

Structures of hosting in a south-western Chinese town

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Declaration

I, Thomas Niall McDonald, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the materiality of hospitality situations in an industrial county-level town in south-west China, and its rural peripheries. Using ethnographic data, it demonstrates the movement of structures of habituated hospitality practices from ‘guest hall’ rooms in homes to a plethora of new commercial venues that have emerged in the town during the ‘reform and opening’ period. The first half of the thesis illustrates how, in the domestic sphere, these layouts serve to create a locale around which the family is both literally and metaphorically arranged, but also as a key site in which the family attempts to manage and control their interactions with non-family guests. In recent years, the expectations that hosting situations should be ever more exuberant in nature (typified by the creation of large amounts of ‘social heat’) has resulted in such gatherings being considered increasingly unsuitable for the home environment, which is progressively being reconceptualised as a location for ‘relaxation’. The second half of the thesis focuses upon the town’s commercial venues, examining both the material environment and social interactions taking place within, to demonstrate the similarities that exist between these spaces and the home’s guest hall. It will be shown that the widespread commodification and de-domestication of hosting situations has brought about a number of changes in the town, including concerns over a lack of co-presence of family members, and an enhanced facility for the creation of socially efficacious relationships that are free of the ties and purview of kin relations. The thesis concludes by proposing the term *structured hosting* to inform both existing anthropological notions of the home and hospitality, and to extend Bourdieu’s notion of habitus by demonstrating how it can become inscribed upon new social domains.

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Note on the text

Transliteration

Names, words and quotations from participants have been written in Mandarin, and romanised according to the standard *Pinyin* system. A glossary of selected *Pinyin* terms with their accompanying Chinese characters and English equivalents is provided from page 329 onwards.

Names

In order to preserve the anonymity of the individuals who participated in this research, all names of persons, organisations, businesses and places (below the provincial level) have been altered. Nor is the identity of the fieldsite disclosed.

Personal names

In China, women generally do not take their husband's family name upon marriage, as opposed to it being routine occurrence in many western countries. However, I have chosen to refer to my main informants in terms of their relationship to the male head of the household, i.e. ('Mr Li', 'Mr Li's son', 'Mr Li's wife'). The only exception to this is on occasions where there is no obvious male head of household, and in these cases I will revert to a female head of household (i.e. 'Mrs Yu'). I adopt this naming convention not to reflect any actually existing nomenclature practice in Red Mountain Town, nor through a desire to emphasise or assume the existence of any kind of patriarchy. Instead, the intention is to simplify life for the western reader by reducing the number of family names used, so as to make it easier to ascertain who belongs to what family.

Currency

RMB denotes *renminbi*, the national currency used in the Chinese mainland. During the time of fieldwork the exchange rate hovered at around 10 RMB to £1 GBP.

Copyright

The map shown in figure 1 on page 51 is included with reference to the 'Permission Guidelines for Google Maps and Google Earth' that appear at <http://www.google.com/permissions/geoguidelines.html>.

Chapter 1: Introduction

我们找到了一个气氛。

“We have found an atmosphere.”

Up to that moment, it had been an awkward restaurant lunch. I had initially been reluctant to join the group of middle-aged government officials and business people for yet another meal. It felt as if nothing productive ever came out of these three-hour-long midday refectations. I worried that my limited period of fieldwork in Red Mountain Town was slipping away from me, and that I was squandering time which should have been more productively spent elsewhere. This was a group of people in their mid-to-late forties, who had known each other since attending Party School together as young adults on their first steps into officialdom. It seemed as if their conversation never moved to any new terrain. The same hackneyed jokes were dragged out at every gathering, and I had tired of these quips after a few months. But that evening, as the group gathered at the table, even they themselves appeared a little disenchanted with the prospect of yet another meal in each other's company. For a moment, the mood had seemed positively gloomy.

However, the host for that evening, a middle-ranking official from the City Administration, had other ideas. When he telephoned earlier, he had rather stubbornly insisted that I should attend the meal, despite my polite attempts at refusal. He had arrived early at the modest restaurant, one of the town's scruffier establishments, but nonetheless known for its good food. He had already placed the

order for a large number of dishes, so as to ensure that there would be the minimum amount of waiting once all the guests had arrived.

Immediately as people started to arrive, a dish of hot roasted peanuts was placed on the table for the group to snack on in the interim. The host had ordered two bottles of *shaojiu*, a strong Chinese liquor, and proceeded to carefully pour it into the small rounded ceramic cups placed in front of each guest, so that each one was full to the brim. A few guests politely refused, saying that they would not drink at lunch. However the host smilingly insisted that they drink at least a cup, and these guests soon acquiesced.

Once the waitresses had brought the first few dishes from the kitchen and placed them on the table, the host raised his glass to his former schoolmate sitting beside him, and gave a toast. They started eating, but still retained their somewhat strained demeanour. Soon the rate of the toasts increased. The guests now started toasting each other, with each directing their cup at one of their fellow diners, saying a word or two, and then both taking a sip, whilst retaining eye contact with their interlocutor. But it was the host who took the lead in dispatching the most toasts to his guests. By the end of the first cup of *shaojiu*, I myself felt slightly intoxicated, warmed and loosened-up by the powerful firewater. At some point somebody made a witty comment, and the entire party around the table spontaneously burst out laughing. It was at that moment that the host leaned towards me and quietly, but assuredly, explained that 'we have found an atmosphere'.

From there on in, the afternoon flowed smoothly, as the group's conversation traversed across topics, all the while continuing to feast from the multitude of different tasting dishes laid out before them. In due course the event came to a close,

and the group appeared as friendly and relaxed as they must have been all those years ago at the Party School. As we went our separate ways, I began to contemplate on what, exactly, was the atmosphere that the host declared we had, been searching for and apparently attained? It seemed that this search had not been an entirely unguided one. For our host had successfully marshalled a plethora of variables: from getting the group together; choosing the appropriate restaurant in the right surroundings; selecting an array of dishes with contrasting taste, spicy, bitter, sweet and sour; pouring drinks for everyone and corralling the exchange of toasts; offering cigarettes; but also, beyond these material components, he exercised much diplomacy and tact in the way he treated his guests.

Furthermore, whilst the host may have played a pivotal role in steering the course of events that night, it was also clear that the atmosphere *we* had found that night, was created by *us all*, together. There was something profoundly participatory about the means by which everyone contributed to creating the good-natured warmth that existed between the people around the table that evening. It seemed as though, however reluctant the guests might have been at first, they inevitably gave in to what appeared to be a deep, culturally inscribed longing which all shared to successfully find that ‘atmosphere’. Eventually, their actions belied their initial reservations and protestations. Moreover, the participants had displaced their despondency at the start of the evening with an overwhelming sense of comradeship and fun.

That this group of people embodied such a deep-seated desire led to a number of other questions. What exactly was this ‘atmosphere’? How would one go about creating it? What purpose did it serve? Perhaps most importantly, in what way

did this yearning come to be established and repeatedly inculcated upon Red Mountain Town people?

This thesis will demonstrate the inseparability of the material culture of specific locales from the practice of hospitality situations. In so doing, it will illustrate a deep structure that exists within hospitality situations in Red Mountain Town which results in a phenomena that townsfolk seem able to describe and perceive in terms of ‘atmosphere’, or, more often, specifically in feelings of warmth or heat.

There exist obvious parallels in this situation with Bourdieu’s (1977:78) notion of habitus, which he describes as the generative principle that produces practice. For Bourdieu, it is the internalisation of external objective structures which is productive of certain durable dispositions. These dispositions are analogous to the specific desires the people of Red Mountain Town described as experiencing above. There us a further commonality with Bourdieu (1973, 1977:117), who observed a similarity of structures, such that the internal organisation of houses had an homologous relationship with exterior spaces. This ethnography of Red Mountain Town will reveal similar likenesses in structure between the house and certain new commercial spaces found outside it, such as internet cafes, hair salons, and karaoke parlours, in the carrying out of hospitality events.

The ethnographic data taken from Red Mountain Town presented in this thesis affords a particular opportunity to build on Bourdieu’s original notion of practice. Whilst Bourdieu’s (1977:81) practice theory made clear the way in which practice owed its particular form to the internalisation of objective structures, what Bourdieu did not make immediately explicit was the ongoing evolution of those

structures. Bourdieu's early work on practice theory appeared to miss something of this temporal dynamism, and the critique that Bourdieu ignored how change occurs or people's capacity for agency is one that has been frequently levelled by other scholars (DiMaggio, 1979:1470; King, 2000:427-429). Bourdieu's description of habitus in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) was more focused on the 'durability of dispositions', the structures that people *were* able to internalise, the nature of how habitus became instilled and these dispositions had been formed historically and reproduced from generation to generation. There is less account afforded to the practices and forms that remain fluid over time, or the structures that *do not* carry over.¹

Although the critique that Bourdieu's description of habitus failed to account for social change is an oft-raised one, this rightly ought to be balanced against his concept of *doxa*, which describes a state where tradition corresponds with the 'natural world', and so can reproduce itself without any conflict (Bourdieu, 1977:164-170). Bourdieu explains that this doxa can be weakened and brought into doubt through exposure to other cultures or through economic or political crises. Bourdieu argued that in such cases, the self-evident and natural state of the social world is impinged. He explains how dominant groups seek to impose orthodoxy in order to manage a limit change through processes of exclusion and censorship. Bourdieu later goes on to develop a more adaptive theory of practice in *The Logic of Practice* (1990), where although the durable dispositions of habitus may frequently

1. Although Bourdieu does not make it explicit, his account implies that people may not be able to internalise the entirety of the objective structures existing externally: 'in each of us, in varying proportion, there is *part* of yesterday's man' (Bourdieu, 1977:79, italics added).

extend beyond the life of the person, and thus act to ensure the continuity of social groups through enduring practice, at the same time these dispositions seem under a greater level of challenge than he had previously described and ‘can be the source of misadaptation as well as adaptation, revolt as well as resignation’ (Bourdieu, 1990:62). Bourdieu’s revised position is further clarified in *Pascalian Meditations* (2000), where he explains that habitus undergo constant change in response to novel experience, in which he goes on explains that ‘dispositions are subject to a kind of permanent revision, but one which is never radical, because it works on the basis of the premises established in the previous state’ (Bourdieu, 2000:161).

By contrast, Red Mountain Town confronts us with an ethnographic situation in which the place has undergone a vast, material restructuring, especially in the last decade, to the point where townsfolk themselves mention that they no longer recognise the conurbation anymore. Such transformation has been accompanied by an enormous expansion and diversification in the means of consumption and material culture of the town itself. This was especially exemplified by the fact that many commercial venues found in the urban area today, such as internet cafes, luxury hair salons, and karaoke parlours, simply did not exist in Red Mountain Town a decade earlier.

This thesis examines the nature of this rapid transformation, in relation to the similarities that have been preserved in spite of it. It will trace the migration of specific modes of hospitality, and the forms of habitus they entail, from the home to commercial venues. In so doing, it will illustrate the replication of these established modes of habitus within the new commercial domains, and how this is being done in reference to the home. That encourages a reconsideration of the way in which

transformation is perceived, by situating the change between home- and commercial-based hospitality within what appears to be, at a deeper level, the relative stability in the forms of materiality and behaviour of hosting.

This finding will bring with it a number of important points for discussion, enabling an evaluation of the extent to which the home and hospitality might be said to be mutually constitutive. Does one, as posited by Derrida (1997:45-62; cited in Candea, 2012:S38), require the command of a home in order to welcome a guest? Is the shift in hospitality locales bringing about the rupture of the Chinese house? Is the domestic sphere being reconstituted outside the house? And what effect is this transformation having on the way relationships, both within the family and in wider social networks, are being constituted or reconstituted?

1.1. Understanding Chinese society: homes as supporting kinship

In order to elaborate upon an understanding of hospitality, it is posited that homes are of essential importance in the structures of hosting that exist in present day Red Mountain Town. The value of such an assertion to the discipline of anthropology, and material culture in particular, lies in the way in which the home directly informs our knowledge of what has long been considered the organising principle of Chinese society: relations of kinship. By tracing these connections, in the context of hospitality situations, a contribution is sought to our understanding of the nature of homes, which may in turn, further inform kinship. The home contributes to this understanding by the mediating purpose it serves between family members, and wider relations in society. The thesis will demonstrate how the structures in the home

that mediate between kin and non-kin relations are no longer as efficacious as they once were, prompting the displacement of hosting to outside spheres.

Over the course of fieldwork in Red Mountain Town, I experienced a similar set of occurrences to those described by Stafford (2000b:3) in his ethnography of separation and reunion in China. In the same way as Stafford reported in respect of his separation topic, there was no initial intention that either hospitality or homes should be the subject of this thesis. Rather, the link between homes and hospitality was something that gradually emerged throughout the course of fieldwork, via an increasing awareness of the importance of an indigenous notion of ‘heat’² to Red Mountain Town people. During this period, I became progressively more aware and confident that a major source of continuity between hospitality events occurring both inside and outside of the home emerged from the invocation of home-like structures within both of these domains. This connection led to the understanding that if hospitality situations in Red Mountain Town required the presence of the home, and that the home and kinship were strongly related (as indicated by the Chinese word *jia* representing both home and family), then a study of hospitality would inform our understanding of kinship.

What follows in this section is an overview of the varying theoretical configurations of the home in correspondence to kinship, with a particular focus on sinological anthropology, but without excluding general anthropological trends in kinship (or the influence Chinese kinship theory has had upon them). Whilst it may appear somewhat unusual to provide a literature review on homes in a thesis that

2. This concept of heat will be introduced in greater detail in section 2.3.

pertains to be primarily about hospitality, it is hoped that such a outline will lay the ground for enabling the reader to think of how the materiality of these hosting situations can provide a perspective on the way in which social relations are viewed by the participants of this study. Furthermore, this thesis has been structured in two parts: 'inside' and 'outside'. These parts simply reflect a conscious preconception at the start of fieldwork that the home, and its attendant doors and gates, reflected a division between inside (*nei*) and outside (*wai*) (Stafford, 2000b:88). Whilst the thesis still considers this division to be pertinent, and of great importance, to Red Mountain Town people, chapter 7 will return to reconsider inside and outside as boundaries that 'are always fluid and open for negotiation' (Daniels, 2010:25).

An entire overview of the anthropology of Chinese kinship theory will not be attempted here, as this has already been provided in a comprehensive article by Santos (2006). Rather, the following discussion draws on his review, and the texts mentioned therein, to compare the varying linkages between homes and space with kinship since the start of the twentieth century.

Santos (2006:278-279) explains the trajectory of Chinese kinship studies in the Euro-American literature of the twentieth century as consisting of five phases, noting Maurice Freedman's (1958, 1966) theory of lineage organisation as occupying a key transformative moment during that period. Santos recounts that prior to Freedman, early twentieth century Chinese kinship studies adopted a surprisingly encompassing and broad definition of kinship, typified by an extraordinarily varied set of approaches and methodologies (Fei, 1939; Morgan, 1871; Kroeber, 1933; Hsu, 1967). The publication by Freedman of *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China* (1958) and *Chinese Lineage and Society:*

Fukien and Kwangtung (1966) placed patrilineal descent as the overwhelming organising factor in Chinese kinship and society. Santos recalls how, in the post-Freedman era, fieldwork carried out in Hong Kong and Taiwan (*in lieu* of access to the sealed mainland) sought to apply Freedman's lineage theory to the ethnographic reality of these areas. As Santos (2006:300) observes, Freedman's theory became a 'paradigmatic model' in the anthropology of China, particularly owing to the characteristic precision and detail of his lineage approach, which lent it to being used for comparison and testing against the ethnographic reality of Taiwan and Hong Kong. The 1980s, Santos notes, saw an increased critique of Freedman's lineage theory, stemming in part from more general challenges regarding the validity of kinship as a topic of academic concern within anthropology, and accompanied by a shifting of the anthropological lens towards topics such as politico-economic or social change. The 1990s saw a gradual re-emergence of kinship as a research priority for sinological anthropologists, with Santos describing this as a period of 'renovation' of Chinese kinship studies, in which a similar diversity of approaches to the pre-Freedman era has flourished.

Of particular interest is the way in which the concept of the house has been put to use in different ways to support and inform these changing theories of Chinese kinship. As Santos (2006:279-280) reports, kinship and the family already occupied a central place in anthropological accounts of China during the first half of the twentieth century. The anthropology of Chinese kinship became characterised by what Santos refers to as a 'somewhat fragmentary nature' in comparison to the later theoretical dominance of a far more rigid lineage-paradigm. This pre-Freedman period was marked by multiple contrasting approaches and methodologies.

For example, Fei Hsiao-Tung's³ (1939) monograph *Peasant Life in China* was based on an ethnography of Kaixiangong, a small village located in Jiangsu province. In his monograph, Fei attempted to account for the cause of the economic depression that the village was experiencing, suggesting it was rooted in the decline of local domestic industry. He postulated that the 'expanded family', as the motor of the rural economy, was the solution to this problem. It is the way in which Fei develops the idea of family that is particularly noteworthy. Fei (1939:27) claimed that the *jia*⁴ was the basic social group in the town, from which kinship was extended to larger groups through the combination of a number of *jia* for differing purposes. Fei describes the *jia* as an 'expanded family', rather than an economic one.⁵ The expanded family applies the use of kinship terms to non-kin villagers in order to create these larger social groups which he claims are the political and economic engine of Chinese society.

Fei speaks of *jia* mainly in terms of this extended group of people, and largely ignores the fact that the word also refers to the physical structure that this group tends to occupy. The exceptions to this are Fei's provision of a basic floor plan (1939:122); his description of the *jia* as a centre for productive activities, and the significance of room allocation therein; and the overall authority of the head of the household over this. Fei (1939:123) provides a rather partial description and plan of

3. Later written using *pinyin* as 'Fei Xiaotong'.

4. Rendered as *chia* in Fei's original text under the Wade-Giles system.

5. It is of note that Fei's comments about kinship idioms being applied to non-kin in rural village China might cast doubts upon Yang's (1994:114) assertion that this phenomena is something symptomatic of the transition to modern Chinese society. This extension of kinship to non-kin is a key theme, that will be returned to in 6.3.1 of this thesis.

a typical house in the village, but with little explanation of how the building might contribute to ideas of family, or a wider cosmological understanding of social groups or relations, save from noting that the house construction is viewed as being an auspicious occasion involving local craftsmen and Taoist priests.

An alternative approach of that era is Feng (1937), who, drawing on Morgan's (1871) previous kinship studies, attempted a long view 'historical-linguistic analysis' of Chinese kinship nomenclature. The home⁶ makes only a brief appearance within Feng's detailed analysis of hundreds of kinship terms, to illustrate its 'deprecatory' use as a prefix to standard kinship terms of the speaker's relatives, in order to illustrate a sense of modesty or membership in a group when communicating with non-kin. Feng (1937:155) records that *jia*, meaning 'Family, dwelling, household' – is used to indicate relatives of an older generation and higher status than the ego. He also notes that a related term *she*, meaning 'cottage, shed, household', refers to sib relatives of the same generation, but lower in status, to the ego. Given Feng's focus on nomenclature, it seemed inevitable that his work emphasised the stratification existing in this system, which would be capitalised upon by Freedman in the subsequent descent-based lineage theories he developed.

The single pre-Freedman era publication that stands out as being of greatest relevance to understanding the role of home, in terms of both methodology and position in society, is Hsu's (1967) monograph *Under the Ancestors' Shadow*. Hsu

6. The English words 'house' and 'home' are used interchangeably in this thesis, as they tend to be in everyday life in Britain. For the assistance of non-anthropologists, and Chinese lay readers in particular, it may help to mention that, when a distinction is made in British English usage, 'house' is used to refer to the physical entity or structure of a dwelling, whereas 'home' can, on occasions, include that plus groups of people and other somewhat more conceptual notions of place and belonging.

attempted to describe the ‘basic personality configuration’ of people in a small Yunnanese Town called West Town.⁷ Hsu maintained that this personality configuration explained why people in this highly economically differentiated town appeared to act in vastly contrasting ways. He argued that, on a higher level, the people of West Town were actually behaving quite similarly to each other, in response to the differing politico-economic situations they found themselves in. Of note is the detail with which Hsu (1967:28-41) described West Town’s homes. Hsu affords particular attention to the materiality of these homes, demonstrating the way in which the home inculcates an understanding upon people that their current situation owes much to the achievements of their ancestors, under whose shadow they are destined to live. The patrilineal nature of the Chinese kinship structure means that the relationship with the ancestors centres mainly around the father figure. For Hsu, the father-son relationship was the primary kin relationship, and all other relationships are extensions of this connection. The way in which Hsu classifies this social behaviour as being psychological in nature, is problematic, in being somewhat belied by the nature of his ethnographic description, which centres so much on material aspects of the West Town society as being the means by which such values are inculcated. As such, the behaviour clearly does not exclusively

7. West Town shares broader ethnographic and societal similarities to Red Mountain Town. Both are located near Kunming, and both towns exhibit a high degree of wealth differentiation within their population. In Red Mountain Town, ethnic minorities constitute a minor section of the population, whereas Hsu’s ethnography famously failed to acknowledge that his informants in West Town were actually predominantly of Bai origin (at that time referred to as Minjia), as noted by Leach (1982:125-126). Despite these differences in the ethnic composition of both towns’ populations, similar attitudes towards ethnicity existed, in that the informants in both towns believed there to be little noticeable difference between local ethnic and Han (local and/or wider) populations (see also Liang, 2010:89).

pertain to the mind alone, but rather may be thought of more as a form distributed personhood (Gell, 1998).

For Freedman, patrilineal descent was the way in which power and property was transmitted between generations in Chinese society, forming a link bridging the external political parts of society with its internal domestic parts, and acting to make it a 'total social system' in the same way that Fortes (1953) described of unilineal descent groups. An even more distinct emphasis on descent came into being with Maurice Freedman's (1958, 1966) development of lineage theory. However, as Santos (2006) points out, Freedman's publications coincided with the peak of Maoism and the period in which mainland China was largely inaccessible to foreign researchers, and as such these two monographs constituted an endeavour in 'armchair anthropology'.

Freedman's coverage of the home speaks little of the material nature of the house, instead he focuses largely upon an analysis of what it means to belong to a household, and the varying transformations of these social groups. Freedman (1958:19-23) notes that in Fukien and Kwangtung, generally a person only belongs to a single family, and that amongst peasants, the household normally consists of a family unit. Households usually ate together and were part of a common property-owning group. Freedman also describes the division of a household amongst grown brothers. Once this division had occurred, Freedman claimed, the new households were separate economic units. Freedman's account does not describe the material characteristics of the domestic space, but instead the house normally comes into view mainly as a form of 'property'. For example, in his analysis on inheritance Freedman claims:

Household division was not simply the division of a domestic unit; it was a formal separation of both hearth and land.

(Freedman, 1958:22)

Freedman's desire to explain the house primarily in terms of property is hardly surprising, as this adheres cleanly to his theory of the house as something to be transmitted and divided in order to further substantiate his theory of the descent system.

Freedman (1966:137-139) does take minor steps towards providing a wider description of the symbolic nature of the home in his account of geomancy (*feng shui*). Here, although the bulk of his description centres around the siting of graves and the appropriate burial of ancestors, at the end of his description he briefly notes that geomancy affects buildings as well as graves. He then relates this back to lineages, by explaining that every lineage member would pay attention to the *feng shui* of their own house as being the source of success. He explains a system in which geomancy is a form of social control, where lineages might seek advantage over each other or quarrel with each other over geomantic interference.

Finally, it is worth mentioning another way in which Freedman's theory has linkages with this thesis, noticeably through his claim of the family as being a major source of dissension within his model. Freedman (1966:21-22) apportions this dissension to women, explaining that women who are married into new homes, and estranged from their agnatic family, become primarily interested in the wealth of their own husband and children, placing the family in a position of rivalry against the other brothers of the lineage. Today it is most striking dissension between and against the otherwise primary relation of father-son had thus been described to the

feminine, and this was later challenged in studies of China kinship that were influenced by feminism (Wolf, 1972). However chapter 3 of this thesis will demonstrate a similar form of dissension to that described by Freedman, but instead with origins between the family and a perceived wider social network of non-kin relations.

Santos (2006:301-303) notes that much of the 1960s and 1970s was dominated by the testing of Freedman's lineage paradigm, particularly in Taiwan and colonial Hong Kong, by then emerging as promising fieldwork alternatives to mainland China which still remained closed to foreigners at that time. As Santos remarks, because most anthropologists embarked to the field on the search for 'lineages', this is exactly what they found. Santos (2006:309-316) traces the emergence of a number of early critiques of Freedman's lineage theory including Wolf (1972), Watson (1985) and Sangren (1984), arguing for consideration of the roles of the uterine family, property relations, and corporate groups, respectively, in understanding the organisation of Chinese society.

The final section of Santos' (2006:316-333) review marks what he refers to as the 'renovation of kinship studies' in China. In this he notes the proliferation of a number of research methodologies. Santos identifies '*guanxi*, reciprocity and relatedness'; 'attachment gender and practice'; and 'power, social change and political economy' as the three major themes of the research of this recent period.

The theme of *guanxi* is most notably advanced by Kipnis (1997) in his ethnography of Fengjia, a village in Shandong. Kipnis' uses *guanxi* to describe the network of 'personal connections' his participants appear to be engaged with creating and maintaining. Kipnis argues that there is both kinship and non-kinship based

guanxi, and that kinship remains a major idiom through which *guanxi* is conveyed, although there are others. Within Kipnis' ethnography, the home makes appearances in a number of different capacities, such as government standardisation of house building to minimise visible wealth difference (Kipnis, 1997:12-13), and through the way construction of houses encourages co-operation between neighbours (Kipnis, 1997:30).

However the work is of key significance to this thesis in its extensive description of the home as an arena for hospitality situations. Kipnis (1997:39-45) details the 'skilful practice' of hospitality in the production of *guanxi* relations, with his observations ranging from the importance of receiving and sending-off the guest at the gate of the house; to the orientation of the house resulting in the northern-most room being the most comfortable, and thus preferred for the reception of guests; to the seating of guests on special guest/host furniture. Furthermore, Kipnis (1997:46-57) also notes the significance of banquets in the creation of *guanxi*, paying special attention to the seating of the participants around the banquet table. Interestingly, Kipnis moves his analysis of hosting between banquets held in villagers' homes and those of 'official village banquets' which took place in either the village guest house or committee building, without making entirely clear the ramifications or significance of hospitality taking place in these different domains. Concerns regarding the siting of hospitality events are one of the key transformations that this thesis will focus on.

Stafford (2000b:1, 2004) further contributes to an understanding of Chinese kinship by examining it through the prism of separation and reunion. Stafford notes that separation and reunion is an universal human phenomena, but also that Chinese

people appear especially concerned with it as a theme. Stafford's ethnography makes use of the home in his description of the qualities of separation and reunion in several ways, two of which will be illustrated below. Firstly, Stafford (2000b:30-54) illustrates the role that the home serves during the annual family reunion for Chinese New Year. Here he explains the preparation of the house for this event, and the strong obligation that family members often feel to return to this place for a reunification of the family during the annual festival. In a second example, Stafford (2000b:87-98) demonstrates the importance that the doors of homes occupy within separation and reunion. He characterises the door as being an 'ambivalent threshold', a place that mediates the coming-and-going of not only persons, but also ghosts and spirits. Furthermore, Stafford shows how the elaborately decorated doors to Chinese homes are also said to be representative of the Chinese family.

To summarise, this literature review has demonstrated the changing currents in Chinese kinship over the past century. This began with what Santos (2006) categorised as a plethora of differing approaches to kinship, leading to the gradual dominance of Freedman's lineage paradigm, followed by a period of uncertainty as to the significance and validity of kinship studies, and the subsequent re-emergence of these varied approaches to kinship. But significantly, this literature review also examined how, within these currents, the house and home have always been put to a manner of different uses to support and extend these theories. In the period prior to Freedman the home supported multiple ideas, including instilling notions of patriarchy. It then almost dropped completely out of use during the dominance of Freedman's lineage paradigm (save from the home's characteristic as being a form of property to be divided and passed down the lineage). The house subsequently

experienced a re-emergence for its role in describing kinship in terms of broader networks of social relations, or as pertaining to specific themes, such as separation or reunion, through which kinship acts and is made visible.

This body of literature leads to a number of research questions that have been left unanswered, and to which this thesis seeks to contribute. One such question is whether, in the transition from kinship as a means of describing lineage or clan, to its broader use as a way to think about wider networks of social connections, such as *guanxi*, has this been accompanied by, caused by, or resulted in, any change in the way that homes are understood? In this regard, the thesis will demonstrate a state of tension which has entered the house, between conceptions regarding it as a locus in which the family can relax, and the increasingly incompatible expectation that the home should be used for the performance of hospitality situations. The thesis tackles this through a comparison of hospitality situations occurring in the home with those in new commercial venues. It will suggest that an accompanying ‘broadening out’ of the nature of social relations in China appears to be concomitant with a proliferation of home-like structures into other spaces in Red Mountain Town’s social life.

A further research question this theme has provoked is that if the home has long been called upon, in varying degrees and ways, in order to understand Chinese kinship, then why are other social spaces in the Chinese landscape afforded less focus? This thesis seeks to go beyond the obvious association between house, home and family to demonstrate ways in which both family and non-kin relations are being transformed by new spaces that have emerged in contemporary urban China.

The above literature review also demonstrated how the recent work of Yang (1994), Stafford (2000b) and Kipnis (1997) all increasingly point to the importance

of receiving guests in the correct manner in order to achieve social success for oneself and one's family. All of their ethnographies also implicate the home as being important in achieving this; however none of them systematically review the relationship between the home and the performance of hospitality. This thesis will offer such an analysis, showing what appears to be the inseparability of home-like structures from within hospitality situations, situations which often entail important themes of gender.

1.1.1. A gendered view on kinship

At this point, it is also prudent to introduce a brief section on issues of gender, firstly because of the obvious significance with which the topic of gender pertains to the themes of kinship as given above, but also because, as will become apparent throughout the course of this thesis, gender becomes a significant topic around which hospitality practices become organised.

The work of Margery Wolf is of key significance here. Wolf (1972) used her ethnography of women's lives in rural Taiwan in order to launch a feminist-based critique of Freedman's lineage theory and anthropological approaches to Chinese kinship that had emerged from it. Wolf's main critique was that the emphasis on a patriarchy and the patrilineal system as the defining feature of the Chinese kinship system had led to almost entirely obscure the role of women within the same system. Wolf argued that (frequently male) anthropologists invariably tended to concentrate their analysis on the male aspects of the system, foregrounding the role that men played in ensuring the temporal continuity of lineage. Wolf's (1972:37) account instead moved the attention to a female perspective on the family, not as an enduring

male line of descent, but instead as a temporary ‘uterine family’, one that is kept in place for part of a woman’s life, and for as long as this woman is able, and it is convenient for her to do so. Through creating emotional attachments within the family (most importantly with her son’s), and a broader rural women’s community, Wolf argued that rural Taiwanese women were able to achieve status and security in both their new family and the community; and also could prevent themselves from being at the receiving end of violence or mistreatment from their husband or his kin. As such, Wolf’s (1972:37) model of uterine families that have ‘no ideology, no formal structure, and no public existence’ did not particularly aim to challenge the accepted hegemony of the patriarchal concepts and their perceived hold over society, but rather it demonstrated that Taiwanese women had developed a number of effective ways of asserting their own agency in the face of such dominant ideals.

Elsewhere, Wolf (1985), in her multi-sited study of the position of women in the early stages of reform-era mainland China argued that ideas relating to the uterine family also partially pertained in the mainland. In her study, Wolf contrasted the status of both rural and urban women. Wolf highlighted the influence of the Communist Party ideal of gender equality, and the associated rhetoric that women would only achieve emancipation through full involvement in production. Wolf showed that although most urban women in China were engaged in paid labour, socialist attempts to relieve the strain of housework faced by women have variously failed or been abandoned, and so urban women face a ‘double burden’ of expectation that they complete household chores while also retaining employed. Wolf claimed that rural women, however, were less likely to partake in work outside the home, and that when they did, discrepancies in the work-point system meant that they were

awarded less work-points than men for the equivalent work. Wolf concluded that rural women are far clearer about their position than their urban counterparts, owing to the fact that they see themselves as wives or mothers first. This division between rural and urban women is significant for our research, particularly because, as shall be demonstrate in chapter 3, women often take on the weighty chores of preparing food and cleaning that are required in order for hosting situations to be able to occur in the home. Wolf's contrast between rural and urban women is of further interest in that our research site embodies both recently urbanised women, and other informants who have long commanded the position of urban women.

Wolf's analysis is meaningful on one further point, that is relating to her observations on the concept of stove families. Wolf noted that the expression 'to share a stove', which denotes the sharing of food and eating together as a family, is the major way in which here informants were able to distinguish between family units. The division of a family, she notes, typically does not require any branch of the family to leave the house. Instead, a separate stove is usually set up in another room in the same house, and some of the doorways may be closed off. But in Wolf's account the stove's meaning is not limited to defining the family through virtue of who shares the cooked food that emerges from it. The stove also has the very practical function of being the only source of heat in Taiwan during it's cold winter periods. Wolf's concept of a stove family still carries important implications for our analysis of Red Mountain Town, prompting us to consider the use of heat as an idiom to describe relatedness, but furthermore owing to the fact that this route of food commensality does indeed seem to be an important concern to many households. We will also attempt to understand in further detail the significance of

events when the family's unity is apparently challenged by absence of various family members from meal times, such as when young children are instead to be found in internet cafes, or young people or husbands occupy karaoke parlours instead of taking meals at home.

Francesca Bray (1997), through an examination of the significance of technology in shaping Chinese gender relations between A.D. 1000 to 1900, provides a partially contrasting historical viewpoint on the position of women in the home to that advanced by Wolf. In Bray's description, the material nature of the home not only strictly enforced Confucian ideals of rank gender and hierarchy (a phenomena that chapter 2 will show still persisted, to a degree, within the homes of Red Mountain Town). Bray argued that the seclusion and confinement of women to the inner quarters of their home was not solely experienced as limiting and constricting by these women, but that it also afforded them a certain degree of freedom and autonomy from men. Bray went on to demonstrate that despite being almost exclusively confined to the inner quarters of the home, women were linked to the outside through their labour. Bray details how female-produced textiles frequently contributed to the household economy in equal measure to male-produced grain. This state of affairs meant that the house was a major site of production and a significant locus of female power. Bray illustrates a subsequent transformation from the twelfth century onwards, as male weavers and merchants took control of the networks of distribution, with women left only able to partake in lowly-regarded tasks such as cotton spinning and the raising of silkworm, resulting in a subsequent loss of both rights and status for women. Wolf and Bray's accounts of the home do display a similarity in that they both describe how the Chinese home can be an

important site of female-production, and that this can result in female power and agency against dominant male patriarchal structures.

Throughout the course of this thesis it will be revealed that hospitality practices in Red Mountain Town are also often gendered in nature. Chapter 3 will describe how inviting guests back into the home is mostly done by male heads of households, and that women are often expected to prepare the meals. Also all three of the hosting situations in commercial spaces that are described in Red Mountain Town (karaoke parlours, hair salons and internet cafes) serve predominantly male customers, many of whom use these venues as a site to engage in hospitality practices. However, there exist two important reasons why this thesis has chosen not to base its inquiry around a study of gender. The first reason comes from within the fieldsite, and from my frequent observations that despite the tendency for men to be the primary orchestrators of hosting situations, I nonetheless encountered a significant minority of women who themselves organised hospitality situations, executing them with the same degree of panache and flair as their male counterparts. This would suggest that although the structures of hosting are liable to be gendered in certain ways, in Red Mountain Town, it tends to be the correct execution of these structures that takes precedence over the gender of those executing it. This leads me to a second point I wish to make, which is that though the above studies of gender in China are admirable ones, and indeed have provided much-needed insight into Chinese society as it is experienced through the lives of women, I equally feel that by centring studies around such a prominent theme as gender, authors typically fall prey to the inevitable tendency to then reproduce such themes in their analysis. I hope that the coverage of hospitality this thesis provides can similarly illuminate

issues of gender, but at the same time allowing greater leeway for occasions in which gender may not be the defining factor of a particular situation. It is to this theme of hospitality and its significance to the discipline of anthropology that we now turn our attention to.

1.2. The anthropology of hospitality

While the recent studies of Chinese kinship reviewed above may have only implied the importance of hospitality in understanding transformations of relations, initial experiences of Red Mountain Town quickly convinced me that the successful conduct of acts of hospitality was actually an over-riding concern for townspeople. It became apparent that Red Mountain Town offered an ideal fieldsite to understand how hospitality was being enacted under conditions of change. This ethnography also aims to use the enthusiasm Red Mountain Town people show towards hosting practices to contribute to recent disciplinary calls for a return to the anthropological study of hospitality.

Candea and da Col (2012:S1) have attempted to revitalise hospitality ‘as a frontier area of theoretical development in anthropology’. The authors note the unusual position of hospitality in anthropology, claiming that it seems to be ‘both everywhere and nearly nowhere’ (Candea and da Col, 2012:S2). They highlight Mauss’ (1967 [1923]) writings on the gift, noting how hospitality emerges repeatedly within Mauss’ text and is closely intertwined with the gift, yet at the same time they claim that Mauss fails to explore it in its own right. Candea and da Col observe that in various parts of Mauss’ work, hospitality emerges as alternately subsumed under the logic of the gift; as a precondition to the giving of gifts; and, as a role reversal.

Furthermore, the authors note that the very nature of participant observation in remote societies as the main research method of anthropology means that hospitality permeates through all ethnographic experience, surmising that:

It is perhaps because anthropology, as a lived practice and a conceptual exercise is thus inhabited by the paradoxes of hospitality, replete and saturated with them, that the theme, until recent years, has often failed to catch the light of anthropological theory.

(Candea and da Col, 2012:S3)

Candea and da Col argue that hospitality has the potential to extend beyond the limits of gift exchange, owing to the way in which it also addresses a host of other anthropological issues that are widely identified as being central to the discipline's concerns, such as morality, temporality, materiality, alterity, politics and sovereignty.

Candea and da Col (2012) provide a comprehensive review of some of the most significant appearances of hospitality that have emerged in anthropology over the decades, which I will avoid repeating in its entirety here. The detailed assessment of how hosting practices in Red Mountain Town pertain to existing theories of hospitality will be saved until section 7.1, after having considered the ethnographic evidence presented in the intervening chapters. However, by way of preview the assesment will show how Red Mountain Town does not wholly correspond with two prominent but varying anthropological notions of hospitality, that of Pitt-Rivers (1977) and Sahlins (1985).

Pitt-Rivers' describes the guest as a form of radical alterity, which arrives as absolutely unknown to the host. In that context, hosting is an especially ambivalent and troublesome situation, where host-guest relations inhabit a small space between trust and misgiving, with hospitality acting to stabilise these relations. This thesis

will demonstrate that Red Mountain Town people's hosting practices do partially accord to Pitt-Rivers' descriptions. Section 3.2.1 will detail how townsfolk often keep their homes prepared for guests that they explain might arrive at any moment (despite the fact that, in many cases, they rarely do). This indicates the almost divine, unknowable nature that imagined guests occupy in people's thoughts. When guests do actually arrive, they are also politely pressured into participating in the creation of social heat through various means (to be detailed in sections 3.2.2 and 6.2.3), demonstrating the tension Pitt-Rivers' describes. However, Pitt-Rivers' account becomes problematic when applied to Red Mountain Town hospitality, because it does not occur between a host and the 'radical alterity' of the guest, but rather hospitality in this town most often takes place between those who are already well acquainted.

By contrast, Sahlins (1985, 2008) account of the stranger-king described an understanding that power always originates from outside, with the sovereign role as one of an 'usurping guest' requiring incorporation. In keeping with this, the extension of home-like structures into commercial hospitality situations in Red Mountain Town may indicate a desire to apply kinship metaphors to otherwise non-kin relations. However, Sahlins' account of hospitality raises similar problems to Pitt-Rivers' when judged against the ethnographic reality of Red Mountain Town, in that actual hosting normally only occurs between prior acquaintances.

The ethnographic evidence from Red Mountain Town instead allies itself more closely to recent calls for hospitality to be considered in terms of scales, materiality, captivity and emotion (Candea and da Col, 2012; Candea, 2012; Swancutt, 2012; Ortner, 1978; Humphrey, 2012; Chau, 2008; Feuchtwang, 2007). It

is in this context that focus on house and home facilitates an understanding of the structures underlying much of the hospitality practices occurring in Red Mountain Town. The following chapters will detail the strong homologies of hospitality existing between the domestic sphere and new commercial venues outside the home. These homologies will lead to a proposal that the common arrangements of materials and associated behaviours that are present in the execution of hospitality in both domains in Red Mountain Town could be usefully understood through a notion of *structured hosting*.

