in one of three prestigious 'white schools' (*bairenxuexiao*, as they are called by the Chinese) for formal education. They are called white schools mainly because they were founded and managed by white settlers in Zambia. Although the tuition is very expensive—about US\$2-3,000 per term—Chinese families perceive the white schools as a fast-track for their children to study in developed countries. When Chinese children reach the

age for high schools or universities, they will apply to courses overseas.

Although they have this long-term plan, in reality, some senior migrants do find it difficult to emigrate again, especially when age, health and business growth become concerns. Another reason for their settlement is simply that they get used to the life-style in Zambia and worry that they would not fit in well, either back in China or in other countries. Nevertheless, they do encourage their children to move out of Zambia.

No matter what their long-term plans are and how various they are, if one looks into Chinese migration to Zambia as a whole across history, this massive flow of population is a fairly new phenomenon and Chinese migration to Zambia is still in its early stages. Therefore, I broadly categorize my Chinese interlocutors as being *first-generation migrants*. This general characteristic of Chinese migrants in Zambia is one of the fundamental contexts which influences their interactions with the host society.

China in Africa from the ground up

The rapid expansion of Chinese activities in Africa, as outlined above, has certainly attracted a great deal of interest from scholars and other experts in recent years. It seems so far the key question is: how should one interpret the nature of this extensive engagement and understand the renewed relationships between Chinese and African people?

Haunted by their own historical experiences, Western media and politicians are mostly highly sceptical about the arrival of China in Africa and repeatedly paint a negative picture of this emerging event. ‘Irresponsible exploitation of raw materials and labour,’ ‘violation of local laws and human rights’ and ‘supporter of authoritarian regimes’ are phrases which frequently appear in relation to China in the Western press (for details, see Sautman & Yan, 2013). Furthermore, echoing these popular stereotypes, certain scholars have begun to generalize China as the new imperialist power and China in Africa is a form of neo-colonialism (see Ferguson, 2011; Limos & Ribeiro, 2007).

This overly simplistic view of things has been criticised, however, by a number of academics from various disciplines. On the one hand, directly attacking the bias, Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong argues that Western powers promote these negative images of China in order to safeguard their own economic and political interests in Africa (2006);

they further use statistics to show that China's engagements in Africa are no worse than their Western counterparts (2013). On the other hand, other scholars endeavour to prove that the arrival of China provides the African countries with alternative opportunities to the hegemony of the West and suggest that China is simply balancing the structure of international power (Chan-Fishel & Lawson, 2007).

Despite their good intention to reveal a comprehensive picture of Sino-African relations by presenting counter-arguments at the macroscopic level, such research hardly touches the ground to describe a concrete and real picture of Sino-African interaction, in my view. In other words, they have not demonstrated in what respects Chinese engagements in Africa are intrinsically different from those of the West. Indeed, they arguably re-affirm the negative images of China while criticizing them. As Daniel Large's survey shows, current studies on Sino-African relations are predominately macroscopic and mostly in the field of international relations (2008). This research from a macroscopic perspective, while treating 'China' and 'Africa' as homogeneous categories for analysis, entails several inadequacies.

Firstly, they overlook some important variations in the Chinese experience. As mentioned above, these varieties are not only about Chinese migrants coming from different regions, social status, age and gender; but also are about the distinctive contexts, historical as well as social, of different African countries. Indeed, more and more researchers have been aware of these variations in recent years and started to present more complicated pictures of Sino-African engagements from different analytical angles (Park 2008, 2010; Dobler, 2009; Lee, 2009; Giese & Thiel, 2012; Monson & Rupp, 2013).

Next, the macroscopic perspective also tends to presuppose the passivity of individuals and groups, and largely omit agency and its role. Against this, several scholars have proposed to study China-in-Africa as 'globalization from below' and have argued that 'African actors also exercise agency outside the confines of the state, even as these actions are shaped by and in turn shape processes of state formation and function' (Mohan & Lampert, 2013). Not only do Africans actively influence the Sino-African mutual understanding from below, in this thesis, I will elaborate the agency of Chinese migrants exercised in day-to-day interactions.

Thirdly, mere macro-level investigation faces the danger of re-enforcing pre-existing stereotypes in the West of both regions (Giese, 2014) and, more importantly, to impose analytical bias on interpreting China/Chinese-African relationships. As Park and Hunyh noticed, ‘most media coverage and scholarly studies continue to focus primarily on the economic and political aspects of Chinese activities in Africa’ but ethnographic research of ‘people-to-people encounters’ is still scarce (2010: 208). Other scholars further contend that ‘the lack of reliable field research data has not only resulted in dependency upon a macro-level analysis, but has also contributed to the circulation of rumors and distortions’ (Monson & Rupp, 2013:23). Consequently, in order to gain a comprehensive and thorough understanding of this new phenomenon, microscopic researches are necessary, which becomes especially urgent when the Chinese activities and Chinese migrants to Africa are intensifying and diversifying. Monson and Rupp have well cautioned that ‘the question, therefore, may not be whether “Chinese” actors are better or worse than other actors, but rather how the study of China-Africa entanglements, in all of their complexity and in their multiple, rapidly changing milieus, can lead us to a deeper understanding of the world which Africans and Chinese currently engage’ (2013: 40). They further suggest that studies of China-in-Africa shall shift the lens from national level to community and individual level and shall engage more with ethnographical specific research on everyday interaction:

‘...research on everyday interactions between Chinese and African actors allow us to see “China-Africa” not as binary partnership premised on political and economic (im)balances that are often viewed as geopolitical complementarities. Instead, such historically grounded and ethnographically specific research allows us to analyse engagement between China(s) and Africa(s) as *a flexible and emerging process* that links two areas of the globe – including their people, businesses, governments, ideas, networks – in ways that are both fundamentally rooted in historical processes and unfolding before our eyes.’ (2013: 28, italics added).

This thesis takes up this call and aims to make an ethnographic contribution to understanding Sino-African relationships via the lens of *everyday interactions and communication* at micro-level. In the last five years, more and more scholars have begun pursuing this line of inquiry; namely, to investigate Sino-African relations on the ground via fieldwork. In general, there are two aspects being stressed while they analyse the data. On the

one hand, sociologists and historians concentrate on the impact of local socio-historical contexts (usually one particular African region) on the interaction and (dis)integration of Chinese migrants and their host societies. When comparing the labour tensions in Zambia and Tanzania, sociologist Ching Kwan Lee (2009) argues that it is the long history of class struggle and trade unionism in Zambia that successfully halts the inclination of ‘casualization’ in Chinese workplaces; whereas in Tanzania, due to its own political history on labour relations, casualization is still widely practiced. Again in Zambia and Tanzania, historian Jamie Monson (2013) documents how the story of Tanzania-Zambia Railway construction is invoked and re-told according to their shared memories on railway building by retired TAZARA African workers in order to achieve recognition and material securities in the process of economic cooperation and liberalization between China and Africa, in which they feel forgotten. In South Africa and Lesotho, sociologist Yoon Jung Park (2013) affirms that national geo-demographic differences and their distinctive historical engagements with Chinese immigrants to these two regions shape local people’s perception of the Chinese ‘other’. As she argues, ‘Chinese are generally seen as a friendly and familiar “other” because of their long historical presence in the country (South Africa)’; whereas ‘there are no other significant “others” in Lesotho makes the Chinese vulnerable’ (145-146). Even though claimed as ethnography (see Monson & Rupp, 2013), research of this kind relies on interviews, surveys and questionnaires, which are mainly self-reports. Undoubtedly, this research focus is valuable to highlight the driving force of socio-historical conditions on Sino-African interaction; however, it dims the individual at the same time. It hardly gives any observation about how action takes place in *everyday situations* and how the socio-historical constraints are consciously negotiated and manipulated in people-to-people interaction.

While looking into the interaction of Chinese migrants and local Africans at the grassroots level, another aspect that researchers draw on is the life of Chinese traders and private entrepreneurs, particularly their work relationships with the African employees. Compared with studies produced from socio-historical analysis, most of this research concentrates on inter-personal relations, and focuses on cultural dissonance, relational tensions and sometimes conflicts in daily life caused by mismatched social expectations and incompatible interpretations of each other’s symbolic actions. In his detailed studies of

Chinese in Ghana, Karsten Giese documents how tension arises at work due to the conflictive social meanings of and associated cultural practices of certain social roles, such as boss, middleman, as well as in gift exchange. As he clearly illustrates, ‘In the Ghanaian context, however, the appearance and behavior of Chinese traders send out contradictory messages. They do not fit into the employee’s role expectations, informed by the authoritative and at the same time caring attitudes of fellow Ghanaians in similar positions. Almost every Chinese employer fails to fulfil the role of the responsible elder *vis-à-vis* his young local employees’ (2013:152). Instead of merely analysing the tension at Chinese shop-floors as a representation of economic exploitation and resentment of class interests, Giese offers an alternative reading of the labour conflicts from the level of inter-personal relations. He further points out that the labour conflicts ‘cannot be thoroughly understood without taking into account pervasive cultural and societal norms, customary laws, political struggles and the longstanding convictions of their own societies’ (153). This focus on the impact of cultural norms and practices on inter-personal relationships between Chinese migrants and local Africans has inspired many other researchers. In his studies of Chinese shop sellers in Uganda, Codrin Arsene (2014) gives a rich ethnographic account of how Chinese employers’ knowledge and acceptance of local notions and practices of ‘*enjawulo*’ influences the proximity between Chinese migrants as the boss and local Ugandans as the workers. Similarly, Tanny Men (2014) shows how Confucian values, such as *renqing* (human-emotion) and *mianzi* (face), as an embedded cultural rationale practiced by Chinese firm managers in Tanzania mediate perceptions and relationships at work.

In general, I will pursue Giese’s methodology for analysis in this thesis; that is, mainly applying intense participant observation, to investigate how embodied social and cultural norms influence the formation of inter-personal relations at grassroots level, especially in everyday situations. As Mohan and Lampert have cautioned, overly culturalist explanations and static readings of intercultural relations may potentially essentialize both groups at play and may lose the dynamic and diverse class relations which political economy could offer (2014:14). Taken this warning seriously, in this thesis, instead of imposing group ethnicities as enduring and essential categories, I treat ‘groupness’ as a happening event and as being ‘embodied and expressed not only in political projects and nationalist rhetoric but in

everyday encounters, practical categories, common-sense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms' (Brubaker, 2004:2). Therefore, in this thesis, the focus of my discussion is on how social relations or groups can be formed or prevented and on the significant role that emotional proximity plays in the process of group formation. Furthermore, I have no intention to ignore the socio-economic condition that my interlocutors are acting in but to see it embedded in situations and functioning through individual motivation and conscious choices. As Max Gluckman argued,

'A social situation is thus the behaviour on some occasion of members of a community as such, analysed and compared with their behaviour on other occasions, so that the analysis reveals the underlying system of relationships between the social structure of the community, the parts of the social structure, the physical environment, and the physiological life of the community's members...The shifting membership of groups in different situations is the functioning of the structure, for an individual's membership of a particular group in a particular situation is determined by the motives and values influencing him in that situation...Thus the association of certain Zulu with Europeans and their values and beliefs, creates groups within the Zulu which in certain situations across the separation of interests of Africans and Whites, but emphasize the difference between them' (1958: 9-26)

Inspired by his approach, I will observe Chinese-Zambian interactions in *everyday situations* and treat them as a dynamic process of negotiation, mutual transformation and ultimate integration. I take 'everyday' here, to follow Hans Steinmüller's usage, not only in the sense of 'ordinary routine', but also with respect to the continuous reflection on and the acute consciousness of 'living in the present' (2013: 13). Nevertheless, at my field sites, this sense of being in the 'everyday' is provoked not so much by a process of modernization, I would say, but rather by displacement through the process of international migration. It is through this ordinary yet problematic 'everyday' that the entanglement of Chinese migrants and Zambians is revealed. I consider that close attention to the relationships that emerge in everyday life, in this context, can help us avoid the imposition of a researcher's analytical bias. Another advantage of this approach is that it treats interaction and communication as a dynamic process, emphasizing mutual expectation, negotiation, and cooperation (or conflict). Compared with static structural analysis, this

approach gives social agency a greater role to play in the process of relationship formation.

Investigating Everyday Sociality from a Chinese Perspective

If one cross-reads the literature published in recent years on the topic of Sino-African relations, there is an obvious common perspective shared by most of the scholars; that is, most of the analysis is based on reports from the African side – the ‘Chinese’ in this supposed two-party interaction are almost mute. As Giese clearly points out, ‘most studies have been conducted on ventures operating under enclave like conditions, and have concentrated on violations of legal labor rights, focusing almost exclusively on the perspectives of African employees’ (2013:139).

I consider this research inclination to be due to two conditions. First is the comparative inaccessibility of the Chinese groups in African countries. As more and more negative reports about China’s activities and agenda in Africa spread in international media, Sino-African relations are considered by Chinese officials as a topic with high political sensitivity which needs to be handled carefully. At my field sites, the Chinese embassy in Zambia repeatedly reminds Chinese state-owned companies, organizations and even Chinese Committee of Commerce in Zambia that they are representing China as a nation to the world; their workers were not mere individuals, as their daily conduct could damage the image of ‘China’ if they did not act with caution. Since almost all the administrative staff and workers are in Zambia for short-term projects and many migrants still have extensive connections back in China, most of them will choose to ‘shy away’ when being interviewed. Even when they are being interviewed, words are carefully selected and usually fall into bureaucratic style (*guanqian*) and ‘prepared package-talk’ (*taohua*). Getting a pass from the ‘gate-keeper’ to do intensive fieldwork in Chinese organizations also becomes extremely difficult.

Second, most studies are produced from an African perspective, I would suggest, because of the presumed power positions in the mind of researchers. In other words, many scholars, and probably especially anthropologists, tend to ally with the ‘vulnerable’ party in order to balance the relations and to avoid being criticized as an instrument of ‘the powerful’. While investigating Sino-African relations and interactions, naturally from the

current structure of international power, Africans are presumed to be the vulnerable party and it is their stories which need to be heard and told. This way of selecting interlocutors – identifying international power structures within daily inter-personal power relations – can run into the danger of reinforcing bias. I contend that a more reasonable approach to study Sino-African relations and to aim for mutual understanding is to give a whole story from both sides.

In fact, I would note that when I arrived in Zambia my plan was to study how Zambians perceive the arrival of the Chinese. Soon after, I started to interview Zambians who had previous contact with Chinese, at the University of Zambia, Chinese farms, street shops and Chinese restaurants. To my surprise, they all seemed to share similar opinions. As time passed, I began to meet other researchers working in Zambia on related topics. One by one, they told me how difficult it was to get into Chinese field sites. Reflecting upon their stories, I realized my ‘unconventional’ (being Chinese myself and doing research in Chinese work-places in Zambia) yet fortunate position (being accepted by the Chinese gate-keepers at a very early stage to work, live with the Chinese groups and participate in their daily activities), as well as my opportunity to offer an alternative perspective on the same topic. It was then that I decided to take the ‘unconventional’ further – to tell the story from the perspective of the presumed ‘powerful’.

Considering my own position at the field sites and the perspective that most recent literature provides, in this thesis I will focus more on how the Chinese migrants (who have various social backgrounds) perceive and interact with Zambians every day. From the Chinese perspective to understand interactions and relations does not mean that I intend to imply Chinese perspectives should be the reference system and Zambians should learn from and incorporate them. On the contrary, I consider that interaction is a long process of mutual transformation. ‘From the Chinese perspective’ means to investigate what issues have attracted attention and been put forward for negotiation and reflection by my Chinese interlocutors during the process of communication and everyday socialization.

As summarized in the last section, another major phenomenon repeatedly documented in recent studies on Sino-African interactions on the ground is the easily triggered tension and sometimes even conflicts which mostly take place in Chinese shops

(see Giese, 2013, 2014; Arsense, 2014; Men, 2014). This overwhelming presentation has been criticized for overlooking the ‘convivial relations’ emerging at the same time as the tension (Lampert & Mohan, 2014). Personally, I regard that conviviality and conflict are two sides of the same coin if one sees the intercultural relationship as a process of formation. The question perhaps is no longer about the nature of Sino-African relations, but how the social relationship is formed, from the perspectives of both parties. If one puts inquiries in this way, naturally, it will lead into a precondition – how are social relationships formed for both groups of players before they interact together? Considering the conditions of my fieldwork, the main question I will try to answer in this thesis is how Chinese migrants in Zambia socialize every day, how social relationships are formed among them and what they hold dear in the process of relation-formation. Only having done this, one might understand how tension arises and ask how convivial relations between Chinese migrants and their host society become possible. As stated above, I consider this order of inquiry is crucial, especially in avoiding essentializing migrant groups. As James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta claim, ‘all associations of place, people, and culture are social and historical creations to be explained, not given natural facts...[C]ultural territorializations (like ethnic and national ones) must be understood as complex and contingent results of ongoing historical and political processes’ (1997:4). While studying Sino-African relations on the ground, one should not take any group as granted but should try to understand how the groups are (re)produced and affinity is achieved through everyday situations. Surely, the China-Africa project is a massive cooperation of various experts. What I would like to contribute, via my ethnography, is an alternative perspective offered by my Chinese interlocutors in Zambia.

A Chinese Theoretical Model of Chinese Sociality

Obviously, there are many theoretical frameworks that might be applied to my fieldwork material, and there are many literatures that can and should be referred to in relation to it. In later chapters, I will take up some of these other frameworks and literatures but in this Introduction I want to focus especially on a Chinese social scientific resource that I have found to be very useful.

Arguably, the modern study of Chinese sociality was originated by the

anthropologist Fei Xiaotong. In his ground-breaking book, *Xiang Tu Zhong Guo (From the Soil)*, drawing a contrast with Western individualism, Fei uses an analogy to vividly illustrate the idea that Chinese sociality 'is like the circles that appear on the surface of a lake when a rock is thrown into it. Everyone stands at the center of the circles produced by his or her own social influence. Everyone's circles are interrelated.' (1992: 62) He categorizes this Chinese type of sociality as the 'differential mode of association' (*chaxugeju*) and further explains that association formed in this mode is not based on fixed groups. Rather it is extendable in scope and size depending, among other things, on the power and authority of the person in the centre.

Later on, in a memorial lecture dedicated to Fei, Stephan Feuchtwang, having compared the 'differential mode of association' with Maurice Freedman's account of Chinese lineages, reinterprets Fei's model as being based on 'social egoism.' As Feuchtwang explains:

'For Fei it was vital to conceive of sociality, starting from the family, as ego-centred, whereas for Freedman and for the studies of kinship in English anthropology in Freedman's time, ego-centred kinship, or as it was called 'kindred', is distinguished from permanent structure. A kindred by contrast to a lineage, is transient just because it is ego-centred. For Fei ego-centred kinship is both transient and permanent. Freedman's lasting organisation is conceived as a group, whereas Fei's lasting organisation has no fixed boundaries. It certainly has rules, law-like customary rules, but it precedes either organisation or institution as a primary conception of sociality. For Fei, 'structure' in the English anthropological sense of something permanent and fixed, would be too abstract.' (2009:5-6)

Based on his comparison, Feuchtwang further claims that the relations built into Fei's 'differential mode of association' (*chaxugeju*) are in fact 'always more flexible than Fei assumed. They were in any case not just relations of consanguinity but also *relations of affinity and friendship, expectations of trust and reciprocity in hierarchical relations*' (2009, italics added). To put this differently, Feuchtwang suggests that Fei's model can and should be understood in relation to the 'relatedness' turn that came much later in anthropological studies in kinship (Carsten, 2000), although Fei's model was proposed half a century before the latter was introduced.

If so, why was Fei's contribution to studies of human relatedness not

recognised? Personally, I would suggest that this neglect could be due to two reasons. On the one hand, Fei was originally writing directly to Chinese readers and scholars with a Chinese writing style; therefore, his arguments rely on implicit cultural notions (e.g. *jiaohua*, *liaojie*) and many presuppositions are implied in what he says. Consequently, when his words are translated into English, the subtleties of some textual meanings have probably been lost. Therefore, other scholars then, especially in the West, could not easily appreciate the potentiality of Fei's model. On the other hand, as Feuchtwang acutely points out, Western scholars mostly treat Fei's works as information about Chinese culture and social conducts rather than understanding him and other Chinese anthropologists 'as the products of a Chinese social science, as fellow theorists' (2009). Arguably, to Fei, the 'differential mode of association' (*chaxugeju*) is the theoretical foundation to understand various social phenomena in China, including authority, morality, affection in conjugal relationships and friendships, and legal disputes – not to mention its potential outside of Chinese contexts.

Although many Chinese anthropologists have applied and developed Fei's theory to understand social phenomena in China (among others, see Yan on Chinese gift exchange and particularistic ethics, 1996, 2009; Chang on Chinese reciprocity, 2010; Tan on the transformation of sociality in rural China, 2010), many Western sinologists have more rigidly interpreted Chinese sociality in association with '*guanxi*' (social networking) and its instrumentality when studying social relationships in the post-socialist era (Jacob, 1979; Walder, 1986; Yang, 1988; Kipnis, 1997). As I will discuss further in Chapter Two, '*guanxi*' has been regarded as the key notion to analyse Chinese social facts in the 1990s. Mayfair Yang dedicated a monograph to study the 'art of *guanxi*' (*guanxixue*) and argues that '*guanxi*' practices could be interpreted as the emergence of Chinese civil society against the State (1988). Although incorporating '*renqing*' (human emotion) into his model of *guanxi*, Andrew Kipnis considers '*guanxi*' as the fundamental fact organizing Chinese sociality and Chinese society (1997). I argue in this thesis that these representations of the pervasiveness of *guanxi* in China have left an overwhelming biased impression that Chinese are manipulative Machiavellians and instrumentalists. Later on, Yunxiang Yan has attempted to rectify this biased impression by introducing emotion (what he refers to as '*ganqing*' [feeling] and '*renqing*' [human emotion]) into his own analytical framework. Speaking of the community

in Heilongjiang where he carried out very long-term fieldwork, he says:

‘It is clear that in the social life of Xiajia village, sentiment affects villagers’ behaviour just as significantly as do moral obligations. The spiritual substances embedded in gifts are both morally and emotionally charged. Villagers exchange gifts to increase *ganqing* with each other, as well as reinforce *guanxi*. In other words, it is the combination of developing emotional attachments and cultivating personal relations that gives meaning to the practice of gift exchange...What I am trying to emphasize...is that villagers do not interact with each other only for utilitarian purpose, and the *renqing* complex is much more than a win-or-lose power game.’ (1996:145)

Nevertheless, as I will argue in the conclusion to this dissertation, putting emotion into ‘*guanxi*’ may, in fact, help to reinforce its utilitarian characteristic as well as its social significance as the organizing principle of Chinese society. Therefore, so far, omnipotent ‘*guanxi*’ still deems emotion to have no significant role to play in the formation of social relationships in China. If one applies the utilitarian logic of ‘*guanxi*’ to the circumstances of my field sites, one question begs an answer; that is, if Chinese migrants in Zambia are so instrumental, how could one explain the repetitive occurrence of arguments which have nothing to do with profits or loss?

Against this rigid take of Chinese sociality and the relative neglect of Fei’s theory in Western academia, in this thesis, I aim to extensively reinterpret his ‘differential mode of association’ (*chaxugeju*) in light of Feuchtwang’s qualifications and clarification and in association with recent developments in anthropological research on sociality (for an overview, see Moore & Long, 2012). Specifically, I will demonstrate through each chapter and theorize in the Conclusion the meaning of emotion in Chinese contexts, the crucial role that ‘emotion’ (with extensive connotation) plays in the process of forming and sustaining Chinese social relations and the dialectical relation between sociality and ‘emotion’. To analyse everyday practices of sociality in my field sites based on Chinese sociological theory is the second facet of what I refer to in this dissertation as ‘the Chinese perspective.’ (To recap, the first facet is to understand Sino-African interaction from my Chinese interlocutors’ point of view.)

Reinterpreting 'Chaxugeju': Role Ethics, Situational Affect and Emotional Proximity

In recent years, a group of scholars have proposed to revitalize the theory of human sociality (Moore & Long, 2013). In contrast with previous studies, which see sociality as 'formal patterns of social relations' and 'products of either social relations or social interactions', Henrietta Moore and Nicholas Long suggest studying sociality as a process. They want to 'conceptualize human sociality as a dynamic relational matrix within which human subjects are constantly interacting in ways that are *coproductive*, continually plastic and malleable, and through which they come to know the world they live in and find their purpose and *meaning within* it' (2012:41, italics added). While Christina Toren stresses intersubjectivity, which she refers as 'the capacity for recursive thought that makes human learning a micro-historical process' (Toren, 2012:64), arguing the fundamental position of sociality in human actions, more intriguingly, Moore integrates ideas from neuroscience and the so-called 'affective turn' in recent anthropological studies and sees the capacity of affective objects on impacting human interactions and relations. As she observes:

'Any view of human sociality has to take account of these capacities, not just their peculiar propensity for forward and backward projection in space and time (memory, regret, aspiration, hope) – thus extending any notion of 'environment' or 'cultural ecology' well beyond the presentism of many theoretical formulations of affect or assemblages of actants – but also crucially their ability to imaginatively ascribe attributes and qualities, and subsequently to form attachments, to things of the imagination.'

In light of this revitalization of studies of human sociality, I see potential dialogue between Fei's theory of Chinese sociality and the model of human sociality being proposed by Moore, Long and others, especially in aspects of perceiving sociality as a dynamic process, as entailing intersubjective engagements, as shared recognition of affects, and more importantly as fundamental human condition organizing human actions. In the following section, I will elaborate how Fei's theory could be reinterpreted in this way.

Going back to Fei's original writings, it seems to me that '*chaxugeju*' entails at least another three characteristics of Chinese sociality, distinct from utilitarian '*guanxi*'. First, as referred to in his texts, Fei's model is based on the Confucian notion of '*lun*':

'Pan Guangdan once said, "[w]ord combinations with *lun* all have similar meanings, which express

proper arrangements, classifications, and order”...*Lun* stresses differentiation. In the *Book of Rites (Liji)*, the ‘ten relationships’ form a discontinuous classification...“Everyone should stay in his place” (*bu shi qi lun*); thereby, fathers are differentiated from sons, those remote from those close, those who are intimate from those who are not...*Lun* is order based on classifications...In fact, the basic character of traditional Chinese social structures rests precisely on such hierarchical differentiations as these (abstract positional types). Therefore, the key to understanding networks of human relationships is to recognize that such distinctions create the very patterns of Chinese social organization’ (1992:65-66)

What this notion connotes is not only the classification but also the distinction brought in by various social roles and, more importantly, the impact of social roles on organizing and transforming individuals. In other words, individuality is not a priori but realized and achieved through taking one’s roles set in a hierarchy and interacting with others. In his insightful book ‘*Confucian Role Ethics*’, Philosopher Roger Ames brilliantly illustrates this significance of ‘social roles’ in Chinese cosmology –

‘Individuality is not a given; it is the accomplishment of becoming distinctive and distinguished in one’s relations with others...The principle of individuation in this cosmology (Confucius) is not a ready-made and replicable essential identity that constitutes us as natural kinds – a soul, a heavenly-endowed human nature, a rational mind, a virtuous character, a self-conscious self, an independent agency. Rather, it is a qualitatively achieved distinctiveness in the configuring of one’s relations within family and community. In this Confucian model of the constitutive relations of role-bearing persons, then, we are not “individuals who associate in community,” but rather because we associate effectively in community we become distinguished as relationally constituted individuals; we do not “have minds and therefore speak with one another,” but rather because we speak effectively with one another we become like-minded and thrive as a family and community; we do not “have hearts and therefore are empathetic with one another,” but rather because we feel effective empathy with one another we become a whole-hearted, self-regulating, community. Indeed, paronomasia – defining and realizing a world through associated living – is the Confucian way of making meaning in a communicating community’ (2011:74-76).

He further elaborates that social role-bearing in China is a process of embodiment and the embodiment of roles directs perception and social valuation of the individual.

‘[T]he quality of one’s conduct is not mediated by or reduplicated in some notion of a discrete “agent” or “character” that would isolate and locate persons outside of the concrete pattern of their social and

natural relations. Instead, the identity of persons lies in the achieved amalgamation, the integrations, and the sustained coherence of their continuing habits of conduct within the embodied roles that constitute them.’

(111)

As I will illustrate in the following chapters, the value of social roles and the embodiment of such values in Chinese sociality has a profound impact on everyday interactions between my Chinese interlocutors and their Zambian hosts. Not only could the unmatched recognition of each other’s roles (for example, boss or colleagues or friends) cause misunderstandings, but also different embodiments of mutually agreed roles often lead into quarrels in practice (Chapter Three). More importantly, as I will argue in Chapter Four on moral interactions, this recognition of the value of social roles nurtures the everyday practices of ‘role ethics’ and taking roles in Zambia will encourage self-realization and individual transformation of my Chinese interlocutors, particularly the young ones. Potentially, as I will explain, role ethics may offer an alternative understanding of the debates that have taken place within the anthropology of morality and ethics since the last decade or so (for an overview, see Laidlaw, 2014).

Second, social roles are intrinsically dyadic and role-taking is always fluent and situational. As described above, individualization is subject to positional social relationships; that is, the realization of the self often needs the assistance of the other. As a result, this dialectic dyadic relation leads to a reactive self; namely, one’s role shifts when the counterpart varies; therefore, one’s role is always changing and is further defined according to the *particular situation*. Again, as Fei clearly writes when summarizing the characteristics of Chinese ethics, ‘[t]he degree to which Chinese ethics and laws expand and contract depend on a particular context and how one fits into the context. I have heard quite a few friends denounce corruption, but when their own fathers stole from the public, they not only did not denounce them but even covered up the theft...In a society characterized by a differential mode of association, this kind of thinking is not contradictory. In such a society, general standards have no utility. The first thing to do is to understand *the specific context*: Who is the important figure, and what kind of relationship is appropriate with that figure? Only then can one decide the ethical standards to be applied in that context’ (1992:78-79, italics added).

For many years, Fei’s writing has been interpreted in the aspect of

Chinese particularistic morality (Yan, 2009) and in terms of personal ethical dilemmas in Chinese society which have also been analysed as a consequence of rapid social change and modernization (Fang, 2009). Nevertheless, I want to argue that the interplay between individual with the role taken and the situation at play has not received enough academic interest. On one hand, personal actions are constrained by the ability of agents to comprehend a situation; on the other hand, individuals are actively (re)producing the situation via their choices of performances (Chau, 2007, 2008).

While studying Chinese epistemology, Ames also illustrates the social significance of ‘situation’ in China. ‘[O]rder is the emergent harmony achieved in the always-contingent relationships that obtain among this unsummed totality...With no “One behind the many” as the ultimate source of meaning, there is no single-ordered world, no strict sense of *kosmos* that assumes an external orderer; there is only the ongoing evolving harmony expressed as the quality of life achieved by the insistent, co-creating particulars which together make a world for themselves. In this world in which things are constituted by their conditioning relations, meaning does not arise *ex nihilo* from some independent and external source – from some conception of God or Natural Law or Platonic ideas or Muse, or from some audacious, reclusive genius. Instead, increased significance is always situated and situational. Meaning arises *in situ* through the cultivation of deepening relations that we have expressed elsewhere as *ars contextualis*: “the art of finding optimal contextualization within one’s roles and relations.” (2011: 77) This cosmology, as I will discuss in Chapter Five, impacts on the process of everyday communications between my Chinese interlocutors and their Zambian counterparts. Not only do they construe meanings of action from everyday encountering situations and react upon according to the personal projection, but also they expect their Zambian communicative co-operators to have the similar sensitivity to the situation as they do. Here, I want to note that, although my Chinese interlocutors often refer the communicative difficulties with Zambians as ‘not easy to talk with’ (*buhaoshuohua/buhaojiaoliü*) – which appears to be due to the Chinese people’s lack of confidence in English – this reluctance to socialize is beyond mere language incapacity as the ones who work as translators still find it hard to communicate with Zambians. I will fully unpack the meaning of this statement – ‘Zambians are not easy to talk with’ – towards the

end of this thesis.

This sensitivity to the situation is not just to acknowledge each other's roles at play and the inter-personal power set. More crucially, it is to be sensitive to the 'emotion' embedded in situation. Note that emotion here has extensive connotations. It entails three dimensions – emotion as a personal psychological state, empathy as an intersubjective interaction (for the definition of 'empathy', see Hollan & Throop; 2011) and affect as in terms of 'energy/spirit (*shen/ling*)' built-in to social objects and situation for resonance (for the definition of 'affect', see Berlant, 2006; Kathleen, 2007; Blackman, 2012). The meaning of 'emotion' and its significance in Chinese sociality will be discussed at length in the conclusion. Here, what I would like to point out is that 'situation' in Chinese is called '*qingkuang*'. Morphologically, it is the combination of '*qing*' (emotion) and '*kuang*' (shape/status). When being translated back to English, '*qingkuang*' could also be circumstances, condition and state of affairs. Pragmatically, this term could be used to mean that one could only comprehend a fact by taking its 'emotional dimension' into account. '*Qing*' then is both the facticity of and the feeling that pervades any particular situation. Any perceived fact/value distinction between "circumstances" on the one hand, and "feelings that are responsive to circumstances" on the other, collapses' (Ames, 2011:74). This embeddedness of 'emotion' (*qing*) especially in objects and situation (I term it as 'situational affect' later on), despite being 'invisible' and easily to be omitted, makes 'emotion' become pervasive and crucial in Chinese sociality; that is, only when one is sensitive to the embedded 'emotion', can one comprehend the situation. Only when one appreciates the situation, can one fix the roles to play. Only when one understands the role to take in a situation with embedded 'emotion', does one know how to perform, react, and communicate in general.

As I have pointed out above, I will try to understand the relationships between my Chinese interlocutors and their Zambian hosts from the Chinese perspective and mostly in the process of everyday situational interactions. The approach I take will be situational analysis (see above, Gluckman 1958). The significance of situation in my Chinese interlocutors' sociality offers my research validity, and their sensitivity reminds me that I should not ignore the 'emotional dimension' if I would give an adequate account of their everyday sociality.

Third, Chinese groups are fundamentally (re)produced based on social and emotional proximity achieved in shared understanding after long-term interactions. This goes beyond instrumental ‘*guanxi*’ networks and ‘*guanxi*’ alone is not adequate to form a community. This is perhaps the most important message that Fei offers in his ‘differential mode of association’.

‘The force that stabilizes social relationships is not emotion (*ganqing*) but *understanding* (*liaojie*). Understanding means accepting a common frame of reference. The same stimulus will call forth the same response....I mentioned that propinquity and familiarity breed a mutual awareness. Such *feelings of mutuality* and a condition of being emotional are completely at odds with each other. Mutuality rests on a harmony that is continuously reproduced. Mutuality is silent, whereas emotionality needs to be voiced.’ (1992: 88, italics added)

At first glance, this paragraph seems contradictory with the claim that ‘emotional proximity’ is the foundation of Chinese association. Nevertheless, if read carefully, Fei actually defines emotion in a narrow way and limits its application to ‘personal psychological states’. He contrasts emotion with ‘feelings of mutuality’ as one can see clearly from the highlights in the paragraph above to the term he uses in his original Chinese text is ‘*qinmi ganjue*’, i.e. ‘a sense of intimacy or proximity’. Moreover, he argues that his sense of intimacy arises in the process of familiarization and it is the consequence of ‘long-term cooperation to coordinate the interactions of individuals’ (89). More importantly, this sense of intimacy guides people’s everyday actions and reactions. Therefore, it can be argued that Fei regards ‘the feeling of mutuality’ – ‘emotional proximity’ as I call it in this thesis – and the ‘understanding’ which arises through it as the basis of Chinese sociality and group formation.

It may be worthwhile to clarify that ‘understanding’ (*liaojie*) and ‘emotional proximity’ are not just about familiarization between individuals after long-term interaction. They also refer to a ‘shared feeling’ among individuals when perceiving the world. It is a ‘common frame of reference’ as Fei says but with a focus on ‘emotion’. Another aspect of this is resonance – not only being able to empathise with other subjects but also recognizing and reacting affectively in the same way when facing the objective world. What is more is that this shared resonance offers the possibility for communication. This emphasis on ‘shared feeling’ between subjects as well as toward objects, as I will show in the

conclusion to this thesis, can potentially add new dimensions to the study of emotion in anthropology (Lutz & White, 1986; Lutz, 1988; Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1993; Leavitt, 1996; Potter, 1988; Rosaldo, 1980).

To sum up, in this section, I have pursued a long line of argument. My main point is that, if one wants to study the social tension or conviviality between Chinese migrants and their African hosts by looking into how Chinese socialize and how Chinese groups are formed, instrumental ‘*guanxi*’ is not adequate (a point also made strongly in Yan, 1996). One should not overlook the significance of social roles played in everyday mutual perception, the impact of the embedded ‘emotion’ in roles and situations on everyday mutual comprehension, and, most importantly, the essential position of emotional proximity in the formation of Chinese groups or community. As briefly mentioned above, reinterpreting and extending Fei’s theory on sociality in aspects of role ethics, situational effect and emotional proximity, in this thesis, I aim not only at understanding the tension or conviviality between Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts, but also seeing how Chinese anthropology (not anthropology of China) may contribute to current anthropological theories in general.

Introducing my Field Sites – Stories of Two Chinese Farms

As noted above, I carried out 16 months of fieldwork in Lusaka, Zambia. My main field sites were two farms – one private, the other educational with Chinese state sponsorship. I accessed my first field site, the state-sponsored educational farm, through a connection with my father, and stayed there for seven months. While I was with them, I was also introduced to the Confucius Institute in Zambia, where I did a one-month voluntary internship, and became acquainted with the Zou family. I spent the rest of my time in Zambia at the Zou family farm.

The educational farm is physically attached to the University of Zambia farm in an eastern suburb of Lusaka. It was founded under the new Sino-African policy proposed at the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit. The official name is ‘China-Aid Zambia Agriculture Technology Demonstration Center’ (*zhongguo yüanzhu zambiya nongye jishu shifan zhongxin*). This project is fully sponsored by Chinese central government, classified as an aid project and the main purpose is to provide training for local

agricultural students and farmers. In total, there are fourteen similar projects across Africa. The funding (30 million RMB for each project) is distributed by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce to different Chinese provincial governments. Each province assigns its provincial agricultural university to take charge of the implementation. The project in Zambia was allocated to Jilin Province, which has been regarded as an agriculturally advanced province, then to Jilin Agricultural University. The programme is coordinated with University of Zambia. According to its promotion leaflets, ‘the construction of agricultural technology demonstration center will provide new types of agricultural theory and practical agriculture service, and promote economic and social development...According to the practical condition and development needs of Zambia, we will fully use local resources such as water, electricity and roads, build necessary basic facilities. Provide necessary agricultural goods, experiment instruments and farming machines. Dispatch a certain number of agricultural experts and administrative staff. Focus on training and demonstration of production technologies of corn, soybean and so on.’



Picture 1: China-Aid Zambia Agricultural Technology Demonstration Center

The China-Aid Zambia Agricultural Technology Demonstration Center (ATDC) occupies 120 hectares of farm land rented free from the University of Zambia under a five-year contract. During the contractual term, a new training centre will be built with essential infrastructure, such as student accommodation, irrigation system etc. The training

programme will last three years. After the contractual term, the project will be handed over to the Zambian government unless a new contract is agreed. Nevertheless, the new cooperation will become commercial as Chinese state will no longer provide sponsorship.

The administrative staff of the project are permanent employees of Jilin Agricultural University. Like other Chinese organizations in Zambia, staff are assigned with two-year contracts. While working in Zambia, staff receive '*jianku buzhu*' (allowance of hardship and bitterness) apart from their usual salaries. All are paid directly into their bank accounts in China. Accommodation and food are provided free. There are five Chinese administrative staff members working at ATDC: one manager, one deputy manager, two farming technicians and one translator. The manager and deputy manager are both professors and in charge of lectures. Guest teachers are invited on a temporary basis both from University of Zambia and from Jilin Agricultural University in China.

There were six, later twelve security guards. They are employed permanently by the University of Zambia (UNZA) and most of them live on the UNZA farm, which is about a thirty-minute walk from the demonstration centre. The manager of UNZA farm is Mr Mbozi, who is also the Zambian manager of the demonstration centre and takes charge of any issues raised from the UNZA side. I will give a fuller description of Mr Mbozi in Chapter Three. The other Zambian workers are hired by the Chinese management team at the demonstration centre on a temporary task basis, usually without contracts. They are recruited from nearby villages. Their work mainly involves daily maintenance of the farm and some seasonal tasks. Most farming is done by the Chinese technicians using heavy machinery.

When I arrived in Lusaka, it was towards the end of the project construction so all the staff were staying at a hotel owned by a Chinese businesswoman, Mother Liü, who appeared in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter. She came to Zambia in the 1990s and currently runs one restaurant and one hotel in Lusaka. Because of her close relationship with the Chinese Embassy, she has gained great fame among Chinese migrants. Almost everyone knows her and some even give her the nickname 'grassroots ambassador'. I stayed at her hotel with the others for one month at the beginning of my fieldwork.

As it was very close to the completion of the construction, after one month staying at Mother Liū's, I moved to the construction compound with the rest of the ATDC (Agriculture Technology Demonstration Center) staff. We shared accommodation with the construction workers for another month until the new administrative building was ventilated and the construction team built a new compound for their next project. The Demonstration Center was built by a Chinese construction company from Anhui Province. The company used to be provincial owned but was privatized during the Chinese state-enterprise reform. There were about twenty Chinese workers stayed in the ATDC construction compound. Zambian workers came to the site on two giant trucks every morning.



Picture 2: The Gate of the Construction Compound

During my fieldwork at the Demonstration Center, I took a role as voluntary translator. My main task was to assist in the daily negotiation of work problems between Chinese staff and Zambian workers and in the frequent meetings between Chinese managers and Zambian officials. This role as a translator provided me great opportunities to observe how negotiation is carried on, in what aspects misunderstanding arises and in what

circumstances communication is broken.

My second field site was a small-scale private Chinese family farm. It was through the translator Xiao Liū that I became acquainted with the Zou family with whom I spent the rest of my fieldwork. The Zou family runs a small farm, only about two hectares, next door to the demonstration centre. The land was purchased around 2009 from another Chinese migrant. The family grows Chinese vegetables mainly to supply Chinese companies, although every Tuesday they will sell at the local farmers' market. Father Zou is the first one of the family who came to Zambia. Born in the 1950s in a rural village of Jiangxi province, Father Zou initially was recruited to Zambia by his provincial company, Jiangxi Construction Coop., as a cook for an aid project in 1997. After the project finished, Father Zou chose to stay and worked for a construction company owned by his *laoxiang* (people from the same region) until 2004 when Father Zou had a quarrel with the manager and decided to start his own business. It was then that his wife, Mother Zou, joined him in Zambia. They found shared accommodation in west Lusaka and started to grow vegetables on a small piece of land which they rented from the *laoxiang* landlady. Around 2006, their son, Xiao (junior) Zou, and daughter-in-law arrived in Zambia. In late 2008 or early 2009, with their savings and money borrowed from friends, the Zou family bought the land and established their family farming business.

Before moving to Africa, Mother Zou and her son, Xiao Zou, tried various businesses in Nanchang, the capital city of Jiangxi Province. They sold breakfast on a street stall, opened a clothes shop and sold DVDs but none of them was profitable. 'It is too difficult to do business in China,' as Mother Zou reasons, 'too many administrative officials give you trouble. They visit your shop every day. One day the tax man comes and another day it's the city inspector. They are nobody, to be honest, but they have badges. They can always pick up some problems to give you a fine. If you do not know any senior official (*shangmian meiren*), it costs a lot to run a business. Profits hardly balance the expenses. It is only in Zambia where our business thrives. Finally, our hard work has paid off.' Another reason why Mother Zou migrated to Zambia is that she wants to save some money for her son when she can still work. She does not want her son to continue living an 'unbearable' life.

The son, Xiao Zou, is in his early thirties. He dropped out of school when he was sixteen and started to help in the family business. Later, he opened his own DVD shop with financial support from his family but after only two years, the shop was forced to shut down due to the government policy to clear pirate DVD shops. Since then, he had worked as a bus driver before joining in his parents in Zambia. 'The bus company did not pay much, only 2300 RMB per month (around £230). What was worse was the manager. He was very strict and fussy. Sometimes, he would intentionally cause trouble (*zhaocha*). Even if Xiao Zou's uniform was not clean enough, he would cut his payment. At the end of the month, there were only 1500 RMB left. It is not all about the money. It is the work atmosphere, unbearable. They bully you when they know you are nobody! Seeing Xiao Zou suffer, I asked him to quit and join us in Zambia,' Mother Zou once commented.

I stayed with the Zou family for six months. Since their family farm is next door to the demonstration centre, I chose to keep my room in the centre as accommodation but commute to the Zou family farm every day. Every day, I joined the Zou family for breakfast and left their farm after dinner. The weekly routine included helping the family with preparations for Tuesday market sales and Wednesday delivery. The Wednesday delivery was the Zou family's main business. The delivery was made to Sino-Hydro in Kariba, more than 300 miles away from Lusaka. Sino-Hydro is in charge of maintenance of the Kariba Dam. They have more than 100 Chinese workers residing in the base. The Zou family reached an agreement to supply food to Sino-Hydro. Therefore, every Wednesday, Xiao Zou would drive tons of meat and vegetables for almost five hours to Kariba in the morning and back to Lusaka on the same day.

The division of work was rather clear in the Zou family. Father Zou is in charge of farming in the field. Mother Zou takes control of domestic tasks and social networking. Xiao Zou does all the work related to the 'outside', such as contacting clients, delivering goods, etc. The daughter-in-law helps whoever needs assistance. There are three Zambian workers hired by the Zou family, two boys and one girl, all from nearby residential compounds. The two boys help Father Zou in the field with planting and harvesting and the girl assists Mother Zou with domestic work. The Zambian workers are hired without contracts and no accommodation is provided for them on the farm.

Work is usually finished by Friday. At weekends the Zou family visits friends around Lusaka or invite friends over for banquets. Manager Deng and his family are the Zou family's closest friends in Zambia. Like Father Zou, Manager Deng is also from Jiangxi Province and came to Zambia as a cook with a Chinese state-owned company. Then, he opened the first Chinese restaurant in Lusaka. I will describe more about the friendship between the Zou family and Manager Deng in later chapters. Through the Zou family's social networks, I met several Chinese entrepreneurs in Lusaka. Most of them were from Jiangxi and Henan provinces. Participating in their daily social activities provided me a good opportunity to observe how Chinese migrants in Zambia socialize with each other.

Fieldworks at two different sites not only offer me chances to meet people from different social backgrounds, but also to observe how everyday social interactions are influenced by social status and the corresponding projection of micro-power relationships. In general, at my field sites, the interactions between Chinese and Zambians mainly occurred at the Agriculture Technology Demonstration Center. Nevertheless, data collected from the Zou family farm, of how Chinese migrants socialize with each other every day and how community emerges, is equally valuable as it answers the same question from the other side of the coin; that is, one could investigate the problems arising in the process of Chinese-Zambian interaction by revealing how Chinese socialize every day.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized according to two threads. One thread follows the narratives of first encounter between my Chinese and Zambian interlocutors and focuses on the issue of misunderstanding and disjunction in communication. The other thread traces the formation of groups or even a community among my Chinese interlocutors, especially concentrating on the impact of 'emotion' on their everyday interaction.

Chapter One starts with the everyday life of the Zou family in Zambia. It tells the stories of their fear when encountering 'ethnic strangers' and their anxiety in general when living with uncertainty in Zambia. It maps out the conditions which trigger and intensify the anxiety of the Zou family. Specifically, their anxiety is due to the political turbulence in Zambia during the general election, the rumours circulated among friends,

unfamiliarity with their Zambian hosts and the lack of protection from Chinese officials. Nevertheless, this anxiety, as I will describe in the chapter, is a pan-phenomenon. It is a shared everyday psychological state of my Chinese interlocutors. Fundamentally, this anxiety is caused by the shared perception of ‘outsider’. And, I argue that it is this anxious attitude of my Chinese interlocutors towards strangers/outsideers that discourages them from socializing with their Zambian host and breaks down communication from the start. Everyday interaction between Chinese migrants and Zambian hosts is generally scarce.