1.3. Red Mountain Town: commonality amongst diversity

Red Mountain Town was chosen as the site of this study because its specificity also happened to be its generality. Ethnographies of life in China often take care to point out the remarkable cultural heterogeneity of the country, warning readers against assuming that observations made in one particular place are necessarily applicable to China as a whole (Liu, 2000:20). Nevertheless, Red Mountain Town was selected as a fieldsite precisely because it drew together remarkably different groups of people into a medium sized town. Daniels' (2010:8) notably eschewed Tokyo as a site to carry out urban ethnography, instead selecting a suburban region in the area around Osaka with the aim of adding 'much needed regional variation' to studies of Japan. In a similar vein, this thesis chose Red Mountain Town as the focus of its research because the place occupied a relatively similarly undistinguished place in contemporary China. That is not to say that Red Mountain Town, or the surrounding region, was not without spots of natural beauty, and cultural interest, or, had not, at moments, contributed significantly to the history of China as a whole. Red Mountain Town, however, distinguished itself owing to its relative *unremarkableness*. Red

Mountain Town was conspicuously absent from almost all Western and Chinese guidebooks⁸. My informants often expressed surprise at the idea of both they themselves and their town being the focus of anthropological investigation, suggesting to me that other more ‘spectacular’ locales, such as the border areas of Yunnan, famed for their exotic ethnic minorities (e.g. Harrell, 2002), might be a more fitting place of study.

What made Red Mountain Town an appealing site for ethnography lay precisely in the fact the town brought together hugely varied persons in terms of their economic status, occupations, industries, localities and nationalities⁹ within a compact urban environment. This cultural composition meant that Red Mountain Town appeared to mirror particularly well many of the disparities that exist across China today, and provide a good basis for much debate and analysis about the country’s future. Red Mountain Town offered an opportunity as a fieldsite, to conveniently compare the life of superficially diverse groups, resulting in the gradual discovery of interesting commonalities in terms of social behaviour and relationships. The focus of this thesis is thus intentionally more on the commonalities between these quite disparate groups in hosting and guesting behaviours, rather than any differences. Nevertheless, a variety of opportunities for the groups to express social distinction do still emerge.

8. Although certain spots within the district’s rural area are well known on a local and provincial level.

9. Here I use nationalities in the Chinese sense of the term, as the Chinese race, encompassing a Han majority and 56 ethnic minorities. For discussions on this see Gladney (2003) and Dikötter (1992).

The reader should be forewarned that owing to the cultural diversity within Red Mountain Town, this thesis might seem somewhat incohesive in comparison to ‘traditional’ ethnographies of Chinese village life. An ethnographer might typically have inserted himself into closely-knit villages of people of a roughly similar background and economic ability (See Kulp, 1925; Fei, 1939 for examples), resulting in what Skinner (1964:32) perceived to be a distortion of the reality of social structure.¹⁰ By contrast, the narrative that forms this thesis will sometimes unexpectedly traverse across Red Mountain Town, even making the occasional foray into the surrounding countryside, visiting the houses of rich and poor; government officials, mine-owners, retired teachers and farmers; taking in commercial apartments and houses built from earth. This approach is adopted not only because these were the contradictions and differentiation that formed the normality of the everyday lives of Red Mountain Town dwellers, but also in an effort to achieve what might be best termed an act of ‘social distillation’, by which I mean an attempt to gradually clarify some of the quintessential elements of the culture of the town. Despite this stated aim of the thesis, I would still echo previous sinological ethnographers’ cautions against assuming that the products of such a process might be wholly applicable to ‘Chinese’ culture in general.¹¹

10. Whereas Skinner (1977) saw the stability of the county level unit to be ‘the great constant of Chinese society’ (Skinner, 1977:18).

11. The thesis does still make comparisons to other ethnographies from throughout Greater China, in an attempt to help illuminate to what extent its findings regarding Red Mountain Town are applicable to Chinese society as a whole. Many of these ethnographic examples suggest a degree of commonality of key themes of this thesis, such as hospitality, social heat and the material culture of the home, throughout the modern Chinese nation. This will be explored at greater detail in chapter 7.

I will now attempt to set the ethnographic scene, so to speak, in describing the key social groups existing in the town today, and how this also comes to be concretely expressed in its domestic architecture.

1.3.1. A mining town

Red Mountain Town is a county-town located around 140 km from Kunming, the provincial capital of the Yunnan province, in the south-west of China. The town lies at an altitude of 1,200 metres, dramatically penned-in on either side by 4,000 metre high mountains. Before the fieldwork period, the township that Red Mountain Town sits in was reported as having a population of just over 126,000 people, who lived in 42,000 officially registered 'households' (Red Mountain District Government, 2009:49). Red Mountain Town is the administrative centre for the surrounding district, some approximately 2,000 square kilometres of very mountainous terrain. The area surrounding Red Mountain Town is, as the name suggests, famous for its copper reserves, affording the landscape a distinctive red-ish hue. Local people tend to be both aware and proud of the mining history of the area, and this is also reflected in written historical accounts (Jia, 2009). Both oral and written histories similarly recall that reserves have been mined since the Xi Han dynasty. The processing and exchange of this precious metal had formed part of a 'copper route' that linked Red Mountain Town to the imperial palace in Beijing, where some of the copper today remains preserved in the palace's public galleries.

In 1958, the State Council of the People's Republic of China bestowed city status upon the area (Red Mountain District History Committee, 1995:16). Some locals explained to me that the rationale behind the government's decision to declare

the area to be a city was that this would afford the town a military station, which was essential for the protection of the area's copper reserves in what, at that time, was still viewed as being the somewhat fractious south-west of China.

The Communist party had dedicated much effort to the development of the town, encouraging Han cadres and workers from around the region, and the nation, to migrate to the area in an effort to bring skills into the region. These actions were in common with those described in Harrell's (2002:62) observations of south-west China generally, where Han Chinese tended to occupy the lowlying areas, where the towns were built, whilst more mountainous rural areas remained populated by a higher relative proportion of ethnic minorities.

During Mao's era, the Mining Bureau (*kuangye ju*) had operated all of the mines on behalf of the state. The government initially carried out these operations rather successfully, with Red Mountain Town providing much of the nation's copper output, peaking in 1980 with, according to official figures, almost 4 million tonnes of material extracted from the mines (Red Mountain District History Committee, 1995:174). This remained the case until the end of the 1980s, when the copper reserves had become so depleted that the basic methods of extraction that had been employed were no longer viable. The copper industry collapsed, and with it the local economy, causing widespread unemployment. Beijing decreed the area no longer to be a city, demoting it to a special district under the control of nearby Kunming. The city was renamed Red Mountain Town.¹²

12. See comment, page 9.

During the 1990s came the dissolution of large numbers of state owned enterprises (SOE) nationwide. Institutions for which people had worked for years were disbanded virtually overnight. State workers instead found themselves attempting to secure jobs in private companies. In the same period, a number of people, typically previous officials of the mining bureau or city government, were either laid off or made the decision to leave their posts and set up private mining companies. For a while the local economy struggled; then, in the late 1990s, as the world price of copper began to soar, and techniques became available to process ore that previously had too low a copper content to be profitable, these individuals suddenly found themselves at the heart of what had become a super-profitable industry. There were hundreds of mining bosses in Red Mountain Town, presiding over hundreds of small companies from mines, to haulage, to processing. However, the landscape was dominated (both literally and metaphorically) by the two largest mining concerns, the oligarchic Golden Spring and Diamond Water companies. Their opulent, imposing premises matched in size the new district government office although, in a perhaps not entirely unexpected gesture of humility, they occupied lower spaces of the steep slope on which the town was built.

Signs of incredible wealth thus began to appear on the Red Mountain Town landscape, in a manner less likely to occur to such extremes in many other similarly-sized and similarly-remote Chinese county towns. Black Audi A4s purred along the streets, along with full-spec Toyota Land Cruiser off-road vehicles. The celebrity acclaim that had been achieved by some of these 'local people' who had made a fortune was almost mythic. For example, one informant recalled in conversation with me that the Diamond Water company earned 1,000,000 RMB every hour. The power

and influence of these enterprises was manifested throughout the town. In the last ten years they had diversified into property development, building swathes of commercial housing, all of which bore their respective company names. An avenue called 'Golden Spring Road' enclosed the west side of the town. The director of Golden Spring had even contributed heavily to the building of a mosque and a Daoist temple, a fact that was prominently engraved upon the walls of both institutions. The director also kept a sailing yacht in the compound where he lived in the town, despite Red Mountain Town being a parched mountainous region thousands of kilometres from any shoreline. Similarly, the head of Golden Spring was also famed for the cars that he owned, especially in the mindset of young males in the town; a red Porsche could occasionally be seen coasting around the few lanes of major urban road, at times scraping its low underbody on the uneven surface. Owing to this degree of wealth that existed in Red Mountain Town, the town contained a growing tertiary sector (shops, offices, banks, etc.), dedicated to serving its businesspeople and government officials, and in due course others unrelated to the mining industry. Commercial and leisure facilities had also sprung up in Red Mountain Town: restaurants, hotels, karaoke, saunas, and other enterprises dedicated to providing their clients with spaces within which to socialise and consume together.

Despite mining being a large part of Red Mountain Town, there were a range of other industries typical of any county-town of that size. As the administrative centre of the wider district, Red Mountain Town came replete with a mix of bureaucrats, teachers, doctors, police, armed forces, traders, engineers, investors, salespeople, shopkeepers, labourers, managers, students and retirees.

1.3.2. Rural peripheries

This rather atypical structural feature, where the mining industry was effectively presided over by two enormously powerful local companies, meant that the district that Red Mountain Town occupied had the somewhat dubious accolade of extracting and processing large amounts of valuable natural resources, whilst at the same time retaining one of the lowest annual per capita salary levels within the Kunming municipality. According to official figures (Red Mountain District Government, 2009:50), 8.39% of the town's population belonged to ethnic minorities, mostly comprising of (in descending order by population) Yi, Miao, Hui, Buyi, Bai and Naxi groups. Within the district as a whole, the proportion of ethnic minorities to Han was greater in the surrounding countryside than in the town itself.

Red Mountain Town's immediate periphery is distinguished by large swathes of mountainous countryside. At most, a ten minute motorcycle or car journey was all that separated the town from its agricultural hinterlands. In this hilly terrain, farmers typically engaged in agriculture, growing maize, buckwheat, sorughum and corn in the terraced fields that surrounded their homes (Red Mountain District History Committee, 1995:251-259). Most of the work of planting and tending to these crops was done by hand, save tilling the land, which was often achieved by means of ox-drawn plough. In the courtyards around which their homes were built, peasants commonly reared hens, pigs and occasionally cows.

However, far from being two separate worlds, Red Mountain Town was intimately linked to the countryside that surrounded it. In the early mornings, farmers walked down off the mountains, or travelled in vans or wagons into the town to sell

their produce to townsfolk at the markets. Some farmers in mountainous areas also performed labour in the mines. Most of the rural farmers' young offspring attended middle and high school in Red Mountain Town, where they would board at the school. Conversely, as will be discussed in chapter 2 (from page 107 onwards) there existed a counterflow of people from the town into the countryside, not only for the purposes of working in the mines or processing operations (typically at a management level or above), or overseeing aspects of agricultural production, but increasingly with the conception of the countryside as a place of relaxation, where one might be able to eat and engage in leisure activities.

This section has explained how the intimate links between rural and urban areas within Red Mountain Town contributed to the largely heterogenous society encountered in the conurbation. I will now move to a consideration of how this has affected the overall landscape and architecture of homes in the town, in order to demonstrate that this variation in social groups was accompanied by a corresponding diversity of housing types. This prepares the way for part I of the thesis, which will describe the common structures of home-based hosting which were to be found across this diversity of domestic types.

1.3.3. Historical contextualisation: Chinese transformations in ownership, inheritance and privacy

The task of tracing the connections between hospitality practices that occur in homes and in new 'home-like' commercial venues becomes easier if one is able to view such changes against the wider historical context and transformations of political

economies regarding home ownership, inheritance and privacy that have contributed towards creating China as it is experienced today.

Wakefield (1998) provided key insight into the history of the Chinese notion of property. Although his analysis centred mainly on inheritance practices that occurred during the Qing and Republican eras, he also illustrated how concepts of private property emerged amongst commoners towards the end of the Eastern Zhou dynasty (771-256 B.C.), and argued that it was this concept of property also carried with it the possibility of inheritance (Wakefield, 1998:10-11). Wakefield detailed the subsequent development of an inheritance law which applied to commoners during the following Warring States period and Duke Xiao's (403-221 B.C.) reign over the Qin State (361-338 B.C.). Duke Xiao's inheritance laws forced families to divide their estate equally between the men of the family, in addition to banning fathers from residing with any one of their grown sons (prior to this it had been customary for a couple, before division of the family, to live with all of their married son's and daughter's-in-law, and any remaining unmarried daughters.). Wakefield noted that these policies encouraged families to divide and search for new land to cultivate, thus both expanding the state's spatial boundaries while also increasing the revenues paid to its treasury. Taken as a whole, Wakefield's analysis demonstrated that this basic rule of Chinese inheritance – equal division of the family property between all brothers – remained largely unchanged until the end of the Qing era.

Wakefield (1998:36-37) noted that during the Qing dynasty, tensions between family members were frequently the most influential factor in prompting the household division process. Such disputes typically occurred between between brothers; wives of brothers; or, less commonly, between elder and younger

generations. These quarrels, Wakefield noted, tended to centre on the difficulties of poverty, problems from increasing family size and fear of a profligate son. In this context, the decision by a family to divide was typically one that sought to minimise or avoid such tensions.

The practice of dividing the household carried implications not only for the social structure of the family, but also the physical domestic space of the house. Following household division, it was standard practice that the brothers, their wives, offspring, and any remaining parents continued to live in the same house together, but practical and legal arrangements were made to split off the various spaces. Wakefield (1998:90) highlighted the importance attached to achieving equality of living space during family division in Qing dynasty Taiwan, with equal spaces being assigned regardless of the number of people in each brother's family. Similar concerns regarding the equal division of the domestic space also pertained in the Republican era, with Wakefield (1998:140) detailing one case study where a brother received enough monetary compensation for receiving one less room than his brother, to allow him to build an extra room of matching size. It should also be noted that despite this attention being given to the fair distribution of housing during household division, by far the largest concerns centred on the equal division of land amongst brothers (Wakefield, 1998:93).

The Republican era also saw the introduction of a raft of new inheritance rights that aimed to make Chinese law comparable with inheritance in the Europe, while still remaining amenable to Chinese tradition. The most dramatic change was that the law codified the surviving spouse as the person that inherited the property, rather than the legal male heirs as had been the case under the Qing dynasty.

However, Wakefield noted that despite these somewhat revolutionary changes being passed into law, they were never enforced, and as such household division in North China remained much the same as he had described for Qing dynasty Taiwan.

While the Chinese Republican government had hoped to revolutionise land re-distribution by changing inheritance laws, the Chinese Communist Party sights were on the loftier task of revolutionising the entirety of society, and they saw land reform as one of the main ways to achieve this. Zhang (1997:188) recorded that CCP strategy of land reform was introduced in an attempt to persuade farmers to back the revolution, having given promises that land owned by landlords would be confiscated, and rents reduced. This Marxist-inspired policy of collectivisation aimed to eliminate exploitation that was seen to arise from land being used as a commodity and to ensure the effective allocation of land resources. The result of this policy was that by 1953, virtually all privately owned land in China had been confiscated into collective and state ownership. Under the new system the state was to allocate the land for free, thus preventing land speculation, and allowing the government to distribute resources in what they viewed to be the most rational manner. This remarkably different conception of land had important implications for inheritance, as Zhang noted, in that it brought about a prohibition on the transfer of both land and land-use rights between users. Often houses were built and allocated by work-units, state owned enterprises, or collectives. A separate result of land policies during the Maoist era, as noted by Wolf (1985:19), was that rural women also began to be allocated land by the collective. However, Wolf argued that this specific reform failed to have a positive effect on women. Despite the deeds to such land being in women's names, the persistence of the belief that these women themselves were the

property of men meant that they immediately handed these land deeds over to the male head of the household.

Zhang noted that the land reform policies of the Maoist era generally resulted in large amounts of land being inefficiently used and distributed. Following Mao's death, the CCP began to introduce new land reforms in 1980, most notably in urban areas, by separating the rights of land-use from actual ownership of the land. The ability to effectively lease land from the government for long periods was one of the major contributors to urban development, eventually resulting in the development of the rocketing property market that is visible in China today.

This narrative of China's history of changing land rights and inheritance provides an important backdrop which helps to make sense of the distribution of property, and the opportunities to obtain property as it is experienced today in Red Mountain Town. However, it also makes sense to apply a modicum of caution against any assumption that people's economic conditions might be solely reduced to external economic factors. This is perhaps best exemplified by finally examining how the notion of privacy in China has been experienced.

Privacy is, of course, importantly linked with property. But privacy is also worth specific consideration in that it has the capacity to open out onto an altogether more personal set of concerns than that of property. For example, as has already been mentioned, Bray (1997) noted that despite being disenfranchised from land ownership in imperial China, women occupied a considerable degree of autonomy from men, partially because of their ability to make silk, however she also detailed

how the concealment of women in the home afforded them an important autonomous space in a society where they were otherwise largely restricted.

Yan's account of household arrangement in Xiajia village in Heilongjiang province is also important in relation to privacy. Yan described the transformations that have occurred in the everyday life of families. He noted that prior to the 1980s, entire families frequently shared a single *kang* bed in their homes where 'everyone can be observed by everyone else, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, including at night' (Yan, 2003:116). Yan detailed how since the 1980s the village saw a surge in house building. He pinpointed villagers' desire to designate separate bedrooms for the conjugal couple as a prime motive behind the boom in construction. Yan's account is significant to this study in that it illustrated how a desire for intimacy and privacy can be the prime driver behind both economic and social change, as opposed to being consequential of such changes.

This history regarding land ownership, inheritance and the role of privacy can be observed in the variety of building forms that were observed in Red Mountain Town during the period of fieldwork. These buildings encompass everything from houses constructed by former peasants on land allocated by collectives, to 'foreign style' apartments constructed by property companies, and increasing numbers of commercial units and buildings that, arguably, would not have been constructed without appearance of new land-use rights that were introduced from the start of the reform-and-opening period onwards.

1.3.4. Heterogeneity and housing: ownership, inheritance and social status

The considerable economic and social heterogeneity of Red Mountain Town residents was reflected in the widely disparate forms of housing encountered in the town. To briefly illustrate, most Red Mountain Town people distinguished between five main types of housing that appeared in the town. These housing types consisted of work-unit homes, ‘village-in-the-city’ homes, new commercial homes, social welfare housing, and soil (i.e. earth) housing. The distribution of these different housing types within the town is shown in the shaded map in figure 1. These housing types differed in multiple ways: including their distribution in the town, the period of time in which they were constructed, the exterior appearance of the buildings, the typical social class and status of the families that inhabited them, and the legal position surrounding each form of property.

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Figure 1: Map showing distribution of different housing types in Red Mountain Town

Work-unit homes (*danwei fang*) in the town began to be constructed from the 1950s onwards by the state-owned work-units for rental to their employees. However, the most prodigious rate of building of this type of housing occurred in the town from the late 1960s to the end of the 1980s. All shared a similarity in the organisation of the compounds in which the houses stood, in that these buildings were sited in regular blocks, usually contained within a courtyard or a compound attached to the offices of their work-unit (figure 2). The form of these buildings tended to be regular and uniform, with the individual blocks arranged in perpendicular rows.¹³ Houses built in later decades tended to be more spacious and have a greater number of rooms.



Figure 2: A block of work-unit homes overlooking a courtyard

13. Older work-unit houses had sometimes been subject to alteration. This will be described further in section 2.2.

Bray (2005a:172-174) explains the way in which, during the period of the socialist planned economy, the state initially channelled funding for housing directly to state owned work-units. The vast majority of urban housing nationwide was built in this way in the 1970s and the 1980s. By 1990, a transformation had occurred, as reform had granted increased economic authority to the individual work-units, who were increasingly responsible for raising their own funds for the purposes of house building. Bray explained how this resulted in work-units that were performing poorly having very limited ability to invest in housing. This issue subsequently brought about a nationwide reform in the 1990s when the government attempted to reshape the housing sector by giving employees the opportunity to buy housing from their work-unit. Bray notes that the intention of this policy was not that housing should move from public to private, but rather that the burden of providing housing was shared between the state and the individual. Nevertheless, in practice this policy gave many government and SOE employees in Red Mountain Town the opportunity to own their own home, often at a purchase price that was greatly subsidised by the work-unit. Owing to this, many of the occupants of work-unit houses in Red Mountain Town were previous or current employees of the work-unit that had constructed the house. By the same token many occupants of this work-unit housing in Red Mountain Town were middle class, who typically still retained good connections with government. All of these households had an urban *hukou*¹⁴, in most cases limiting the number of children they could have to one.

14. The *hukou* is mainland China's household registration system, which was introduced by the government in 1958 to control the movement of people between rural and urban areas (see Cheng and Selden, 1994).

A large number of new commercial homes¹⁵ (*shangpin fang*) were built in the town from the turn of the twenty-first century onwards. Large swathes of rural, peasant land to the south and east of the work-unit areas was purchased by property developers (indicated in blue on the map in figure 1) for the construction of new, commercial housing complexes. As has been previously mentioned, a significant proportion of new commercial property development in the town was backed by the two enormously powerful local mining companies. These companies not only had the financial capital to invest in the housing developments, but they also had good links with the local government, something needed to enter the highly regulated real-estate market. These companies also used their company names, which were well known by local people, to brand the housing developments. However, these initial commercial developments tended to have a similar exterior appearance to that of the later stock of work-unit apartments. They were uniform shaped blocks of buildings, spaced in regular patterns, generally within a large compound (figure 3). But they differed from work-unit housing in the provision of subterranean parking, and in the better greenery allowed for in the interstitial spaces between the blocks.

This commercial housing was either purchased with cash, or, more commonly, using credit from the banks. In order to obtain credit, the potential buyer had to demonstrate an ability to make a deposit, and fulfil job status requirements, either being self employed or with a work-unit. The owners of these houses thus tended to be small entrepreneurs or businesspeople. More rarely, some had previously been rural peasants, and not had the opportunity to purchase work-unit

15. Also sometimes referred to as ‘commodity housing’ in literature on Chinese housing.



Figure 3: Rows of commercial housing blocks



Figure 4: A narrow road running between village-in-the-city housing

apartments, but had managed to accumulate enough funds via private enterprise to afford to be able to purchase a house.

Bray (2005a:174) has observed that the above policy of housing reform created a two-tiered system of urban home ownership between commercial and work-unit housing, differentiated by those who could afford to purchase housing at market prices, and the majority of people who relied on their work-unit to provide housing. However, Red Mountain Town has moved on from Bray's explanation of the urban housing system with the addition of a third important tier: village-in-the-city housing.

Village-in-the-city¹⁶ housing (*chengzhongcun fang*) differed from work-unit and commercial housing in a number of ways. The main belts of village-in-the-city land were located on the outskirts of Red Mountain Town, but there was also a smattering of village-in-the-city housing even in the centre of the town between areas of work-unit housing (indicated in green in figure 1).

Village-in-the-city housing was constructed on agricultural land by former peasants who had been allocated land by the government during the land reforms of the 1950s. According to the town's official history (Red Mountain District History Committee, 1995:245-246), 58.7% of the land where the town then stood had been owned by the 'landlord class', who made up only 23.1% of the population. By contrast, the 'poor peasant (*qiongnong*) class' made up 58.7% of the population and owned only 3.1% of the land. Land reforms commenced in the district in February 1952, and by completion in June 1953 the land seized from the landlords had been

16. Sometimes also referred to as 'urban villages'.

redistributed to rural peasants at an average of 2.2 *mu* per person.¹⁷ This allocation of land grouped families into production teams (*shengchangdui*). The remnants of these teams corresponded to the administrative units for the village group (*zu*) at the time of fieldwork, although the importance of the village groups had by then diminished. The former peasants still owned the allocated land, and many who had land immediately adjoining existing work-unit housing had seen its value sky-rocket as it became increasingly sought after by property developers. Selling off parts of their land to property developers, as well as increasing participation in other commercial activities, furnished the villagers with funds with which to construct new houses on the remaining land they owned.¹⁸

The former peasants built large multi-storey homes out of bricks and mortar, with several times the floor area of a work-unit home, which they then rented (or, more commonly, part-rented) to migrants from rural areas who had come to the town to find work. As opposed to the uniformity of work-unit and commercial homes detailed previously, the village-in-the-city homes were largely characterised by unplanned, sporadic development, featuring buildings of differing heights, shapes, and colours, jostling for space around narrow alleyways and roads which threaded through the villages (figure 4). Furthermore, it was common for extended family members to live in houses built next to each other, as the land allocated by the

17. A *mu* is a unit of area equivalent to one fifteenth of a hectare.

18. This also had the effect of further raising the price of their land, should they villagers subsequently choose to sell it to property developers. A case study is detailed in section 2.2.2.

government during the reforms had typically been divided subsequently amongst the brothers of the next generation.

Village-in-the-city housing was regarded by many as the least appealing of all the housing types in Red Mountain Town, and many informants were surprised at the fact that I had chosen to live in that area of the town. For example, one woman, the owner of a small restaurant, advised me against living in the village-in-the-city because it was too ‘messy’ (*luan*) and ‘not safe’ (*bu anquan*). A Public Security Bureau official from the town told me that on occasions at night they ‘feared entering’ (*pa jinqu*) the village-in-the-city. Mrs Zhao, a nurse who lived in work-unit housing, insisted on inspecting my accommodation, similarly asserting that the village-in-the-city was not suitable for me to live in, before attempting to get me to relocate to the work-unit housing. Despite the multiple warnings I received regarding the supposed danger of the village-in-the-city, I never felt threatened or unsafe in any way whatsoever during my time there.

Soil housing (*tu fang*) also existed in a very limited number of cases within the town (figure 5). This type of housing occupied the same legal status as that of village-in-the-city houses, being constructed by former peasants on the land that they owned. These houses occurred within the same village-in-the-city areas of town as the village-in-the-city homes above. However, at the time of fieldwork almost all village-in-the-city landowners had replaced their soil houses with brick and concrete ‘mansion-style’ village-in-the-city homes. For this reason, this distinction in housing type was one made by townsfolk based on the material the structure was made of, rather than being an officially recognised classification in terms of property laws. The families who occupied these few remaining soil countryside homes within Red

Mountain Town were generally former farming families who had fared badly following the reforms, failing to engage in private enterprise or sell off enough land to enable them to raise the capital with which to replace their home. But in the surrounding mountainous countryside, soil housing remained the primary form of housing.



Figure 5: One of the few remaining soil houses in the village-in-the-city. A number of village-in-the-city homes can also be seen in the background.

Social welfare housing (*fuli fang*) is the final type of housing described here. The amount of social welfare housing already established in Red Mountain Town was limited (represented by the solitary yellow area in figure 1); however, during the fieldwork a large development was nearing completion a couple of kilometres north of town. This development was to feature a minibus service which would bring the villagers into town. To be eligible for this housing, one had to be a recipient of benefits (*dibao*). Several informants explained that one also needed to have good connections with government officials in order to obtain such houses. Summing up

the situation, one informant explained that recipients of these houses were those who “drove BMW’s to collect benefits” (*kai baoma qu na dibao*). Welfare housing, despite its architecture being somewhat similar to many commercial homes, was also seen by certain groups as engendering similar problems to village-in-the-city housing. For example, one property developer suggested that, because its occupants “did not really have awareness [of how to act]” (*meiyou shenme yishi*), it had a negative effect upon the environment of the social housing compound.

Owing to the specific periods in which they were built, and the differing criteria for which groups of people were eligible for each type of housing, house ownership provided an approximate method of ascertaining the social status of various families in the town. The differing types of housing were, in many cases, good indicators of the different kind of social status and life trajectories of the occupants. There was a general trend towards improving property, and wishing to move towards commercial housing, as it was symbolic of the wealth and success of a family. However, distinctions also emerged in the opposite direction, steering us away from the assumption that work-unit housing might be preferred by all. For example, Miss Lin, a young government official, lived with her mother in a 1970s work-unit house. She had considered buying one of the new commercial apartments in the far south of the town; however her mother had tried to persuade her otherwise. Miss Lin told me that when they had visited the new housing complex together, her mother had complained that there was no ‘atmosphere’ in comparison to the busy little districts and market areas in the north of the town. Village-in-the-city residents were similarly unenthusiastic when asked whether they too might eventually wish to move into commercial apartments (detailed examples given from page 111 onwards).

All of these situations suggest that architecture and dwelling in Red Mountain Town is an important place around which social distinction is created. It seems little coincidence that the type of housing somebody occupies in Red Mountain Town appears to be partly dictated by either their (or their close relatives) family membership of a particular group or institution: whether one was a government or state owned enterprise employee, a farmer belonging to a village, or a business-person. But it is also a function of specific periods when houses became available to certain populations. Membership of those groups at particular times has been conducive if not crucial to one's opportunities of coming to own or occupy a house: whether it be an individual employed in a government or state owned work-unit during the 1960s-1980s; a farmer who happened to be allocated an area of land that would subsequently be close to the edge of the urban conurbation and therefore high in value; or those who seized the early opportunity to do business when restrictions on private enterprise began to be eased during the 1980s.

These changing opportunities for house ownership in the town become especially significant in relation to hosting. Section 3.3.3 shows how migrants renting rooms in village-in-the-city homes viewed these spaces as unsuitable for hosting, as they were not homes. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate a series of commercial hosting situations where people such as these migrants, plus some local young people, who did not have command of a home space in the town, were afforded greater opportunity to engage in hospitality practices through these commercial spaces.

As previously explained, the intention in recognising these vastly differing types of domestic space was not to emphasise the social difference and disparity in

wealth that existed in Red Mountain Town society. That should already be apparent from the above. Instead, the following chapters turn to focus on the commonalities between these different architectural arrangements, and whether or not they precipitate or contribute to certain modes of behaviour that link together all Red Mountain Town people. However, before turning to that description, it is important to first discuss the means by which I came to know the participants of this study.

1.3.5. Participants: persons and households

The conclusions of this thesis are based on data gathered from ethnographic observations gathered over a period of eighteen months intensive fieldwork in Red Mountain Town. My initial insertion into the field was not aided by a gatekeeper. Rather, during my search for potential fieldsites within the Kunming municipality, I chanced upon Red Mountain Town. It was the variety and blend of architectural forms described above that immediately indicated that the town was likely to contain a heterogeneous mix of population. I suspected that Red Mountain Town could offer the ideal site to search for any commonalities that might exist amongst such heterogeneity.

After stepping off a coach into a town where I knew no-one, my basic research technique became to make as many and varied friends as possible. This was aided by my selection of rented accommodation in one of the town's poorest and most densely populated village-in-the-city areas. Living in this area proved useful as people in the village-in-the-city tended to invite people back to their homes and engage in hospitality practices less often than in other parts of town. So my constant

presence in this area helped to win the villagers' trust, and eventually garner invitations to be a guest at events they hosted in both their homes and elsewhere.

The rent for my room was 120 RMB per month, which represented the going rate for peasants from the countryside who migrated to the town for work. I afforded myself the minimum comfort and privacy possible, staying in a small, barely furnished room on the roof of a house. I used the room for sleeping and writing only, which encouraged me to spend as much time as possible in the company of others. My eagerness to make acquaintances, however, was aided by the overwhelmingly positive response and welcoming nature with which Red Mountain Town people received me, and the relative novelty they found of having a foreigner living in the town on a long-term basis.¹⁹

The main research methodology adopted during this period of fieldwork in Red Mountain Town can best be described as 'deep hanging out' (Clifford, 1997:56). Like Empson (2011:37), I hoped that by engaging in activities with my participants, I would gradually become a person to them, as opposed to a researcher obtaining knowledge. Owing to the fact that the preferred method of social interaction of Red Mountain Town people was through hospitality situations, such as restaurant meals, karaoke, internet cafe sessions, *majiang* and card games, all of which tended to take place in semi-public locations, I met hundreds, if not thousands, of townspeople during the course of fieldwork. Some of these people I became fairly well acquainted with, others less so. These serendipitous, and sometimes fleeting encounters were too numerous for me to be able to record or recollect every detail; however my

19. No one I met in the town was able to recall any foreigner having lived there for a similarly long period of time.

interactions with that many people contributed greatly to forming a fuller understanding of life in the town. As such, the claims this thesis makes as to the generality of structures of hosting in Red Mountain Town have been drawn from the collective sum of interactions with these townsfolk over the fieldwork period. On the few occasions where I feel it is particularly beneficial to the argument of this thesis, specific ethnographic examples involving this wider population have also been included. However, I have chosen to leave these minor informants nameless – unlike the main subset of informants, to be detailed next, whom I refer to pseudonymously by family name.²⁰

From this multitude of informants, a subset of participants was selected from across these different housing types. In contrast to a ‘traditional’ ethnography, which is often characterised by profiling the relationships between a small group of people within a confined locale, the project drew its main participants from 16 households distributed across the town and its peripheries. In many cases, owing to the vastly different social and economic status of the particular groups in the town, the participating families did not directly know each other. But rather than this lack of social connections hampering anthropological analysis, it makes the argument that is being advanced in this thesis all the more cogent. It suggests that the commonalities in structured hosting that will be presented through the course of this thesis are likely to occur throughout the town, in spite of the social differentiation that is being described.

20. An explanation of the naming conventions used for persons appears on page 9.

Nevertheless, in some cases, households were indirectly connected to each other. For example, Mr Deng's oldest son's former primary school teacher rented a room in Mr Li's home. Sometimes I was introduced to one household by virtue of knowing another. For example, Mr Huang introduced me to Mr Xu on an occasion when he visited their village-in-the-city house, in an attempt to involve Mr Xu in the planned sale of fertiliser. Where social connections were known to exist between families, this has been indicated in table 1.

	<i>Family name</i>	<i>Housing type</i>	<i>Family composition (in regular residence)</i>	<i>Connections with other families</i>
1	Zhao	work-unit	Mrs Zhao (divorcee, lives alone)	mother of Tang; 'dry daughter' of Luo
2	Tang	commercial apartment	Miss Tang (Mrs Zhao's child)	daughter of Zhao
3	Li	village-in-the-city	Mr Li; Mr Li's wife; their two sons; and Mr Li's mother	former classmate of Huang and Song
4	Yang	work-unit	Mr Yang; Mr Yang's wife; their daughter and niece	
5	Huang	work-unit	Mr Huang; Mr Huang's wife; their son	former classmate of Li and Song; friend of Xu
6	Liang	work-unit	Mr Liang; Mr Liang's wife	friend of He
7	Song	commercial apartment (villa)	Mr Song; Mr Song's wife; their son	former classmate of Li and Huang; friend of Lin
8	Han	work-unit/welfare	Mr Han; Mr Han's maternal grandmother; Mr Han's brother, his wife and their son	
9	Xu	village-in-the-city	Mr Xu; Mr Xu's wife; Mr Xu's mother; their daughter	friend of Huang
10	Deng	soil housing (village)	Mr Deng; Mr Deng's wife; their two sons; Mr Deng's parents	ex primary-school teacher is tenant at Li's house
11	Yu	work-unit	Mr Yu; Mr Yu's wife	works for Yuan
12	Yuan	commercial apartment	Mr Yuan; Mr Yuan's wife	employs Yu
13	Hu	commercial apartment	Mr Hu; Mr Hu's wife; their son	
14	Lin	work-unit	Mrs Lin; Mrs Lin's mother	friend of Song
15	He	work-unit	Mr He; Mr He's wife; Mr He's wife's son	Friend of Jun
16	Luo	work-unit	Mr Luo	'dry mother' of Zhao

Table 1: 16 participating households: names, housing types, family composition and connections with other families

This group of 16 households, despite the enormous variety in their economic and social ability, became an ad hoc support network in Red Mountain Town, displaying a great deal of concern for my welfare, enduring incessant rounds of questioning, introducing me to various aspects of the town, and allowing me to photograph and inspect their homes in great detail. As such, these people gradually became my main circle of informants. The ethnographic focus of this thesis is the experiences shared with these 16 households, and the social relationships that the individuals within these families create and maintained both through their homes and on the occasions when they took me to other commercial spaces in the town.

1.4. Outline

This chapter first introduced the central theme of examining structures of hosting, and specifically the inscription of established modes of hosting found in the home onto new commercial domains. It then reviewed the changing role the home has played in informing Chinese kinship theory, and outlined the contribution intended to the anthropology of hospitality. The general situation of Red Mountain Town was presented, and the types of housing found within were detailed. Finally the methodology of insertion into the social life of the town was explained, alongside the manner in which a subset of main research participants across 16 households was drawn from broader ethnographic interactions with many hundreds of townspeople.

The remainder of this thesis is split into two parts, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. Part I of the thesis (chapters 2 and 3) is focused on ‘inside’, and specifically illustrates the role of the central guest hall in the home. Chapter 2 will detail the intersection between the house and family life in the town. It will first demonstrate how both

rooms and people are expected to arrange themselves around the guest hall. Furthermore, it will show how the house is considered as being fundamentally expansive in nature, growing and developing around a static guest hall in response to familial and financial changes. It will then demonstrate how ideas of heat in the home have become significant in terms of charting the metaphorical and literal expansion of the home. Ideas of social heat, or *re'nao*, have recently become a key concept in the anthropological understanding of Chinese popular religious and ritual life (Chau, 2006:147-168; Chau, 2008; Feuchtwang, 2007; Steinmüller, 2011). Social heat was indeed found to be a major preoccupation of the concerns of Red Mountain Town people, and a principal way in which they come to understand and assess the efficacy of both hospitality situations and their homes. The chapter will contribute to this growing body of literature by explaining more clearly the specific forms of social heat that existed in the town, and the particular ways in which Red Mountain Town people viewed them as acting.

Chapter 2 then argues that there has been a re-envisioning of this guest hall centre of the home as a more introverted place for the family to relax, rather than for the expansive creation of social bonds with non-family members through the production of intense social heat. The chapter concludes by addressing a further theoretical strain of analysis that runs through the work, namely anthropological studies of the home. The home as a focus for familial relaxation, as described above, prompts a comparison with Lévi-Strauss' notion of 'house-societies'. This comparison reveals that the homes of Red Mountain Town only partially adhered to Lévi-Strauss' criteria for 'house societies', in that houses in Red Mountain Town appeared to lack something of the permanence of the homes described by Lévi-

Strauss, owing partly to the rate of demolition and reconstruction. The houses remained important foci for social life. But they have always had a dual nature: that of receiving guests from the outside, as well as a site for the performance of family relationships. These dual functions were increasingly in conflict, causing a certain sense of dislocation in the home. This dislocation subsequently prompts the research look outward to examine spheres beyond the home

Chapter 3 examines the root of this conflict more precisely, in terms of the ostensible purpose of the guest hall: ceremonial hosting and guesting situations. It first describes the way in which people proffer and accept (or alternatively decline, in as polite a way as possible) invitations to be a guest in the homes of others. It profiles the unique anxiety felt by potential hosts within this situation. The layout of these guest halls is described, most significantly detailing the state of permanent preparedness in which they are kept, in anticipation of the unexpected arrival of guests, despite the fact that this may rarely happen. When guests do arrive, the layout of the guest hall is in effect used to trap them. This is done to try to secure their participation in the creation of social heat. The account will detail specific ways in which social heat is created, and the expansion of social relationships this can create. It will also give ethnographic examples of unsuccessful hosting situations, where social heat has either not been engendered or has strayed over permissible boundaries. It will detail some of the conflicts faced by families in the burden of carrying out hosting situations, and conclude that in the context of this town's hospitality practices, the home may often be seen as a dysfunctional space.

Part II of the thesis (chapters 4, 5 and 6) gives ethnographic examples of hospitality situations outside the home in Red Mountain Town. These are located in

sites to which hosting and guesting situations are increasing being displaced, yet where elements of home-like arrangements are still to be found. The crux of the argument, that common structures of hospitality exist across domains within the town, rests on a comparison of the reception of guests in the guest hall of the home described in chapter 3, with examples of hospitality occurring in the town's internet cafes (chapter 4), hair salons (chapter 5) and karaoke parlours (chapter 6). This reveals the existence of homologies between the homes and commercial venues of Red Mountain Town. This phenomena illustrates the way in which habitus can move from one domain to another, thus extending anthropological understanding of social practice.