Chapter Two focuses on the Zou family’s everyday business activities and their networks to trace the relationships and everyday socialization among Chinese private entrepreneurs in Lusaka. The aim is to investigate how groups are formed from scratch among my Chinese interlocutors and how their social relationships become sustainable, so one could understand in what way the social bonds can naturally arise at the grassroots between Chinese migrants and their Zambian counterparts. While looking at Chinese private entrepreneurs in Zambia as a whole, it is evident that there are widespread factions. In business, fierce competition arises between groups with pervasive mistrust and suspicion in the ‘community’. Nonetheless, looking into the group from the bottom up, ‘interactional affection’ (*jiaqing*) is stressed and provides the basis for forming relations. Moreover, relationships become sustainable because my Chinese interlocutors consciously protect ‘interactional affection’ by discouraging actions calculated to deny affection. If Chapter One shows how ‘emotion’ could hinder interaction (i.e. with Zambians), Chapter Two is intended to show the constructive impact of affection on forming and sustaining social relations in general (i.e. among Chinese).

Chapter Three shifts attention to the ‘Agricultural Technology Demonstration Center’. It looks into the misunderstandings at work between ‘Chinese bosses’ and ‘Zambian workers’ when interactions are forced to happen. In this chapter, first of all, both cultural practices on the ‘boss-worker’ relationship will be documented for comparison. Furthermore, I argue that each party (re)acts according to their accustomed practices. Nevertheless, what is puzzling is that, despite both accustomed practices being based on hierarchical, dependent patron-client relationships, misunderstanding and tension still frequently occur. Therefore, after investigating the affective dimension of the work relations,

I argue that it is the mismatching direction of *attentiveness* bundled in their practices and interactions that causes tensions at work. Contrasting with analysis of labour relations at Chinese workplaces in Africa from the angle of class struggle and exploitation, I will demonstrate how the emotion embedded in ‘boss-worker’ practices could trigger resentments, which has not attracted sufficient interest from researchers.

Chapter Four is the point at which my discussion of the interactions between Chinese migrants and Zambian hosts moves onto more general aspects. This chapter is dedicated to the issues arising in everyday ethical interactions. Continuing from the previous chapter, the events are mainly set in the demonstration centre. Heavily engaging with debates in the anthropology of morality and ethics, this chapter shows, theoretically as well as ethnographically, the impact of selfhood and social roles on the everyday ethical decision-making of my Chinese interlocutors. Also, introducing a young Chinese migrant’s personal experiences as a worker and then a boss, I will illustrate the function of social role, especially its associated ‘emotion’ subject to social expectation, on personal transformation. Following the general line of analysis though this thesis – the importance of ‘emotion’ to social relation/social group formation and reproduction, I will push my arguments a step further by showing the embeddedness of ‘emotion’, represented as ‘*renqing*’ (human emotion) at my field sites, in the process of moral reasoning and ethical practices among my Chinese interlocutors. The significance of ‘emotion’ in forming social relationships is because it directs people’s moral actions. To the Chinese migrants, it is the projective non-appreciation of their ‘emotion’ embedded in the ethical actions by their Zambian hosts that make them alienate the Zambians.

Chapter Five takes both field sites into account and investigates the problems existing directly in the process of everyday conversational communication. In this chapter, I argue that the miscommunication between Chinese migrants and their Zambian counterparts in terms of linguistic exchanges arises as a result of the accustomed communicative style – indirect speech – that my Chinese interlocutors employ. They highly value the capacity of ‘speaking appropriately’ and evaluate others based on their communicative skills. ‘Speaking appropriately’ requires the actor to be sensitive to the context, not only the social positions and intentions of each interlocutor in the situation but

also the emotional tone of the situation. In everyday practices, both parties, Chinese and Zambians, are learning and modifying conversational styles from each other; nevertheless, the current phase is only the beginning of a long-term process of transformation.

In the Conclusion, I consolidate the theoretical steps of arguments I have taken in each chapter. Based on my observations at the field sites and reflecting in association with the literatures on Anthropology of Chinese Emotion, I will turn Potter's general hypothesis (1988) upside down and argue that 'emotion' is the first-order factor to form and reproduce social relations and social groups among Chinese. Further engaging with Chinese epistemology in relation to the discourse of Chinese migrants, the meaning of 'emotion' will be extended to three dimensions. Furthermore, I will point out the dialectical relations between emotion and sociality in Chinese contexts; that is, *chaxugeju* as the Chinese social matrix nurtures the social significance of emotion in three dimensions while in turn the emotion provides foundation for forming and reproducing social relation. Consequently, the function of 'emotion' is the key if one to understand the everyday dynamic interactions between newly-arrived Chinese migrants and their African hosts.

Chapter One: Living with Strangers, Anxiously

At 1 am on September 23rd, 2011, Father and Mother Zou were lying awake after a late-night phone call from Manager Deng, their best friend in Zambia. Around 3 am, unable to get back to sleep, the elderly couple got up and took two chairs outside, to the spot on their one-hectare vegetable farm where they would often sit after supper to watch the stars and enjoy the quietness that African nights bring. This time it did not have its usual calming effect; with so many worries and fears, the old Zous had to start seriously re-considering their future in Zambia. That night of September 23rd, 2011 was a night of triumph for Mr Michael Sata and his party, Patriotic Front⁷, in Zambia's general election; however, it threatened to become the night of another 'failure' in the lives of Father and Mother Zou. The future had suddenly become extremely uncertain, and undoubtedly their anxiety soared. They feared that Chinese migrants would be forced to leave Zambia very soon, as Sata had threatened before the general election. If this were the case, they would lose everything – all they had saved through their continuous hard work over the past six years in Zambia. All would be wasted. What was worse was that they would be despised as 'losers' once they returned to their village in China. They would have 'no face' to meet their family and friends again.

Nobody really knows what exactly the Zous discussed that night, but two days later Mother Zou informed me that they were going to sell the farm: 'Very soon, I am going to sell this piece of land, then rent a place to live (in Lusaka). Life feels steady (*tashi*) when we've got cash in our pockets. Once we've cashed in, I would not be so worried even if we have to leave Zambia.'

This indeed came as quite a surprise to me as Mother Zou had always said that the farm was the 'root' (*gen*) for the growth of their family business. At that moment, although acknowledging that it would not be easy to sell their farm quickly, I

⁷ Zambia is a multi-party system. Patriot Front and MMD (Movement for Multi-Party Democracy) are two majority parties. Politically, Patriot Front is a democratic socialist party and the party leader, Sata, has famously campaigned to chase foreigners out of Zambia, particularly with reference to Chinese migrants, during the election of 2006. This was repeated in the 2011 election.

simply could not question the decision, seeing Mother Zou's intense anxiety, but only tried my best to comfort her. Nevertheless, her son, junior Zou (Xiao Zou) reacted straightforwardly: 'I did not want to buy this farm at the beginning but you two never listened (to my opinion). Now, you see the consequence. Well, it is not my business as I am merely "working" for you two. I never have a say here!' Mother Zou did not reply immediately, perhaps because she had too much on her mind. She simply asked me to help her write a door poster in English so that neighbours could call in if they were interested in purchasing the farm. Meanwhile, she was making phone calls to Chinese friends and asking them to pass on the information. Despite Mother Zou ignoring her son's comment, Xiao Zou's words did remind me of a rather similar discussion we had had a couple of months before when we drove by some modern shopping malls in Lusaka. I asked him why no Chinese entrepreneurs were interested in investing in commercial properties in Lusaka. Xiao Zou rationalized that

'No single one (Chinese entrepreneur) has the money! And even if one had the money, he would not invest in infrastructure. You know, Africa is very politically unstable. It is not good to fix too much money here. You may lose everything overnight. Zambia is comparatively the safest. This is why more and more Chinese are coming here. But, there is no guarantee, especially this year. Elections always bring political turbulence. If Sata were elected, lots of Chinese would go back to China.'

Just as Xiao Zou predicted, quite a few Chinese had already left Zambia for China weeks before the election and most Chinese businesses in Lusaka stopped running during the election week. It was a case of '*duo fengtou*' — 'hide for a while until the storm passes' — as they described it.

The Zou couple's reaction in the ethnographic vignette above represents well the anxiety which private Chinese businessmen hold every day while surviving and striving in Zambia, although the personal sentiment might have been exaggerated to the peak in the Zou's case following the extreme uncertainty brought by the general election. Their decision to sell the farm provides me with a clear answer to the primary question that I wanted to ask when I arrived at my field site: how do Chinese migrants perceive and respond to the 'unfamiliar' environment in Zambia which they live in every day?

While studying Chinese and African interactions and mutual perceptions, many researchers and journalists presuppose – for obvious reasons – an imbalanced power relationship between Chinese people and their African hosts; namely China, relying on its increasing economic and political influence, is imposing its will on African counterparts (e.g., Limos & Ribiro, 2007) and local Africans are consequentially the vulnerable partners (for an overview, see, Giese & Thiel 2012; Giese, 2013). As I noted in the introduction, this assumption might well be true at the level of international relations; however, the everyday ordinary life of my Chinese interlocutors in Lusaka tells a different story – they live constantly in anxiety and, in my experience at least, they feel very vulnerable. This anxiety is raised not only by the temporary political instability of their host countries but also experienced, communicated and spread in mundane daily life among the Chinese migrants. It is very much a shared sentiment and has become a mode of everyday existence. In this chapter, I would like to capture and describe this *everyday* experience of anxiety at the grassroots level through my account of weekly life events which I witnessed during my stay with the Zou family.

Understanding this pervasive anxiety is crucial, in my view, because it provides a kind of baseline for initial contacts between the Chinese migrants and their African hosts. Moreover, this anxiety as everyday lived experience has significant effects on their on-going interactions and communication. While writing about mutual perceptions between Chinese migrants and their Angolan hosts, Cheryl Mei-Ting Schmitz describes her informants' uncertainty and their daily concerns about security and claims that 'Angolans and Chinese in Luanda, rather than occupying positions of absolute segregation, inhabit a shared social world – one in which suspicions and concerns with security predominate' (2014:44). She further implies that this 'shared suspicion' could even provide sufficient common ground for the achievement of mutual understanding and socialization between Chinese migrants and their Angolan hosts. I have some doubts about this analysis, however. By contrast, I argue in this chapter that anxiety – at least in the cases I am familiar – is one of the general causes of the *reluctance* to socialize between Chinese and their Zambian counterparts.

In light of other sources, I would actually contend that this anxious state is not particular to my Chinese interlocutors in Zambia; rather, it is a pervasive phenomenon in Chinese communities. As above, Schmitz (2014) documents that Chinese officials repeatedly warned her of the safety issues in Angola and the Chinese private traders there constantly worry about potential robbery on the street or bribery coming home. Despite our research being carried out in two very different countries, I find Schmitz's ethnographic descriptions strikingly similar to what I saw at my field sites. McNamee also points out a similar shared anxious state among Chinese migrants after a comparative project across five African countries (South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia and Angola) to study Sino-African interactions. He points out that, due to rising tide of resentment from the host societies and intensified fear of Chinese traders, 'only a tiny minority intend to make the continent [Africa] their home' (2012:5). Recently, ethnographic research on doubt and anxiety has mainly framed the analyses in relation to political economy (e.g. see, Shah 2013). Nonetheless, this approach alone cannot explain why Chinese migrants (officials as well as entrepreneurs) feel anxious in *various* African countries and even in China. These cross-regional resemblances beg further explanations beyond the underlying political-economic conditions, which obviously vary widely across these locations. It seems to me that this everyday anxious life shared by many Chinese migrants has a deeper structural reason. It is this *pervasiveness* of anxiety among Chinese migrants that I try to understand in this chapter.

Contrasting with the North American notion of fear and danger, Catherine Lutz claims that the sociocultural idea of *metagu* (fear/anxiety) among Ifaluk involves more than bodily change. It is often experienced as 'intensely meaningful' and 'woven in complex ways into cultural meaning systems and social interaction' (1988:8). Fear, as a common form of emotion, also serves as an ideological index to locate interpersonal relationships. Therefore, instead of being a mere individual psychological state, it should be interpreted in respect of sociocultural action and be understood in relation to personhood. As Lutz further explains, 'cultural views of emotion help construct people's interpretations of their experiences. For many Ifaluk, being alone is taken to be fearsome ... Each emotion concept is ... an index of a world of cultural premises and of scenarios for social interaction;

each is a system of meaning or cluster of ideas which include both verbal accessible, reflective ideas and implicit practical ones' (210). To echo her arguments, on the one hand, I attempt to interpret the meaning of anxiety held by my Chinese interlocutors, especially in association with their sociality; on the other hand, I want to explore how anxiety is evoked to help Chinese migrants to perceive their experiences in Zambia.

While capturing personal life histories in Northeast China, Charles Stafford has presented a story of the anxious life of an old Chinese man. Stafford argues that anxiety rises partly due to the man's particular circumstances but also due to the everlasting contradiction between a universal human will to control and transcend the unpredictability of our natural and social environment, and the very uncertainty of that world. As he suggests with regard to social ties in particular, 'what is often most anxious-making about [human] relationships is precisely their contingent nature. The people around us have their own plans and intentions and understandings, which may or may not correspond to ours ... What we lack, it seems, is control' (2007:72). Stafford further argues that, in order to cope with and possibly even solve this contradiction, actors may draw on cultural schemas⁸ that provide them with familiar (and thus somewhat comfortable) patterns for their future perceptions and decisions, a process he refers to as 'pattern-recognition exercises' (59).

To follow this line of reasoning, I claim that, at my field sites, my Chinese interlocutors as newly-arrived migrants are facing great uncertainty and unpredictability. As a result, when encountering people from other ethnic groups, the general Chinese cultural schema of 'stranger' (*shengren*) is triggered for the purpose of recognition and control. As I will elaborate later in this chapter, 'stranger' as an acquired conceptual category in the mind of my Chinese interlocutors is rooted in their enculturated 'mode of association' and their perception of society as whole. More importantly, 'stranger', as a cultural ideal, is often associated with a number of negative cultural sentiments, including anxiety, suspicion and caution. The generally negative Chinese view of strangers has been extensively documented and analysed along with a Chinese tendency towards exclusiveness (*paiwai*, literally 'exclude outside[r]'). The general history of Chinese exclusivism is beyond

⁸ Here, Stafford applies Strauss and Quinn's definition; that is, 'learned expectations regarding the way things usually go' (1997:49).

the scope of this chapter (for more, see Prasenjit Duara, 1991; Frank Dikötter, 1992, 1994; Barry Sautman 1994). Here, the locus of my arguments is the dialectical relations between everyday sociality and the pervasiveness of anxiety, with a specific stress on the ways in which the cultural schema of ‘stranger’ helps Chinese migrants to ‘comprehend’ their new social conditions in Zambia. Echoing Feuchtwang’s beautiful wording, I contend that my Chinese interlocutors in Zambia apply the cultural schema of ‘stranger’ to ‘fabricate a sense of control where there is no real control’ and ‘to regularise the making of decisions in an irregular and uncertain field of choice’ (2002:279). It is this wide application of the cultural schema of ‘stranger’ – a notion bundled with negative sentiments – that causes the occurrence of pervasive anxiety when Chinese migrants are approached by unfamiliar counterparts.

It may seem, however, that there is a contradiction here. Surely one could ask the question: if the cultural schema of ‘stranger’ is applied to control uncertainty, why do Chinese migrants still feel anxious? To clarify, ‘stranger’ is used conceptually to classify in order to handle the ambiguity of the new social environment; however, it cannot eliminate the uncertainty and negative sentiments built in to the schema of ‘stranger’ itself. In other words, the invoked Chinese cultural schema of ‘stranger’ adds a new layer of anxiety while diminishing the one brought by new social settings. This explains why Chinese migrants would feel more anxious when unfamiliar people approach (e.g. when they are stopped by police for a random check) but less so when driving on roads by themselves.

In general, Chinese migrants, across gender, age, education and political-economic status, feel anxious all the time while surrounded by ‘strangers’ in Zambia. Anxiety is their everyday mode of existence. This sentiment in turn has discouraged interaction between them and their Zambian hosts, and also created a great hurdle for mutual understanding in the course of their initial encounters and beyond. This is the beginning of the story of an initial encounter.

Before turning to my ethnographic descriptions, I should note that there are different Chinese terms for anxiety and that these relate to different linguistic registers. One can use the terms *kepa* (fearful) or *kongbu* (terror) to describe the extreme state of anxiety, or terms such as *bu’an/butashi* (unstable) or *danxin* (literally, ‘burden the heart’;

worry) to express more everyday unease. Different registers surely connote different shades of anxiety and various meanings of anxiety can occur due to different contexts. Undoubtedly, at my field sites, the nuance of their anxious states between different Chinese migrants is sometimes related to the different positions they held in the host society; for example, Chinese officials in Zambia might fear unrest less than the private Chinese entrepreneurs because they could mobilize more resources and secure more protection in order to deal with it. Nevertheless, as I will show throughout the chapter, behind all of the variables – age, gender, social status, and education – there lies anxiety as a general psychological phenomenon among my Chinese interlocutors in Zambia.

Finally, I would like to explain that the narrative in this chapter is going to be organized in chronological order, like a diary. This ‘unconventional’ arrangement of ethnographic data⁹ serves three purposes. First, I hope that this form of presentation will reveal the real *everyday nature* of the anxiety being experienced by my interlocutors. Second, by taking the reader for a vivid mental tour of an ordinary week in the life of my Chinese interlocutors, I attempt to trace serial images so as to raise the readers’ emotional resonance to comprehend this ‘anxiety’, instead of using logical persuasion. Third, each section will begin with a vignette followed by reflections. This form of presentation is classified as ‘*sanwen*’ (prose)¹⁰ in the theory of Chinese literature. It is considered the most popular and

⁹ Kathleen Stewart, in her monograph *Ordinary Affect* (2007), has applied similarly writing styles while describing the ‘affective dimension of everyday life’. Although being well praised as ‘touching’, ‘elegant’ and containing the ‘evocative power of descriptions’, the work has been criticized as failed to ‘exploit the analytical possibilities of affect’ and it ignores the pre-set power relations while playing the refrains of ‘familiar situations’ (Mathijs Pelkmans, ‘The Affect Effect’ in *Anthropology of This Century* 7, 2013). In this chapter, I will take the critiques into consideration while blending her writing styles with the ones in Chinese literature.

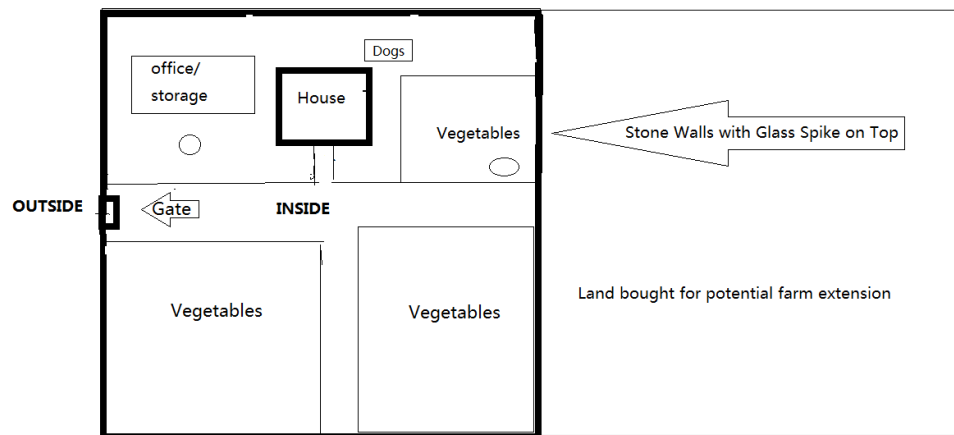
¹⁰ *Sanwen* with poetry (*shige*), fiction (*xiaoshuo*) and drama (*xiju*) are categorized as four genres in Chinese literature. *Sanwen* is a traditional Chinese literary genre and has experienced several historical transformations. Contemporary *sanwen* was re-invented in the era of May-Four Movement (*wusi yundong*) by a series of writers such as Lu Xun, Zhu Ziqing etc. The main characteristics of *sanwen* are broadly considered as 1) it has a loose structure and argument but the coherence are achieved by referring to the same ‘spirit’ (*shen*) or meaning (*xingsan’ershenbusan*). 2) The contents are normally organized via first-person narratives and authors endeavour to reach persuasion via invoking emotional resonance. The emotional resonance is achieved through creating ‘*yijing*’ (literally, settings of meaning) within texts to induce readers’ imagination, which defines the aesthetic value (more see, *Zhongguo Xiandai Sanwenshi*, The History of Chinese Contemporary Prose, Yu Yuangui ed., 1988, Shandong Wenyi Press)

effective genre to convince the reader because it works on the emotional (*ganxing*) as well as the rational (*lixing*) side of persuasion. Instead of arguing for the significance of this linguistic style of Chinese communication – a point to which I will return at the end of this thesis – in this opening chapter, I would like first to employ the structure of this writing style for demonstration.

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Noon, September 23rd, 2011

After drawing up the poster for the sale of their farm, Mother Zou asked me to help her put it up on the front gate. The gate is made of iron, about three metres tall and fully painted in red. It has three locks – two of them are for the gate while the other one is for the side door on the left side of the gate. On the side door, there is a peep-hole which itself has a small sliding door and is used by the family to identify visitors before they can enter. If visitors are Zambians, the communication would carry on through the peep box, usually for several minutes. Meanwhile, when a Chinese face appears through the peep-hole, the gate is opened within seconds and quickly locked tight again in case Zambians see what is inside. Sometimes, if the Chinese visitor is accompanied by a Zambian chauffeur, Mother Zou would request the Chinese guest to leave the Zambian chauffeur waiting outside the gate. For the family, the gate is a symbol of protection which reassures them of their control over access between the two parts of the world, inside and outside, artificially separated by the gate and wall.



Structure of Zou Family Farm Compound

Apart from the locks on the gate, there are another three locks for the house; one for the main door, one for the kitchen and one for the living room and bedrooms. Most of the time, the doors remain shut if not used by the family, so that the farm workers will not have a chance to steal anything from the house even though – in fact – no worker is allowed to step into the house at any time. Mother Zou is the only one who holds all the keys. Her daughter-in-law used to hold an extra set, but after their house was robbed – because her daughter-in-law left the door open – Mother Zou feels that she cannot rely on anyone but herself. She always complains about the recklessness of the young couple: ‘They are too young. They never know the danger. It is always good to be cautious (*xiaoxin*). Being cautious allows one to sail without danger for thousands of years (*xiaoxin shide wannianchuan*).’

This belief certainly cost the Zou family a lot of money when they built the farm. The farm was built on four hectares of land which Father Zou purchased around late 2008 from another Chinese businessman. Before then, for two years the family rented a small piece of land from their Chinese *laoxiang* (people from the same region). The transaction cost the family US\$80,000 in total, one third of which was borrowed from their friends. The family could have purchased land from a local Zambian farmer at a cheaper price but they were willing to pay more to keep the business between the Chinese. This is a rather common practice among Chinese private farmers in Zambia. They prefer to buy land

from other Chinese. If they cannot find a Chinese seller, their second preference would be to buy from a white farmer. Local custom land (where land belongs to the chief) attracts very little interest unless it is backed up by the Zambian government. The rationale behind this order of preference is partly due to the degree of familiarity; that is, my Chinese interlocutors like dealing with the people who they are familiar with because they know the procedure and the rules of the 'interactional game'.

The Zou family farm only occupies one fourth of the land they purchased; the rest is still left barren. The reason for this, they say, is that they did not have enough money to build a stone wall to surround the full four hectares, so only one hectare was enclosed. Walls are very important for Chinese families in Zambia, since they both exclude strangers from the property, and protect the family from the danger outside. They are considered an 'efficient' device of self-protection. The walls Mr Zou built for his one-hectare farm cost him about US\$30,000, more than one third of the total budget. Regardless how much he spent, he is certainly very proud of his wall. Every time he has a Chinese friend visiting, Father Zou always comments on how safe his farm compound is and how necessary to have a high wall: 'Walls need to be high so that the local guys won't be able to see what is inside. If they cannot see, they won't want to steal anything.'

Father Zou is not the only one who is proud of his own work on protecting property. His attitude is shared by the general manager of the nearby demonstration centre (Chinese state-sponsored agricultural training centre). The manager feels that one of the major achievements he has contributed to the project during his service is the highly advanced electronic wall system installed around the farm. Nevertheless, this strong attachment to walls is not shared by local Zambian farmers. When I asked two of my Zambian interviewees why they did not build walls or any defence to protect their farms, they told me that they had nothing to hide and they welcome everyone to visit them. They said that the walls would make people wonder what was going on. The less people could see from the outside, the more they would want to get in – a sharp contrast with what my Chinese interlocutors would have expected.

As well as extra locks and strong walls, dogs are also felt to be good for domestic protection. However, not every kind of dog is good at defence. The 'native dog'

(*tugou*) is considered ‘incompetent’. Although they are very cheap to purchase on the street, none of my Chinese interlocutors was interested in this breed. On the contrary, a special kind of ‘wolf-dog’ (*langgou*) is constantly in short supply in Lusaka among the Chinese community. ‘Wolf-dogs’ are in high demand simply because they are said to bite only local Zambians. One has to pre-order the dogs several months in advance by asking for one as a favour (*renqing*). They are never for sale. Xiao Zou was very satisfied after he secured four dogs through his networking skills. He cherished them like babies. High quality *shima* (corn-flour, the staple food for local Zambians) was bought especially for feeding these dogs while farm workers sometimes have to bring their own lunch. After two of his dogs were found dead from snake bites, Xiao Zou was so sad that he always said to himself, ‘Two dogs are too few. I would feel steadier (*tashi*) and sleep better if the other two were still here.’

To my Chinese interlocutors, the outside is always perceived as dangerous owing to its characteristics of unfamiliarity and unpredictability. By definition, the outside is less controllable compared with staying inside the farms. This geographic classification, outside versus inside, corresponds with their mental categorization of people in general, stranger versus familiar. The morphemes of the term ‘stranger’ (*shengren*) in Chinese are a combination of ‘raw’ (*sheng*) and ‘person’ (*ren*), whereas ‘familiar person’ (*shuren*), by contrast, is formed with the morpheme ‘cooked’ (*shu*). Typically, in the cultural schema of Chinese migrants, ‘stranger’ is associated with the more general notion of the ‘outside’ (*wai*). Indeed, in everyday discourse, strangers and outsiders are interchangeable, sometimes referred together as ‘*wairen*’, which can literally be translated as ‘outside people’, while ‘inside people’ is normally called *zijinren* (literally, ‘self-people’). According to the conceptual correlations, the binary relation among different terms above could be formulated roughly as;

outside : inside :: stranger : familiar :: raw : cooked :: dangerous : safe

This model of categorization related to Chinese sociality was first generalized by Fei Xiaotong (1992 [1948]). As I have discussed in the Introduction, Fei defines this mode of sociality as being based on the ‘differential mode of association’ (*chaxugeju*). In the conclusion, I will come back to analyse the dialectical relations between this ‘differential mode of association’ and the pervasiveness of anxiety.

For the moment, I would just note that my Chinese interlocutors clearly put this conceptual framework into practice and the categorization of ‘inside and outside’ corresponding to ‘safe and risky’ indeed causes quite a bit of trouble when the Zou family goes out and interacts with the local Zambians. When outside of the farm, Mother Zou always keeps her head down and speeds up her steps when local guys try to say hello, sometimes even in Mandarin. For her, it is more like a potential ‘threat’ than a greeting. She always thinks that those people must want something from her and a ‘hello’ is just the beginning of a dangerous incident, so it is better to avoid them than to confront them. Avoiding (*duo*) is used as a ‘good strategy’ by the Zou family to keep themselves out of trouble with locals who are perceived as untrustworthy cheats.

Not only do the Zou family avoid socializing with locals, but they also try to avoid doing business with them. Since they came to Lusaka five years before, the Zou family hardly made any friends among local Zambians. As I mentioned above, when it comes to business, they prefer to deal with the Chinese. As they repeatedly told me, ‘Chinese are easy to negotiate with (*haoshuohua*). If there is any problem, it is easier to solve it between the Chinese’ – an affinity which I interpret as due to familiarity and the controllability of the social interactional rules. Even though worry about being cheated may be quite different from being anxious about troubles knocking at the door, I regard both cases as the consequence of a negative perception of strangers. This affinity to familiars and anxiety around strangers may sometimes appear as racial discrimination at my field sites.

To cite a brief example, I once accompanied Xiao Zou to look for a borehole drill in Lusaka town. Before visiting the supplier, sometimes we had to make a phone call. Because Xiao Zou does not speak good English, I was the one who normally called the supplier. Nevertheless, after the call, Xiao Zou would always ask me to guess the ethnicity of the speaker from the accent. If I said it was a black Zambian, he would simply cross the name out of the list of suppliers – ‘*Laohei* [the term used by Chinese to refer black Zambians, literally, ‘the old black’] are not reliable. They cheat whenever they can and cannot do the job properly’, Xiao Zou explained.

Nevertheless, sometimes contact with locals becomes necessary. In such instances, the Zou family always take extra caution. They would always take their own set of

scales with them when buying vegetables or meat from local markets because they believe that Zambians cheat on the scales. When Father Zou shops in the markets Mother Zou always stays near the car and keeps an eye on it just in case it is stolen. Xiao Zou's wife showed more extreme anxiety. She always stayed in the car and tightly locked the doors from inside, even though the hot sun can turn the car into a sauna. Moreover, Mother Zou would ask me to take a tape-recorder when I accompanied Xiao Zou to the immigration office to negotiate the application for permanent residence in Zambia, in case the officers did not keep their promise as happened once before.

This fear of being cheated might be the result of a series of bad experiences the Zou family had when transacting business with Zambians. Mother Zou repeatedly told me a story of how Zambians have wronged her. At the beginning when they set up their farm, a local electricity equipment company contacted them offering to connect the electricity for the farm. The Zou family accepted the offer due to the low price quoted. There was no contract. After US\$3,000 had been paid, the supplier disappeared without finishing the service. Since then, Mother Zou could no longer trust the locals. As she always said, '*chiyiqian zhangyizhi* (adversity makes a man wise). It is better to be cautious (*jinshendian*) when one is away from home (*chumenzaiwai*). Better to be safe than sorry.'

Afternoon, September 24th, 2011

It was around 2pm when Mother Zou received another phone call from Manager Deng. After a short chat with him, Mother Zou informed her family, 'Deng Zong (Manager Deng) just called. Obviously, it is total chaos in town now. There are lots of people on the street, shouting very loudly. Deng Zong has shut the restaurant for the next few days. He said there seemed to be a riot going on in town. It is not safe to go outside at the moment. He suggested that we should remain at home for the next couple of days and wait for his further information.' Then, she told Xiao Zou to let Xiao Xiao (the grand-daughter of Mother Zou) have an extra month for summer break and only send her back to school when outside 'the wind is flat and the swell is peaceful' (*fengping langjing*). After she had said all this, Mother Zou turned around and tried to comfort me, saying that 'Xiao Wu, do not go out this week!

Just stay at my farm. It is safe here. We got plenty of food; enough to feed you!’ Then, Mother Zou picked up her mobile again to notify another friend of hers.

Indeed, among the Chinese migrants, anxiety is like a virus. It is contagious and gets amplified as it passed from mouth to mouth. More importantly, it is transmitted through their enculturated ‘mode of association’; that is, the existing trust and emotional proximity between familiars provides a reliable foundation for hearsay to spread fast and easily without personal investigation or confrontation. In this section of the chapter, I describe how rumour, as a linguistic phenomenon, is intensifying and sometimes may even create an everyday atmosphere of anxiety for my interlocutors to live in. Although I will not engage in a theoretical discussion with the recent anthropology of rumour (Allport 1947; Gluckman 1963; Paine 1967; Rosnow & Fine 1976; Rapport & Overing 2000), there are obviously some connections between the themes in the literature and my own work in Zambia. Via rumour, a negative image of ‘the outside’ as a dangerous and fearful space is reinforced¹¹ whereas group solidarity at the same time is enhanced by this shared sentimental discourse. Just like what happened between Manager Deng and Mother Zou and their friends, anxiety is passed on because people trust each other, and the outside is dangerous only because friends warn them that it is.

Later that afternoon, partly out of concern and partly out of curiosity, I texted my friend living in town to ask how he was getting on and what on earth was happening. ‘It is all fine. The PF (Patriotic Front) supporters are just having a street party to celebrate Sata’s victory,’ he replied. Ironically, this social heat (*renao*) displayed by the locals is perceived by the Zou family and their friends as threat and danger.

Similar scenarios occurred regularly during my fieldwork. In the third month after my arrival a Chinese lady, who used to run a mushroom farming business near Lusaka, was murdered by local Zambians. She was killed after a profitable day at the

¹¹ Similarly, Schmitz has documented the widely spread rumours in Angola, both in the Chinese migrant community and in their host society. Chinese migrants are perceived as pirates as well as prisoners; whereas Angolans are regarded as thieves and robbers. Schmitz argues that rumours are produced due to the lack of mutual communications while it is the social foundation and process of transmission that interest me more in this chapter. See Schmitz, C.M. (2014), ‘Significant Others: Security and Suspicion in Chinese-Angolan Encounters’, *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 43 (1): 41-69

‘Tuesday Market’ just before the Chinese New Year when her husband was away in China. The news was passed on very quickly among the Chinese migrants in Zambia. Every time the story was told, the narrator would add his or her own juicy bits into the storyline as if she or he had witnessed it; and the story was always told with an almost whispery tone as if sharing a secret. Afterwards, the audience would supplement the story with their own ‘fearful experiences’ with the locals then discussed them vividly together with the narrator. I never witnessed an audience suspecting the authenticity of the story but somehow all enjoyed co-telling it.

Among the five different versions I heard during my fieldwork, sometimes the mushroom lady was shot; sometimes, she was beaten to death. Sometimes, she was killed because she showed off her money (*loucai*); sometimes, she was murdered because she had offended others (*dezuiren*). The story got told again and again for months. After a year, new arrivals from China were still being warned of the dangers of Zambian life with this story as an example. Although no one really knew exactly how and why she was killed, the sentimental essence of the story was indeed passed on – local people can be violent so it is best to be cautious.

To this day, this murder is still the only such case I heard of. As my Zambian interlocutors always said, Zambia is a safe country as Zambians are Christians and not violent like the people of neighbour countries (the Congo is normally referred to by way of contrast). Nevertheless, one case is enough for the Chinese migrants to be anxious about. To me, this anxiety may sometimes have come from their illusory exaggeration, which is registered linguistically as rumour. It is the mutual trust of inner-group members that nurtures the exaggeration; however, this ‘illusion’ in return also provides shared experience for them to communicate. My Chinese interlocutors seem to be living together in a ‘loop of anxiety’ – a loop which they partially create and are constrained by.

Evening, September 25th, 2011

The general election passed three days ago, yet the Zou family still have not once stepped out of their walled-up farm. The evening meal was served at 6pm as normal but Xiao Xiao was not happy as her grandmother did not cook her favourite dish. The process of feeding Xiao

Xiao became more difficult that evening. She ran around the farm yard and refused to eat anything while her mother chased her with a bowl of rice. After a while, her mother became impatient and shouted, ‘if you do not finish your dinner now, your father is going to find you a black mother tomorrow. Your new black mother will be very tough and sort you out. I will see what you can do. By then, nobody will care even if you starve to death!’ Hearing this, Xiao Xiao stopped running and immediately came back to finish her dish. This trick employed by Xiao Zou’s wife is effective every time.

I have described above how anxiety is transmitted via rumour among Chinese migrants. This anxiety not only diffuses *horizontally* among peers but also passes on *vertically* through generations. In other words, children from my Chinese interlocutors’ families in Zambia are taught to be cautious when being outside. Xiao Xiao, the daughter of Xiao Zou, was born in a Chinese medical clinic in Lusaka a few months after the Zou family migrated to Zambia in 2006. Although she is legally eligible to register as a Zambian national by birth, Xiao Zou and his wife still prefer their daughter to be a Chinese citizen. Specifically for this, they flew back to China one year ago to complete Xiao Xiao’s national registration. Like most of the Chinese children born in Zambia, Xiao Xiao attends ‘Zambia International Chinese School’ (*zanbiya guoji zhongwen xuexiao*) which was founded by six senior successful Chinese businessmen in Lusaka; however, unlike the others, Xiao Zou and his wife are determined to send her back to China for formal schooling rather than allowing her to be educated at the ‘white man’s school’ (*bairen xuexiao*). Sending their daughter to local schools has never even crossed their minds. Since several months ago, Xiao Zou has been seriously considering applying for his daughter to go to the ‘private school’ in his home city. Although this arrangement may be partly due to financial concerns (as I noted in the introduction, the ‘white’ school costs more than US\$3000 a term), he is convinced that his daughter will get a much better ‘fundamental education’ (*jichu jiaoyu*) back in China. As he told me, ‘Chinese schooling is the best. Plus, Xiao Xiao is a Chinese so she needs to be able to speak proper Chinese. She still can come back to Zambia when she has grown up.’ Ironically, even though she was born in Zambia, at the age of five Xiao Xiao can speak no more than ten English words and cannot speak any local language at all.

Xiao Xiao is a 'boyish' girl as the family friends would describe her. She likes moving around a lot and cannot sit still for more than one minute. It is at those times when she is naughty and does not obey the adults that 'scary stories' about local Zambians will come into play. When she does not listen to her father but insists on winding up and down the car windows, Xiao Xiao will be warned that black policemen will sort her out and take her to the orphanage. When she does not listen to her mother but refuses to eat the supper, she will be warned that her father will marry a black mother soon to discipline her. When she does not listen to her granny but runs around in the City Market, she will be warned that black men will take her away and sell her to another black man to do tough work. Gradually, when some local Zambian women in the market try to fondle her because of her cuteness, Xiao Xiao would immediately run away and hide behind her family. After similar warnings day by day, the world indeed starts to sound very 'dangerous' for this little girl.

After the dinner with the Zou family, around 9pm, I was going to walk back to my apartment in the Demonstration Center but Xiao Zou insisted that he should drive me back although it is only about five minutes' walk, because it was dark outside and the Zou family worried that I might get myself into trouble on the way back. As I usually do every day, after returning to the Demonstration Center, I decide to chat with the translator, Xiao Fan, to find out what has happened during the day in the Center.

'It has been a very quiet day today. You know, all the workers are still off work and there are no jobs to be done. Oh, I have not had such a relaxing day for ages!' Xiao Fan answered pleasantly. After a few seconds, he continued but with a cheeky smile on his face, 'Hmmm, I went out to the town centre today!'

'What?! Really? How was it in town? Is it dangerous?' I asked full of surprise.

'No, not at all, on the contrary actually! There were only a few cars running on the street. No traffic jam at all. All the blacks (*laohei*) were singing, drinking and dancing. They look happy.' He paused a few second while checking the news on line, then continued.

'I did not see any Chinese on the street today. I did see several white men driving in town though. They seem not afraid at all. Why don't they feel afraid? Why are only the Chinese so afraid of death (*pasi*)?'

As usual, Xiao Fan threw me another big question directly after making his observation. I could not answer him but his ‘careless’ attitude did attract my interest.

Among my Chinese interlocutors, it seems to me that the younger generation, especially the ones born in and after the eighties, are less anxious in general than the older generation. In China, this young generation has caused so many new phenomena that the Chinese popular media has created a new term to refer them: ‘80 *hou*’ (meaning post-80s). Xiao Fan is one of the ‘80 *hou*’. The friend I texted for confirmation when Manager Deng called Mother Zou is also one of the ‘80 *hou*’. When I texted him, he was in town following the locals and practicing to be a ‘war journalist’ as he joked in his text back to me. The older generation regard the actions of 80 *hou* as recklessness (*bujihouguo*) and reason it is because the younger ones have not entered the society deeply enough (*rushishangqian*) so they do not understand how risky society can be. Sometimes, they even criticise the younger ones as being too stubborn and too selfish because they do not take advice easily and do not consider the ‘bad consequences’ of their own decisions for the people who they closely relate to. ‘Do you know how sad and heartbroken your family would be if there were any harm happened to you?’ is a statement usually employed by the older generation to persuade the young not to take dangerous risks. Note here, interestingly, emotion is invoked for forbidden rather than logical arguments.

This general perception that society outside is a dangerous, unpredictable and contagious space compared with family as insiders is another aspect of anxiety as an everyday mode of existence for my Chinese interlocutors. As Steinmüller and Wu (2011) have pointed out when analysing the infamous school-killing incidents in China;

‘In popular discourse ... ‘society’ is often a jungle – a space of coldness and indifference. Parents frequently scold their children in order to prepare them to ‘enter society’ (*zou shang shehui*). ‘Enter society’ here means to leave the warm space of the family, where people take care of each other, where you can live freely and don’t have to worry, for a social space constituted of strangers, where there is much danger and risk. Young people are taught to learn a new set of skills and techniques in order to survive in this wilderness.’

To confirm this statement, senior Chinese migrants also stress the contagious effect of society on personal moral decline. They describe society as ‘a giant

dyeing pot' (*darangong*) and in order to survive or to be successful one has to be tainted. This negative image of the outside society is co-produced in contrast with idealized image of inner self. The self, before stepping into society, is considered pure and innocent. Here, the binary relation above appears again between society and self; namely, self (inside):society (outside) :: safe:risky.

Although the different intensities of anxiety between senior and junior Chinese migrants could be due to their variable experiences of interaction with the 'outside world', it is noticeable that there is a distinction of attitude towards strangers – the young Chinese interlocutors seem not very anxious about being in Zambia and about interacting with Zambians. Several weeks after the election, when I met my other two '80 *hou*' friends for coffee, they mentioned that they were eager to go out on the street and to find out what exactly was happening but their boss would not give them permission. As I have stated in the Introduction chapter, when encountering others in Zambia, the young Chinese are more open-minded, less suspicious and willing to make friends. Nonetheless, as I will elaborate more in Chapter Three, this willingness is constrained by the control of their seniors. Young people are strongly and repeatedly advised not to mingle with black Zambians as they are dangerous and unpredictable. Consequentially, the initial attempt to befriend Zambians is halted and not renewed. Reflectively, the youth are learning from, forced or not, and learning to become similar to their elders. They are learning how to act like 'insiders' by reference with Zambians as outsiders. Moreover, they are learning to be cautious before stepping into the world outside to face strangers.

After hearing the rumour I presented in the last section, Xiao Xiang, the young translator of a Chinese motel, told me outrageously;

'At the beginning, I was very friendly to the blacks as I pitied them. They are poor so I tried my best to help in every way I could. Then, they do this (murdering Chinese mushroom lady) to us! You know all the bad things *laozanbiya* (senior Chinese migrants to Zambia) say about the blacks. To be honest, I despised them. I thought they were so mentally backwards (*sixiang luohou*) because they are not educated (*meiwenhua*). Now I see how wise they are! The blacks are no better than pigs and dogs (*zhugouburu*). They are all animals (*chusheng*)! I wish they all got killed!'

Let's put aside how objectively Xiao Xiang was reporting his own true thoughts, given his strong feelings at that particular moment. I still consider there are two points which need to be noted in relation to what he says. First, the role that the older generation takes in the cognitive shifts of the youth. The elderly are considered to be representing the knowledge accumulated via experiences and wisdom of life, which no formal education could provide. My Chinese informants usually invoke a Chinese slang expression, '*jiang haishi laodela*' ('ginger is by its nature more biting the older it becomes'), to express this folk idea. When writing about powers in China, Fei names this form as power of '*jiaohua*' (education) (1992:119)¹². The translation here ('*jiaohua*' as education) loses the subtlety of the Chinese term. *Jiaohua* places more emphasis on civilising and moulding other people's behaviours via everyday practices to form socially acceptable habits. The first word '*jiao*' refers to educating whereas the second word '*hua*' means '*ganhua*', *empathetic influence*, which entails emotion as way of moulding. Authority lies in one's possession of affective knowledge and rich experiences of the social world but not on autocratic coercion. Second, there is a shift of linguistic registers from 'I' to 'us' to 'they'. As I argued above, not only does the particularistic sociality contribute to the emergence of mistrust towards strangers, but also the anxiety learnt from others enhances the group identity by drawing lines between them (outer-group) and us (inner-group).

September 26th, 2011

Since the Zou family decided to rest a couple more days just in their farm compound, I returned to the Demonstration Center after lunch. While I walked in, the general manager Bao, translator Xiao Fan and other technicians were joking about what they could do if any robbery happened.

'We could put a bomb in the safe and move it to the middle of the compound and tell the black to take it.' Xiao Fan suggested with laughter.

¹² 'Now let us return to China's rural society. Its structure of power contains elements of both dictatorial and consensual power; but, besides these, the structure of power rests upon education. This power generated in the process of education is neither democratic nor dictatorial; it differs from both' (Fei, 1992:119).

‘Lao Xu, make sure you give up the money when the blacks come. If you were killed just for being unwilling to give them little pennies (*xiaoqian*), you would no longer be able to meet your little lover (*xiaoqingren*) in China. It is not worth it (*buhuasuan*)!’ manager Bao teased Technician Xu and the others all laughed out loudly. Jokes and laughter could temporarily ease the intensity of anxiety at the Demonstration Center and the Chinese staff would obtain psychological reassurance from each other through shared intimate knowledge. Nevertheless, from another side, the jokes can also reveal the inner anxiety which they hold.

Very similarly to the Zou family farm, at the Demonstration Center no Zambian workers are allowed to step into the main administrative/accommodation building and the doors are firmly locked every time the staff leave their rooms. As mentioned above, when building the Demonstration Center, general manager Bao specifically requested two facilities from the construction team – a strong electronic fence surrounding the compound and a CCTV system installed for the administrative/accommodation building. Both were purchased from South African companies as he wanted to make sure that they had the most up-to-date technology. Then Manager Bao doubled the number of security guards and bought them military uniforms as he believed that the local Zambians would be scared off if they saw the military. Moreover, via his personal connection, he secured a governmental car plate from the Zambian Ministry of Education so no one could dare to cause him trouble when he was out on the street. When I was in the field, he was still trying his best to obtain guns for the security guards.

By comparison with the Zou family, most of the administrative staff in the China-Aid Zambia Agricultural Technology Demonstration Center (Demonstration Center hereafter) grew up in cities and are well-educated. Manager Bao himself holds a PhD in agricultural science and was appointed to a professorship for several years. Even though there is a distinction of social-economic background, interesting enough, both the Zou family and the administrative staff of the Demonstration Center lead an anxious life in Zambia. Notwithstanding, presumably, the anxiety has different degrees of intensity as manager Bao can mobilize more resources for his protection.

October 1st, 2011

One week after the Zambian presidential election, all seemed to have passed peacefully; however, no one knew what the future would hold for the Chinese community in Zambia. On the 1st of October, as in previous years, the Chinese Embassy hosted a celebration for Chinese National Day. In the election year, in particular, people were more willing to attend in order to find out more information from the officials about the updated relationship between the Chinese government and the new Zambian government. In the morning, as usual, Mother Zou received all the details about the evening party from Manager Deng. Immediately after she got the news, Mother Zou invited me to go with the family. I was reluctant as I had not received any official invitation but neither had the family. Mother Zou said it would not matter as the party is to celebrate Chinese National Day and we are all within the community. However she suggested several times that I should dress as smartly as I could in case of losing face. This was my first time to see Mother Zou put on make-up. The Zou family is always worried that they would be looked down on regarding their social background back in China and the lower hierarchical level they occupy within the Chinese community in Zambia.

Around 6pm, we all dressed formally and set out for the ceremony. When we got to the venue, Mother Zou stopped at the main entrance as she was worried that the usher would refuse her entry since she had not secured an official invitation. She called Manager Deng for help and reassurance. Manager Deng told her just to walk straight in as he normally did. Manager Deng said he did not have any invitation from the embassy either. An embarrassing moment then happened, however: Mother Zou tried to go past the usher into the party hall and she was intercepted and asked to leave. Suddenly, Mother Zou's face burned. She quickly stepped back to the main entrance while murmuring to her son, 'Get me out of here quickly. I cannot bear *'diüren xiānyan'* (losing face and being looked down and laughed upon publicly) here.' Just on the way out, we bumped into Manager Deng and his family. Mother Zou told Manager Deng what had happened and suggested that he should not try to go in without any invitation but Manager Deng persisted. After Manager Deng made it clear that he is the owner of China Chinese Restaurant (*zhongguo fāndiàn*) – the oldest Chinese restaurant in Zambia — the usher did not even ask for his invitation but welcomed

him in with big smiles. The Zou family and I were accepted in as Manager Deng's guests. Once inside, Mother Zou turned around and whispered to me, 'You see, these are the Chinese officials. They are very snobbish (*shili*). They only like socialising with the rich ones and the powerful ones (*youqianyoushi*). They never lay an eye on us, the little ordinary people (*xiaolaobaixing*).'

This was not the first time I heard such a complaint against the Chinese embassy and Chinese officials in Zambia. For a long time, people were fed up with their bureaucratic styles and disappointed with their ignorance of the Chinese grassroots in Zambia, especially when they are in need of help. Perhaps the lack of protection or reassurance from the government is another reason why Chinese migrants in Zambia live anxiously. My interlocutors realise that, if they had no personal connection with the top level in any way, they could not expect to rely on anyone officially standing by them. To them, all the officials are assigned to Zambia just for a short period and most of the governors only flatter those at the top in order to be promoted quickly; therefore, no one care about the grassroots. To go back to the story above about the Chinese mushroom lady being murdered in Lusaka, quite a few of my Chinese acquaintances gave similar evaluation of the actions which the Chinese embassy took regarding to the case – 'Chinese lives are cheap (*mingjian*) after all, especially the ones without "background" (*beijing*). The government just never cares if we are alive or dead! You see, if this happened to an American, the American Embassy would have already stood out and ask for some action (*jiaodai*).'

Even in business, it seems that the voluntarily organised Chinese Commerce Committee (*zhonghua shanghui*) does not fulfil its responsibility either. After a few years of enthusiasm, more and more 'insignificant' Chinese businessmen are quitting the community with disappointment and frustration. 'We normally only see them (the Chinese Commerce Committee staff) once a year when they come to collect the membership fee. It is the only moment when they say sweet words (*haotingde*) to us. After they got the money, they just disappear until the next collection. They never ask how our business is running and if we have any difficulty,' Father Zou often complains.

I claimed above that fear as a shared everyday experience enhanced group solidarity in Zambia. Here, it is important to point out that group solidarity is different

from community solidarity. On the contrary, there are deep factions and competition within the Chinese community, which I will elaborate more in the next chapter. It is this factionalism, I further argue, that also helps the growth of personal anxiety; that is, the factions diminish mutual reliance and trust between groups within the same community and, as a result, self-reliance (*zili*) is firmly believed, emphasized and practiced, which in turn intensifies personal anxiety. As Father Zou pessimistically put it, ‘nowadays, no one really cares about anyone. One can only rely on oneself. You know that old analogy: *fuqibenshitonglinniao, dananlindougezifei* (husband and wife are originally the birds on the same tree; when the calamity comes, each flies in different direction). If even conjugal ties cannot be reliable, whom else would one rely on?’

Not only does the lack of protection from the Chinese embassy intensify the anxiety of Chinese ‘grassroots’ emigrants, the embassy also generates another form of anxiety for the officials working in Zambia. Again and again, such officials are reminded that they are representing China and Chinese to the world so they need to take extra caution regarding the image they portray. Officials should endeavour not to damage the Chinese national image because of bad personal behaviour. Since they are evaluated by the top level for promotion, officials are very self-policing and careful about the activities they engage in and even the wording they use in public as no one wants to get into trouble which could ruin future careers. Consequently, unfamiliar people, especially foreigners (researchers or journalists), are mistrusted because they are seen to potentially expose official misconduct.

Fear of being reported or disclosed for some misdeed limits officials’ socialising with others. One of my own experiences in the field can provide a good illustration. Half way through my fieldwork, I was looking for a Chinese state-owned commercial farm to carry on further fieldwork for comparison. When I approached the farm, the manager refused me immediately when he heard that I was doing anthropological research. His reply was very subtle and indirect yet the message of refusal was very clearly conveyed: ‘Mine is a state-owned farm and I also work for the state. We all know how the Chinese government runs things. You are welcome here to drink tea now and then’.

Other Chinese officials in Zambia give a similar reaction. The manager’s subtle refusal was made rather explicit when the director of a Chinese non-governmental

organization did not accept another researcher for fieldwork. As the director explained to me, ‘she (the research student) is not in our group (*zanmen yihuo’erde*). Although we are not doing anything nasty here, who knows how she is going to write about us. We’d better be careful, especially when being abroad (*guowai*)’.

Morning, October 2nd, 2011

It was the second day of the celebration of Chinese National Day, a Sunday – also the day when the Zambian Chinese Christian Fellowship provides routine church service. As normal, at 10.30 in the morning, around twenty Chinese got together to listen to a sermon given by a white priest, who the Chinese Fellowship invited as a tutor. The topic of that day was how to face danger. It was specially proposed by Chinese members of the congregation in relation to the political turbulence in Zambia a week ago. At the end of the service, a senior member led a prayer. She thanked the Lord for bringing a peaceful presidential election so that the Chinese did not have to suffer political turbulence. Then she requested more protection from God to guide the Chinese to a safe and prosperous life in Zambia.

It was at that moment when I suddenly realised that most of the prayers offered were about blessing a safer life and avoidance of tragedy. It was also at that moment when I finally understood what the dialectical relation of that pair of Chinese concepts, ‘*fu*’ (good fortune) and ‘*huo*’ (calamity), really means. The meaning of ‘*saiwengshima*’ allegory¹³, which I learned in my primary school but did not comprehend, finally revealed itself as well.

Perhaps, in the life of my Chinese interlocutors, ‘*huo*’ (calamity) is always the norm in life but ‘*fu*’ (good fortune) is the true contingency. They assume the badness of things so they can take cautious steps to prevent it happening and prepare for the risk beforehand. They probably have always prepared to live with unpredictable calamity because they believe that the society outside is full of danger all the time and the world is ultimately beyond one’s control. That they mistrust strangers by default, avoid socialising

¹³ This allegory is from the Chinese classic *Huainanzi Renjianxun*. The message from the story is to tell the dialectic relations between good fortune and calamity – ‘calamity begets fortune, and fortune begets calamity. This circle has no end, and its depths cannot be measured’. Nowadays, the story has been popularized as a Chinese idiom.

with unfamiliar people and take extra caution when dealing with outsiders may be just one facet of how they perceive the world, as they believe that good fortune in life is the luck which one could only ‘beg’ for (*qifu*) and which could only arrive when one is living with caution and preparation. Even when facing God, good fortune becomes what the Chinese pray for, instead of the forgiveness of personal sin.

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How my Chinese interlocutors, as newly arrived immigrants, perceive their new social settings and how they lead their everyday life in Zambia are the initial questions I want to ask. The daily mundane life and activities of the farming Zou family offered me an answer – they live anxiously. They are anxious that they will be cheated when doing business with the local Zambians; they are anxious that they might be mugged or stabbed when walking on the street; they are anxious that their house would be broken in to at any time and they are anxious that all the things they have saved up after days and nights of hard work would disappear overnight. Anxiety is their everyday mode of existence in Zambia.

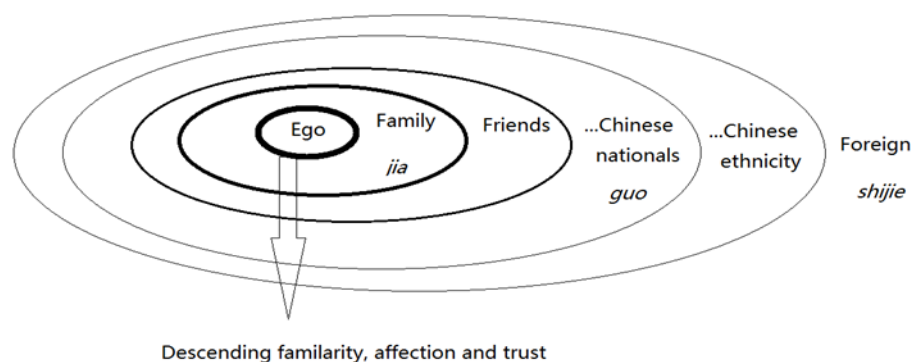
Along with several episodes from their daily lives, I documented the conditions which may have contributed to and may have intensified their anxiety. The political turbulence in Zambia, the insufficient protection (as they saw it) from the Chinese government, the widely spread ‘scary’ rumours of local people – it seems that all could count as parts of the contextual reasons for their everyday anxious life.

Nevertheless, not only the private farming family constantly feel anxious, but so do the Chinese officials working at state-owned projects. The anxiety is pervasive. It is shared by most Chinese migrants – men and women, old and young, educated or less educated. Comparing with other literature, it seems that the anxiety is a general psychological phenomenon existing in most Chinese communities across Africa and even in China. This pervasiveness begs a deeper structural interpretation.

Above, I have referred to a set of binary oppositions – outside:inside::strangers:familiar::danger:safe – that are linked to the Chinese cultural schema of ‘stranger’. The categorical equivalence between strangers and danger further

triggers anxious reactions when my Chinese interlocutors encounter unfamiliar people in everyday life, I would argue. As previously mentioned, these categorical binaries are related to notions of selfhood and sociality in China and, in association with trust, could be spotted in Fei's original analysis which I elaborated in the previous chapter.

Here, I would like to further extend Fei's observations in order to understand the occurrence of pervasive anxiety among my Chinese interlocutors in Zambia. First, as Feuchtwang (2009) well puts it, this model of Chinese sociality is not limited only to consanguinity (blood relationships) but encompasses affinity, friendship and expectation of trust which rely greatly on familiarity and affective bonds. In other words, in Fei's analogy¹⁴, the circles of association centred around self are not just about different fixed social relations but also about different degrees of *emotional proximity* – the further the circle is from ego, the less the familiarity turns, the less the intimacy becomes, the less one trusts. At my field sites, according to my Chinese interlocutors' perception, their Zambian counterparts are classified as 'foreigners' (*waiguoren*) who do not share any common ground with the self and falls on the furthest circle relating to self. Consequently, they are regarded to be the least trusted and those who most need to be handled with caution.



¹⁴ 'According to the Western pattern, all members in an organization are equivalent, just as all straws in a bundle are alike. This is quite different from the Chinese pattern. Social relationships in China possess a self-centered quality. Like the ripples formed from the stone thrown into a lake, each circle spreading out from the center becomes more distant and at the same time more insignificant.' (1992:65)

Second, the circles associated to the self are flexible. They ‘can be expanded or contracted according to a change in the power of the centre, [and] cause the Chinese to be particularly sensitive to changes in human relationships.’ (Fei, 1992:64) Here, I think there is a slight issue with the translation. In his original text, Fei uses ‘*shitaiyanliang*’ (1998:27) to refer to what Chinese are sensitive to, which term connotes more on the shifts of the *sentimental* response from others rather than merely the change of human relationships. This writing could be interpreted in two facets. On the one hand, Chinese in Fei’s view are very sensitive to the change of other people’s sentiment. On the other hand, the categories of people relating to the self are *interchangeable* and this interchangeability is according to the context as well as emotional proximity. This relatedness based on emotional proximity applies to the everyday sociality between my Chinese interlocutors and their Zambian hosts. As I will show in the next chapter, emotional bond and trust built through everyday interactions at work could in theory turn the ‘foreign Zambians’ into friends.

Third, the categories are relative to each other and expectations are therefore responsive. Back to the binaries, ‘*wai/wairen*’ (outside/outside) is a relative concept to ‘*nei/zijiren*’ (inside/self-people) and a corresponsive concept to the further circle of ‘*wai/wairen*’. It is matter of perspective and reference. When an outer circle appears, an inner circle is created. Fei makes it clear that ‘in this pattern of oscillating but differential social circles (*chaxugeju*), public and private are relative concepts. Standing in any circle, one can say that all those in that circle are part of the public’ (69). As a result, social expectations often come with *positioning*. This relativity from ego’s point of view generates responsive sentiment – when the outside circle pushes inside, anxiety rises. Therefore, people approaching from outside are considered to act always *with purpose* and could bring potential threat but not when the ego actively approaches the outside. As my interlocutors always say, ‘*hairen zhixin buheyong, fangren zhixin bukewu*’ (one shall not have the heart to intentionally harm others but, in order to survive, one cannot not have the heart to be aware that others may harm me at any time). This positioning impacts on the interaction between Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts. The willingness to interact from the Zambian side is often construed by my Chinese interlocutors as approaching unnecessarily; therefore, the actions are perceived as ‘dangerous’. Nevertheless, the anxious state would drop when the Chinese

migrants actively seek interactions with the Zambians, for instance, helping with immigration issues, as well as when a shared ‘outsider’ arrives.

Based on my understanding of Fei’s model, I argue that the *pervasiveness* of anxiety is generated by my Chinese interlocutors’ ‘social egoism’ and its corresponding practices of sociality. Their mode of association and their anxious state form a dialectical relation. On the one hand, the social egoism encourages emotional proximity and affinity between familiars/insiders and produces suspicion and fear when strangers/outside approach. On the other hand, anxiety provides shared emotional ground to strengthen proximity and solidarity within the existing groups.

In the above, I have not attempted to argue that living anxiously is unique to the experience of my interlocutors. On the contrary, I take it as a universal human condition to some extent. Notwithstanding, the mode of sociality between my interlocutors does provide a rich context in which anxiety can arise. As Stafford points out, ‘indeed, if anxiety is seen as a culturally constructed state, then one possibility is that the Chinese tradition is actually good at *inducing* it’ (2007:71). Therefore, I consider that perhaps the Zambian settings only just amplify their anxiety rather than creating it. They have imported the sentiment along with specific cultural schema which they have learned via everyday practices back in China. Even, this anxiety is perhaps more illusory than it is in the real life of Zambia.

Nevertheless, this constant anxiety does have a significant impact on everyday interaction and communication between my Chinese interlocutors and their Zambian hosts. It hinders their mutual understanding and acceptance from the start. Notwithstanding, this shared sentiment within Chinese community has not formed any collective action due to intra-community faction and competition. This pervasive anxiety also exists in the everyday interactions between my Chinese interlocutors. The mutual suspicion within the community is the topic I will turn to in the next chapter.

In the end, the fences are in place and the walls are up. If one could only rely on oneself, the rest would really be up to fate. The only thing one can do is to pray for safety (*ping’an*) while living in a risky world.

Chapter Two: Suspicion, Interactional Affection (*jiaoqing*) and Voluntary Cooperation

The Zou family's farming business has not always grown as smoothly as they had hoped or expected. As mentioned in the previous chapter, they started the business with a very small piece of waste land (approximately one acre) rented from their *laoxiang* (i.e. a person from their native town/province in China). Aiming to save as much as they could, the old Zou couple moved into a wooden shelter on the edge of the land, which had originally been built by the landlady for storage. Mother Zou once told me:

‘Life then was very bitter (*ku*). We worked on the farm without knowing day from night (*meiri meiyue*). There was no electricity, no well, nothing on the farm. So we had to do all the work by ourselves, just Lao Zou [her husband] and me, two of us. The back pain that I am suffering now was from then ... Our *laoxiang* landlady was not particularly helpful either. At the beginning she was kind, inviting us for meals, contacting business for us etc. but seeing our business become better, she turned very calculating (*suanji*) and even nasty (*huai*) to us. She raised the rent and asked us to pay half of the electricity bills even though we rarely used electricity. What is worse was that she started to secretly cut our vegetables, not the whole lot but just the heart (*caixin'er*). No one is going to buy it with no heart in it! Then she cut our water, blackmailing us to pay the whole water bill and she even said bad things about us to the other Chinese. Why on earth did she do that? I guess she envied us. Chinese people cannot see others being better (*jianbude renhao*). You can ask Xiao Zou [her son] if you do not believe me.’

After four years of renting from their *laoxiang*, pooling their pensions and savings together with some money borrowed from friends, the Zous finally were able to buy their own farm in a suburb to the east of Lusaka. By then, their only son and daughter-in-law joined them to help with the family farming business. As Mother and Father Zou always say, the bitterness they have eaten is for their son to have a better life. The Zou family's business is mainly to grow vegetables targeting the Chinese migrants around Lusaka. Even though they do sell on the local farmer's market, they are forbidden to sell any vegetables which Zambian farmers trade on the same market, such as potatoes, tomatoes etc.

Nevertheless, growing Chinese vegetables is a preferable choice for the Zous, not only because the business competition is relatively low (there are only three Chinese farmers stalls on the market), but also because they believe that Chinese are much easier to deal with when it comes to business.

Starting from delivering to a few Chinese restaurants in town, the Zous gradually built up their own personal network. Via a friend's recommendation, they secured an offer to supply vegetables and meat to a Chinese tele-technology company with hundreds of employees. Unfortunately, this deal did not last long. About one year later, the company switched to another Chinese supplier simply because the other farmer was able to establish a better personal relationship with one of the top managers in the company. Being squeezed out, the Zous had to start looking for new business opportunities. It was then that the Zou family heard the news that Sino-hydro, a Chinese construction company helping to maintain the water dam in Kariba (which is more than 200 miles away from Lusaka), was looking for a food supplier.

Considering their lack of contacts with anyone from Sino-hydro, Mother Zou decided to take an 'unconventional way'¹⁵ – recommending herself (*maosuizijian*), as she put it. With her son, they directly went to knock on the manager's door. Their 'bold' move paid off. Showing sympathy with the difficulties of running a small business in Zambia without any contacts to rely on (*kaoshan*), the manager accepted their business proposal immediately. Since then, every Wednesday morning around 4am, Xiao Zou has to get up and drive his 3.5 ton van, preloaded with the meat and vegetables they prepared the day before, four hours to Kariba Dam then another four hours back on the same day in order to get ready for the business next morning in Lusaka. This routine had been established for three years when I arrived at their farm for fieldwork. In those three years, trip after trip, Xiao Zou came to know the route by heart – where to slow down to avoid a sharp turn and which part of journey is extra bumpy. He even knows in which area baboons could suddenly appear on the

¹⁵ To say it unconventional is because normally a middleman is required when two strangers try to do business in China. This is especially the case when individuals who are lower in the social hierarchy try to establish contacts with officials higher in the hierarchy. The middleman usually knows both parties previously and his/her role is to act as guarantor for the initiator of the action. Without being introduced by a middleman, the initiator may risk being refused due to mistrust.

road. Xiao Zou never missed one delivery since the business relationship started as he acknowledges the difficulty of securing a long-term deal, especially when one has no special relationship. When I once asked him if he felt tired and ever thought of stopping this business, Xiao Zou told me;

‘Yes, it is tough but this is the only stable business we got so far. People at home always think it is easy to become rich in Africa. It is actually harder. The problem is not that there is no opportunity but that the Chinese here are not united (*butuanjie*) enough. Once someone has earned a little bit of money, others copy them and do the same trade like a swarm of bees (*yiwofeng*). The Chinese only compete with the Chinese and never can run a business together. Although several friends may start something together, nine out of ten times they would break up at the end of the day. I have heard lots of this kind of story – close friends turn out to be enemies (*fanmu chengchou*) in the end. You see the white guys, how big and how successful they have grown their business! Big shopping malls, massive farms...most are run by a group of friends together! Do you know that they voluntarily organised a commerce committee in Zambia? I heard that they meet every month to exchange business information and set a unified market price. The committee members would really stand up and help each other if any of them has trouble. Look at ours – all we can do is fight in the nest (*wolidou de benshi*). Ai! One Chinese is a dragon but a group of Chinese together will become worms (*yigezhongguorenshitiaolong, yiqunzhongguorenshitiaocheng*).’

Aside from the question of how much he may have stereotyped the ‘business success’ of whites, Xiao Zou’s reflection on the interplay between the relationships among Chinese migrants and the success of their businesses is shared by many other Chinese private businessmen in Zambia. After I interviewed several ‘commonly regarded’ successful businessmen within the Chinese migrant community about questions such as the difficulties of business operation, a general response emerged: ‘Ten years ago, business was easy but nowadays, especially in the last three years, it has not gone so well. Too many Chinese in Zambia now! It will get worse,’ to quote Boss Chen’s answer as an example. At the beginning, I found this response rather counterintuitive: surely, as a minority group, the population growth would strengthen the influence of the community and benefit its members. Towards the end of my fieldwork, however, I started to comprehend the implication behind the comments about there being ‘too many Chinese’. As in Xiao Zou’s statements above, *butuanjie* (not united) is the most frequent notion invoked by my Chinese interlocutors when

summarizing their personal impressions of the Chinese community in Zambia.

This Chinese notion of *butuanjie* has had various linguistic registers in different historical periods. During the Republican era, for example, Sun Zhongshan once famously commented that Chinese people were like ‘a sheet of sands’ (*yipansansha*) while the same analogy was used by the great Chinese literatus Lin Yutang (1935) when writing about Chinese culture. Later during the Communist era, a critique of ‘petty groupism’ (*xiaotuantizhuyi*) was launched by the central government in an attempt to enhance solidarity within the Party, which was known to be riven with factionalism. At the grassroots level, a popularised version of this is the ‘dragon-worm’ analogy cited above. One could argue that these patterns of factionalism and unification in China have been the by-product of Chinese political centralization (more see, Qin 1998); nevertheless, in my field sites, ‘*butuanjie*’ is very much applied knowledge as well as lived experience to be reflected on by my ordinary Chinese interlocutors, especially when they compare the practices of other ethnic groups. To them, *butuanjie* entails two facets. On the one hand, it corresponds to the unsatisfactory reality of unhealthy competitive relationships among Chinese private businessmen and the growing factionalism within the Chinese community; on the other hand, it demonstrates a moral ideal that overseas Chinese, purely due to their ethnic identity, *should* actually share and take care of each other and be united together against outsiders.

I have already explained how the Chinese ‘differential mode of association’ (*chaxugeju*) may promote anxiety when people face *strangers* and uncertain situations; therefore, it may block everyday communications and interactions between my Chinese interlocutors and their Zambian counterparts. In this chapter, looking at the other side of the same coin, I would like to provide some ethnographic accounts of the anxiety – manifested as mistrust and suspicion of others’ motivation in this chapter – among Chinese *acquaintances*. I contend that pervasive anxiety not only hinders the sociality between Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts but also nurtures internal factionalism within the Chinese ‘community’ and further impacts on their everyday business cooperation.

More specifically, I want to document the role of suspicion in the process of daily interaction when my Chinese interlocutors are *approached* by other Chinese migrants. In the previous chapter I claimed that, while studying Chinese sociality, many

western scholars have interpreted the ‘differential mode of association’ rigidly and mostly focus on the practice of ‘*guanxi*’ networking (Yang, 1994; Kipnis, 1997, 2002). As further illustrated below, I contend in this chapter that the rise of omnipotent ‘*guanxi*’ (scholarly and socially), especially after rapid marketization in China, and my Chinese interlocutors’ acute awareness of its instrumentality are the social-historical conditions for the occurrence of mistrust and suspicion.

Moreover, this mistrust prevents the emergence of ‘spontaneous sociality’ (Fukuyama 1990:27, see below) between mere acquaintances. In practice, my Chinese interlocutors almost always presuppose action-initiators’ instrumental motivation by default unless it can be proved otherwise. This suspicion hinders the formation of business cooperation among Chinese private entrepreneurs; meanwhile, it nurtures factions and encourages competition among Chinese migrants.

I should note, however, that cooperation is of course sometimes also successfully entered into at my field sites. Concentrating on tactics which my Chinese interlocutors apply in everyday business operations, and especially on their descriptions of the interplay between interactional affection (*jiaoqing*) and calculation (*suanji*), I will analyse in the last section how business cooperation beyond family becomes possible and even sustainable for some Chinese migrants.

Structuring my arguments in this order, however, I have no intention to incorporate ‘interactional affection’ into ‘*guanxi*’ (social networking) as other anthropologists do with ‘human emotion’ (*renqing*) (see, Kipnis 1997; Yan 1996). On the contrary, I consider that the overwhelming research focus on the instrumentality of the reciprocity relationships in China leaves no space for *sincere voluntary cooperation* (based on genuine intersubjective sentiment), although some anthropologists endeavour to rectify the imbalance by directly stressing the importance of emotion in Chinese social relationships (see, Yan, 2003; Stafford, 2000, 2009).

It is true that, in China as well as in my field sites, there is a tremendous and increasing flow of gift exchanges in everyday life. This is growing not only in terms of quantity but also in respect of price; that is, Chinese gifts have been subject to serious inflation in recent years (Osburg 2013). Consequently, gifts are gradually losing their

function to express affection (Yan, 1996) and social reciprocity is presumed with players' instrumental intentions. In practice, my Chinese interlocutors are sensitive to the inflation of gifts and aware of the growing utilitarian aspect in social interactions, especially following the rapid process of modernization in China. Therefore, I argue that their acute realization has de facto transformed their practices of socialising; that is, when gifts are widely regarded as instrumental and '*guanxi*' is objectified as social networking skills, either gift or '*guanxi*' has already started losing the function of sustaining social relationships.

As a result of the dysfunction of '*guanxi*' and gifts, my Chinese interlocutors have to look for alternative ways to express their sincere affection, form bonds and maintain relations. I claim that, consequently, this awareness of instrumentality and mistrust forces them to emphasize, nurture, cherish and also protect the interactional affection (*jiaoqing*), even if this sometimes means sacrificing personal gains. They begin employing consistent actions to express their mutual affection and, arguably, emotion is in general alienated from gifts. Nevertheless, dialectically, it is also because of this focus on affective bond and emotional proximity in cooperative groups that, to some extent, further segments Chinese migrants at the level of voluntary association and solidifies the factionalism in the 'community'.

In general, if the last chapter aims to show how emotion is influencing social perception and blocking the formation of social relations, in this chapter I would like to reveal the other side; namely, how affection is constructing relationships and gluing people together willingly but at the same time creating factions as a by-product. By describing the crucial impact of emotion on the formation of social relationships among my Chinese interlocutors, although without further evidence, I still attempt to point to a direction where the communication between my Chinese interlocutors and Zambians could be improved.

Mistrust and Suspicion

It was just a normal Sunday afternoon at the Demonstration Center farm. After lunch, instead of rushing back to their dormitories as they did on weekdays, the administrative staff stayed a little longer in the dining hall to chat. Suddenly, a van drove into the courtyard with a group of five visitors. Recognising the car, Manager Bao immediately went outside to welcome the

guests.

‘What wind carries you here today?’ Bao greeted the visitors with a big smile on his face.

‘Ah, we were visiting some friends earlier on. They live further east down the Great East Road. Since we are passing yours on the way back, I thought we could drop by to see how you are and how the new building is. We have not met since you moved out of my hotel. It has been a long time! I know you are a busy man (*damangren*) so we have to visit without invitation (*buqingzilai*)...Look how magnificent (*qipai*) the building is! I am sure this is the biggest building in eastern Lusaka. These are all your credit (*gonglao*), Director (*zhuren*) Bao (i.e. Manager Bao)! Without your diligence and wise guidance (*yingming lingdao*), it could not have been built!’

With these words, in front of her family and the staff of the Demonstration Center, Mother (*dama*) Liü both explained the reason for her ‘uninvited’ visit and praised Bao for the work done.

‘Any time! The Center is your home. You can come whenever you like!’ Then Manager Bao turned around to the staff: ‘We all know how much Mother Liü has helped us. Without Mother Liü, there would be no Center today (*meiyou liüdama jiu meiyou zhongxin de jintian*)! We are still using your duvets and sheets! You are not here today to take them away, are you? Otherwise, we would be naked in bed tonight! Ha ha!’ Everyone laughed, then Bao started to give Mother Liü and her family a tour of the Demonstration Center.

As I have already explained, Mother Liü is the most well-known businesswoman in Zambia. Coming from Sichuan province originally, she arrived in Zambia with only ‘one basin and one duvet’ as she always says herself. Now settled in Zambia for more than a decade, Mother Liü is currently running two restaurants (one of which is attached to her own motel) in Lusaka and has a branch near Victoria Falls. Even though she cannot be named as the most successful Chinese business woman in Zambia, Mother Liü has certainly gained fame due to her sophisticated social networking skills and her close relationship with the Chinese ambassador. Because of her personal experiences in Zambia and her relationship with the Chinese embassy, it has been common for newly arrived Chinese officials or managers of state enterprises to initially seek Mother Liü’s help and

build up their own networks via her introduction. This is how Manager Bao and Mother Liü became acquainted. As I have explained, the staff of the Demonstration Center stayed at Mother Liü's hotel for almost a year before they moved into the educational farm compound. When I arrived in the field, it was almost the end of their tenancy; nevertheless, I stayed in Mother Liü's hotel for more than a month, which provided me with a good opportunity to observe her business operational style and her interaction with others.

Mother Liü stayed about an hour before heading back to her restaurant in town. 'We are one family (*yijiaren*). If you need anything, just give me a shout. You must not see yourself as an outsider (*qianwan bie jianwai*)!' Mother Liü told Manager Bao before getting into the car.

'Of course, we all regard you as our mother in Zambia! Now we have our own place. Make sure you come here often so we can treat you to some nice meals and wine,' Manager Bao replied.

After we had seen them off, I praised Mother Liü's kindness in visiting the Centre. To my surprise, Manager Bao replied,

'He he! People would not visit the Temple of Three Gods if they had no trouble (*wushi budeng sanbaodian*). Mother Liü said she was visiting a friend. Everyone knows she does not have any friends living up this way. She said she came here to see how we are. These are all sweet words said for us to listen to (*shuogei zanmen tingde*). You know, everything she asked was about farming. A close friend of mine was mentioning that Mother Liü was looking for some land to open a farm. Seeing others earning money from farming, her eyes must have turned red (*yanhong*, envy). She was here trying to seek more information about how to run a farm! Essentially, Mother Liü is a businesswoman (*shengyiren*) – she wouldn't get up early if there were no benefit (*wulibuqizao*). Xiao Wu, you are still young. You haven't stepped out in the society long enough (*sheshi taiqian*). Do not believe what others tell you that easily.'

Manager Bao's words had left me speechless. The shock was brought mainly by Manager Bao's personal awareness and speculation on other people's 'real' motivation. Given the fact that he is a manager for a large educational farm and Mother Liü is a small entrepreneur, rationally one might suppose that there should be no real business

competition between them. Yet, the mistrust between them is very easy to detect even though Manager Bao and Mother Liü had interacted for a rather long time before. To unpack the statements of Manager Bao, there are several points which need to be stressed. First, the position of initiator and approached alters the process of personal reasoning and one's corresponding emotional reaction. In this case, it is the approached, Manager Bao, who generates a response of mistrust and suspicion against the initiator of the encounter, Mother Liü.

Second, more importantly, he focuses specifically on the instrumental end of the approaching actor. This is revealed clearly in the Chinese idioms which Manager Bao invoked – *if they had no trouble* or *if there were no benefit*, a person would not initiate the action. This, I argue, is an almost default assumption of my Chinese interlocutors when they are involved in spontaneous association, which I call 'otherwise presumption', namely, encounters or initiators are presumed to approach with instrumental, sometimes malicious end, unless it can be proven otherwise. The saying '*wushi budeng sanbaodian*' (people would not visit the Temple of Three Gods if they had no trouble) expresses this suspicion. Most of my interlocutors have an alternative folk analogy with a similar meaning – 'the weasel goes to pay his New Year's respects to the hen' (*huangshulang geiji bainian*). This implies that the initiator's motives are malicious even when their action appears kind.

Third, there is a strong reliance on the context and other sources of information for this type of personal speculation. In this case, Manager Bao associates his previous experience with Mother Liü, his cultural knowledge and even the hearsay of his trusted close friend to figure out the 'real' intention of Mother Liü's unexpected action (I will elaborate more about this contextual perceptiveness related to the ability for proper speech in Chapter Five).

Fourth, this contextually associated suspicion is considered as a form of social ability or social knowledge in opposition to 'social naivety'. This belief, as stated in the last chapter, is mutually constructed with the folk idea of 'society as a dying pot that contains great danger and necessary sins'. This was the implication behind Manager Bao's advice to me.

To sum up, then, viewing this ethnographic vignette as a whole, there are

three obvious aspects: 1) strong personal awareness of the instrumental ends of social actions when they are initiated by others; 2) very explicit mistrust and even sophisticated suspicion associated with such awareness; and 3) a very fragile social association as a consequence of this strong mistrust. Indeed, based on cross-cultural comparison, political historian Fukuyama claims in his monograph *Trust* that ‘there is a relatively low degree of trust in Chinese society the moment one steps outside the family circle’ (1995:56). Then he elaborates;

‘The key feature would appear to be that you trust your family absolutely, your friends and acquaintances to the degree that mutual dependence has been established and face invested in them. With everybody else you make no assumptions about their goodwill. You have the right to expect their politeness and their following of the social proprieties, but beyond that you must anticipate that, just as you are, they are looking primarily to their own, i.e., their family’, best interests. To know your own motives well is, for the Chinese more than most, a warning about everybody else’s’ (75, c.f. Gordon Redding 1990: 66)

Fukuyama reasons this mistrust is owing to strong Chinese familism which itself is the consequence of Confucianism and its dominant position in Chinese ethical education. He further argues that this familism prevents the growth of ‘spontaneous sociality’ which he believes as the foundation for voluntary association and professional management.

Although this discussion corresponds well with my observation in the field, I have little agreement with Fukuyama’s essentialisation of Chinese practices as Confucian. Furthermore, I neither consider that familism or trust heavily invested in family is the fundamental reason for the pervasive existence of mistrust in Chinese society. Not only is Confucianism constantly reinterpreted and even reinvented across history, but also there are of course many reports of domestic conflicts within families. Trust in family should not be deductively assumed merely because one can observe a low level of trust with *non*-family members. Notwithstanding, I find Fukuyama’s concept of ‘spontaneous sociality’ intriguing and useful. I reinterpret ‘spontaneous sociality’ as a form of willing and ungrounded free association. To say it is ‘ungrounded’ is to stress that such association is not formed within the frame of family or any pre-existing social organizations and, significantly, the socializing has ends in itself.

Contrasting with Fukuyama’s analysis, I argue that this pervasive mistrust between my Chinese interlocutors, and the consequential prevention of ‘spontaneous

sociality' is due to their self-consciousness of the increasing instrumental inclination of 'guanxi' practices between individuals in everyday interaction, following the expansion of the market and the inflation of gifts. Chinese social interactions and relations, generalized as 'guanxi', have been associated by sinological anthropologists and others mostly with strong rationality, instrumentality and utilitarian characteristics. Bruce Jacobs defines 'guanxi' as 'particularistic ties' (1979:238) which are subject to personal manipulation and strategic plan, especially for the purpose of constructing political alliances. While studying socialist institutions, Andrew Walder sees 'guanxi' as 'instrumental-personal ties' (1986:179) informally utilized by workers in socialist factories to secure resources without challenging authority. The most thorough study of 'guanxi' is perhaps Mayfair Yang's monograph on 'guanxi-ology' (*guanxixue*), in which she treats 'gift economy' and 'guanxi' as interchangeable (1994:8). Aiming to study 'guanxi' as social fact, instead of mere representation, which constitutes a Chinese 'civil society' against the power of socialist state, Yang tries to understand 'guanxi' from an emic point of view and stresses its 'artfulness' which draws on 'the sense of skill, subtlety, and cunning conveyed by the word' (8). Such theoretical treatments, I consider, inevitably leave two negative consequences – first, Chinese social interactions are unnecessarily portrayed as fundamentally instrumental so that Chinese society somehow becomes intrinsically Machiavellian; second, a focus on the utilitarian characteristics of 'guanxi' may blind us to the sincerity also found in social relationships, as symbolised in gifts.

Of course, negative views of 'guanxi' are shared by our Chinese interlocutors. As Yang documented with pages of interviews on the definition and evaluation of 'guanxi', almost all of the reports contain images of manipulation, self-interest as a driver, deception and symptoms of moral decline (49-74). This awareness could also be demonstrated by Manager Bao's comments on Mother Liü's motivation and his general evaluation of Chinese society, which I presented above. This self-consciousness of the instrumentality built in 'guanxi' practice has soared and been transformed in recent years under the social conditions of continuous marketization, the inflation of material gifts and intense anti-corruption campaign led by Chinese central government. In his recent fascinating ethnography about the social networking among Chinese elites, entrepreneurs as well as

officials, in Chengdu, Sichuan, John Osburg has documented the increasing significant role that ‘entertainment and leisure’ as forms of action are playing in social networking processes because ‘the inflation in forms of commodified pleasure has begun to reach its limit’ (2013:39). This transformed version of networking has also triggered a new type of self-awareness. As his informants said, ‘*yingchou*’ (entertaining) is the job – a statement very similar to what my Chinese interlocutors often mention when talking about relations at work, which I will elaborate more in the next chapter.

All of these various discourses about the instrumentality of Chinese ‘*guanxi*’ are intriguing. Notwithstanding, taking one step back to interpret these opinions, what interests me most is that, if everyone is so conscious of the utilitarian characteristics of ‘*guanxi*’ and morally resenting its instrumentality, how could ‘*guanxi*’, regarded as an essential device in China to connect the social individuals, be adequately functional? I will explore this question later in the final section but for now, the argument I would like to put forward is that it is this very self-consciousness of the instrumentality of ‘*guanxi*’ practice that provides the foundation of mistrust and suspicion between my Chinese interlocutors (as familiars). Furthermore, this pervasive mistrust delays the occurrence of ‘spontaneous sociality’; meanwhile, it strengthens the existing ‘trust-worthy’ relationships (I prefer to call it ‘otherwise-presumptive trust’ relationships), often in the shape of blood-tie (family, *xueyuan*) or region-tie (*laoxiang*, *diyuan*). Consequentially, factions form along with this dynamics of trust and suspicion.

The historical transformation of ‘*guanxi*’ practice in China is beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, for my Chinese interlocutors in Zambia, suspicion and factionalism are lived experiences. As shown in last chapter, they are constantly encountering ‘strangers’; therefore, anxiety becomes a mode of everyday living and mistrust turns into a ‘weapon’ for self-protection. In a way, the projected vulnerability (politically and socially) of Chinese migrants exaggerates the effect of suspicion at my field sites. Moreover, among familiars, anxiety is often manifested as mistrust which is reflectively realised via further comparisons with references to the practices of sociality from other ethnic groups. Indeed, the common reflection that many of my Chinese interlocutors have, after visiting businesses or farms owned by white or black Zambians, is that they are very open, seem to have nothing

to hide and are not afraid that others would ‘plagiarize’ (*piaoqie*) from or spy on them, although some of those may have been illusory.

During my first month in Lusaka, I mentioned to Xiao Liü, the Demonstration Center translator that I would like to visit some British-owned farms in Zambia. He told me that I should go to the York Farm next door as he had met one of the managers once and got on well with him. A couple of days later, Xiao Liü insisted on accompanying me to the farm in case I had any trouble gaining access. Unfortunately, the manager he was acquainted with happened to be absent on that day. Nevertheless, when I explained my intention, the gate guards let us in after phoning the management team who assigned a farm technician to show us around. We spent almost two hours and visited every section of the farm. Xiao Liü asked lots of questions about farm management as he has always been interested in running a farm himself. On the way out, Xiao Liü commented to me, ‘Look at the Whites (*renjia bairen*)! How friendly! This would never happen in China. Everyone (in China) tries their best to hide the information in case you would climb higher (*paidegao*) than him/her and s/he would end up without rice to eat (*meifanchi*). No need to mention sharing. If one did not intend to trick/harm (*huai*) you, s/he would already be a good person! Nowadays, there are many “harm others but brings no benefit to self” (*sunrenbuliji*) people on the earth.’

Technician Xu made very similar comments after we had paid an unexpected visit to one of local farms. It was one afternoon on the way back to the Center after food shopping. When the car passed a local farm, Xu noticed the soya beans growing there.

‘See, soya beans!’ Suddenly he got excited.

‘Shall we stop and visit the farm?’ Xiao Liü asked.

‘Really? No. No. They would not let us in. Let us just go back to Demonstration Center.’

‘It would be OK.’

‘Really? It would be very embarrassing (*diuren*) if they chased us out.’ Xu reminded Xiao Liü with a concerned tone.

To his surprise, the manager allowed us in, showed us the field and also the potato production

section and told Xu what kind of soy bean disease one needs to be aware of in Lusaka. Technician Xu was astonished and made a similar statement to what Xiao Liü said above.

By comparison, Xu's previous interaction with a Chinese farm manager was not so smooth. With a similar motive — to find out how to prevent soy beans and wheat disease when farming in Lusaka — Xu tried several times to make appointments to visit one of the biggest Chinese state-owned commercial farms in Zambia. Finally, he got hold of the farm manager. After a hot tea and a little chit-chat, Xu started to ask questions about farming.

'Lao Xu, as you know, each farm has its own peculiar situation. Everyone is "crossing the river by touching the stones" (*muozhe shitou guohe*). What happens here does not necessarily happen at your place. Have some more tea please,' the farm manager answered.

These words made Xu very upset. On the way back, Xu complained, 'What is he like (*shenme dongxi*)? He thinks he is something. He is really nothing! As if we were going to steal his rice bowl (*qiangfanwan*). I do not even care (*buxihan*)!'

Faction in Action: the 'Bottleneck Effect' of Chinese Private Business in Lusaka

As argued in the last section, the pervasive mistrust and suspicion of others' instrumental motivation among the Chinese 'community' feeds the rise of factions. A very obvious effect of this internal factionalism among Chinese in Zambia is that it constrains the sustainability of business partnerships so to limit the scale of business growth. Relying on previous ethnographical studies by sinologists, Fukuyama speculates that Chinese business would suffer great difficulties in up-scaling without assistance of strong centralised organizations due to the lack of 'spontaneous sociality'. His speculation corresponds well with the practical 'breaking-up' stories that my Chinese interlocutors experience in business.

In general, the process of 'breaking-up' is, first of all, several 'friends' unite together and join their capital to form a partnership. Then, following the extension of the business, the profits would grow along with the personal authority of each partner. Furthermore, disagreements would appear while the partnership became more unequal or unbalanced. Then, partners would calculate their personal contribution to the business and the distribution of corresponding profits. Finally, the partnership would be dissolved due to

the internal growing hostility and the consequential separation of the partners. Next, some partners would find new ‘friends’ to start a new partnership again. Having heard and seen repeatedly such stories of Chinese business partners breaking-up, I propose that there is a ‘bottle-neck’ effect on the growth of Chinese private joint ventures in Zambia. This effect happens not only as a consequence of the dramatic increase of Chinese migrants to Zambia and the intensifying external competitive environment, but more significantly, as a result of the internal conflicts and factionalism among the business partners.

The first time when I heard a breaking-up story was the second month after I arrived in Lusaka. The story was told by the manager assistant of Mother Liü’s motel and involves Mother Liü’s early business cooperation with others. At the beginning, Mother Liü started business with two of her friends, both female. They came to Zambia roughly at the same time and because of funding issues, they decided to pool their money together to start a business. As she could not speak a word of English then, Mother Liü was in charge of daily business management while her friends were doing marketing or contacting clients. Once the business started to generate profits, disagreements on accounts and individual contribution also emerged. Finally, the joint business collapsed and Mother Liü took her initial funds and established her own catering business. The story was told as a legend and little could be proven as Mother Liü never talked about this piece of personal life history in interviews. Nevertheless, half way through my fieldwork, it so happened that the story was told to me again when I was helping an institution that was in business with Mother Liü’s previous business partner.

Although the legend was unproven, I did witness a conflict which happened in another of Mother Liü’s joint businesses when I was with the Zou family. Seeing the money that some white businessmen in Lusaka earned by opening schools, Mother Liü thought it would be a really good business opportunity to found a Chinese school given that there were none in Zambia. So she persuaded six other successful Chinese entrepreneurs to join and run the school together. Nevertheless, the school did not become as popular as Mother Liü planned. It now only survives as a nursery mainly for Chinese private migrants and relies on volunteers who are recruited by Mother Liü every year from Chinese universities. Since there was no profit for several years but significant costs, several partners

were thinking of withdrawing their initial investments. The most serious disagreement was between Mother Liü and Boss Mo. Boss Mo criticised Mother Liü's authoritarian managerial style while Mother Liü complained that Boss Mo did not contribute anything to the school's everyday management. Their quarterly board meetings often ended up with quarrels (*buhuan'ersan*). Fewer and fewer partners actually attended the meetings. I learned all this from Manager Deng, who is one of the seven partners, after the Zou family and I encountered Xiao Zhang, the manager's assistant of the Chinese school, weeping (*kusu*) in the courtyard at Manager Deng's house on a Chinese New Year's day.

Xiao Zhang got her job due to her close relationship with Mother Liü. She is the daughter of Mother Liü's village friend and presumably under Mother Liü's umbrella for protection. Instead of calling her manager, Xiang Zhang respects Mother Liü as her mother (*ganma*). The reason why Xiao Zhang was weeping in Manager Deng's courtyard was because of a fight she had had with the martial arts teacher at the school. The martial arts teacher had only arrived a month before. Although there were hardly any martial arts students, he was still recruited from China by Boss Mo from his own village. Ever since he arrived at the school, he never stopped causing trouble to Xiao Zhang, as she complained.

The fight started at midnight when Xiao Zhang could not get into the school compound after celebrating the Chinese New Year with several friends in town.

'He locked me out on the New Year's Eve! Can you believe that? Who does that? So lacking in morals (*zhenquede*),' Xiang Zhang said.

After she had knocked at the gate for almost half an hour, the martial arts teacher unlocked the door then accused Xiang Zhang of undignified behaviour.

'You know what he said? He said no good girl goes out drinking until midnight. He said I know nothing about a girl's behavioural discretion (*xingwei bujiandian*). Who does he think he is! My father? Dog's mouth could not grow elephant's teeth (*gouzuili tubuchu xiangya*).'

Then they began to swear at each other and it turned into a fight. Xiang Zhang was beaten and cut her forehead, then went to a Chinese clinic where she stayed over.

'He is not a man. A real man will never beat a girl! He dared to do that only because he has Boss Mo as the backer (*kaoshan*) – a dog relies on the owner's authority

(*gouzhang renshi*). Boss Mo must have sent him to spy on *ganma* (Mother Liü) and me. Ai, I would have no sweet days (*haorizi*) to live from now on. It is time to go back to China for good.’

Manager Deng advised Xiao Zhang that she should wait till Mother Liü came back from China after Chinese New Year to sort things out.

After Xiao Zhang left, Manager Deng’s wife told me that they were rarely involved in the management of school these days although Manager Deng was an initial founding partner. She said that the more people became involved, the more problems would occur.

‘We knew from the start that it would not work out well. We never planned to get a penny back. Since Mother Liü asked, she would lose face if we did not contribute something. Two tigers could not live peacefully in the same hill (*yishanburong’erhu*), not to mention there are seven of them. You see what it ends up like. It is better for us not to step into the muddied water (*hunshui*). Only harmony could generate fortune (*heqi shengcai*). Better not give them more messiness (*dianluan*).’

About two months later, I overheard from a conversation between Manager Deng and Mother Zou that the martial arts teacher was sent back to China while Boss Mo withdrew his investments from the partnership.

Not only does Chinese private joint venture suffer this bottleneck effect for business growth, but also Chinese family business needs to face the potential challenge of ‘*fenjia*’ (family division). *Fenjia* as an ethnographic phenomenon has long been documented by anthropologists of China (Cohen 1976). Mostly, *fenjia* is a result of domestic conflicts among brothers. To some extent, one could argue that *fenjia* represents internal factionalism within one family; therefore, to repeat, the analysis provided by Fukuyama, with the presumption that strong familism inherited from Confucian tradition is the reason for the lack of ‘spontaneous sociality’ in Chinese society, needs to be qualified. In other words, trust does not easily happen without nurturing just because both parties are from the same household – certainly not between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

During my fieldwork, there were very few *fenjia* cases. The Hu family farm was the only case I heard of. The family farm was established by the senior Hu (in his

80s now) when he came to Zambia more than twenty years ago. After his retirement, his eldest son inherited the farm business but his younger son and daughter were also given equal portions of the farm land, where they built their own houses as well as shops. Despite the family breaking up, the younger son and daughter still seek financial help from senior Hu when their own business is in trouble. This places an extra burden on the eldest son who is now taking care of senior Hu and often causes family quarrels between the eldest son's wife and his siblings, which I over-heard several times when Mrs Hu visited Mother Zou to tell 'bitter stories' (*suku*).