Chapter 4 examines how the young people of Red Mountain Town are increasingly choosing to make the internet cafe their home. The appeal of these cafes lies not only in the collective nature of the experience for their customers, but also in the way they afford young people increased opportunities to practice hospitality with their friends. This social change has, in turn, caused ever more parental concern over the safety of the cafes. These anxieties include parental worries regarding young people's 'infatuation' with the internet, the perceived social complexity of the cafe, disease, radiation and the upsetting of natural phases of the body. Evidence is given of how, in response to such concerns, growing numbers of parents in the town have chosen to install home internet connections in an effort to attract their offspring to remain in the homes. The varying and sometimes unexpected results that the adoption of the internet can bring about upon the domestic sphere is illustrated.

Chapter 5 considers *xiangshou*, a term which can be roughly translated as 'enjoyment'. It shows how commercial venues outside the home in Red Mountain

Town have become closely associated with *xiangshou*, in contrast to the state of relaxation perceived of as being desired in the home. This is somewhat typified by the case of some of Red Mountain Town's hair salons, where the offering of additional *xiangshou* services is what makes the salon suitable for hosting. This chapter will detail the bodily nature of the *xiangshou* experiences offered in the salons, and will demonstrate the use made of notions and concepts from Traditional Chinese Medicine. Although these themes emerge to a greater and lesser extent throughout the thesis, chapter 5 particularly reflects the growing literature highlighting the role of pleasure, desire, and medicinal and bodily practice in Chinese contemporary life (Sangren, 2000:4-11; Farrer, 2002; Farquhar, 2002; Farquhar and Zhang, 2005; Rofel, 2007; Chu, 2010). It will attempt to advance the concept by demonstrating more explicitly how these *xiangshou* experiences may be positioned within practices of hospitality.

Chapter 6 moves to the town's karaoke parlours, providing an ethnographic example of how singing activities that formerly took place in the home have now relocated to such venues, and are used to generate social heat in them. The chapter will explore the key role of sound in creating social heat and in encouraging participation from members of the party in the karaoke. It will describe similarities between the karaoke parlour and the home, and consider the implications this may have for an extension of metaphors of kinship into hospitality situations.

The conclusion of the thesis (chapter 7) will consider broader theoretical implications of the ethnographic evidence collected in Red Mountain Town on two main areas of anthropological study: hospitality and homes. It contends that hosting in Red Mountain Town has been shown to strongly concern itself with themes of

hospitality, scale and emotion that characterise recent literature on hospitality. It then turns to consider how Red Mountain Town can inform anthropological studies of the home. It finds that the homologies between the inside of the home and outside commercial spaces, rather than being strict and rigid in the sense that was applied by Bourdieu (1973), were dynamic, partial and dyadic in the case of Red Mountain Town. It concludes by speculating that these shifting homologies might provide an explanation as to the nature of scales and materiality involved in hosting, and a key means by which habitus moves from one domain to another.

The notion of *structured hosting* is advanced as a potentially useful concept through which one may better understand Red Mountain Town society. This notion is broad enough to enable consideration of not only the structured practices of hosting, but also the actual physical structures that are inseparable from these practices, as illustrated through the guest hall of the home, and its homologies in commercial spaces in the town. The thesis finishes by raising some implications of such a notion for comparisons in a broader Chinese context.

Part I: 'Inside'

Chapter 2: 'Jia': home and family

That the Chinese word *jia* refers to both the home, the physical structure of the place, and the family, that is, a specific group of people who normally live within it, is a fact that has already been widely noted (Knapp, 1999; Lo, 2005:174). The aim of this chapter is to thoroughly explore how this concept of *jia* is created socially, and emphasise the dangers inherent in trying to conceptualise the Chinese domestic space as equivalent to western notions of either 'home' or 'family'. It is argued that *jia* necessarily entails a consideration of kinship and the material as inseparable. In so doing, the intention is to build upon two trends within the literature to date on Chinese domesticities. The first tends to focus on the architectural features of a dwelling and their associated symbolic meaning (Knapp, 1999; Knapp, 2005c). The other views the home as a kind of corporate family, where pure social relations, hierarchies and formal kin relations are seen as the be-all and end-all of society. That second approach, 1.1 follows from formative classic Sino-anthropological studies of kinship, as detailed in section 1.1.

It might be more useful to consider *jia* as being something that both people and structures are *centred around*, and also work towards creating socially. Here a comparison between *jia* and the term *household* is of help. The concept of *jia* differs from household in a number of ways. The notion of household tends to be rooted in a specific moment, whereas *jia* expands over time, as Steinhardt (2005) notes, with *jia* appearing to be:

multigenerational in structure, and it is simultaneously the story of a multigenerational household, or home; the family members who are born,

live, work, struggle, aspire, die, and will be venerated in it; and the architectural structure in which it all takes place.

(Steinhardt, 2005:13)

Furthermore, the concept of *jia* seems to be a far more scalable notion than that of household: either *jiating* (literally ‘house courtyard’) or *hu* are arguably terms with closer affinities to household. By contrast, *jia* can also be used as a classifier to describe businesses, and even appears in the word compound for ‘nation’ (*guojia*, literally ‘country home’).

Wilk and Netting (1984) note that the term ‘household’ is polysemic, and somewhat vague in nature. They maintain that the analytic value of the term household arises from its nature ‘as a culturally defined emic unit’ (1984:1). The authors chart how early anthropological use of the term household attempted to address the discrepancies between the structural nature of ‘kinship’ and the observable reality of ‘residence’. Elsewhere they note that whilst households are task-oriented units of residence, families differ in that they typically are defined as non-location specific kinship groupings (Netting et al., 1984:xxx). Wilk and Netting (1984:5) suggest that, rather than concentrating on how households function, it would prove more fruitful to focus on how households act. They propose the concept of *activity groups* as a useful unit of study, arguing that people are brought together in groups based around a common action, and these groups have a relative density dependant on the frequency of their operation. The household, they claim, happens to be an activity group of particularly high density. However, they go on to argue that the household ‘is a compromise between often contradictory functional imperatives’

and the households accordingly experience a ‘constant tension between different activity groups and their corporate morphology’ (Wilk and Netting, 1984:20).

Wilk and Netting’s concept of the relative density of activity groups carries with it somewhat unsettling connotations that such ‘densities’ might be physically observed and compared in relation to each other. Their approach to domestic space remains useful nonetheless, in that it encourages consideration of how different activity groups may be related to one another, and how various activities might sometimes be in relationships of interdependence, or alternatively, how activity groups might be in competitive or antagonistic relationships. In Red Mountain Town the contradictory nature of activity groups might be best exemplified through hosting and guesting situations, which seem to constantly negotiate a tricky set of obligations between one’s family and wider social relations. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to an exposition of that theme – i.e. how everyday joint activities around a particular centre might create a notion of family – before moving on to consider how pressures of hosting and guesting in the home create incongruities.

To tackle this we concentrate on the role of the people who inhabit a *jia*, specifically examining the arrangement of rooms in the house, and the perception that these arrangements of people and materials are governed by impermanence, in expectation of the movement through life of those who live within. Despite these notions of flux, what is found to remain constant in these cases is the existence of a somewhat intangible centre around which people both gather in the house, and move around through the course of their life. One of the factors that creates the ceremonial import of this centre is its function as a locale for the creation, through events, of an imagined form of heat, reflecting the idealised warmth of the rural home. The

chapter will conclude by arguing that, though social heat appears to remain desired in the home, its form and limits have changed somewhat. *Jia* is now being reconceptualised as a place for the family to relax, rather than a site for the creation and maintenance of intense social heat and social relationships with non-family members. This conclusion leads to a theoretical framework for thinking about *jia* which will then be expanded to more fully explain and illustrate the role of the home in receiving guests, and how such experiences are increasingly becoming commodified and performed outside the home.

2.1. Arranging life around something

This section describes the adaptability and growth of homes in Red Mountain Town. It does so specifically in relation to the location of bedrooms around the guest hall, and also through accounts of how homes were procured, and the significant links that exist between these activities and important life stages, such as marriage, birth and death.

One of the striking features of the vast majority of homes in this town was the tendency, regardless of house size or occupant wealth, to have furniture and rooms arranged in a roughly similar overall schema. In almost all homes, the bedrooms were located so that their doors opened out onto the guest hall (see figures 6, 7, 8 on following pages; and also figure 19 on page 156).²¹ Not only did

21. A key exception to this pattern of layout for rooms was in homes of wealthy private businessmen and government officials, who were able to afford to buy commercial villas, or construct their own large custom-made homes. In these cases, it was typical that guest halls and kitchen areas occupied the ground floor, whilst bedrooms were upstairs. Most other houses followed an arrangement where rooms were organised around the central hall.

homogeneity exist in the arrangement of rooms around the guest hall, but the basic interior furnishings of the guest hall itself were also positioned in very similar ways. We will return to the arrangement of the guest halls themselves in section 2.3.2, and again in greater detail in chapter 3.

The arrangement of rooms around guest halls expressed itself mainly through a correlation between the distance of the room's position in the house in respect to the main entrance, and the generational seniority of family members. There was a broad trend amongst the homes surveyed that the front door was typically located so that it opened onto the guest hall, and rooms positioned closer to the front door tended to be occupied by family members of younger generations. There may well have been practical reasons behind such an allocation: for example, the communal stairwell in apartment buildings, typically located beside the front door and therefore sharing a wall with the most exterior bedroom, was a notorious conductor of noise from the echo-amplifying concrete stairwell. Commercial and work-unit apartments often took this preference into account by locating the smallest room in the house next to the stairwell.



Figure 6: Floor plan of Deng's rural village home



Not to scale

Figure 7: Floor plan of first floor in Li's village-in-the-city home



Not to scale

Figure 8: Floor plan of Yang's work-unit home

However room allocation cannot be explained entirely by the preferable environment of some rooms over others. It may also be that room arrangement is used to express and instill a view of generational differentiation, and it is possible that the origins of such a characteristic might be traceable further back in Chinese culture. Knapp (2005b:56-57) notes ‘expandability’ as being a key feature in Chinese housing. He claims that this expandability allows for hierarchy to be expressed architecturally, borrowing the term ‘graduated privacy’ from Nelson Wu (1963:32-34) to describe the phenomena of older generations occupying more interior, and therefore more private, rooms.²²

Bray traces this trend back to imperial China, noting that ‘within the house social and generational rank was clearly marked by allocation of rooms’ (Bray, 2005b:261). She shows how imperial-era women lived a life largely separated from adult men (save from their husband), remaining confined in secluded inner quarters, where they were responsible for a range of activities, such as food preparation, care of children and the elderly, and the production of textiles and garments. As such she concluded that although women lived a life of relative concealment, ‘what they produced tied them to the wider world as productive subjects of the Chinese state

22. One might be tempted to question whether the positioning of the ancestral table adheres to this theory of ‘graduated privacy’. In most rural village homes, such as the Deng’s (figure 6), the ancestral table remains in the centre of the guest hall. The centrality of these tables would appear to match what Hsu (1967:53) describes as the ‘submission to ancestral authority’ present in the layout of Chinese homes. However, none of the urban homes in our survey had an ancestral table (with the single exception of the Li’s village-in-the-city home, where the ancestral table had been moved to a room on the roof of the house). Knapp also notes this transformation in the domestic sphere, recording that ‘spaces once focusing on venerating ancestors now serve as entertainment centres replete with the latest electronic gadgetry’ (Knapp, 2005a:7).

and as contributors to the family finances' (Bray, 2005b:265). No houses in Red Mountain Town displayed any kind of marked, purposeful female seclusion, such as that described by Bray.²³ However, Bray's example is noteworthy because it is suggestive of how ideologies relating to the appropriate allocation, positioning and use of rooms in homes may have remained pertinent despite the stark ideological shifts in the imaginary of the state.

What are the implications of such spatial ordering? In the 'traditional' Chinese houses that Knapp (2005b:56-57) describes, there is an implication that one may move 'up' through the rooms, to ever more interior areas of the house as one's age increases, and, importantly, one produces offspring.²⁴ In a contrasting case, Yan (2003:112-118) gives an account of house remodelling in a contemporary northern Chinese village that demonstrated a shift toward the emergence of private bedrooms (families previously slept together in a single room on one *kang*, a heated brick bed). He showed that new couples typically occupied the best rooms and, consequentially, the senior generation were often disenfranchised when it came to new allocations of living space.

As already noted, many of the houses in Red Mountain Town had been built recently, and there was consequently less expression of longevity in how people

23. One possible exception to this might be kitchens, which were often intentionally secluded from the guest hall, and where women do most of the work in preparing meals (further detailed in section 3.3.2).

24. Another conclusion one could draw from Knapp's observations (which he himself does not make clear) is that such architecture inherently implies an obligation to create offspring: as one moves up through the rooms in a house (and eventually, upon death, vacates the bedrooms altogether). Failure to produce offspring would result in the room one has vacated being left empty, which could potentially act a constant reminder of such failure.

conceived of their home. For example, there was little concern about the fact that commercial apartments could only be purchased with 75-year leases, or with the growing numbers of young people leaving the town to study or find work. There appears to have been little expectation or obligation that offspring would necessarily continue to occupy their parents' house when those parents died.²⁵ Regardless of such observations, it might be that habits relating to the allocation of rooms are simply so ingrained that they have not yet had time to 'catch up' with changes in modern housing structure. Here Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* would appear to be applicable to the allocation of rooms amongst family members:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.

(Bourdieu, 1977:72, italics in original)

It suggests that these structures have, to an extent, persisted regardless of whether homeowners have a say in the arrangement of the rooms of their homes (as is the case in village-in-the-city homes) or not (work-unit and commercial apartments). We might understand generational seniority to exist as a 'system of classification', which Bourdieu (1977:164) could conceivably argue contributes to the reproduction of the power relations of which townfolk are themselves a product, and makes the social

25. Indeed, in common with Yan's (2005:642) observations on the changing nature of Chinese bridewealth, many Red Mountain Town parents often intimated that they would have to provide a new house for their offspring.

and natural world appear to be self-evident. Nevertheless, there were subtleties to the trends of generational seniority in Red Mountain Town. Consistent with Yan's observations, homes did not appear to be wholly gerontocratic, especially in the most senior generation. In houses where elderly people lived with their family (for example, the Deng, Li, and Xu households), they often occupied smaller rooms on the first floor, or the attic of the house, respectively. In other households (Hu, Huang, Luo²⁶ and Xie), the surviving elderly lived in separate houses nearby, or were cared for in hospitals.

Here similarities may exist with both Fong (2004:148) and Yan's (2003:54-55) observations of elderly people being left alone, in the shift to neolocal housing amongst the younger generation. This behaviour might imply that parents gain seniority and power as they come to control households, whilst the elderly lose this ability and become increasingly consigned to the periphery as reflects their dotage.

The different accounts given above, when combined with the description of the guest hall, appear to emphasise that family members are positioned *around* the guest hall in a certain manner. Furthermore, there may be an implication that, as well as simply expressing hierarchy, there is an inherent notion of the movement of people *around* this central room over the passage of their lives. It seems productive to think of hierarchy, in the case of Red Mountain Town, not as something conceived of in vertical terms, like a ladder that one moves up, but perhaps more like a locus which one may also move *around*, in relation to others? This alternative view of

26. The Luo couple lived together in their work-unit house, while their offspring lived elsewhere.

family hierarchy would suggest that the guest hall acts as some kind of focus, or hub, of family life, with each of the private rooms opening out onto this shared space.

Similarity could be said to exist with Francis Hsu's (1967) ethnography, where he details the means in which the presence of the ancestors is constantly impressed upon family members. If this were the case in Red Mountain Town, it is reasonable to assume the spatial architecture of the house to be instrumental in instilling the relationships that the generations of a family members are expected to have to each other.

One might also usefully consider the allocation of rooms in relation to Stafford's (1995:86, 2000a) writings on cycles of *yang*. Stafford (2000a:41) describes *yang* as a 'kind of all-encompassing nurturance' in which parents care for their offspring, and in so doing, create an inescapable obligation that sons should return this *yang* to their parents when they become old. Stafford notes that *yang* centrally involves transferring money and sharing food between family members (2000b:123), but also mentions that housing is a minor form of *yang* (2000a:43). Therefore parents who allocate rooms to their children or elderly parents may also be carrying out *yang* activities, creating or repaying obligations respectively. This way of thinking about *yang* might also be extended from the provision of rooms to entire homes. Mr Huang once told me that he believed it was his responsibility to purchase a house for his grown son before he got married. This putative provision of housing also extended to the afterlife, and it was common practice in Red Mountain Town to burn paper houses for deceased ancestors at funerals.²⁷

27. See Scott (2007) for further examples.

Even if family members are no longer regularly residing in the home (for example, if they are living or working in another city), they are still drawn back into the household space, and a system of spatial arrangement that ties them back in to specific relations with their family. Stafford (2000b, 1995) notes the strong obligation existing to return to one's family home for the Chinese New Year. This may be considered not just as a reunion with the family, but also a reunion with the material home itself, as an architectural arrangement and behavioural group that continually emphasises its occupants' relative positions to one another.

The obligation to produce offspring in order to continue one's lineage, whilst at the same time continuing to care for one's parents, obviously creates needs in terms of space. The following section will demonstrate the expandability of the Red Mountain Town house, as indicative not only of the importance of the constant growth of the home, but also of the increasing perception of the home as a property investment that has emerged owing to recent housing reform and the rising price of land.

2.2. Endlessly expanding homes and state regulation

The typical arrangement of bedrooms around the guest hall of Red Mountain Town homes bears a close similarity to the arrangement of buildings around courtyards in 'traditional' Chinese homes described by Knapp (1999). Rural homes in the countryside surrounding Red Mountain Town also had a preference for retaining a courtyard, although all the home's bedrooms and guest hall were typically located within one building conjoined to the courtyard (see figure 6, page 79). It might be presumed that the idea of 'expandability' in houses remains an important organising

principle for homes, but how much was that manifest in this situation. In Knapp's (2005b:44) description of the expansion of 'traditional' Chinese homes, he shows how the modular form of traditional houses, referred to as *jian*²⁸, allowed for future expansion, and that such expansion typically occurred in response to the availability of resources or as a reaction to changes in the structure of a family. This section will further an understanding of this phenomena of expansion by demonstrating that, in the homes of Red Mountain Town, expansion appeared to depart from the 'traditional' forms described by Knapp,²⁹ owing mainly to ever-tightening national and local planning policies placed on the development and extension of both existing and new homes. These policies were enacted at different levels and to varying extent by the City Administration (*chengshi guanli*), work-units and housing management companies.

2.2.1. Examples of expansion

Evidence of the ever-present desire to expand the home was common throughout Red Mountain Town's dwellings, though with variations depending upon housing type. Such expansion activities were most prevalent and pronounced in the village-in-the-city homes. These multi-storey homes, each of their own style, were constructed using a technique referred to as 'brickmix' (*zhuanhun*). In this technique

28. A *jian* refers to a single modular unit. In Chinese architecture it refers to the area bounded by four vertical columns that support the roof. A single *jian* is not always enclosed by walls, and a room in a house may consist of several *jian*. A *jian* may vary in size between houses (Knapp, 2005b:44).

29. Knapp (2005b:44) notes that this expansion was achieved in two different ways: in the north of China by enclosure (buildings being built on four sides around a central courtyard); in China's south, through buildings progressively expanding backwards, and ever more lightwells being incorporated into the complex.

a concrete foundation is first constructed, into which are set horizontal cable girder (i.e. steel reinforcement) ‘skeletons’. These are equally spaced apart from one other. Walls from clay bricks are then constructed in the spaces between this skeleton, leaving an approximately 20 centimetre sized gap for each girder (see figure 9). These interstitial spaces, containing only the vertical steel mesh skeleton are then shuttered and filled with concrete. Once the concrete is set, the shutters are removed and the walls are skimmed with cement, and then finally painted white. The concrete uprights meant that these homes also formed modular units, *jian*, in keeping with ‘traditional’ homes. Despite being constructed with different materials to the wooden uprights and soil walls used in older homes, both occupants and builders still referred to these units as *jian*.



Figure 9: Wall on village-in-the-city home. Steel mesh uprights are visible in spaces in-between wall.

Whereas Knapp details houses being expanded around a courtyard, or expanded outwards in Red Mountain Town, it was more common that village-in-the-

city homes, limited by their closely packed-nature, instead expanded in a vertical direction. To allow for this possibility, many home owners chose to leave the remnants of the mesh cage sticking out of the top of the house when they had completed building (figure 10). This meant that if occupants later decided to add a further floor onto their village-in-the-city home they would be able to do so easily, simply by welding another steel mesh onto the one already in place.



Figure 10: Steel mesh left sticking out of top of column in village-in-the-city home to allow for future expansion

One such example came from Mr Li's home in 2010, when he added a partial extra floor onto the flat roof of his home, creating an extra room for the purposes of

renting out to lodgers, whilst also constructing a new kitchen space and a combined toilet/shower room in the floor below. Similarly, Mr Xu's village-in-the-city home on the outskirts of the town featured the entire concrete *jian* jutting out of the top (figure 11). Mr Xu explained that he had left it for the possibility of future expansion. Many village-in-the-city rooves also act as a place in which to store building materials, most commonly large piles of iron sheeting, wood and other building materials left from the most recent expansion of the house. As China is seeing a rapid increase in the cost of building materials, these items remain useful given the constant envisioned possibility of enlargement.



Figure 11: Concrete pillars on the roof of Mr Xu's house leave the possibility for adding an additional floor in the future. Meanwhile the space is used for an improvised rocking chair.

This provision for expansion seen in Red Mountain Town, and explained in the context of Knapp's account of 'traditional' Chinese homes, also appears to be a well-documented phenomena in a cross-cultural context, confirming the role of the

house in accommodating social reproduction. For example, Tan (2001:154) argues that amongst the Paiwan minority of Taiwan, marriage was seen as serving ‘the mission of reproduction’. Tan claims that the house itself also came to be seen as an agent of such reproduction, owing to its anthropomorphic similarity to the womb (it being a dark, warm, container). Furthermore, Tan demonstrated how individuals retained a link to their ‘original house’, which over time became a chiefly house. Tan describes the conflict that existed between original and chiefly houses, before going on to chart the influence of Christianity in the area, which replaced the original house as the focus of devotion, and served to introduce love into the mission of marriage:

In short the house is the objectification of the conjugal relationship as loving and inalienable. The devotion to the house is the commitment to this ideal relationship. The Christian couple, therefore, tries to combine the mission of love and the mission of reproduction together as its life-long project. The enduring devotion to the house they construct is the way they can fulfil both missions.

(Tan, 2001:160)

Tan shows that for both traditional and Christian homes amongst the Paiwan, social reproduction is tied up with the production of the home.

Tan’s analysis was clearly influenced by earlier work by Bloch (1995) who claims that the gradual formation of the Zafiminy house, materialises ‘the idea of the [marital] union emerging into view’ (1995:75). This process starts with sexual attraction between youths, and culminates in the birth of the third born. This is paralleled by a changing materiality of the home, from an initial wooden frame, with thin woven bamboo walls, to eventually having thick hardwood planks. In this case, the houses are said to ‘acquire bones’, and are described as hardening. Eventually

when parents have successfully produced offspring and die, these houses will become 'holy houses', the ritual centres of communities (1995:82).

Themes of enlargement of the domestic space are also similarly prevalent amongst the Langkawi of Malaysia. Carsten (1995:111) reports how homes, which are conceived of as female bodies, are positively associated with siblingship, and negatively associated with affinity. She outlines a process of enlargement whereby houses eventually form compounds of several houses, which then form a neighbourhood of several compounds, these neighbourhoods then eventually forming villages. Carsten notes how all of these are referred to using a single term, *kampung*, a practice which she claims underlines the process of enlargement.

Carsten notes the centrality of siblingship for Langkawi understandings of kinship, owing to the fact it can be 'laterally extended' to co-villagers. She argues that this extension enables an assertion that co-villagers were all formerly kin somewhere in the past, and that they are now siblings. Carsten sees the house as part of a 'dynamic process' between opposing notions of consanguineal kin and affines, hierarchy and equality, sharing and exchange. She describes how this process is mediated by food and directed towards the production of 'shared grandchildren'. Carsten argues that the house serves not to 'fuse opposing categories so much as manifest them with all their contradictions' (Carsten, 1995:127). Later chapters of this thesis will similarly explore notions of the extension of kinship metaphors to non-kin.

Similarly, Waterson (citing Traube, 1986) notes how the Mambai of East Timor use a botanical metaphor to symbolize the hierarchical relationships that exist between houses:

New 'tip' houses branch off from older, ancestral 'trunk' houses, as in myths the ancestors 'cut a slip' from the central pillar of the first house and spread out to found new settlements.

(Waterson, 1990:126)

The above ethnographic examples from Tan, Bloch, Carsten and Waterson all demonstrate the importance given to the expansion and progression of homes in cross-cultural contexts.³⁰ Perhaps of greatest significance in all of these accounts is the perceived inter-connectedness between the material culture of the house and social reproduction. They demonstrate the social mechanisms that exist to ensure that houses are built for marriages or births, and how they solidify and become venerated over time. They are all similar in a further aspect: these types of 'house-based' societies carry with them an imperative to reproduce: a house cannot be complete until it has created offspring, and vice versa.

2.2.2. Limits of expansion

Towards the end of the fieldwork in Red Mountain Town, certain village-in-the-city areas of the town experienced a sudden and unexpected flurry of building activity. A significant number of houses in these areas started working on adding extra floors

30. The Tan case, being from Taiwan, does share some characteristics with Red Mountain Town houses (i.e. kitchen placement). However, even though Tan acknowledges the increase of Han immigrants from the seventeenth century, he does note that their cultural difference in respect to their Han neighbours, recording that 'they share more similarities with the Austronesian people of south-east Asia and Oceania' (Tan, 2001:150).

onto existing buildings (figure 12), or even knocking down existing soil homes and constructing entirely new buildings. Though there was always ongoing construction underway in the village-in-the-city, this moment marked a sharp increase in the scale of such activities. Villagers explained that their sudden enthusiasm for building had been prompted by the fact that the government were soon to introduce a moratorium on new construction in the village-in-the-city areas of Red Mountain Town. Prior to this, these areas had largely escaped the draconian attention of central town planners, who had preferred to concentrate their efforts on the planning and construction of work-unit houses and commercial apartments. This ‘oversight’ was reflected in the distinct topography of these zones, which were defined by their irregular buildings, divided by small winding uneven roads and alleyways. The layout had evolved partially through the way in which land had been allocated to peasants at the time of the land reforms, but also in response to how families themselves had subsequently chosen to divide their plots between siblings. This stood in contrast to the architect-planned work-unit or commercial houses, which would have been built an entire compound at a time: neat blocks of apartments, presenting themselves in orderly parallel lines, their interstices filled with gardens and car parking spots, all demarcated by boundary walls, and gateways.



Figure 12: Adding an extra floor on top of an existing village-in-the-city home prior to new building regulations coming into force

Villagers explained that, prior to the year 2000, they were largely free to build whatever structures they wanted on their land. The turn of the century saw the introduction of a requirement to submit to the planners rather cursory details of an intended construction: a plan of the building's footprint, and a statement as to the elevation of the homes. By contrast, the impending regulations were likely to make it even harder to construct new buildings in the area, and would also limit the height of these brick-mix buildings at four floors. Many homes predictably experienced a sudden 'growth spurt' as homeowners sought to expand whilst the opportunity still existed.

Limitations on the physical expansion of dwellings were paralleled by legislation that limited the expansion of the family, in the guise of China's 'one-child policy'. The policy placed legislative controls upon, and changed social attitudes towards, physical reproduction and birthing, by limiting the majority of couples to

giving birth to only one child.³¹ Fong (2004), in her ethnography of the one-child policy in China, notes that the state attempted to use low fertility to accelerate modernisation and create a generation of ‘high-quality’ people. Fong (2004:28) claims that China’s only-children were socialised with the same lofty expectations and material demands as ‘first world youth’, especially with regards to lifestyles and consumptive practices. Although houses in Red Mountain Town were no longer necessarily expanding to provide room for more children, they were providing their existing young people with ever more space, and also, in village-in-the-city homes, extra accommodation that could be rented out to tenants.

In this connection, consideration ought to be afforded to how financial factors acted as a driver to the expansion of homes. In addition to building extra rooms to rent to migrants who had come from the surrounding countryside to work in the town, many of the village-in-the-city homes were built on land close to the centre of the town that was becoming increasingly sought after by property developers. However these developers were required to base the calculation of purchase price not solely on land value, but also on the total usable floor area of the property.³² Hence, a five-storey building would be worth considerably more than a two storey one.

31. In Red Mountain Town, ethnic minorities and couples who had a rural household registration (*hukou*) were able to have two children. During the period of fieldwork many village-in-the-city homes unwillingly had their rural residency permits converted to urban ones, and complained of the loss of benefits (such as the ability to have two children, and lower university-entrance requirements) which this entailed.

32. Lora-Wainwright (2012:9) notes the same system of compensation in effect in nearby Sichuan province.



Figure 13: Commercial apartments in Red Mountain Town banned expansion of the structure of buildings.



Figure 14: External window ledges attached onto early (1970s/1980s) work-unit homes

In comparison to village-in-the-city homes, owners of other work-unit and commercial housing have, for a longer period and to a greater degree, found it ever more difficult to make additions and changes to their homes. There typically existed restrictions on making any modification to the external structure of the building, with such restrictions becoming ever more draconian for newer buildings (figure 13). One notable technique for expanding work-unit homes in the 1970s and 1980s was fixing external window ledges constructed of corrugated iron and welded steel bars to the home (figure 14). This provided additional space for growing plants or hanging clothes and fostered an increased feeling of safety for those who lived inside. It also afforded additional shade from the strong Red Mountain Town sun. Informants explained that, even in former work-unit apartments, such structures were strictly not permitted. However it was only in newer private apartments, built since the turn of the century, that the prohibition on such additional structures started to become enforced effectively.

In contradiction to this rule, some of the very oldest work-unit housing that existed in Red Mountain Town had undergone substantial modification. One home, that of Mr Han's mother-in-law, in a retirement complex for former mineworkers, had seen an extra room attached onto the building, despite the apartment being on the fifth floor of the block. In another example from the same apartment complex, residents over several floors had worked together to illegally extend the building outwards (figure 15). There was rumour amongst those who lived in the little district that the management were to insist that residents undo the modifications that they had made, although no such action had yet been taken. In a separate case which also emphasised the desire for space, Mr Han's elderly maternal grandmother lived in

extremely cramped conditions with Mr Han³³, as well as Mr Han's brother, his wife and child. When asked about the size of the apartment, she complained about the discrepancy between figures for 'total area' (*zong mianji*, including the area taken up by wall space) and 'usable area' (*shiyong mianji*) of the apartment, as if her work-unit had, some forty years earlier, purposefully collaborated to cheat her out of two square metres of space.



Figure 15: Unsanctioned expansion of an early work-unit block of apartments. The concrete-faced brick section of building with windows has been added on to the original exposed brick work-unit apartment block behind it.

This section has illustrated two somewhat contradictory, but interrelated trends. There is a long-standing desire to expand the home spatially, when either financial resources are available or family size demands; but that is counteracted by ever-more stringent building regulations for newer houses, that are progressively

33. Mr Han and his wife had recently separated.

limiting even the smallest amount of change from being made. A key solution for expansion that emerges in this situation is to purchase additional homes. This partially accounted for the rapid development of housing and apartments that had occurred in Red Mountain Town in the previous decade. Whilst one might imagine that the limits placed on external expansion of the structure of the house would result in a switch of effort to redevelopment of their interiors instead, it was rare for people to refurbish or make major changes to existing homes. Likewise, a move to a new home would typically be accompanied by the purchase of completely new furniture for the entirety of the house. It may well be that the limit on expansion and size of homes also helps to account for the growth of semi-private public spaces outside the home, a topic we will return to in part II of this thesis.

Prior to its reform, the work-unit housing system handled expansion differently to that found in village-in-the-city homes. Government officials and state owned enterprise employees had tended to be allocated such houses in response to changes in their family stage. For example, Mr Yang, who worked as a low-level government administrator, initially lived in a dormitory with his colleagues that had been provided by his work-unit. Upon his marriage in the 1980s, his work-unit assigned him and his spouse a single-room apartment in the main street of the town. Their daughter was born in the late 1980s, and in 1991 his work-unit offered him the opportunity to purchase a subsidised newly-built three-bedroom apartment. In such circumstances, the expandability of the home depended more on the resources and organisation of the work-unit than was the case for village-in-the-city homes, where the capacity for expansion rested on the financial resources of the family.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Bray (2005a) comprehensively charted the means by which the Chinese work-unit system practiced governance through spatial practices. He noted that the reform-era did little to slow the pace of construction, most significantly through the development of new forms of private-business (*getihu*) that challenged the enclosed nature of the work-unit (*danwei*) (2005a:166-168). Bray argued that the restructuring of the work-unit and the city augmented the transition from ‘collective’ to ‘individual’. However, the desire for expansion detailed above suggests it may also be useful to consider whether or not it indicates an embodiment by normal individuals equivalent to the government predilection towards building, construction and expansion.

This section has illustrated a desired expansion of homes which appears to be motivated by a combination of both familial and financial concerns.³⁴ However, in the midst of a dwelling under constant expansion and change, there is a striking sense that this expansion and transition are also occurring around something more established, which remains central to both everyday and ceremonial life. Despite a desire to grow and extend the house, the guest hall appears to have a somewhat centripetal effect, drawing in family members (and as we shall see in the subsequent chapters, friends and guests) to partake in various shared practices together. Whereas Gullestad (1984:324) posited that the kitchen operates as the centre of Norwegian family life, whilst also being an important site in which the home links to broader

34. It is notable that expansion did not seem to be caused by an increasing amount of consumer goods. Rather, most rooms were typified by their sparse and clean decorations, which tended to emphasise their expansive nature. It would be interesting to see whether this applied in more densely packed cities in China.

society, it is here argued that in Red Mountain Town this centre appeared to be organised more around the guest hall.

The nature of this guest hall hub will remain a point of reference for the rest of this thesis, as the focus of observation gradually traverses outwards to consider other locations in the town's social landscape. However the guest hall itself first needs describing in more detail; and at once this centre is both evident and yet intangible.

The arrangement of rooms around the guest hall has already been introduced. Stepping in to the guest hall, it is possible to observe a further layering, with a regular 'U'-shaped seating arrangement. This seating allows people to position themselves around something, although it is inconsistent as to what. It might be the low tea table (*chazhuo*) inbetween these sofas, or perhaps the elaborate guest hall light (*keting deng*), or the flat screen television. Somehow these items feel as if they maybe looking onto the space, as much as they are being looked at. Perhaps what is important about the centre is what is *not* there? Or more accurately, what we as outsiders likely fail to perceive, but what the people of Red Mountain Town are able to create and communicate through subtle symbolic cues?

In this context it is now necessary to elaborate an indigenous notion of 'heat' to better explain how Red Mountain Town people come to experience and describe such spaces. This notion of heat will be called upon in all of the following chapters of the thesis, making it vital to now introduce its properties. To achieve this requires a momentary detour away from family life, however the concepts of heat which we are to explore will be fundamental in understanding the home as a social space.

2.3. Heat and the home: heat as an organising factor in Red Mountain Town society

Heat is a rather pervasive yet nebulous and multifaceted concept in Red Mountain Town. The scope of the term is not limited to describing physical temperature. The Red Mountain Town use of concepts of ‘heat’ illustrates an excessive social concern with maintaining the correct temperature of both things and persons. Whilst Chau (2008) and Steinmüller (2011) have already taken steps towards using ‘social heat’ to describe similar themes (which will be discussed further in chapter 6), I want to complement those descriptions by stressing the unique currents of causality through which Chinese notions of hot and cold act. These currents stress an interrelatedness of otherwise quite distinct domains of heat, allowing temperature to become a means by which people act socially in ways that they may not be able to in other contexts.

The first domain in which heat emerged as important is *heat as weather*. During fieldwork, Yunnan province was in the middle of experiencing a two-year long drought, the worst it had seen since the mid-1950s (Choi, 2010:2). The drought had seeped into the town’s consciousness. When people met in the street, they greeted each other, not with the usual salutations of asking where one was heading, but instead with an exasperated ‘too hot!’ (*tai rele!*). The effects of the drought was manifest in other ways, too, such as an increase in the price of vegetables and water shortages for village-in-the-city homes. However, what most occupied the concerns of Red Mountain Town residents was the physical discomfort of the heat, grumbling that they were ‘unable to bear’ (*shou bu liao*) it, or that ‘as soon as you step out of the door, you’ll sweat’ (*yi chumen, jiu chuhan*).

It was common for residents to also describe *heat as a kind of atmosphere*. In this usage heat comes to describe the characteristics of a place. However, this is not simply the temperature of a place (as above), but in this case movement and noise. And the behaviour of the people who occupy the space can contribute to this type of heat. This description is reminiscent of Chau's (2006:147-168, 2008) portrayal of the red hot sociality produced in temple festivals.

It was also not unusual to think of *heat as bodily 'internal fire'*. The body is seen as possessing an 'internal fire' (*huo*) (Zhang, 2007:95), which must be kept in balance for one's health and wellbeing. Related to this was a narrative of *heat as food*. Food and drink are vitally important to all of the hosting situations that are being detailed throughout this thesis. Food and drink are seen as being substances that have the potential to increase or decrease the body's internal fire, and thus affect one's heat and wellbeing.

Red Mountain townfolk also described *heat as personal character*, often in order to characterise individual temperaments, such as 'fiery tempered' (*piqi huobao*) 'cordial/enthusiastic' (*reqing*, literally 'hot/warmed charactered'), 'cold and distant' (*lengmo*).

Finally, these townfolk also saw *heat as symbolic*, being of vital importance in ritual occasions such as the burning of incense and candles. Apart from the deep Chinese auspiciousness of the colour red, the fire radical (火) appears in a range of words relating to heat and warmth generally. This had added significance in the local context, where the red mountains that surrounded the town were not only the major

source of its wealth, but also constituted a defining feature of the landscape, which people from the rest of the province saw as uniquely representing the town.

Red Mountain Town people often indicated that one particular type of heat might influence or affect another type of warmth. For example, eating too much spicy food might increase the body's 'internal fire', which would, in turn, contribute to a person's temperamental character. Similarly, the heat of the alcohol consumed at a restaurant or karaoke parlour was not only felt to increase internal heat, but it also led to the warming of the locale's atmosphere, which could in turn affect people's characters, making them 'warmer' or 'friendlier' (*geng reqing*). In these situations the causal chain was not always a simple, linear one, and there sometimes existed confusion and varying accounts between informants over which different types of temperature affected each other, and how. Regardless of the precise details of how they acted on each other, the interconnection of these spheres appeared self-evident to Red Mountain Town people. Heat emerged as an important means by which people were able to have agency and control over the world around them, giving them ways to not only rationalise and shape social space and environment, but also attain influence over other persons. Heat thus becomes crucial to both family life and hosting situations.

With such a wide array of usage, and its centrality to key points of Red Mountain Town sociality, heat may be properly viewed as a major aspect of these cosmological understandings. Heat appears to relate directly to the Taoist concept of *yin* and *yang*, in which each human being is comprised of these two opposing forces,

a balance of hot and cold.³⁵ No informants in this study ever expressed views suggesting *yin* and *yang* to be organising features of the universe. In contrast, the management of hot and cold was an overriding, constantly expressed concern for almost everyone in the town. It may be that heat is an understandable concept reaching towards elements such as *yin* and *yang*, but for Red Mountain Town people, it is heat that occupies the lived ecology of daily life.

Having highlighted the overarching centrality of heat in this context, it is now appropriate to return to 2.2.2 consider how heat pertains to the home in two different ways. First, through examining how notions of heat allow townsfolk to compare the different types of housing described in section 1.3.4. In such comparisons townsfolk assert links between the atmospheric heat of the home, the characters who inhabit them, and the idealised, particularly warm, re-imagined rural home of Red Mountain Town's past.

2.3.1. Linear development, cooling and constructing idealised past homes

The changes that have been occurring to Red Mountain Town homes have not gone unnoticed by residents. As housing types in and around the town proliferated, ideas relating to heat became a way in which people sought to understand the changes they were witnessing. Judgements regarding the relative heat of domestic spaces and zones of the town became intermeshed with discourses surrounding development and the wider geography of the province and beyond.

35. In this context, Zhang (2007:43) emphasises that, rather than being taxonomies, *yin* and *yang* should be understood as describing a process or tension, that is mutually constraining and generating. Zhang quotes a passage from *Neijing: Suwen* to illustrate the relationship of hot and cold forms of *qi* to *yin* and *yang*.

Several infrastructural and material developments appeared to have contributed towards creating these perceived changes. First, rapidly improving transport links, and the construction of a new road, completed five years earlier, had brought the journey time from Red Mountain Town to the provincial capital, Kunming, down from eight hours to less than three hours. People availed themselves of the convenient transport to Kunming for employment, shopping, study and leisure. Monied government officials and business people often bought second homes in the provincial capital. It should be noted that the most commonly cited reason for buying a second home was not for financial gain, but rather that its higher altitude meant that it was a comfortably cool place to reside during the summer months.

Meanwhile, in the last five years, Red Mountain Town itself had undergone a massive urban reconstruction project, mostly owing to the building of new commercial housing. A local newspaper report (Deng, 2010:2) noted that the urban footprint of the town had increased in area from 4.4 square kilometres to 8.03 square kilometres by 2010, with an accompanying rise in population from 50,000 to 90,000 respectively.³⁶ The expansion and improvement to the material infrastructure of the town was such that one resident remarked that he barely recognised the town when he returned to it after completing his four-year university degree in Kunming.

The developmental effects of such infrastructure construction were not contained within the boundaries of the town. From the year 2010 onwards, the district began to see the results of the nationwide ‘countryside construction’

36. The observant reader will notice that this population figure differs slightly from the one given on page 40. The figure given on this page refers to the actual urban area of the town, whereas the earlier figure referred to the township (including some outlying rural villages) as a whole.

(*nongcun jianshe*) programme, one of the outcomes of which was an effort to connect a road to every village within the mountainous district. However, despite this aim, a vast amount of work remained in order to link up all of the hamlets. Government officials often regaled me with their stories and photographs of overseeing village elections in remote areas, where they might have had to walk up mountains for hours in order to reach the settlement in question. Red Mountain Town dwellers would comment that, in the midst of all the transformation the town had seen, these villages had experienced ‘no change’ (*meiyou bianhua*).³⁷

My own visits to these remote villages suggested otherwise, as evidenced by new building materials, concrete and furnishings that were being used to construct or improve many rural homes. However, there was still a general sentiment (sometimes expressed by villagers themselves), that such settlements were ‘backwards’ (*luohou*), whilst cities such as Kunming, Shanghai or Beijing were perceived of as being ‘advanced’ (*xianjin*) or ‘modern’ (*xiandai*). Taking into account the argument presented previously of the continuing imperative to expand throughout the evolution of Chinese architecture, such attitudes suggest that participants’ efforts at expansion may also have been attempts to locate themselves within the narratives of modernity and development.

On one level, this perspective upon relative positions of urban and rural development appears to accord with a Marx-Engels unilineal schema of the

37. Skinner’s (1964:32) account of marketing structures in China is useful in cautioning us against assumptions that rural Chinese villages have ever been a ‘self-contained world’ for those who live within them. Skinner instead argues that it is the standard marketing area, comprising of the market town used by the villagers and this town’s other subsidiary villages, that form a peasant’s social world.

evolution of society, which continues to inform perspectives on development and advancement. This has also been widely posited as an over-riding ideological way of understanding modernisation in other ethnographic accounts of China, sometimes with a focus on analysis of developmental inconsistencies (Gillette, 2000b:4). But what is of particular note is that in Red Mountain Town the categories of warmth and cold appear to be *inversely* related to those of ‘advanced’ and ‘backward’. Whilst townspeople sometimes did describe the villages as ‘backward’, it was this alternative discourse of warmth that created an idealised countryside and past home. Concepts around the idealised warmth of rural homes served to fuel a re-imagining of the countryside as a place of pleasure for urban dwellers.

One might find it useful to consider this phenomenon in relation to Fei’s (1992:37-44) claim that Chinese society is fundamentally agrarian in nature. Fei argues that the rapid transformation from rural to modern society has led to urban people denigrating everything that is rural. In Red Mountain Town the notion of the warmth of rural people indicates a countervailing sentiment, possibly stemming from a feeling amongst townsfolk that in the process of modernisation they themselves may have sacrificed or risk sacrificing a modicum of authenticity.

For example, many Red Mountain Town residents explained that Kunming people were ‘cold’ (*lengdan*) in character, and that big cities were not fun (*bu haowan*). The nostalgic discourse surrounding rural homes as particularly warm environments meant that Red Mountain Town people were able to critically view those who lived in the provincial capital as being the coldest of all. Such discourses appeared to reconfigure modernist narratives into the local cosmological schema of heat. It suggested that, in a China where the spatial-administrative segmentation of

the country manifests itself in such clear and resolute definition,³⁸ discourses surrounding heat and cold potentially provide a way in which those supposedly lower down the urban-rural hierarchy may be able to cherish and assert the relative merits of their location.

The disparities between heat and cold were not limited to descriptions of perceived differences between Red Mountain Town dwellers and their village counterparts, but also served to further differentiate those living within various areas of the town. For example, Mr Li's wife, who resided in the same village-in-the-city, explained that she too disliked the new commercial apartments being constructed, recounting that she often went to visit her younger brother who had bought one of these apartments with his wife. She remarked that the compound areas of the commercial complexes were devoid of people, in contrast to the constant mingling of bodies in the narrow alleyways of the village-in-the-city. Mr Li's wife complained that everybody who lives in these residential areas just goes home and 'closes their door' (*bamen guanle*), compared with her own front door, which was always left ajar during the day. The atmosphere of these compounds, she said, was 'cold and flat'

38. The administrative system in China consists of, in descending order (with certain exceptions or equivalents), country (*guo*), province (*sheng*), county (*xian*), town (*zhen*) and village (*cun*). This system forms a somewhat rigid hierarchy along which relative levels (*ji*) of power and superiority are made clear. For example, O'Brien (2002) shows how the various levels of the government relate to each other in clearly hierarchised power. He argues that aggrieved citizens in China might take advantage of such levels when protesting government wrongdoings by 'skipping a level', knowing that higher level officials exert much power over their subordinates at lower levels. Similarly, Skinner (1964:43) argues that marketing systems in China operate as a hierarchy that does not always align itself to that of the administrative system. In this connection it is noteworthy that Chau (2008:495) describes markets functioning as a site of social heat. In the case of the people of Red Mountain Town, it would appear that notions of heat are in effect being used to question the presumed superiority of higher levels.

(*lengdan*), in contrast to the comparatively ‘hot and noisy’ (*re’nao*) environment of the village-in-the-city. Likewise, another village-in-the-city resident complained that commercial apartments and work-units were too ‘monotonous’ (*dandiao*), asserting:

Those houses in the ‘little districts’, speaking no lie, I wouldn’t even swap this place [his own house] for *two* of those [commercial apartment] houses.

The desirability of such a loud and boisterous environment bears interesting comparison with Douny’s (2007) research on untidiness in Dogon homes. Douny details the way in which dirt strewn on the floor of these homes is seen by the Dogon in an overwhelmingly positive light, claiming that dirt ‘communicates the capacity to feed people as well as to fulfill their needs’ (2007:314). Douny goes on to assert that touching and bringing dirt into the compound is symbolic of life, whereas a compound that is clean would signify death. In the case of Red Mountain Town, if one were to consider sound as a material form (as advocated by Tacchi, 1997), then it would be as desirable and symbolic of life as messiness was in Dogon homes. This is most forcefully expressed during Chinese New Year, when the creation of *re’nao* becomes a very public endeavour, in which the light and noise of firecrackers and fireworks literally envelops the town, even including otherwise comparatively tranquil work-unit and commercial apartment areas.

Red Mountain Townsfolk tended to express a view that people of the rural countryside, in contrast to Kunming’s city-dwellers, could be characterised by their ‘cordialness and enthusiasm’ (*reqing*, literally ‘hot character’) or their ‘simple

nature' (*danchun*).³⁹ It was often explained that this character was most clearly evident in the yearly ritual 'slaughter of the first pig meal' (*shazhufan*) that takes place in countryside homes in the Red Mountain Town district. This ritual provides a prime example of where the warmth of the occupants and the warmth of the house overlap. It is hardly coincidence, then, that this especially warming festival occurs in the middle of winter, typically about a month or two before the Chinese New Year. The event commemorates the slaughter of the first pig of the year, but also carries an important social dimension, owing to the obligation to share this pig (and the wealth it symbolises) with other villagers and friends, before retaining the remainder for oneself. Many farmers believe that failure to carry out this annual event could adversely influence their family's prosperity.

Here a comparison ought to be made with Empson's (2011:69) account of harnessing fortune amongst Buriad pastoral herders in Mongolia. Empson describes how, for the Buriad, fortune is made apparent through various practices, one of which involves separating a portion of something, and containing this piece in order to give rise to future growth. Empson records how, on the sale of a cow, the herder will cut a lock of hair from its tail and store it in their house. However, in the case of *shazhufan* described above the quantities appear to be inverted: the first pig must be shared with others, whilst all the rest of the heard can be retained for family wealth.

39. Steinmüller's (2011:267) contrasting finding must be acknowledged here, in which he claims that rural mountain homes are said to be 'lonely' and 'cold', in contrast to the 'liveliness' and 'hotness' of market and street spaces. I would argue that our apparently contradictory observations are reconcilable. Whilst Steinmüller's observations may pertain to a countryside landscape and habitat *as a whole*, my account demonstrates that these rural homes, at least, are considered to be especially warm when viewed under the rubric of hospitality situations.

It is important to also note that the heat created in the holding of the event is also felt to be retained in the home, and in the warmth of relationships between guest and host.

These notions of auspiciousness are further enhanced by the fact that rural families often make use of a fengshui master (*fengshui xiansheng*) to select an auspicious date for the event. Selecting the date involves taking into account various birthdays of the members of the households, and consultation of an agricultural almanac. One of the virtues of this complex system of date selection means that the preferred dates for holding the feast tend to differ for each household in the village. On those rare occasions where two dates do clash, a secondary alternative date will be selected to conduct the meal. Regardless of this, all of these dates fall within a six week period that typically lies near to the eleventh lunar month. This means that for the duration of this time, villagers often find themselves eating at a different house in the village (or adjacent villages) every evening, multiplying the festival's significance.

Although *shazhufan* once also frequently took place in homes within Red Mountain Town, this is now no longer the case. However the urban dwellers, are often the recipients of invitations to join countryside *shazhufan* events. A range of urban residents received invitations to attend such celebrations during this fieldwork, including school teachers invited by their pupils, and government officials invited by farmers they had dealings with, as well as family and friends. At a *shazhufan*, it was common for the entirety of the guest hall of a rural home, and often also their exterior courtyards, to be filled with tables for guests.

The generosity of Red Mountain Town's countryfolk was legendary amongst the people of the town. At the dinners themselves, younger members of the family and extended family were called upon to assist in replenishing depleted rice in guests' bowls, and in topping up vegetables or meat in the dishes at the centre of the table. This action was carried out in a vocal, exaggerated way, making clear to visitors the abundance of food that was available. Many farmers no longer reared pigs for profit, saying it was 'too much trouble' (*tai mafan*). Yet they might still raise one or two a year, especially for the purposes of the *shazhufan*, or alternatively, would buy in extra pigs (at considerable cost) especially to slaughter for the day. Town dwellers relished the prospect of the abundant amounts of good food that was to be included in the feast, and the warm character of their country hosts; but even they tired of endless dinners after six weeks, with one of them commenting that he had eaten so much *shazhufan* that he was now 'scared of eating' (*chipa le*) it. As a ritual event, *shazhufan* provided a clear example of how the heat of the home was created through both the people and the production. This case is also a rather extreme example of the centrality of food and heating to social life in China (Kipnis, 1997:39-57; Anderson, 1988:244-245; Farquhar, 2002; Santos, 2009).

The importance of the feast to people was best exemplified in the case of a large *shazhufan* that took place in a village on the outskirts of the town, which itself was rapidly becoming a village-in-the-city. The meal was eaten in the shell of the host's semi-constructed new home. The walls were unplastered, exposing bare brickwork and concrete, and still lacked panes of glass. Concreting machines were kept running and labourers milled about outside the home, attempting to continue what little work could be done in the midst of the feast. Inside the home, the hosts

had strung up bare lightbulbs for the guests to eat their meals under. This was an exceptional state of affairs, but one that nonetheless made clear the importance of providing a good meal, generosity and warmth that appeared to outweigh potential worries about showing visitors the state of the house.

This idealised warmth of peasant homes shared by Red Mountain Townsfolk had brought an accompanying change in reasoning for why one might visit the countryside. Increasingly, the countryside was not merely where someone went to or came from for work,⁴⁰ but it also functioned as a primary site for leisure. In this context, springing up in the scenic area surrounding Red Mountain Town were ever-increasing numbers of rural establishments referred to as ‘cheerful peasant homes’ (*nongjia le*). Despite the name, these establishments were typically not domestic units, but actually specially constructed restaurants outside the town, accessible only by vehicle, often featuring a melange of different ‘traditional’ architectural features such as tiled roofs, gardens, and ponds, many of which were only extremely rarely found in rural housing.

40. This is not to say that the countryside is no longer somewhere where people engage in work. It is especially true of Red Mountain Town, where the remote copper mines and associated processing plants outside of the town are linked with particularly arduous work. Rather, the emphasis here is that an idealised countryside reinvents the rural as a place of leisure, whilst still remaining entirely possible for it to co-exist with being a place of work.



Figure 16: A 'cheerful peasant home' restaurant

Take, for example, Mr Huang, who worked for the agricultural bureau in the town. Now in his fifties, the warm-natured Mr Huang was never reticent to recount his life story. His parents, both party cadres, were sent to Red Mountain Town by the party in the 1960s as part of government efforts to increase the amount of educated Han in the area. In the early 1980s, when Mr Huang had completed his training in agriculture at vocational college, he went on to do 'voluntary service' (*ziyuan fuwu*), and lived for two years in a remote (and, at the time, incredibly poor) rural village in the district. At that time, the countryside was a particularly harsh place, and though such service was idealised and encouraged, Mr Huang would have preferred to be in the city. However, nowadays Mr Huang receives a different kind of reward from the countryside. He still travels to villages regularly with work, though now the work-unit always makes sure a villager has prepared a large lunch or dinner for their

visitors (paying them to do so). Mr Huang also often frequents ‘cheerful peasant home’ restaurants on the edge of the town with his friends and colleagues.

In light of the indigenous understanding of the Chinese as an agrarian people (as mentioned above), the relationship Red Mountain Town’s people have with the surrounding villages has similarities to that observed by Tambiah (1984:274-280) between urban and rural Thailand. He describes the Thai movement of Buddhist novices and laity from cities to villages to fill up on the authenticity offered by forest saints, and their subsequent bringing of this power (often materialised as blessed amulets) back with them into a city, itself seen as depleted of authenticity. The Red Mountain Townspeople, and particularly those with contacts like Mr Huang, perform minor cycles of migration out into the countryside in order to benefit from the warmth incoate in rural homes and agrarian life. The six weeks of *shazhufan* provide heat at an otherwise cold time, both for the village populous and the city folk—to such a degree that it may even insight fear. Mr Huang likewise gains from the village and ‘cheerful peasant home’ food, which as mentioned above is a primary ingredient to social heat. Through his hosting of friends at such establishments, he also generates this warmth, in abundance outside the town, bringing it into the sociality of the town proper. Likewise, the movement of the farmers into the city each morning to sell their goods at once brings the raw material for hospitality to the people of Red Mountain Town, and fosters the social relations by which townspeople are invited out during the yearly first pig meals. Here, the symbiosis between urban and rural likewise fosters a flow of authentic potency, but specifically within the categories of heat through the movement of food and hospitality from the rural into the urban.

This section has moved away from the family at home, to consider broader concerns regarding the wider context of the home in terms of heat and temperature. It has shown how ideas of hot and cold are intimately linked to development in and around Red Mountain Town, and has reported the existence of a general perception that more ‘advanced’ urban places are colder. Red Mountain Townsfolk also participate in creating an idealised rural home, perceived of as being particularly ‘warm’, not least verified by the experiences of the great generosity of contemporary farmers’ *shazhufan* hosting events in the surrounding villages. This is perhaps the case in which the notion of heat, its association with the home, and with the people who live within and host from it, become most clearly expressed. We now turn to consider changing perceptions of the role that such heat should play, as it is evidenced in relation to family life in the house.

2.3.2. The guest hall, family and relaxation

Having already detailed the arrangement of rooms around the guest hall in the first section of this chapter, the focus now moves to consider how the family make use of this guest hall space. Despite its name, the ‘guest hall’ (*keting*) is decidedly dual purpose in nature, its most frequent use being by family members in their daily lives. In this sense, the guest halls of Red Mountain Town might be said to share a similarity with the *tatamai* rooms of Japanese homes. Hendry (1993:114) reports that, despite these spaces ostensibly being reserved for receiving visitors, their actual use tends to be multi-purpose. She explains how these matted rooms are alternately used for formal and informal occasions, including dining, sleeping and sitting, all made possible through judicious rearrangement of furniture, screens and objects

within. She contrasts this with the clearly understood purpose of space found in conventional British houses, where eating meals occurs in dining rooms, sitting in sitting rooms, and sleeping in bedrooms. Daniels (2010:42) observed that her informants used *tatamai* rooms in three different ways (as described by architectural planner Suzuki, 2002): a ritual space, for receiving guests, and for family relaxation. However Daniels also notes the siting of these rooms denoted economic status, with most of these multipurpose rooms being used for everyday activities. It was often the case that Red Mountain Town's guest halls performed similar multiple roles, and that despite the important ceremonial nature of the guest hall still remaining somewhat intact, family use of the guest hall appears to be usurping its use for hospitality.⁴¹

Of all the topics presented in this thesis, family use of the domestic space is probably the hardest subject to comment on authoritatively. This is because, in many cases, the presence of the ethnographer immediately changes the way in which the space is used to that typical of a guest-host situation (to be explored in chapter 3). Nevertheless, over the period of this fieldwork, it was possible to acquire a level of closeness with some families, who gradually became increasingly at ease with my presence, to a stage where they allowed me to glimpse at least some of the intimacies of family life. These glimpses were enough to support a degree of informed

41. The ritual aspect of guest halls has lessened in recent times, partly because many homes now no longer contain ancestral tablets. Only the village houses surveyed still contained ancestral tablets in the guest hall (apart from one village-in-the-city home that kept it on the roof). In this context, Knapp's (1999:21) descriptions of traditional Chinese architecture notes the central *jian* where this tablet was located varied regionally, with names including *zhengwu*, *zhengting*, *tangwu*, *gongting*, *zutang*, or *tingtang*. It may be that a change in name accompanied the removal of the ancestral tablets.

speculation as to how the guest hall might act as the venue for more private moments of family life.⁴²

The main outcome of these observations was that family members increasingly used, or spoke of, the guest hall as a place in which they could ‘relax’ (*fangsong*). Many family members expressed to me the importance of what they perceived to be the freedom of this home space. More than one participant used the phrase ‘whatever [I] want to do [in it], [I] can do’ (*xiang zenme zuo, jiu zenme zuo*),⁴³ to describe the guest hall. One informant described leaving the house as akin to having to wear a mask, by contrast with the home as a place where one could reveal a more authentic self, or at least feel able to be less cautious. As such, participants displayed a clear ideal of the guest hall, and the home more broadly, as being a liberating space.

This sense of liberation reflected a distinction felt by informants, of the home as somehow being separated from the outside. For example, some informants referred to relationships and life that occurred outside the home as being ‘in society’ (*zai shehui shang*), implying that the home might be considered as being in some sense apart from society. In this apparently contradictory phrasing, society is envisaged as being a world of particularly complex and sometimes dubious

42. By contrast, it is possible to be more confident of the veracity of the conclusions drawn in other chapters of this thesis, where it was easier to observe common behaviours being performed multiple times in daily life by different participants. So whilst the data in the remainder of this chapter should be treated more cautiously, it is still included because it remains important to speculate about family life, in that understanding the nuances of the dual nature of guest halls between family relations and the hosting of guests is essential for the remainder of the thesis.

43. The following chapter will note how guests in the guest hall are also sometimes instructed by hosts to abide by the same maxim.

connections, that the home (and maybe certain other institutions such as schools and universities) are intentionally excluded from.⁴⁴ At other times in conversation, participants were happy to acknowledge that homes and families were, in fact, a part of society.

Informants thus carried with them dual understandings of home and society that could be opposed to each other, whilst also being parts of a whole. Perhaps this understanding could help explain tensions within the dual nature of the home. On the one hand this is an entity which is, in many aspects, intensely private, literally barricading itself from the outside through the prodigious use of steel doors, locks, bars on windows, privacy screens, permanently drawn net curtains, security guards and perimeter walls.⁴⁵ On the other hand there is its central hall's named function and intention for receiving guests, which exemplifying the potentially expansive nature of the home, and its conception, by those who live there, as a venue in which one might naturally attempt to maintain and enlarge networks of connections to friends and acquaintances.

It will be shown that the dual nature of the guest hall and the home, as being a site that is both *part of* and *apart from* society – a place both to receive guests, and a place to create family – appears to be increasingly in question in Red Mountain Town. This conflict appears to have led to a reconceptualisation of the kind of space

44. Schools and universities are architecturally distinctive owing to their gated and walled campuses, supposedly separating them from 'society'. In this context, leaving school or university and securing a job is often referred to as 'entering society' (*chū shehui*).

45. Security guards and perimeter walls were more commonly found in the sections of private apartments.

that the guest hall is envisaged as being, with an increasing emphasis on the home as primarily a site for mutual relaxation amongst family members.

The guest hall sofa is one key locus of this mutual relaxation. Chapter 3 highlights the emphasis in Chinese sofa design to give prominence to length, in order to accommodate the maximum number of guests. These long sofas were also important, however, in providing a space in which the family could relax together, most often through the shared watching of television. In many homes families would retire to the guest hall after eating their meals, for this shared activity. Once again, parallels may be drawn with the architecture of Japanese homes. Daniels (2010) describes how these centrally located rooms were part of her informants' imaginations regarding what an ideal home was, including descriptions of sitting together, reading newspapers or watching television. Daniels can also be read as implying an association between heat and relaxation in her examples of how heated floors or carpets were held by informants to achieve a 'state of bliss best achieved while sitting on the floor' (Daniels, 2010:47).

Yan (2003) noticed similar changes occurring in the spatial arrangements of houses in a north-eastern Chinese village. Yan notes the emergence of modern cabinets and the sofa set in the late 1980s, and new scattered arrangements of seating that brought about the dissolution of the old spatial hierarchy in which elders were afforded the prime position. The presence of television meant that people preferred to remain at home rather than socialise with neighbours, and the new arrangement of seating meant that family members were able to sit wherever they wanted, bringing about 'a more relaxed, equal, and comfortable environment' (Yan, 2003:133). In Red Mountain Town, watching television together was a core family activity that took

place in the guest hall. Section 4.3.1 of this thesis will detail an ethnographic example of the parental anxiety created following the installation of a home broadband connection in the Li families' village-in-the-city home, because of the disruptive effect this had on the family's joint television watching practices.

Sofas also became a site in which intimacy through bodily contact might be expressed by family members. Bodily contact was relatively rare between family members when outside the home. For example, in the Li's home, before the installation of the broadband mentioned above, Mr Li reclined on one of the guest hall sofas with his 13 year old son, whilst the two watched television together. Such actions struck me as being remarkably odd, given the fact that there already existed a degree of acrimony between the two, relating to the son's unrestrained use of the internet and its disruptive effect on his studies. However, their intimate shared consumption of television stood out as an unexpected moment of calm and reconciliation between these family members.

A further example of such intimacy was the shared washing of feet between family members, an event that commonly occurred in the guest hall of many Chinese homes, often whilst watching television together. For example, in the Li's family this washing was aided by an electric foot spa machine. Mr Li's wife obtained the machine when she subscribed to a new mobile phone package.⁴⁶ Every night she would fill the spa with water she had heated using the electric hob and kettle in the kitchen, then bring it into the guest hall. She would wash her feet first, then, without

46. For a prepayment of several hundred RMB, Mr Li's wife received a phone, an amount of credit to be used on calls and text messages over the period of the contract, a large bottle of vegetable oil and the foot spa.

changing the water, her husband would wash, and then their sons. In a separate example, from Mr Song's house in a rural village on the outskirts of Red Mountain Town, foot washing also took place. Here they would heat water using coal bricks or on top of a fire, which they would then pour this into a plastic bowl in order to wash their feet. Though almost all the households surveyed had a shared shower/toilet room, with a water solar heater, washing feet together remained an important family event. Participants explained the sense of 'comfort' (*shufu*) they felt, as well as the fact that one could sleep better after washing one's feet. These practices seemed to produce a sense of relaxation and sociality similar to that in Daniel's descriptions of home bathing practices in Japan (Daniels, 2010:38-41).

These examples of communal washing, or unexpectedly close contact, that take place in the home might best be interpreted in terms of recent anthropological writings on the topic of 'skinship'. Gregory (2011) provides detailed elaboration on the concept, which originates in Japanese culture, but which he claims can serve as a useful alternative to more established anthropological approaches to kinship, such as the study of relative nomenclature between kin members. Instead he argues that a consideration of skinship, as the 'mutuality of sensible⁴⁷ being' (Gregory, 2011:185), places an emphasis on practices of touch and bodily contact as ways in which kinship relations are not only created, but sustained by pursuit in the correct manner. For example, Gregory describes how the relationship between an Indian Bastar elder

47. Here Gregory defines 'sensible' as necessarily involving 'both verbal and non-verbal communication' (Gregory, 2011:185). He cites the apparent ambiguity and lack of significance in kin terms as making the expression of relations correctly through touch so important and precise in the Bastar context. Perhaps it is because kinship terms are so heavily and precisely used within Chinese family relations that touch appears far less prominent there.

and a senior male is negotiated through the appropriate use of touch. The ethnographic examples of Red Mountain Town might be useful in adding a further dimension of place onto these ideas of skinship, intimacy and closeness. These behaviours are, in practice, defined as only being appropriate for performance in the house. Likewise, the behaviours that occur exclusively therein are what make and define the home as an intimate space.

It is important to recognise eating as a key activity that took place in these spaces. Whilst some households had a dedicated dining table set slightly away from the guest hall where they took their meals,⁴⁸ others often ate as a family sat around the tea table in front of the television. Even in cases where families did not take their main meals in the guest hall, it should be noted that the tea tables in all guest halls were kept replete with snack foods that, although purportedly intended for unexpected guests (to be detailed in section 3.2.1), were frequently nibbled upon by family members. As such the guest hall came to be a key locus of commensality between family members. Santos (2009:113) argues that food sharing amongst Chinese families not only works to create intimacy and closeness, but is also reflective of historical influences such as the centrality of agriculture in Chinese culture. Elsewhere, Santos and Donzelli (2009) use an analysis of rice production and distribution to understand agricultural homes as specific institutions.

2.4. Half house-societies

This chapter began with the assertion that *jia* could productively be thought of as a term related to both the domestic structure and those who lived within it. The chapter

48. See figure 7 on page 80; and figure 8 on page 81 for examples.

proceeded to illustrate this in practice, notably in the desire amongst householders to, wherever possible, expand their accommodation to meet family needs, whether outwards through the addition of extra rooms, or window balconies, or via the purchase of more homes. This desire to expand was then located within a wider schema of development and modernisation, in which it was noted that the level of development and heat were inversely related, a state of affairs which was typified by the urban residents' nostalgic imaginaries of rural countryside homes, and the *shazhufan* feast that took place within them. The final section of the chapter moved to a consideration of the comparatively sedate interiors of Red Mountain Town homes, specifically detailing the way in which houses were increasingly perceived as spaces in which the family could relax together.

This notion of the home as a site in which families arrange, organise, are drawn together, and where they reproduce would seem to prompt a comparison with Lévi-Strauss' (1983) theory of 'house societies', in which he used concepts of home to overcome the analytical difficulties faced when examining the Kwakiutl, whose main kinship groupings appeared to have both matrilineal and patrilineal features. In *The Way of the Masks*, Lévi-Strauss posits that the common feature which unites and orders Kwakiutl society is the manner in which houses become the focus of kin organisation. Lévi-Strauss asserts that similar cases can be seen in other present-day and past societies throughout South-East Asia, Melanesia, Polynesia and the North-West Coast, in addition to feudal Europe and Japan. It should be noted that Chinese society, by contrast, displays a very clearly defined system of descent, lineage and inheritance (as already detailed in chapter 1), and therefore Chinese society does not require the house to resolve the kinship roles in the same Lévi-Strauss' 'house

societies'. Despite this differing social context, a comparison with the features of Lévi-Strauss' house societies remains useful in that it is helpful in revealing specific characteristics of homes within Red Mountain Town society.

Lévi-Strauss (1983:187) emphasises that these house societies operate by fusing principles of descent and affinity, categories that would otherwise be in conflict with each other. He argues that all house societies have a number of important features. They perpetuate themselves over time by transmitting their name, wealth and titles down to younger members (1983:174). In addition house-societies are sites where ceremonies are performed, and can be expected to have elaborately decorated facades, and imagery expressing notions of marriage and kinship (Waterson, 1990:139).

Red Mountain Town houses partially accord with Lévi-Strauss' categories for house societies. Houses undoubtedly form important ceremonial centres, acting as the focus of reunion for the family during Chinese New Year (Stafford, 2000b:32-39), as well as the ritual behaviours of hosting and guesting that will be described in chapter 3. Equally, the doors of many Red Mountain Town homes were elaborately decorated.

Both Red Mountain Town and the Chinese language at large use house imagery and metaphors to express kinship and marriage relationships. For example, the character for the verb 'to marry a husband' (嫁 *jià*) consists of the character for woman (女 *nǚ*) and house (家 *jiā*) placed next to each other. It is phonetically similar to the character for house, bar a slight tonal difference.

However, the houses of Red Mountain Town do not appear to have the same permanence that Lévi-Strauss posited was essential for house societies. In fact very few buildings in the town predate the 1960s, and even twentieth century buildings may be in the minority. A large proportion of soil homes have been demolished to make way for new apartment blocks. Sections of abandoned work-unit housing in the town had the character ‘demolish’ (*chai*) emblazoned on them, as a warning of their impending destruction to make way for new housing. Materially, at least, there appeared to be little concern with the perpetuation of the domestic sphere. Equally, people rarely spoke nostalgically or at any length about the previous soil homes in which they used to live.

Furthermore, Red Mountain Town houses generally do not have names. People merely tend to refer to the home by the name of the (usually male) head of the household, for example ‘Li Xiaobo’s house’. Whilst the lineage has a name (the family surname) that persists, the house appears uniquely atemporal.

These two examples suggest that one cannot, truly, classify Red Mountain Town’s houses as being Lévi-Straussian ‘house societies’, because they lack a certain kind of permanence, having neither names nor permanent perpetuating structures. Instead, we are forced to consider that if these houses are indeed sites of social reproduction and organisation, we must understand them in a somewhat different light. We need perhaps to think of similar organising actions as might be found in house societies, but without the same degree of fixity and rootedness.

It is this sense of dislocation, fundamental in these centres, that points us towards an alternative view of the evolving concerns of the people in Red Mountain Town in choosing what to centre their lives around. In the following chapter, I will

attempt to illustrate the connections between these changes and the anxious nature of hosting in the guest hall. That will further elucidate the conflicts of interests faced by Red Mountain Town individuals over their obligations towards both their family and the wider society.

Chapter 3: Guest halls and guests

This chapter addresses the connection between the act of receiving guests into the home, and the materiality of the room in the house into which they are most often received: the guest hall. It will focus on the nature of formal hosting situations that take place in this room, what happens when such events occur, and the perceived efficacy of such situations. What has been here classified as ‘formal hosting situations’ refers to a rather broad range of behaviours all concerned with receiving guests from either a wider network of friends, work colleagues, potential business partners, or occasionally distant family members into the home.

It should be noted that there are certain people, not members of the family residing in a particular home, who nevertheless are still not usually ‘formally hosted’ when they visit a particular house. This tends to apply to close family members (i.e., uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents) and neighbours who may live nearby, and who may contribute to the work of hosting, or to children or young people (who are often not yet fully aware of the etiquette or social significance of such formal hosting situations). This distinction is perhaps best encapsulated by Stafford (2000b:62-67), who notes the vastly differing levels of concern and attention given to the etiquette surrounding the parting and return of a number of different entities, including visiting guests, deceased ancestors and spirits, visitors from afar, neighbours and families. Stafford notes that whilst a great deal of attention is typically afforded to the arrival of distant guests and ancestors; by contrast, close friends, family and neighbours are treated with ‘little fuss’, and their relationship is marked as being one

of a high degree of informality, with these people being free to move in and out of the house as they wished.

This chapter concerns itself with guests who are formally invited to spend time in the homes of others. These invitations may be as pronounced as a request such as “I invite you to my house for dinner”, or as casual as an entreatment to “come and play” hollered down a telephone. Regardless of the style of delivery, it can be posited that these invitations act as a marker delineating the ritual nature of the hosting situation they precede.⁴⁹ The invitations constitute a moment when both parties negotiate the prospect of assuming specific host/guest roles. The definition of formal hosting that has been adopted in this chapter applies equally to both large-scale events planned in advance, with maybe over a hundred guests at the house;⁵⁰ or what might appear to be a spontaneous, casual invitation between a family member and their friend to go to their home to drink tea. The interest here lies in the social potential of the guest hall, in promoting an examination of the common structures underlying what are otherwise quite different occasions.⁵¹

49. In this connection, Feuchtwang (2007) describes the burning of incense in temple festivals as a similar type of ritual marker, ‘like inviting someone in to receive a gift of hospitality and to establish a relationship in which there can be a reunion’ (Feuchtwang, 2007:62).

50. The *shazhufan* (previously described in section 2.3.1), housewarmings, weddings, and funerals are all examples of large-scale hosting events that may take place inside, or in the courtyard of, the home.

51. Miller (2008) provides an ethnographic example of how the kitchen in British homes offers similar social potential to that seen in Red Mountain Town’s guest halls. He contrasts the warmth of the kitchen to the façade of the sitting room which ‘has never managed to inveigle itself into the heart of the home’ (2008:209). See also Gullestad (1984).

The guest hall is designed not solely with the intention of negotiating relationships between hosts and guests (indeed, chapter 2 has already detailed its use as a site for family relaxation). But its role in hosting of special anthropological interest because, on such occasions, the occupying family become drawn into an acutely significant moment at which the successful conducting of a hosting situation in the house becomes the means of presenting not only the material wealth of the household, but also the existence of a harmonious, well functioning family. Furthermore, these notions regarding family ideals do not act on solely on a communicative level. Rather, it is posite that formal hosting presents host families with a moment of particular self-reflection and anxiety, analogous to that elaborated by Sophie Woodward (2007:82) in her ethnography of British women's dressing practices. Woodward effectively inverted Gell's (1998:96-153) concept of the extended mind, to argue that womens' everyday dressing decisions presented her participants with a uniquely anxious moment. Despite clothing connecting the wearer with a more expansive, distributed and externalized mind, it simultaneously made them 'vulnerable to penetration by the anticipated gaze of others' (Woodward, 2007:82). The guest halls of Red Mountain Town, true to their name, are designed with a degree of intentionality for such formal hosting situations, with the aim of impressing upon guests the relative wealth, prosperity and harmony of a family. But these hosting occasions also present uniquely anxious moments for families, exposing them to the gaze and judgement of their guests.

This part of the study seeks to demonstrate the important way in which, for Red Mountain Town families, the domestic sphere, in addition to being a place in which the day-to-day matters of the hearth can be handled, encompasses an outward

facing, expansive function. The ability to successfully host people in their guest hall is vital to the standing of a family, and to the creation and maintenance of a range of relationships instrumental to the success of the family unit.

Although the Lévi-Strauss definition of house societies cannot strictly be applied to Red Mountain Town homes, the examples of guesting and hosting in this chapter do echo Lévi-Strauss' house societies in as much as the house acts as a unifying force, to transcend opposed principles of affinity and descent in kin groups (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995:6-20). Certainly, the evidence to be presented here suggests that the presence of guests induces family members to co-operate with each other in order to engage the guest in the production of social heat. However, such assertions regarding the expansive, social nature of Red Mountain Town's guest halls must be balanced with observations that such lively interactions are not always viewed as desirable or convenient by all members of the family.

This chapter will go on to examine the declining tendency to invite guests back to one's home in Red Mountain Town, in tandem with an increasing trend towards entertaining them instead in other venues. However, notwithstanding these transformations, the guest hall may partially retain its important symbolic purpose. In Red Mountain Town it is possible to see the emergence of comparatively partial and asymmetrical homologies between outward and inward in contrast to that of Bourdieu's (1973) Kabyle house, which demonstrated a more gradual and proportioned transfiguration from outward to inward facing, in the transition from the outside of the home to the inside. The implications of this will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section explores invitations and intimacy, specifically looking at the difficulty potential hosts face in the task of persuading acquaintances to be guests in their home. It will also examine the related social implications and obligations that result from accepting an invitation to be a guest.

The second section of this chapter moves to examine the state of ‘permanent preparedness’ a house is expected to preserve in anticipation of the reception of guests, asserting that it may be productive to consider the guest hall as a kind of ‘trap’, capturing guests in order to make them participate in the creation of the warmth of the house. The presence of guests in the house is felt to necessitate the creation of a certain convivial hosting atmosphere, in the production of which the guests themselves are politely obliged to participate. The successful creation of such an atmosphere serves a dual purpose: confirming the existence and health of social relationships between those involved in the event, and affirming the vitality of both the home and the family that live within it. In this context, the analysis will return once more to the concept of social heat², as a means to understand the ‘atmosphere’ that it is desirable to create in the house. It will demonstrate that, in hosting situations, the creation of this heat occurs through foodstuffs, alcohol, temperature, sound and light, all of which combine to confirm that the household is vital and properly functioning. However, this heat also operates within fine margins of acceptability and permissibility, and can be all too prone to spill over such limits.

The third section of the chapter will conclude by considering how the drive to execute successful hosting events and create ever-more intense experiences of social

heat is increasingly contradicting other cherished ideals of the home being a ‘place to relax’, as introduced earlier.

The chapter will close by examining how this conflict is felt by townsfolk, proposing that it might be useful to consider the guest hall a ‘dysfunctional’ space, and one that contributes further nuances to Bourdieu’s notion of ‘durable dispositions’. It is this dysfunction that explains the moving of structures of hosting into new domains, and will provide a grounding for part II of the thesis. That will turn to document the expansion of hosting opportunities beyond the home, illustrating how material elements of the home might also have made the transition to such external environments, in order for them to be recognised as suitable for the carrying out of hosting events.

3.1. Inviting guests home

As fieldwork began, initial frustration at the lack of opportunities to visit participants’ homes made it apparent that invitations only came with a certain level (or perhaps with the prospect of achieving a certain level) of familiarity. It was only after beginning to make ‘friends’, perhaps by meeting people several times at the dinner tables of restaurants, etc., that invitations to visit their homes were gradually proffered. On commenting to Mr Song’s son about what sometimes appeared to be the closed nature of the town’s homes, he explained:

It is impossible to, say, if I met you on the street today, just to invite you to my home. Yes? Normally, it is that kind, after you have chatted, everyone is comparatively familiar (*shuxi*). The same as you and I. It won’t be until we are comparatively familiar. And also, before we invite we will definitely be worried that if they ‘have a matter’ (*you shi*), what’s to be done?

A couple of preliminary conclusions may be extracted from this testimony. First is the requirement of familiarity between the potential guest and host. The compound

word *shuxi*, translated as familiar, is particularly revealing, owing to the allusions it contains regarding the natural trajectory social relationships are thought to possess. The first part of the word, *shu*, in addition to meaning familiar, can also denote cooked (of food), ripe (of fruit) or mature (of seeds). Indeed, in spoken Chinese, when using the word to mention familiarity between two persons, often the *xi* character is excluded altogether. One could infer that relationships are required to reach a certain stage of maturity (and perhaps somewhat like crops, demand tending, care, or work,) before one could expect a home-based hosting situation to take place.