Notwithstanding, *fenjia* syndrome happens less and less for my informants because most of them only have one child due to the Chinese policy. Nevertheless, the new problem which successful Chinese private entrepreneurs are facing is that the only child is not willing to inherit the family business. For them, Zambia is too poor and too backward (*luohou*) to be desirable for settlement. Therefore, a common practice is that the family support the only child to study overseas, mostly in the USA or UK, with the plan that the whole family would be able to migrate once the child is settled; despite this meaning that entrepreneurs would have to give up their businesses in Zambia. To place a professional manager in charge of the family business has crossed the minds of any of my Chinese interlocutors. A simple reason they offer is that one can never trust an outsider to take care of family business and professional managers are always suspected of manipulating the balance sheet for personal gains. 'One has to manage the business oneself (*qinli qinwei*) if one wants profits,' as Boss Zhang once told Father Zou.

Anti Anti-Affection as a Way of Cooperation

So far in this chapter, I have focused on the negative effect on business operations of 'differential mode of association', particularly manifested as '*guanxi*' practice here. At least one obvious question has, however, been left unanswered: namely, if everyone is so suspicious and mutual mistrust is so low, how could business cooperation happen or ever be sustained? In this section, I attempt to solve this conundrum by concentrating on the interplay of two cultural ideas, interactional affection (*jiaoqing*) and calculation (*suanji*), which my interlocutors repetitively illustrate and practice every day.

Aiming to balance the overwhelming instrumentality of '*guanxi*', a popular demonstration of gift exchanges in China, a few sinologist anthropologists have begun to incorporate '*renqing*' into their analytical models, a term which so far has literally been translated as 'human feeling' (Yan 1996: 122). As Yan Yunxiang argues in his highly detailed ethnography of gift exchanges in a Northern Chinese village:

'It is clear that in the social life of Xiajia village, sentiment affects villagers' behaviour just as significantly as do moral obligations. The spiritual substances embedded in gifts are both morally and emotionally charged. Villagers exchange gifts are to increase *ganqing* with each other, as well as reinforce *guanxi*. In other words, it is the combination of developing emotional attachments and cultivating personal relations that gives meaning to the practice of gift exchange...What I am trying to emphasize...is that villagers do not interact with each other only for utilitarian purpose, and the *renqing* complex is much more than a win-or-lose power game.' (1996:145)

Then he specifies that 'the system of *renqing* ethics has three structural dimensions: rational calculation, moral obligation, and emotional attachment' (146).

This relationship of entailment is also clearly stated in Andrew Kipnis's monograph on '*guanxi*' in China – '*guanxi* involve human feelings and *ganqing* involves material obligation. The terms are often interchangeable...In *guanxi*, feeling and instrumentality are a totality. Additionally, one should not romanticize *guanxi*...*guanxi* can be seen as unifying what Western bourgeois relationships separate: material exchange and affectionate feelings' (1997:23-24).

Despite their original analytical purpose, I argue that such incorporation –incorporating *renqing* into *guanxi* – unnecessarily misleads people to instrumentalise 'human feelings', but certainly not to romanticize *guanxi*. This way of incorporating has positioned affection as a second-order social factor and, potentially, brings the danger of leaving no space for the sincere sentiment to play in everyday interaction. To avoid such potentiality, I would like to borrow the term '*jiaoqing*' (interactional affection) which my Chinese interlocutors always use when talking about relationships, and propose that affection is the foundation (first-order) of voluntary association, sustainable cooperation and a good '*guanxi*' (relationship). Most importantly, this affection is not presupposed with any existing social relations but grows with long term daily inter-action. Notwithstanding, this long-term

engagement in turn may prevent the occurrence of other ‘spontaneous sociality’ so to form potential factionalism.

The significance of interaction in forming social relations in China has already been clearly pointed out by Charles Stafford. By contrast with the lineage paradigm, Stafford invokes the local concepts of ‘*yang*’ and ‘*laiwang*’ which are held to produce the relatedness between individuals and further demonstrates how relations are constituted beyond kin and affinity, ‘in which kinship and friendship are seen to be hard work, the product of everyday human interactions’ (2000: 52). It is the ‘cycle of *yang* and *laiwang*’ – with the emphasis on the nurturing via daily actions – that connects individuals across time and space.

As quoted above, the focus on actions and ‘shared experiences’ have increasingly been realised by individuals due to the inflation of ‘gifts’ in China. Although it is under the shadow of business networking skills, Osburg has shown how the relationships are ‘forged and maintained through ritualized leisure – experiences of shared pleasure’ (2013:26). And, he argues that these experiences serve as the foundation for affective ties between men and their social intimacy, which further offers possibility for networking. In my field sites, the affection growing via interaction is called ‘*jiaoqing*’ and the importance of nurtured relatedness could be represented by the proverb my Chinese interlocutors use: ‘*yuanqin buru jinlin*’ (remote kin are not reliable as neighbours).

Personally, *jiaoqing* (international affection) as a term is more suitable than *renqing* (human feelings) or *ganqing* (emotion) for the analytical purpose of this chapter. First, semantically, discourse of *renqing* connotes utilitarian aspects and often comes as the Chinese four-letters idiom ‘*renqing shigu*’ in which ‘*shigu*’ stresses the sophistication of one’s social networking skills learned in social practices. It already entails manipulative inclination. Second, although my interlocutors often refer to it, I consider that *ganqing* focus more on the inner psyche so to diminish the effect of intersubjectivity. By contrast, the locus of *jiaoqing* is on the affinity/emotional proximity generated via long-term interaction. It pinpoints the temporality to eliminate the instrumentality as well as the interactivity to diminish the individuality. Furthermore, it takes affection as the basis of social relation.

The difference between ‘*jiaoqing*’ and ‘*renqing*’ could be clearly seen in

Mother Zou's discourse. Once, when helping her pack some gifts for another Chinese migrant's son's wedding banquet, I asked Mother Zou how they became friends. She corrected me:

'We are not friends. We do not have any interactional affection (*jiaoqing*). We hardly socialize (*zoudong*) at all. To be honest, I do not really want to go to the wedding but I do not want others to say that I do not know *renqing* (human emotion). The circle [*quanzi*, i.e. the network of Chinese private entrepreneurs in Lusaka] is small here. I won't stay long. I will come back as soon as I give them the gifts'.

From her statements, we can see that Mother Zou distinguishes *jiaoqing* from *renqing*. The latter is used in respect of moral obligation. It is what one should do. The former refers to affection growing through socializing. It is what one chooses to do. Interactional affection has a focus on intimacy/emotional proximity whereas human emotion stresses the psychological side of morality. Arguably, *jiaoqing* is 'interpersonal' (as in between friends) whereas *renqing* is 'universal' (as in Chinese moral norm).

Since most of the time affection is communicated via actions and expressed indirectly at my field sites, documentation of the observation of explicit affection and its direct impact on cooperation becomes difficult. Nevertheless, my Chinese interlocutors do often give evaluations of the actions which may harm the interactional affection – a way, I consider, of protecting established intimacy. Therefore, I call this manifestation of cooperation 'anti anti-affection'.

One of the most common anti-affection actions is calculation. Such action could appear in various ways. Calculation encapsulates the meaning of '*jisuan*' (computing or counting) as well as '*suanji*' (strategic plotting). In linguistic applications, the former is often followed by things as accusative while the latter is often applied to a person, namely calculating (*jisuan*) something and calculating (*suanji*) somebody. It is '*suanji*' that my interlocutors mostly resent as it takes people as a means to achieve personal ends. This kind of action is the one most commonly subject to suspicion and harmful to the maintenance of mutual affection. *Jisuan* could also sometimes be regarded as actions which potentially harm the interactional affection. Nevertheless, the relationship between *jisuan* and *qing* are more dialectic. As Stafford illustrates, counting could be very much emotionally loaded

(2009, 2010). If it is aiming for the good of the other party in a relationship or the good of the group as a whole, which may involve self-sacrifice sometimes, *jisuan* will enhance the emotional ties. But over calculating (*jisuan*) between inter-actors in a relationship may be considered as too formal and as an implied gesture of unwillingness to form an emotional bond. In my Chinese interlocutors' term, it is called '*keqi*' (over-polite/ritualised) or '*jianwai*' (seeing oneself as an outsider). To do it to an extreme, one could face the potential danger of converting '*jisuan*' (counting) into '*suanji*' (plotting). This interplay between calculation and intimacy was originally pointed out by Fei when he studied the Chinese consanguinity and regionalism. As he writes, '[i]n fact, people are afraid to square their accounts (*suanzhang*). To settle accounts (*suanzhang*) or to be completely square (*qingsuan*) with somebody means to break off relationships, because if people do not owe something to each other, there will be no need for further contact' (1992: 125). This dialectic relationship has been explained further by Yan when studying economic agency in China. As he argues, 'a person who is good only at economic calculation is regarded as too calculating and thus anti-social and immoral. It is only at the third level (the consideration and practice of self-cultivation in order to be a proper person in the culture of *guanxi* and *renqing*) that one can simultaneously secure economic prosperity and a good reputation, and become a wise person who really knows how to calculate and plan (*hui suanji*) over the long run...After all, in a moral economy calculability must operate under the constraints of *renqing* ethics, thus providing a cultural element that co-exists with economic rationality' (2009: 204).

The resentment of calculation (*suanji*) could be demonstrated in various sets of oppositional concepts referred to and practiced in ordinary life by my Chinese interlocutors. At my field sites, people commonly complain about those who over-emphasize money and personal gains. Over-emphasizing money and personal gains during interaction is a characteristic usually termed '*xiaoqi*' (parsimony) by Chinese migrants. *Xiaoqi* is considered as a consequential action of over-focusing on one's gains (*de*) and loss (*shi*) so that the mutual affection might be in danger of being overlooked. This kind of action is described as '*jianli wangyi*' (to forget friendship/right conduct when one sees money) and the

people who regularly commit such action are regarded as '*xiaoren*' (petty man)¹⁶. A general attitude towards '*xiaoren*' is trying one's best to avoid socialising with them. The opposite of '*xiaoqi*' (parsimonious) is '*kangkai*' (generous). Generous people are morally praised as they are willing to sacrifice their wealth to maintain interactional affection, especially if one party is in need of help. My Chinese interlocutors often describe such people as '*zhangyi shucai*' (generous with money in the name of '*yi*').

'*Yi*' in the four characters idioms above is an oppositional concept against '*li*' (profits) and contains rich meanings (for more, see Ames 2011). It could refer to righteousness as well as faithfulness. In Confucian classics, it is one of the five core virtues for praise and self-cultivation. At my field sites, it is often used in combination as '*yiqi*', which denotes a kind of personal characteristic of willingness to take risks or sacrifice self for the interactional affection. The notion has been popularized in Chinese literature along with the concept of '*jianghu*' (literally, lake and sea; society) and widely practiced by secret societies (*heshehui*) in China (Osburg 2013). It is also because of this association that '*yiqi*' has been demonized as a residue of the Chinese feudalist past in recent years by the official discourse of Chinese central government in the process of political centralization.

Due to its material nature and ease of calculation, money is often used as a 'test stone' to judge another person's character and the mutual affection between two people. During my fieldwork, borrowing money sometimes became an inevitable practice despite my Chinese interlocutors endeavouring to avoid it as money involvement could potentially harm interactional affection. Normally, prospective borrowers would approach people with whom they had already built emotional bonds. This emotional bond could increase the borrowers' chance of getting the loan; meanwhile, it can also provide lenders with some security against the risk of unreturned money. If the money is not paid back, the emotional bond was in danger of being broken.

Zambian workers often seek to borrow money from Chinese bosses. This

¹⁶ *Xiaoren* in Chinese is the opposite notion of *junzi* (man of honour) and they always appear as a pair. This pair of concepts is crucial in Confucian dogma as well as in Chinese morality. In *Analects*, it is noted that '*juziyuyuyi, xiarenuyuyuli*' (Gentlemen distinguish themselves by upholding values, while petty men, by pursuing personal gains). As mentioned in the Introduction, value for Confucius not only contains rigid moral rules but also embraces propriety in mutual affection.

often causes unnecessary arguments and resentment. To the Zambian workers, borrowing money from the boss is unquestionable as the boss is the one that workers should go to if there is any difficulty; and boss is the one who shall take care of the workers (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, it is a ‘taboo’ for the Chinese bosses. For them, the workers should not have put forward such request at all because there is no strong interactional affection between the boss and the worker. By being approached in this way, the boss has been forced into a difficult dilemma. Afraid of never being paid back, the boss is very reluctant to lend the money. Nevertheless, if s/he refuses to lend the money, the boss would consider the refusal as a potential threat to a good working relationship. Therefore, such action often leaves the Chinese bosses very annoyed and they criticise the Zambian workers who ‘do not know the way to deal with human emotion (*renqing shigu*)’.

This function of money as a ‘test-stone’ is well demonstrated by the money lending practices which Xiao Liü became involved in. Xiao Liü is a translator at the educational farm. Like most young Chinese, he is very open to talking with Zambian workers and making friends with them. Gasper is one of the Zambian workers Xiao Liü quickly became acquainted with. When I arrived at the educational farm, Xiao Liü had already formed a certain bond with Gasper. He would ask Gasper to help him with some personal matters and told me that I could trust Gasper. However, one afternoon, Xiao Liü looked very worried when he was seeking advice from Liü Wei on the matter of whether he should lend money to Gasper.

[Liü Wei]: What is the money for? They are going to get paid next Thursday!

[Xiao Liü]: He told me that he needed to attend a funeral in Livingston this weekend and he is short of money to travel. It might just be an excuse.

[Liü Wei]: En, sometimes, they (Zambians) can be full of bullshit. Do you think he (Gasper) will pay you back?

[Xiao Liü]: He seems a trustworthy guy. Normally, my heart is at ease (*fangxin*) when he helps me with tasks. He is not like other blacks. Sometimes he even brings me something he has cooked at home. (He) seems to have the ‘sense of human emotion’ (*renqingwei’er*). Plus, he did not want to borrow a lot. I do not want him to think me too parsimonious (*xiaoqi*).

[Liü Wei]: How much?

[Xiao Liü]: 50000 kwacha (US\$10).

[Liü Wei]: En, it is not much. If he did not pay you back, you could consider it as a lesson learned (*huaqian mage jiaoxun*) and there would be no need to socialise (*dali*) with him in the future.

Xiao Liü lent the money to Gasper and two weeks later, Xiao Liü came to my room and told me pleasantly, 'Gasper is good. He paid me back. It is worth getting to know him better (*zhide shenjiao*).'

Another common sign of resentment towards calculation is the negative attitude that my Chinese interlocutors hold on drawing contracts. Contracts to them seem cold, fixed and formal, which is the opposite of what proper mutual affection should be: fluid and informal. Therefore, drawing contracts between friends is perceived as a gesture of 'alienation' implying mistrust and potentially damaging the interactional affection (*jiaoqing*). If such intention is ever raised, a typical response from the counter-party is 'relying on our long-term interactional affection, can't I trust you?' A Chinese phrase could well capture the interplay between contract as a form of law and affection as the fundamental bond in social interaction: '*fa bu waihu renqing*' (law does not lie outside the sphere of human feeling). Note, here again, that human feeling (*renqing*) does not merely refer to the instrumental character of social interaction but also embraces the notion of sympathy and moral sentiment as a whole. Again, Fei gave a clear analysis of the rationale behind this resentment of contracts: 'To fulfil the conditions of a contract is to settle accounts - to take complete care of the rights and obligations as required by the terms of the contract. This requires careful calculation, an exact unit of exchange, and a reliable medium of exchange. Calm thinking is involved, not personal emotion. Reason dominates contractual activities. These are special features of modern society, and they are exactly what rural society lacks' (1992:127).

It was half way through my fieldwork when I started to notice the reluctance of my Chinese interlocutors to draw up contracts. The vegetables on the Zous' farm often suffered the problem of premature growth. For example, the corianders often blossomed before the leaves grew big. After trying several different types of seeds, Father Zou was convinced that the problem could be solved with more advanced agricultural skills. As no one in the family had farming experience before coming to Zambia, Father Zou was

eager to get help from agricultural experts. They family treated Technician Xu from the Demonstration Center next door to several nice meals and asked some advice; nevertheless, considering their ‘unfriendly’ relationship with the general manager (i.e. Technician Xu’s leader), it became more and more difficult to invite Xu over. Seeing their worries, I suggested that Father Zou could hire the UNZA farm (University of Zambia) technician as a part-time consultant. At the beginning, he was hesitant but he decided to give it a try after he realised that getting help from the Chinese technicians next door was a dead-end. Having discussed the matter on the phone a couple of times, the UNZA technician was happy to take the position. When we were meeting for a tea to talk about the details, he mentioned that he needed a formal agreement for reference. To me, it was a very reasonable requirement; however, Father Zou looked concerned. Although he said nothing, the meeting finished a couple of minutes later when Father Zou said he still had other things to attend to. Driving back to the farm, Father Zou told me that it was better to postpone the negotiation, and wait and see if he could contact any other Chinese experts for help. I was very puzzled by his reaction as I could see nothing wrong during the meeting, so I asked him why he did not want to pursue the work. Father Zou told me, ‘He does not trust us. What is the contract for? If it is already so problematic (*mafan*) from the start, it will be more trouble in future. So it is better to leave it now’. Clearly, in Father Zou’s mind, a contract is for people who do not trust each other. And, what is more interesting is that a contract is designed to prevent problems in future; nevertheless, it is considered problematic already by my Chinese interlocutors.

Overall, the interplay between interactional affection and calculation could be illustrated positively by the Zou family’s cooperation with Boss Deng. As introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the Zou farming business hardly survived when they were renting a plot from their *laoxiang* (people from the same region). They were seriously considering returning to China when their several attempts to borrow money failed. It was at that difficult time when Boss Deng was introduced to the Zous. Boss Deng is from the same city as the Zous. Initially coming to Zambia as a cook with his company for a construction project in the early 1990s, Boss Deng decided to stay after his peers returned to China and in the following year, he opened the first Chinese restaurant in Zambia.

‘When I first met Boss Deng, I was really scared. You know he has a serious face

and hardly smiles....Then, I found out that he used to work in the building across the road of where the department store I used to work was. No doubt (*nanguai*) that I felt I have seen him somewhere. He must have bought things from our shop. We had never spoken to each other in China even though we worked building by building. Now we are good friends on this foreign land. What karma (*yuanfen*)!’

Mother Zou told me this when I asked her how Boss Deng and the Zou family made their acquaintance. *Yuanfen* here refers to an uncontrollable force governing social relationships. It is similar to the notion of fate and could be loosely translated as karma. Nevertheless, the connotation here is of its ‘unplanned’ or ‘by chance’ nature. By landing on *yuanfen*, one is eliminating the instrumental part of the relationship and emphasizing the emotional bond between parties. Knowing how to cherish ‘*yuanfen*’ is a good moral characteristic to my Chinese interlocutors.

Acknowledging that the Zou family needed money to be able to keep their farming business going, Boss Deng lent them US\$30,000 without charging any interest. Five years later, the Zou family still owes him US\$10,000. Several times, the Zou family suggested paying interest to Boss Deng but he would firmly refuse it. Once, I heard Boss Deng tell Mother Zou while she was offering him money as interest:

‘If you do this again, you do not need to come to mine any more. Why are you seeing yourself as an outsider (*jianwai*) so much? We have known each other for years. I lent you money out of our long term interactional affection (*jiaoqing*). Now you give me interest. If someone who does not know our relationship sees this, they would think I am some kind of parsimonious person. Did I lend you the money just for that interest? You are putting me in an immoral (*buyi*) position!’

Hearing this, Mother Zou left, blushing.

Boss Deng’s action earns enormous gratitude from the Zou family and praise from every Chinese who hears the story. People compliment Boss Deng as ‘*youqing youyi*’ (possessing an affectionate and faithful character). Mother Zou often said to me that if there were no help from Boss Deng, they could not survive in Zambia.

‘Only adversity reveals the real interactional affection (*huannan jianzhenqing*). He (Boss Deng) is our family’s saviour (*da’enren*). It is our family’s fortune (*fuqi*) to meet Boss

Deng. He was really “travelling miles in the snow storm to delivery coal” (*xuezhong songtan*)¹⁷. We will never forget his gratitude-emotion (*enqing*).’

This deep emotional bond between the Zou family and Boss Deng makes this business cooperation run rather smoothly. As he runs a successful restaurant, Boss Deng would purchase Chinese vegetables from the Zou family. The Zou family would always give much cheaper prices to him and give him extra for free. When I asked Xiao Zou’s wife that if they could actually earn any profits through transactions with Boss Deng, she firstly got very surprised that I could even have asked such question; then she said it was not about gains or loss at all. She told me that the Zou family visited Boss Deng every weekend and stayed at his for dinner most of the times but Boss Deng never calculated the loss. ‘If everything is calculated so clearly, there would be no friends,’ she said.

Giving extra for free (*rao*) is a common practice the Zou family employed when dealing with long engaged Chinese customers. It is a gesture to show one’s willingness to maintain mutual affection for the longer term. Giving extra for free is an action to demonstrate one’s intention to be anti-calculative through actual careful calculation. The opposite intention will cause the break-up of a business relationship.

As the Zou family does not grow cabbages on the farm but needs to supply tons of it for Chinese construction companies every week, Xiao Zou often buys the cabbages on the local market. Initially, he was purchasing from another Chinese cabbage farmer but after several transactions, their business relationship came to an end. The reason was fairly simple – Xiao Zou thought that the Chinese cabbage farmer was too calculative and did not consider there was any affection between them, despite both being Chinese in Zambia. I happened being on site when Xiao Zou had a quarrel with the Chinese cabbage farmer.

It was a rainy afternoon. Xiao Zou made an appointment with the farmer to pick up the cabbages from the market at 2 pm but when we reached the site, the farmer had

¹⁷ *Xuezhong Songtan* is a Chinese four characters idiom based on analogy. It means someone offers help, even though it might bring difficulty or danger to oneself, when the other is in urgent necessity. The message conveyed in the analogy is to acknowledge the sincerity and affection manifested via actions – adversity or emergency is a test-stone of genuine interactional affection.

not showed up. After five phone calls and two hours' wait, the farmer finally drove his truck into the market courtyard. Two Zambian farm boys jumped out of the booth and started to unload the truck.

[Farmer]: Busy traffic and the roads are all muddy. I couldn't drive fast.

Xiao Zou had a glance at the cabbages then turned around to the farmer unpleasantly.

[Xiao Zou]: Why are they so small this time?

[Farmer]: It is nearly end of the season.

[Xiao Zou]: I thought you said you were going to keep some big ones uncut for me last week. How much is it this time?

[Farmer]: 500 kwacha (per cabbage)

Xiao Zou looked shocked but held his anger

[Xiao Zou]: Even for this size? It was only 450 last week and they were twice as big as these! I have bought cabbages several times from you and will need more in future. Can't you do a human-emotion price (*renqingjia*)?

[Farmer]: 500 kwacha is very low already.

[Xiao Zou]: Ok Ok

Xiao Zou was very upset. As soon as his van was loaded, Xiao Zou paid the money and drove away. While in the car, he commented;

'What a thing (*shenme dongxi*)! He does not talk any affection (*jiaoqing*)! He thinks I have a giant head (*datou*)!¹⁸ No need to mention that we are all Chinese in Zambia and shall help each other. He even asked more than what the locals sell for! Seeing he is a Chinese, I buy from him. I could have bought from other local farmers. So ungrateful! Doing business is never just about the money. Making a good emotional bond (*ganqingchuhaole*), the money will naturally follow. Short-sighted as a rat (*shumu cungrang*)! Only recognising money (*zhirengian*)!'

Two weeks after the quarrel, seeing that Xiao Zou did not place any order, the Chinese cabbage farmer phoned him to apologise. Although I had contacted the University of Zambia farm to supply cabbages to Xiao Zou, he still went back to the Chinese

¹⁸ An analogy means people who have lots of money but easy to be tricked.

farmer. A simple reason Xiao Zou offered is that ‘he (the farmer) is basically a Chinese; easy to talk to’ – a reason I interpret as ‘easy to talk affectionately’.

Conclusion

The Chinese interlocutors at my field sites in Zambia could be said to be caught up in factions, which they say results from the Chinese community being ‘*butuanjie*’ (not united). This faction is forming groups in a small scale; but mostly hinders business cooperation, encouraging internal competition and preventing the business up-scaling. Instead of tracing this back to the Confucian ideal of familism, I investigate how the faction is formed and realised through everyday interaction. I propose that it may be the increasing self-awareness of the instrumentality of ‘*guanxi*’ practice in China as a whole that provides the foundation for strong suspicion and mistrust among acquaintances. In turn, the mistrust shifts people’s gaze towards long term interaction and affection, in search for sincere cooperation. This inclination has also been exaggerated as a result of decades of economic boom and corresponding inflation of gifts in China. To some extent, gifts are gradually losing their adequacy to convey mutual affection and to maintain a sustainable and genuine voluntary cooperation.

I want to stress that genuine voluntary cooperation does happen at my field sites. Above, I endeavour to show how its occurrence and sustainability are formulated around mutual affection growing in the daily interactions, which I have argued is the first-order condition for formation of social relations. Rather than interpreting ‘*guanxi*’ as a social fact to organize Chinese society, I take it as the second-order social representation that builds on the foundation of ‘interactional affection’. I consider this separation is necessary as an overwhelmingly utilitarian ‘*guanxi*’ leaves no space for social sincerity and voluntary cooperation, either analytically or practically. This separation may be criticised as falling into ‘Western bourgeois dualism’; however, the context of China has transformed dramatically after years of modernization and marketization, as have the evolving practices of sociality. At my field sites, voluntary cooperation is nurtured with continuous care, affection and interaction. My Chinese interlocutors consciously cherish the interactional affection with cultural devices testing and acting against any calculative actions which may potentially

harm the relationship – not merely between Chinese migrants but also with Zambians. Notwithstanding, this concentration on interactional affection and its crucial role in forming and maintaining long-term relationships is likely to further intensify the factions which already exist. For my Chinese interlocutors, in the context of hierarchical association, forming an attachment and deep affectionate bond with one may alienate the other.

The segmentation of overseas Chinese communities, particularly during Chinese migration to Southeast Asia, has long been documented by anthropologists. Most famously, Crissman (1967) describes how the traditional Southeast Asian Chinese communities segment based on lineage, common region of origin, dialect and surnames; at the same time, organizations are constituted to represent the segments. Together, Southeast Asian Chinese migrants have ‘almost invariably set up a segmentary hierarchy of associations which organize their members into a hierarchy of inclusion’ (Pieke & Benton ed. 1998:12). In this chapter, instead of taking the category ‘Chinese community in Zambia’ as granted, I focus on how groups are formed via interaction. By no means have I argued that there is a ‘Chinese community’; rather, the Chinese migrants in Zambia are living in factions.

Perhaps the difference – between the *segmentation* model based on Southeast Asian communities and *factions* found among Chinese migrants in Zambia – comes with various perspectives of analysis. Still, there are two contextual reasons worthy of note. First, as I have mentioned in the Introduction, most of my private entrepreneur interlocutors moved to Zambia because they did not like the political games or ‘*guanxi*’ games played between businessmen and officials in China. In a way, they emigrate for ‘business autonomy’. Therefore, there is a brought-in internal disjunction between Chinese migrants coming to Zambia as private entrepreneurs and the ones as short-term government representatives. Second, to survive and strive in Zambia, sometimes connecting with Chinese officials becomes inevitable as Chinese government has easy access to political and economic resources. Comparatively, the current Chinese migrants to Zambia are under stronger supervision by Chinese government than the ones moving to Southeast Asia mostly in the era of Republican China. This centralization of power and inevitable dependence diminishes the growth of self-organized association yet encourages internal competition and faction. To put this differently, it is the competition (between individuals) for ‘love’ (from the

hierarchical top) that reinforces the faction – a point now I am going to turn to for the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Leadership, Dependency and Asymmetrical

Attentiveness

It was 10 pm and the last truck was driving into the farm compound bringing Zambian workers from another construction site as Liū Wei (a young Chinese administrator) and I were chatting in my room. Suddenly, the quietness of the Lusaka suburban night was broken by the heavy steps of workers jumping out of the truck and the high-pitched metal clatter as they put their tools away.

‘Good night, Boss!’

‘7 hours tomorrow, no late!’

I heard this short exchange through my window. About ten minutes later, someone knocked at my door. It was Lenny – standing outside my door looking absolutely exhausted. Mud and dirt covered most of his red uniform. Lenny was the first Zambian worker who I became acquainted with after I arrived at the Demonstration Center. At that time, as noted, the main administrative building of the farm had not been finished so we, the demonstration centre tutors and I, shared accommodation with the Chinese construction team for three months. Then Lenny was recruited as a general worker by the construction team. I consider it inaccurate to label Lenny as a worker due to his different background from other Zambian workers on the site. Lenny was only 18 years old and had just finished high school in the summer of 2011. Having already applied to the law programme in the University of Zambia (UNZA), Lenny thought it would be a good thing to find a summer vacation job and save some money for his future university life so that he would not have to request money from his father who had retired as a professor from UNZA a couple of years before and was now managing the family farm. Knowing Lenny’s age and educational background, the general manager of the construction team took him as a favourite so only allocated him some gardening work and put him under the supervision of Liū Wei. Both being young, Liū Wei and Lenny quickly became close, more friends at work than boss and worker. Their relationship quickly started to annoy the general manager, however, as he thought that this

‘inappropriate’ relationship provided Lenny with excuses for being lazy at work; more importantly, it had set up a bad example for other Zambian workers to follow. The general manager was concerned that if the close relationship continued, other Zambian workers might be infected with a ‘lack of organization and discipline (*wuzuzhi wujili*)’. After warning them about this twice, one day when he saw Lenny hanging around in Liü Wei room instead of cutting the grass, the general manager could no longer contain his anger and, on the second day, Lenny was sent to do heavy labour on another construction site in town. It was that night when Lenny knocked at my door.

‘Good evening, Dr Di. I heard David (Liü Wei’s English name) was in your room?’
Lenny sounded huskier than normal.

‘Yes, do come in please. Can I get you some water?’

‘I am OK, thanks. I came here to see David.’

Liü Wei stopped playing with my laptop and turned around when he heard Lenny was there to see him.

‘Oh, how was your first day [working in town]?’ Liü Wei asked Lenny.

‘Why do you ask? You know it’s tough. I do not think I can do it anymore.’

‘You shouldn’t have argued with the general manager.’

‘What do you mean? If the boss is wrong, I shall let the boss know. Right?’ Lenny asked.

‘No, the boss can never be wrong! Just do whatever the boss tells you to do then you will be fine.’

‘Perhaps that is so in China; but in Zambia, if the boss is wrong, everyone can advise him.’ Lenny paused for a few seconds. ‘So, this [being sent to do heavy labour] is my punishment!’ It seemed that Lenny suddenly realised the rationale that Liü Wei was trying to imply. ‘What should I do? I do not think I can do another day of this work. It is very hard. Can you ask the big boss to bring me back?’

‘No! You can ask him if you want: not me!’ Liü Wei firmly refused.

‘But you are my boss. A boss should take care of his workers and help them when they are in trouble, just like a family. I cannot ask the big boss [i.e. the general manager] as he is *your* boss, not mine. I can only ask *my* boss.’

‘Sorry, I cannot do it for you. I do not want to upset the boss. In China, workers try not to cause the boss any trouble and they cannot challenge his authority.’

‘This is Zambia. You should learn the Zambian way.’

‘But you work for the Chinese! You should learn the Chinese way.’

‘What can I do? I cannot do this job. It is too tough.’

‘Well, you do not need to. I would quit if I were you. Think about it tonight.’

Liü Wei accompanied Lenny to the main farm gate and saw him off. When he came back, Liü Wei looked rather sad. He sighed and told me.

‘Sometimes, I really pity them [i.e. the Zambian workers] and feel bad when I cannot help – but really, there is nothing I can do. Even if I spoke to the leader, he would not listen anyway. Besides, I still want to work here! I do not want to upset our leader and get fired just because of protecting them [i.e. Zambians]. You know, I still have family back in China who rely on me.’ Then Liü Wei sighed again. That was the last night when I saw Lenny in the farm compound. He did not come back after work on the second morning. Months after the construction company moved out of the farm, I encountered Lenny at the UNZA campus. In our brief conversation I found out that he never took another job after that night but went back home to help his father on the family farm.

Introduction

During my fieldwork, complicated situations of the kind outlined above often took place between Chinese bosses and Zambian workers. Stepping back from my own ethnographic observations, it is obviously the case that labour issues involving Chinese enterprises in Africa – at a more macro level – have repeatedly been under the spotlight of Western media and scholars (Wang and Flam 2007; Utomi 2008; Baah and Jauch 2009; Lee, 2009; Moumouni 2010; Dittgen 2010; Karsten 2012, 2013; Arsene 2014; Men 2014). The published media reports about this are overwhelmingly negative in tone – referring to China’s extraction of African resources, exploitation of African labour, and corruption and violation of African and international law (e.g. see Human Rights Watch 2011). But the generalizations about ‘China in Africa’ are, perhaps, too ‘morally right’ to be entirely true. As the sociologist Ching Kwan Lee argues, ‘the rhetoric of Chinese colonialism...reveals

little about the varied capacities, interests and constraints of the foot-soldiers of Chinese projects on the ground' in Africa (2009: 665). Aiming for a more balanced analysis, especially in relation to 'the politics of casualization' in Chinese businesses in Africa, she compares the labour tensions and strikes at a Chinese mining enterprise in Zambia and a Chinese textile company in Tanzania. Then, she reaches the conclusion that the reason why Zambians successfully halt the tendency towards casualization, whereas this does not happen in the Tanzanian case, is mainly due to the local history of socialism and unionism. Then she further claims that labour relations at Chinese businesses in Africa should be understood in relation to the nature of the business and to the 'varied collective histories and power' in different settings (665). Given the thrust of my own project, I obviously support her call for historical specificity and micro-analysis when thinking about China in Africa. Still, her paper on casualization leaves me wanting to know more about the dynamics of *everyday* negotiations, arguments and compromise at a relatively mundane level. For sure, the structural analysis which Ching Kwan Lee applies can provide convincing rationale of the political-economic reasons behind social behaviours and relationships. Nonetheless, it does not really capture the laughter, tears, genuine affection and anger which I witnessed every day in the workplace, as well as the desires and the motivations of the workers and the bosses. Crude or not, I argue that it is exactly this *affective* component of relationships at work that causes misunderstanding and miscommunication which accumulates and intensifies into labour conflicts and in turn effects production. In other words, starting out from the level of everyday one-to-one interactions, I intend to supplement the structural analysis with vivid ethnographic stories.

My perspective in this chapter draws mostly on two theoretical sources. One is James Ferguson's recent article 'Declarations of Dependence' (2013). In this paper, he challenges the value which has been given to 'autonomy' in the liberal tradition – in part because of its association with moral critiques of slavery and 'dependency'. Having reviewed the previous ethnography of Southern Africa, he encourages scholars to think of dependency as a form of membership and as a way of offering people life choices through social inclusion instead of as mere exploitation and absolute inequality. As he writes;

‘It seems that for poor South Africans (as for a great many other people in the contemporary world) it is not dependence but its absence that is really terrifying – the severing of the thread, and the fall into the social void. (232)...the sort of employment for black men in South Africa that is nowadays nostalgically longed for was hardly ever a vehicle for independence. On the contrary, it constituted precisely a form of dependence, albeit a highly valued kind of dependence that brought with it a kind of unequal incorporation that I have termed “work membership”. Men’s desire for employment of this kind cannot be figured as a yearning for autonomy; it is on the contrary precisely *a desire for attachment* (italics added) – for incorporation, even under highly unequal and often dangerous and humiliating terms, into a social body (235).’

This emphasis on workers’ desires and interpersonal attachments, which mirrors my own interests, is another reason why I find Ching Kwan Lee’s structural analysis a little bit unsatisfactory. Reading across her published papers in recent years, it seems that casualization, which Lee takes as equivalent to informalization (2009:648), entails negative moral connotations even though she never makes this claim explicit. For Lee, casualization or informalization represents inevitable exploitation and needs to be abolished. Labour relations should be based on equal rights and constrained by formal legal frames. By contrast, in my impression of the work relation in Zambia, sometimes informalization is workers’ intentional choice as it allows them greater flexibility; moreover, in the Chinese bosses’ eyes, rigid rules or contracts leave no room for *jiaoqing* (interactional affection) to be played out and may potentially damage sociality as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter. For both parties, morality at work which bonds the boss and the worker is more important in the end than rigid labour laws. Therefore, I consider that interpreting merely from the perspective of structure could potentially lose sight of everyday intersubjective and informal interactions at work.

Aiming to investigate the affective dimensions of work relations and production, another theory that I draw upon in this chapter is that surrounding ‘emotional labour’. Arlie Hochschild (1983) first proposed this concept to study the service industry. By emotional labour, she means ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value...this labour requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward

countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others – in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place’ (7). Despite the original definition being restricted to emotional performance as part of a wage transaction – for example, flight attendants are paid to show attentiveness to customers regardless of their inner feelings -- I consider that ‘emotional labour’ could be interpreted more broadly and apply to any form of work relations especially in the post-industrial era. Arguably, to some extent, any work can contain a certain amount of service (or performance). At my field site, although the emotion is not directly sold for a wage, the affective performance is still required due to highly moralized and often informal relationships at work. Chinese leaders on the farm as well as in the construction company not only require efficient work output but also demand proper affective performance. By contrast, in the Zambian context, farmer workers predominantly expect their Zambian bosses to perform care in exchange for their loyalty and support.

To draw on these two theoretical sources, in this chapter I would like to investigate the hierarchical dependent relationship at Chinese workplaces in Zambia. I suggest that boss-worker relationships depend on a cultural schema, ideal as well as practical, that both Chinese and Zambians use to comprehend, negotiate and practice every day when they encounter each other. As Max Bolt correctly points out in his recent review of Ferguson’s article, ‘dependencies work differently and mean different things...subordination and protection between a white farmer and a black labourer are not the same as between a black mine foreman and black mineworkers’ (2013: 243). The various meanings of dependency cannot be better demonstrated than in the misunderstandings which occurred at work every day at my field sites – Chinese in Zambia have a different notion of boss-worker dependency compared with the one based on Zambian moral ideals and ethical practices. Such difference is manifested via daily negotiation and struggles at work. It can be plausible to argue that this misunderstanding is caused by different forms of dependency across social groups; notwithstanding, in my opinion, the everyday misunderstanding at work is more significantly due to the mismatch of the affective component bundled in the structure.

In the specific case in my field site, this mismatch appears as the conflictive direction of *attentiveness* between boss and worker. To put it simply: the attentiveness usually goes up from the worker to the leader in Chinese workplaces while the

attentiveness usually goes down from the boss to the worker in the *Zambian* context. If it is correct to say that dependency is a form of patron-client relationship, a vertical dyadic alliance, this alliance should at least contain two parties and be constituted with the exchange of different kinds of benefits, tangible and intangible, and ‘involve the direct personal *attachment* of two individuals to each other’ (Schmidt et al., 1977: 20, italics added). This attachment, I argue, contains a direction of attentiveness required in practice. In this dyadic alliance, attentiveness is, perhaps sometimes in a form of service, subject to exchange for other kinds of benefits. It can function as an offer and demonstrate personal intention and willingness. Therefore, in this way, attentiveness has a timescale and can be asymmetrical. At the Chinese workplaces, vertical patron-client relationship requires an upward attentiveness performed first by the worker in exchange for extra welfare and job promotion in the future so the focus of dependency lies on the top; whereas, on the *Zambian* farms, the attentiveness goes down in exchange for mass support, loyalty and authority and the focus lies at the bottom. It is this mismatch of asymmetrical attentiveness that produces some of the most important misunderstandings at Chinese enterprises in *Zambia*.

My analysis in this chapter will be subject to two important qualifications. First, due to the nature of my fieldwork as introduced in the Introduction, my data on the work relations between *Zambian* bosses and *Zambian* farm workers are mostly from semi-structured interviews. This self-reported data means the work relations they represented to me are in an idealised form. In other words, the narratives of boss-worker relations are very much about ‘what ought to be’ instead of ‘what is’. By contrast, most data of the work relations between Chinese leaders and workers was obtained via direct day-by-day participant observation; therefore, the description of leader-work relationship is based on how they practice rather than mere self-report. Second, the characteristics of work relation in this chapter are strictly limited to the context of the demonstration centre and previously state-owned construction company – hierarchical bureaucratic organizations, whereas the *Zambian* farms presented here are non-state owned and predominately profit-driven. I believe that the analysis would shift in a more complicated context. A four-facet comparison to study work relations, respectively at a private Chinese farm in *Zambia*, state-owned Chinese farm

in Zambia, private Zambian farm in Zambia and organization-owned Zambian farm in Zambia, will have to be left to a future study.

To follow this line of thinking, in this chapter, after introducing more context of my field sites, I will first concentrate on describing how attentiveness is required and performed every day at work based on the comparison of how the leader (in the Chinese case) or boss (in the Zambian case) understands the work relationship. Then, I will further demonstrate the direction of attentiveness in a dependent relationship from two angles: respectively, the independence of workers and task-sharing between leader and worker. In the conclusion, based on my comparison of the cases presented in this chapter with the ones which I described in the last chapter (i.e. about the relationships between Chinese private entrepreneurs), I would like to put forward an analytical notion, ‘the spirit of structure’, in order to highlight the significance of emotion in everyday production and work-related interaction. If the previous two chapters are dedicated to understand the reluctance of Chinese migrants to interact with their Zambian hosts, this chapter is to take one step further to document how Chinese-Zambian communication is further hindered by the effect of affection even when interaction becomes inevitable at work.

One Educational Farm and One Construction Team

Although I spent the second half of my fieldwork primarily with the Zou family in Zambia, the descriptions of work relations in this chapter will predominately be about the Chinese educational farm and the Chinese construction company which built this farm. This also enables me to show the significant impact of the *danwei* (‘work unit’) institution on the practice of attentiveness in Chinese workplaces.

The educational farm is a cooperation project between the University of Zambia (UNZA) and Jilin Agricultural University. As I have already discussed the background to this project in the Introduction, here I would like only to point out one distinctive characteristic of this farm. In China, universities are classified as *shiye danwei* (non-production work-units). This is a historical residue of the communist planned economy and has long been subject to reform since China started to liberalise the market (Lü & Perry ed., 1997). Although these organizations are non-profit and are established for public services,

such as education, medicine, media etc., such ‘non-production work-units’ are very different from normal NGOs in the Western concept because they are directly funded by the Chinese government; yet they are distinctive from Chinese private companies, as they are legally prevented from generating profits despite in practice many ‘non-production work-units’ having affiliated companies for business purposes.

As Lü and Perry (1997) have summarized, *danwei*, as a rather unique social institution of China, has several distinctive characteristics –

- 1) It is managed according to national administrative ranking system; that is, staff are assigned by higher authorities and have governmental titles. They enjoy particular privileges and treatment according to corresponding administrative hierarchies.
- 2) The employees in the work units are controlled via management of their dossiers (*dang'an*); therefore, the mobility of the workers is limited and top level officials usually have the final say on promotion and job transfer.
- 3) The more general social function of *danwei* is to ‘lighten the state’s burden of social welfare and entitlement provisions’ (1997:9). Medical insurance and public housing are typically provided by the work units. Consequently, ‘members become dependent on the unit for both political and economic resources’ (11). These characteristics of *danwei*, I believe, contribute as certain institutional reasons which influence the practice of attentiveness in Chinese workplaces at my field sites.

The construction team that built the farm is from a private Chinese construction company; however, it used to be a state-owned (provincial level) company a couple of years ago before Chinese state-enterprise reform about decades ago. In China, state-owned companies share similar administrative characteristics with non-production work-units but aim for financial profits. Even though this construction company had been privatized for decades, during my stay with them I had a strong impression that there was a continuity of *danwei* management style within the company.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, the education farm was towards the end of its construction. Therefore, the tutors had to share accommodation with the staff of the construction company before the main farm building was totally completed. This offered me a great opportunity of three months to observe two distinctive organizations at the same time

and compare them. Even though one is a non-profitable farm with the focus on agricultural technology demonstration and education and the other is a private enterprise with the purpose to achieve financial gains, the similarity in practical management overtakes the differences. By comparison with other ethnographies of Chinese workplaces after the Cultural Revolution (Walder 1986; Rofel 1999; Fang 2012), I regard this similarity as due to the social continuity of the Chinese *danwei* system and to some extent, this continuity is re-triggered and amplified by the contexts of my field sites; i.e. strong mistrust of others, resulting in closed communications with strangers, firm control of workers and distribution of welfare by the Chinese companies.

First, the organization/company arranges Chinese workers' overall welfare in Zambia. Accommodation and food are free so workers live in the same compound and eat together every day at the dining hall. Entertainments are provided which usually include table-tennis and basketball courts for physical exercise, mah-jong and poker for after-work social games and sometimes karaoke. Salaries are paid directly to workers' bank accounts back in China and taken care of by their families. A small allowance (normally less than US\$50) is distributed to workers every month. Now and then, a group day trip is organised on bank holidays. Second, as most of their daily needs are provided by work and the majority of the Chinese workers cannot speak either English or a local language, workers tend to stay in the compound. Even if the younger workers (those who can speak English) like going out, they are subject to the strict control of the leader. If anyone wants to leave the compound, s/he needs permission from the managerial team and usually the permission is given with a time limit. If s/he needs to stay out longer, the worker has to phone the leader for further permission. By contrast, Chinese managers enjoy no such physical control over such matters as there is no directly superior Chinese official present in Zambia. Third, welfare and priority at work corresponds with administrative hierarchy.

The hierarchy is not just on paper or in one's job title but very much a lived daily experience. It can be demonstrated in accommodation arrangements, dining position allocations and work task assignment. A worker relatively high in the hierarchy can have priority to live in an en-suite room facing the sun instead of sharing with other workmates and can sit close to the leader while dining. This hierarchy at work is not only

drawn according to formal governmental regulations but also through informal relationships. It is drawn according to mixed criteria of age, locality, education and closeness of personal relationships to the leader. Distribution, awards and promotion are mostly at leaders' discretion. Consequently, both organizations have strong informal social networks within formal work relations. Favouritism is widely exercised at work. Regarding the strict control by the leader, both over daily socialization with the outside and welfare allocation, and the great discretion of the leader, a dependency is reinforced and attentiveness to the top is required and performed by the workers in order to become the leader's 'personal favourite' and so enjoy extra privilege and benefits at work. My Chinese interlocutors summarized this subtle work relation by quoting Chinese idiom, '*yirenshegiantian, jiquanchengxian*' (when one becomes a celestial being, his chicken and dogs can fly to heaven with him).

Direction of Attentiveness I: the Zambian Case

Although I was always interested in the criteria of 'good boss' during my fieldwork, it was Mr Mbozi who pointed me to the significance of attentiveness in the workplace. This happened half way through my fieldwork. It was one evening after work when Mr Mbozi came to the farm to see the general manager Bao after hearing that the newly recruited Zambian workers (seven in total) had quit their jobs again. A similar thing had happened three times in the past five months. The workers not only complained about the toughness of the tasks, the low pay and the long hours of the job but more importantly were not satisfied with Manager Bao's attitude. The workers told Mr Mbozi that Manager Bao did not care about them at all especially when they needed his help. After acknowledged the reason, Mr Mbozi considered it necessary to share some of his experience as a boss with manager Bao before the situation became worse. Mr Mbozi worried that if Manager Bao continued using his Chinese management style, no more local men would be willing to work for the educational farm. It would be very bad because not only would it effect the daily operation of the farm but also it would damage Manager Bao's reputation and authority. Mr Mbozi told Manager Bao that in Zambia a boss needs to treat the 'boys' (this was how he himself referred to the farm workers) like his own children and to help the boys at work as well as in their lives. Only when the boss helps solve workers' troubles at home and keeps them happy will

they can stay without worries and work hard on the farm. Manager Bao listened and smiled but after Mr Mbozi left, he said to me that *Zambians* knew nothing about '*zhongguo guoqing*': this literally means 'Chinese circumstances', but note that the last character *qing* also means 'emotions'. This term is normally applied when the speaker justifies why the interlocutor's utterance should be ignored based on a simple reason that the interlocutor does not know anything about Chinese culture and Chinese context and therefore his comments are irrelevant.

Mr Mbozi is the general manager of the UNZA farm. He was born near Livingston and was sent to Czechoslovakia for a master's degree in agricultural science by the *Zambian* government. After his graduation, he returned to *Zambia* and took charge of the UNZA farm. There are roughly three hundred workers on his farm. As the educational farm was built on a piece of waste land belonging to the UNZA farm, Mr Mbozi was assigned as the *Zambian* manager for this project. Nevertheless, he has never been called on by Manager Bao apart from to deal with some emergency and issues with local administration. However, in the *Zambian* workers' eyes, Mr Mbozi is truly a good boss and his kindness has certainly earned him a very good reputation in the local community in eastern Lusaka. Many workers want to work for him. When I asked thirty-six *Zambian* workers why they thought Mr Mbozi a good boss, several common traits came up. They said Mr Mbozi was kind and generous and always willing to help the workers. He loaned money to workers and helped them to build houses. He drove the workers' children to clinics. He bought workers beers after work. Also, he gave good advice to his workers and listened to workers' advice when he made mistakes. They said Mr Mbozi was reliable and like a father to them. These traits corresponded to the answers I obtained from interviews when I asked, 'What is a good boss in general?'

Mr Mbozi's ideas are shared among other bosses I talked with near the educational farm. Lindsey is the owner of a small banana farm less than a kilometre away from the Center. Born in Lusaka and having worked for British Airways as a flight attendant when she was young, Lindsey retired to a small farm with her mother and daughter. Apart from bananas, she also grew flowers and raised chickens for sale to generate extra income. There were around twenty workers on Lindsey's farm. Now and then, I went to her farm to buy bananas as well as to chat. Once after I saw how she taught a worker to deal with

customers and keep sales records, we started to talk about her farm workers. She told me that one of her boys was leaving her farm soon to work in a tobacco farm managed by a white Zimbabwean. Lindsey had recommended this. Even though the worker was a little bit reluctant to leave, Lindsey thought it was necessary. She told me that the worker would benefit more from working for the white farmers. He would not get paid as much but would learn many modern managerial skills which she could not offer. She said it would be good for her boy's future career. As a boss, she needed to be responsible for her workers and help them to achieve things in their lives although sometimes it means that they had to leave her farm.

From the statements above, it is not hard to summarize that 1) The notion of family is often invoked to describe the relationship between boss and workers rather than formal managerial terminology; 2) To be a good boss is to be responsible for workers – not only at work but also with domestic issues – helping workers with troubles in their lives and advising them on life options; 3) A good boss takes care of his or her workers and is always attentive to workers' needs. In return, loyalty is paid back and stable working relationships are sustained to the satisfaction of the worker. It is a result of long term negotiation and reciprocity. By demonstrating one is a good boss through being attentive to the needs of one's followers, one would be able to attract more followers, to build up one's local authority and personal influence and, more importantly, to prevent potential conflicts and distraction in the production process. Therefore, in this context, the boss and farm workers depend on each other – the former needs the workers' support for fruitful production while the latter needs the boss for everyday welfare. Notwithstanding, this dependency has a focus at the bottom and the direction of attentiveness goes from the boss to the farm worker.

This characteristic of dependency between Zambian bosses and Zambian workers might be traced back to the classic understanding of African politics before the colonial period. In *African Political Systems*, Fortes and Pritchard write,

'Everyone who holds political office has responsibilities for the public weal corresponding to his rights and privileges...A chief or a king has the right to exact tax, tribute, and labour service from his subjects; he has the corresponding obligation to dispense justice to them, to ensure their protection from enemies and to safeguard their general welfare by ritual acts and observances. The structure of an African

state implies that kings and chiefs rule by *consent*. A ruler's subjects are as fully aware of the duties he owes to them as they are of the duties they owe to him, and are able to exert pressure to make him discharge these duties.' (1940:12 italics added)

They reason that this political balance is achieved because of people's faith that the 'social system...figures as a system of *sacred values*.' These values are symbolised and shared by the whole society, the ruler as well as the ruled. 'Hence people will overthrow a bad king, but the kingship is never questioned' (18). Finally, they point out that 'in political relations, consequently, we find two types of interests working conjointly, material interests and *moral interests*' (20, italics added). The interests bundle rights and duties and more importantly political sentiment. Note I have no intention to argue that there is a primordial notion of African leadership at play in my field sites. Nevertheless, I would make two points in relation to this. First, regarding the long history of unionization in Zambia as documented by Lee (2009), one could argue that the political power is well diluted from the centre and resides mostly in the hands of workers. This power of workers could easily be organized and demonstrated against dissatisfaction with or ill-treatment by the boss. Second, if I could reinterpret the passages above in respect of the symbolic meaning of 'boss' rather than in respect of social structure, arguably, this meaning bundled with political sentiment has been idealised as in moral forms. At my field sites, even though many work relations nowadays are formalized through laws, what counts a good boss as a moral ideal is still being valued and practiced. Part of the sentiment bundled in this moral ideal is that a good boss is worth following because s/he is attentive to the workers.

Similarly, while studying Chinese-Ghanaian employment relationships, Giese Karsten and Alena Thiel also document this moral practice of 'good boss' in the social context of Ghana. They point out that, for the Ghanaians, the employer's role is often defined as 'benefactor, guardian and protector' and 'Ghanaian employers are highly appreciated for their *availability to employees* for personal advice and assistance in cases of financial emergencies. In that sense, employers assume the role of elders, figures of respect and wisdom. Youth employment, in this light, is widely recognized as a way to give a person a chance to progress in life beyond the mere material dimension.' (2012:1106, italics added)

Direction of Attentiveness II: the Chinese Case

The dependency implied within hierarchical relations in China has also been well documented by sinologists (Solinger 1995; Shaw, 1996; Rofel 1999; Fang 2012). Among others, while studying leadership and culture of authority in post-revolution Chinese *danwei*, Andrew Walder argues that the reward system under communist regime creates an ‘organized dependency’ between the leader and the subordinate.

‘The politicization of reward system had unintended consequences, however. In making workers’ livelihoods highly dependent on the personal political evaluations of their superiors, politicization created strong material incentives for workers to develop calculative strategies for exhibiting the proper loyalty in front of their superiors...More importantly, the ability of superiors to reward employees flexibly, according to subjective evaluations, has provided fertile ground for the growth of pervasive networks of informal social ties based on *personal* loyalties’. (1983: 52)

This system, as Walder summarizes, emphasizes flexibility, discretion and subjectivity and reinforces itself via lack of employment alternatives in the post-revolution era. These characteristics of the reward system produce certain behaviours at work. ‘*Biaoxian*’ (performing) is an important tactic developed by Chinese subordinates to secure job promotion in competitive workplaces. *Biaoxian* not only shows one’s political thoughts but also ‘refers to a realm of individual qualities broader than one’s political attitudes’ (62). ‘In practice, employees who are unfailingly helpful, cooperative, and courteous in dealing with their supervisors make a more favourable impression on them, and tend to receive better evaluations...In fact, it is the former [subordinates] who are more helpful to the supervisors on a daily basis, who make their jobs easier’ (63). Although Walder never formally made the emotional component of this dependent relationship explicit, I consider that *biaoxian* already connotes a direction of attentiveness; that is, in order to secure individual welfare at the flexible discretion of the leader in competitive workplaces, the subordinate needs to demonstrate loyalty by showing/performing personal affective attachment to the leader. Therefore, this attentiveness has an upwards direction.

Not only in *danwei* is this type of dependency constructed; Li Zhang has also discovered that there is a strong patron-client networks formed in the Wenzhou migrants’ enclave in Beijing. Among the migrants, the leader mobilizes extended-kinship networks and

invokes fictive kinship relationships to consolidate his or her power. On the other hand, the migrants' leader acts as a middle-man to mediate the relation between migrants and local officials. Among the interviews that Zhang carried out with migrants' leaders, one particular paragraph caught my eye: 'He [one of her informants, Boss Jin] believed that a good *guanxi* relationship needed constant cultivation and care, and he did his best to maintain good personal ties with officialdom. He once made an analogy between making *guanxi* with officials and establishing a relationship with a deity: one cannot expect to get help from the Buddha if one does not go to burn incense and show devotion on a regular basis' (2001:81). Strikingly, similar idioms are cited by my Chinese interlocutors at my field sites as well. Here, it is important to point out that, by emphasizing the direction of attentiveness in a patron-client relationship, I do not mean it is only a one way system. On the contrary, I argue that the care, although often appearing in different forms, is exchanged and goes in two directions. Surely, Chinese leaders have great responsibilities to look after the workers; nevertheless, it is the worker who needs to be attentive first and constantly in order to stand out from the workforce and to exchange attention for favourable distribution of welfare and job promotion in the future. Therefore, this attentiveness has a temporal dimension and the long-term accumulative effect (in the Chinese case) is upwards in direction.

Social continuity or not, this kind of dependent relationship did appear at my field sites – a migrants' *danwei* enclave – between Chinese leaders and Chinese workers. As I briefly introduced above, the workplaces at my field are hierarchical. Workers enjoy welfare but are subject to the discretionary power of the leader. They are also under strict daily control. Obvious favouritism is widely applied, as a matter of routine, and work relations are highly personalized. There is little more to add regarding these shared characteristics; instead, in the following sections, I would like to give some ethnographic accounts from two facets to demonstrate the direction of attentiveness within this dependency. Along each point, I will also insert some relevant descriptions of daily struggles between Chinese boss and Zambian workers. To me, everyday misunderstandings at work provide an ideal case to prove the significance of the direction of attentiveness in dependent relationships.

To serve the leader

To serve the leader (*wei lingdao fuwu*) is an ironic twist of the old communist slogan 'To serve the people', which was used in Mao's era. 'To serve the people' is still being used as a linguistic ritual in China today, especially on anniversary military parades in Tian'anmen Square. At my field sites, the twisted version is often used by the Chinese workers to, first, mock the gap between the communist party slogan and social reality and second, to express daily frustrations at work – 'unlike in the early days of communist China that people was the gravity of politics, nowadays leaders are the true centre,' Barry (as I have explained, a Chinese translator for the construction company) once explained to me.

To serve the leader requires workers being attentive to the leader's needs all the time and endeavouring to keep the leader pleased. It is not just about fulfilling the leader's requirements at work. More importantly, it includes assisting the leader with personal issues at and outside workplaces. These matters may include arranging accommodation and transportation, carrying suitcases, making tea, keeping the leaders company while shopping or banqueting, welcoming and entertaining the leader's family when they are visiting and assisting the leader to deliver gifts during Chinese festivals. If it could be put more simply, to serve the leader is to look after the leader or to be the leader's 'valet'.

Keeping company, as '*pei*' in Chinese, is a crucial ingredient to show a worker's care towards to the leader. Usually workers show their attachment via gifts to the leader. Gifts go upwards and are normally tangible material goods such as clothes, alcohol, and jewellery etc. In return, the workers can obtain intangible 'gifts' from the leader – favour. Gifts can be given at any time of the year but normally during Chinese festivals or special events such as weddings, funerals etc. Nevertheless, gift-giving follows one rationale, that is, 'nobody is going to complain of too many gifts' (*liduo renbuguai*). All the same, considering that everyone can buy gifts, presenting gifts is relatively effortless; therefore, it is not sufficient to demonstrate one's 'having heart' (*youxin*: making effort/care) or 'sincerity' (*chengyi*). Consequently, showing one's attachment and affection to the leader via daily action steps in as a touchstone since it requires long-term, constant performance. *Pei*

becomes a popular strategic choice. As Barry once told me half-jokingly, ‘to serve the leader good means three *pei* – *pei chi* (keep company for eating), *pei he* (keep company for drinking), *pei liao* (keep company for chatting). Just adding one thing – *pei shui* (keep company for sleeping) – I would be their [leaders’] mistress! Thank goodness I am not a girl.’

Pei as an effective service to the leader can also be extended to the leader’s personal close contacts, such as friends or family. To be attentive to the leader’s close contacts is considered equivalent to showing one’s care to the leader himself/herself. This leads to one phenomenon in my field, which is borrowing (*jie*) workers. *Jie* is done through interpersonal relationship between the leaders. Workers normally do not have a say in such matters. Although it is extra work, they do not get paid for it. On the contrary, their routine work has to be delayed but still needs to be finished. As a result, this intertwined formal-informal work relationship makes Chinese workers occupied almost all the time. Indeed, ‘busy’ (*mang*) is the response I would hear every day when greeting other Chinese workers.

However, not everyone is needed to do these extra tasks. The leader only chooses the workers who s/he considers as ‘competent’ and ‘promising’. For the worker, carrying on some private matters for the leader may be a fast track to being promoted. Refusing such tasks, particularly without reasonable excuses, is considered as ‘not being able to comprehend the leader’s great expectation’ (*bushi taiju*). To be judged as ‘*bushi taiju*’ has serious consequences. Such worker will fall out of the leader’s favourite group and gradually ignored at work. Workers’ attentive services to the leader are linked with the evaluation of workers’ performance at work. The criteria of evaluation are very subjective. It is not enough if the worker just finishes the tasks required: the worker also has to make the leader pleased. This subjective evaluation leaves great uncertainty for worker’s self-assessment of performance outcomes; meanwhile, this uncertainty renews the worker’s desire to be more attentive to please the leader. This circuit could be very well illustrated through Barry’s story.

Like most young Chinese, Mr Barry adopted an English name, Barry, when he was in the university. While in the compound, Zambian workers like to call him Mr Barry. Mr Barry was born in a rural village of a Chinese northwest province during the

mid-1980s. He is not the only child but has two sisters. With parents who farm for a living, Mr Barry went to university to study English. During his time at university, Mr Barry took several jobs as a private English tutor to help with his fees and expenses. Soon after he finished his degree, he went to Beijing for a short-term job. Six months later, he joined the construction team going to Zambia. When I arrived at the compound, Mr Barry had already worked in Zambia for thirteen months.

As one of only a few people who can speak fluent English in the compound, Mr Barry has been allocated lots of jobs. Not only does he have to prepare company documents, negotiate with local officials and businessmen and manage the Zambian workers, he also needs to help the chef to do grocery shopping at the local market and accompany the leader bargaining at gemstone shops. Indeed, Mr Barry is very busy – too busy to have lunch on time every day. I would always see him running past my window. The only chance he had to sit down and talk with me was usually after 10pm when he finished his work.

‘How are you today?’ I asked

‘Very tired, but glad it's all finished.’

‘Oh, really? I thought you never feel tired, robot.’ I teased him and tried to relax him.

‘Who does not feel tired? Every day, I have endless work to do, one thing after another, never mind the ones which are not even my job. I actually do not mind doing lots of work. It is good chance for me to harden (*duanlian*: training). I am young and I need practice. But, sometimes, it can get very annoying, especially after all that effort to finish one task but our leader is not satisfied. He is very hard to please. It is my heart that feels tired (*xinlei*).’

‘Can't you complain to your leader?’

‘What! No way! I do not want to lose my job yet. It took me a while to find such an opportunity. I do not want him to think I am incompetent. Well, in some way, being busy is good. It means the leader trusts you.’

It would not be exaggerated to say that Mr Barry is very afraid of upsetting his leader. Mr Barry is a rather talkative person and naturally curious about Zambian culture and people. When he has time, he likes walking to the security booth after

dinner and chatting with the farm's security guards. Sometimes, the leader takes a walk after dinner as well. Spotting the leader approaching the booth, Mr Barry would immediately stop chatting and start heading back to his room. All the guards would find this odd. When I asked him why, he said the leader did not like seeing him getting close with the Zambians and he did not want to upset his leader.

As stated above, a similar rationale is shared by Liū Wei, another young Chinese worker in Zambia. It was because Liū Wei was afraid of upsetting his leader so to lose his job that his friendship with Lenny had to end. This was a rather common phenomenon among the young Chinese workers in Zambia. Most of them want to learn more about Zambia and its culture. They are very willing to talk with the locals and to be attentive to the workers. However, interactions are often cut off because of the control of the Chinese leader. For the leader, being too close to the Zambians means a threat to the hierarchy at work and damage to discipline. Therefore, attentiveness towards to the Zambian workers without consent from the leader is seen as a challenge to authority and potentially alienating one's own group. Most of the young Chinese workers are aware of this tension and few are willing to take the risk of alienating the leader especially when they predominately rely on *danwei* to provide welfare and future prosperity back in China. Nevertheless, I consider that their personal choices of prioritizing leaders' orders are very much influenced by the social status of their families. To show such influence, in the next chapter I will present contrasting cases, in which young Chinese workers confront their leaders sometimes even on behalf of the Zambian workers.

Being afraid of upsetting the leader indeed makes Mr Barry a very cautious man. Nevertheless, to get close to the leader entails uncertainty. After having worked at the construction team for a year, Mr Barry finally had a chance to keep his leader company on a week-long trip to South Africa. He was very excited when he was assigned; however, when he was back a week later, he looked rather sad.

'So how was your trip in South Africa? Was it good?' I went to see him in his room immediately when he was back.

'The city (Cape Town) is very good, clean and beautiful; much better than Lusaka. But the trip did not go well.' He replied with a quieter tone than usual. Sensing that he was

not in the mood for talking, I left him alone with his unpacking. Only a few days later, I heard that his leaders were not satisfied with his ‘work’ while in South Africa and even yelled at him several times in public. Out of concern, I decided to pay Mr Barry another visit. This time, he told me the whole story. The reason why his leaders were unhappy with him was that the hotel Mr Barry booked did not successfully register the booking so that they had to change hotel. The leaders blamed Mr Barry for not double-checking beforehand and not being diligent enough. Moreover, during the whole tour, the leaders thought that Mr Barry enjoyed the scene too much himself but did not ‘serve’ the leaders properly. He only assisted the leaders when asked rather than taking initiative. Several times, his leaders had to ask him to take pictures or book dining tables for them. The leaders criticised him as ‘not mature enough and not attentive enough’ (*buchengshu buxixin*). Mr Barry commented;

‘I still need lots of hardening (*duanlian*: training). Sometimes, I am too careless – not attentive enough and let the leader bother (*caoxin*) too much. To accompany the emperor is like accompanying the tiger (*banjun ru banhu*). These things happen. It [being yelled] is good. I actually learned a lot from this trip. Next time, I would pay much more attention and perform better.’

As Barry’s case has shown, a Chinese leader expects the workers to be versatile and multitasking and attentive to take on any matter that the leader needs to get done. This idea of work and working relationships is different from the one Zambian workers hold. This conflict appears in daily negotiations of job descriptions. Being attentive does not mean there is no division among the Chinese workers based on occupation. Nevertheless, when it comes to the work that everyone is able to do (*lisuo nengji*), such as cleaning, the division of occupation blurs since Chinese workers are ready to carry on variable kinds of tasks to keep the leader pleased. By contrast, the Zambian workers place more emphasis on the division of occupation. Therefore, the negotiation between Chinese leaders and Zambian workers over job description is always about what tasks and duties come with one certain type of job. For example, the Zambian workers would refuse to clean the ground if they were hired as chauffeur. They would refuse to carry tables and chairs for a conference preparation if they were employed as security guards. For the Chinese boss, cleaning the ground or carrying tables are the tasks everyone should be able to do (*lisuo nengji*) and shall do; while,

for the Zambian workers, these tasks are not within their job description so they have no responsibility for them. Refusal to take the *lisuo nengji* task is regarded by Chinese bosses as challenging authority and very upsetting actions; while being forced to do the task out of one's job description is considered by Zambian workers as downgrading one's social status and being used as slaves. Consequently, every day the task allocation is questioned. The general pattern of the arguments is normally as follows:

Zambian worker: This is not my job. I am a [profession]. If you want this work done, you should hire [profession] to do it. I am not a general worker.

Chinese boss: It is not hard work. Everyone should be able to do it. You are a worker. You should do what the manager asks you to do.

As a result, argument by argument, Chinese bosses have learned a strategy; that is, when employing new workers, everyone is labelled as 'general worker' in the contract. Gradually, there is no gardener, no driver, and no cleaner but only general worker. Ironically, the general worker earns the lowest pay among all occupations. Indeed, in this case, for Chinese bosses, workers earn more rewards because they are attentive and versatile at work, but for Zambian workers, they should earn more rewards because of their occupation.

Don't give the leader extra trouble

If 'to service the leader' focus on the active attentiveness which the workers pursue every day at work in order to stand out from the competitive crowd, the advice 'don't give the leader extra trouble' stresses the passive side of worker's behaviour. The first time when I witnessed the leader's attitude towards the problem of extra trouble (*luan/mafan*) was welcoming a Chinese delegation at Lusaka International Airport. Members of Chinese delegations are normally from a higher administrative ranking than the Chinese leaders in Zambia. So being attentive suddenly becomes the leaders' main task. It is usually the busiest time for the leader as s/he needs to carefully design the itinerary according to the personal preferences of his/her leader (the delegation's highest ranking official) and liaise with many Chinese companies in Zambia to arrange accommodation, meals, party venues, transport, day trips, entertainment, etc. Preparation to host the delegation group can sometimes take months. During the whole process, other routine work is inevitably delayed.

A subtle and smooth welcome can demonstrate the leader's management ability and his attentiveness to his leader. The main principle is to make the whole arrival procedure run as smoothly and quickly as possible to cause less trouble for the delegation.

Manager Bao, as the main leader of the educational farm, took charge of the welcoming. Having chosen his favourite workers, Bao arrived at the airport three hours in advance. He asked the translator Xiao Liū to negotiate with airport security so that they could drive the car into the landing field so the delegation would not have to queue to go through immigration control. The initial negotiation failed due to a recently-published airport security control policy. Nevertheless, as they succeeded before, Bao blamed Xiao Liū for not explaining the situation to the airport security clearly enough and insisted Xiao Liū should try again. 'Tell them, this time big leaders are coming! (*dalindao*),' Bao stressed. After another half hour of negotiation, Bao lost patience and changed his plan. He went to the arrival lobby and attempted to go pass the immigration control into the landing field himself so he could assist the delegation personally when they exited the airport. After another long negotiation, Bao got through this time. By talking with the immigration officers, Bao persuaded them to open the fast track usually for diplomats even though the delegation members were not qualified as diplomats. So far so good.

Once the plane landed, Bao immediately sent Xiao Liū to collect the delegation's luggage. Without waiting in the long queue, the delegation took the diplomatic track and quickly passed the immigration control. By the time they arrived at the luggage zone, Xiao Liū had already collected most of the luggage. While waiting for the rest, Bao explained his initial plan for welcoming the delegation by car in the landing field and asked the delegation for forgiveness that they would have to drag their own luggage about ten metres to the airport exit where the car was already waiting. All went through the check-point very fast with no problem until it came to the last member of the delegation, the deputy party secretary of the provincial education ministry.

'Sir, please take your luggage there for a customs check,' a young *Zambian* officer pointed to a luggage checking platform. The deputy party secretary looked confused and I explained to him that it was a random luggage check.

‘There is nothing to check,’ the secretary told the customs officers in Chinese while they were going through his luggage. Then they pointed to some boxes in the luggage and asked, ‘What is inside these boxes?’

‘Nothing!’

‘Sorry, we need to open these boxes and check.’ Seeing the officers start to unpack the boxes, the secretary became upset. He turned to me and said,

‘Tell them, these are the gifts for their national leaders! The Vice-president! If they break anything, can they take responsibility?’ Noticing that the officers had not stopped the search, the secretary began to accuse them,

‘Tell them, I am a leader! I am here to aid Africans. If they keep causing trouble like this, even in such a small matter, who on earth will help them in future!’

I did not translate this sentence in the end partly because I was shocked by such an explicit statement and by the leader’s very own awareness of the privileges coming with his title. For the secretary, it seems that being a leader has the right of priority and the priority comes with the leader’s own will with smooth conditions of fulfilment created (*chuangzao tiaojian*) by the subordinates. As the secretary commented in the end, rather irritated, ‘this thing would have never happened in China!’

Don’t cause trouble for the leader, expressed as *butianluan* in Chinese, is the other side of the same coin of ‘care for the leader’. It may contain two aspects: respectively, avoid causing unnecessary trouble to the leader, and show self-discipline (*zili*) and independence (*zili*). The implicit rationale as some workers explained to me is that the leader is already busy enough and should focus on grand matters (*dashi*) at work instead of solving workers’ personal problems. Workers therefore are supposed to take care of themselves and to make the leader’s work as smooth as possible. The function of the leader is to make crucial decisions and corresponding orders while the function of the worker is to succeed in reaching their target without bothering the leader too much.

As argued above, in work relations, Zambian workers expect the boss to take care of them, at work as well as at home. This understanding is not very compatible with Chinese emphasis on self-discipline and independence. In practice, the Zambian workers did seek daily help from the Chinese bosses when they were in trouble. They would ask for salt

or sugar if they were short for cooking lunch. They would ask for washing liquid and gloves if the boss asks them to clean up. They would ask the Chinese boss to arrange a car to drive them back home if their bicycle was broken. They would ask for a loan from the boss if they needed money for lunch or for a bicycle or for house renovation. At the beginning, the boss did not mind helping but, as time went on, the Chinese boss became rather annoyed. For many times, I heard the Chinese boss complain about the Zambian workers;

‘They are just like spoiled children, so demanding and not independent at all! They ask for everything, even though their payment already covers it. They find you for every little ‘sesame trouble’ (*zhimadadeshi*). It is very annoying, just like a ‘hassle-mother’ (*shi’erma*: a female always causing trouble). I have so many important things to deal with. Who has the time and energy to deal with them all the time! Why can’t they just take care of themselves?’

To be independent and to avoid extra trouble for the leader does not mean that workers can make their own decisions at work. Making decisions is the demonstration of a leader’s authority and power at work. It is also a form of control. In general, the Chinese workers are supposed to obey the manager’s orders, report frequently on their work progress (*huibao*) to the manager and ask for instruction (*qingshi*) when a decision is needed. Failure to report or to ask for decisions may cause the manager’s dissatisfaction and lead to the worker being criticised as ‘*shanzi zuozhu*’ (making decisions when one is not the position to). It is considered as bad self-discipline and disrespectful to the leader’s authority. This is the criticism that Zambian workers usually suffer.

Thomas was the driver for the educational farm. In his mid-thirties, he worked as a taxi driver in Lusaka for several years before being recruited by the farm manager. After having refused to take orders from the manager to clean the car, water the flowers or sweep the ground, Thomas was downgraded from driver to a general worker when the manager renewed his employment contract although driving remains his main task. Most arguments took place between Thomas and the manager when they were in the car. On three very extreme occasions, the manager even forced Thomas to stop while driving in the highway and gave him an angry lecture because Thomas made a decision without the manager's permission. Such decisions sometimes included a sudden detour to the petrol station while the manager was late for a business meeting or taking a new route which the

manager was not familiar with when he was in a rush. For Thomas, these decisions may be with good intention, such as saving travelling time or avoiding accidents, but for the manager, these decisions were unpredictable and might potentially ruin the whole plan, and also not ones Thomas should have made. When I asked Thomas the reason for such actions, he told me,

‘I am just trying to help. I have been a professional driver for twelve years. I know what I am doing. In a car, the driver should be the one in charge. You arrive safely at the place then it is fine. You Chinese are very difficult to communicate with. Always want me to do it the way you want. You never listen to advice. I am not stupid you know. I think too.’

As time went on, gradually the arguments became less and less. On one hand, the translator supplemented the manager’s orders by adding extra information. For example, instead of merely translating the destination, the translator would also add extra sentences to make the order very explicit, such as ‘no need for extra petrol’ or ‘use Great East Road’. On the other hand, Thomas was learning how to obey the orders. In my last discussion with Thomas before I finished my fieldwork, I asked him what he had learned from working for the Chinese. One point which he made rather clear was that ‘Chinese are good as long as I do what the boss asks me to do.’

This reflection of work relations is not just limited to the Zambian workers. Quite a few Chinese workers, especially the young workers, in my field are very self-aware of their conditions, especially after observing how the Zambian workers respond to the Chinese leader. Many times I have heard complaints about the working relation between Chinese leaders and Chinese workers. First of all, workers complain about tiredness (*lei*).

‘The work just seems endless. When you finish one task, another one comes in. Sometimes, one has to do lots of work at the same time. Plus, leaders are always in a hurry. Everything needs to be done very quickly. It is so frustrating, especially here [Zambia]; they [Zambian workers] work too slow. [Sigh] Nowadays, everyone is a *ye* [literally ‘grandpa’ or leader]. You can’t offend anyone (*dezui*). So tiring!’ a senior Chinese worker once told me after we played ping-pong together.

Furthermore, lack of personal freedom is also a common topic when workers talk about their experiences at work. *Meiziyou* (no autonomy) and the requirement of *tinghua* (obedience) are the terms they frequently use. The workers complain of the strong interference of the leader over their work and life and also advise me that it is better to be obedient and not to challenge the leader. Once a translator told me,

‘Here [Zambia], they [the leaders] control everything and want to know everything. There is no freedom at all. One has to get permission even just to go out with friends for dinner or cinema! They [the leader] always say that this is for our [the workers] good and this is them being responsible. We all know it is just bullshit (*pihua*). But we have to listen. No one wants to upset the leader. As long as the leader is happy, everyone will be happy. Only obeying the leaders’ words (*ting lingdao hua*) can keep one out of trouble. Just do whatever the leader asks you to do.’

The more radical complaints I heard were usually from the younger workers born since the 1980s (the so-called *80-hou* in China). Once, Xiao Liü and I went to another Chinese construction site in Lusaka to pick up an electrician who had been 'borrowed' by the leader of the farm. The electrician was 25 but had worked in Zambia for almost two years. After he heard that I was studying in the UK, he began to comment on his job,

‘The western countries always criticize the Chinese government’s lack of respect for human rights. Now I understand. We indeed do not have any human rights at all – always working and not allowed to go out. I have been here [Zambia] two years but barely visited any place. I want to know this country! Anyway, I am glad that my contract finishes soon. There is no way I am coming back. At least, I get more freedom at home!’

Xiao Liü also liked coming to my room after dinner to talk about his feelings, especially when he felt stressed after the leader criticised him. Many times he reflected, ‘Sometimes, I think we are worse than the black workers. At least, they are not afraid to stand up and fight when they are not happy. You see, how many Chinese dare to challenge the leader? We are the true slaves! [sigh] So sad. It is the bad system (*zhidu*). Hopeless.’

Although I heard many such complaints privately, I saw few Chinese workers speak straightforwardly and confront the leader perhaps concerning their future career. Ironically, showing great attentiveness first to the leader so to get into his/her personal

favourite circle can offer the workers a way out of the ‘toughness’ at work. Therefore, to some extent, attentiveness from workers to the leader at Chinese workplaces is not just exchange for welfare or job promotion; sometimes, it can simply be a tactic to avoid a heavy workload. To become the leader’s personal favourite means one can fall into the leader’s authority shadow, turn into a middle-man and enjoy certain privileges in the competitive work environment. This tactic could be shown through Liü Wei’s story.

Liü Wei was an administrator for the construction team. He (born in the late 1980s) is one year younger than Mr Barry. Like Mr Barry, Liü Wei is also from a Chinese rural village but in a south-eastern province. He also has a sister and his parents are both farmers. Liü Wei studied computer science in a university in his home province. Immediately after graduation, he was recruited by this construction company (again, from the same province). Having worked at the central company in China more than a year, Liü Wei with some of his colleagues were assigned to Zambia for projects. This work experience in China makes Liü Wei’s situation in Zambia dramatically different from Mr Barry’s although they share a very similar social background.

Liü Wei is a close friend of the team leader. Back in China, they are from the same province and used to work together as colleagues in the same department under the same leader. When allocated the project in Zambia, as a senior, Liü Wei’s friend got promoted as the team leader. This shared experience offered Liü Wei some advantages. He was assigned to live next door to the leader and worked as an administrative staff member in charge of cross-checking the engineering papers, printing and filing documents. His work is relatively easy. During the day, Liü Wei spent most of his time in his room. He always jokingly called himself a ‘*zhainan*’ (domestic boy). Compared with Mr Barry, Liü Wei’s work life is very idle. Every time when I popped into his room for a chat, I could see him either playing computer games or watching American soap operas. Although he speaks English, Liü Wei was not required to do any translation or manage any Zambian workers, except Lenny. Nevertheless, now and then he did help Mr Barry with some work in order to prevent Mr Barry’s ‘psychological imbalance’ (*xinli bupingheng*: jealousy) as he called. Liü Wei is much busier at nights, especially during the weekend. He attends most banquets with his leaders – drinking and eating has become his routine ‘work’. Also, the leaders always

want his company for karaoke and casino. If some young workers, such as Mr Barry, want to go out during the weekend, they always try to persuade Liü Wei to join them because he can borrow the car and get permission from the leader. Comparatively, Liü Wei does enjoy more freedom than other workers. The leader does not interfere with him much. As he put it, ‘our leader does not control me that much. We have deep *jiaoqing* (interactional emotion). As long as I do not cross the line (*guofen*), he won’t ask.’

Liü Wei’s ‘easy life’ did not last long. Once the farm building was built and the whole construction team shifted to a new site, the team leader was appointed to Zimbabwe to set up a new project. Although the new team leader was from the same province as him (as were most other workers in the team), Liü Wei’s situation became more and more like Mr Barry’s. After they moved, I visited them three times. In the new site, Liü Wei shared a room with Mr Barry and started to manage the Zambian workers. Once, even though I only stayed with him for thirty minutes, our chat was interrupted twice by the new leader’s calls and four times by workers knocking at the door asking for assistance. In the end, I was trying to ask him out for a dinner. He refused: ‘I cannot. This new leader is tough and very difficult to deal with. He tries to give me trouble all the time. I guess it may be because he did not get on well with team leader Gan (the previous team leader) and he knows that I am close to him. Anyway, now, I cannot act that freely (*suibian*) anymore. I have to be more careful.’ The last time I saw Liü Wei before I left the field, he was seriously considering going back China to work in the mother company again.

Conclusion

Returning to the vignette I presented at the beginning of this chapter, how can one understand the negotiation and the trigger of negotiation between Liü Wei and Lenny? To recapitulate, Lenny was trying to claim his own rights at work by invoking local ethics and practices on boss-worker relations, such as ‘a boss shall take care of his workers and help them when they are in trouble, just like a family’. In defence, Liü Wei was concerned with the Chinese way of dealing with leader-worker relationship, for example, ‘workers shall try not to cause boss trouble and cannot challenge the boss’. From a purely objective point of view, one can easily unveil the exploitative nature of labour relations and argue that the cause of this vignette is

the lack of legal protection for local workers at Chinese enterprises in Zambia. Nevertheless, as I have argued in this chapter, this approach would face the danger of losing insight of the impact of intersubjectivity and emotion played and performed in everyday work relations. One point is clear in the vignette; that is, neither Lenny nor Liü Wei was questioning the inequality or the exploitation between boss and worker at work. On the contrary, it is the ethics and informal work relationship that they are both concerned with and it is ‘membership’ that they desire – a form of membership which relies on mutual dependency filled with care. As a result, for them, the focus of negotiation is the issue of what form of dependency shall be applied on a Chinese farm in Zambia.

By broadly applying the concept of emotional labour, in this chapter, I have argued that it is the affective component bundled in dependency that causes the everyday misunderstanding and arguments between Zambian workers and Chinese bosses. In other words, the Zambians expect the Chinese bosses to take care of the workers (attentiveness goes down) but the Chinese bosses expect the workers to show great attentiveness towards them (attentiveness goes up). These conflictive expectations of affection not only trigger everyday disagreements but also haunt the sociality between Chinese and local Zambians. As I have elaborated above, even though young Chinese workers are willing to be friends with Zambian workers, this willingness to bond is inevitably hindered by the Chinese leaders’ social expectations, their control and the competition for attentiveness with Zambian workers.

Nevertheless, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this direction of attentiveness is not exhaustive or exclusive. It is an accumulative inclination after long-term negotiation of work relations and subject to contextual variations. Between Zambian bosses and Zambian farm workers, attentiveness is morally expected to be performed by the boss in exchange for the worker’s loyalty, personal reputation as well as stable and non-conflictive production. The attentiveness goes downward, I speculate, due to the political context of long-term unionization in Zambia so that the locus of power resides with workers. Meanwhile, in the case of Chinese leaders and Chinese workers, the context of this accumulative inclination is multi-faceted. On one hand *danwei*, as a socio-historical institution, provides a solid conceptual foundation for my Chinese interlocutors to practice

dependency at work. However, as Yan documents, regarding the political power relations in *Xiajia* village, there has been a shift in the role of cadres following decollectivisation and marketization. As he points out,

‘The reforms have eroded cadres’ previous power and privilege by breaking their monopoly over resources and by creating new income opportunities that make the accumulation of personal wealth more attractive than the political rewards offered by the party state. Their political role in village society has also changed from that of the tyrannical “local emperor” ruling the village as the agent of the party state to prudent middlemen who negotiate between the state and village society. For villagers, the reforms have ended their dependence on the collectives and the cadres who ran them, and have thereby to a great extent freed them from cadre domination.’ (2009:50)

Clearly, Yan reasons that the absolute power of cadres over villagers before reform was fundamentally drawn from the fact that villagers had no alternative options but to depend on cadres for the resources under their control. Bearing this change in mind, though, specifically at my field sites, this form of dependency is reinforced under the condition of Chinese leaders’ strict control over Chinese workers’ activities and welfare in Zambia. As my Chinese interlocutors repeatedly mentioned, they are longing to go back to China immediately after they finish their projects, as in China they enjoy more freedom.

This notwithstanding, although the direction of attentiveness may vary when the context changes, there is indeed a dimension of affection bundled with different forms of dependency. This impact of affection has been clearly demonstrated by John Osburg’s very recent ethnography on everyday socialization among elites in Chengdu, China. He describes the important function of courting favour (*goudui* in his informants’ term) in gaining officials’ trust. He contends that, against the inflation of material gifts and commodified pleasure, affections become crucial to attract the protection of officials. Subordinates need to ‘employ techniques of entertaining, flattery, and gift giving to win the favour and affection of his superiors’ (2013: 96). Instead of analysing how ‘the market’ is transforming the social life in China, Osburg intends to ‘demonstrate how “marketization” in China is best understood as a process of embedding new economic structures and opportunities into existing and emergent social networks that straddle state and society’(28). Strikingly, there is great similarity between his ethnographic descriptions and my data.

Therefore, it seems arguable that, even after decades of economic reform in China, the significance of affection embedded in any form of social relations (attentiveness at work in this chapter) is strengthened rather than diminishing.

Considering this significant impact of the affective component within dependency not only on everyday production but also on sociality formation, here I would like to propose that, when studying social structures and institutions, anthropologists should not omit the affective component. Here let me provisionally term this embedded affective component ‘the spirit of structure’. By the spirit of structure, to emphasize again, I mean, the *affective* component bundled in social structures. This bundled affection needs to be performed according to social expectation. Broadly speaking, one could claim that every meaningful social representation includes certain social expectations of affects, and the social performances of these affects, although not necessarily to be capitalised in every case, certainly influence everyday social perception, decision and interaction. I will elaborate more about this concept from the perspective of cognition in next chapter when analysing moral decision-making and everyday moral interactions. So far, I hope that in this chapter I have raised enough awareness, via presenting my field sites, of the significant role that affection plays in everyday interaction and production at work. I consider this perspective needs to be specially stressed following the arrival of the post-industrial (especially service-based) era and the boom of cross-cultural contacts and cooperation.

Chapter Four: Virtues Lay In between

In the last three chapters, by introducing everyday interactions as I observed them in my field sites, I have been demonstrating the significant role that emotion plays in forming and sustaining social relations between Chinese migrants; furthermore, I have noted how emotion, specifically anxiety and suspicion, may serve to cut off the initial interactions between Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts. In the last chapter, I began to take an analytical turn to stress the embeddedness of emotion in the process of sociality and in the cultural practices of social relationships; more particularly, I examined how communication is hindered at work between Chinese leaders and Zambian workers in spite of their interactions being unavoidable. From this chapter onwards, I would like to zoom out my lens a little to look at general problems in the process of Chinese-Zambian interaction in relation to moral and linguistic communication. Theoretically, instead of merely focusing on *person-to-person* emotion, I will further concentrate on the *embeddedness* of emotion in social roles, interactive situations and even Chinese epistemology. As I briefly mentioned in the Introduction, ‘emotion’ not only entails individual inner psychological state (e.g. fear) and empathy between people, but also may be extended to a third dimension; that is, ‘emotion’ is built in material and social objects and everyday situations. This dimension of emotion further encourages or prevents communication between individuals, and influences the formation and sustainability of social relations. In other words, a smooth communication requires interlocutors synchronously to recognize and react to the ‘emotion’ bundled in objects and situations in a similar way. This shared intersubjective response to objects or situations (people-to-things) enhances the emotional proximity and intimacy between individuals. Through my observations in my field sites, I will describe the impact of emotion on everyday interactions and sociality in relation to its third dimension, which I will discuss at length in theoretical terms in the Conclusion.

Beyond Good and Bad: From Morality to Ethics

How to study morality anthropologically — not as a phenomenon that is equivalent with society but rather as a special domain — has become a well-developed research interest in the last decade or so. This focus, although partly attributable to James Laidlaw's influential lecture '*For an Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom*', fundamentally is owing to the fact that morality has always been present in ethnography along with other social phenomena and most anthropologists can easily find something to say about it once the topic is announced (Robbins, 2012).

As Laidlaw observes, anthropologists have tended to conflate the collective with the moral and this is the theoretical presupposition that he opposes in his lecture. For Laidlaw, this conflation derives from Durkheim's legacy, which takes 'society to be based on *moral obligation*, and indeed defined it as being a system of moral facts' (2002:312, italics added). This identification of the moral with the collective as well as with the good, as Laidlaw further contends, 'means everything and nothing' (313). More importantly, such presupposition to comprehend morality in the perspective of social duty backed up by authority and respect, as Laidlaw illustrates, inevitably imposes dictates of collectivities and leaves little or no room for freedom – 'the claim that what he (Durkheim) has left us with is Kant with the freedom taken away' (313). And for Laidlaw, freedom is conceptually crucial because 'an anthropology of ethics will only be possible – will only be prevented from constantly collapsing into general questions of social regularity and social control – if we take seriously, as something requiring ethnographic description, the possibilities of human freedom' (315).

In order to get away the 'theoretical trap' that Durkheim set up for anthropologists to study morality, Laidlaw encouraged anthropologists to distinguish the term 'morality' as 'ethical systems where self-denying values inform law-like obligations' (317) from 'ethics' as self-fashioning and techniques of the self. Laidlaw believes that invoking Foucault's notions, if reinterpreted correctly and comprehensively, could offer anthropologists a way to study morality ethnographically without facing the danger of losing freedom from the picture. Following Foucault, Laidlaw defines freedom as personal conscious reflection under the condition of choice and in the process of self-transformation.

In other words, freedom lies in personal choices of what kinds of self one wills to be. This distinction between morality and ethics brings the anthropological studies of morality from ‘structure’ down to the level of ‘agency’ (Stafford 2010) as well as shifting the gaze from static moral norms to the process of ethical becoming.

Inspired by Laidlaw, anthropologists have begun stepping away from the idea that morality is a system of normative rules and started to focus on everyday ethical practices while theoretically engaging with the philosophical writings of Aristotle (Lambek 2010), Foucault (Faubion 2011) and Heidegger (Zigon 2008, 2009). Instead of asking what is good, anthropologists have started to ask how one ought to live.

To leave alone the question of how one could interpret Durkheim’s ideas differently, although the distinction pulls anthropologists out of Durkheim’s trap and points to a new approach to study morality anthropologically, I consider that such a theoretical shift – from obeying social obligations to actively seeking reflection and self-transformation – may quickly lead anthropologists into another trap if not enough care is taken. In philosophy, it is well known that virtue theory, to which camp Aristotle and Foucault belong, has its own limitations. It inevitably embraces a teleological default for arguments. It is true that virtue theory goes beyond the cold rule-bonded moral system and brings human consciousness back into the main picture; however, the question of who ultimately gives the denotation and connotation of virtues can never be avoided, which, in a way, has long been criticised by post-modernists as a form of power. Ironically, they also learned from Foucault, perhaps Nietzsche as well. Of course, Laidlaw was very aware of this dilemma so, in his paper, he was at pains to rectify the well-established and widely-applied anthropological concept of ‘agency’ (Laidlaw 2002: 315; 2010) partially by re-investigating Foucault’s late writings in the aspect of self-reflection and ethical choice. As Laidlaw observes;

‘Foucault is making the same point when he says that, when “the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practice of the self”, these practices are ‘models that he finds in his culture and are proposed suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, his social group” (1984c [2000:291]. This does not mean that his doing so is not an exercise of freedom, but that freedom he exercises is of a definite, historically produced kind...he (Foucault) describes it as “not just representations that inhabit conduct”, so not the stuff in which anthropology often deals, the taken-for-granted cultural representations, or habitués, or

“discourse”. Instead, “it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem” (2000:17)’ (2002:324).

Here, the freedom seems embedded in rather than existing in separation with power; and heavily relies on consciousness. Suddenly, ethics turns into the mere means to achieve the end of morality. Nevertheless, in such defence against power, the ethical self in Laidlaw’s ideal unavoidably needs to become very *introspective*, possibly sceptical and surely make lots of choices – to some extent, very much like a philosopher.

To me, this emphasis on self-fashioning and choices for the sake of personal freedom could potentially cause a series of problems for anthropologists. First of all, the practice of choices has its own limitation, not just on historical conditions but also on cognitive capacity. For example, as psychologists have proved repeatedly, automaticity is a normal mode for human behaviours (for more, see John Bargh, 1994; Robert Cialdini, 2001). In daily life, people do not constantly make conscious choices all the time. Life simply flows. If this is the case, logically speaking, how often are people free or ethical in an ideal anthropological sense? Moreover, it has been agreed so far that most decisions are made in a snap based on intuition while the slow motion of reflection only occurs occasionally (Kahneman, 2012). If this is true, it seems only plausible that one needs to cultivate regular reflections first in order to become ethical.

Furthermore, over-estimating self-reflection is likely to omit the extrospective and intersubjective factor of the collective. Ethical actions can be token-based and assessed variably by others according to different social situations and social relationships. More often, we find that it is not what we want to become but what others want us to become that matters. In some societies, being ethical can be predominantly about achieving the social expectations of other members because maintaining a good social relationship is considered as crucial in the practice of personhood (Robbins, 2004). Therefore, seemingly, investigating cultural practices of selfhood and sociality should be the precondition of studying ethics anthropologically, before rushing into the presumption of universal introspective self-reflection.

More seriously, such redefinition of freedom¹⁹ if slightly misread – focusing too much on choices and neglecting morality as willing responses to collective invitation – may potentially impose researchers’ implicit ethical value and disposition to analyse moral phenomena, by which I refer to individualism and rights-based moral understanding. Obviously, this has always been a routine critique of social scientists against western moral philosophers. Such potential danger has already been acknowledged by some anthropologists. As Joel Robbins points out, ‘any recourse to freedom within anthropological theory has thus seemed to me to risk falling into the trap of promoting western common sense models of social action to the lofty position of universal theories’ (2007:295). To avoid the new trap, he ‘strongly resist(s) having to throw out the Durkheimian baby with the bathwater of too rigid models of cultural reproduction as the price to be paid for securing an anthropological concept of freedom’ (295). Following Robbins, Yan Yunxiang (2011) also tried to pull the audience’s gaze back to Durkheim by analysing *immorality* in Chinese society. Having done so, it seems that anthropology of morality, if it ever existed, may have started on the track of looping back to where it originally began.