The second, related point to be drawn from the statement pertains to a host's fear that any invitation might be turned down by the potential guest. Here Mr Song's son uses the expression *shi*, which is often given by the potential guest as the reason for refusing an invitation to someone's house. *Shi* translates as 'matter' or 'affair', but it is often used in conversation as an excuse to turn down unwanted invitations, simply in the form "I have a matter" (*wo you shi*). The phrase is deliberately ambiguous, and while some who use it may genuinely have prior engagements, it is also often used by those who simply do not particularly want to attend. Asking someone the exact nature of their 'matter' is generally considered to be prying behaviour, meaning that in such situations much goes unsaid.

This example illustrates how the proffering of invitations to one's home constitutes a moment of extreme anxiety for many potential hosts: it implies an assumption relationships have reached the necessary level of 'familiarity' for such a home visit to be reasonable. If a potential guest is to accept an invitation, it can act as an acknowledgement that their relationship is indeed familiar. But if one is to reject an invitation, this can be interpreted as a sign that the potential guest does not want

to enter in to such a relationship with the potential host. This can often be taken as a personal snub by potential hosts. Some people confided that they abided by the principle that if their invitations to a potential guest were met with refusal on two consecutive occasions, then they would not again extend an invitation to that individual. In Wang's (2000:262) description of the etiquette Shenzhen city dwellers used in inviting 'friends' to go bowling together in the early 1990s, he noted that someones prestige might be badly effected were it to become common knowledge that particular esteemed people had never accepted their invitations to partake in joint consumptive activities.

By contrast, people who are already quite familiar with each other are able to refuse invitations in a much more abrupt manner. For example, on one evening, the Li family were eating dinner together at home. Whilst they were eating, the housewife in her forties from the family next door dropped by unannounced to ask a question. Mr Li's wife entreated the neighbour to sit down and join them in the meal, to which she curtly replied 'I won't eat' (*bu chi*). Given their close connection (they had lived next door to each other for decades), there was no requirement in this instance for the neighbour to disguise her unwillingness to partake with any claim that she 'had a matter'.

Comparisons may be made with Feuchtwang's (2007:61-62) description of forms of opening and closing communication involved in the hosting of gods at temple festivals. Feuchtwang notes the comparability between acts directed towards people, such as handing them a name card, or offering a cigarette; and those directed towards gods, marked by burning incense, the most basic act of Chinese ritual. Feuchtwang points out that the key distinction is that the incense is burnt, whereas

cigarettes and business cards are offered to a ‘responding person’. He argues that this step, and the entire sequence itself, is an act of supplication. The individual steps he sees as acts of communication that can be taken as a form of testing, ‘an invitation to respond’. The ethnographic examples given above, especially with respect to the idea of a limit of the number of times one might proffer an invitation, would suggest that a similar form of testing for response exists amongst people in Red Mountain Town.

Tendering invitations also has an important temporal aspect, which can be indicative of the degree of formality intended of the guest-host event in question. I have referred to the events that are our focus here as ‘formal hosting situations’, where those who are definitely non-kin are welcomed into a part of the home. However the type of occasion that this such hosting embodies stretches to some that may otherwise be viewed as being less formal in nature. The best local definition of such situations would be the phrase ‘to invite guests’ (*qingke*). Though some hosting invitations do, indeed, use the phrase ‘invite’ (i.e. “I invite you to my house to eat dinner” (*wo qing ni lai wo jia chi fan*), others may sound almost like orders to “come and eat” (*guolai chifan*). For events such as small dinners in the home (perhaps with just a single guest), or a game of cards, or an afternoon of drinking tea, it is typical that the invitation is made between a few hours to a day beforehand. Conversely, as previously mentioned, hosting can also extend to certain kinds of ‘mass-hosting events’ (see note 50 on page 132), where multiple tables of guests may be present at the house. In these cases, the date of the event may be set well in advance,⁵² and guests will generally be informed two to three weeks beforehand. For example, in

52. Indeed, an agricultural almanac or fengshui master (*fengshui xiansheng*) may be consulted to select an auspicious date for such events.

the case of the ‘slaughter of the first pig’ feast, previously discussed in section 2.3.1, the rural hosts would typically invite their guests a couple of weeks beforehand.⁵³ For weddings this proffering takes on a material form, as a hand-delivered paper wedding invitation. However, regardless of the perceived degree of formality or informality of the approach, and the amount of time beforehand that invitations may be given to people, it is still clear when somebody is playing the role of the host or guest.⁵⁴

In this connection, the positions of children and young people are of particular note. Unlike Stafford’s (1995:36) description of the behaviour of residents in the Taiwanese fishing village of Angang, who appeared to move freely between the public areas of each other’s homes, Red Mountain Town people typically did not display such behaviours. The exception to this was children, especially within the village-in-the-city homes, where front doors often remained open. Youngsters appeared to move freely between homes without invitation, suggesting that these practices of hospitality are not only learnt as one grows up, but are also viewed as being mainly applicable to adults.

The first section of this chapter has dealt with issues around the inviting of guests to the home. It has demonstrated how requesting the presence of friends in one’s house is often fraught with elements of anxiety, as it is predicated on the

53. The rural farmers would typically invite their fellow villagers in person, and use telephone calls to invite townsfolk.

54. The asymmetry of host and guest is further reinforced by the names by which they are referred. A host is called *zhuren* (literally, ‘primary person’), whilst guest is *keren*, in which the character *ke* (客) comprises a classifier for a person placed under a roof.

assumption of the existence of a certain degree of familiarity, and an associated risk of having that assumption confirmed or denied by the potential guest. We then proceeded to detail ‘formal hosting situations’ in the home that could take a number of varying forms, from simply drinking tea together, to full-blown mass-guesting situations, where the house might host in excess of a hundred guests. Depending on the specific nature of the event, the time in advance that one is expected to issue an invitation will vary. However regardless of such variance, the key requirement is that visitors will conform to expectations of the roles to be played out by a guest, which is made clear through the materiality of the guest hall, an arrangement which will now be illustrated.

3.2. The materiality of the guest hall: permanent preparedness, fate, and the nature of social relations

This section is split into three parts, all of which will illustrate the intended ceremonial function of the guest hall in hosting guests. The first part examines how the guest hall is expected to be in a state of ‘permanent preparedness’ for visitors, a preparedness that illustrates the importance of local understandings about the nature of ‘fate’ (*yuanfen*) amongst the perceived infinite variance of human relationships. The second part goes on to elaborate how this preparedness becomes of further import when one considers the notion of the material layout of the guest hall acting as a ‘trap’ for guests, not really with malicious aims, but rather with an intention of impressing upon guests their ceremonial importance and position in relation to the host. It is claimed that these two factors are instrumental in creating an environment conducive to encouraging guests to participate in the creation of warmth in the house.

3.2.1. Permanent preparedness and ‘yuanfen’

Many Red Mountain Town guest halls were striking in that they far over-provisioned material resources compared to the actual levels of use by the small nuclear families typically inhabiting such homes: surplus seating, vast wide coffee tables, spacious living rooms, and large quantities of snacks lay in wait for prospective arrivals. Often, when asking householders the reason for the surplus of such items on display, they provided the stock answer: ‘in case guests come’ (*ruguo keren lai*).⁵⁵ That guests could appear at any time always remained a consideration, regardless of whether or not households actually entertained very many visitors. Households were most anxious to avoid any situation where there might be a perceived lack of anything that was conducive to holding a hosting situation, such as seating, snacks, drinks and food.

Seating in the guest hall provides a useful example of the need for surplus capacity. The forms of seating found in the guest halls in the town’s homes included sofas, chairs, and stools of a variety of materials and designs (indeed most households had several of each type). But, regardless of status and stylistic preferences, all households displayed a surplus of seating compared to actual use.

The most prominent seating in Red Mountain Town guest halls was the sofas, largely owing to their length. For example, in the UK, the most popular type of

55. That is not to say that family members did not partake in these snacks themselves. Indeed, consuming such snacks together as a family, whilst watching television was one of the main forms of relaxation, as has already been detailed in section 2.3.2. Nonetheless, the fact that informants’ explained the presence of these items as being intended for potential guests illustrates the importance attributed to these items in terms of their role in hospitality situations.

living room furniture sold is likely to be a combination of a two-seat sofa with two matching chairs, normally sold together as a ‘three piece suite’. By contrast in Red Mountain Town, two-thirds of houses surveyed had at least one ‘three-seat sofa’ (marked by three separate cushions for sitting), although in reality these seats were easily capable of accommodating at least five people. In Red Mountain Town homes it was common practice that a long three-seat sofa would be accompanied by a pair of twin sofas arranged perpendicular to it. Such a provision of seating already far exceeded the typical need, based on the number of family members. However townsfolk often sought to further supplement the seating availability in their guest hall with other furniture.

For example, the Li’s village-in-the-city house had three large, long sofas in their guest hall. The sofas would have easily accommodated around 20 people sitting. They also had an extra three imitation leather poufs that looked like footstools, but were never seen to be used as such. The Li’s house rarely entertained outside visitors, and there were only five family members regularly living in the house. Even when they did have visitors, these tended to be extended kin, who lived nearby. It was clear in the Li’s home that their capacity for guest hall seating greatly outweighed the frequency of visitors they normally received into the home.⁵⁶

In other houses, which hosted guests more frequently, there were often occasions when the seating on the sofa would reach capacity. For example, when Mr Yu and his wife hosted guests in their new commercial apartment, it was common

56. This disparity became even more pronounced towards the end of fieldwork, when the Li’s fitted an extra sofa in a previously empty room outside the guest hall (to be further detailed in section 4.3.1).

for the sofa to become crowded with extended family and friends. Mr Yu kept a stack of stools in their balcony area for just such an eventuality (figure 17). Such stools could be purchased in the town's markets from around 5 RMB (for the cheapest ones, moulded entirely out of bright, colourful plastic).

Regardless of the particular form of seating used, all homes still displayed a concern with providing adequate seating for guests. One possible reason for this might be that almost all houses in Red Mountain Town will, at some stage in their existence, play host to a large numbers of visitors. Such mass-hosting events are typified by homes overflowing with guests, to the extent that houses have to resort to temporarily borrowing extra seating from neighbours during these gathering. However, such events take place only very occasionally, and the defining feature of this surplus seating was that most of the time it remained vacant, stacked in a corner of the house.

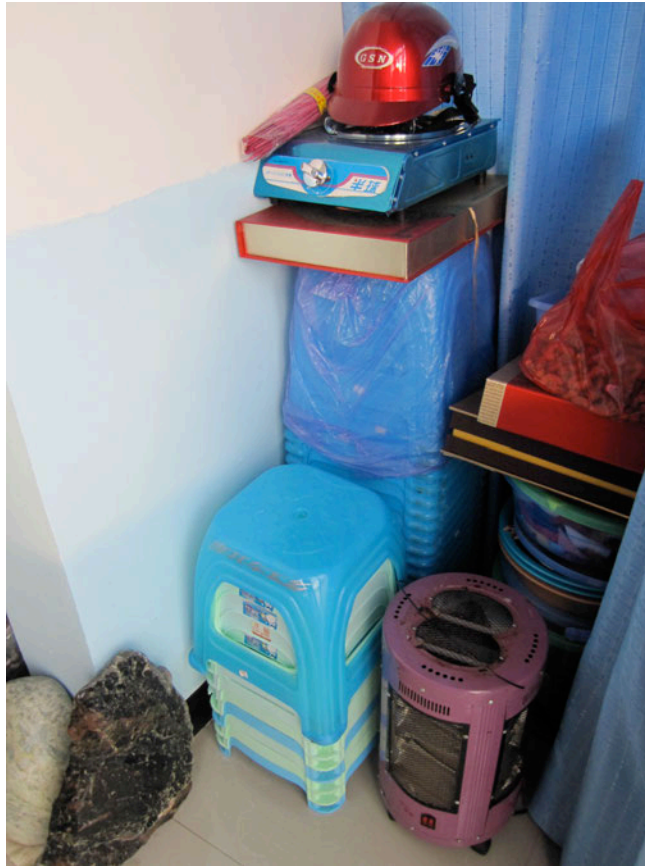


Figure 17: Over 30 plastic stools stored in the guest hall of a commercial apartment

It could also be surmised that the large number of seats found in people's houses demonstrated a perception that all guests should be afforded the opportunity to sit down. It would not do for a single guest to be standing, no matter how many visitors were present. Over-provision of seating indicates an acute anxiety that hosts feel regarding the possibility of a situation occurring in which the host might not be able to provide sufficiently for guests.⁵⁷ One might think 'What would happen if a large group of people were to come to my house, and no-one was able to sit down'?

57. Here Goffman's (1972) observations on social embarrassment are of relevance. Goffman notes that embarrassment does not always occur in-situ, but that at times individuals may find it impossible to cope with all the conceivable eventualities of a situation, to the extent that they 'become 'rattled' although no others are present' (Goffman, 1972:98).

Even though such a situation would only very rarely occur, it seems as though it is the perception that it *might* happen which occupies informants' minds.

In addition to seating, a range of snacks, or 'little foodstuffs' (*xiao shipin*) are commonly placed on the 'tea table' (*chazhuo*) of the guest hall. Such snacks typically included sunflower seeds, peanuts, fruits and sweets. When guests came to the home they are invariably encouraged to snack on these foodstuffs: "eat sunflower seeds!" (*chi guazi*) a host may say, or "eat a little of whatever" (*suibian chi yidian*). Guests may typically at first refuse to eat the items, saying "I won't eat, thanks" (*bu chi, xiexie*), to which hosts typically enthusiastically insist that their guests "eat a little" (*chi yidian*). It is probably the material quality of these 'little snacks' that makes them immensely fitting for these back-and-forth insistences between host and guest. Seeds, nuts, sweets, small fruit and cakes are noteworthy because of their small individual size, married with the large quantities in which they appear on the table. This makes them eminently suited to resolving uncomfortable negotiations surrounding how much it is appropriate to eat. In many cases guests would capitulate to their insistent hosts, and grab a small handful of seeds, but merely eat a few. In these cases, guests have to show that they are acquiescing to the insistence of the host; such small, divisible snacks enable them to do so, whilst still allowing the guests to maintain a degree of control over what they eat.

Likewise, it is also common for guests in Red Mountain Town houses to be offered endless cups of tea by their hosts. The process of teamaking can vary in complexity. In the poorer countryside homes the farmers surveyed simply used a few supermarket-bought leaves added to some boiled water taken from a large thermos flask served in a recycled glass jar. The wealthiest in private apartments undertook

elaborate procedures involving complicated tea-sets, and expensive leaves purchased from specialist markets. Regardless of these differences, the act of serving tea still symbolised an important element of host-guest relationships in Red Mountain Town. Furthermore, when people had drunk all their tea, their cup would be topped-up with more hot water (or tea), continually emphasising the care of the host. In this context, tea carried similar qualities to the snacks previously described. It's nature as a substance with a quality of multiplicity meant guests could potentially drink only a little, or a lot. Indeed, guests were never able to finish their tea, as their cups were continually refilled.

Three material elements of hosting and guesting situations in the town have now been identified: seating, snacks and tea. Despite a huge variance in the style of these items in the homes of Red Mountain Town between those of different socio-economic status, they nonetheless appear in all of the dwellings surveyed, and it would be common to use these items in a hosting situation. It can be argued that these items work because, on one level, the large variety of quality, nature and price provides a schema within which all households are able to display their economic and cultural capital, whilst at the same time their universal placement in the guest hall provides what Goffman (1974) described as commonly understood 'frames' through which social actors would be able to decipher how to respond accordingly. It is the act of seating one's guests, offering them snacks, making them tea, and ensuring that their cup is constantly topped-up with boiling water that makes clear to these social actors their relative positions as host or guest.

A further conclusion may be drawn from how the abundance of these material items shows the anxiety felt by homeowners around the *possibility* of a

large number of guests suddenly turning up. This derives from a macro-level understanding of beliefs about the structure of social relationships held by Red Mountain Town people. It became particularly clear in how people described the connection they perceived as existing between them and myself. Many expressed their belief that the reason we might be sharing a particular moment in time was a form of ‘predestined affinity’ (*yuan*) or ‘destiny that ties people together’ (*yuanfen*). One friend explained that, in a world with so many people, why would it be that we were both sat together at the same dinner table? He immediately explained that what brought us together was *yuan*. Although concepts of *yuan* have received a degree of attention in psychological studies relating to (particularly romantic) social relationships (see Chang and Holt, 1991; Goodwin and Findlay, 1997; Yang and Ho, 1988 for examples) it was Moore (1998) who examined it from an anthropological perspective. He noted its use in romantic contexts between Chinese students, describing *yuanfen* as being a force that is seen to draw to people together. Indeed, I witnessed such sentiments regarding the force of *yuan* expressed between other people, usually males, and more frequently when they became drunk at dinner banquets.

However the use of *yuan* is not limited to romantic relationships. It may be that my status as not just an outsider, but one from particularly far away, raised the informants’ perceptions of the level of *yuan* that had been instrumental in making us meet. It appears reasonable to conclude that if participants were to hold a perception of social relations which emphasised the remote likelihood of two people being drawn together into a social relationship, that when this was considered against a vast moving sea of ever-changing social connections, aptly described by Stafford as

‘the assumption that all human and spiritual relationships are in spatial flux’ (2000b:88), then there was equally the chance that such an event could occur at *any time*. Having a house that was prepared for such an eventuality would appear to be a logical thing to do under such an assumption.

3.2.2. Trapping guests to create heat in the home

Having detailed the function of the guest hall as one that includes being ‘permanently prepared’ for guests, the description will now turn to consider what happens when these guests arrive. It will be suggested that the guest hall can perhaps be thought of as a sort of ‘trap’ for potential guests, in which they are subjected to a form of overpowering kindness. It can be posited that the nature of a guest-host relationship can, on occasions, result in a relationship that is an inversion of power. In these instances the guest is held in submission to, and forced to comply with, the host in a number of important ways. Returning for a moment to the above examples of seating, tea or snacks, it was demonstrated how the guest will repeatedly be urged to sit, drink and eat by the host. If the visitor really does not want to partake in eating one particular item they might politely refuse; but as mentioned previously, there is an expectation that they will partake, even if only in an emblematic manner, to something that is offered. If guests were to refuse to sit, and not eat or drink anything, they would likely be perceived as unwilling to take up the offer of friendship. One could interpret this as the utmost degree of care by the host towards the guest; but on the other hand, it could be seen to represent an effort to force a guest into submission, through polite insistence that the guest consumes.

Perhaps such behaviours illustrate that the guest, rather than being thought of as an esteemed visitor, might also be considered somebody whose presence is necessary to validate the vitality of the hosts home? The remainder of this section will attempt to illustrate how the guest is effectively ‘trapped’ in the guest hall, and through the obligation to consume is expected to participate in reproducing this social warmth in the house. The extent of this heat in host-guest situations also becomes ascertained through a broad range of senses and perceptions: through what is tasted and ingested, the aural, the architectural, and even the visual impression of detrius or mess. Most importantly, it is suggested that the proper maintenace of heat, both in one’s body, the bodies of those around, and in the atmosphere of the room, are all of vital concern to proper social wellbeing.

In this context the invited guest is being expected by the host to partake in and help to reproduce the social heat of the house. This means that the warmth of the house has to be performed in certain ways. The host and guest not only have to come together, but to also become engaged in a project, together with others that are present, to create and promulgate the social heat of the home.

The foodstuffs used for snacking in the guest halls – such as tea, sunflower seeds, nuts and certain fruits – are typically held to increase the body’s internal heat. Whilst consuming them is considered beneficial for the body, informants equally commented that eating a large amount of these foods would potentially be detrimental to one’s health.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the snacks provides further evidence of2

58. For example, informants explained that eating too many sunflower seeds would cause their ‘internal heat to increase’ (*shanghuo*), a phrase which can also mean ‘to get angry’.

heat as an affective force that could cut across domains which might otherwise be considered unconnected. They were often eaten whilst casually chatting, so that the sound of light conversation was, for Red Mountain town people, synonymous with these foodstuffs. For example once, upon telephoning a friend to ask what he was currently busy with, he answered: “Nothing. We are here hulling sesame seeds, sitting and chatting”. Such snacking coincided with notions of free time, and appeared synonymous with informal dialogue, filling time, and leisure. In this sense, the snack foods not only increase the internal fire of peoples’ bodies, but were also seen as being conducive to creating a sense of conviviality in the guest hall. The lively, chatty ‘atmosphere’ (*qifen*) of a successfully executed hosting situation was felt to avoid any sense of ‘coldness’ or ‘flatness’. Thus, these snacks were seen to help encourage leisurely conversation and contribute to the right atmosphere.

This type of snacking is of deeper significance when one considers that most of these foodstuffs are encased in shells, skins or wrappers. Typically guests are instructed to help themselves to these shells, seeds or fruits; and choose to busy themselves accordingly, hulling or peeling them whilst they chat and drink tea. One of the key aspects here is that these are essentially seated communal activities, presenting perhaps an idealised leisurely state, a state which extends right down to the waste created in the process. In many homes in Red Mountain Town, a large, oversized ashtray was in place on the tea table, to serve as a receptacle for this detritus. In rural village houses, it was common for guests to throw the shells or wrappers from such snacks directly onto the floor, where they would remain, usually until the end of the meal. It is postulated that the waste that accumulates becomes a material expression of the social heat being created between host and guest through

the joint consumption of food. Again, it is appropriate to recall the similarities with the ‘messy’ floors Laurence Douny (2007) observed in Dogon homes, where the Dogon view certain kinds of disorder as having overwhelmingly positive connotations. In that case it was apparently deemed desirable for the home to become increasingly dirty over the years, in order to communicate the capacity to feed people and fulfil their needs.

Furthermore, social heat appeared to have an auditory aspect in Red Mountain Town, as already mentioned in the previous chapter. It was desirable that there should be a constant sound in the guest hall when people were present. In addition to the way in which snacking was seen to be conducive of conversation, a similar example was apparent through the judicious use of the television. In many homes, the television, which was located in the guest hall, provided a constant background sound. When guests entered the host’s home, one of the first thing that the host would often do was to seat these guests in the guest hall and ensure that the television was turned on. Guests were often instructed to ‘watch whatever you want’ (*ni xiang kan shenme jiu kan shenme*), and on occasion, the remote control was physically placed in front of the guest. Thus, in Red Mountain Town’s living rooms, the television was used as a source of sound which was thought to help contribute to the creation of social heat. On asking informants the reason for turning the television on when guests arrived, they explained that if they did not turn it on, the guest hall would be ‘too cold’ (*tai lengdan*, literally ‘cold and tasteless/weak’). In Red Mountain Town quietness was equated with coldness, appeared to be undesirable in the home, and should therefore be avoided in the guest hall.

There was one occasion in Mr Yu's new commercial house where he and his wife⁵⁹ were hosting around ten guests. In the hour or two before they ate, they all sat around the tea table facing the television hulling sesame seeds, chatting and drinking tea. The television was turned on, but largely ignored, and little of the conversation in the room actually revolved around the content of the television programme. As soon as the meal was served on the tea table Mr Yu's wife ordered her extend family to turn the television off. It seemed as though by then the warmth and conversation of the guests had reached its own, self-sustaining momentum, and that the external input of the television sound was no longer required. However, my more typical impression of Red Mountain Town's guest halls was of background sound being used, to avoid an undesirable state of coldness rather than to positively generate heat.

The desire to involve guests in the creation of heat through snacking and conversation extended to the layout and use of the guest hall furniture. Almost universally throughout Red Mountain Town, the first action that took place when anybody visited a house was that the host would receive the guest at the door, whereupon they were shown to the guest hall and told to sit down, often simply with the politely insistent instruction to 'sit'. The same seating that has been previously shown to create intimacy and closeness between family members, then served its nominal purpose of 'seating' the guest. Seating in guest halls was not only conducive to the creation of social heat through the positioning of those present towards each

59. This family was atypical in that the gender roles were somewhat inverted. Mr Yu did most of the cooking in hosting situations, whilst his wife was the most active in toasting and drinking.

other, but it was also fundamental in materialising and expressing social position and roles in the guest hall.

In almost all of the guest halls in Red Mountain Town houses, there was a 'U'-shaped arrangement of sofas, the central sofa of which faced the television. Of the sixteen houses in this study, thirteen of the guest halls conformed to this arrangement. The only exceptions to this rule were the Tang, Yang and Zhao homes. In all three homes it appeared to be space considerations that influenced the less conventional arrangement of their sofas. The Yang's house was prevented from having a third seat owing to the positioning of a large upright piano, which took up the entire wall to the left of the television (see figure 8). The home of divorcee Mrs Zhao followed a similar 'U'-shaped pattern, but there was no room for the small CRT television, so it was placed at an angle in-between the two sofas. 26 year-old Miss Tang's new commercial 'single-person flat' was so small that once her rather domineering mother (Mrs Zhao) had filled the guest hall with cupboards, tables and appliances only one sofa could be squeezed into the cramped nine metre squared room (see figure 18).

One of the most obvious applications of this 'U'-shaped pattern was that it was utilised in an effort to signify the relative social relations between the guest and the host, and also the relative positions of all those present. In all of the houses that displayed this sofa arrangement, when guests arrived at the house, they were immediately shown in, and in most circumstances the host would indicate with a gesture of the hands that the guest was to sit on the central position of the middle sofa, directly opposite the television. If there were several guests, they would usually arrange themselves so that guests of the highest status would be sat in this central

position. There were similarities in this mode of seating arrangement to the way in which people organised themselves at dinner tables in restaurants or the home, where again great care is taken over the appropriate allocation of seats.

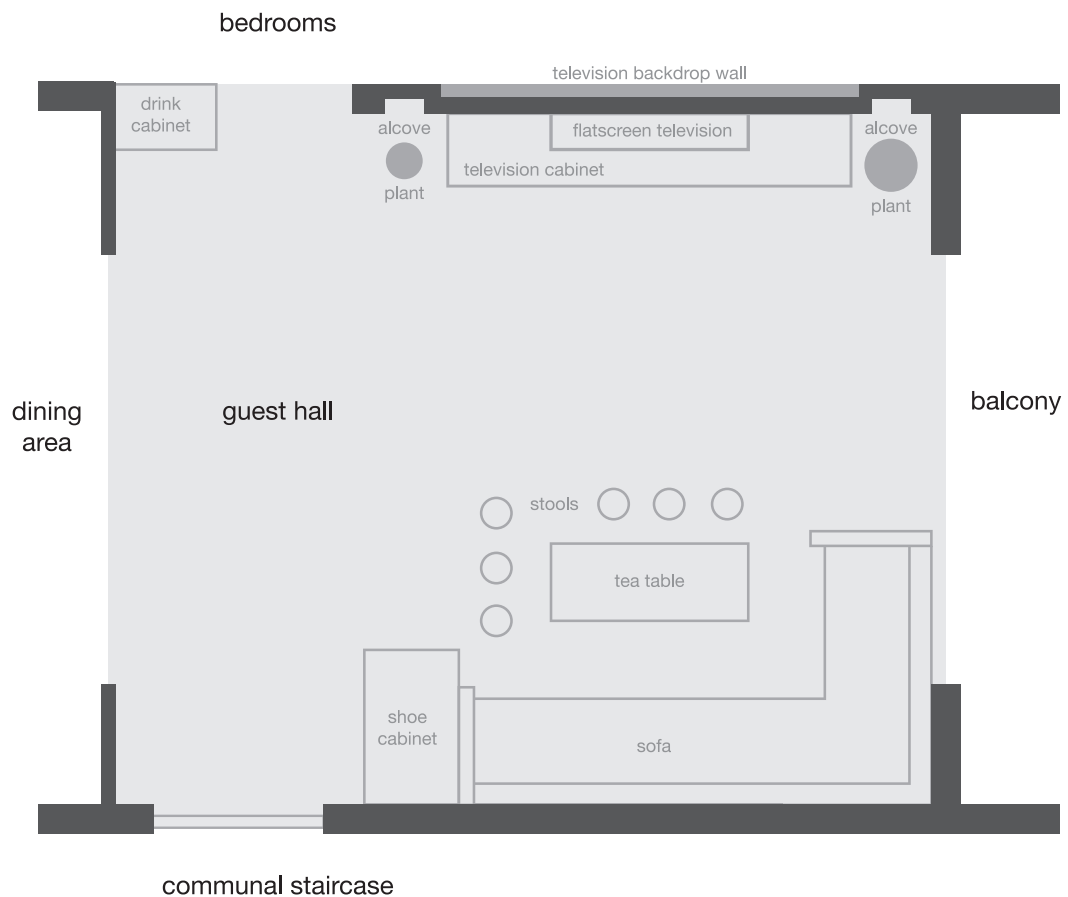


Figure 18: Tiny area of living room in Miss Tang's home prevents arrangement of sofas in a 'U'-shaped pattern

One example of this occurred at the housewarming party at Mr Yu's new house, a commercial 'affordable home' on the outskirts of the town. He and his wife had been able to obtain the home at a more favourable rate than normal, because he worked as a driver/assistant for property developer Director Yuan. Director Yuan was one of Red Mountain Town's success stories. During the cultural revolution he had been a 'model worker' (*mofan gongren*). With the advent of the reform and opening period he grasped the opportunity to engage in business, opening a building materials factory in the town to produce low-quality roof tiling. From these beginnings he had gradually built up his wealth, and managed to use his government contacts to move into the far more lucrative field of property development. The 'little

district' in which Mr Yu's house was located was owned and developed by Director Yuan, who has built his own, five-floor luxury villa in the centre of the development.

In decorating her new house, Mr Yu's wife had spent a considerable amount of money on furniture, to the extent that her home was entirely newly furnished. Amongst her purchases, she had spent 3980 RMB on an 'L' shaped sofa from the shop 'Classical Furniture'. The sofa was lilac coloured, with low seats and a straight sloped back. The sloped lines conformed to Mr Yu's wife's own description of the style of their house: 'modern' (*xiandai*). Though the sofas did not entirely adhere to the archetypal 'U'-shaped layout, she still attempted to create this with the addition of a shoe cabinet on the outside (see figure 19).



Not to scale

Figure 19: Floor plan of Mr Yu's guest hall as laid out for the dinner with Director Yuan

On the day of the housewarming party, several family members and friends had already arrived and were sitting on the central area of the sofa chatting and drinking tea. As soon as Director Yuan arrived, without saying a word, people politely stood up and made room for the director, who squeezed onto the sofa directly opposite the television. Even Mr Yu's brother, who was an important local party cadre deferred the prime spot for Director Yuan. In the end, there were so many guests present, that several low stools, mass-produced items with black tubular steel legs and blue coated round chipboard tops, were placed around the tea table to complete the circle, so that the participants were all facing each other. Most of Mr Yu's own family sat on the lower, hard wooden stools, leaving space for Director Yuan and his entourage on the sofa.

If there was any special reason behind inviting Director Yuan for the meal, it was to express gratitude to him for the very preferential discount that he had given them when they purchased their house. Without Director Yuan's help, Mr Yu and his wife would have found it difficult to afford such a property. Thus, one of the key moments of the meal was when Mr Yu's wife toasted director Yuan from across the table and briefly said, glass raised, "Director Yuan, thank you," and the two of them sipped rice wine together. Mr Yu's wife's oral expression of gratitude may have seemed simple and understated. But it was apparent that by inviting Director Yuan to their house, spending the considerable part of a day preparing the meal; and, of course by enabling Director Yuan to sit in the central seat opposite the television, Mr Yu's wife was able to convey much more respect through the subtlety of material means.

The above example makes it easier to understand the reasons for arranging seating in this fashion. In the case of Mr Yu's wife, by seating Director Yuan in the prime spot on the sofa, in front of all of the family, it indicated a tacit acknowledgement of their relative positions: Director Yuan not only being her husband's manager, but also the person who made the house available to them. But, this was not merely deferential posturing. Yuan's acceptance of the central seat was as much an acknowledgement that, on this occasion, he was willing to take on the role of the Yu's guest, despite his otherwise superior status. It should be emphasised, however, that what eventually made the evening successful was that everybody partook in eating, hosting, drinking and conversation with each other. Effectively this temporarily reverses (or at least equalises) established hierarchies, where Director Yuan, a successful businessman, would be considered to be of higher status than both Mr Yu and his wife.

Items such as sofas can thus be surprisingly prescriptive and constrictive, in certain contexts of guesting and hosting. One may be tempted to consider a sofa as merely being a soft comfortable piece of furniture on which to relax; indeed, as section 2.3.2 demonstrated, this is exactly how such furniture was used by family members here. But by taking up the central seat on the sofa, Director Yuan also subjected himself to being 'taken hostage', in a sense, by the kindness of the Mr Yu's wife. The position Director Yuan sat in was the hardest one to leave, and he found himself 'hemmed-in' on all sides by Mr Yu's friends and family. This meant it was difficult for him to move, and he was persistently offered foodstuffs, and toasted with rice wine by his family members. This degree of restriction of personal movement also means guests in this position are subject to the most impressive view

of the guest hall, through its axuality and symmetry. To be sat on this axis was to occupy a prime position. Several features would impress this symmetry onto the viewer, e.g. the lavishly laid out tea table, the television (often flat screen or wide screen), a large, elaborately lit guest hall light (*keting deng*) – all placed on this axis in almost every home that I visited. Wealthier households also incorporated a ‘television background wall’ (*dianshi beijing qiang*), a recessed wall behind the television, frequently featuring wallpaper, hand-painted patterns or tiling.

Writing on the division of space in Chinese dwellings, Knapp (2005b:45), drew on evidence mostly derived from an analysis of ‘traditional’, somewhat archetypal Chinese homes. He noted the significance of the central guest hall,⁶⁰ the use of which encompassed a range of activities from ancestral rituals, sharing family meals, entertaining guests and day-to-day routines. Knapp described how, guest halls were typically located in the prime middle *jian* of a Chinese home, auspiciously sited to emphasise the importance of the room. He also noted the symmetrical arrangement of furniture inside the guest halls, often based around ancestral shrines. While such architectural and interior arrangements remained commonplace within the villages surrounding Red Mountain Town, the urban area guest halls often no longer occupied such a central portion of the home. However, guest halls did remain vast in size in proportion to other rooms in the house. They also continued to rely on the symmetrical arrangement of ‘U’-shaped sofas, tea tables, guest hall lights,

60. In this publication, Knapp refers to this central *jian* of the home as the ‘reception hall’. See note 41 on page 120 for a discussion of the differing names given to this room.

cabinets and television background walls, to denote the vital importance of the guest hall space onto the captive guest.

One is inevitably drawn to associate the guest halls of Red Mountain Town with Gell's (1996) discussion on 'artworks as traps'. In this paper Gell cogently argued against the common definition of what distinguishes an art object from an artefact, in that only an art object has an interpretation, and can be said to embody the artist's intentionality. He asserted that, by this definition, hunter-gatherer traps could also be exhibited as art-objects, owing to their containment of complicated indigenous concepts of the relations between person and animal. He concludes his paper with the examples of Damien Hirst's and Judith Horn's work, arguing that their artworks may effectively be thought of as a form of trap. Miller (2000) later goes on to demonstrate that Gell's theories can be applied to websites, arguing that a website's aesthetic forms are designed to 'trap' the reader in order that the creator may expand their fame. It seems of dubious value to compare the European art world with Red Mountain Town's guest halls, beyond speculation that the guest halls may similarly embody the 'complex ideas and intentions' that Gell claims both artworks and 'primitive' traps display. In Red Mountain Town these ideas and intentions pertain to generally constructive relationships between host and guest, rather than malicious ones of hunter and prey.

This chapter first examined the etiquette related to inviting guests into a home. It then moved to consider how one would receive guests when they arrived, with a specific focus on the way the materiality of the guest hall was kept in a state of permanent preparedness for guests. The room containing objects that both created social heat and could be conducive in trapping guests to both witness and participate

in the creation of such heat. Our focus now shifts to the social reasons and affects behind this process.

3.3. Creating social heat at home with guests: expansion, unification and speculation

It will now be shown how attempts to produce heat in the home through the involvement of guests can be problematic. These issues emerge from the perception of heat as being a lively, convivial atmosphere, necessary needed both for the successful creation of ‘warm relationships’ with non-family members and in order to retain the vitality of the family home. That may come to be at loggerheads with the growing reconceptualisation of the home as a place for the family to relax, as encountered in Red Mountain Town.

To understand this potential discord, we will first try to understand what impels people to attempt to create heat in their homes through the co-operation of guests. We will then highlight the potentially disastrous effects of failed hosting attempts, such as situations of ‘social cold’ beset by awkwardness, or of ‘excessive heat’ spinning out of control, resulting in violence or confrontation. Paradoxically, it seems that the desire to avoid such mishaps can have a very unifying affect on families. But, the final section of this chapter will illustrate how the oft-times highly risky nature of creating social heat through guesting situations in the home can instead be felt to be a heavy burden at a familial level.

3.3.1. Expansion: heat as creating social relationships and aggrandising hosts

What are the benefits of social heat? Why do people feel the need to create it? Most obvious, perhaps, is the prospect that the successful creation of heat in the home provides an immediate indicator of a person's ability to host. Someone who particularly enjoys having guests, and is known for being especially hospitable, might be described as *haoke* (literally, 'good guest'). There is also an implication munificence is linked to a person's magnitude: the term 'generous' (*dafang*, literally 'large sided') and its antonym 'miserly' (*xiaoqi*,⁶¹ literally 'little air/breath') make clear the connection between ability to give and status. These terms all suggest the extent of their ability to efficiently execute hosting situations is demonstrative of a person's character.

There exists a clear hope amongst Red Mountain Town people that some of the heat that is created in these hosting events, over the course of a short time in the house, will linger on in their relationships. The warmth that is created in a successful hosting event is expected to transfer to a kind of warmth that endures between individuals. Often, people will describe the relationships held with others whom they share frequent hosting and guesting situations as 'we have sentiment' (*women you ganqing*). A similar point has been noted elsewhere by Kipnis, who made much of the role of *ganqing*. He argues that when sentiment (*ganqing*) was produced through ceremonial hosting situations, they created social subjects that were 'constructed in

61. A further link to heat is apparent here in the fact the *qi* (i.e. 'air' or 'breath') is held to have a warming function (Kaptchuk, 1983:38). Hence *xiaoqi* could indicate coldness.

magnetic fields of human feeling pulled by the remembrance of specific, past *ganqing* exchanges' (Kipnis, 1997:185).

Farquhar (2002:151) also records the durability of emotions created at banquets and hosting and guesting situations similar to the ones described here. She recounts an evening spent in the company of a number of government officials, many of whom she felt she had a somewhat distant and uncomfortable relationship with. Over the course of the evening, and accompanied by a constant flow of liquor and intellectual verbal sparring, this animosity gradually made way for friendship, and what she described as the 'deep affection' she felt for these men in her lucid state. But furthermore, she detailed how elements of this affection endured beyond the disbanding of that evening's gathering:

When I saw some of them in subsequent days and years, the memory of that evening was still with us. We did not necessarily have more interests, ideas, or abilities in common than before, but we were linked by something more substantive, a pleasantly shared moment in our lives. This comradeship (*ganqing*) existed (and for some of us still exists, I think) as a real foundation for continued negotiations that would match our respective offerings and requirements (excesses and deficiencies) in working relationships.

(Farquhar, 2002:151)

As Farquhar notes, much has been written on the role of feasting in *guanxi* exchange. Work such as her own, plus Kipnis' on *ganqing*, make a move away from *guanxi* exchange as an instrumental way of expanding social networks, by giving much-needed attention to the role of emotions in social relationships. But a deeper understanding is called for of the role of heat within such social situations, because it provides the route by which the material world plays a direct role in the creation of *ganqing*. Heat is not the same as *ganqing*; however the two are related to each other. Heat would appear to make a direct bridge between the material and the social, and

is believed to be directly affective towards the state of social situations and social actors in Red Mountain Town. The heat that is inherent in material things, or can be induced by their arrangement in the guest hall, would appear to create warmth in relationships between people. And it is a heat which is seen to potentially long outlive the moment in which it is created.

This allows us to consider the nature of *guanxi* exchange in a somewhat different light to that advanced by Yang (1994), as a somewhat mechanistic obligation to return. We might think not only of how attempts to recreate *ganqing* draw on those experiences that have gone before, but also how the recreation of such experience relies on the correct materials being present for the production of heat. In short, the social recreation and repetition of *ganqing* exchanges, as described by Kipnis, can also be seen to have an important accompanying material structure, which must itself be recreated in order for the renewal of *ganqing* to take place. Part II of the thesis will go on to show how parts of these arrangements are now being reproduced outside the home, in Red Mountain Town.