The background reason for this loop arguably lies in an accustomed set of theoretical dichotomies in anthropology; namely, morality:ethics :: structure:agency :: constraint:freedom. To be fair, this is precisely what Laidlaw endeavoured to eliminate in his original paper. Still, it is difficult to reconcile the relation between the default theoretical position of anthropology and the common interpretation of freedom in western philosophy. On the one hand, social constructionism has long been the trademark of the anthropological tradition; that is, social structure constitutes or even determines individual thinking and action. On the other hand, freedom has been popularly understood as personal liberation and release from constraints. So how could studying freedom be feasible in anthropology? A compatibilist position turns out to be an easy solution. Therefore, anthropologists started to incorporate choices into social construction – society becomes open by offering limited

¹⁹ For me, this is the original contribution Laidlaw makes; namely, opening up spaces for the practice of individual freedom without losing the impact of social structures. In order to achieve this, he emphasizes motivation and desire after personal conscious decision. Nevertheless, how different is this from Durkheim’s position if one is allowed to read it from the perspective of social contract?

choices and the individual becomes compliant by finding the right social inspiration. Despite such attempts, choice-based compatibilist freedom normally presupposes a rational individual in the background. In anthropology, such presupposition can only reinforce the set of dichotomy above rather than demolishing it. Therefore, the crucial question to me seems to be how anthropologists could avoid the double traps – those of being over-Durkheimian trap and Eurocentric – and go beyond the loop of dichotomy to study morality ethnographically through learning from comparative anthropology, moral psychology and philosophy.

How can the ethnography of China potentially help anthropologists to avoid these traps and contribute to the anthropology of morality in general? First, it could be argued that social rules are not, in fact, very rigid in China any more. It has been widely acknowledged that Chinese society has experienced and is experiencing dramatic social transformation in the process of ‘open the market’ in the past decades. Anthropologists have long been arguing the decline of traditional Chinese virtues and the consequential ‘moral vacuum’ in Chinese villages (Liu, 2000); meanwhile, a new set of moral practices is emerging, particularly following the rise of Chinese individualization pushed by capitalistic marketization, and a parallel multi-moral system is forming (Yan, 2009, 2009a). In practice, this brings uncertainty to everyday life, particularly in moral education. As Vanessa Fang (1999) has documented, the confusion of Chinese parents caused by rapid social change makes domestic moral education of children problematic. Although this moral ambiguity has popularly been considered as a consequence of economic liberalization, it is arguable that moral pluralism has always existed in Chinese philosophy given various religious practices across history. Put aside, therefore, theoretically Chinese society indeed offers an example which falls out of Durkheim’s world of rigid moral obligations and which offers enormous choices for individuals every day – a good sample to avoid the Durkheimian trap in the study of ethics.

Second, as Yan Yunxiang has pointed out, ‘moral rights and duties are defined and fulfilled differently in accordance with one’s *position* in a given relationship. Many of the behavioural norms and moral values do not apply to people who are outside one’s network of social relationships’ (2009a:19, italics added), which he termed as

‘particularistic morality’. This observation of moral practice corresponds well with Fei Xiaotong’s model of Chinese selfhood and sociality – ‘differential mode of association’ (*chaxugeju*) (1992), which I have already discussed at length in previous chapters. For the purpose of this chapter, I would like only to stress two characteristics of such mode relating to moral practice in China –

1) Maintaining personal relations is valued more than following rigid rules; that is, rules could be re-interpreted for application according to relational proximity. As Fei writes;

‘[A]ll the standards of value in this system were incapable of transcending the differential personal relationships of the Chinese social structure. The degree to which Chinese ethics and laws expand and contract depend on a particular context and how one fits into that context...In such a society, general standards have no utility. The first thing to do is to understand the specific context: Who is the important figure, and what kind of relationship is appropriate with that figure? Only then can one decide the ethical standards to be applied in that context’ (1992:78-79)

2) The focus on context and one’s position in that context gives special significance to ‘social roles’ and ‘office’. This has been termed ‘role ethics’ by Roger Ames while comparing Confucian moral theory with Western philosophical tradition, which I will come back for elaboration later in the chapter. Coming down to moral interactions, people pay more attention to other’s expectations of the fitness between oneself and one’s roles, than to self-reflection. In other words, the self is more external than internal. Consequently, daily cultivation of the moral self concentrates on fulfilling a role and responding to social expectations. This emphasis on intersubjectivity in Chinese sociality, I believe, could provide a check and prevent anthropologists from falling into the introspective and Eurocentric trap. What is more interesting, with the assumption of the rise of Chinese individualization, is that controlled comparative case studies may become possible via cross-generational sampling.

3) The gift economy enjoys a long history and broad social significance in Chinese society. As I have argued in Chapter Two, along with the discussions of the Chinese ‘art of *guanxi*’ and instrumentalism (Mayfair Yang 1994; Kipnis 1997), *renqing* as a type of moral practice has always been documented but never fully explored, especially from the perspective of moral sentiment. As Yan (1996) illustrated, *renqing* emphasizes as much

reciprocity as emotion. Inspired by David Hume and his followers in moral psychology and cognitive science (Churchland 2011; Haidt 2012), I propose that Chinese moral practice of *renqing* can offer anthropologists an alternative approach from the aspect of emotive morality and intersubjectivity to study ethics ethnographically. I think such approach not only could supplement the established ethical choice and ‘moral breakdown theory’ (Zigon 2007) in anthropology of morality but also may provide a useful side-track for anthropologists to get out of the loop above via diminishing the dichotomy all together, which point I will return to at the end of this chapter.

In this chapter, first, I would like to present comparative case studies of the different generational moral attitudes to stealing in the Chinese community at Zambia and I argue that the practice of selfhood, either formed through living in different historical contexts or nurtured with different social and economic status, does affect everyday moral behaviours. Second, I will share a story of how a Chinese young man transformed himself ethically from the experiences of working as a worker then working as a boss. Not only will I demonstrate the significance of social roles on personal ethical cultivation, but also through the story I aim to shift the focus to the process of subjectification of the moral sentiment which is bundled in the virtues of certain social roles. Third, possibly more specific to my field context – across racial and cultural communication – I will investigate the impact of the Chinese notion of ‘*renqing*’, especially its affective component ‘the sensation of *renqing*’ (*renqingwei’er*), on Chinese practical moral reasoning in the moral interactions between Chinese and Zambians. Following such cases, in the conclusion, I will evaluate the possible approaches of studying morality anthropologically in the trend of increasing cross-group, cross-cultural and cross-racial contacts, either from the perspective of rigid moral rules, as self-reflective virtuous cultivation or as intersubjective moral emotion.

To Steal or Not to Steal

East is the head of technicians at the China-Zambia Agriculture Technology Demonstration Center. After an unhappy divorce three years ago, he ‘volunteered’ to come to Zambia in order to escape the social tension his ex-wife caused among his workmates at a university back in China. Although ashamed of having a divorce at his late fifties and his domestic

problems disclosed to the public, East is proud of his professional skills in farming, and based on these skills he demands respect from others. East cherishes his ‘face’ (*mianzi*) and title. He prefers to be called ‘teacher’ instead of ‘technician’ and is ready to put up a fight if anyone does not recognize his ‘face’.

Apart from all this, there is something more about East, rather peculiar, perhaps due to the socio-historical era he grew up in; that is, he is one of the men in the generation who have lived through the Chinese Communist Movement and the Cultural Revolution. East was born in 1954. Growing up in a city, like most teenagers at that time, he was sent down to work in a machine factory for Communist Re-Education (*gongchanzhuyi zaijiaoyu*). As East once recalled,

‘Life was rather tough in those days but more fun. We (the workers) worked very hard from dawn to dusk every day to earn work points (*gong fen'er*), not just for ourselves but also for our team. At the end of the year, there was a competition among all the work units in the factory for the title of ‘the most advanced production team’ (*xianjing shengchan xiaozu*). The award was quite silly to be honest if I think about it now. It was just a title. Nowadays, who cares about title if there is no money attached to it? But back then, everyone worked hard for it; it did make one feel ‘advanced’. It was a shame for one to ‘drag the team’s back leg’ (*lahoutui*). After work, we normally organized a group study session to discuss Chairman Mao’s new instructions. Very often, we also had to criticize and fight (*pidou*) against people who had turned into capitalists and might cause potential damage to the factory. It was difficult sometimes, especially if the one you were fighting against was a close friend’.

He liked telling me such stories when we were supervising the workers together. Although it is debateable how this may have shaped East’s disposition and changed his values, this personal experience certainly is deeply embedded in his memory and guides his everyday actions at work.

Indeed, group interest influences East’s personal moral decisions; or, at least, provides him with justification for some of his ‘immoral’ behaviours. The staff of the Centre lived with the Chinese workers of the subcontracted construction company in the construction compound for more than two months. Towards to the end of the project, the construction team started to gradually move their supplies (stored food, tables, work tools etc.) to their next construction field so the staff of the demonstration centre had to start a new

life in the just-finished administrative building. Although electricity and water were already installed, the initial set-up for living in the new building became difficult because the supplies that they ordered from China were still in transit and would not arrive for another month. The manager was seriously worried as there was no extra budget to cover such problem. Plus, he did not want to waste any money on double purchases. Pulling some of his personal strings, the manager secured some bed-frames, mattress and duvets etc. Regarding the manager's unwillingness to 'beg' for more from his acquaintances, East came up with an idea – to steal from the construction team. I never witnessed how he stole but only heard his description afterwards. At the beginning, he shared a room with the warehouse keeper which happened to be next door to the warehouse. Through socialising together every day, they became good friends. From the warehouse keeper, East heard that the general manager had lost track of the warehouse record due to the chaotic situation of the compound removal. So, East began to sneak things out with the assistance of his warehouse keeper friend.

'I was just pretending to help them to move and then carried things into our storage. No one noticed it as it was very chaotic. Lots of people were in and out (of the warehouse) all the time. Plus, Lao Zhang was looking out for me. If the manager was coming, he would send me a signal. He he! (giggle) Lao Zhang is an iron mate (*tiegemennr*).'

East once shared his 'strategy' with the rest of the staff in the demonstration centre after the construction team left, explaining,

'They (the construction team) had plenty of stock. If no one used it, it would be wasted anyway. *Buna baibuna* (Not taking it is a waste of the opportunity to take it). Plus, they are rich. See how many projects they got since they started ours. Our compound was their first one in Zambia. They would not have had the chance to squeeze into this market here if we did not allow them to work for us! But they never thanked us. This is our share.'

To me, it was not East's action that was astonishing; rather, it was his moral rationale and attitude which I found very puzzling. Every time when he told his 'theft' stories, which he preferred to refer to as 'taking', he always applied a tone of pride and self-satisfaction; meanwhile, he smiled a strange smile. It looked like East did not consider that stealing is intrinsically wrong. Clearly from his statements above, one of the justifications, along with other reasons, is that he acts (stealing in this case) for the benefit of

the group. Indeed, East enjoyed showing his ‘achievements’ to his fellow colleagues. I was invited more than once. The goods he took were impressive: two bags of rice (each weighing 50kg), one box (12 bottles) of soy sauce, five bottles of cooking oil, flour, dining table and chairs, fried pans etc. ‘Without me, we were all going to starve. See how much money I have saved for our Center. The committee up there (*zuzhishang*) should award me a medal just because of my contribution to our Center.’ East repeatedly made such statements, especially when the manager was present.

Considering that he is a senior and out of respect, I never dared to offend East by asking him blunt questions such as how he thinks about stealing. Nevertheless, feeling guilty was certainly not one of the impressions I perceived from East. It seems that stealing could be easily justified if it is acted for the group interest or commanded by the leader. For several times, East has ‘taken’ seeds from local supermarkets or flowers from the University of Zambia (UNZA) garden under the ‘soft command’ of the manager. I call it soft because the command has never been a straightforward one and always made implicitly. It is a linguistic game. The format starts with the manager showing great interest in something. Then the manager will explicitly suggest it is unnecessary to purchase such a thing. When the manager walks away, East will steal the thing given that he is not willing to buy with his own money either. For example, once in the supermarket, the manager noticed some bean seeds. After holding it and examining it for several minutes, the manager turned around and said to East with some regret, ‘I wonder what the difference is between this type of beans and our beans. It is shame that they only sell it as a bag. We really do not need that much – it would be a waste of money. One or two would be enough. [Sigh]. Pity that they do not just sell one or two seeds.’ After he came out of the supermarket, East took five seeds out of his pocket and handed them to the manager. To say this is a form of command is because East would fall out of the manager’s personal favourite circle and potentially lose his chance for future promotion if he could not perform according to the manager’s wishes. I will analyse such communication technique at work, as a part of ‘*youyanlijian’er*’ (capability of observing other’s intention and preference to act accordingly), at greater length in the final chapter. Here, it is merely a demonstration that individual ethical choices and moral actions would be influenced, sometimes significantly, while in a group setting.

Surely, there may be quite a few ways to rationalize East's 'moral/immoral' action. Nevertheless, here I simply would like to point out that his concern for social relations and also his interest in acting for the benefits of the group, which modify his moral behaviours and provide his moral rationales, should not be overlooked. During my fieldwork in Lusaka, I encountered many Chinese whose moral reasoning resemble East's. In their perception, moral codes are not rigid but can be applied flexibly according to the situation. Moral rules can even, when considered necessary, be sacrificed to maintain social relations. One's duty to obey objective rules turns into one's obligation to the social other. Sometimes, for the greater interest of one's group, the 'immoral' could easily be justified and turned into the 'moral'. On the surface, it seems similar to the utilitarian (consequentialist) position in Western philosophical tradition; however, the group interest or the greater good can be very much constrained in the Chinese case. In a way, the group is an extension of the self, according to self-identification. The boundary is drawn variably depending on the counter-group – it is more reactive than initiative, as I have shown in previous chapters. Notwithstanding, if one limits the definition of consequentialist to the end justifying the means, then one could perceive East as a utilitarian; namely, doing good for the group can justify the wrong one has done. Furthermore, within a group, personal virtue might have a direction. In other words, virtue only becomes virtuous when praised by others – it is extrospective rather than introspective. Such impact of the group on moral behaviours has been claimed by moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt:

'We (human beings) have the ability (under special conditions) to transcend self-interest and lose ourselves (temporarily and ecstatically) in something larger than ourselves. That ability is what I'm calling the *hive switch*. The hive switch, I propose, is a group-related adaptation...' (2012:223)

Such impact of the group on individual moral actions is also acknowledged by anthropologists. In his more recent paper, James Laidlaw cited the famous Milgram experiment to argue in favour of using 'agentic state' and redefining 'agency' as a whole – 'as a matter of relations that reach both into and beyond the individual by means of mediating entities' – to study moral responsibility (Lambek ed. 2010:163). In Charles Stafford's study of how Chinese villagers choose to make moral judgments – 'ethics of moral judgment' (2013:101) – he illustrates how the collective and knowledge of contexts could

influence individual moral judgments and ethical actions. As he writes, ‘...society obliges us to make harsh judgments some of the time and in particular that our ability to punish wrongdoing, thus upholding social norms, depends on it’ (22). Note, I have no intention here to essentialise Chinese personhood but merely to point out that moral reasoning is subject to variable practices of sociality. To me, personhood is formed according to one’s socio-economic status and changes through individual life experiences. In the next section, I would like to present a contrast to show the variables.

East’s ‘immoral’ behaviours was never approved by Xiao Liü. For Xiao Liü, stealing is wrong and there is no justification whatsoever; so for him, East is a flawed man who has been seriously ‘corrupted/rotten’ by society. ‘What on earth is he thinking? Does not he know that stealing is wrong? He does not have a sense of guilt (*neijiu*) at all! I suppose the men in that generation are all like that – petty peasants’ mentality (*xiaonong yishi*)!’ Xiao Liü once commented secretly to me after East showed him the stolen stock.

As explained in previous chapters, Xiao Liü was from Shanghai, born in the 1980s. His family runs a quite profitable seafood business. As the only child, it seems that Xiao Liü has never worried about his material and financial problems. After his master’s degree, with the intention to broaden his horizon and harden (*duanlian*) himself, Xiao Liü came to Zambia to work as a translator. For him, work experience is more important than the money he earns. As he told me several times, he wanted to see the world and gain experience. ‘If I am not happy here, I will go somewhere else. There are so many things to do in the world. In the end, I guess I could still go back home and join the family business if nothing succeeds.’ Xiao Liü’s attitude towards to life seems mismatched with East’s and even the manager’s expectation. For them, Xiao Liü is a typical spoiled *80 hou* (born in 1980s) – ‘floated’ (*fu*), lazy, self-indulgent, ungrateful and rebellious.

‘Thank goodness he [Xiao Liü] quit. He was so lazy – getting up so late for work every morning! What is worse, he does not know how to distinguish good and bad people (*bufen haolairen*). Every time when I try to discipline the blacks, he always speaks for them. His elbow is outwards (*gebozhou xiangwaiguai*). He has certainly forgotten who he was working for! So ungrateful!’

East made a clear judgment about Xiao Liü at the dinner table one night after Xiao Liü left the Demonstration Center. The general manager (born in 1965) continued,

‘It is true. Every night he just wanted to go out for fun. I have never seen him shown similar enthusiasm for his work. Also, he has no sense of ‘big and small’ (*meidameixiao*). It is OK if one does not know but willing to learn. He usually had a lot of excuses and refused to listen when I tried to teach him. Very disrespectful and lacking family discipline (*jiajiao*)! I was prepared to fire him even before he quit.’

Linguistically, the moral judgments here are filled with references (local slang) based on mutual understanding of group identity and corresponding moral obligations. East’s analogy – ‘one’s elbow outwards’ – is a northern Chinese representation of alienating inner-group behaviours, which he associated with one’s moral evaluation – ‘distinguish good and bad people’. In other words, to unpack East’s discourse, Xiao Liü as a Chinese, which is supposed to be his group-identification in the context of working with Zambians, can only be morally good if he acts for the interest of his group or group-members. As well as for the general manager, his emphasis is on each other’s roles and the corresponding moral expectation of hierarchical work relationships.

Actually, the tension between the general manager and Xiao Liü was built up through several social events. As he had done with East, the general manager also implied to Xiao Liü that he should sneak some seeds out of shops. Nevertheless, Xiao Liü did not comply but told the manager straightaway that they should buy the seeds if the Demonstration Center really needed them and so Xiao Liü purchased the whole bag. This made the manager rather upset and he criticized Xiao Liü for being wasteful. ‘I do not mind what he thinks of me. It is wrong to steal. Whoever wants to do it for him then he can do it. I won’t steal,’ Xiao Liü replied when I asked him whether or not he was afraid that the manager would dislike him if he did not follow the order.

To make their relationship worse, Xiao Liü also publicly refused to obey the manager’s personal order in front of other colleagues, which the manager considered humiliating. The event was a small one. It happened one sunny Saturday afternoon. Having worked the whole morning, the manager decided to take the afternoon off and went for a walk in the UNZA campus with some of his favourite workers. Meanwhile, he also wanted some pictures taken for his daughter back in China. While walking and chit-chatting, two Zambian college girls passed the group. The manager found them rather attractive so he immediately asked Xiao Liü,

‘Quickly run in front and take some pictures of us. Make sure you got those girls in the picture.’

Xiao Liü was reluctant.

[Manager]: ‘What are you doing? I said take some pictures. Quickly, otherwise they will walk too far away.’

[Xiao Liü]: ‘No, I cannot take the picture.’

[Manager]: ‘Why can’t you do it? It is not difficult.’

[Xiao Liü]: ‘It is wrong to take pictures of others without their permission. It may potentially violate the law. Even if not, it is not respectful to take their pictures secretly. If you want, I could go and ask them.’

[Manager]: ‘No need. Too late. Let us go back to the farm.’

At that moment, the manager’s face turned very red. It was obvious from his tone that he was very angry.

Xiao Liü is not the only *80 hou* who prefers to stick to rules. Inspector Lao is another one who is not willing to bend the rules for the sake of social relations. Like Xiao Liü, Lao was born in the eighties. Three years after graduation, he became a regional manager of a large-scale, state-owned construction enterprise and was posted to Zambia as a project-inspector. After the farm compound was finished, Lao was assigned by the Chinese government to inspect the project. Having socialized with all the managers of the construction team and the Center for months, Lao was invited to carry out the final inspection after the farm compound was completely built. Everyone was expecting it would just be a routine check (*zouguochang*); however, Lao came back with a ‘surprising’ report.

‘The paths to the crop-drying field were designed to be covered by concrete in the drawing but why was it finished only with sand?’ Lao put the question to the general engineer who had been working for the construction company for more than thirty years.

‘There is really no need to be so ‘referring to reality’ (*jiaozhenr*). Everyone knows what is going on. No one is making a fuss. If you turned a blind eye (*zhengyizhiyan biyizhiyan*), everyone’s life would get easier,’ the engineer tried to persuade Lao.

‘No, that is not how it should be. This is my job and I need to do it properly. If you have not done it according to the drawing, you shall fix it,’ Lao replied.

‘Well, young man. I am much older than you and I tell you that one shall let people go whenever one can (*deraorenchu qieraoren*). It will take at least several days to fix it: by then we will miss the opening ceremony. If you do not give the face to the monk, at least you shall give the face to the Buddha (*bukansengmian kanfuomian*).’ The engineer was a little bit annoyed but still tried to put another reason to Lao.

‘This is not about face. This is about the job. Also, do not think you can tell me what I shall do just because you are older than me.’

The conversation seemed to be becoming intense as both parties raised their voices so other co-workers interrupted and separated them. In the end, the paths got re-paved.

Please allow me to pause here for a moment and explain what exactly happened. Having socialized with Lao, including banquets, shopping, and day trips together, staff from the construction team expected him to be flexible on the written rules and pass the quality inspection; in turn they can save some time to do the next project and save some money on building materials. This type of interaction would require Lao to value contingent social relations more than rigid rules. Acting the opposite, called ‘*jiaozhenr*’ (literally referring to reality, rigidity), is somehow morally problematic in this situation. Whereas for Lao, rules are rules and shall not be applied differently just because the interlocutor is different. As with Xiao Liü, also born in 1980s and from a financially stable family, Lao is forming a distinctive selfhood comparing with his senior generation. For them, being subject to rules is more important than social relations.

Note, for my Chinese interlocutors, apart from the written rules, there is another level of rules which is called ‘*qianguize*’ (hidden rules). To me, this is different from the written rules in the aspect that hidden rules follow the people and are constantly formed through interactions. To use chess playing as an analogy, written rules are about how to play chess in general and are set before players start the game; while hidden rules are particular ways to play the game according to each other’s characters and interests, designed after players have played together for a long time. Hidden rules change when the players change but not the written ones. The former are interactive and intersubjective while the latter are institutional. One could argue that the latter are moral and the former shall be ‘ethical’. This separation between written rules and hidden rules in Chinese social practice provides

anthropologists with a very good sample to study ethics.

The contrasting cases above of different moral reasoning across generations provide me with a good opportunity to study the influence which selfhood has on everyday moral practice. Yan (2009) has argued for a decade of the rise of Chinese individualism after the liberalization of Chinese economy. In his later writing, Yan has modified Chinese individualism to ‘striving individuals’, which emphasizes hard-working, materialistic and utilitarian selfhood, in reference to Nikolas Rose’s ‘enterprising individuals’, which stresses individual autonomy and rights (2013: 283-285). Nevertheless, tracing back to the historical transformation of the self in Chinese society corresponding to its political and economic development (from communism to market economy), Yan argues that,

‘As far as ethics and moral life are concerned, an important ethical shift has occurred in post-Mao China, that is, the shift from a collective ethics of duties and self-sacrifice to a more individuals ethics of rights and self-development, thus radically changing China’s moral landscape’ (2013: 287)

This shift of moral landscape is encapsulated as the generational differences in moral reasoning at my field sites. Notwithstanding, I would like to further argue that my *80 hou* (post-80) Chinese interlocutors are forming a sense of ‘enterprising individual’ rather than mere materialistic and utilitarian selfish egocentrism. From the cases I presented above, it is not difficult to see that they have started to show concern about individual rights and autonomy, and are rule-abiding. Furthermore, I consider this inclination to be subject to personal choice as a result of social-economic status. In other words, because of the wealth or social authority accumulated by their families, Xiao Liu and Inspector Lao are provided with multiple life choices and could ‘afford’ to be individualistic. In contrast, their senior generation, even though the mostly grew up in the collective communist era, may have the choice to be individualistic as well. Therefore, the generational difference in selfhood formation is not predetermined but a mere historical inclination.

No matter for what reasons, in my field, the individualist Chinese, from the senior generation as well as the young, do tend to stick to rigid moral codes regardless of the interpersonal relation. In Western philosophy, I suppose that they can be called deontologists (non-consequentialists); that is, ends could never justify evil means no matter how good the consequence will be. For the deontologists, following rules is the end itself and

the moral project is to cultivate oneself according to the objective norms. Note, Kantians, of which Durkheim is considered to be one, are deontologist, broadly speaking. Whereas, as presented previously, the Chinese who put group interest and interpersonal relation first are usually flexible on rule-following. For them, perhaps good ends can easily justify evil means (consequentialist) and virtue lies between subjects.

Here, I would like to argue that, in order to avoid the ‘Durkheim trap’ and ‘introspective tendency’ when studying morality, anthropologists should first of all distinguish the conditions of different moral reasoning. To borrow John Searle’s terminology without strict denotation, every moral action has its own ‘conditions of satisfaction’ (2012) – outside of the subject as well as inside. Some moral reasoning can be generated after taking external social relations into account while some can be performed simply out of habit. Among all the conditions of satisfaction, selfhood can count for one.

A similar idea has been illustrated by Robbins nevertheless with different terms if I understood him correctly²⁰. In his paper and ethnography, Robbins developed Dumont’s hierarchy of value with ‘relationalism’ (2004, 2007). By opposing relationalism with individualism, furthermore he proposed to differentiate ‘morality of reproduction’ (Durkheimian) and ‘morality of freedom’ (207:306). For Robbins, ethics, as representation of freedom and choices, exist between the non-reconciliation of different value spheres. Undeniably, typology can clarify a muddle; however, it can be too abstract and static. Potentially, it may overlook the mutual transformation between systems and also the moment-to-moment moral experience so to lose sight of the ‘ordinary’ in ethics (Lambek 2010). In the context of Chinese community, this can appear as ‘role ethics’ (Ames 2011). In other words, the dynamic social roles people are taking every day can influence selfhood formation as well as ethical practice especially in ways of internalization – a point which I

²⁰ Stephan Feuchtwang distinguishes the Melanesian personhood under Strathern’s model with Chinese personhood under Fei’s model. The former ‘is plural and partible...can be conceived as a social microcosm... [T]he social person is a result of substantial exchanges, of gifts and meals in rituals and exchanges’; whereas the latter is ‘born into and...can be conceived in terms of status and role, prescribed by rituals of social relations. They of course include rites of gift exchange and of the sharing of meals. But Fei does not emphasise as does Strathern the substance and physical quality of ritual events and the experiencing body (2009).

am now turning to illustrate.

To Be Cruel or Not to Be Cruel

Like Xiao Liū and Inspector Lao, Eagle was also born in the eighties. Trained as a police officer back in China, Eagle did not pursue his career after college but went to Beijing for an office job. After a couple of months, with the similar aspiration as his peers to see the world when still young, Eagle took a tour in several countries around Africa and visited one of his friends in Zambia about four years ago. He had stayed ever since. When I asked him why he decided to quit his job and move to Zambia, he told me that it was the freedom that he was eager for. ‘The life in China is too tiring – not only do I have to work according to the leader’s temper (*kanlianse*), but also there are so many social networking among friends. If you want to live well, you have to be cautious all the time and try not to upset anyone. Not to mention the food safety problem, at least in Zambia, the milk is safe.’ Eagle once told me after we played frisbee together. Then he continued, ‘You see everyone in China now only cares about money and is busy to get rich first, even sometimes it means that they need to do nasty things. It is so shallow. I do not want to become one of those. The society is a big dyeing pot (*darangang*). If I stayed, I would have to play the game according to their rules and eventually become just as black as them. That would not make me happy. So, I left.’

These may all sound familiar; however, what is interesting about Eagle is that, as far as I know, he is one of only two Chinese in Lusaka choosing to work for non-Chinese companies. He first got a position in a Greek-owned paint company in charge of marketing to Chinese construction companies in Zambia. Then he shifted to a Malaysian-owned wheel company in charge of sales. ‘I never thought of working for the Chinese here. I mean, I knew I would not want that as I worked while I was in China before. You know how complicated it is to work for the Chinese – so many hidden rules (*qianguize*). The work is never just about the work itself. The main reason why I left China was because I do not like the way Chinese manage people. Plus, the payment is low and you never get your own time. Even though you have to work like a donkey 24-7, the boss may still not be satisfied and accuse you. By contrast, working for the foreigners is very straightforward. The work is easier and everything follows the rule. They pay me well and even provide me car.

More importantly, I can have the holidays and I can do whatever I want to do.'

Not only just in terms of jobs, Eagle tends to socialise more with non-Chinese off work as well. He organizes sports event with the white guys in Lusaka every Sunday and also he is the only Chinese I know who has rented a flat with non-Chinese in one of the Zambian residential buildings in town. More interestingly, Eagle is also one of the organizers of Lusaka Chinese Christian Fellowship which is attached to the American Baptist Commission in Zambia. He started to show interest in the Christian church when he was in college. He told me that, at the beginning, his intention was just to practice English. The more he participated in the activities, the more he was attracted to the Bible and Christianity. So after a year joining the group, Eagle decided to be baptized. After he arrived in Zambia, he became acquainted with a Christian family from Hong Kong via business and started to organize a Sunday congregation and study group under the guidance of American Baptist commissioners. Eagle's main role in the Fellowship is to translate preaching and assist in organizing social events such as a Christmas party. Although the tasks are small, Eagle showed great enthusiasm. He never missed one service and always tried to rehearse the sermon translation nights before the church services. The pastors appreciate his effort and capability and intended to train him to preach directly. When I asked him what his experience was like in the Fellowship, Eagle told me that 'the Bible guides my life. It is not dry doctrines but reveals meaning to people through life. If I have problems, I will look into the Bible and the answer will come to me one day. At least, I feel happy when I am in the Fellowship. I like the atmosphere. Fellows genuinely help each other no matter who is in trouble. It is rare nowadays when the society is full of deceivers and people just use people for some personal gains.'

Eagle disapproved of the way that some of the Chinese managers treat their Zambian workers; perhaps due to his personal working experience before. He criticized the segregation between Chinese migrants and local people in Zambia and tried his best to rectify it at least via personal practice. He would join in a local street football match and drink shake-shake (a Zambian alcoholic drink) with the guys afterwards. He likes chatting with local vendors and gets to know his neighbours. And he enjoys sharing food with Zambian workers in his office: 'I prepare some food in the evening and take it to work. I

share it with the workers. They seem to like it a lot. Well, they do not like rice that much. They also share their food with me. I do not know why people sometimes say their food is disgusting. It is simple but quite tasty. Here, I know Chinese do not eat food on the same table with Zambian workers. I cannot see why we shouldn't. Aren't we all from a mother's womb (*doushi mashengde*)? Nothing different. Actually, Zambians are better than lots of Chinese. They are nice and friendly people, very extroverted, easy to get on with. I certainly have made friends with the guys in my office,' Eagle told me when we were dining in a Chinese restaurant while some Japanese were eating dinner with Zambians at the table next to ours.

From his own descriptions, it seems plausible to claim that Eagle prefers an individualistic life style. His desire for freedom is strong by contrast with his distrust of Chinese society. He is not very keen on the relational (or 'particularistic') game his Chinese colleagues play but likes a rule-bounded work atmosphere. And he is a believer in universal rights and treats his Zambian colleagues as equal with himself and others. So when personal freedom comes with opportunities opened up (via migration overseas and working for non-Chinese), Eagle chose the life style he approved of and practiced the virtue he admired. Unfortunately, Eagle's experience is not as simple as he wants it to be.

All of these perceptions have been seriously challenged and doubted since Eagle was promoted as a manager in charge of the workers. 'Sometimes, it will get very difficult to carry on the normal job if I get too close with the workers. I mean, I tried to be their friend. I had lunch with them and I played football with them but it has messed up our relations at work. Once they see me as a friend, they do not listen to my command any more. It became very difficult to organize them. You know, the workers can be lazy and full of excuses not to work sometimes. If they know you treat them as equal as friends, they will 'climb your nose and jump to your eyes' (*dengbizi shanglian*; a Chinese expression for disrespect), taking advantage of the friendship and stopping taking my orders seriously. Sometimes, it is just outrageous, especially when the work is busy. In the end, I had to stop sharing with them and join the managers for lunch. Now and then, I have to be harsh and shout at them. Only in this way can they know I am their boss and respect me accordingly.' Every time when Eagle shared his experience with me, his face appeared sad. 'It is frustrating.

I want to be friends with them and help them but I cannot show my sympathy. It is right when people say that “a man who attracts sympathy also has traits for others to hate him” (*helianzhiren ziyouhehenzhichu*). Sometimes, they just force you into a position to be cruel to them. I cannot help but discipline them in the name of order. It is a very strange feeling. At that moment when the workers disobey me, it feels like I have been possessed by demons. I cannot think straight except by shouting and accusing them in order to get things done. Afterwards, when I reflect on it, I feel bad. I think I am changing into another person since I become a manager; well, at least at work.’

Eagle is not the only one who reported such an experience. It is rather a shared dilemma among the newly promoted *80 hou* Chinese in Zambia. Mr Barry fired the chauffeur, who used to be his best friend among all the Zambian workers, merely because the chauffeur did not obey his orders on route choice. Moreover, Xiao Liü quarrelled with workers many times and fired a dozen after he was placed in charge of the workers. Like Eagle, they all experienced a transformation after taking different social roles.

So what can anthropologists learn from their moral experiences? First, social roles are bundled with different virtues. By moving away from Durkheim’s moral duty (the Kantian view), anthropologists draw heavily on virtue theory to study everyday ethics. As Laidlaw, Faubion (2001) roughly at the same time proposed an anthropology of ethics by borrowing ideas from Foucault – the technology of self and self-fashioning. Faubion developed the ideas further into ‘ethical autopoiesis’ – ‘a process of becoming and maintenance of the ethical subject’ – with a focus on ethical subject positions and ethical-becoming (2011:20). As I have argued before, this way of perceiving virtues might easily fall into an ‘introspective trap’. What the Chinese case warns is that virtues can be responsive and come with the different social roles one takes. Role ethics has always been a concern in Chinese moral practice. Going back to the classics, ‘*chenlijulie bunengzezhi*’ (if one cannot fulfil the role, one should not take the role from the start) has been the principle that Confucius taught his tutees, which is still in the textbooks of Chinese schools nowadays. In this brilliant monograph on Confucian role ethics, compared with Western moral philosophy, Robert Ames acutely summarizes:

‘From the Confucian perspective, however, in the stead of pre-existing norms we discover a

phenomenology of experience that services as a resource for determining what it would mean to act in such a way as to enhance our relations...Confucian role ethics takes the substance of morality to be nothing more or less than positive growth in the constitutive relations of any particular situation...[I]n contrast with familiar Western ethical theories, Confucian role ethics does not make an appeal to putatively objective principles or to rational choice alone....In taking family feelings as the entry point for developing moral competence, role ethics is a program of personal growth that begins and extends outward from specific partial relations in the direction of the more impartial bonds that secure community more broadly.’ (2011:257-258)

Many times, anthropologists have documented the moral dilemmas that Chinese individuals face when taking multiple social roles (Fang 2009; Stafford ed. 2013). In this way, it is arguable that subjective self-fashioning of one particular virtue is less important than fulfilling the external demands of multiple social roles. In other words, sometimes it is about what the others expect one to be instead of what one wants to become. In Eagle’s case, it is the role of being a boss which forces his transformation.

Second, it has been claimed that self-fashioning, backed-up by choices, secures personal freedom (Laidlaw 2002; Faubion 2011; Robbins 2012). Nonetheless, it still sounds problematic when one considers carefully the relationship between choice and internalization. On one hand, self-becoming is about internalizing the virtue one desires. On the other hand, freedom requires independent relationship between subject and choices. Semantically, the process of subjectification itself eliminates choices. To the best, one could argue that freedom exists in the choice made before subjectification, which somehow sounds like social contract theory. If this is the case, how free can one really be in one’s whole life given that ethical-becoming is a life-long process? This has been shown in Eagle and his peers’ cases. Reading Eagle’s judgments (as a boss) of Zambian workers, local slang phrases filled with specific cultural references are not difficult to spot. Because Eagle was educated in China and worked in China before he came to Zambia in the age of 31, I interpret his response as *encultured automaticity*. In other words, Eagle had internalized certain cultural ideas and knowledge, of which moral concepts may be one, before coming to Zambia. Even though in a new context, such inhabited knowledge still provides references for his reasoning, no matter how much freedom he desires.

Third, intriguingly, subjectification and virtue theory nevertheless do

offer a new perspective to understand moral actions, particularly in the aspect of affection. If morality (as virtue) can be considered as a system of knowledge which needs to be internalized for practice, what are subjectified are bundled sentiments with moral concepts. This has not been captured much by duty-based moral theorists so far. To argue more generally, it seems that when semantic knowledge turns into episodic knowledge, a subject attaches certain sentiment to the process and, later on, such attached sentiment will influence the subject's reasoning and action. In the last chapter, I have proposed, while studying structure (work relations in my case), anthropologists should not omit the sentimental component, which I termed as 'the spirit of the structure'. Here, I would like to further argue, borrowing some language from cognitive science, that this spirit is a consequence of *enculturated automaticity* and obtains efficacy in the process of transformation from *semantic memory* to *episodic memory* (for more see Daniel Schacter, Daniel Gilbert & Daniel Wegner, 2011). This was what happened when Eagle became a boss. Before, he only understood the semantic meaning of 'boss' from objective observation but after promotion, the role as a boss pushed him to understand or experience the meaning of 'boss' subjectively and affectively by interacting with workers. The meaning of 'boss' was transformed into an episodic memory for Eagle in this process. As a result, Eagle's moral judgments shifted as well. In this way, understanding morality as a form of knowledge bundled with affective components, Stafford has correctly pointed out, while invoking Strawson's notion of 'participant reactive attitudes', that 'Strawson treats morality less as an intellectual problem and more as an *interpersonal and emotional* one and moreover as something which is always *embedded* in particular forms of the collective life' (2013: 106, italic added). It is this emotive part of morality that I would like to explore further in the next section.

To Sympathize or Not to Sympathize

Sympathy is a common sentiment that Chinese migrants possess when they first arrive in Zambia and encounter their Zambian hosts; however, this sympathy normally fades away and potentially turns into dislike with further interactions. It is not rare to see the Chinese migrants give Zambian workers clothes and food. And very often, one can hear them express pity for the poor standards locals are still living in. The older Chinese interlocutors usually

recall the 'bitter' life that they used to live before China opened the market and compare their pre-reform life with the current Zambian one. For the younger Chinese migrants, they simply cannot believe that there are people still living in such poor conditions.

Once, staff of the Demonstration Center helped Thomas, the driver, to move house. We drove into the compound his family lived in, which was in the west suburb of Lusaka. It was rather a big compound but I could not see men, only women washing clothes outside of their houses and children running around and chasing each other. Thomas told me that the men were working in nearby farms or factories. There were only bumpy and muddy roads in the compound and besides the roads, a shallow and narrow gutter ran along with sewage sometimes leaking onto the roads. Mosquitoes buzzed around in the stench. From the staff members' facial expressions, I could tell that they were a little bit shocked. We parked the pick-up outside Thomas's house. While his neighbours were helping him carry his furniture into the car, Mechanic Feng lighted a cigarette and started to chat with me, with a sympathetic tone.

'I did not expect they would still live in such poor condition. I won't believe it if I had not seen it myself today. They are just like what we were during the 60s. At that time, the infrastructure was bad. The whole village relied on one or two wells. People walked miles to get water. There was no flush toilet. We would shit in the field. It can be very cold in the winter. We had no money and the whole family survived upon what we planted in our land. Sometimes we had to starve if things were bad. I reckon their lives are similar or even worse than ours. I heard that they do not live very long? No doubt, if they live in such poor conditions. So pitiful (*kelian*)! It is just pity to see that they have to suffer like this. We all say the Communist Party is corrupted but to be honest, without the Party, perhaps we would still live like this nowadays.'

Feng waved to the kids standing metres away, staring at us. Two of them approached us after they saw the wave. Feng bowed down and began holding their hands and touching their heads. 'They are so cute!' Feng said to me followed by a deep sigh. Then he took some money from his pocket and pointed to the little shop at the end of the road while making a gesture of putting food into mouth. The kids happily ran away and some more kids came to him until he sent off all of his change. That night when we returned to the demonstration centre, Feng packed some of his clothes, which he did not need, and handed

them to Thomas; at the same time, he told Thomas to ‘Cherish this job and work harder so the Center would take care of you and you won’t starve.’ Thomas made a bow with hands folded in front and accepted the gift with appreciation. This happened only about one month after Feng arrived in Lusaka.

This sympathy did not last long and gradually vanished as the interaction went on further; and sometimes even turned into hatred. After months working in the demonstration centre, the relationship between Feng and Thomas become worse and worse. One day after another quarrel between the two, Feng came to me to ‘throw out’ (*qingsu*) his dissatisfaction;

‘He is just an animal (*chusheng*) and does not have any sensation of *renqing* (*renqingwei*’r)! He does not know five and six (*wuliu bufen*), Idiot! I found him pitiful and gave him so many things. Not only does not he show any gratitude, now he even dares to offend me! The things I gave him are all wasted ‘in the lake just to ripple’ (*dashuipiao*’r). It is truly throwing a meat bun to the dog (*roubaozi dagou*). Well, he is worse than a dog. Dogs even know barking when you give them things. These things (*zhebangwanyi*’er) come back and bite you. Animals (*chusheng*)! They are not worthy of pity. They are not human!’

Not only did Feng made such complaint in front of the Chinese workers more and more, but also he tried to stop them giving the Zambians gifts whenever he saw them. His justification has always been that the Zambians are not worthy of pity because they do not have any sense of *renqing*.

In Chapter Two, I distinguished *jiaoqing* (interactional affection) from *renqing* (human emotion). I pointed out that interactional affection has a focus on intimacy/emotional proximity whereas human emotion stresses the psychological side of morality. Arguably, *jiaoqing* is ‘interpersonal’ (as in between friends) whereas *renqing* is ‘universal’ (as in Chinese moral norm). Nevertheless, I did not explain the meaning of ‘*renqing*’ in the Chinese context.

Renqing is a crucial component in ethical interactions among Chinese. So far, there is no unified translation although most of the anthropologists specialized in Chinese studies have referred to it. Literally, it can be translated into ‘human emotion’. Despite most of the anthropologists concentrate more on the instrumental characteristics of *renqing* following the study of gift exchange and *guanxi* in China, personally, I prefer Yan’s

translation of ‘human emotion’ because it captures two essential contents of the concept of ‘*renqing*’ – ‘*ren*’ (humanity) and ‘*qing*’ (affection/sentiment). As Yan clearly illustrates;

‘...[*R*]enqing ethics provides the guiding principles and regulations by which one learns to be a proper person interacting with others in a socially accepted way. Here, the Chinese notion of *renqing* should be understood as, first and foremost, a set of moral norms that guide and regulate one’s behavior. *Renqing* is also the socially accepted pattern of emotional responses in the sense that one takes others’ emotional responses into consideration. Furthermore, *renqing* serves as an important standard by which villagers judge whether one is a proper social person...Without *renqing*, life is less meaningful and people are dehumanized.’ (2009: 193)

To unpack, first, *renqing* as an ethical interaction is loaded with affection. It is not just mere exchange of things, tangible or intangible. The exchange demonstrates people’s attitudes and intentionality and is attached to people’s expectation and corresponding sentiment. Second, *renqing* is an embedded concept in the Chinese idea of humanity and Chinese identity. In other words, it is *renqing* that makes Chinese perceive self or be perceived by others as ‘human’. It is *renqing* that marks the boundary between the animal kingdom and humans. These two contents of *renqing* have corresponding effects towards to each other as well as a significant impact together on everyday ethical interaction in general. In this context, on one hand, humanity contains sentiment; on the other hand, sentiment defines humanity. In general, to my Chinese interlocutors, morality is towards to fellow men or humanized objects. If one does not demonstrate or appreciate the sensation of human emotion, one is not human; consequently, others do not have moral responsibilities towards to this ‘man’. Here, again, the sensation (*renqingwei’r*, literally human emotional taste) of the sentiment is sought for and repeatedly stressed by my Chinese interlocutors even when they are talking about ‘human emotion’. This is Feng’s implicit rationale when he said Zambians were animals, not human and not worthy of sympathy.

Feng’s reaction is not unique. Most of the Chinese I encountered in my fieldwork gave similar discourse. They favour the Zambians who understand and practice a little *renqing*, either at work, in class or in informal interactions. A senior tutor at the Zambian Confucius Institute would compliment a Zambian student, saying that she was clever and knew how to interact with the Chinese after the student presented a small gift to

the tutor before Chinese New Year. A young translator was willing to lend more money to a Zambian worker after the worker brought local maize to the translator to show his gratitude.

Nevertheless, most of the time, the sympathy would drop and the interaction would fall as the Chinese could not sense the *renqing* from the Zambians. One afternoon in the security booth of the Demonstration Center we, the Zambian guards and I, randomly discussed this topic. ‘They are the boss. They should take care of us. But, we do appreciate when they give us things and we say thank you,’ said one guard. When I put forward the idea that ‘thank you’ may not mean much in China but one had to show gratitude through action or gifts, another guard replied, ‘We cannot afford gifts. We are poor. Besides, it is God who send things to us, not Chinese. It is God who we should really thank.’ When he said this, the other guards nodded. Nevertheless, I found it rather intriguing so I questioned further, ‘But it was the Chinese giving Zambians things, right? I mean, physically.’ ‘Yes, but if we did not pray to God for things, you won’t give them to us. It is God giving us gifts through you. So we really shall thank God,’ the guard explained to me.

This rationale, sharing in the name of universal love inherited from God, could hardly be comprehended by most of my Chinese interlocutors. For them, not only are the Zambians ungrateful, but also sometimes they does not appreciate ‘the lift’ (*bushi taiju*), meaning ‘good intention to respect and assist’. The Chinese are very puzzled about the Zambian workers being poor but still refusing gifts. ‘If I were as poor as them, I would accept everything given to me. If you do not need it, you could always sell the thing for money. Their nerves are knotted up (*sinaojin*). Do not know being flexible. Being poor and also picky (*xianqi*) – they are doomed to be poor forever!’ East told me one day after one of the Zambian workers refused his second-hand shoes. For the Zambian workers, refusing gifts has a ‘simple’ explanation. Thomas reasoned to me that ‘Why should I accept things if I do not need them? It would be bad because other people might need them. But if I took them, the people who really need them would never have them. Then I would commit a sin of being greedy. Others should not suffer only because I am being greedy.’ Nevertheless, Thomas’ concern for others in need is (mis)understood by my Chinese interlocutors as a refusal of gift-offering. To them, the refusal could mean insult. ‘Does not appreciate the lift’ (*bushi taiju*) is a common expression, which roughly means that someone is trying to help but the

receiver does not appreciate the intention and refuses the help. This expression also attaches a sentiment – only out of care does the lifter offer. The refusal is to deny the intention to care and is to refuse creating potential social bonds with the lifter. This is also a refusal to start *renqing* interaction.

As David Hume famously claimed, ‘reason is the slave of passion’. Many psychologists have followed Hume step by step to prove how affection influences human decision making. In *The Righteous Mind*, moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2012) argues that most of the time human beings follow their intuitive and affection to make judgments. More importantly, such affection is not just about harm but also includes nurtured ‘gut feelings’ which he terms as ‘disgusting’ reaction. Drawing from experiments in neuroscience, Patricia Churchland also acknowledges the significance of affection in moral reasoning. For her, care is the foundation stone of human morality. She claims:

To be sure, in different contexts and cultures, particular articulations of those values may have different shapes and shades, even when the underlying social urges are shared. Values are, according to this hypothesis, more fundamental than rules. Various norms governing social life, reinforced by the reward/punishment system, may eventually be articulated and even modified after deliberation, or they may remain as implicit, background knowledge about what “feels right” (2012:9)

My case study of Chinese community in Zambia confirms such findings. It is the affective part of *renqing* that my Chinese interlocutors emphasize. The sensation of *renqing* triggers, influences and even sometimes determines their moral evaluation of others. However, it needs qualification. Note, such sensation is nurtured via cultural learning and practices and itself is a form of enculturated automaticity. This process of enculturalization could constrain the extension of affection. In classical Confucian ideals, this humane affection is embedded in hierarchical social relations. With contrast to Mo Zi’s notion of ‘*jian’ai*’ (love equally distributed or universal love), Confucius encourages love to be differentiated and practiced according to relational proximity (Yu, 2012). Despite the limitation, as Chinese philosopher Liang Shumin argues, the central notion of *ren* in Confucian ethics is fundamentally about love (affection). Bearing this cultural variation of affection in mind, sentiment does have significant impact on ethical actions and individual moral choice-making.