3.3.2. Unification: the effect of guests on family cohesion

Hosting and guesting in the house had an unusual and apparently contradictory effect on co-operation within the family. Hosting created a uniquely anxious moment for the host family, for it not only gave them an opportunity to project their intentions onto the visitor, but it also left the host and their family open to the gaze and judgement of the guest. This chapter previously described the multiple material arrangements that must be marshalled in order to successfully execute even the smallest hosting event: the atmosphere of the room, seating, snacks, tea and

foodstuffs. As such, it tended to be that hosting and guesting situations demanded the attention and co-operation of several family members for their successful execution.

In this context, the way in which complex feasts appeared to be almost effortlessly ‘conjured up’ out of nowhere was particularly impressive. In many cases, family members were commanded to contribute to certain tasks once a visitor had arrived. For example, in one house, when visitors arrived the youngest daughter, in her early twenties, was called upon by her mother to peel and slice apples for visitors to consume. Similarly, when guests came to Mr Huang’s house, he sent his son outside to purchase a bottle of rice wine and a pack of cigarettes.⁶² There was also a gendered allocation of tasks: it was normally wives, mothers or aunties, often with the help of daughters or other family members, who were called upon to prepare meals. In all but one⁶³ of the homes surveyed, it was commonplace for the wife to prepare the bulk of the meals. Many meals took a large amount of time to make, and this becomes especially significant when one considers the location of the kitchen: in most cases the kitchen is sited in an area concealed from guests.

This distancing of the kitchen from other domestic spaces has a history within Chinese architectural forms. In an essay written by Zhang (1916; cited in Schneider, 2011:44-45) on the organisation of domestic space in China, Zhang criticises the layout of northern courtyard style dwellings owing to the distance that

62. Most houses in Red Mountain Town, however, kept a supply of alcohol and cigarettes for potential guests (including when members of the household did not drink or smoke).

63. Mr Yu’s house was a notable exception to this, in that his wife explained that she did not know how to cook, and that her husband was particularly gifted in the creation of meals.

exists between the kitchen and dining room. This he posited makes homes inconvenient for family gatherings and hosting guests. Knapp similarly notes the tendency to architecturally separate the kitchen from the rest of the house, with it being reserved as a space for the performance of female domestic activities.⁶⁴

The fact that the family tends to co-operate to such a degree when hosting guests is perhaps indicative of the broadly recognised importance of these situations to the host family. That could be because there is seen to be a crossover between the heat produced in these social situations and the vitality of the house itself. The best parallel to this might be that elaborated in Waterson's (1990) discussion of south-east Asian houses, in which she developed the idea of the house as a living thing. Waterson noted the existence of a south-east Asian world view in which humans tend to understand themselves not as being alienated from the cosmos, but instead existing in a similar way to everything else in the universe. As such, the house was imbued with a vital 'life force' or energy, which Waterson noted in Malay is referred to as *semangat*. Waterson went on to demonstrate how the course of house construction there appeared to be as focused on ritual processes as much as it was on technological ones, explaining that 'through the following of the proper rituals, the house and its vital power are constituted and the wellbeing of the inhabitants is assured' (Waterson, 1990:129).

64. Tan's (2001) description of Paiwan housebuilding practices in Taiwan also notes the placement of the kitchen as being hidden from visitors' sight. However Tan attributes this design not to influences from Han culture (the Paiwan are an aboriginal people of the island), but rather claims it to be 'an objectification of the ideal pattern of the Christian conjugal relationship in which the husband is the head and the wife is submissive' (Tan, 2001:167).

One might argue that if a parallel to Waterson's 'life force' existed in Chinese houses it would be the notion of *qi*, which in the Chinese context is held to compose and define everything in the universe (Kaptchuk, 1983:35). Indeed a number of Red Mountain Town houses demonstrated concern with *fengshui* in order to exert control over *qi* and ensure the wellbeing of occupants. But a far more oft-spoken concern was the indigenous notion of heat. Regular hosting of guests in the guest hall was a further way in which family members demonstrated to themselves, their kin, and their guests the warmth of the house. Activities to create this warmth thus became testimony to, and the inducer of, a state of family unity. Seen in this light, the introduction of guests into Red Mountain Town houses is desirable in order to reinforce family boundaries. It may hence be said that in Red Mountain Town the guest hall is creating two quite specific modes of familialism. The first², is the 'interior' familialism that emerges when the family is together by itself, as demonstrated in chapter 2. This has to be balanced against the use of the guest hall for hosting, and the unification which that leads to, as detailed in the current chapter. However the presence of the outside guest(s) creates a mode of familialism under scrutiny and relatively hierarchical in nature. One is a family of mutual pleasure, relaxation, and relative equality; the other is a type of familialism with gender and age disparities in labour, economic interests and motivation.

One particularly good example of how heat might be understood as a vital power, in the sense used by Waterson, emerges in the throwing of a house warming party (*qiaoqian*). Housewarming is one of a select number of mass-hosting events where the house might receive a particularly large number of guests, usually requiring several tables. In Red Mountain Town, the phrase 'house warming' takes a

somewhat literal turn with the ‘moving of the fire’ (*qunuo*). Participants explained that when families moved from one home to another they would move the heat from one house to another. Although I did not manage to witness this practice myself; participants recounted that at the appointed time, an auspicious day, or sometimes even just a two-hour window would be selected by a *fengshui* master. A source of fire (today it might be done using a portable gas burner, or a small burner for compressed coal briquettes), was then literally carried from the old house to the new house. Upon arriving at the new house, a large number of firecrackers would be detonated at the door, creating a tremendous noise, serving the dual purpose of scaring away any malevolent spirits or forces, whilst simultaneously attracting the attention of neighbours and people nearby to the newcomers.

One housewarming I did observe took place in a large, newly-built house that had been constructed by a well-connected family in the southern section of town. The house was particularly impressive, standing five stories high, with the outside walls painted lilac purple in colour. It had a walled exterior compound that was at least double the area of the house, in which stood a shelter with a large, curved, corrugated iron roof, raised up on steel buttresses, which would have provided parking space for at least six cars. The compound had a huge, exaggerated, four metre tall metal gate, that dwarfed the surrounding wall.

Placed inside on the first floor of the house, which had not yet been furnished, were ten tables, eight of which were in the spacious guest hall, and two of which in rooms that were later to become the bedrooms (figure 20). At each table sat about eight guests. Outside, under the steel shelter there were at least as many tables and guests again (figure 170). Thus, at its peak, the number of guests eating at the

house numbered somewhere in the region of 150. Guests were expected to bring a red envelope containing money as a gift to the host⁶⁵. These crowds were useful in heightening the level of social heat.⁶⁶

At a separate housewarming, it was explained to me that the ideal atmosphere of a housewarming should be ‘red red fire fire’ (*honghong huohuo*). A quality of the heat created in hosting and guesting situations was that it would be converted into warmth of affection (*ganqing*) felt between friends, and that this could hopefully ‘linger’. But, the perception that this creation of heat was meant to have durable, lasting effects that outlived the event itself, was not limited to sustaining the relationship between host and guest. Its durability was believed to extend to the dwelling itself, in that the heat of hosting was felt to bring good fortune upon the house and ensure its continuity into the future.

An example of this was encountered in another house, amongst the cousins of the Song family. The family, consisting of a husband, wife and their ten year-old son, had just moved in to a newly-built apartment. Normally they would have spent the eve of the Chinese New Year with the Song family, who traditionally put on a large reunion meal (*tuanyuan fan*). However, as this was their first year in the new home,

65. Owing to this, the host could expect to make money as a result of throwing a housewarming party, although equally this money may have to be returned at a later date when these guests subsequently moved house. In common with weddings, meticulous logs of the amount of money gifted and by whom were kept by the hosts at housewarmings (Stafford, 2000a:45).

66. Chau (2008:497-498) notes, in another Chinese context, the importance of the convergence of people in producing *honghuo*, and that higher numbers of people generally result in more *honghuo* being produced.



Figure 20: Guests gathered in the guest hall of a house during a housewarming



Figure 21: Guests gathered in the outside compound of a house during a housewarming

they felt it necessary to have their own reunion meal in this home, so as to ensure the auspiciousness of the house itself. In essence the home, like other social relationships, demanded a certain amount of heat itself.

If the presence of guests in the house did, on occasions, contribute to uniting the family in order to successfully host visitors, such unification was not without problems, tensions and conflicts. That potential was sometimes highlighted in the architectural arrangements of the home, a point deserving further exploration.

We mentioned above the fact that the kitchen tended to be located in an area of the house that was, at least partially, out of view of the guest hall. In rural homes, food was often prepared in an outhouse, a completely separate building to that of the main living unit, where guests were received and the family slept. Both of the buildings usually opened out onto a shared courtyard. By contrast, within the urban area of Red Mountain Town, space limitations meant that the kitchen was, in most cases, incorporated into the rest of the home. In work-unit housing built between the 1970s and 1990s, the kitchen was typically annexed onto the side of the guest hall. In most of these cases, the kitchen was connected to the living space (i.e. there was no wall sealing it off); however in a minority of work-unit homes the kitchen was a separate room. Where there was provision for an 'open-style' kitchen, this was typically constructed in an 'L'-shaped arrangement, with the kitchen being stuck right at the end of the arm of the 'L'. The effect of this was generally to locate the cooking area in a position so as to be unobservable to those sat in the guest hall. As such, although in work-unit homes the kitchen was ostensibly continuous with the guest hall, it was still distanced from it, and intentionally part-hidden behind a screening wall or around a corner (see figure 8, page 81).

Despite the fact that the ‘open’ plan kitchen appeared to be a popular design for work-unit homes, by the late 1990s these kitchens bore the brunt of a series of efforts by homeowners to more effectively separate them from the guest hall of such homes. Most notably, this came in the form of the installation of screens or cabinets that further divided and obscured the kitchen from the guest hall. Screens made of frosted glass mounted in light steel frames were the most popular solution for this type of flats. These screens were typically constructed to make a double sliding-door, and were mounted on runners allowing them to be closed, thus sealing-off the cooking area from the guest hall. People explained that these doors were installed because the “smoke was too strong” (*yanwei tai zhong*) during the cooking process. Though there was doubtless an element of truth to this account, it remained a fact that most of the time these doors stayed open. Though there were times when they were closed, such cases were relatively few and far between, and usually only during frying. Ironically, though this ‘sealing-off’ of the kitchen may have made life more comfortable for those in the guest hall while the cooking was in process, it inevitably impinged on the level of comfort of those charged with preparing the meal, who found themselves more socially confined with the fumes in the close space of the kitchen.

Other houses chose to install an alcohol cabinet (*jiugui*), that was filled with bottles of alcohol and trinkets to obscure the view of the kitchen. It turns out that the installation of such screening had an important auxiliary purpose and symbolic significance in addition to avoiding the transmission of smoke from the cooking area to the guest hall. Homeowners were uncomfortable without the presence of a physical break between the kitchen and the guest hall. The government planners of

these work-unit homes had envisaged the kitchen and the guest hall as being a merged continuous space. However the subsequent behaviour of homeowners attested to an unwillingness to have this architectural form imposed upon them.⁶⁷ They shirked the idea that these two spaces, which they saw as being quite distinct, should be conjoined, and instead chose to spend money on glass and metal screening in an effort to once again seal off the areas from one another.

In village-in-the-city homes, which started springing-up from the 1990s onwards, homeowners had more control over the layout of their home than their work-unit counterparts. The confines of space meant that they too were forced to incorporate the kitchen into the main building of their house. However, as opposed to the solution for work-unit homes, the owners tended to elect to site the kitchens in a dedicated room of the house, typically far away from the living or dining areas. But kitchen provisions for the renters in village-in-the-city homes tended to be a more complicated matter. Small rooms that had originally been intended for storage, etc., had to be converted to provide makeshift facilities. In other village-in-the-city homes, it was sometimes the case that renters were expected to cook their food in the courtyards of the landlords' homes on makeshift tables. It was extremely rare that

67. Here comparison can be drawn with Buchli's (1999:23-39) description of the effect of *byt* reforms upon the domestic space of the Soviet Union. Buchli indicates that reformists held the abolition of individual kitchens to be central to the emancipation of women. However attempts to dismantle the hearth were subsequently abandoned owing to the lack of suitable infrastructure outside the home.

landlords in village-in-the-city homes were willing to share their own cooking facilities with that of their tenants.⁶⁸

The intended desire to distance guests from the kitchen becomes particularly manifest during mass-hosting events, where a large number of guests visit the home and need to be catered for accordingly. On these occasions the house was typically filled with guests, and, where space permitted, it was common to decamp the entire kitchen to an outside area.⁶⁹ For example, during the wedding day of a 26 year-old man who lived with his parents in one of the village-in-the-city houses, the groom took the bridesmaid and all the members of the wedding entourage (about 70 persons in all) back to their village-in-the-city home to take lunch together, before the main wedding meal, which was to take place in a restaurant later in the evening. They prepared most of the food for the lunch on a mixture of portable gas stoves and bird's nest coal stoves in the compound of the house.⁷⁰

A less straightforward example was evident in the large village-in-the-city housewarming described earlier (page 168 onwards). For the purpose of this housewarming event, a makeshift cooking area had been erected under a tarpaulin. There were about five people present who appeared to be actively involved in the

68. This insistence on the separation of food preparation reveals, in part, attitudes on behalf of landlords with respect to the cleanliness of their renters.

69. I do not mean to deny that there are also practical reasons for moving the kitchen outside during these kinds of events, such as the need for more spacious food preparation areas. However it is notable that even when space is available in the courtyard of a house to site this cooking area in view of the guests, householders prefer to place it out of view.

70. This was partly owing to the fact that the groom's family were Muslim (*huizu*). They used the existing kitchen to prepare halal meals, and outside they prepared meat.

cooking. Most significant was that this makeshift kitchen had been erected outside the main gate to the compound, next to the large welcoming party of five to ten people who stood there greeting guests. Placing the cooking at the gate not only practically helped to keep the yard clean and clear, but furthermore it gave the guests a chance to glimpse the sheer amount of food that was being prepared, emphasising again a capacity to entertain the large amount of people that were expected to attend. In that respect the temporary kitchen was prominently located

However, the separation of the cooking area from the guests still pertained during the rest of the hosting. Everyone who entered would certainly have observed the cooking being carried out. But it seemed significant that the stoves were placed outside the door to the home, and that, the head of the household and the rest of the greeting team stood in front of those engaged in cooking. When guests arrived, they would be greeted by the head of the host household.⁷¹ The host then signalled the guests to make their way into the courtyard, where they would take one of the many tables on the ground floor of the house or, alternatively, underneath the metal roofing in the courtyard. From both of those positions guests were no longer able to see the cooking area. This was particularly telling in that the courtyard of this house was so large it could have easily accommodated the cooking space, but the hosts nevertheless decided to site the kitchen area outside the compound walls.

These two examples have demonstrated how during large events where existing kitchen facilities were not sufficient, even makeshift outside kitchens were,

71. For events such as housewarming or *shazhufan*, the guests would hand the host a red envelope, containing money. Therefore some hosting situations also functioned as money-raising enterprises for the families.

wherever possible, located out of the view of guests. This, in conjunction with the previous examples of the siting of permanent fitted kitchens away from the guest hall in the homes, provides strong evidence of a division not only of responsibilities. While hosting events tended to unify and involve the families in working, at the same time they necessitated spatial separation, usually leaving women at the periphery of the house to prepare the meal. This is a point we shall see reinforced in the following section, in relation to problems of excessive social heat created during hosting events in the home.

3.3.3. Limitation: failed hosting and the danger of coldness or excessive heat

Our focus now moves to circumstances where hosting events fail or are mismanaged. This will include situations where potential hosts lack the experience or material means necessary for successful hosting, and also cases where, despite having such material resources in place, the hosting situation becomes uncontrollable. The rationale behind examining such hosting situations here are three-fold. Firstly, they highlight an imperative to throw hosting situations, despite the risks, in order to avoid social cold, a state that is seen to be undesirable and signify a withdrawal from social connections. Secondly, hosting situations always toe a somewhat fine line: events should be boisterous and lively, but at the same time must occur within acceptable moral boundaries. As such, hosting situations are always dangerous, carrying with them a risk that they may flare out of control at any particular moment. Thirdly, the combination of this imperative to host with the risky, and demanding nature of hosting is leading to tensions within the family. These

tensions are resulting in an increasing tendency for such situations to be relocated away from the guest hall and outside the home altogether.

Failed hosting events in Red Mountain Town tended to be few and far between. The beginning of this chapter detailed the means by which people might invite others to be a guest in their home. Such invitations tend to be proffered only to those who are already reasonably good friends, so as to avoid any embarrassment that may emerge from a rejected invitation. Indeed, when people accept, and do come as a guest to somebody's home, it generally remains in everybody's best interest to co-operate in order to create a successful hosting event, so as to prevent a loss of face for anybody, but particularly the host. Therefore guesting and hosting situations engendered a high degree of civility, even when guests were being 'trapped' in guest halls, or obliged to drink another glass of rice wine, as was outlined above.

The clearest examples of failed or problematic hosting situations in the home usually involved migrant populations or young people. These populations tended not to have houses of their own, living instead in rented rooms, typically located within the town's village-in-the-city homes. In situations such as these it was difficult to host large parties in one's room. One good example was an unmarried male primary school teacher in his late twenties who rented a single room in Mr Li's village-in-the-city home in Red Mountain Town. The teacher taught in a school located in a mountain-top village around 30 minutes motorcycle ride from the town. His room was relatively bare, featuring a large double mattress on the floor, a desk and a cloth-covered wardrobe. He had a small folding table and four stools. Occasionally, the teacher had a few of his former students, who were now enrolled in high school, over

for dinner. At such occasions he would cook the meal himself using a simple electric stove and rice cooker. The teacher and his former students would sit and eat around the table.

The teacher related to me his dissatisfaction with what he perceived to be the meagre salary that he received for his work, saying that he would ‘never get rich’ (*yongyuan fa buliao cai*) if he remained in his current job. He had instead started to supplement his income through involvement in an incentive-driven direct selling scheme, specialising in rather expensive beauty products containing small amounts of Chinese medicines. He was convinced this would bring him a great degree of wealth, and eventually enable him to resign from his teaching job. This sales work brought him into contact with a large number of people, mostly women who were older than him, and necessitated dinner meetings with others who were involved in the selling and marketing of the products. However, he never entertained them in his room, instead preferring to meet and show hospitality to potential clients in restaurants or karaoke. The only people the teacher entertained in his room tended to be his former pupils, or those with even tighter resources than himself. In many occasions rooms such as the one rented by this teacher lacked the guest hall facilities described above, and were therefore unsuitable for hosting people of a higher status. Such rooms were less often referred to by the occupants as their *jia*, and instead were usually simply called a ‘room’ (*fangzi*).

Apart from seeking to avoid situations where the house might become ‘dead’ and cold, equally threatening was the potential that a hosting situation in the guest hall could spin out of control. As previously mentioned, there exists a strong expectation that alcohol is to be drunk at these hosting events. Alcohol was believed

to be instrumental in the creation of social heat, and, as such was considered obligatory for any successful hosting situation.⁷² Most houses kept a supply of hard liquor on display in the guest hall. In rural houses this might be a large amount of self-brewed *baijiu* held in a plastic jerry-can style container, on or near, the ancestral tablet. In urban houses this was typically bottles of mass-produced alcohol kept in specially built cabinets (*jiugui*). Equally, there were expectations that everyone in a hosting situation should participate in drinking. Idioms such as ‘[you] can’t return [home] if your not drunk’ (*buzui bugui*), and the practice of almost continually refilling the guest’s glass, reflected this. On the other hand, drinking had to take place within defined boundaries of respectability. Farquhar defined these boundaries as being such that so long as ‘civil talk is maintained, the amount of alcohol consumed is not thought of as excessive’ (Farquhar, 2002:148).

The drinking that pre-occupied many of these occasions was frequently problematic. In many cases, groups applied themselves to zone and segregate this drinking activity whenever it happened to occur at banquets. During particularly large banquets, where several families might be present in the home, there was a tendency for men to sit at one table, and women and children to sit at a separate table. This division often occurred spontaneously, without the need for prompting. However, on one occasion where a mixed group of adults were dining together, Mrs Zhao made the reasoning behind separate seating for men and women more explicit, by loudly asserting to the men “You men... you that want to drink alcohol... sit over on that side [of the table]” (*nimen nande yao hejiu dem zuo nabian*). What was

72. Dietler (1990) provides a cross-cultural survey of ethnographic data to show that alcohol is often fundamental in hospitality situations.

unclear was the motive that lay behind a wish to separate men from women in this fashion: whether it was recognised that drinking was essential to the successful expansion of social relationships between the groups of males, or whether it was that some of the women found the drinking behaviour of the men tiring and reprehensible.

Sometimes alcohol and the heat created in these situations could backfire. One memorable example came from a village-in-the-city house located towards the highest part of the town. This family had constructed a large corrugated iron awning on the roof and, in addition to entertaining guests in the guest hall, the family also regularly took meals on the roof, where they commanded a fine view overlooking Red Mountain Town. They frequently hosted a variety of guests in the house, and one group of young men associated with the household, who were not held in the highest of esteem by fellow villagers, made a regular appearance. Not only did their hosting activities tend to go on late into the night, but these gatherings were visible (and audible) to the neighbours. This served as a fine advertisement for the household's ability to host, making highly conspicuous the consumption that was taking place there! This state of affairs continued until one night when, after a round of heavy drinking and feasting, an altercation suddenly broke out between one of the young men and the eldest son of the family. A beer bottle was smashed, and a young child who was also present started screaming in fear. The noise of the fighting brought neighbours up onto their own roofs, where they intently watched the scrimmage. On the rare occasions when hosting situations such as this turned into a fracas, they would attract an avid crowd of onlookers. Such observations are paralleled in Jankowiak's (1993:125-164) ethnography of everyday life in urban

Ulaanbaatar. Jankowiak noted that, in situations where arguments occurred between people in public spaces, those involved were seen to have lost face. He commented that these situations would attract the intense curiosity of passers-by, who would typically form large crowds of bystanders.

The argument that occurred on the roof of the village-in-the-city home was especially problematic because, unlike Jankowiak's street-based examples, it obviously linked this argument and its attendant social unrest to that household unit. It thus reflected badly upon the host's ability to create the warmth required of hosting events, whilst still maintaining the expected climate of civility.⁷³ Following the evening of the fight, this group of young men were never seen in the house again, and other visitors were entertained on the roof of the house far less often. This example demonstrates the limits of immediate control a host can have over hospitality situations, whilst equally showing that they may eventually resume a degree of responsibility in ensuring that the drinking and jesting remain within permissible boundaries.

A further example of the boisterous behaviour that is attached to hosting events might be seen in the habit of 'teasing the groom' (*nao dongfang*) that takes place immediately after a successful wedding feast. Red Mountain Town people reported that the process of teasing the groom had become increasingly salacious in recent years. Mr Deng's son told me that in the rural villages that surrounded Red Mountain Town, when the teasing of the groom still occurred (village weddings were

73. It should be noted that Red Mountain Town people often described the atmosphere of homes as 'warm' (*wennuan*), rather than the 'hot and noisy' (*re'nao*) atmosphere that was held as typifying other social gatherings.

becoming increasingly rare), it would be a relatively gentle affair, such as making the groom dance with the bride. In contrast to the countryside, in urban Red Mountain Town the teasing of the groom was a far more risqué activity, which usually involved the newly-married couple be put in a variety of compromising positions, whilst in view of, and being goaded on by their friends. The nature of these happenings meant that middle-aged and older people who attended the wedding banquet rarely joined the teasing the groom event that followed.

During fieldwork in Red Mountain Town, I was able to personally witness one teasing of the groom event, and observe photographs of a second event, and question the newly-married bride who had recently taken part in that. The first took place in one of the town's karaoke venues; the second occurred in the groom's village-in-the-city house. The karaoke-based groom teasing, which was witnessed in person, was particularly bawdy. The groom was pushed into the private karaoke room full of his waiting friends, having been stripped naked with his hands tied. When asked them why they did not choose to hold the event at the groom's house (as was tradition), they replied 'because old people are there' (*yinwei laoren zai*). Here it was made clear that the presence of older generations would be felt to hamper, or dampen the occasion. These two examples of very similar events, one which took place in the home, another which took place in the karaoke parlour, demonstrate how such large, communal hosting events, involving drinking and smoking, can create problems in the home environment. Whilst it may be more affordable and traditional to host such events at home, they can become irreconcilable with how the domestic space is now envisaged, and with the wishes of other members of the family.

3.4. Hosting versus homing: dysfunctionalist approaches to the home

This chapter presented the problematic situations arising around the reception of guests into the home. It explained the acute desire amongst households to receive guests into the guest hall, emblematised perhaps most strongly by the name of the room itself, despite its wider roles. It went on to detail the lengths to which heads of households will go when inviting guests (risking potentially embarrassing rejection), plus the extent to which people will attempt to politely refuse such visits. Entering the guest hall would entail an obligation to partake in making the gathering a success, which often involved being compelled by the host's generosity to spend many hours eating and drinking food. Furthermore, when the host's social status was lower than that of the guest, a hosting situation might entail a tricky reversal of conventional positions, which was a further reason as to why invitations might be politely refused. As we shall see in part II of this thesis, this may be one cause of the rising popularity of hosting outside the home, in that the commodification of hosting situations potentially makes such role reversal somewhat less severe.

Getting guests into the home was only one aspect of this challenge. Rather than reflecting the frequency with which guests were received in the home, guest halls had to be kept in a permanently prepared state. This preparedness was driven by an anxiety on behalf of family members that the home might not have sufficient means to cope with the arrival of unexpected guests. In many cases this was more a perceived risk, rather than an actual reality; in truth most houses rarely entertained large numbers of visitors. Guests who did accept an invitation to visit would become implicated in the production of a warm atmosphere in the home, driven by a mutual

desire on the part of both hosts and guests to ensure a successful gathering. Hosts on their part ensured the television was turned on, to avoid the awkwardness and coldness of silence, whilst providing conversation and encouraging the guests to partake in food and drink. Likewise, visitors felt an obligation to be good guests, and would generally participate as desired by hosts.

The final section of this chapter looked again at home hosting through the prism of heat, as exemplified through house warming events. Heat was used by informants to think about the atmosphere of hosting events, and was invoked by those within the home as the essential ingredient making the difference between a successful hosting event and one that was not executed well. Creating this heat had a unificatory effect, not only on the host and guest, but also on the family of the host, who were frequently enlisted into performing household tasks to produce a hosting event. The creation of heat in the guest hall in hosting situations was then recognised to be an inherently risky affair. Opening the home up to guests means that one also opens oneself up to judgement by them. For this reason, poor populations in the town, mostly migrant workers from the countryside, rarely entertained other people in their rented rooms, being afraid that their homes lacked the material means with which to create sufficient warmth. At the other extreme, hosting could become problematic because of excess heat produced, as both host and guest felt obliged to collaborate, yet not compete with each other in the creation of a warm environment. There were occasions when the warmth of gatherings spun out of control, particularly in terms of the amounts of alcohol drunk and food eaten. Although this generally resulted in nothing but a warming of relations and conviviality between people, it also brought the risk that tempers could become frayed, and the event

result in arguments and loss of face for those involved, particularly the host and their family.

It was for this reason that, in Red Mountain Town, hosting at home appeared to be a particularly challenging and troublesome affair. Hospitality situations in this town could not be described mechanistically, as the creation of instrumental relationships between the host and guest. Rather they embodied a tension between host and guest, a relationship that might well be described as ‘on a knife-edge between suspicion and trust’ (Candea and da Col, 2012:55). That stress spilled over into relationships between the host and those involved in the creation home hosting situation, typically the family, through the onerous demands placed on them to use material means to produce a successful event. As Stafford (2000a:47) notes, when he describes similar hosting events in terms of *laiwang* production, women often bear the burden of producing everyday *laiwang*.⁷⁴ That is not to say that families did not, at times, unite effectively in co-operating to receive guests into the house. Indeed, the reception of outsiders into the home is itself seen to be constitutive in encouraging members of families to come together to successfully receive guests. These are unique moments of introspection in which ideas of what comprises a family are formed and flourish. However, the changing expectations of what a hosting situation should be, coupled with changing expectations of family life, appear to have engendered domestic conflict since the reform and opening of China. The desire for ever-noisier, more exciting and rambunctious hosting situations,

74. *Laiwang* will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.3.3.

continuing late on into the night, are at odds with the way in which the home is increasingly imagined as a place for the family to 'relax'.

In summary, it appears that there exists a feeling amongst Red Mountain Town people, occasionally spoken but more usually implicit, that the guest hall is no longer really adequate for conducting hospitality. Anthropologists are generally loath to imply that things do not work socially anymore, such assertions carrying with them implications of functionalism, or that anthropologists have somehow failed to fully understand the culture they are studying. However, the sense of inadequacy identified above is not used in a strictly structural functionalist mould, in the sense of Radcliffe-Brown's (1952:178-187) analogy between social and organic life, which claimed that the social life of a community was the functioning of social structure. Radcliffe-Brown implied that the function of social structure is to fulfil the necessary conditions for existence, suggesting that human action is directed toward the survival of the wider society, in the same way that cells function in aid of the survival of the organism they constitute.

Bourdieu is clear that large swathes of human action do not appear to be directed at ensuring the survival of society, but such knowledge is embodied, and people in reality have little idea about why they act in a particular way. He illustrates this through the example of rites:

Rites, more than any other type of practice, serve to underline the mistake of enclosing in concepts a logic made to dispense with concepts; of treating movements of the body and practical manipulations as purely logical operations; of speaking of analogies and homologies (as one sometimes has to, in order to understand and to convey that understanding) when all that is involved is the practical transference of incorporated, quasi-postural schemes.

(Bourdieu, 1977:116)

Bourdieu advocates understanding habitus as consisting of ‘durable dispositions’, as already recounted earlier (chapter 1). However, there is a tendency to see this as a disposition *towards* something, an inclination for carrying things out in a particular way. Instead, in Red Mountain Town people are confronted with the fact that hosting in the guest hall, in a rather subtle way, no longer ‘feels right’. This might be expressed in the notion that receiving guests at home is ‘too much trouble’, or in anxieties about an older generation being present that feels at odds with a post-wedding ‘tease the groom’ party.

Consideration of dispositions against something, as advanced here, also complicates Sangren’s (2000:8) notion of the role of ‘desires’ within practice theory. Rooted in a Marxian framework concerned with how production acted at a social level, Sangren attempted to amend Bourdieu’s concept of systemic imperatives by arguing for a greater emphasis on people’s motives being connected directly to individual desire. The case of Red Mountain Town’s guest halls prompts a consideration of whether such feelings of ease can themselves be the producers of desire.

Equally, these sorts of ambivalence over the appropriateness of hosting in the house also find themselves in minor discord with Carsten and Hugh-Jones’ (1995:36-42) view of kinship and the house as not only being processual in nature, but both intertwined in one single process. In Carsten and Hugh-Jones’ account, process renders human actions into a sort of ongoing effort that constantly works to create something, most notably social relationships. But the story of Red Mountain Town guest halls implies what might be termed ‘dysfunctionalism’: though the basic structure of these houses may have stayed roughly the same, there nonetheless exists

a widespread feeling that, on the hospitality front at least, the house no longer functions adequately. One might need to widen Bourdieu's notion of 'dispositions' to consider dispositions *away from* particular structural arrangements, in addition to the more frequently encountered disposition *towards* a different one.

A parallel to this notion of discordant disposition can be found in Miller's (2006, 2008:260-273) description of an elderly Caribbean woman living alone in London. Miller attempted to describe the reasons for the loneliness experienced by the divorcee, who were now largely estranged from her family and place of origin, having migrated to London decades ago. He found that throughout her life she had attempted to act in a manner that would be moral and honourable when viewed from a Caribbean perspective, particularly with respect to the relations she attempted to maintain with her large, extended family in her place of origin. Miller noted that whilst this attachment to the extended family might have served her well in the Caribbean, where she might have expected to be adored and looked after by her nearby relatives in her dotage; in London the same disposition had exposed the woman to mistreatment by her extended relatives. He posited that this way of acting was somewhat ill-adapted and debilitating in this new context.

This kind of inadequate adjustment finds itself more in agreement with Bourdieu's later writings on habitus, in which he revises the concept to argue that habitus 'accounts equally well for cases in which dispositions function out of phase and practices are objectively ill-adapted to the present conditions because they are objectively adjusted to conditions that no longer obtain' (Bourdieu, 1990:62).

One of the fundamental questions emerging from this discussion, then, is what impact the disembedding of expansive *guanxi*-like activities of hosting from

family life are having? Is it that family life and the home are envisaged as being increasingly separate and incompatible with social and commercial endeavour? Is this simply a privatisation of part of the domestic sphere, and if so, what effect will it have on the boundaries and constraints of commercial and social life beyond the home? How are people being transformed by the apparent decoupling of family life and the commercial sphere, through which wider connections are seen to be made? And on the other hand, how does the tendency to remove the home and family from socially expansive situations in turn affect family structure and concerns? It is these questions that part II of this thesis will attempt to address, as it makes its transition from the unsatisfactory nature of hosting in the guest hall, to an examination of the new commercial venues into which these hospitality activities are increasingly being displaced.

Part II: 'Outside'

Chapter 4: Internet cafes and the presence of children

Part I of this thesis focused on the ‘inside’ of the home. Chapter 2 examined the concept of *jia*, detailing the way in which it incorporated notions of both home and family. It demonstrated how, almost regardless of housing types, individual bedrooms are arranged around a central guest hall. Homes were also viewed as ideally allowing continued expansion outwards from this constant central guest hall in response to the growth of a family and its financial resources, until space constraints plus regulations limited such expansion. Heat was then introduced as an important principle through which the Chinese home is understood, and showed how the people of Red Mountain Town judged the relative heat of houses against each other. Chapter 3 detailed the role of the guest hall in receiving and in hosting. It outlined the process of inviting guests into this space, before illustrating how the material arrangement of the guest hall had a tendency to involve guests in the creation of social heat. This process was used to expand social relationships, but always ran the risks of either spinning out of control, or of warmth failing to be engendered in the first place. Part 3I concluded by highlighting the ‘dysfunctional’ aspect of Red Mountain Town’s guest halls, in that they are increasingly envisioned as a places for the family to ‘relax’ and appear to be increasingly found to be less suitable for the hosting of guests.

Part II of this thesis will consider how this has engendered a move of hospitality situations to sites that are now perceived of as being more suitable for the role. The following three chapters will take an internet cafe (this chapter), a hair

salon (chapter 5) and a karaoke parlour (chapter 6) and detail the hospitality situations and activities that occur in each.⁷⁵ All three chapters will detail the material homologies that exist between the guest hall of the home and these commercial spaces, homologies that encourage hospitality situations to take place in them, and thus help account for their popularity.

We start with an examination of internet consumption in Red Mountain Town. Our primary focus is to document the two competing ways in which broadband internet connections were accessed by the town's young people. Specifically, the town had recently seen an increase in the availability and adoption of home broadband, offering direct competition to longer-established internet cafes that existed elsewhere in the conurbation.⁷⁶ Rather than assuming this change in methods of connectivity to have emerged solely as a result of the teleological inevitability of telecoms infrastructure upgrades, this analysis attempts to probe the

75. It may seem surprising that restaurants, which are the frequent site of banqueting and feasting, and have been noted as being of importance in many accounts of modern Chinese hospitality (Farquhar, 2002:50; Pharoah, 2005:79-116; Kipnis, 1997:37-57; Yang, 1994:137-138), have not been afforded specific coverage within this work. This decision was based partly on the wealth of ethnographic writings already existing on restaurant situations, but also owing to the fact that commercial venues such as internet cafes, *xiangshou* hair salons and karaoke parlours had only relatively recently arrived in Red Mountain Town. Such venues thus better illustrated the way in which habitus can be seen to move from one domain to another.

76. A third and growing way in which people could access the internet was via the wireless 3G network which had been available within Red Mountain Town since 2009, and was being heavily advertised by all the mobile phone operators at the time of fieldwork. However, the impact of 3G was in its early days. So this work concentrated on the relationship between home broadband and internet cafes, owing to the opportunities for hospitality they afforded, and the homologies that existed between the internet cafe and the home.

social and structural forces that were driving demand for home broadband connections.

This chapter is split into three sections. The first section examines the appeal of internet cafes from the perspective of the predominantly young men who frequent them. It will emphasise the overwhelmingly collective nature of internet cafe use in Red Mountain Town, including the opportunities afforded to customers for conducting their own hospitality situations. The second section of the chapter will move to consideration of how the internet cafes are perceived by parents, young people and government agencies (to varying degrees) as being inherently dangerous places. The third section will examine many parents' hopes that home broadband internet connections will resolve such anxieties by attracting their offspring back in to the home. It will show how the presence of the offspring in the home is viewed as being necessary for kinship bonds to be created through shared activities (eating, watching television, etc). The absence of an offspring due to prolonged periods of internet cafe use disrupts these processual kinship activities, creating feelings of unease and emptiness within the family, which parents hope home broadband connections will resolve. However the discussion will also identify multiple ways in which use of the internet in the home disrupts and challenges the reckoning of spatiality and time within the domestic sphere. These issues are not usually foreseen by parents prior to the installation of home internet connections. Finally, the chapter turns to consider more generally whether or not parents are increasingly finding that they are having to host their own children within their home, in order to retain their presence.

4.1. The attractions of internet cafes

The first internet cafe (*wangba*) appeared in Red Mountain Town around 1998. By the year 2012, the number of cafes had grown to no less than 13. These cafes were located on the main thoroughfares that criss-crossed the hilly town. In all but two cases, the internet cafes did not have ground level frontage onto the street. Instead they were typically located in cheaper, first-floor space, or spaces set back from the street, leaving the ground floor area abutting the pavement to be rented out as retail units at higher rates. Although signs demarcated the premises as an internet cafe to passers-by, it was typically impossible to see most of the interior of the internet cafe until one had actually entered it. As such, internet cafes possessed a certain aura of concealment.

The interior of the cafes featured banks of computers, usually organised in back-to-back rows across the room. Each desk would have a spacious area for a large LCD monitor, a microphone headset, and a sizeable, comfortable chair. Underneath the table, to the side of the customer's legs hung a locked cabinet that held the computer tower. The opulence of these furnishings was noteworthy. The LCD monitors sat on opaque, black, polished glass, which had specks of glitter set into it. Customers sat in front of the computer terminals in comfortable sprung leather-look black cantilever office chairs. In some internet cafes, those willing to pay extra were able to upgrade to the VIP area, where two people could enjoy a semi-private booth, equipped with a pair of terminals and a comfortable sofa. One internet cafe quickly gained notoriety amongst youth following the installation of two industrial-sized air conditioning units into its premises in the summer of 2010. Air conditioning units

remained extremely rare in either homes or businesses in this fieldsite. During the summer months, as the temperatures of Red Mountain Town reached in excess of 40 degrees celsius, customers happily described the cafe as ‘cool’ (*liangkuai*) and ‘comfortable’ (*shufu*).⁷⁷ All in all, the level of comfort and sumptuousness of internet cafes in the town matched, if not surpassed, the guest halls typical of Red Mountain Town’s homes.

Red Mountain Town’s internet cafes were open 24 hours a day, and terminals were rented to customers according to the amount of time they used. As the main clientele of the internet cafes were young people, these venues competed with both home and school for the presence of young people, a fact confirmed by daily patterns of cafe usage in the town. On weekdays during term time, internet cafes were relatively empty while school was in session. The cafes typically saw a peak of numbers during school lunch breaks (11am-1pm), and once school had finished for the day (5pm), with a second lull during dinner time (6-8pm), when many students would make their way home. This was followed by a sudden increase in numbers after 8pm, which gradually petered out as the night went on. During the weekend or school holidays, one could expect the internet cafes to be relatively full throughout the day. Internet cafes had managed to rapidly insert themselves into the daily lives

77. It is worth restating here the existence of a local understanding that there was a connection between the physical temperature of an environment and other forms of heat, such as a person’s ‘character’, or the social ‘atmosphere’ of the room (already described in section 2.3). In this internet cafe context, it was not that the physical coolness of the room reduced social heat, but rather that such rooms were seen as being too hot to begin with, to the extent that those within said they were ‘unable to bear’ (*shou buliao*) the temperature.

of the young people who used them, whilst keeping them away from other social spheres.

At certain times of the day, the town's internet cafes would be brimming with customers who occupied every available terminal. In common with Qiu's (2009:117) observations of internet cafes in China, the customers in Red Mountain Town used the cafes more as entertainment centres than to look for information. The majority of customers spent most of their time playing games (many of which were multiplayer or online), watching streamed movies, and/or talking to friends on the instant messaging programme *Tencent QQ*.