Therefore, emotive morality can potentially offer anthropologists an alternative way of studying ethics if one perceives emotion as the blend of nature and nurture. By focusing directly on inter-subjective interaction, it may help anthropologists to avoid the muddle of rigid Durkheimian duty and inwardness of virtuous self-fashioning. From the perspective of sympathy, morality would arise first of all from subjective reaction then for objectification, unlike other theories which presuppose an objective rule or virtue first for subjectification. To consider moral behaviours horizontally as intersubjective action may furthermore open up more room to study 'freedom' via truly appreciating personal desires and motivations of the interlocutors at the field sites.

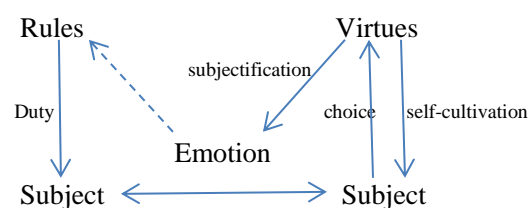
Conclusion: Towards Ethical Action with Moral Sentiment

In this chapter, drawing on material from my field sites, I tried to supplement and push further on the current theories in anthropology of morality. As I understand, if correctly, the initial motivation for anthropologists to shift their interest – from morality to ethics, from 'what is right' to 'how to live' – is to bring freedom and human consciousness back to research. By criticizing the omnipotence of Durkheim's social rules, anthropologists began to shift their gaze to virtue theory and ethical choices. In this process, some potential traps appear on the way, which Chinese ethnography may potentially assist anthropologists to deal with and keep theory in check. As I argued above, first, each moral behaviour's condition of satisfaction needs to be clarified before one studies the action itself. In the context of Chinese moral interaction, such condition includes different understanding on selfhood; that is, different practices of selfhood impact on personal moral reasoning and alter moral choices and behaviours correspondingly. The formation of selfhood is subject to personal experiences and may change across one's lifetime. Second, virtue theory and ethical choices can only provide freedom when the subject becomes very reflective and introspective. If I am right to claim that Chinese personhood shows great tendency to responsiveness, the virtue is outside coming with social roles and lies in the eyes of others. If virtue really is external to the subject existing as a type of knowledge (or power) and has *telos* all along, the question is back to how to achieve freedom. It seems there is no way out either way.

As Lambek warned, anthropologists of morality should not fall into the

mode of Boasian American anthropology when it has only just jumped out of the mode of Durkheimian British anthropology (2012). To avoid both, he suggested that anthropologists should study morality from the perspective of everyday action rather than mere thought process – what he calls ‘ordinary ethics’. The ‘*ordinary*’ entails the idea that the human condition is intrinsically ethical and, most importantly, it refers to ‘an ethics that is relatively tacit, grounded in agreement rather than rules, in practice rather than knowledge or belief, and happening without calling undue attention to itself’ (2012:2). Stafford supplements it by arguing that ordinary ethics could well be implicit but as well ‘the subject of explicit and conscious deliberation’ (2013:5) which is more the case in the Chinese context as the ethical practitioners themselves are forced to be objective observers of their own society and moral rules following the rapid social change.

Similarly, following Lambek and inspired by my Chinese interlocutors’ constant stress on sentiment, I propose to borrow ideas from emotive morality and moral psychology to study ethics from the angle of everyday intersubjective interaction – to inject the ordinary with affection. It is different from other approaches in terms that it looks at morality on a horizontal level. It is ordinary as it does not presuppose an objective rule or virtuous goal above for individual to achieve. Instead, morality is negotiated and formed via everyday *interpersonal emotional interaction*.



In this way, the rule is flexible but the emotion is rigid. This may also offer a new perspective to investigate the well-claimed dramatic change of Chinese moral landscape. As Oxfeld documents, ‘*liangxin*’ (good heart) is still what her Chinese villagers talk about (2010: 46).

For sure, it is true that emotion is partly nurtured through cultural learning; however, neither can one deny that affection has natural universality which offers a solid foundation to achieve mutual understanding. I believe that moral emotion could also fit

in well with increasing global migration and cross-cultural communication nowadays. After all, people never seem to carry a bag of rule books with them when going abroad. Morality and ethics come with loaded emotion – this perhaps is a third aspect that Chinese ethnography could contribute to anthropology of morality in general.

Apart from influencing everyday moral interactions, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, embedded emotion can also impact on daily communications between my Chinese interlocutors and their Zambian hosts. Being able to recognize and respond to the affect in a situation encourages emotional proximity and provides the foundation for convivial interactions. This is the other general point that I want to demonstrate in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: the Art of Speaking

It was a normal Sunday midday during October in the eastern suburb of Lusaka city – dry, hot and quiet. After a quick lunch, instead of having a nap as usual, the Zou family immediately started to get busy again to prepare the evening banquet which they were going to host for a small group of their friends – three families with their associated friends, roughly twelve guests this time. It had become a routine for the Zous and their friends to get together every weekend for socializing. Families took care of the banquets in turns and it was the Zou family's turn that weekend.

‘Lao De [Father Zou], stop being lazy! Go to the field and cut some cabbages, chives and leeks. I need them for stir-fries later. Zou Hua [name of the son, Xiao Zou], go to the supermarket and buy two tilapia, four if they are small. Ah, if you pass Lao Hu's shop [a small Chinese supermarket], buy some Chinese five-star spices and cumin. It is running low. I am afraid it won't be enough.’ Mother Zou began to organize the preparation while sharpening the knife, boiling water and getting ready to butcher the rooster and duck which Xiao Zou bought from the local market on Friday. Although without being *verbally* assigned to any particular task, the daughter in law could not just rest but took the beef out of the fridge and began to chop it.²¹

‘Can I do anything?’ I asked the Mother Zou out of courtesy.

²¹ Seemingly, the daughter-in-law's action here is voluntary; however, it followed Mother Zou's ‘soft command’ – a point which I mentioned in Chapter Four. This efficiency of this communicative technique requires the cooperation of the other and heavily relies on the context. The command is within the ‘unspoken’. In this case, by explicitly ordering Father Zou (husband) and Xiao Zou (son) to work, Mother Zou is imposing a pressure of sociality on the daughter-in-law; that is, Mother Zou could not order the daughter-in-law to do things as she is considered as ‘outsider’ in this context but, if the daughter-in-law does not help Mother Zou, she will face the danger of alienating Mother Zou then damage the familial relationships. This contextualised way, especially referring to situational relations, to communicate plays very important role in everyday social/moral evaluation. I will investigate this communicative technique later in this chapter.

‘No, really no need. It is very simple. We will finish this very quickly. If you are tired, you can have a nap. Or, you can watch TV. *Baijia Jiangtan* (Lecture Room) is on. It is a very good programme, one of my favourites.’

I assumed that Mother Zou answered me this way due to politeness; therefore I chose to stay in the courtyard near the kitchen looking after the grand-daughter Xiao Xiao as well as chatting with Mother Zou when she was cooking. We talked about her childhood and her life experience in Zambia in general. We also gossiped about other Chinese businesswomen in Lusaka and discussed the reasons behind their business success. Although it was a conversation, Mother Zou seemed to have dominated the whole discussion. Compared with Father Zou, she is indeed more articulate, which she considered as an advantage, for her and for the household. To her, being able to speak appropriately is a crucial element to business success. ‘We cannot all be mute!’ she said, ‘At least one needs to be articulate in a family. Otherwise, there is no way to do business! I cannot rely on Lao De as you can see. So I have to speak!’

A couple of hours later, our conversation were interrupted by the rather loud sound of a car horn: ‘Beep – Beep – Beep’. Hearing the noise, Mother Zou quickly took the keys from the shelf and ran to the farm gate to welcome the arrival of the first group of guests. It was Manager Deng and his family, the most important guests for the evening banquet. To claim that they are the most important guests is due to their long-term personal relationships with the Zou family. As introduced in Chapter Two, both families are from the same city back in China. It was Manager Deng who helped the Zou family to settle in Lusaka and, most significantly, he was the only one who was willing to loan money to the Zou family without conditions when the Zou family almost went bankrupt two years ago.

‘Xiao Xiao, come and see who is here!’ Mother Zou waved to her grand-daughter while Manager Deng was parking his SUV. Having heard the call, Xiao Xiao jumped out of the chair and ran to the car.

‘Say hello to Grandpa Deng.’ As usual, Mother Zou tried to teach Xiao Xiao greeting manners.

‘Grandpa Deng, hello.’ Xiao Xiao raised her voice and loudly greeted Manager Deng.

‘Oh, see how lovely and polite our Xiao Xiao is!’ Manager Deng touched her hair.

‘Xiao Xiao, will you say Grandma Deng is extra beautiful today?’ Mother Zou continued.

‘Beautiful! Grandma Deng is beautiful! Sister Niü Niü [Manager Deng’s grand-daughter] is beautiful too!’ Xiao Xiao followed Mother Zou’s instruction at the same time hugging Grandma Deng without being told by her grandmother. At this moment, a big smile appeared on Grandma Deng’s face and she said, ‘Wait till Xiao Xiao grows up. She is definitely promising (*chuxi*).’

This episode of encounter and greeting seems very normal. Nevertheless, for Mother Zou, it has great significance. It was days after the banquet when Mother Zou praised Xiao Xiao’s performance: ‘Xiao is going to achieve much better than us. She is only five but already not afraid of speaking. Sometimes, she can even speak the compliment loudly which I would never dare to say. She certainly is going to live much better life than her parents. Look at them, never learned how to speak appropriately. Now, they ended up unemployable. They have to live with us and carry on being farmers. Xiao Xiao is going to be different. She knows how to speak appropriately (*huishuohua*). For a girl, being pretty and having a sweet mouth (*zuitian*) is the key to success. Our Xiao Xiao has both. Our Xiao Xiao is going to be famous. She is much more promising than us.’ From Mother Zou’s words, it is not difficult to spot how she correlates personal prosperity with one’s ability to speak *appropriately* – to use technical terms, as Bourdieu (1992) might have put it, she makes a correlation between ‘linguistic capital’ and ‘social mobility’.

Mother Zou’s words reminded me so much about my parents’ concern when I was little. They particularly worried about my future given that I was still scared into tears when aged thirteen and being asked to give a public speech standing in front of people. They thought that my prospect was doomed if I was not able to make good speeches; therefore, they took me to many banquets and always forced me to make toasts with speeches no matter how reluctant I was. After the banquets, my father would correct my toast speeches word by word if he found anything inappropriate. At that time I could not appreciate my parents’ intention. Only in my fieldwork in Zambia, did I begin to understand the cultural significance of speech on social interaction in a Chinese community.

At my field sites in Zambia, people make and are being asked to make speeches, formally and informally, all the time – at banquets, at work conferences, at school, at business meetings, among friends, among colleagues and even among strangers. For them, the way in which one speaks is part of oneself. Speech is one's 'gate and face' (*menmian*) and demonstrates one's capability in association with ideas of quality (*suzhi*), self-cultivation (*xiuyang*) and charisma (*meili*). Furthermore, being able to speak appropriately is a component of 'being a proper human' (*huizuoren*). It is deeply embedded in everyday moral interaction and communication. Most importantly, appropriate speech, especially speaking with affection, has the power to draw people together and enhance the emotional proximity; therefore, if seen from the instrumental point of view, speech has great impact on the accumulation of 'social capital' in practice. This impact has been amplified with the process of urbanization and modernization in recent years when intimate relationship built up through long time face-to-face interaction is gradually replaced with brief transactional encounters among urban strangers (for Chinese urbanization see Nancy Chen ed. 2001; Xuefei Ren, 2013). Under this social transformation in China, speaking appropriately (*huishuohua*) has entered people's awareness and been emphasized more and more as a form of 'personal capability' because it may provide people with more opportunities to achieve success and prosperity.

The popular interest in speech and increasing awareness of its significance has generated a market for 'rhetorical training' in China. Since 1983, '*Speech and Eloquence*' (*yanjiang yu koucai*) has become a widely-subscribed magazine in China. In 1988, the subscription had already reached 1.13 million. This is a magazine especially issued to teach speech skills. Since 2001, the founder of the magazine, Shao Shouyi, was also invited to be one of the regular speakers on a very popular TV programme, Lecture Room (*Baijia Jiangtan*), broadcast on China Central Television (CCTV) which was the only channel my Chinese interlocutors watched at my field sites. Following the popularity of speech skills training, seminars are opened up in universities and bookshops dedicate special sections to the flood of publications on related topics. To some extent, this exaggeration of speech following its commercialization has objectified speech and turned it into a form of art; and, being able to speak appropriately has been inserted into everyday social expectation. To

stand back and reflect on it as a Chinese myself, this obsession with speech is a truly fascinating cultural phenomenon.

Even though it receives broad attention from the public, the cultural significance of speech in China has rarely been studied by sinological anthropologists. Arguably, this omission might have been because the scholars have been overwhelmed by the long-standing and sophisticated Chinese culture of writing. Among the few anthropologists to study speech, Hans Steinmüller recently has documented how irony is employed as a main communicative strategy for the villagers in Hubei province. Borrowing the analytical concept of ‘cultural intimacy’ from Herzfeld, Steinmüller argues that irony as a linguistic style is forming a ‘community of complicity’ in rural China (2010, 2013). He interprets that this ‘community’ arises in ‘a “coded tension” exists between official representations, generally linked to nation and state, and vernacular forms in face-to-face communities; this tension expresses itself locally in embarrassment, cynicism, or irony. Such are the reactions when “cultural intimacy” is exposed, and they can both confirm the official representation and satirize it. Inasmuch as these expressions are shared and common, they bind people together in intimate spaces of self-knowledge.’ (2010:540)

As I see it, however, there may be several problems regarding the argument that irony is formative of community. First, putting ‘irony’ as the analytical locus, researchers potentially muddle the emic and etic perspectives. In other words, what the informants find genuine could look ironic to the researcher. Second, irony as a linguistic style may be a mere representation of other rhetorical values rather than being the foundation. François Jullien (2000) has traced the history of the Chinese communicative strategy of ‘detour’ and argues the social value of indirect speech, which entails irony, in China. Therefore, arguably, indirect speech could be formative of Chinese communities instead of irony. Third, the sustainability of a community is questionable if the solidarity is purely based on ‘irony’. That is to say, if irony is taken as the moral norm, sincerity will become marginalized and untraceable. Communication would break down if no one could speculate what the other genuinely thinks. Most importantly, the relationship between sociality and linguistic style are dialectical. In order for irony to function, interlocutors need to have intense ‘shared background’ (Searle 2010) already at hand. In a way, it is to say that people

need to be in a community to understand irony. Nevertheless, it is arguable that irony as shared expressive technique can strengthen group solidarity by contrasting with ‘outsiders’ who are not culturally equipped to appreciate its indirectness and implication.

It is this dialectical relation between sociability and speech that I am going to investigate in this chapter. To seek the emic meaning of ‘speak appropriately’ from two aspects of my Chinese interlocutors’ everyday practices – indirect speech and contextualization – I aim to analyse the mutual constitutive impacts between speech and sociality. On the one hand, the choice of the speaking style in linguistic exchange, often seen as a manifesto of personal intention, has the effect to draw together or isolate interlocutors, which is usually done via speaking with or without affection at my field sites. On the other hand, the mode of association and its practice forms the inclination of linguistic techniques and constrains personal choices. Particular to my Chinese interlocutors in Zambia is the concern that speech has the potentiality to damage the ‘harmonious’ relationship between interlocutors so they employ indirect speech to a great extent. In turn, indirect speech requires the parties in communication to have intense knowledge of the social and situational context for cooperation and for successful information transmission. In order to secure the transmission, further moral evaluation, such as ‘incompetent’ or ‘social stupidity’ in my case, is imposed, sometimes even with social isolation as punishment. In general, speech and solidarity is in a loop – a loop of mutual constituting and mutual nurturing.

To understand this dialectical relation, first of all, I will use banquet speech and ‘soft command’ at work as examples to describe what ‘speaking appropriately’ connotes to my Chinese interlocutors. Based on Steven Pinker’s hypothesis on linguistic implicature (2007), I attempt to propose that the stress on Chinese ‘harmonious’ sociality, as moral ideal as well as practical interest, provides the condition for specific speech styles, such as emotional speech and contextualized communication. Furthermore, with their realisation of the impact of speech on social networking, I will document how my Chinese interlocutors utilize speech at work and in business to achieve personal prosperity. As in previous chapters, the study is mainly microscopic with a focus on everyday mundane conversational exchanges. The main aim is to show the dialectical relations between speech and sociality appearing in practices; therefore, this chapter will be predominately descriptive.

This perspective for investigation may seem ahistorical and apolitical; however, I have no intention to deny that the linguistic style my interlocutors engage with is subject to Chinese historical and political conditions. Surely, the class struggle during the Cultural Revolution and the state involution before and after Communist China etc. all contribute to the formation of communicative techniques; and, any form of linguistic styles could be the demonstration of ‘symbolic power’ and ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu 1992). Such perspectives need more detailed future studies and are beyond the discussion of this chapter.

Communicative Capacity I: Indirect Speech

Back to the party the Zou family was hosting: Mother Zou immediately sent Xiao Zou to the Demonstration Center inviting Manager Bao and the administrative staff to join as soon as he came back from the grocery. ‘Ask nicely! If Manager Bao does not want to come, make sure you invite Teacher Feng [the mechanic] and Xiao Lü.’ Mother Zou instructed before Xiao Zou left home.

This instruction was specially stressed regarding the relationship between the Zou family and Manager Bao – they did not get on very well. For Manager Bao, the Zou family were uneducated peasants who came to Zambia to look for windfalls because of their ‘failure’ in China, so he looked down on their quality (*sushi*) and peasant’s lifestyle; whereas, for the Zou family, Manager Bao was just another pretentious official who fell out of the leader’s favourite circle so was assigned to Zambia. Although the Zous acknowledged that Manager Bao despised them, considering the Demonstration Center and the family farm were neighbours and both were from China, Mother Zou still made every effort she could to socialize with the staff and to maintain a ‘harmonious’ (*heqi*) relationship.

About half an hour later, Xiao Zou came back with Teacher Feng. Just as Mother Zou predicted, Manager Bao did not come but only Teacher Feng. After settling Teacher Feng in the lounge, Mother Zou found Xiao Zou in the courtyard and questioned him.

‘What did he (Manager Bao) say?’ Mother Zou asked in a rather weak voice.

‘What else could he say? Just *daguanqiang* (talking in an official style). He said the farm work was very busy and he needed to keep an eye on it. Also, the central government

had specifically issued documents recently stressing that officials overseas should be aware of their image (*xingxiang*) and try to reduce unnecessary entertainment after work. Full of bullshit, as usual! He was playing QQ games in the bed when I knocked at his door! Why did you send me there anyway? You know he does not like us.’ Xiao Zou replied with a loud and upset tone.

‘Shh, lower your voice,’ Mother Zou gave Xiao Zou a hint by rolling her eyes in the direction of the lounge and continued, ‘You see how busy I am. If not, I would go and invite him myself. Anyway, why did Xiao Liü not come with you?’

‘What a question! How could he if Lao Bao [nickname of Manager Bao] didn’t!’ Xiao Zou started to get annoyed and left his mother to join his friends for poker.

Mother Zou turned to me and complained, ‘He is just like his father – stubborn and never knows how to request well. Sometimes you need to throw your face away and say some cheeky words to get things done, right? Nowadays, how much money is face worth! *Siyaolianpi huoshouzui* (willing to suffer but not to give up the face).’

Let me pause for a while to analyse some interesting points of the dialogue in this episode. First, the notion of *guanqiang*: literally, it can be translated as official tone. Nevertheless, the connotation normally contains a negative evaluation. It belongs to a certain type of speech style which usually is used by government officials. When it is used, this style emphasizes the form of speech and the hierarchical relationship between speaker and audience; it has the power to transform the communicative context from informal into formal so to create a sudden social disjunction between the addresser and addressee. It often conveys the intention to de-socialise; namely, using formal speech or official excuses to refuse dealing with informal and practical requests. The negative evaluation of *guanqiang* comes from its patronising character of the speech form and its emptiness of the speech content.

Second, the intention towards bystanders during the communication has two aspects; one is to avoid over-hearing and the other one is to aim for being over-heard. The former is associated with the Chinese communicative notion of ‘*geqian you’er*’ (it has an ear on the other side of the wall) and the latter is linked with ‘*zhisang mahuai*’ (reviling/abusing the locust tree while pointing to the mulberry). Both terms are abstracted from

Chinese classics²² and were cited frequently by my Chinese interlocutors when commenting on communication. I will provide more related ethnographic examples later in this chapter; but Mother Zou's body language of 'eye rolling' during the dialogue with her son belongs to the former practice of such speech skill. By redirecting Xiao Zou's intention to the lounge, where Teacher Feng was, using body language, Mother Zou was warning her son about the possibility of their conversation being over-heard by Teacher Feng who worked under Manager Bao and presumably allies with him. From Mother Zou's concern, it is not difficult to see that the group identity of the addressee and bystanders constitutes an important part of the situational context and influences greatly the speech styles that addressors employ.

Third, regarding the relationship between speech and notion of face, it is true to say that speech is subject to the pre-existing power relations among the interlocutors, but it can form new power relations as well, if conversations are perceived as a form of exchange (for examples of power relations of gift exchange in China, see Yan 1996). This character of speech often clashes with moral practice on equality and mutual respect, which in Chinese practice is often bundled with the notion of face (*mianzi*). Face is associated with dignity. During my fieldwork, I often heard my Chinese interlocutors complaining that someone's words did not leave any space for his/her face (*buliü mianzi*) and brought shame in public. As a result, social ties were cut off. Since words could damage social relations, my interlocutors are very conscious and careful when talking to each other. As they always say, 'misfortune can come out of a careless mouth' (*huocong kouchu*); therefore, one needs to pay extra attention to whom one is speaking to and what one is speaking of. Note, the content of speech always corresponds with the projected social relations of interlocutors. In turn, this cautious attitude on speech also impacts on people's speech style – the wide application of indirect speech every day.

In general, the brief conversation between Mother Zou and her son above reveals the significant role that situational sociality plays in daily communicative exchange. Not only are interlocutors aware of each other's positional role during the conversation, but also they are cautious about the group identity of the bystander. Moreover, they acknowledge

²² Story of 'geqian you'er' is from 'Guanzi Junchenxia'. 'Zhisang mahuai' is from *Thirty-Six Strategies* (*sanshiliuji*)

the interplay between speech and sociality. For them, the choice of speech style conveys the intention for socializing and carries the implication of each other's relationship. Careless wording may bring the potential danger of breaking 'harmonious' relations. Two slang phrases which my Chinese interlocutors often refer to could nicely capture this interplay between speech and sociality – '*jianrenshuorenhua, jianguishuoguihua*' and '*shuozhewuxin, tingzheyoyi*'. The former can be literally translated as 'speak human's language when meeting a human and talk in ghost's words when encountering a ghost'. The connotation indicates that people shall be able to shift conversational contents and communicative style according to the status of the addressee, instead of sticking to the truth. The latter means that 'speaker does not have the intention but the wording actually used could be over-interpreted by the listener according to his/her own projection'. In an extreme version, one's words could be twistedly interpreted against one's self.

In Chapter Two, I argued that my interlocutors are self-conscious about '*guanxi*' (relationship) and cherish interactional affection (*jiaoqing*). Here, I contend that it is this acute awareness of social relationships accompanied by the acknowledgement of the social function of speech that generates and nurtures an everyday communicative style of indirectness. Steven Pinker has proposed that sociality is the reason why human use implicature (2007). I would qualify his hypothesis by supplementing that the sociality he refers to is mainly spontaneous socialization which often comes with uncertainty and risk. Nevertheless, I consider his hypothesis could very well explain the phenomenon at my field sites. Because my interlocutors regard social networking plays an important role in one's personal success yet are never certain of the intention of the conversational other, they choose to use an indirect communicative style.

This perceived cultural value of indirect speech could be demonstrated by misunderstandings which occurred during cross-cultural requests between Zambian workers and Chinese managers at work. When the construction work for the administrative building finished, there were lots of extra materials left, such as paint, bricks and unwanted steel. For the Chinese managers, these materials had no use but the Zambian workers could well use them to re-decorate their houses. So, suddenly, the manager's room was full of Zambian workers requesting the free materials and it was up to the manager to decide who

would get the resources. This discretion gave the manager a chance for favouritism. Thomas considered himself the first who should be granted materials because among all the workers he had been working at the demonstration centre for the longest time. Nonetheless, after several attempts, he could not get any. By contrast, the newly joined security guard Gasper had secured quite a few. Seeing Gasper carrying the materials back home by his bike every evening, Thomas was a little bit upset. So he decided to talk with the manager. As a result, not only did not he get anything, but also the Chinese manager used the chance to orally discipline him. So, Thomas was very disappointed.

Among the Zambian workers, Gasper was always the favourite one. The manager thought him clever, capable of reading the manager's mind (*youyanglijian*) and knowing how to put forward a request appropriately. On the contrary, Thomas was not particularly liked by the manager. For him, Thomas was too stubborn and often did not know who was the boss and who was the worker. He was always the one who liked to bluntly give advice to the manager and make decisions without asking for permission. Moreover, Thomas was also the one who did not even know how to speak. When I tried to find out the reason why Thomas did not secure any material, the manager told me;

‘You see, he is too arrogant (*kuang*). Every time he asked me, it seemed that I was obliged to give it to him. It felt like I owed him (*qiantade*). If he asked nicely, I would have given him something. Sometimes, I do pity him but the way he speaks really put me off. Such a person does not deserve sympathy (*buzhide tongqing*). Doomed to be poor for life!’

After hearing the manager's judgement, I decided to observe how Thomas made requests. Several times, I followed him when he went to see the manager for the materials. In general, Thomas's requests were rather straightforward. If he wanted something, he would directly ask for it by saying things like ‘Can I have...?’ For the manager, such expression sounded too blunt and could be interpreted very much with a force of an order rather than a request. It put the manager in an uncomfortable spot – if he gave in, he would feel that Thomas would think he was giving him the material due to his obligation as a boss and Thomas would not be grateful; if he did not give it to him, he could not avoid sounding bad or rude as the way to reply to Thomas' direct request is to use direct confirmative or negative sentences.

By contrast, Gasper's strategy for making requests was very different. If he aimed for something, he would attend to the manager's needs more in the morning. Then he found a chance to make a request, almost like a spontaneous conversation. Instead of directly asking for things, he would firstly chat about some problem at home. Then he would comment on how expensive it was to buy such things in the market. Afterwards, he would mention that he saw some materials he needed in the garage or in the field then ask the manager what he was going to use it for. At the point, the manager would have already comprehended his intention and tell him that those material had no use anymore so he was happy to offer them to him if he could use them. In the end, Gasper would say lots of sweet words to show his gratitude. Despite knowing Gasper's real intention every time he approached, the manager still liked the way in which Gasper's request was made and pleased that he could help Gasper to better his living conditions. This does not mean that Gasper would get what he requested every time but he did make the manager comfortable even when refusing him.

Seeing Thomas disappointed every time, as a friend, Xiao Liü decided to share some communicative techniques with him. One afternoon, when driving back to the Demonstration Center from city market, Xiao Liü bought some chilled soft drinks for the hot weather. Seeing there were some extra bottles in the bag, Thomas asked to have one.

[T]: Can I have one?

[XL]: Hmmm, no!

[T]: Why not? I thought we were friends!

[XL]: Because you should not have asked like that! I do not have to give you any, you know.

[T]: How should I ask?

[XL]: Hmmm, you should say it is very hot today and you are thirsty. And wait for me to offer you one.

[T]: But it is not a question. How can I know you will offer me one?

[XL]: Well, I will. I am not mean and I am not stupid! Like you said, we are friends. Of course I am going to offer you one. You know, you need to change the way you ask for things. Otherwise you will get nothing. You know Lao Bao (Manager Bao) does not like you.

[T]: Yes, I know. Is that why he does not give me things?

[XL]: Maybe

Xiao Liti passed Thomas a bottle of Coke.

[T]: Hmm, we like Coke. So nice! Thanks boss!

Since that afternoon, Thomas started to pay attention to his style of making requests and began to try more and more implications. Gradually, the manager began to offer him things and expressed pleasure that he had changed and encouraged him to work harder.

This misunderstanding at work raised due to the mismatch of linguistic forms could disclose the dynamic interplay between everyday socialization and communicative styles – indirect speech in this case. For the Zambian workers, perhaps precisely transmitting messages in conversations are weighted more; whereas, for the Chinese managers, the communicative style and revealed mutual perception on each other's social relation and social roles associated with it are valued more. As shown above, the pre-existing social positions brought into conversation – manager and worker – provide a social expectation of certain forms of speech performance. It is the form of speech which draws my Chinese interlocutors' attention. For them, the form of speech conveys information which is implicit but nevertheless crucial, such as speaker's intention, perception of the power relation between interlocutors, and speaker's social status. It is the choice of form that reveals personal capacity of communication. To some extent, the form becomes part of the content of communication.

To further interpret the previous statements of Chinese managers, indirect speech leaves a communicative gap for interlocutors to fill in – a gap for choice and a gap for both to escape the responsibility for causing embarrassment. By doing so, the interlocutors could avoid potential damage to sociality. The addressee could always claim that s/he has not fully comprehended the real intention of the addresser; while the addresser could avoid being accused of forcing the response.

This cultural value of communicative indirectness in China could arguably be traced long back in history and it has been deeply embedded in Chinese aesthetics. This value could be well captured by the Chinese terms '*weiwan*' and '*hanxu*'. The former could mean 'diversion' and the latter could be translated as 'suggestive'. Both aim to convey the meaning but without totally unveiling the intention. These are widely used

as rhetorical techniques in Chinese literature. In the Chinese classic ‘*wenxindiaolong*’ (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*), Lü Xie claims that the beauty of expression exists in concealment (*yin*). ‘Only through veiling is the meaning conveyed extensively and elegantly’ (*shenwenyinwei, yuweiyubao*). In his study on Chinese rhetorical styles, sinologist philosopher Francois Jullien writes, ‘the basic principle of aesthetics in China, in both painting and poetry, is for the meaning, the pleasure, not to exhaust itself at first glance but to develop endlessly’. He further quotes Chinese scholar, Liang Shiqiu’s study on inveighing techniques in China: ‘Avoid day-to-day language because it is exhausted quickly. It is no match for literary language, whose indirect nature is rich in implicit meaning’ (2004: 53). For Jullien, detour is an important communicative style in China is due to the censorship and its fierce power struggles in political games so detour has long been utilized as a form of strategy to express one’s intention.

Communicative Capacity II: Contextualization

Placing indirect speech as a crucial communicative technique brings an intrinsic dilemma; that is, how could the addresser accurately transmit his or her message to the addressee? To solve this problem, my Chinese interlocutors have further emphasized another communicative skill, contextualization, as social competence for moral evaluation in practice to accompany indirect speech. In Speech Act Theory, context is considered as a fundamental component not only for the interlocutors to achieve communication in practice but also for researchers to study the conversation. In order to succeed mutual understanding, pragmatics have argued that interlocutors constantly engage in a set of *contextualization cues*;

‘Speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows...these features are...habitually used and perceived but rarely consciously noted and almost never talked about directly. Therefore they must be studied in context rather than in the abstract’ (Gumperz 1982a:131, cited in Duranti 1997: 212)

When the cues are missed, the message will fail for transmission. At my field sites, to prevent such miscommunication, instead of focusing on precise coding by the addresser, my Chinese interlocutors incline to put the burden of communicative cooperation on the addressee. In

other words, in conversational exchange, the addressee often takes the active role to construe and interpret the addresser's intention.

In practice, this communicative capacity is popularized as '*yanlijian'er*' by my Chinese interlocutors. It is a colloquial expression from northern China. Literally, it can be translated as 'having the ability to observe' while it often means one is capable to act according to the other's intention without being explicitly demanded. This term usually carries moral evaluation. To say someone is '*yanlijian'er*' is to praise him or her for being clever, industrious and having high EQ (*qingshang*) whereas the people without such 'capacity' are criticised as socially retarded. In previous chapters, I have briefly described how this communicative technique is used as 'soft command' among my Chinese interlocutors. In this section, I would like to elaborate how it has been negotiated and transmitted between Zambian workers and Chinese managers.

Ever since he was 'downgraded' from chauffeur to general worker, Thomas had been criticised more and more by the general manager of the Demonstration Center. The criticism is mainly because the manager thinks that Thomas has a very passive attitude towards work and that he is very lazy as he would not do any work until the manager ordered him to do it. The manager's perception was drawn from several incidents at work. For example, when he saw Thomas chatting with the security guards, the manager would pick up a broom to sweep the courtyard in front of the security booth. In taking this action, the manager is expecting Thomas to observe and understand his intention so that Thomas would stop chatting, take the broom from him and continue sweeping. Nevertheless, very often, Thomas would just ignore him or, sometimes he would stand beside the manager and watch him finish the task. His response (also expressed through action, or inaction) irritated the manager. The manager would criticize Thomas harshly and command him to re-do the work which he just finished. On more than one occasion I heard the manager sharing his perception with managers from other Chinese companies – 'They (Zambian workers) are not just lazy but very stupid as well. They don't have any *yanlijian'er* at all! You have to order them to do work and they only do what you ask them to do; not a tiny little bit more. Even worse, they sometimes just stand there like a piece of wood watching you do their jobs! This would never happen in China! Make sure you choose some smart ones otherwise tons of

trouble is ahead of you', the manager of the Confucius Institute was told when seeking recruitment advice from Manager Bao.

After more and more accusations Thomas was very frustrated. He considered that he had finished what the boss asked him but somehow it was not enough to satisfy the manager. So, Thomas decided to ask Xiao Liü for some advice. Xiao Liü told Thomas that he should be more observant of what the manager wants and prefers. He mentioned that Thomas should actively pursue the task even before the manager asked him to do anything. 'It does not mean you have to work all the time. You just need to be more observant when Lao Bao (Manager Bao) is around. When you see him walking near the flowers, you can pick up the bucket and start watering. Then he will be pleased. Oh, when he is doing some work, don't stand there. You should help him. Just do what he wants. It is easy,' Xiao Liü shared his 'insight' with Thomas.

Thomas learned from Xiao Liü and put his advice into practice. This effectively eased the tension between him and the manager. Not only did the criticism become less, the manager sometimes even praised Thomas in front of other Zambian workers. Having already planned to fire him, Thomas's 'change' made the manager put his initial thoughts on hold and 'keep him for further observation' (*youdai guancha*). Notwithstanding, Thomas's acquired communicative skill put him in another 'awkward spot' when the delegation team from China was visiting the Demonstration Center.

The awkward moment happened when manager was giving a tour of the newly built administrative buildings to the delegation team. After being showed around the first floor, they were passing the lobby to go to the east wing. Seeing the manager was coming, Thomas picked up the broom and started sweeping the floor. When he saw what Thomas was doing from the end of the corridor, the manager immediately whispered to Technician Xu who was by his side; Xu quickly ran to the lobby, shouted at Thomas, grabbed his broom and pushed him out. That evening after the delegation team left, the manager fiercely scolded Thomas. The recently salvaged relationship sank to a new low.

What happened there? By sweeping the floor without being ordered to do so, Thomas's intention was to please the manager just as he had learned before. However, in this case his action caused the manager extreme embarrassment. According to the manager's

practices, the building needed to be thoroughly cleaned before the visit of his leaders. That was why all of the staff in the Demonstration Center postponed their routine work and spent almost a fortnight cleaning and preparing the whole farm for the delegation's visit. Cleaning while the delegation was present meant that the job had not been done properly, demonstrating the incompetence of the manager's management skills. As a result, Thomas' action out of good intention was interpreted as a reflection of the manager's incompetence, so causing his anger.

To understand this event, the notion of '*yanlijian'er*' needs to be further explained. Although he told Thomas how to be observant, Xiao Lü did not fully explain the whole package of the meaning of '*yanlijian'er*'. Crucially, to be observant is not just aiming at the communicative other but it extends to understanding the nature of the situation, the social relationships between every player in that situation and the motivation or intention of the main communicative other; then acting accordingly. In the episode above, the locus of social relations has shifted to the one between the manager and his leaders and the gravity of the situation lies in the intention of the manager to please his leaders. So, presumably, the workers normally working for the manager in that situation should assist the manager to satisfy his leaders. Any communicative action against this would be construed as non-cooperative and carries the danger of breaking up the relationship. As argued in Chapter Three, this would lead to workers falling out of their Chinese leader's circle of favourites and damage their career or future prosperity if there is a dependent relation at work. Hence, owing to this characteristic residing in situation, the capacity of '*yanlijian'er*' entails flexibility. It requires the subject to draw a great deal of information from the situational context and respond to it.

Fang I-Chieh in her doctoral dissertation documents similar communicative phenomena in a factory at Guangdong Province, Southern China. Her informants refer to this capability of contextualization as '*kanren lianse*'. She explains that this term is literally 'watching other people's facial expressions but means seeing what others feel/want'; then she further elaborates that 'what truly marks a "smart", ideal worker is that they should be voluntarily paying attention to their leaders' *emotions* in order to understand the leaders' desires and intentions. Then they should react quickly...If workers cannot

understand leaders' unspoken wishes, or know who might react to things that happened, they will be punished, sometimes without the matter ever being mentioned' (2012: 99, italics added). What she points out is that emotion is a crucial clue for her informants to construe the leaders' intention. Her findings correspond well with the phenomena at my field sites in Zambia. Nevertheless, what I would further add is that this attention to emotion is not only of other people but also of the one embedded in the whole situational context which I call the *situational affect* for distinction with personal emotion. In other words, interlocutor's emotion and the effect of conversational situation are equally important 'contextualization cues' for my Chinese interlocutors in the process of reading each other's mind.

The significance of situational affect in communication could be seen in etymology and writings on Chinese aesthetics. 'Situation' in Chinese can refer as '*qingshi*'. If translated back, it is a combination of 'affect' (*qing*) and 'tendency' (*shi*). To comprehend the situation for personal advantages is fundamentally grasping the affect embedded in it, so to control the tendency (*shi*). In Chinese literature and painting, the greatest beauty is within '*yijing*' provided by the author to raise affective resonance (Jullien, 2009), which I have mentioned in Chapter One. '*Yijing*' could be translated words by words as 'meaning settings'. It has a rich connotation. It is often used in the scenario where certain setting, natural or artificial, offer triggering points to cause affective response by the subject. It is a form of communication. Meanings are transmitted via affective resonance rather than logical persuasion. This style of communication requires intense shared experiences as a precondition. In everyday practices, affective resonance in conversation is also consciously used by my Chinese interlocutors when they form or enhance social relationships.

Talking with Affection

Back to the banquet the Zou family was hosting that evening, as described before, there is a hierarchical order of the seating arrangement at the banquet table. The order of speeches normally follows the seating arrangement. The host of the banquet gives an opening speech then each guest follows in the prearranged hierarchical order. Everyone needs to address a semi-formal speech to the whole table with a toast for the first round then informal toasts carry on between individuals. The first round speech can be presented on behalf of household

as units as well. The speech is spontaneous and usually would not be carefully prepared beforehand since its content needs to correspond with the event and also with other speeches; hence, it is a good way to demonstrate the speaker's capability in communication. Often, the opening speech by the host shall include the purpose of the banquet, the special relationship between the host and the guest of honour who normally sits next to the host on the right-hand side, welcoming the new acquaintances at the banquet and offering general wishes towards to all the guests. Father Zou as the head of the Zou family was requested by the guests to give the opening speech that night although he was not willing to. He said, 'Thanks for coming here for dinner. The dishes are simple but please enjoy yourselves.' Then he emptied his Chinese whisky shot-glass. Seeing this, Mother Zou immediately stood up, holding her glass, and made a supplementary speech.

'Our Lao De is very down-to-earth (*shizai*) as you all know. He is not very good at speaking (*bushan yantan*) but a very reliable man in business. All of you sitting here are our close friends. This meal is the first meal we have together since our family farm is fully built. This is to thank all of you sitting here. Without your generous help, we would not be able to build this farm or even stay in Zambia. Our family especially feel grateful to Manager Deng and his family. You are our benefactor (*enren*)...'.

At this moment, Mother Zou turned around and faced Manager Deng directly as she continued speaking with a slightly shaky voice and tears in her eyes.

'Many people turned away when our family was in big trouble. It was you who helped us but did not ask for anything in return. We would never forget your goodness. If it were not for your help, we would not be here today, not to mention this meal. I represent my whole family to make this toast. We wish you and your family health and that your business grows bigger day by day! Also, to all the friends sitting here, good fortune! I am going to empty my glass first to show my respect (*xiangan weijing*).'

While Mother Zou was still drinking, some guests already started praising her speech and her ability.

'Enjoy the dishes. Enjoy the dishes.' Mother Zou served some meat onto the guests' plates.

Moments later, Manager Deng raised his glass and suddenly all the people at the banquet stopped chatting.

‘First of all, we need to appreciate the Zous’ heart (*xinyi*) to invite us here today and offer us an opportunity to get together. Nowadays, everyone is busy with business and earning money. So little time left for friends and family. Without *zoudong* (visiting each other), people inevitably become disacquainted (*shengfen*). It is not worth sacrificing each other’s affection (*qingyi*) for money. Everybody sitting here knows that it is not easy to survive here (in Zambia) long away from home (*beijing lixiang*). We have all experienced the bitterness (*ku*, difficulty) at the beginning. Helping each other is what we should do, not to mention that we are from the same region. The old sayings puts it well: “People need to rely on friends when stepping out of home” (*chuwenkaopengyou*). We are all good brothers and sisters (*xiongdijiemei*) united through suffering the same together (*gonghuannan*). I toast for our long lasting brotherhood affection (*xiongdiquingyi*)!’

Manager Deng emptied his glass then everyone followed. By then, a very warm and convivial affect has been created at the banquet.

During my fieldwork, I attended thirty-two banquets, informal and formal, official as well as familial. And I tape-recorded twenty-one banquet speeches. From what I gathered and what I heard from my Chinese interlocutors, it seems, in general, that a good banquet speech needs to show the speaker’s courtesy, intention and sincerity. Nevertheless, all of these are subject to a matter of degree. Too much courtesy may potentially become *ketaohua* (polite speech), empty speech, and sound superficial so to alienate the addressee. On the contrary, if the speech is too straightforward, the speech would be criticised as lacking elegance. As argued above, a good banquet speech should correspond well with the emotional proximity between interlocutors and the context of the banquet. More importantly, a good banquet speech needs to be emotionally loaded and affectively provocative. It is to produce and maintain an affective situation at the banquet. Such affect is produced via emotional resonance triggered by shared experience as shown in the case above. In the resonance, both the speaker and the audience are co-authors. They cooperate to create the situational affect together in order to generate or strengthen the social bond.

Adam Yuet Chau claims this process of co-authoring as ‘the sensorial production of the social’ (2008). He not only highlights the significance of sense ‘*honghu*’ (social heat) in Chinese social perception, but also argues that the actors are actively (re)producing sense for sociality. He writes that this involves ‘not only how the senses receive and perceive the social but more importantly how social actors actively construct their social worlds in sensorially rich manners, and how moments of sensorialized sociality become institutionalized’ (2008:488). Following him, I further argue that emotional speech is one mechanism for my Chinese interlocutors to (re)produce the sensory and affective situation for everyday sociality. In other words, through emotional speech, they create an affective setting for each other to feel, to resonate, to understand and to bond. In turn, this attachment pushes them to produce further emotional speeches.

Speech Capital I: Speech, Work and Favouritism

Above, I have argued the dialectical relationship between speech and sociality. As I have demonstrated through this thesis, the sociality of my Chinese interlocutors is based on ‘differential mode of association’ which is particularistic, affective and responsive. This kind of sociality provides the foundation for wide application of indirect speech and emotional talk in practice; and also encourages the individual to extensively draw information from the context in order to achieve communication. This focus on communication nurtures certain types of capacities in speaking and they reflect back to act upon everyday socializing. In a simpler version, my Chinese interlocutors would be reluctant to socialize with someone who does not use similar communicative mechanisms. In their words, it is because such people ‘do not know what to talk about’ (*buzhidaoshuoshenmehao*). Meanwhile, shared speech style would strengthen the proximity among interlocutors.

The latter aspect of this dialectical relationship – the function of speech on sociality – has been gradually acknowledged by my Chinese interlocutors. In everyday interaction, my Chinese interlocutors are consciously utilizing speech for social networking to achieve personal desires. In other words, they are using speech to access ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu, 1977). Since speaking appropriately is considered as a form of social capability by my interlocutors and needs to be learned in long-term social practices, here, I venture to

term the skill in speaking as ‘speech capital’. Speech capital has subtle differences from Bourdieu’s notion of ‘linguistic capital’. For Bourdieu, linguistic capital is a form of cultural capital which emphasizes how different social statuses are manifested and reproduced (1991). By contrast, speech capital focuses on how class differences are diluted and how individual social mobility is strategically achieved. Nevertheless, the utilitarian characteristic of analysis is shared. In the rest of this chapter, I will describe how speech is utilized as capital in everyday practices at work and in business. I want to propose that this tendency of commercializing speech will enhance and amplify the power of existing communicative style to the extent of self-regeneration.

If speech is not just a way for the speaker to express himself/herself but also for the audience to perceive and evaluate, it could be argued that speech is a performance – a kind of self-impression management (Goffman 1971, 1972). It is enacted for the audience’s awareness. Good performance will attract an audience’s interest and appreciation while a bad performance will potentially dislodge the audience. Good performance requires certain abilities of the actor, which need to be acquired through a long process of cultivating and practising. Ultimately, it is possible that the speech would change the character of the speaker; that is, metaphorically, the actor is trapped in the play and lives in it forever. Play becomes the reality and reality becomes the play. It is indeed this performative character of speech that most of my 80-*hou* (born in 1980s) Chinese interlocutors struggled with, causing frustrations and non-satisfactory complaints at work. The frustration comes from the association between the performance of speech and work evaluation and the struggle comes from their realization of the fakery of such play. They acknowledged the importance of speaking appropriately at work – speaking well will make them become the favourite so to be promoted quickly by the leader – but sometimes they will feel unease at putting up a show. As Mr Barry always said:

‘Nowadays, the one who works hard cannot compete with the one who speaks well (*nenggande buru huishuode*). Leaders prefer the one with the sweet mouth. Look at them. Doing nothing every day but they still get a bonus. Look at me. Work my shit out every day but our leader still criticises me. What a society (*shidao*)! So unfair!’

Barry's feeling of unfairness largely drew from the comparison between his everyday work life and Liü Wei's. Liü Wei shared a room with Barry. As a document filer, indeed, Liü Wei did not have as heavy a work-load as Barry. Nonetheless, for me, Liü Wei had another kind of tiresome work. Because he made good banquet speeches, Liü Wei was always asked to keep the leader's company at business dinners, which he did not particularly find enjoyable.

'To be honest, I do not really like that business dinner-entertainment (*yingchou*). It is so tiring. Full of fakery. People have to say the words they do not want to say in order to please each other. Also, you are forced to drink a lot; otherwise people would think you are not groupy (*hequn*) and insincere (*jia*). Why bother (*heku*) if people cannot enjoy and be true to themselves? [Sigh] So difficult to be human (*zuoren zhennan*).'

Liü Wei's negative sentiment and reluctance to *yingchou*, owing to the performance of fake speech, were widely shared among most of my young Chinese interlocutors. Despite the discontent, they do acknowledge its significance for sociality and admire the one who has the ability to speak and perform well in business banquets.