4.1.1. Collectivity in internet cafes

Turkle's (2011) ethnography of the internet and technology use in America, *Alone Together*, paints a bleak picture of humanity's turn towards the computers, claiming that our willingness to adopt such technologies stems from the risks and disappointments of our relationships with other humans. She asserts that technology is taking us away from engaging in 'proper' conversation. Turkle's privileging of face-to-face communication over other forms of mediated interaction is typical of many accounts that try to make sense of the role of digital technologies in the lives of people. It ignores the driver that each specific media not only carries with it certain affordances and capabilities, but also that new media are not limited to framing relationships in any one particular way (Madianou and Miller, 2012:124), let alone in conventional ways. Rather mediation technologies may be appropriated differently in different contexts.

For example, Miller and Slater's (2000:72-75) ethnographic observations of Trinidadian internet cafes demonstrated how new forms of sociality were created when using the internet brought people together into the same social space. The authors described the layout of one internet cafe as intentionally producing an 'informal and convivial ambience' (Miller and Slater, 2000:72) with part of the cafe frequently used for *liming*, a Trinidadian term that describes partaking in leisure activities. Internet cafes in Red Mountain Town appear to offer equivalent collective experiences. Qiu (2009:46) similarly notes the 'collective mode of access' that is offered by internet cafes, positing that these cafes offer a local informational commons for the 'have-less'. Qiu explains how in the post-Mao era, there exists an erosion of shared collective spaces, and that private internet cafes offer an alternative space of shared experience for the country's working class populations.

The heart of this collectivity can be found in the shared experience of internet gaming. Around 90% of customers in Red Mountain Town's internet cafes were males, typically below 25 years of age. In common with Qiu's (2009:111) ethnography of networks in China, in Red Mountain Town there was a pronounced division in the online activities of internet cafe users: males tended to play online games, and females preferred to chat on *QQ*. As a result of this division, and the gender imbalance of customers, the bulk of online activity that took place in Red Mountain Town's internet cafes' was playing games. But these games were rarely solitary experiences; almost all were multiplayer online games. By far the most popular at the time was *Crossfire* (*chuanyue huoxian*), a Chinese-made first-person shooter similar to *Command & Conquer* (which was also available in most internet cafes, but lacked the popularity of *Crossfire*). A less popular game was *Finding*

Immortality (xunxian), a 3D role-player fantasy game, set in a mythical ancient China.

Noteworthy in this respect, was that, far from being alone when playing these games, they were frequently played either in co-operation with, or against, other people in the room. Groups often sat in clusters on adjacent or facing seats, whilst playing the same shared multiplayer games. Though they may have also been playing with other players outside this group – people in the same cafe, town, or even further afield – gaming together still seemed to be part of the intrinsic appeal of the experience. The co-presence of gamers in the internet cafe thus wove together digital and non-digital communication. If one user was shot by another whilst playing *Crossfire*, indignant curses would rise above the monitors. Conversely, if users were on the same team they might mutter verbal directions to each other, in order to guide their friend to an advantageous spot where he would be able to sniper an enemy. In Red Mountain Town, rather than internet games being a distraction for players, or an isolatory experience, they actually tended to be very co-operative and participatory. Indeed internet cafes capitalised on the collective nature of sociality that these games engendered by organising occasional *Crossfire* tournaments, where members of that internet cafe competed (sometimes as individuals, and sometimes as teams) for cash prizes.

Another case where the internet cafe actively encouraged members to acknowledge one another was a cafe which had a league table of the names (and partially concealed national ID card numbers) of the ten customers who had spent most hours online that month. This was displayed on the desktop of every computer monitor in the internet cafe upon login, referring to these individuals as ‘gold

members' (*huangjin huiyuan*). The same desktop also promoted a special *QQ* group (an instant messaging chatroom) for internet cafe users which allowed them to converse together as a group via text messages.

4.1.2. Web hosting: practising hospitality in internet cafes

The collective nature of the internet cafe also meant that it lent itself to certain wider, outgoing hospitality situations. Customers often arrived at an internet cafe as groups, rather than on their own. It was usual for people to visit internet cafes that were close to their homes⁷⁸, so young people would go to meet their friends at the internet cafe, or sometimes bump into them there. Frequently, when a couple of friends arrived at the internet cafe together, one of them might pay for both of their internet usage, effectively turning the internet cafe experience into something akin to other recognizable forms of joint consumption (i.e. sharing cigarettes, food). A parallel to this is found in Wank's (2000) account of cigarette consumption amongst Chinese business peers, where he asserts that smoking together 'conveys the spirit of sociability rather than obligation and therefore is not perceived as influence per se' (Wank, 2000:286). In the case of the internet cafe, where this pattern of consumption was occurring it was often between those who already had a roughly egalitarian relationship (i.e. low income, young people, mostly males). Thus this joint consumption did not act to significantly alter the relationship, it merely served to restate a continuing friendship.

78. For instance, young males who lived in one village-in-the-city invariably visited one of two internet cafes on the boundary of that village, rather than going to the town centre.

The fact that the comfort provided in internet cafes matched, or in some cases surpassed, that of the guest hall in many homes points to a further indicator suggesting the internet cafe as a comfortable site for conducting hospitality. Namely, there is an interesting parallel between the way an individual places themselves in front of a computer in an internet cafe to the placing of a guest in front of the television in the guest hall (as mentioned in section 3.2.2).

A further aspect in the role of the internet cafe which can lend it to being considered a site of hospitality was the provision of food and snacks to customers, in a similar manner to that occurring in the guest hall, as described in section 3.2.1. However, in this instance such snacking had been commodified. Internet cafes provided a range of drinks (bottled water, alcohol, etc), snacks (crisps, pot noodles), or simple cooked meals (bowls of noodles, fried rice, fried potatoes). To order food, the customers simply had to call for a waitress and request the item. These middle aged women were sometimes referred to by the young male customers as ‘auntie’ (*a’yi*). The item would then be brought directly to them. Once again this parallels the way in which guests are treated in the guest hall, save for the introduction of money. It was very common for groups of customers in the internet cafe to consume together, perhaps with one of them purchasing drinks or snacks for the entire group, in a very similar fashion to that described by Wank for cigarettes. In this case we may posit that the shared consumption of the internet as a leisure activity is useful for the maintenance of social relationships between peers (for a similar example, see Wang, 2000). One of the features of these forms of hospitality is that they are accessible and amenable to the young people of Red Mountain Town, who typically had networks of connections, but limited funds and more limited command over the

domestic sphere in their parents' homes. However, whilst this may have explained the attraction of these spaces to their young customers, it was more problematic when viewed from the perspective of parents.

4.2. The dangers of internet cafes

During the 1990s a discourse emerged in the west relating to the potential dangers of the internet. Western media outlets portrayed the early internet as an uncertain place operating outside boundaries of nation-states, and inhabited by a kaleidoscope of unsavoury characters such as paedophiles, fraudsters, and hackers (for examples, see Gray, 1999; Rose, 1996). These early mainstream accounts of the dangers perceived as permeating the internet found a parallel in the academic discourse of the time, as Miller and Slater (2000:4) noted, with the perceived 'virtuality' of the internet being the determining characteristic of this discourse. The internet was presented as disembedded from, and opposed to, the 'real' world. Miller and Slater saw ethnographic research as the best way to overcome such an opposition, by demonstrating how people attempted to assimilate the internet into their existing practices.

In Red Mountain Town, use of the internet, and specifically the internet cafe, was also seen by many informants, and particularly by parents, as carrying a number of potential risks. However, unlike in the western discourse mentioned above, which emphasised the supposed lax moral standard of users and content, in the case of Red Mountain Town anxiety seemed to focus on the potential damage that the environment of the internet cafe and prolonged internet use might do to an individuals' physical and mental health. The remainder of this section will describe

some of the main dangers that were perceived to exist in the internet cafes, specifically with reference to examples of infatuation, crowds of people, disease transmission, radiation and Chinese medicine notions of bodily phases.

4.2.1. Infatuation

The draw of the internet cafe caused several problems with regards to students. One informant, Mr Deng's son, from a nearby village, who boarded at the state high school, explained to me that every Friday evening he and his fellow students would head down, en masse, to an internet cafe in the town. There they would each buy an 'all night' session (*tongxiao*), hiring the computer for the entire ten-hour period between 10pm and 8am the following morning, at a discounted rate of 10 RMB. Most students only partook in 'all night' sessions from Friday evening through to Saturday mornings, and such use was somewhat tolerated by the school. But Mr Deng's son also recalled the tale of a fellow student who had become too 'infatuated' (*milian*) with internet games, missing classes to play the computer, resulting in his eventual expulsion from the school:

[There was a person] in our class, now he's not in our class. He got expelled by our year head ... Everyday he was acting truant to play on the computer ... He made the internet cafe into his home.

[One] night just, as I had gone out, I said to him "where are you going?" ... I had bumped into him... He said he wanted to go home. ... He said where do you want to go? ... I said, "I'm going on the internet for a second, and then I'm going home". He said "Ok, let's go together". I said, ok, you wait at the bottom. After waiting till the time I went into the internet cafe, I saw he followed me in. I said: "Don't you want to go home?" He said: "Here *is* my home!"

Though Mr Deng's son delivered this anecdote jokingly, expressing his own amusement at the extreme case of the young man who had made the internet cafe his home, the story was also indicative of a very real social concern amongst parents:

that young people were shunning their own homes for the preferable environment of the internet cafe. Parents worried that the internet cafe's ability to infatuate and entertain blinded their offspring to a number of further dangers that parents feared to be contained within.

4.2.2. 'Too many people' and social complexity

Some parents described the internet cafe as having 'many people' (*renduo*), or alternatively 'too many people' (*ren tai duo*), and for this reason they claimed that the internet cafe was 'too complicated' (*tai fuza*) a place. It did not matter that Red Mountain Town's internet cafes were actually somewhat more quiet than the town's bustling food markets that many parents shopped in on a daily basis. It was the characteristics of these gatherings of largely young males for long periods of time, combined with the transient nature, of the space that earmarked the cafe as being particularly problematic spaces from a parental perspective. These examples appear to support Rolandsen's (2011:115-125) argument of the existence of a Chinese discourse surrounding internet cafes as chaotic places.

One particularly influential, but rather extreme, example of this was when a young man from the village-in-the-city was, apparently inexplicably, stabbed by youths outside the internet cafe near his home as he was leaving at night. Though such incidents were very rare in the town, they nonetheless heightened parental fears regarding the safety of these cafes.

4.2.3. Disease

Furthermore, many parents held that the transient nature of people in the internet cafe made it a place within which it might be particularly easy to contract disease, asserting that there were ‘many illnesses’ (*bingduo*) within. In a complementary vein, internet cafes attempted to implement a number of measures that were either believed to, or gave the appearance of, controlling the transmission of disease. In one cafe, waiting staff would wipe down the keyboard and monitor after each user vacated it. Red faux-velvet seat covers were placed over the seats in another cafe. In many of these venues, customers were given drinks of water in disposable paper cups, which were seen to be cleaner than sharing a washed cup between different customers.

4.2.4. Radiation

There existed a commonly held belief that electrical equipment could be the source of radiation (*fushe*). For example, Mr Deng’s son made clear to me his belief that radiation was split into natural (*ziran*) and man-made (*renwei*) forms. He acknowledged that natural light was a form of radiation, and that sunlight might include infrared (*hong waixian*) and ultraviolet (*zi waixian*) which did have the potential to harm the human body. In this sense, Mr Deng’s son’s understanding accorded with that of the natural sciences. However, his definition of sources of radiation also extended to the computers found in internet cafes:

But, if you talk about computers, these kind of electric objects, especially large machines (*daxing jiqi*), especially [in things that are] a little bit more high-technology (*gaokeji*)... I believe the radiation will be a little bit stronger.

However, Mr Deng's son was less clear on where in the machine the radiation actually emerged from:

I haven't researched deeply. It should be from inside the machine [i.e. the tower computer located under the desk] ... Sometimes it is from inside the cables, and sometimes it is from inside the computer...

On a separate occasion, I accompanied Mr Deng's son when he visited a friend's house. This friend owned a wireless bluetooth keyboard and mouse. It was the first time he had seen such a device, and besides expressing general amazement he asked his friend whether or not the radiation from the device might be dangerous. Similar concerns existed with televisions. For example, Mr Liang, a flower seller in the town, had a dated cathode-ray television in his home which had developed a fault, causing it to display images only in green. One day he explained the benefits of this situation to his brother-in-law in the following way:

This TV, I bought it over 10 years ago, at that time it was the biggest, now it's a small TV. One good thing about this TV, it's environmentally friendly (*huanbao*), it turns on slowly (*man man*) so it doesn't harm your eyes (*shangyan*).

He went on to more clearly illustrate the characteristics of an environmentally friendly television:

An environmentally friendly TV doesn't harm people... when you turn it on, it will very slowly turn on... there's no radiation. When you look at it, it's very comfortable, It really nourishes/supports the eyes (*yang yanjing*).

Mr Liang's statement demonstrates how the material intensity and colour of light were held to engender different amounts of radiation. Furthermore, the right kind of light, rather than damaging the eyes, could be cooling, relaxing, or even nourishing. Some also explained that maintaining a greater distance between monitor and viewer made television viewing a less risky practice than using computers. Other participants also held the belief that flat-screen LCD monitors (which were used in

internet cafes) and televisions might emit more radiation than their CRT predecessors.

The damage this radiation was perceived to cause the body was made clear by Mr Deng's son:

Computers, these kind of things, if we don't use the internet... especially this 'through the night' (*tongxiao*) [option], Your face won't develop something, and you won't have that oily-greasy feeling (*youni*).

If, for example, you go to use the internet. When you went in, originally the surface of your face was very clean, your hair was also very clean. Very fresh (*jingshuang*) that kind of feeling, wait until the second day, after the time you come out, your face has a very oily layer. Your face is like an oil slick (*youyanghu*)... and your hair is also oily. Just like a chef in a kitchen after he has been frying dishes and hasn't been wearing a hat... After, a certain time... your face will develop lots of small spots (*doudou*), there are some, like us adolescents, who sometimes will develop acne (*qingchundou*).

A lot of students in our school have the same experience, they come to play computers and they all know this. Especially this problem of small spots.

Mr Deng's son thus felt able to clearly link prolonged periods of computer/internet use to the creation of greasy skin and also acne. Later he suggested that one way to reverse the effects of such exposure was to go for a walk in the town's park, which was of a higher altitude than the town, and therefore had noticeably cooler and fresher air. On a separate occasion a 26 year-old woman, who worked in an office using a computer, was heard complaining to her friend about her bad acne, the alleged reason for her bad skin being that the 'computer radiation was too much' (*diannao fushe tai da*).

The perceived danger of computer radiation in Red Mountain Town were not only limited to adolescents' feelings regarding acne. A further way 'radiation awareness' was disseminated into the town was through beauty parlour treatments. One beauty parlour, aimed at upper-middle income women, had a range of massage

treatments, using a combination of herbal remedies and Chinese medicine ingredients, aimed at ‘dredging the energy channels’ (*jingluo*) as a preventative measure to avoid illness. Once a large poster was placed outside the store, advertising the health benefits of their treatments. One such package referred to in the poster was the ‘Liver and gall bladder purification pressure reduction package’ billed as being appropriate for, amongst a number of other bad lifestyle choices, ‘people who often work with computers or monitor screen radiation interference’.

4.2.5. Upsetting natural bodily phases

In another beauty parlour I had observed an informational poster, taken from a magazine article that extolled the virtues of performing certain activities at the correct time. The proprietor explained to me that the day could be split into two-hour sections, and that in each of these sections certain types of body functions relating to the five organs took place. There was a natural cycle of things, and the various organs of the body were felt to have corresponding periods in which they might be particularly active or in a stage of recovery. Here a parallel may be drawn to Hsu’s (1999:199) observations of a tendency within Traditional Chinese Medicine to substitute ideas about the Five Phases (*wuxing*), notions of change that are central to Chinese medicine, with that of the Five Organs (*wuzang*).

Accordingly, it was seen to be important to keep to the correct time of eating, sleeping, etc., and failure to adhere to this could result in illness. It was noteworthy that the internet café was one of the few businesses in Red Mountain Town – in addition to saunas and hotels – that remained open for business 24 hours a day. Although nobody suggested it during fieldwork, one could speculate that there might

have been a concern that all-night stints in the internet cafe also posed a risk to health, due to the normal cycle of day/night being inverted, and mealtimes being disturbed.

In this section we have attempted to show the reasons behind the concerns that many parents expressed over their offspring's presence in the internet cafe. Somewhat surprisingly, as opposed to western worries relating to the internet, which typically centred upon the perceived morality of encountering dubious strangers or online content, in the case of Red Mountain Town parents' concerns rested much more on the immediate environment of the internet cafe. This included the perceived social complexity of the cafe, the potential for contracting illness, computers as a source of damaging radiation, the risks of upsetting the natural phases of the body due to the 24-hour opening of internet cafes. All these factors combined to encourage parents to increasingly adopt home internet connections.

4.3. Click to return home: home internet connections

In recent years, home broadband connections had become increasingly common in Red Mountain Town. This service was first provided in the town by China Telecom (*zhongguo dianxin*), and then from 2010 by China Unicom (*zhongguo liantong*). As noted by Qiu (2009), in contrast to the severe government regulation and controls experienced by internet cafes, the government and telecoms companies strongly promoted the expansion of home broadband connections. This was most prominently observed in the multiple painted wall advertisements extolling home broadband on Red Mountain Town's streets. Home broadband coverage was offered to almost all work-unit houses and new commercial apartments; however it was only from 2010

that China Telecom's home broadband service started to gradually penetrate the village-in-the-city areas on the outskirts of the town. Although statistical reports showed that 88.8% of all internet users in China connected at home, whereas 27.9% connected in internet cafes (China Internet Network Information Center, 2012:19), it is suspected that the difference was not nearly so pronounced in Red Mountain Town, owing to its limited availability of home internet connections.

During the time of this fieldwork, China Unicom's broadband was still not available in many village-in-the-city areas of town. Both providers offered substantial discounts if a year's subscription was paid in advance: China Telecom's basic broadband charge was 1000 RMB per annum, whereas China Unicom's was 600 RMB. There also existed options to pay monthly.

Puel and Fernandez (2012) argue that the geography of internet access provision in Chinese cities contributes to urban fragmentation by differentiating urban space. The size of Red Mountain Town made such differentiation far less pronounced than in large Chinese cities, and if differentiation did exist, it probably owed much to the availability and affordability of home internet connections rather than the demand side. However, Puel and Fernandez's approach concentrated on how varying implementations of policy created urban fragmentation between different forms of internet connection. By taking an ethnographic perspective from the view of families, the main fragmentation in Red Mountain Town is seen to be one between home-based and outside provision and take-up.

Some of the steps taken by parents in an attempt to ameliorate such a divide can now be considered. Installing broadband in the home was viewed by many parents as offering the potential to address the problems seen to be created by

internet cafes, by bringing young people back into the home. However, as the ethnographic examples of the Li and Huang families below will demonstrate, installation of the internet into homes brought with it a new set of issues and problems which disturbed the daily life and routines of the family.

4.3.1. The Li's and the problem of placing the PC

In Mr Li's village-in-the-city home, the issue of the internet mainly revolved around a battle for the presence of their youngest son. Mr Li lived in his home with his wife, his elderly mother, and their two sons, aged 14 and 21 respectively. One of the most remarkable features of the internet in their home was how the positioning of the computer terminal within the house and the provision of broadband service to the home changed over the fieldwork period.

When I first arrived at Mr Li's house, the computer had been located in the two brothers' shared bedroom (see figure 7 on page 80). The tower computer was placed on an old office desk made out of laminate chipboard, with a bed on either side. A plastic garden chair, a plastic stool and a metal rocking chair sat in the room, all pointing towards the terminal. At that stage Mr Li's wife explained to me that the reason they installed the internet at home was that they were concerned at the amount of time their youngest son was spending at their neighbour's house playing on their computer, instead of being at their own home.⁷⁹

79. The youngest son was below the legal age to use internet cafes, and was often refused service. His older brother also often visited the cafes before the internet was installed in their homes.

Installing the computer initially achieved the desired effect for the Li's. Once the computer and internet were installed, the youngest son stayed at home for far longer periods, contentedly occupying himself with hours of gaming. In particular, he concentrated his efforts upon the online multiplayer game *Crossfire*, spending hours on end mercilessly annihilating his opponents. However, his avid gaming created a new set of concerns for his mother, as the extent of his appetite for gaming techniques became immediately visible to his parents. Though the parents had achieved their ambition of bringing their son back into the home, they were now troubled by having to directly witness the amount of time that their son spent playing the games.

Furthermore, the siting of the computer in the boys' bedroom led to significant restructuring of the daily routines of the Li family's life. For example, one staple rhythm of the Li's daily practice as a family was summed up by Mrs Li's expression "eat dinner, watch TV" (*chifan, kan dianshi*), which she often recited, with some degree of joy, after every meal. This expression was indicative of the family's habit of retiring to the guest hall after dinner, to watch television soap operas or light entertainment gameshows together, whilst avidly discussing the personalities of the characters or contestants in the programme.

However, the introduction of the internet to the home was extremely disruptive to this process of dining together. The youngest son would frequently be last to arrive for a meal in the kitchen, his mother having to repeatedly call him away from the computer. He would gulp down a small amount of food, then set down his chopsticks and immediately head back to the bedroom to resume gaming. Her son's apparent disinterest in eating caused considerable concern, for his mother. He was

often gently teased by his elder brother's friends for his paltry physique, comparing him to a 'beansprout' (*douya cai*).

In the case of the Li family, the installation of home internet connections became problematic because it initially failed to achieve what the parents *really* seemed to want. Although it brought the family together within the bounds of one household, it did not bring them together into joint activities. Instead, Mr Li and his wife spent their time in the guest hall watching soap operas as before, whilst their two sons occupied themselves in their bedroom playing computer games.

The installation of the computer and home internet connection had a further effect on the family's daily routine. Having unlimited access to the internet, as opposed to the hourly billing in the internet cafe or limited use in their neighbour's house, meant that both sons use of the computer and the internet increased dramatically. The boys often played games late into the night. Mr Li's wife was particularly worried that the presence of the computer in her sons' room meant that her youngest son failed to have an afternoon nap, or to go to sleep at an appropriate hour in the evening. His parents often complained that his inability to prepare for the middle-school exams was affected by his gameplaying. The complaints of his parents seemed to have little effect, and the situation only came to a head when they exercised the most direct possible method in which to control access to the internet: they simply stopped paying the monthly fee, resulting in the service being suspended. However this action only partially achieved the desired effect, as the two sons had taken advantage of the internet connection whilst it was in place by downloading several games that could be played offline. Although disconnecting the

internet curtailed their online game playing, the sons were still able to continue playing computer games.

The story developed further when the old cathode-ray tube (CRT) monitor used with the computer developed a fault, stopping the sons' use of the unit completely. The household routines began to revert to something resembling the situation prior to the appearance of the computer. In particular, post-dinner television sessions occurred more frequently. However, the youngest son's presence in the home also began to wane. He often failed to return directly home once the school broke for lunch, choosing instead to dawdle on the street for ever longer periods, or to try to get served at the internet cafes. On occasions he would not return home until the rest of the family had already finished their meal. This once again began to provoke concern on behalf of the mother.

Eventually the parents relented, and chose to reconnect the internet and purchase a new LCD monitor for the computer. For the time being, the computer stayed in the boys bedroom. On the day the internet was reinstalled Mr Li clearly warned his son that if he were to once again fail to complete his homework, or play too late into the night, then he would simply cut the line again. However, following the reintroduction of the internet in the house, an interesting development occurred: both of the parents gradually became aware of ways in which they could use the internet for their own amusement. For the father, it was the introduction to the online version of the playing card game 'tease the landlord' (*dou dizhu*). Tease the landlord is by far the most popular card game played in Red Mountain Town, and is mostly engaged in by men, as a pastime involving gambling small amounts of money together. In the online version of the game, participants played against two online

opponents, and winning a round would earn the player a fixed number of points. Mr Li explained to me that the reason that he liked the online version over playing offline was that he 'didn't need to find people' (*bu xuyao zhao ren*), describing the inconvenience of trying to find opponents who could put aside the time to join in a game.

A further change occurred when Mr Li's wife realised the potential of the internet in allowing her to watch a vast collection of television programmes and films on-demand and free of charge. Once she had observed her sons watching television programmes online she got them to teach her how to use it. This became particularly useful during a period following Mr Li's wife's surgical operation. For a short time she was unable to perform any housework. She remained seated on the bed of her sons' room facing the computer monitor, watching endless re-runs of soap operas set in recreations of 1930s Shanghai. It soon ensued that there were occasions when the family, rather than being crowded around the guest hall television post-dinner, instead assembled in the boys' bedroom in order to watch a re-run of dating programme *Take Me Out* (*feichang wurao*). Much family debate would precipitate over whether a particular woman was actually good looking or not, or the moral fibre of a particular man.

The parents' realisation that the computer could be used to perform leisure activities similar to the ones they had already been practicing was essential to its successful assimilation into the domestic lives of the family. Mr Li and his wife had initially simply viewed the computer as a means by which to keep their errant son at home. However, they had not realised that the adoption of such an item would upset the daily rhythms of life in the home. They were doubtless even less likely to have

perceived that, through prolonged exposure to the computer in the home, they were also likely to themselves become users.

In the end, the only way that the internet could fully be integrated was if it became a family project. The most extreme way this happened in the Li's house was through the eventual re-siting of the machine. During early 2011 the Li's redecorated a sparse outer room which conjoined the boys' bedroom, the guest hall, a washbasin/laundry area and the staircase. They painted the walls pale pink and installed a new, L-shaped sofa which lay across the back wall, to take advantage of the sunlight that entered this room through the long window, making it the warmest room in the house during the winter. Significantly, at the same time, they moved the computer there, placing it on a corner table in facing into the room. They also moved in plastic chairs. Now when the youngest son played computer games it was frequently under the observation of the parents, or while they were playing *majiang* in the same room. Alternatively, occasions arose when the entire family came together to share the consumption of TV programmes or games of *doudizhu* or *majiang* on the internet.

4.3.2. Mr Huang's son finds immortality in his bedroom

The situation was somewhat different in Mr Huang's home. Like the Li's, this low-level government cadre had installed the internet in his work-unit home in a bid to reduce the time that their only son, 27 years of age, spent in the internet cafe. However, as opposed to the Li household, in this case the internet acted to sustain the frostiness of this parent-child relationship. Mr Huang displayed a continuing sense of disappointment towards his son. Despite studying for a degree in 'television presenting' in Kunming, his son had failed to secure full time work since completing

university. He had returned to Red Mountain Town, and worked irregularly as a compère of live shows at a bar, a job involving a large amount of alcohol consumption and mixing with some of the town's less 'savoury' characters. Towards the end of the fieldwork period, Mr Huang secured a supervisory role for his son in the security department of a local state owned enterprise, which was the first regular job his son had ever had. But this occurred only after his son had lost 20,000 RMB of Mr Huang's money on a failed clothing store venture. His son's experiment in professions that veered away from the more traditional and stable ones practiced by his parents (also a government employee) had strained relationships between them. In this case the home-based internet appeared to do little to improve relationships, beyond ensuring their son's presence in the home.

Following the unforeseen closure of the bar which Mr Huang's son had worked in, he had spent almost all his time at home in his bedroom. If I visited before 2pm, the door to his bedroom was usually closed, signalling the fact that he was still asleep. However, any time after that, the door would be open, and Mr Huang's son would be sat in front of his computer, usually playing the game *Finding Immortality*. *Finding Immortality* is a 3D, multiplayer online role playing game set in a detailed, albeit nostalgic, reproduction of ancient mythical China. It is full of characters such as artisans, pretty young princesses, *fengshui* masters and Buddhist monks who concertedly traverse between pagodas, water gardens, temples and dynastic homes in the execution of a number of tasks, the story lines of which draw on China's rich stock of legends.

Mr Huang helplessly bemoaned to me that his son spent all of his time on the computer, often staying up late into the night. However, in contrast to the previous

example of the Li family, where the parents made concerted efforts in attempts to change their son's behaviour, Mr Huang appeared resigned to it.⁸⁰ He wryly joked about his son's dedication to the game, satirically remarking that if his son were to persevere with his incessant game playing, that his son himself would eventually 'find immortality'.

Mr Huang's son's quest to find immortality was not confined to the online world. It was also intertwined with, and expressed in, the materiality of the bedroom in which he spent so much of his time. Mr Huang's son surrounded himself with a pastiche of his greatest achievements and idols. Gazing on from the shelf above his computer were two model statues of Michael Jackson. One Jackson had been positioned so that his eyes looked, somewhat creepily, directly down onto Mr Huang's son as he played on the computer. The two Jacksons were dwarfed by a silver award trophy. It had a black rhomboid base which was engraved '*Champion - Red Mountain Town Youth Talent Competition 2010*' followed by the name of the awarding body, the 'Red Mountain Town Communist Youth League Committee'. Mr Huang's son had won the prize performing a dance routine in the town's annual talent competition. Mr Huang later explained that his son had spent the 5000 RMB winnings within a week "buying other people dinner, buying them alcohol" (*qing bieren chifan, hejiu*). To put this in perspective, Mr Huang and his wife's monthly combined salary was just over 4000 RMB. The desktop picture on his computer was also a silhouette of a suited, hat-wearing Jackson.

80. Perhaps due to the relative age of their offspring.

In contrast to the Huang's village-in-the-city home, the computer equipment in Mr Huang's son's room was remarkably similar to that of an internet cafe. But it provided an even higher level of comfort and luxury, in that Mr Huang's son could use the internet whilst being surrounded by things that were designed to remind him of his own past successes.

In this sense, Mr Huang's son's bedroom was a homage to the two greatest people in his life: the first was Michael Jackson, the second was himself. At times, in fact, it was difficult to be sure exactly where Jackson ended and Mr Huang's son began. This young man's own certificates, awards, and merits, were juxtaposed with statues, photos and images of Jackson. Articles of clothing, such as the two brimmed hats laying on top of the wardrobe suggested this was more than just surrounding oneself by idols. There was also an active attempt to mimic and appropriate elements of Jackson through the clothing of Mr Huang's son's own body. It felt somewhat appropriate that right in the centre of this Huang-Jackson intermingling, the young man's game of choice was *Finding Immortality*. For Mr Huang's son, Jackson's fame-in-death seemed to be indisputable evidence that immortality could, in fact be achieved.

In contrast to the case of the Li's, where we showed that the family eventually found a way to consume the internet together, Mr Huang's son's home internet use appeared to be doing little to foster more positive parent-child relations. Mr Huang and his wife showed no interest in what he was doing on the computer, or in using it themselves. His parents expressed their disquiet at the time he spent on the internet, but at the same time did not attempt to modify his level of usage. However, what were always clear in the Huang's house were the frosty relations between his

parents and their son. There was a palpable sense of disappointment that their son, now aged 27, had not yet married, obtained stable employment, or accumulated significant wealth. At one stage, Mr Huang explained to me that despite living under the same roof, he and his son had not been on speaking terms with each other for several months. Even Mr Huang's son himself acknowledged that Red Mountain Town provided 'no market' (*meiyou shichang*) for his talents.

Limited though this evidence is, the starkly differing results of the adoption of home internet connections between the two families would suggest that there may be nothing strongly inherent about the effect that appropriation of home internet connections would have on family relations. Instead, home internet connections appeared to mediate pre-existing relationships, and were used to different ends by different families, with the intentions ascribed to their use changing over time.

4.3.3. Hosting the children at home

This chapter has dealt with parent-child relationships, specifically focusing on the anxiety parents experience in relation to their child's internet use. Section 4.1 profiled the reasons behind the attraction of internet cafes to young people. In contrast with discourses that posit digital forms of interaction to be less authentic than face-to-face interaction, it was demonstrated that internet cafes offered many experiences to their customers (such as gaming and chat rooms) that were essentially collective in nature. The collective nature of internet cafes meant that, in addition to individual consumption, they were also viewed positively for engaging in hosting practices between peers. Such hosting practices included visiting the internet cafe as a group, paying for a friend's internet use, or buying them drinks or snacks within

the internet cafe. The existence of a similarity between the symmetrical layout of the monitors, terminals and plush seating in the internet cafe to that described of the guest hall in the previous chapter was also noted. The ability for young people to host their friends in the internet cafe, on the most meagre of budgets, became one of the few ways in which these young people could exercise and work on what Kipnis (1997:40) describes as the 'skilful practice' of hosting.

Section 4.2 then moved to consider why the internet cafe was generally perceived by parents to be an undesirable place for their children to spend time. The sources of this anxiety were described, including becoming infatuated with the internet, the fact that there were 'too many people' in the internet cafe, disease, radiation, and the idea that excessive use of the internet might interrupt the natural phases of the body.

This set of concerns led to ever-increasing numbers of parents installing home-based internet connections in an attempt to bring their offspring back into the family, as was detailed in section 4.3. Here we observed two differing cases of the adoption of home internet connections. The case of the Li family was contrasted with that of the Huang family, noting the differing outcomes of home internet connections. In the Li family, the home internet connection eventually became viewed as being conducive to family relations. It showed how the medium 'finds a niche in relation to the properties of co-existing other media' (Madianou and Miller, 2012:124), namely joint family watching of television after dinner. In the Huang household, by contrast, the presence of the internet served to entrench an already frosty parent-child relationship, by giving their son a means by which to minimise opportunities for contact with his parents.

In Beini Fu's (2010) ethnography of digital practice amongst families in Shanghai, she similarly observes the conflicts experienced amongst families over the siting and use of computers in the home. Fu details the way in which parents control access to the computer in homes. Fu records how young people's intense desire to play computer games leaves parents in a quandary. On the one hand there is a desire to express love for their children (see also Fong, 2004:140) and achieve family harmony. On the other hand are concerns that the distractions of gaming will affect their offspring's educational attainment, and reflect on them badly as parents.⁸¹ This chapter adds a further level of complexity to Fu's argument, by emphasising the nature of the choices that exist between the use of computers set up in young people's bedrooms and the use of those available in other spaces outside the home.

Similar comparisons between offspring's internet use in the home and outside can be found elsewhere. As Horst (2009:100) has noted in her observations of internet use in children's bedrooms in America, the bedroom is supposed to be a 'private' space, held as being important for play and experimentation. Yan (2003:124-128) notes that a similar attitude has developed to bedrooms in the Chinese context, describing increasing trends towards private bedrooms for family members, as seen in changing house designs in a North Chinese village. Yan believes this is driven by an increasing desire for intimacy amongst family members. By contrast Horst suggests that the host of new media in bedrooms challenges the status attributed to the bedroom as a site of privacy and containment. She argues that her

81. Stafford (1995:2-5) argues that morality, in addition to being learnt in schools, is also learnt through parents' daily life practice, and that there exists a perception that by observing a child's behaviour, judgements may be made on the parents' teaching.

informants' 'sense of self in the world hinges upon asserting a material presence in physical and digital worlds' (Horst, 2009:108-109).

Here we should re-emphasise that, both the Li and Huang families sought the adoption of home internet with an intention that it would attract their offspring back in to the home, and away from the internet cafe. The competition between the internet cafe and home was especially clear in the Huang's house, where the arrangement and materials of the furniture in Mr Huang's son's room bore a striking resemblance to the internet cafe. Whilst part of the appeal of internet cafes is that it allows young people the opportunity to host their friends, the case of the adoption of home broadband connections amongst parents in Red Mountain Town also forces us to consider whether or not there is an increasing feeling amongst parents that they themselves have to adapt the structures of hosting in order to maintain links with their own children.

In this context I am drawn to recall two specific behaviours that were observable in both the Li and Huang households. The first was that, in both cases, the son's mothers would bring them food, snacks, fruits and drinks to eat while their offspring sat and played on the computer. The second was that these sons often invited their friends around to sit at the computer and play together, and the sons' mothers would often deliver snacks to them too. I became particularly aware of the likeness in roles between the 'auntie' waitresses in the internet cafes and the sons' mothers.

It should be emphasised that the above point is a speculative one, but if it were to hold true, then it could have important repercussions for understanding the way that structures of hosting are being brought to bear upon parent-child

relationships in Red Mountain Town. Stafford (2000a:38-39) has outlined the way in which the 'rigid' patrilineal descent system typified by Freedman's lineage paradigm (as previously discussed in section 1.1) becomes expressed in creative, processual systems of kinship, typified by what he identifies as 'the cycle of *yang*', and the 'cycle of *laiwang*'. Stafford argues that *yang* applies mainly to parent-child relationships, describing it as 'a kind of all-encompassing nurturance' (2000a:41). This cycle is such that the nurturance which children receive from their parents during their youth is expected to be returned when the parents are elderly and the children are grown up. Stafford describes *laiwang* as being similar to *yang* in that it also involves money and food, but that this cycle applies to relationships with the outside world. One of the questions raised by the homologies between the internet cafe and home internet use is whether issues emerge from the imitation of parent-child *yang* cycles in a commodified form. For instance, might the delivery of food in a manner akin to internet cafe 'aunties') come to be more readily associated by young people to *laiwang* exchanges? If this were to be the case, then one of the results of the shifting relationships between home and cafe internet activities was that they might be challenging or confusing the degree to which generations are differentiated.

In the following chapter, we will move from issues regarding children and young people to the hosting practices mainly engaged in by adults outside of the home. The hospitality situations explored in these two chapters are linked by a common theme: concerns relating to the ability of hosting to affect the health of the body. However, the hosting situations introduced in the next chapter are distinguished in also being frequently spoken about in terms of enjoyment.

Chapter 5: 'Xiangshou' and the salon: enjoying hospitality

This chapter builds on the description of internet cafes given in the previous chapter to consider more closely the role of enjoyment and pleasure within hospitality situations. Chapter 3 of this thesis, which focused on guest halls and hosting, detailed the way in which guests were received and hosted in the guest hall. It asserted that guests were politely obliged to participate in the production of social heat. It described how many of the hosting situations that took place in the home were corporeal in nature, involving sitting, eating, drinking tea, and listening to or producing sound. Chapter 4 also similarly concerned bodily experience, in that it demonstrated how the internet cafe proved attractive for young people in terms of the collective experience and opportunities for hosting it offered. This was countered by a number of concerns occupying parents' minds, mostly related to the perceived effects of prolonged internet cafe use on their children's health, through exposure to disease, radiation, and by upsetting the natural phases of the body. While⁴ internet cafes empowered young people to host their friends, the concern as to the potential harm this might cause the body was one felt more strongly by their parents.

The current chapter will help to provide a broader account of the nature of hospitality situations in Red Mountain Town by switching the focus of attention. It will move from some of the potential damages and dangers as a result of hosting to examine the therapeutic nature of certain hosting situations in the town. It will provide the most pronounced example in the thesis of the intimate link between hospitality situations and the body.

In common with previous chapters, heat will once again emerge to be a crucial concept used by townsfolk in both narratives surrounding, and the performance of, hosting situations. We will demonstrate how notions of heat were used to act upon the bodies of oneself and others within hosting situations. We will also illuminate a kind of experiential state that many hosting situations in Red Mountain Town appeared to be attempting to achieve, by creating events that were characterised as both having, and instilling upon participants, a sense of *xiangshou*. The term *xiangshou* can be translated as enjoyment. This chapter will demonstrate specificities of the use of this term in the context of Red Mountain Town, which show how it is often being used to describe commodified corporeal heat-related hosting experiences that take place in commercial spaces outside the home.

The work will build on a range of writings that already exist regarding Chinese perspectives on pleasure and the body in relation to Chinese medicine (Farquhar, 2002; Farquhar and Zhang, 2005; Zhang, 2007). Taken as a whole, these accounts emphasise the role of pleasurable bodily experiences as beneficial in both the prevention and treatment of illness. This chapter posits that the use of *xiangshou* in Red Mountain Town displays similar properties and attention to the body, whilst at the same time offering a slightly different variant of pleasure to that normally attributed to words such as *kuaile*, *kuaishi*, *leshi* or *wan*.⁸² This distinction is seen to

82. A Chinese orientation towards pleasure can be traced from present-day descriptions of framing hospitality and social heat situations as ‘play’ (*wan*) (Stafford, 2000b:58; Steinmüller, 2011:268) to historical accounts, such as that of Clunas (2007:137-159), that demonstrate the recurrent trope of pleasure, amusement and play in visual and material culture in Ming dynasty China. Clunas emphasises clear that artefacts of that era chiefly illustrate the pleasures enjoyed by the imperial court, and affords little description of what play, amusement and pleasure meant for the mass of the population.

derive from the way in which *xiangshou* appears to be used by Red Mountain Town people largely to describe hospitality situations that are commodified, external to the home, inculcated on the body and carrying connotations of luxury. The increasing importance of *xiangshou* in the town reveals a way in which hospitality has become subtly modified in its transition from the domestic sphere to other places.