As mentioned above, one regular task at the Demonstration Center is to welcome the investigation team from China for project examinations. During their stay, putting up official banquets in local Chinese restaurants every day was inevitable. As the general manager of the Demonstration Center, Bao was always in charge of organizing the banquets. Even though there were several Chinese workers in the Center, Bao still prefers to invite Grace to help during the banquets. As he reasoned, 'It is always easy to speak as a girl' (*nühai'er haoshuohua*). The unspoken reason was that Grace was good at supplementing Bao's speech and saving his face when he lost track due to drunkenness. Grace was originally from the same city as Bao was and did her undergraduate study in Bao's university before she went to the USA for her master's degree. After her graduation, she immediately secured a position in a Chinese mining company. Because of her overseas experience, she was soon relocated to Zambia to establish a business branch. It was in Zambia where Bao and Grace became acquainted through the *laoxiang* (people from same region) network.

Grace was well regarded and often admired as a girl who can speak appropriately (*huishuohua*). Once after a business banquet, Xiao Liü started to gossip with Liü Wei about the performance of Bao and Grace:

‘That girl is tough (*lihai*). Very good at speaking! (*zhennengshuo*). There’s no doubt why her boss likes her so much and is not willing to let her quit. You can tell how much money she can get just for that mouth. See how happy she made our leaders. Everyone on the table was praising her. I wish I could speak as well as she can. It was funny to see how many times she had saved Lao Bao’s [Manager Bao] arse. I mean, what a professor is he? What level (*shuiping*) is he? – does not even know how to speak! No ability (*nengli*) at all! No doubt why he has waited fifteen years to be promoted only as a junior manager...’

‘Shh, lower your voice. Be aware that there is an ear on the other side of the wall (*geqiang you’er*)!’ Liü Wei warned him

‘Yes, you are right. I am too inobservant sometimes.’ Xiao Liü began to whisper. ‘You know, if it was not because there was no one wanting to come to Zambia, Lao Bao would still not get the chance to be promoted. He asked for a promotion in exchange for being sent here. You know what the leaders say about him? They say that he does not know how to control his mouth (*guanbuzhuzui*) and speaks everything directly out of his head. No one liked him so they sent him here.’

It could be claimed that a good banquet speech can form or enhance the social networks at the table so to bring potential benefits for the speaker. Notwithstanding, Barry’s comment that ‘the one who works hard cannot compete with the one who speaks well (*nenggande buru huishuode*)’ has another layer of meaning. Capability in speaking does not just bring possible capital around dining tables; more crucially, it is effective in everyday sentence-to-sentence communication in the workplace. Through this informal everyday communication, the leader evaluates the worker’s capabilities, such as social intelligence, loyalty and respect to the senior, for future references. Therefore, speech at work is a performance for the leader’s perception – one cannot always speak straightforwardly what one thinks but should speak according to the leader’s preferences, as argued above. It involves speaking out loud what the leader is willing to say but does not dare to say regarding possible responsibility; or, speaking it indirectly and humbly when the leader cannot make a

decision but needs advice or obviously the leader has made a mistake; or, speaking passionately when the leader fishes for compliments.

In general, speech capacity is intertwined with everyday practice of favourites at work and, as a result, influences one's prosperity at work. This correlation could be well proved by some daily communications between Xiao Fan (XF) and Manager Bao (MB, aka. Professor Bao). Xiao Fan was the third translator for the Demonstration Center, replacing Xiao Liü. There was another translator before Xiao Liü but both of them were dismissed because Manager Bao regarded them incapable of speaking and of comprehending their manager's words and therefore incapable of working.

One afternoon in the farm field after the irrigation system was fully installed, Manager Bao was standing by the reservoir, overlooking the farm with one hand pointing to the irrigation.

[MB]: Did you know here was a waste-land before? The wild-grass was as tall as a man! Now, look, the grass is cleared out. The irrigation is set up. Impressive, no? You do not know how tough it was to do all these. You were not here.

[XF]: I can imagine it must have been very difficult indeed. See how big this land is. It must be hard work to have done all this. This farm would still be waste-land if it were not because of your diligent work. Before I came to Zambia, Sectary Zhou of our university was praising your efforts here and asked me to learn from you.

(MB turned back towards to XF with a smile on his face)

[MB]: Really? Did he really ask you that?

[XF]: Yes. We met just the day before I left China, in his office and he told me that working in Zambia was bitter and you have done a very good job. He asked me to listen to your words and take this as a good opportunity to learn from you and prepare myself for the future.

(MB did not say anything but looked very pleased)

In this episode, Manager Bao was fishing for compliments (*gongwei*) by asking a question with an implied answer. Xiao Fan did not reply with a direct praise as direct praise sometimes would be considered too fake by the listener so it would not achieve the function. Instead, Xiao Fan used a quotation from Manager Bao's leader to attract the attention and compliment indirectly. The *truth* of the quotation is not the concern but the *form* and

intention of compliment. Only after Xiao Fan shared a room with me a couple of months later, he told me the truth one night. The main purpose of that meeting between him and the secretary was to instruct Xiao Fan secretly to oversee Manager Bao's behaviours while in Zambia and report back if he finds Manager Bao committing any form of corruption and failing in his responsibility.

Speech Capital II: Speech, Network and Profits

As described above, speech transforms into capital at work via favouritism. In other words, a worker who has the ability to speak appropriately according to the shifting situation is considered by the leader as a promising worker; in turn, the worker would have more chances to be promoted and gain associated benefits. By contrast, the transformation from speech to capital in business is more direct; nonetheless, it is through social networking and social capital that such transformation is fulfilled.

As Mother Zou acknowledged and emphasized above, in order to grow the family business, there at least has to be one person in a family who knows how to speak properly even though sometimes it means to throw away one's face. This could be well illustrated in Mother Liü's case. For Mother Zou, one of the crucial background reasons of Mother Liü's business success in Zambia is due to her capability in speaking. As Mother Zou observed,

'Sometimes, I wish I could have the guts to speak as Mother Liü does. Most of the time, I think I am just too embarrassed (*fangbukai*). I suppose my face is too thin. Do you know that Mother Liü even kneeled once to save her business? It was in the early years when she arrived here. She was not as famous as she is now in Zambia and her business could hardly survive. Like us, she was borrowing money to keep her restaurant going. In the end, there were just not enough customers. She almost closed down, she had to "beg" (*bajie*) the officials. That was where the money was. At the beginning, the officials were not interested. Mother Liü said lots of sweet words and gave them lots of gifts and, once, even kneeled in front of their car, crying for help. She was very persistent. I could not have done that. So embarrassing. Well, in the end, she got well-connected with the ambassador and now owns one hotel and two restaurants and is looking for a farm to buy. Ah, nowadays, business is

easy – just throw away the face and say some sweet words (*haotingde*), money will come in! Look at our Lao De, he only knows how to work hard in the field. Honesty these days is not worth a penny! When could we be rich?’

I never heard such story directly from Mother Liü; however, I did witness how skilful she was when the staff of the Demonstration Center interacted with her. Before the farm was built, the administrative staff all stayed in Mother Liü’s hotel. After the compound was finished, the managers still liked going to her restaurant for business banquets even though the food was not particularly good. As Manager Lǚ explained, ‘We know her and she is one of us. She is friendly. Everything is easy to talk and deal with here.’ ‘Easy to talk’ (*haoshuohua*) means someone is flexible and up for negotiation. It is true that flexibility is one of Mother Liü’s qualities and ‘everything is easy to negotiate (*fanshi haoshangliang*)’ is a term she often used. Her capacity for speaking could be shown through the speech she gave. It was a business banquet held by the Demonstration Center in Mother Liü (ML)’s restaurant to treat the Chinese provincial investigation team for the aid project.

[Leader]: Mother Liü, a toast to respect you. Thank you very much for your warm and subtle hospitality. Although we are in a foreign country, we do feel just like at home.

[ML]: Ah, Secretary really has over-complimented (*taiju*) me. I only did what I should do. I was worried that I have not done enough, really. As long as everyone feels pleased, then I will feel pleased. This is your home, our home. The reason why I set up this business is just for the convenience of the Chinese.

[MB]: Mother Liü acts as a real mother here. She helps us a lot. Whenever we had a trouble, as long as we called Mother Liü, she would help us without a second question (*erhua bushuo*).

[ML]: A really old mother! He he!

[Everyone was laughing]

[MB]: Well, you still look very young and glamorous!

[Leader]: We have given you more troubles when we are here for sure.

[ML]: Ahya, you are too courteous, my Secretary. Please do not see yourself as an outsider (*jianwai*). If there was no trouble, I would be bored to death! Ha ha! We are all self-people (*zijiren*). No need to mention trouble or no trouble. See, for fifty odd years in China, we have

never met but we all come to this remote country, thousands miles away from China, and befriended each other here. Isn't this our karma (*yuanfen*). I cherish karma. So please feel free to let me know if you have any problem here. I will try my best. I am sure that Secretary will do the same if I have any trouble in your province.

[Leader]: Certainly! Let us raise our glasses for Mother Liü's hospitality!

Here, by starting with a humble reply – 'over-complimented' – to the leader's appreciation and further affirming her duty to serve the leader, Mother Liü was using an indirect way to demonstrate her comprehension of the hierarchical relationships between the leader and Mother Liü in that situation. Then, to draw their relationship closer, she began to informalize the situation by stressing mutual affective reaction (i.e. feeling pleased), group identity (i.e. Chinese, self-people) and shared cultural idea (i.e. karma); furthermore, via the relaxing situational affect created in the exchange of jokes between Manager Bao and Mother Liü. In the end, by pointing out the potentiality in need of support from the leader in future, Mother Liü established a reciprocal tie and messages were communicated – she is showing great hospitality when the leader is in Zambia so the leader is supposed to take care of her if she has trouble in China.

Note the role of Manager Bao in this situation. He acted as a broker in the conversation. Working underneath his leader, Bao is considered to be a member of the official group but he also had interacted with Mother Liü before. Acute awareness of his role in this web of relations at the banquet table, Bao was pinpointing the care which Mother Liü had offered when he was in need. This explicit appreciation of Mother Liü made this debt of care implicitly transmitted to the leader because Bao's loyalty presumably lies with his leader; namely, to care Bao is to give his leader's face. In other words, what Bao was doing via splitting out personal appreciation is to bridge the relationship between his leader and Mother Liü by taking advantage of his role in between. Helping Mother Liü in the conversation also works as a form of personal favour (*renqing*) (because Bao could have chosen not to speak such) and enhances the social bonds between Bao and Mother Liü. All of this could be possible because of everyone's awareness of each other's relational position in that situation.

Not only through social networking could speech transform into capital, everyday bargaining is a more direct route for such transformation. Through bargaining, the

value of speech capacity is demonstrated and enjoyed by bargainers. Xiao Zou especially liked bargaining even when the benefit negotiated was extremely small. Every Monday Xiao Zou needs to purchase some vegetables and meat from different Chinese farms around Lusaka for the delivery on Wednesday to a Chinese construction team near Kariba. By shadowing him, I had a good opportunity to observe his bargaining speech. Chit-chat before real purchase began was necessary as it enhanced the social ties between buyer and seller in order to decrease the tension of bargaining later on. When the negotiation was on, sound excuses, such as shared locality, long-term business relationship or potential for more purchases, were needed in order to ask for a discount but being flexible and easy to talk with is crucial. Next is one of the bargains Xiao Zou (XZ) performed when he was purchasing half a pig from a Chinese farm.

[Lao Wang]: You are here (*laile*)?

[XZ]: En, busy today?

[LW]: OK, not much, just building a new pigpen.

[XZ]: Your business is growing bigger and bigger. I am afraid after you become the biggest boss, you would not care to look at me anymore [laugh]

[LW]: Impossible (*nakeneng*)!

[While talking, they walked to the butchery house]

[LW]: How much do you need?

[XZ]: Less than half...how much per kg

[LW]: 11500 Kwacha

[XZ]: More expensive?

[LW]: No, it has always been the same price. Look at the quality. It is not expensive at all!

[XZ]: Hmmm, this pig looks quite fatty. I have to cut the extra fat off when getting back home. Make it 9000 Kwacha.

[LW]: No, no, it cannot be. 9000 is too low. 11000 is OK.

[XZ]: Ahya, You are the big boss. See your pigpen is growing bigger and bigger. Why do you care about so little money! Plus, we are both from Jiangxi. 'People from the same village weep when they meet outside of their village' (*laoxiangjianlaoxiang, liangyanleiwangwang*).

We shall look after each other. I will come back more often then you will earn more. We both are happy.

[LW]: But 9000 is really too low.

[XZ]: OK. Make it 10000. Easy to calculate.

[LW]: OK. OK. 10000 it is.

[XZ]: Hmmm, cut me the lean. This one is too fat.

While we loaded the pig into the truck and drove to the next farm, Xiao Zou looked satisfied and said to me, 'It is a lot cheaper than last week. Lao Wang is a good man, very easy-going and easy to talk to.

Not only could good speech strategy in business negotiation bring extra profits for the speaker, the opposite effect would happen if the speaker does not use the appropriate speech. This could not be better proved than by the interaction between Manager Bao and Yang Mei. Yang Mei, with the help of Mother Liü, runs a tourist, printing and advertisement shop in Central Lusaka. Relying on Mother Liü's network, Yang Mei's business income was mainly from arranging tours and preparing ceremonies for Chinese officials. Since the Centre often had official investigation teams visiting, Manager Bao was introduced by Mother Liü to Yang Mei for business. It was one afternoon after lunch when Manager Bao visited Yang Mei's office to pay for a banner welcoming an investigation group. When we got there, Yang Mei was absent but, when he called her, told Manager Bao that she would come back to the office in five minutes. About half an hour later, Yang Mei walked into the yard.

[MB]: Miss Yang is the real leader. Everyone is waiting for you.

[YM]: Today is very busy. I only just got back from the printing workshop to get your banner. There are another two organizations waiting.

(Yang Mei passed over the banner for Manager Bao to double-check)

[MB]: The first two characters are not as clear as the rest. They seem different colour.

[YM]: It should be like that. Every banner has this problem. It is the machine, not my fault.

[MB]: Can you put some more paint on the two characters?

[YM]: It would be the same. Plus, no one is going to notice the difference. It is just a banner. No one is going to see it anyway.

(Manager Bao went quiet for a minute)

[YM]: Where and how are you going to hang them?

[MB]: Hmmm, that was why I was asking for your opinion. You have done this so many times. You have the experience. I wonder if you could send some of your men to hang it for us? My workers have not done this before.

[YM]: Er, your farm is in the Great East Road, no? About 20 miles each way. The money you paid for the banner would not even cover the petrol.

(Manger Bao suddenly become very angry)

[MB]: Who speaks like that! (*zenme shuohua ne*) Do you know how to speak at all? (*huibuhui shuohua*) No need to mention that I am a manager for a government project, at least, I am your senior. Shouldn't you hang the banner for free? You open doors to do business (*dakamen zuomaimai*). Everyone is your guest. Is this how you speak to your guests? I tell you, if you do business like this, no one is going to come anymore! It is not about money at all. Everything can be talked about (*shenmeshi doukeyishangliang*). I was going to pay for the petrol!

[YM]: OK. OK. There is really no need to put on your professor's uniform (*bai zhishifenzi jiazi*) and give me a lecture. You can have the banner for free and go. Your officials are all the same. Just speak big principles (*jiang dadaoli*)!

(Manager Bao turned to Mother Liū but pointing to Yang Mei)

[MB]: Listen to what she just said! *Buxianghua* (literally, does not sound like words; it means outrageous)!

Conclusion

While criticizing John Searle's theory on intentionality in speech act, Rosaldo argues that what is important for Ilongots is the attention to social relations in the process of communication. Therefore, he claims that speech act inevitably reflects and also reproduces western ideas about sincerity, intentionality and human agency if there is not enough attention given to the variable cultural practices on personhood.

'I want to argue here that ways of thinking about language and about human agency and personhood are intimately linked: our theoretical attempts to understand how language works are like the far

less explicated linguistic thoughts of people elsewhere in the world, in that both inevitably tend to reflect locally prevalent views about the given nature of those human persons by whom language is used' (1982:203).

Bearing his caution in mind, in this chapter, aiming to look into the misunderstanding arising in the process of socializing between Chinese migrants and their Zambian counterparts in the general aspect of linguistic communication, I have described the dialectical relations between speech and sociality. On the one hand, the mode of association between my Chinese interlocutors – particularistic, role-responsive, situational and emotional – nurtures certain linguistic practices. I argue that their special attention on maintaining a 'harmonious relationship' encourages them to use an indirect communicative mechanism. Due to the indirectness, they are required to contextualize to a great extent, especially being empathic to the affect embedded in the conversational situation, in order to achieve communication. On the other hand, as these nurtured linguistic styles are moralized and are subject to social expectation and evaluation, the performance of 'appropriate speech' according to the Chinese migrants' folk understanding is impacting on the (trans)formation of sociality. What is more important of 'appropriate speech' or any form of communicative action is that it is used to (re)produce sensory affect in which social relation is realized and practised by my Chinese interlocutors. Based on the observations of this dialectical relation above, I contend that it is these moralized communicative styles and their values in the formation of social relations that causes misunderstanding between Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts. Nevertheless, as I have also shown through the chapter, both parties are aware of the everyday communicative problems and learning from each other in order to achieve mutual understanding.

Besides illustrating the dialectic relations between speech and sociality, I have also elaborated how the speech styles, after being objectified into communicative skills, are utilized consciously by my Chinese interlocutors to attract 'social capital'. Here, I would like to further speculate that such awareness of linguistic utility may come as the result of rapid urbanization and marketization in China, specifically as a consequence of realizing the effect of instrumental '*guanxi*' (social networking). In his study on the relationship between coding systems and sociality, Basil Bernstein generalizes:

‘A restricted code will arise where the form of the social relation is based upon closely shared identification, upon an extensive range of shared expectations, upon a range of common assumptions. Thus a restricted code emerges where the culture or subculture raises the “we” above “I”...An elaborated code will arise wherever the culture or subculture emphasizes the “I” over the “we”. It will arise wherever the intent of the other person cannot be taken for granted. Inasmuch as the intent of the other person cannot be taken for granted, then speakers are forced to elaborate their meanings and make them both explicit and specific (1986: 476, Gumperz & Hymes Ed.).

To apply this rationale to interpret the special attention of my Chinese interlocutors on everyday speech, it seems that the rising significance of speaking in forming social relations is because China in the large scale is transforming from face-to-face community to a metropolis society. This rapid urbanization and marketization estrange people; however, at the same time, it provides the space for the commercialization of speech and opportunities for individuals to utilize speech skills for networking. Nevertheless, understanding this inclination and transformation begs more socio-historical research.

Conclusion

Having started my project with the idea of studying communication and interactions between Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts, soon after I arrived at my field sites in Lusaka I realized the deep segregation between these two ethnic groups. This ‘cut-off’ in communication, either intentionally created or inevitably occurring, forced me to reconsider my initial research questions. As noted in the introduction, much of the existing literature on ‘China in Africa’ has been written from African points of view; thanks to my own identity giving me a practical advantage (i.e. being a Chinese myself made it relatively easier to pass the gatekeeper of Chinese groups in Zambia), I began to shift my research focus to examine how Chinese migrants actually socialize and communicate with each other in everyday life and how they form and sustain social bonds and groups. As I see it, however, this shift is really about pursuing the same theoretical agenda with an alternative approach. I consider that, in order to understand cross-cultural (mis)communication, the researcher first of all has to give ‘thick descriptions’ of both cultural reference systems and then to find the points of disjunction. Undeniably, to study China-in-Africa, as a phenomenon of ‘cultural contact’ and ‘cross-cultural communication’, is a huge project, which requires collaborations of researchers not only from both sides of the interaction but also from different academic disciplines. Against this background, this thesis is written with the aim of contributing to the understanding of Chinese-Zambian cross-cultural (mis)communication from the perspective of one side of the ‘game’: the Chinese side.

So far, touching only the tip of a giant iceberg, I have described and interpreted in each chapter how the interaction between Chinese and Africans was intentionally cut off and how miscommunication is inevitably created. Following a story line of ‘first encounters’ across chapters in the thesis, firstly, I argue that at the initial stage of socializing it is the uncertainty and anxiety of my Chinese interlocutors — which automatically arise when encountering ethnic ‘strangers’ — that makes them reluctant to interact with their Zambian counterparts, to the extent that they may avoid interaction

altogether (Chapter One). It is the mistrust nurtured by intra-community competition and factionalism of Chinese migrants that provides them with the psychological foundation of suspicion of their Zambian hosts' instrumental (often projected as malicious) intention and further prevents the formation of cross-cultural bonds (Chapter Two). Then, in Chapter Three, to take the story a step further, I illustrated how miscommunication can inevitably occur, even when interactions become necessary and unavoidable in work places, because of the mismatching practices on boss-worker relations. The misunderstanding sometimes turns into quarrels and arguments. Last but not least, in the final two chapters, I end the story with more general points of 'cultural encounters'. Chapter Four, in respect of moral interaction, explains that the social bond of Chinese migrants and their Zambian hosts is interrupted overall by the 'particularistic ethics' of the former and non-corresponding moral empathy. Chapter Five shows, straightforwardly, that the communication is deeply hindered by the linguistic styles that my Chinese interlocutors employ and appreciate. Therefore, to read their story of 'first encounters' in this way, it appears that the perceived differences in everyday sociality, morality and language provide the foundation for Chinese migrants to disengage with their Zambian hosts.

Nevertheless, these reasons on the surface cannot answer a puzzle that I constantly faced during my fieldwork; that is, even when my Chinese interlocutors, especially the young ones (born since the 80s), make efforts to communicate and endeavour to form bonds with the Zambians, their interaction and relationships could not last long. Relationships often drift and are sometimes even torn apart with intense frustration and dissatisfaction. Afterwards, the Chinese migrants usually rationalise it with a general expression: 'they are very difficult to communicate/talk with' (*hetamen jiaoliühenkunnan*). What do they refer to and what exactly does it mean when they say it is 'difficult to communicate' (*buhaojiaoliu*)? It cannot simply be due to the insufficiency of Chinese migrants' English skills since the Chinese translators give similar reports and also 'home-sign' (Enfield & Levinson, 2006)²³ starts emerging among Chinese and Zambian co-workers. This

²³ Ways of communication are invented at my field site when Chinese and Zambians do not share the same language. The most common form of communication is gesture. For example, in the work place, if the Chinese manager removes the Zambian worker's safety helmet, the gesture means that the worker is fired.

question forces me to look beyond superficial reasons and look into the foundation of Chinese sociality.

What sustains the social relationships of Chinese migrants is the second narrative line running through this thesis. Inspired by Fei's model of Chinese sociality, I attempted to demonstrate the essential role that emotion plays in producing and maintaining social relationships and groups among Chinese. The presentations and arguments develop theoretically chapter by chapter according to the three dimensions of emotion. At the beginning, the focus is on inner psychological states, anxiety and suspicion, and their impact on initiating social ties and positioning mutual relationships. Then, I highlight the function of 'interactional affection' – a form of intersubjective emotion – on sustaining long-term friendships and cooperation. In Chapter Three, I discussed how intersubjective emotion (attentiveness in this case) is demanded at work and how it is bundled with the structure of 'work relations'. Chapter Four, on the one hand, furthers the argument of the previous chapter and shows how emotion is deeply embedded in social roles and transforms the disposition of the post-80s generation of Chinese; on the other hand, it demonstrates that empathy influences individuals' everyday ethical decision-making process. In the end, I argue that emotion is built into the situation as 'situational affect'. The shared emotional resonance in the situation (or materials) provides a potential for sociability and encourages proximity. To complete this line of theoretical argument, in this chapter, I want to consolidate these three dimensions of emotion, to explain how my ethnography can offer an alternative view on the issue of the social significance that emotion plays in Chinese society and to point out that how the Chinese cases can contribute to anthropological studies of emotion in general.

The Hypothesis of Emotion in China and its Critiques

When studying emotions in China, Sulamith Heins Potter has notoriously claimed that emotion is irrelevant to the construction of the social.

Pointing is used on a daily basis. Apart from gestures, mixed-language sentences are created. These are often based on Chinese grammar with insertion of random English words, such as, 'Tomorrow no come la' (*la* is a Chinese utterance particle).

‘...Chinese believe that experienced emotion is irrelevant either to the creation or to the perpetuation of social institutions of any kind...An emotion is never the legitimizing rationale for any socially significant action, and there is no cultural theory that social structure rests on emotional ties. Thus social relationships persist legitimately without an emotional basis, either real or fictive.’ (1988: 185)

To draw such argument, Potter relies on three premises. First, emotion is about individual experiences and personal inner life (184). In China, there is a lack of individuality and personhood has a sociocentric character: ‘[A] person’s socially relevant characteristics are believed to be socially derived rather than individually generated or purely personal.’ The social meanings are primarily drawn from social contexts and ‘the important aspects of social continuity are external to the self’ (186).

Second, as a legitimizing basis for social action, emotion has to be sincerely expressed. ‘Relationships are derived from and affirmed by feelings, and feelings are direct expressions of the self. The expression of feeling is the medium of communication between the self and the social order.’ (183) In China, ‘expressiveness is independent of, and implies nothing about, relationship...the Chinese are not required by convention to provide their interlocutors with a continuing symbolic pattern of emotionally expressive response.’ (193)

Third, a contrast is made with American society, where ‘personal emotion is a critical component of experience...Emotional experience is taken as legitimizing basis for social action...Every relationship must be enacted on the basis of a continuing emotional validation from within the enacting self that confirms the social and external by reference to the emotional and internal; otherwise the relationships is vitiated and robbed of meaning’. In other words, emotion is crucial in constructing and maintaining the social order.

Consequently, Potter concludes that, because the emotion in China by definition is incompatible with the American one, ‘[f]or the Chinese...the emotions are concomitant phenomena in social life, not fundamental ones. They are *logically secondary*. The Chinese do not locate significance in the connection between the emotions, the self, and the social order.’ (187, italics added)

Following her declaration of the insignificance of emotion in Chinese society and in search for the foundation constructing the Chinese social order, Potter further

contends that it is primarily ‘work’, as a form of action, that ‘is the symbolic medium for the expression of social connection, and work affirms relationship in the most fundamental terms the villagers know [in her field site]’ (1990: 195).

I consider that Potter’s arguments suffer several serious inadequacies after being deconstructed as above. First of all, her first premise concerning the Chinese ‘sociocentric’ personhood needs further qualifications in relation to both the remodelling of Chinese sociality and the historical change of Chinese individuality. It is correct to claim that ‘the social’ constitutes the self to a great deal in China; nevertheless, it does not necessarily lead to the fact that Chinese do not possess individuality. As I have explained in the Introduction, ‘social egoism’ (Feuchtwang 2009) entails the idea that social relations in China exist with reference to the self. Furthermore, as Yan (2010) has argued, China’s conquests to modernity across different historical periods have often been accompanied by the rise of individual and consequential individualization of the Chinese society. Writing in the late 1980s, Potter’s analysis is a reflection of the historical contexts of China then. Considering the data from my field sites, especially the *80 hou* Chinese migrants, it seems that there is an increasing inclination to individualism.

Moreover, as in premise two, Potter limits the communication of emotion only to expressive forms. As a result, the symbolic significance of emotion has been totally mistaken. Even if it were correct to claim that Chinese do not express emotion directly out loud, it would not necessarily mean that emotion has no role to play in forming social ties. As previously discussed, in face-to-face community, the code system of communication is often not elaborated (Bernstein 1986). Due to the great familiarity among social actors, the affection is transmitted predominately with ‘implicature’ but with no necessity for direct expression. As Yan writes when studying love and romance in a village in north-eastern China, ‘[i]t does not much matter whether the expression is verbal or nonverbal; what counts is whether the two individuals involved have found a way to express their affection to each other’ (2003:82). Furthermore, being over-expressive in a face-to-face society when there is no need for it may appear as cunning, untrustworthy and against ethical practices. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned in Chapter Five, the rapid urbanization in China in recent decades is capitalizing speech skills as well as estranging people, and forces Chinese people

to articulate more. As a result, emotion nowadays, especially love, is expressed loudly (Yan, 2003).

Most importantly, reading the third premise together with her conclusion, in spite of the good initial attempt to search for the distinctive characteristics of emotion in China, Potter unnecessarily falls into an ethnocentric trap while comparing the Chinese emotion to the Western one. In other words, she tries to understand Chinese emotion within the Western reference system and measure the Chinese practices according to a Western standard. In a nutshell, since Potter does not find American emotion (i.e. the sincere expression of inner psychological states of the self) at her Chinese field sites, the ‘emotion’ in China logically cannot have the same social significance as it does in American society.

Since its publication, Potter’s approach has been heavily criticized by sinological anthropologists. Andrew Kipnis takes Potter’s point on the emotional expressivity and argues that *ganqing* (‘sentiment’ as he refers to it in the book) is central to Chinese social relationships because ‘feelings are means of communication that can be used to manipulate *guanxi*’ (1997:111). Arguing in this way, Kipnis fuses instrumentality and emotionality into one concept, ‘*guanxi*’ and, fundamentally, it is really ‘*guanxi*’ that is the basis of the social order in China instead of emotion. As I have illustrated in Chapter Two, such treatment inevitably forces the genuine emotion into the utilitarian shadow. It is the case when Kipnis promotes his notion of ‘nonrepresentational ethics’. As he illustrates;

‘...a Chinese ethics of *ganqing* was more concerned with *guanxi* propriety than with accurate emotional representation; the ethical evaluation of emotional responses began from a consideration of the implications of those emotions for individuals’ *guanxi* rather than from a consideration of their “sincerity” (accurate representation of their inner selves).’ (*ibid*)

As a result, a Western notion of ‘emotion’, of which explicit expression is an essential component, comes back to haunt his theory. The significance of emotion as the first factor in forming and maintaining social relationships diminishes, despite once recognized, and ‘*guanxi*’ overtakes it as the fundamental factor in social relations, although it literally is ‘relation’. Notwithstanding, Kipnis ethnographic descriptions on the embodiment of emotion in the process of interaction and the impact of collective *ganqing* on social recognition and community formation are inspiring. I would like to explore it further in the

next section with an alternative interpretation of his concept of ‘nonrepresentational ethics’.

With dissatisfaction of other scholars’ dismissing the sincerity and ability of expressing emotion in China, Yan Yunxiang uses detailed ethnography to demonstrate the transaction of private and romantic life in Xiajia village. He describes the rising youth autonomy and the increasing conjugal independence. He documents how the notion of romantic love has been popularized and explicitly expressed under the influence of American youth culture (2003: 83). Yan argues that the Chinese family has been dramatically privatized. It is no longer just a system of cooperation but more crucially ‘a private haven where the private lives of individuals thrive, and individual identity and subjectivity have emerged as well’ (9).

Undoubtedly, Yan has, using rich ethnographic data, convincingly argued against Potter’s general claim of the irrelevance of emotion in Chinese social life. Notwithstanding, Yan’s arguments are built on an essential precondition, although implicit in his book; that is, the rise of emotion is due to the emergence of individuality after the collapse of collectivization in China. Arguably, this way of reasoning perhaps has left a categorical gap. In other words, it could be logically construed that, before the reform, emotion did not play an important role in everyday interaction or constructing social relations. It is in this way – by pinning the significance of emotions down to the rise of individuality – that I consider Yan might have reaffirmed Potter’s conceptual framework by measuring Chinese emotion according to a Western conceptual system and not providing sufficient critiques to avoid Potter’s Eurocentric trap, although the necessity of expressivity is eliminated. In the following, I attempt to push Yan’s counter-arguments further. By summarizing the meaning of emotion used by my Chinese interlocutors, I want to provide a potential perspective to close the gap.

Redefining Emotion

This thesis is written to investigate the interaction and communication between Chinese migrants and Zambians. While starting the investigation from the perspective of Chinese sociality (i.e. how do Chinese migrants socialize and relate to each other?), the significance of emotion emerges out of complications in the end. Nevertheless, the concept of emotion

here has much broader connotation than the one used in the American context. The core conclusion of the thesis is that emotion has always been the social foundation of Chinese society. Its essential role is not only from its impacts on the process of everyday interactions, communications and mutual understandings in Chinese community but also from its importance on forming and sustaining social relations and social groups in general. Moreover, the social significance of emotion is further secured by the fact that it is the deeply embedded basis of Chinese epistemology and applies to everyday perception, appreciation and comprehension.

Addressed as above, in a way, my conclusion is to turn Potter's claim upside down and my thesis is a demonstration of the social significance of emotion yet in relation to the Chinese reference system. Theoretically speaking, emotion is the crucial component of the Chinese mode of association (Fei, 1992) and sociality is considered as the social matrix of actions (Moore & Long, 2014); therefore, it is arguable that emotion is logically the first in constructing Chinese social order instead of 'logically secondary' (Potter, 1988). Nonetheless, to argue that emotion is the first-order factor in forming and sustaining Chinese social relations, one needs to redefine emotion. Here, I need to point out that, to some extent, this thesis is about the study of emotion in meaning but not the meaning of certain emotion. However, in order to argue the social significance of emotion in sociality and meanwhile to avoid the ethnocentric trap, I consider that it is crucial to re-examine the social ontology of 'emotion' in Chinese community according to Chinese referential system. In this section, I would like to extend 'emotion' into three dimensions (i.e. inner psychological state, empathy and affect) according to its characteristics which I observed in everyday interactions at my field sites and presented in previous chapters, and briefly summarize how each dimension is constructing social ties among my Chinese interlocutors, then compare it with the Western counterpart for distinction as well as similarity.

Firstly, I take it for granted that emotion can be experienced as inner psychological state by my Chinese interlocutors. Any form of denial is to question the basic biological science. No matter to what extent emotion may be constructed by socio-cultural matrix, it is undeniable that the existence of emotion must rely on the biological foundation. In what way the self genuinely experiences certain emotion is another question since it is also

true that emotions are often socially defined as a form of discourse and functions as a form of action (Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990). As I have described at the beginning of this thesis, anxiety and even fear are constantly experienced by Chinese migrants and they exist because my interlocutors are able to feel them.

Moreover, emotion is intersubjective. At my field sites, on the one hand, it is manifested as ‘interactional affection’ (*jiaoqing*). It is required in achieving proximity and sustaining the social bonds. Here, I need to point out that, to my Chinese interlocutors, ‘interactional affection’ and emotion in general are often ‘unrepresentable’. ‘Unrepresentable’ is different from Kipnis’ notion of ‘nonrepresentational’ which he mostly uses to mean concealment and insincerity. ‘Unrepresentable’ does not mean that my interlocutors are not willing to convey real feeling; by contrast, it emphasizes that 1) there is no necessity to explicitly communicate emotion, and 2) flexibility and subtlety of emotion makes any form of direct description insufficient. As shown previously, on one hand, my Chinese interlocutors regard that indirectness not only is functional in maintaining ‘harmonious’ sociality but also contains great aesthetic value. Therefore, emotion, when being communicated, shall not be conveyed directly but embedded in actions. On the other hand, to my Chinese interlocutors, words become cheap nowadays following commercialization and emotion expressed too verbally would only obscure the efficiency of communication by the risk of being perceived as ‘fake’ (*jiaxingxing*) once people become familiar. Therefore, intersubjective emotion is practically ‘invisible’ due to its ‘unrepresentable’ characteristic and embeddedness in action. Nevertheless, the mere ‘invisibility’ cannot rebut the significance of ‘interactional affection’ in forming and maintaining the social bonds of Chinese migrants. As they tell me, the greatest proximity between friends or lovers is ‘*xinyou lingxi*’²⁴ and it needs to be appreciated via heart but not words (*zhiheyihui buheyanchuan*).

On the other hand, empathy is arguably the foundation of Chinese morality. As I have noted in Chapter Four, *renqing* (human emotion) ethics are applied when

²⁴ This four-character idiom is abstracted from a poem by Tang Dynasty poet Li Shangyin. *Lingxi* is a spiritual, three-horned rhino in Chinese mythology. It is believed that if people possess the special horn, lovers’ hearts would be tied together and beat in unison and the romance would last forever regardless how far they were apart. The idiom nowadays is used to describe that close friends or lovers communicate with hearts and no words are needed to achieve mutual understanding.

Chinese migrants are morally engaging (via reciprocity in the case) with Zambians. Yan argues that '*renqing*' is also the socially accepted pattern of emotional responses in the sense that one takes other's emotional responses into consideration. One's failure...to show no consideration for others' feelings and emotional responses, is regarded as an immoral act' (2003: 39). According to Holland and Troop, empathy can be seen as 'a first person-like, experiential understanding of another person's perspective...It is a type of understanding that is neither purely cognitive and imaginative nor purely emotional, but a combination of both' (2011: 2). Defined in this way, Chinese '*renqing*' ethics can be claimed to be grounded on empathy. Pre-eminently in the Confucius classics, '*jisuobuyu wushiyuren*' (one shall not treat others the way one does not like to be treated) is written as the 'golden rule' of the Chinese ethical system.

Last but not least, emotion to my Chinese interlocutors has a third dimension; that is, emotion is embedded in the material world and it regulates the subject-object relation directly and intersubjective relations indirectly. As I have explained in various chapters, emotion is not only bundled in actions (e.g. showing attentiveness), but also built in to social roles and their associative ethics. More importantly, emotion is attached to situations which I call 'situational affect' in Chapter Five. Situational affect is similar to the notion of 'affect' promoted by many scholars in recent years in the affective turn in anthropology. It is seen as intensity, vitality and energy of the world for individual recognition and embodiment (Massumi, 2002; Berland, 2006; Kathleen, 2007). Contrary to what Massumi has claimed that 'there is no cultural theoretical vocabulary specific to affect' (2002:27), situational affect has various linguistic and philosophical registers in China. As mentioned before, my Chinese interlocutors often call it '*shen*' (deity) or '*lingxing*' (spiritual) when describing the affect in objects, or call it '*qichang*' (aura) or '*shi*' (force) when talking about situations. According to Francis Jullien (1999), '*shi*', which he translates as 'propensity of things', insinuates itself into reality as a force of ordering and conditioning; and, Chinese aesthetics and wisdom are grounded on the exploitation of this particular configuration of reality.

In the thesis, I have explained many linguistic terms which entail emotion (*qing*) as morpheme, such as *qingxu* (emotion), *xinqing* (mood), which designate to

the first dimension of emotion, and, *ganqing* (feeling), *jiaoqing* (interactional affection), *renqing* (human emotion), which incline to the second dimension. Here, in relation to the third dimension of emotion, it is worthwhile to repeat what I have noted in the Introduction; that is, situation in Chinese is *qingkuang* (literally, emotion-condition) or *qingshi* (literally, emotion-propensity). Semantically, one can argue that situation in China entails affect as its component. Furthermore, *qing* is also packed in role ethics. In everyday language, *qingcao* (sentiment) is used in combination with morality as in *daode qingcao*. Despite being often translated as ‘sentiment’, *qingcao* stresses more the affect attached to the social roles/positions and their associative ethics. As Roger Ames (2011) points out, being ethical according to Confucius is to grow into the social roles and to embody the bundled sentiment.

What is crucial in this third dimension of emotion, to the sociability among Chinese migrants, is that it provides the foundational ‘background’ (Searle, 2010) or ‘common ground’ (Hanks, 2006) for communication to occur and it enhances the emotional proximity or ‘feelings of mutuality’ (Fei, 1992). In other words, situational affect offers potentiality of commonality. Through shared emotional resonance to the affect, subjects form a sense of proximity (*qinjingan*) and find the common ground to interact. It is worthwhile to mention that emotional resonance stresses both the release of inner state and commonality between subjects. It is private as well as public. Resonating with the situational affect in a similar way (*gongming*), to my Chinese interlocutors, secures communication and mutual understanding. As explained before, creating ‘*yijing*’ (the sublime) to convey meaning is the art in communication instead of logical persuasion. In practice, Chinese migrants often tell me that the reason why there is little interaction between Chinese and Zambians is not that they do not like to talk with Zambians but because there is no commonality (*meigongtongdian*) or sense of proximity (*qinjingan*) when communicating with them, which I interpret as the commonality built upon shared emotional resonance with the situational affect. In the Introduction, I have quoted Moore in her recent work of revitalizing sociality in anthropological studies. As she correctly points out, the studies of sociality should not omit the impact of vitality and affectivity of matter and ‘its capacity to have formative influences on human lives and relations’ (2012:42). I consider that the ethnographic data of the significant role that situational affect plays in Chinese sociality and relationship formation

may potentially make contributions to the project of ‘revitalizing sociality’.

To further supplement my argument that emotion is the first-order factor constructing the social in China, finally, I would like to note that, because it is embedded and requires resonance to achieve mutual understanding, emotion to my Chinese interlocutors is very much embodied knowledge. It is sensory and also rational. It guides people’s perception and appreciation. Emotion is a crucial part of Chinese epistemology. In the Confucian philosophical system, ‘*ren*’ (benevolence), as the essential notion, entails ‘not only intellectual and spiritual, but physical as well...For Confucius, it is the hard won culmination of an aesthetic project’ (Ames, 2011: 177). Also, ‘*yue*’ (music) has always been regarded by Confucius as the unalienable part of ‘empathetic education’ (*jiaohua*) and to reach social harmony (Liang, 2006 [1919]), although its companion concept ‘*li*’ (rites) has received greater attention from sinological anthropologists. In practice, the significance of emotion in epistemology can be captured by the term that Chinese migrants use when evaluating their Zambian counterparts. Considering the embeddedness of emotion puts more weight on the message receiver which I have explain in Chapter Five, the receiver needs to have relevant social experiences and to be capable of producing a similar, corresponding, inner emotional state for resonance in order to construe the meaning. In everyday terms, my Chinese interlocutors call this ability ‘*wuxing*’. This term denotes that one has the ability to understand with a sensitive heart. ‘*Wu*’ as the mechanism of knowledge transmission stresses more the impact of sense and emotion produced in personal practices and experiences. This is also the rationale behind Chinese migrants accusing of Zambian workers being ‘stupid’ when teaching them. ‘Low capability in *wu*’ (*wuxingdi*) is what they often say.

To briefly sum up, above, I have extended the concept of emotion with its characteristics into three respects – individual inner psychological state, intersubjective affection and empathy, and situational affect. I also endeavoured to demonstrate the crucial role that each dimension of emotion plays in forming and sustaining social relations. To my Chinese interlocutors, emotion is unrepresentable. It is embedded in action and situations. It is embodied as a form of knowledge (sensory as well as rational) impacting on perception, appreciation and communication. It is interactional affection that maintains long term cooperation and it is shared resonance to situational affect that encourages proximity and

provides the potentiality for communication and achievement in mutual understanding.

A Chinese Contribution to the Anthropology of Emotion

What may this extensive notion of emotion used by my Chinese interlocutors offer to anthropological studies in general? While unpacking the Western conceptual presumptions of emotion, Catherine Lutz points out emotion in America has always been associated with concepts such as 'impulsive', 'vulnerability', 'chaos' and 'female' (1986). She claims that emotion in the Western referential system is the 'residual category used to talk about that which deviates from the dominant definition of the sensible or intelligible' (1988: 62). Emotion entails danger, pre-culture and individuality and, more importantly, emotion before 1980s in the discipline of anthropology was predominately used to designate 'psychobiological processes that respond to cross-cultural environmental differences but retain a robust essence untouched by the social or cultural' (Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990:2). To eliminate this ethnocentric view, Lutz encourages anthropologists to search beyond by extending the range of emotion as judgment and as public discourse (1990:11) and to concentrate on questions such as how emotion is socially constructed and how emotion is applied as communicative actions. In other words, her main approach was more about constructing different cultural meanings of emotion, rather than investigating the emotions in meaning.

Later on, Margot Lyon categorized Lutz as a cultural constructionist and warned that 'the inchoateness of the concept of culture acts to maintain and leave unquestioned the conventional distinction between emotion and cognition' (1995:254) and that such approach will reinforce the distinction between material and immaterial. So she claims that 'what must be considered are the processes by which collective symbols or anything else acquire power, not merely as they emerge from individual histories (within any given culture) but as they emerge from *social* ones' (254). Then, Lyon proposes that;

'This expanded understanding of emotion must take account of the body *qua* body not simply as it is mediated by "mind" but as part of the conception of emotion itself...Emotion has a central role in bodily agency, for by its very nature it links the somatic and the communicative aspects of being and thus encompasses bodily as well as social and cultural domains. The body is the means by which we experience

and actively apprehend the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962); through its agency we know the world and act within it. This “being-in-the-world”, this grounding in reality, is fundamentally linked to the material aspects of our bodies...An understanding of the agency of the body in society thus comes through its intercommunicative and active functions. Human emotional capacities are closely linked to sociality and thus have an important place in this agency... (But while) the phenomenological position, for example, gives emphasis to the sensory interface between body and the world that is experienced through it, the affective component in this process, the *felt* sense, the “guts”, are not fully represented...The phenomenological perspective requires further extension through the consideration of emotion and its bodily and social dimensions.’ (256)

Echoing this debate, I consider the characteristics of Chinese emotion could make a great contribution to preventing anthropologists from falling into a Eurocentric trap while searching for the significance of emotion. Arguably, the biggest difference is that Chinese emotion is developed through Chinese philosophical tradition which makes no distinction between the mind and the body. In Chinese, heart (*xin*) is the gravity of humanity, which is the ground for emotion as well as rationality. ‘The term “*xin*” refers indifferently to activities we [Westerners] would classify as thinking, judging and feeling.’ (Hall & Ames, 1998:29) Moreover, as Ellen Oxfield argues, *xin* is also the location of Chinese moral goodness (2010:52). Regarding the notion of person in China, the physical self only achieves wholeness by the exchange of ‘heart’ with others (Sun, 1991).

Note that ‘emotion’, in morphemes, is the combination of sense (*gan*) and emotion (*qing*). Both characters, *gan* (感) and *qing* (情), contain the ‘heart’ radical (忄 or 心) which is rather pervasive in Chinese characters (e.g. in ‘*wu*’ [悟, understand] and ‘*yi*’ [意, meaning] mentioned above). This unification of the sensory, the emotional and the rational in ‘heart’ makes the material have a touch of subjectivity, and subjectivity could be objectified for appreciation, transmission and utilization as knowledge. As stated above, knowledge is believed to be gained through experiences and practices, through a sensitive heart interacting with its surroundings: material as well as other hearts. If common knowledge provides the foundation for sustainable interaction, it can be said that, to my Chinese interlocutors, great social proximity is achieved in the unison of hearts. Emotion as embodied knowledge

residing in ‘heart’, I consider, can potentially provide a way out of the dualism and take anthropological studies of emotion a step further forward.

The Embedded Significance of ‘Emotion’ in Chinese Sociality

For many years, the study of emotion in China, partially due to Potter’s hypothesis, has been devalued and marginalized (Yan, 2003; Zhang, 2010). To investigate the relations between Chinese migrants and Zambians, during my fieldwork, I realized the crucial role that ‘emotion’ plays in Chinese sociality. The significance of ‘emotion’ in China is that it directly ties people together and indirectly assigns meanings to the social for the people to recognize and to reproduce. Once produced, ‘emotion’ and sociality reinforce each other in circuit.

Adam Chau explains this circuit well in his studies of *honghuo* and *re’nao* (red-hot sociality) in China. He argues that not only is the social world in China filled with sensory stimuli but most importantly people actively produce the world sensorially. He claims that

‘the role of the social, and not only how the senses receive and perceive the social but more importantly how social actors actively construct their social worlds in sensorially rich manners, and how moments of sensorialized sociality become *institutionalized*...we sensorialize our world, especially through engaging in intense social activities’ (2008: 488 – 490, italics added).

To Chau, ‘a “mindful-body” or an “attentive body” is simply the pre-condition for any person’s action-full life world’ (492), and the sensory sociality is epitomized into aesthetics.

Following his ideas, I contend that the significance of ‘emotion’ for my Chinese interlocutors exactly lies in this institutionalized and epitomized sensorialized-sociality. Most of the time, their interaction with Zambians is cut off because they could not sense and are not able to co-produce the ‘emotion’ embedded in social relations, situations and social institutions. To push it further, one could argue that the community in China is formed centring on the unison of ‘hearts’ and the resonance of ‘emotion’ (for ‘community of sentiment’, see Appadurai 1990), which they actively reproduce in practice. To view ‘emotion’ in this way, the relevance of emotion in China may have been totally mistaken by Potter. Arguably, ‘emotion’ in China is the first-order factor of the social and it is the foundation of sociality and community. Every social fact, social

institution and structure included, has a dimension of embedded ‘emotion’ which enables it to function; and to know is to resonate with a sensitive heart — this is perhaps the most valuable contribution which my Chinese interlocutors could offer to anthropology in general.

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