The first section of this chapter will examine the construction of the term *xiangshou*, showing that it implicates the body as being the recipient of such experiences. It will then go on to explain the different practices that Red Mountain Townsfolk describe as being forms of *xiangshou*. It will note that the term applies to a wide range of activities, most of which are located outside the home, with many being identified as corresponding to what, in the west, would be termed the beauty industry.

The second section of this chapter then takes one specific *xiangshou* practice – getting hair washed in a salon – and examines it ethnographically. A comparison is undertaken of two different hair salons in Red Mountain Town, both of which offer hair washing as part of their services. One of these salons is highly *xiangshou* oriented, whilst the other is not. The chapter will demonstrate how the *xiangshou*-providing salon gains these characteristics through presenting the hair washing treatment as a Traditional Chinese Medicine experience. The chapter then turns to explain how the *xiangshou* nature of this service is heightened by a rigid sexual division of labour and space in the *xiangshou*-providing salon, a feature that is not shared in the non-*xiangshou* salon. It observes that only the *xiangshou*-providing salon is considered suitable by Red Mountain Town people for conducting hospitality situations. It is concluded that one of the essential features of hosting

practices appears to be the ability to express care for, and have agency over, the health of one's guests, thus establishing hosting as a biopolitical event.

5.1. The rise of 'xiangshou' experiences outside the home

The commercial composition of the central streets that run through Red Mountain Town have an unexpected feature. In addition to the usual landscape of shops, supermarkets, restaurants, and pharmacies that one might expect to find in any townscape, there also exists a strikingly high concentration of establishments that contribute to what might be recognised as the 'beauty industry': hair salons, beauticians, massage parlours, saunas and clothing boutiques. A cursory glance would suggest that the population of Red Mountain Town are somewhat preoccupied with their looks.

That people should attach importance to their appearance should not come as a great surprise, as ethnographic and historical accounts show that maintaining one's outward image has endured not just throughout the history of China (Finnane, 2008; Jankowiak, 1993; Gillette, 2000a; Gillette, 2005), but for humankind more generally (Woodward, 2005; Gell, 1993; Kuchler and Were, 2005; Kuchler and Miller, 2005). Nevertheless, the scale at which these services are being consumed begs a consideration of why these activities are so especially important to the people of Red Mountain Town's people. Miller's (2005:2-3, 2009:16-22) concept of 'depth ontology' is theoretically useful in framing enquiry into this local beauty industry. Speaking in relation to clothing, Miller argues that western thought possesses a tendency to view the cultivation of surfaces as being intrinsically superficial, instead of privileging an assumed 'real self' that lies 'deep inside' a person. Miller (1994)

counters this with the example of Trinidadians, who perceive the real person as residing on the surface. Applying this dichotomy to the beauty industry of Red Mountain Town yields two important findings. Firstly, treatments are not just concerned with acting at the surface of the body, but also work on the body's interior. Secondly, such treatments, rather than being purely directed at what might be thought to be an 'individualist self', could also be an inherently social experience, and thus deemed an appropriate means by which to deliver hospitality.

The apparent depth of these beauty treatments became clear when the owner of one of the town's beauty parlours explained, over dinner, her customers' motives for visiting her parlour.

Look, the customers who come here, they just come here to *xiangshou*. Their economic power has reached a certain level, and now they want to *xiangshou*.

The phrase *xiangshou* may be translated as 'to enjoy'. Dictionary examples suggest the word is mainly used to describe rights and benefits. However, as we shall shortly see, the common usage of the word in Red Mountain Town, rather than focusing on legal privilege, is concerned with the sensorial and experiential aspects of consumptive practice. Furthermore, the composition of the word is especially interesting, being made up of the characters *xiang* (享), which means 'to enjoy', 'to benefit' or 'to have the use of', and *shou* (受), meaning 'to receive', or 'to accept'. This would appear to imply a directional nature to the enjoyment, in that something must be conferred upon the person (or their body) in order for them to enjoy. The beauty parlour owner's statement is an indication that, in addition to working on one's outside appearance, a visit to the salon was also perceived as being an experience that also affected the emotions of customers.

The theme of *xiangshou* has been largely disregarded in anthropological studies of China. What is striking is that on the occasions where it does emerge in the literature, this is typically in passing, and in the form of direct quotations from informants, such that the concept is not afforded analysis in its own right. For example, Ho and Ng's (2008) ethnographic account of a former socialist 'model community' in Shanghai illustrates how their participants described the changing nature of *xiangshou* over time. On the one hand Ho and Ng record that 'pursuing the joy of material living' (*zhuiqiu wuzhi xiangshou*) (Ho and Ng, 2008:384) seemed to permeate contemporary everyday discourse. Elsewhere this was contrasted with the prohibition of 'materialistic enjoyment' (*wuzhi xiangshou*) (Ho and Ng, 2008:399) during the Maoist era. In a separate article, Ho (2008:237) notes informants mentioning that 'Shanghai people now know how to enjoy life' (*Shanghai ren xianjian dongde xiangshou*), implying that *xiangshou* is a skill to be understood. Elsewhere, Fraser (2000:36) notes the use of 'gentle enjoyment' (*youya xiangshou*) in property advertisements for new commercial apartments in Shanghai: though not in reference to the apartments themselves, but to the communal garden space within the development. Hanser (2006:480) even notes a sales assistant in a Harbin department store speaking of the 'spiritual enjoyment' (*jingshen xiangshou*) of serving customers. Apart from the fact that scholars are yet to place *xiangshou* under close anthropological analysis, what is also surprising about these mentions of *xiangshou*, is that they all seem to emerge within the context of, or with reference to, commercialised consumptive practice.

In order to better understand the precise nature of *xiangshou*, 25 participants⁸³ were questioned regarding the contexts in which they felt the word *xiangshou* could be used appropriately (see figure 22).⁸⁴ The responses showed that, for Red Mountain Town people, *xiangshou* appeared to represent a specific set of connotations that drew together quite different practices into a somewhat unusual constellation, and one that varied from what, in a western context, might typically be associated with ‘enjoyment’. A sizable scope (49) of different activities were listed by all the respondents, ranging from the apparently mundane (for example, ‘playing cards’) to the sublime (‘a sculptor admiring a finished artwork’).

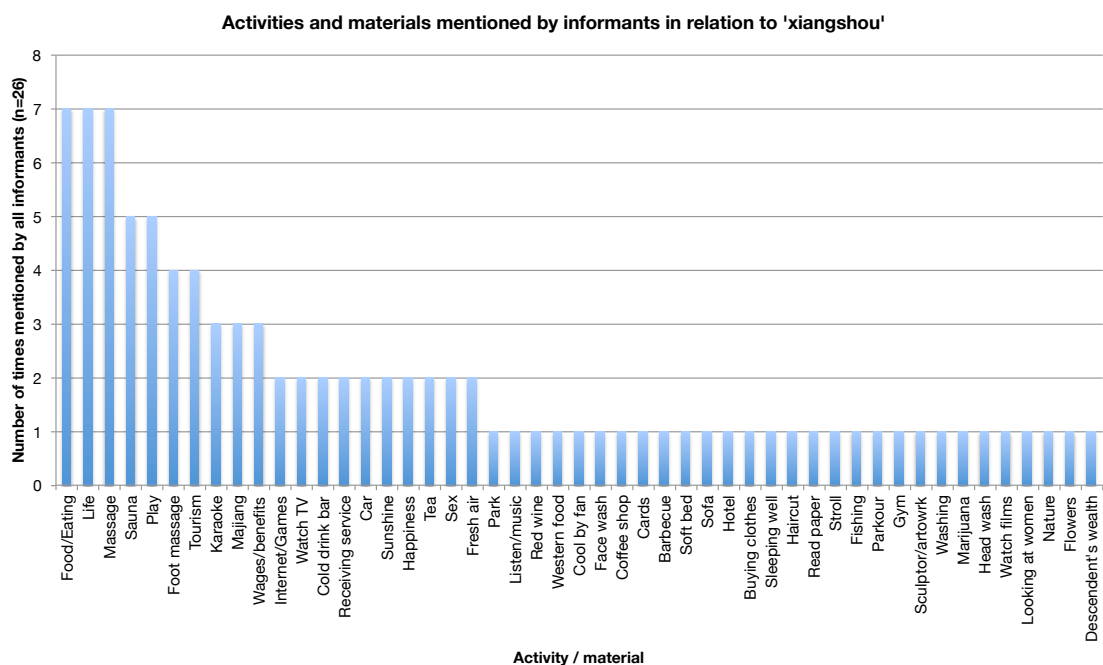


Figure 22: Bar chart of activities and materials mentioned by informants in relation to ‘xiangshou’

83. The participants were drawn from various locations across the town.

84. The methodological inspiration for this approach comes from Kipnis’ (2006) investigation of the rise of the word *suzhi* in Chinese society during the reform period, in which he argued that the popularity of the term rested on the fact that it spoke to the anxieties of both the general population and of Party leaders.

The most popular examples of *xiangshou* given by informants were related to, life, food and eating, and to receiving a massage, which seven of the 25 informants (28%) mentioned. Many informants listed ‘*xiangshou* life’ (*xiangshou shenghuo*) as their first example of *xiangshou*. ‘*Xiangshou* life’ represented a fairly non-specific statement, an appreciation of life itself, almost reminiscent of Clunas’ (2007:138) description of looking and spectatorship as a form of pleasure itself in Ming dynasty China. If respondents were subsequently asked how in particular they would *xiangshou* life, they would typically give further, more concrete examples of activities (all of which follow suit), and as we shall see, are mostly consumptive practices. Of the seven participants who mentioned ‘*xiangshou* life’ three were women and four were men. Amongst males, no young men (i.e. in teens, 20s, or early 30s) interviewed mentioned that one could ‘*xiangshou* life’. The use of the term ‘*xiangshou* life’ by men was only prevalent from those aged around 35 and above. This perhaps suggested that one required a certain maturity or a heightened sense of value in order to appreciate life itself, as opposed to being fixated on consumptive activity.

Answers relating to food and eating were the next most popular activity to be listed as a means of *xiangshou*. These descriptions ranged from simply being able to *xiangshou* something that ‘tastes good’ (*hao chi*), to imaginative descriptions of being able to *xiangshou* food with a ‘beautiful taste’ (*meiwei*). For example, one young man said one could “*xiangshou* a table with a feast on it”, whilst another man of a similar age fantastically described “just like eating western food, right? To slowly [unhurriedly] *xiangshou* that kind of taste. Slowly, slowly *xiangshou* the flavor of those beef steaks”. As opposed to life, the people who described food or

eating as a kind of *xiangshou* were mostly males⁸⁵ and four of these were aged between 10-29 years. Interestingly, this group of people were composed almost entirely of people who had not said '*xiangshou* life'. There was only one case, the middle-aged male manager of a small supplies store which sold rice and noodles, who mentioned both '*xiangshou* life' and '*xiangshou* beautiful taste'. His examples were somewhat grounded in contrast to other more fantastical ones, and he simply said it was enjoying the 'beautiful taste'.

Massage as a form of *xiangshou* earned an equal number of mentions to both food/eating and life. Five of the people who mentioned it were women, and only two were male. Of the two males, one was in his forties and the other was in his early twenties. In a similar vein to massage (and noteworthy as a premises on which, foot massage, and eating also tend to take place), five informants named the act of washing in a sauna as a kind of *xiangshou*. Separately, four informants named receiving a foot massage as a *xiangshou* activity.

What is notable about the results of this survey is that, if one is to group together the various responses that could be interpreted as being part of the beauty industry⁸⁶, then these establishments account for 19 out of the 49 responses. Once the

85. Five males described food or eating as a form of *xiangshou*, as opposed to only two females.

86. It has here been assumed the 'beauty industry' comprises of massage, sauna, foot massage, facials (delivered in beauty parlours), haircuts and hair washes (delivered in hair salons). I am perfectly willing to concede that these different establishments may not necessarily be what Red Mountain Town people themselves consider to constitute the beauty industry. However this etic term is applied at the start of this chapter, to enables an empirical comparison of *xiangshou* practices to be made. That in turn leads to the realisation that health is actually the main point towards which these hosting practices are directed.

rather vague response ‘enjoy life’ is removed, they account for almost half of all responses. Coupled with this snapshot, that such a large industry dedicated to providing *xiangshou* experiences has emerged in Red Mountain Town is naturally, of interest and deserving of explanation.

The issue of place is also of significance here. The prevalence of the beauty industry in townspeople’s descriptions of *xiangshou* activities indicates that many of these *xiangshou* experiences are not only commodified, but also now take place outside the home.⁸⁷ In an attempt to demonstrate more fully what a *xiangshou* experience is meant to be, the remainder of this chapter concerns itself with a comparison of two hair salons in Red Mountain Town: one highly oriented towards providing a *xiangshou* experience; and the other, a more ‘normal’ type of salon that does not provide treatments of a *xiangshou* nature. It will be demonstrated that in the case of salons, it is this quality of *xiangshou* that appears to be the main factor in rendering an activity as being conducive to the performance of hospitality situations.

5.2. Hair salons as a site of ‘xiangshou’

We now examine two Red Mountain Town hair salons, one called Masterpiece Cuts and the second called Classical Hair. Despite both being hair salons, Masterpiece Cuts is described as a salon where people go to *xiangshou*, whereas Classical Hair is not. Masterpiece Cuts’ clientele tends to be wealthier than that of Classical Hair. The two salons attract a roughly balanced ratio of male to female customers, however

87. It should be noted that of the activities listed above in figure 22, some pursuits such as eating, playing *majiang*, playing computer games (see also chapter 4) or watching television take place in both domestic and commercial spaces. In this context it should also be noted that, as with the case of hairwashing detailed in this chapter, all of these activities can be both *xiangshou* and non-*xiangshou* in nature.

more male customers tend to opt for those particular services at Masterpiece Cuts that are highly *xiangshou* in nature. It is argued that the *xiangshou* nature of Masterpiece Cuts is what renders it conducive to the performance of hospitality situations. This section will illustrate how this *xiangshou* is made manifest by the physical location of the salons in the town; the sexual division of labour; the sexualisation of the salon space; and recourse to Chinese medical narratives in the provision of services.

5.2.1. ‘Doing hair’ versus ‘xiangshou’

The staff of Classical Hair had a clear idea of the distinction between their salon and Masterpiece Cuts. One of the assistants remarked that both Classical Hair and Masterpiece Cuts were ‘normal’ (*zhengchang*) salons. They went on to explain that there were two types of hair salons, ‘normal’ and ‘not normal’ (*bu zhengchang*), elaborating that a ‘not normal’ salon would offer a number of ‘special services’ (*tezhong fuwu*), a phrase which was also a euphemism for sex services. In their view what differentiated Masterpiece Cuts from their own salon was that their competitors offered *xiangshou* services, whilst they defined their own service at Classical Hair as merely ‘doing hair’ (*zuo toufa*).

The connection between hair, hair salons and sex in China is a somewhat complicated one. In Jankowiak’s (1993:171) account of physical attraction in urban Huhot, Jankowiak explains the preference among both males and females for what was, at that time, the fashionable ‘Shanghai style’ over more traditional braided hairstyles. Jankowiak argued that this was a sign of the increased value placed on sexual attractiveness. Aside from the obvious role of attractiveness, hair can occupy

a more complex relationship with sex, as explained in Zheng's (2009:188-189) account of hair preferences amongst karaoke bar hostesses in Dalian. Zheng explained that hostesses spent especially large amounts of money and time on their own hairdressing and hair styling, with two main objectives. The first objective was to disassociate themselves from the countryside; whilst the second aimed to increase their attractiveness to male customers, to the extent that they might change their hair almost daily so as to maintain a sense of novelty and ensure that their customers would not tire of them. Nevertheless, as will be detailed later in this chapter, though both Classical Hair and Masterpiece Cuts were 'normal' hair salons and did not offer 'special services', Masterpiece Cuts made use of young female assistants in an attempt to heighten the sense of *xiangshou*.

The main way in which Masterpiece Cuts established its *xiangshou* credentials was through the provision of a specific kind of elaborate hair washing treatment named 'Ginger Art Physiotherapy'. This treatment, costing 48 RMB, was heavily promoted by colour posters and extendable banners, placed throughout the store, that extolled the various restorative health benefits of the service through notions related to Chinese medicine. Whilst in salons like Classical Hair, washing hair typically forms a cursory stage in preparing the hair for cutting or treatment; by contrast, in Masterpiece Cuts, half of the workforce is dedicated to it, and hair washing formed over fifty per cent of the business' profits.

The actual Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatment process itself started with the customer selecting the female assistant from whom they would like to receive the treatment. They would then be led to one of the 'wash and protect' treatment areas, one of three dimly lit areas, with a row of beds containing a sink fitted to the end of

each bed. A plastic sheet would be placed over the back of their shirt, followed by a towel. The customer would then lie on their back, with their head projected off the end of the bed and raised over the sink, facing up towards the female assistant who was delivering the treatment. First their hair would be shampooed, rinsed and conditioned using shampoo, which the posters implied contained the Chinese herbal ingredients. Concurrent to this, the lotion was also used to massage the temple of the head and the upper neck area. In this process individuals were asked if both the water temperature and the pressure applied by the hands was appropriate. Customers were asked whether they wished to have their ears washed, which involved applying shampoo to the ear area, and then rinsing it off shortly afterwards. The assistant would take a cotton bud, and pull out a wisp of the cotton from the bud to form a peak, which would then be inserted into the ear in order to clean out the canal. Next, while remaining lying on one's back, the assistant would massage the lower neck, shoulders and back of the patient using a massage gel. A heat pad would then be applied to the neck for a few minutes. During this time the customer would be left in the treatment area on their own. Eventually they would be led out, their hair would be blow-dried and styled, they would be given the opportunity to sit and offered a ginger flavoured drink that had been brewed in the store.

Classical Hair did not offer elaborate hair wash treatments in the same style of Masterpiece Cuts. Both salons did however offer a simple hair wash as a precursor to a haircut, and also a separate simple wash and blow dry (normally for around 10 RMB). As opposed to the horizontal beds that were used for the complex treatments featured in Masterpiece Cuts, in both of salons the simple hair washing procedures took place on the more familiar style of inclined salon chairs.

5.2.2. Medicinal haircare

The *xiangshou* nature of the Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatment offered at Masterpiece Cuts was associated throughout with narratives of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which reflected a belief that these treatments also acted upon the body's interior. In arguing that there is a conjoint between *xiangshou* and Chinese medicine, I draw on Farquhar's (2002:27-28) description of the connection between 'sensuous experience' and 'healing', which she holds to be central to Traditional Chinese Medicine:

These bitter-tasting but fragrant medicines are techniques for producing or maintaining pleasant, comfortable, gratifying or interesting feelings in place of those that are painful, irritating or dull.

(Farquhar, 2002:27)

Farquhar proposes that this focus on experiential pleasure encourages one to think of Chinese medical services in terms of fulfilling *wants* rather than *needs*. If the same logic can be applied to the salon, then the fact that any treatment might be particularly pleasurable to its recipient should also make it beneficial to their health. A significant amount of artefacts on display in the *xiangshou* establishments of Red Mountain Town confirmed this connection. Various posters placed on the salon walls advertising the treatment emphasised its Chinese medicinal characteristics (figure 23). For example, one such poster read:

Ginger Art Physiotherapy

'Wash with Ginger Art, wash to health'

Fresh ginger (*xianjiang*), orchid tuber (*tianma*), *Ganoderma lucidum* mushroom (*lingzhi*), *polygonatum multiflorum* (*shouwu*), privet fruit (*nüzhenzi*), soup for internal harmony (*neitiaotang*)

Enlivens blood circulation, exercises wind and drives on cold (*qufeng quhan*), removes fatigue and weariness, freshens up and awakens the brain,

eases stress (*huanjie pilao*), nourishes and blackens the hair (*yangfa wufa*), treats headache and dizziness, [treats] cervical vertebrae illness (*jianzhou yan*).

Treatment time: 60 minutes. Special promotional price: 48 RMB.

Treatment process: 20 minute massage; Thai style head wash; Chinese medicine ginger art physiotherapy; shoulder and neck maintenance; heating pad.



Figure 23: Poster advertising Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatment on salon wall

The shampoo and conditioner that was used during the treatment were said to contain amounts of the herbal ingredients listed on the poster (and I have no grounds to doubt that). Based on the Chinese *materia medica* canon, ginger is identified as a particularly efficacious Chinese herb. It is said to have a warming thermal nature (Kastner, 2004:122), strengthening the body's centre burner, its ability to transform phlegm, and freeing the exterior from excess wind-cold (Kastner, 2004:122; Liu and

Tseng, 2005:602). Orchid tuber is similarly cited as extinguishing wind,⁸⁸ in addition to calming the liver (Liu and Tseng, 2005:684). Lingzhi mushrooms are also warming, and act to nourish the heart and calm the spirit (Liu and Tseng, 2005:679). *Polygonatum multiflorum* (*shouwu*) is a black bitter-sweet ingredient that remedies premature greying of the hair⁸⁹ (Liu and Tseng, 2005:286), and the efficacy of this herb was widely known amongst townsfolk. Privet fruit was likewise said to reduce the premature greying of the hair (Liu and Tseng, 2005:668). The ‘soup for internal harmony’ is an encompassing term that describes soup containing multiple ingredients usually thought to be beneficial to the female body.⁹⁰ Though customers and employees at Masterpiece Cuts were usually not able to describe exactly how each of these ingredients were perceived to be efficacious to the detail of the *materia medica* cited above, most still expressed a belief that the general effect of such ingredients on the body would be to enliven blood circulation (*huoxue*). It should also be noted that most of these ingredients were known for their warming characteristics. The employees at Masterpiece Cuts explained that the efficacious

88. Here wind refers to the one of the ‘six excesses’, perceived in Chinese medicine to cause illness: wind, cold, heat, dampness, dryness, and fire (Zhang, 2007:79).

89. The character *wu* can represent the colour black. Some Red Mountain Town people expressed a belief that black hair was an indicator of one’s health. Similarly, Farquhar (2002:85) recounts the plot of Chinese revolutionary opera *White-Haired Girl*, in which a young woman’s hair turns white owing to nutritional deficiency. Zhang’s (2007:65) study of emotions in Chinese medicine also notes the existence amongst her informants of the perception that the emotional state of worry can turn one’s hair gray.

90. Paradoxically, most of the customers receiving Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatments were males (to be discussed later).

herbs within the shampoo could be ‘absorbed’ (*xi jinqu*) into the body via both the hair and the scalp.

These treatments take place in one of the three ‘wash and protect areas’ (*xihu qu*) in the salon. This rather unusual name comes from the addition of the character for protection (*hu*), further gesturing towards the implied preventative benefits of the treatment.

Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatment was seen as being effective not only in terms of the lotions and massage applied on the surface of the body. At the end of the treatment, patients were offered a warm drink that had been brewed in the store using a tea urn filled with Coca-Cola⁹¹, ginger, goji-berries and other ingredients said to boost vitality. Ginger, especially known for its properties of increasing internal fire, was by far the strongest flavor in this sweet, throat-warming elixir.

By now, it ought to be clear that Ginger Art Physiotherapy acted on the body in a number of different ways: through massage which stimulated blood flow, whilst simultaneously incorporating efficacious medicinal herbs into the body both through absorption via the skin and hair, and also by oral ingestion. In this way, Ginger Art Physiotherapy appears to parallel established Chinese medicinal treatments in terms of the multiple techniques, materials and approaches they each take to preventing and treating illness.

91. Surprising though the inclusion of Coca-Cola in this concoction may be, it is of note that when the Coca-Cola company carried out initial taste-tests in preparation of the launch of the drink in the Chinese market during the 1980s, consumers at first thought the black sweet drink to be a form of Chinese herbal medicine (Usha and George, 2006:48; Tian and Dong, 2010:14).

The allusions towards the health benefits of treatments offered by Masterpiece Cuts were not solely limited to these therapies. The salon also placed a number of foodstuffs on display around the store, the most prominent of which was a selection of potted ginger plants (see figure 24). In similar vein, there was a table in the salon consisting of three tall octagonal glasses containing different kinds of freshly squeezed vegetable juice. The glasses were filled with bright orange and green liquids, each covered in food wrap, and laid on a blue towel spread over the table. As if to prove their vegetable origin, behind the glasses lay a bowl containing two bitter-melons, two carrots, two cucumbers and a stalk of celery. Though the vegetable juice was not offered to customers (instead being consumed by the female assistants at the end of each day), it constituted another clear attempt to imply that Masterpiece Cuts' treatments would also achieve a similar kind of healthy lifestyle.

5.2.3. Gendering haircare

Masterpiece Cuts had a sizable staff, with around 10-15 employees working at any one time. This staff was largely comprised of young men and women under 25 years of age (with the exception of three of the male senior stylists and the female managing director). By contrast, Classical Hair had six employees in total, three men, and three women. In Masterpiece Cuts, there was a clear differentiation in the division of labour between the employees, which was also reflected in a corresponding spatial differentiation of the salon. This differentiation was far less pronounced in Classical Hair.

The workforce in Masterpiece Cuts was clearly split into three separate teams: 'washing' (*xifa*), 'cutting' (*jianfa*) and 'treating' (*tangran*). The staff who

were members of the washing team in Masterpiece Cuts were also referred to as ‘assistants’ (*zhuli*). The members of the washing team were uniformly female; whilst the staff involved with cutting, also called ‘hairdressers’ (*lifa shi*), were all male. The gender differentiation amongst the smaller ‘treating’ team, who provided hair colouring, straightening and perming treatments was more ambiguous, with a mixed workforce.

The division of labour in Masterpiece Cuts was made clear to customers in a number of ways, the most pronounced of which was probably through uniforms worn by the staff. The regulation uniform of the female washing and treating staff was a black close-fitting polo shirt with orange hems, and the salon logo emblazoned on its front. All of the females matched this with their own dark blue or black denim jeans. By contrast, the five males who worked in the cutting team wore a uniform consisting of white sleeved shirts, and again, in all but one case, jeans of their own choosing. As opposed to the standard uniform for the women, the males purchased their own shirts and were able to display some variance in the styles of their tops, such as slightly different cuts or patterned collars/cuffs.⁹² Uniforms helped to make the division between female assistants and male hairdressers explicit. Furthermore, as one staff member explained to me, the division was supposed to put the customer at ease. He explained that the presence of female assistants to wash customer’s hair would make them “feel comfortable (*shufu*), if it was men [washing their hair] they would feel uncomfortable”. This staff member went on to elaborate that, in the

92. In the treatment area, which was staffed by two people (a male and a female), the strictly enforced uniform regulations broke down. The male staff member, in contrast to all the other hairdressers (who wore white) wore a non-regulation black shirt.

provincial capital, some salons did have male assistants who provided treatments similar to Ginger Art Physiotherapy, but that he believed Red Mountain Town people were “too conservative” (*tai baoshou*) to tolerate such an offering.⁹³

The gender differentiation of the salon is also somewhat reflected in terms of the customers: however this is less pronounced than in the case of the workforce. Both male and female customers choose to receive Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatments. However some of the herbal ingredients above (page 237), such as the privet fruit, and the ‘soup for internal harmony’, were supposed to be ‘for women’, reflecting what Farquhar (2002:60) refers to as the ‘gendered character’ of herbal medicinal ingredients. However, more men tended to receive Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatments at Masterpiece Cuts than women, perhaps revealing that the skill (or looks?) of the person providing the treatment was also an important factor. This was confirmed by the fact that customers had the opportunity to select which of the female assistants would wash their hair, a process referred to by salon staff as ‘singling out’ (*dandiao*). Some customers would be regular patrons of a particular assistant.

Though attraction was obviously an important factor in the influencing a customer’s selection of assistant, there might be perceived benefits other than just

93. At Masterpiece Cuts there was one occasion when it was acceptable for men to wash hair: the treating team. This team, which was of mixed sex, occasionally washed the hair of customers if the female hair washing assistants were too busy, and it was necessary for the treatments to continue being delivered.

gratification.⁹⁴ One senior male hairdresser at Classical Hair explained of Masterpiece Cuts services that naturally, if customers were to have an attractive assistant wash their hair and give them a massage then their “mood would be good” (*xinqing hao*).⁹⁵ The transformative effect that receiving the treatment from such an assistant might have on one’s mood may also find parallels in Zhang’s (2007) description of the use of Chinese medicine to transform emotions. In Zhang’s comprehensive ethnography, she details the way in which different types of emotions are linked to the five organs (*zang*) of the viscera, and in turn the five phases (*wuxing*). Zhang shows how doctors prescribe herbal medicines in order to treat underlying emotional disorders by attempting to restore the appropriate balance of emotions in the body. Furthermore, Masterpiece Cuts provided another example (similar to the ‘slaughter of the first pig’ meals described in section 2.3.1) of the willingness of the people of Red Mountain Town to conflate the atmosphere of place with the character of the people found within it.

The gendered division of labour in Masterpiece Cuts mirrored a somewhat regimented division of space. These spaces were the ‘rinse area’ (*chongshui qu*) and

94. In this sense, in common with Bax’s (2007) ethnographic observations of Shanghai salons, Red Mountain Town’s salons were found to be a sexual space. However, whilst Bax argued that male hairdressers used the legitimized opportunity for bodily contact with females that their workplace presented in order to pursue women, this chapter emphasises how receiving service from someone who is deemed to be attractive might potentially increase the perceived health benefits and level of *xiangshou*.

95. These attitudes also permeated into the domestic sphere on occasion. Once, on visiting the Yu’s home, I was surprised to observe that the printed wall tiles in their new bathroom featured a faux period-style motif of a topless European lady reclining under a parasol. When I asked the middle-aged couple why they had chosen the tiles, Mr Yu’s wife, a retired schoolteacher, laughed and replied “for your uncle Yu to look at!” (*gei ni Yu shushu kan*).

three ‘wash and protect’ areas (*xihu qu*) (subdivided into areas A, B and C), which were the domain of the female ‘assistants’ (*huli*) (see figure 24). The male hairdressers worked mostly in the haircut area (*jianfa qu*), which was itself further divided between the various price bands of different types of cuts. Finally, there was also an ‘iron and dying’ area (*tangran qu*) where various hair treatments (i.e. perming, conditioning, dying) took place. In the same way that uniforms made the gendered differentiation of the workforce explicit, printed signs, raised areas and platforms in the salon also made the existence of these spatial divisions clear to the customer.

An interesting feature of this arrangement was the way in which certain areas, and therefore people and treatments, were made visible through the double doors that opened permanently onto the busy pedestrian street, whilst certain activities were hidden away from view within the salon’s interior. The complex washing treatments (to be covered in greater detail later) took place in one of the three wash and protect areas. The wash and protect areas were all darkened rooms, within the very interior of the shop, sited away from the view of the street. Within each area, the treatment beds were positioned in a row, with a further partition wall between every two to three beds. This meant that customers receiving Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatments were not only obscured from the view of passers-by, but from customers receiving haircuts in the salon, and sometimes also from other customers receiving the same treatment.



Figure 24: Floor plan of Masterpiece Cuts hair salon

The partitioning of these beds into smaller groups meant that whenever a party of customers arrived together, they were allocated adjacent washing beds in the same portioned area wherever possible, so that they were able to converse with each other whilst they received their treatment, and that their joint consumption was

obscured from the view of the rest of the salon. Most of the customers who come to receive hair washing are males, with one person telling me that the split is around 60% males to 40% females. From my own observations, the assistants were at their busiest in the evening after dinner, when businessmen, typically aged between thirty and fifty years of age, often arrived in groups of two or three to wash their hair. Indeed, one might speculate that this imperative to consume together had given rise to the architectural form of the wash and protect areas. By contrast, women tended to more typically come in to receive hair washing treatments during the afternoon. The male staff of Masterpiece Cuts were uninvolved with the washing process, only very rarely entering the wash and protect areas.

The siting of the wash and protect areas in the salon's innermost spaces suggests a desirability for elements of massage and head washing to be obscured from public view. Perhaps this arises from the possible discomfort of individuals in being observed by others whilst receiving *xiangshou*-type treatments.⁹⁶ Another potential explanation could be a cultural association between females, the interior, and acts of cleaning or washing. Bray (1997:129) traces a preoccupation with female interiority back to imperial China, where weaving practices forced women to spend most of their time at home. However, there were important occasions in the salon when female assistants were predominantly on view. Often one member of the washing team stood by the door (particularly in the evenings) and acted as the 'greeter' (*yingbin*), welcoming customers entering the salon.⁹⁷ Furthermore, during

96. Indeed, similar concerns with privacy and obscuring also occurred in beauty parlours, saunas and foot massage establishments

97. Here similarities in role might be noticed to that of the housewarming party host mentioned in section 2.3.1, who stood by the entrance to the house greeting guests.

lax periods, both male and female employees could frequently be found 'hanging out' in the area in front of the entrance to the salon (a practice not uncommon to other small-business premises in China).

In contrast, the cutting of hair in Masterpiece Cuts took place in full view of public, as the four cutting seats were visible to pedestrians when they walked past the store on the street. The only exception to this was the VIP room (*guibin wu*), a partitioned haircut area towards the back of the store, brightly lit and featuring exaggerated ostentatious gold-painted frames surrounding the mirrors. However unlike the dark wash and protect areas, the VIP room was light and could easily be seen into by customers passing through the salon. In the VIP room only the most experience hairdressers will cut hair, at the more expensive price of 25 RMB for a basic cut (in comparison with 15 RMB with an inexperienced hairdresser).

Classical Hair operated a less strictly differentiated division of labour than Masterpiece Cuts. Although in this salon it was also only men who cut hair, hair washing and treating were normally done by female assistants. However there was not the same rigid formal division of labour amongst the team at Classical Hair. In fact, when things became extremely busy, the male hairdressers often helped with washing the hair of (more typically the female) customers.

This reduced gendered differentiation of labour was reflected in a far less strictly regimented arrangement of the salon space in Classical Hair in comparison to Masterpiece Cuts, though there still existed some similarities in the spatial configuration of the two salons. In Classical Hair the areas where the hair was washed were located in the far interior of the store, whilst the areas where hair was cut were closest to the door, visible to the street through panelled glass. However,

Classical Hair was not as explicit in making this differentiation clear. There were no walls or platforms separating areas off from each other. Nor was there any signage to make clear to the customer the specialisation that each of these zones might offer.

In summary, the gendering of the hair salon for delivering Ginger Art Physiotherapy appeared to be a direct attempt to increase the perceived sensuousity of the experience, and thereby increase its potential for being recognised as a form of *xiangshou*.

5.2.4. Chinese medicine and hosting

Having described people's motivations for receiving beauty treatments as a form of *xiangshou*, and shown how the material culture and division of labour in Masterpiece Cuts was indicative of the medicinal nature of the treatments, we will now look into the the way in which these treatments bear on social relationships within Red Mountain Town. Key to that is a realisation that Ginger Art Physiotherapy is considered an appropriate way in which to host other people. Thus, during the fieldwork hosting between friends was often observed to be taking place in Masterpiece Cuts, whereas it was never seen to occur in Classical Hair.

One instance of the use of the salon as a means of hosting comes from Mr He, an aspiring local businessman. Mr He often hosted his friends, employees and business partners, and was especially keen on taking them out to dinner. On several occasions after eating and drinking at local restaurants, he would drive the people he had shared a meal with across town in his 4x4 car to Masterpiece Cuts, where they would take a Ginger Art Physiotherapy treatment together. On one occasion Mr He stressed to his friends the restorative effect that he perceived the treatment would

have on them, saying that it would ‘remove toxins’ (*paidu*), such as the alcohol they had just drunk, from their bodies. Similarly, Mr He always chose to ‘single out’ the same female assistant when entering the salon. As the men lay next to each other, receiving treatments from the female assistants, Mr He created a jovial mood amongst his friends by directing flattering statements towards the assistant he was receiving the therapy from. Once they had finished their treatments, Mr He would proceed to the cashier’s desk and pay the bill for his, and his friends’ treatments.

One is tempted to compare Mr He’s hosting activities to Farquhar’s (2002:122-163) analysis of the political and ethical dimensions of official banquets. Farquhar demonstrated how the salubrious nature of official feasts raised important moral issues for those involved. She argued that the social dilemmas of such feasting needed to be understood in terms of traditional Chinese bodily notions of excess and deficiency. In so doing, Farquhar attempted to show how the Chinese find a solution to the challenge which social eating poses in ‘determining the best, most respectful, and also most giving way of relating to each other’ (Derrida, 1991; cited in Farquhar, 2002:124). Farquhar argues for an engagement with the specific flow of flavours, alcohol, dialogue and *ganqing* in order to understand what she terms the ‘gustatory political gestures’ or ‘carnal-hierarchical romance’ that take place within these spaces (Farquhar, 2002:153). Farquhar also highlights the perceived medicinal nature of meals, giving the example of how government officials at one restaurant believed the medicinal meals to be particularly ‘boosting’, and that these dishes would have the effect of making them ‘stronger’ (Farquhar, 2002:61).

Farquhar’s description makes clear both the perceived efficacious nature of eating what she terms ‘medicinal meals’, and that these meals often appear in highly

socially-charged situations, such as official banquets. However, Farquhar's ethnographic description focuses more on the way in which the flavours of the meal contribute to the social environment. Farquhar's plays down the significance of the relative roles, status and hierarchical positions of hosts or guests in her descriptions of banquets. It could be that the medicinal dimension of Masterpiece Cuts' offering makes it an analogous situation to that described by Farquhar at official banquets.

However, in putting forward such an analogy, I would seek to add to Farquhar's analysis by making clearer some of the specificities of the medicinal nature of hosting. If one reconsiders Farquhar's banqueting under the rubric of hosting, in the way that Masterpiece Cuts was analysed, it would appear that the medicinal nature of both situations allows hosts to not only express a degree of concern regarding the health and wellbeing of their guests, but also affords them agency and legitimacy over the health and body of their guests.⁹⁸ In this sense, Mr He's engagement in consumptive hosting in Masterpiece Cuts might best be understood as a 'biopolitical' project. This type of biopolitics, however, is not like Foucault's (Foucault, 2003 [1997]) picture of the regulatory power of the state, producing docile bodies through the everyday life of institutions. Nor does it entirely correspond to the way in which the term is used by Farquhar and Zhang (2005) in their description of 'life cultivation' (*yangsheng*) exercises in Beijing's parks, where they claim the body both supplements and exists sovereign power. To me the case of

98. Pharoah (2005:108-116) adopts a more critical position towards Farquhar's (Farquhar, 2002:145-153) discussion of banqueting, arguing that banqueting is chiefly a practice in establishing the respective hierarchical positions of the participants. I do not see the two arguments as incompatible. After all, it requires a large amount of cooperation to establish even the most authoritarian hierarchy.

Masterpiece Cuts stands apart by the way in which these xiangshou experiences were used to express concern over the health and wellbeing of one's friends and associates. This is surely politics with a small 'p', 'biopolitics', rather than 'bioPolitics', in terms of the role medicinal knowledge plays in the sovereignty of hosts over their guests in Masterpiece Cuts.

As shown in the case of Mr He, this form of hospitality demonstrates a host's ability to care for his friends' wellbeing, thereby implying he is fitting for the role of benefaction – that he is a good partner to whom his friends can tie their homes (as sites of production). Thus, the salon also demonstrates a drift of habitus across domains, this time implying trifurcation. By imitating the hospitality of the home in the commercial sphere, Mr He expresses his commercial ability to provide for the wellbeing of potential business partners, enticing them into becoming 'guests' of his entrepreneurial endeavours.⁹⁹ The free capital enterprise which is often conceived of in the west as being external to the person,¹⁰⁰ finds itself in an in-situ cosmological positionality in Red Mountain Town, and one seen to encompass the whole person.

These issues of sovereignty and the body are both developed in the following chapter, which will turn to karaoke parlours. Therein sovereignty is examined in a spatial context, with karaoke parlours providing the clearest example yet of the homology existing between hospitality practices inside the home and in new commercial venues outside. The body also comes to the fore again, in considerations

99. Section 6.3 provide further explanation of how companies can be thought of as forms of houses.

100. Or, as is shown in the case of corporate legal personality in western law, external to the person, and yet capable of being endowed with rights and duties in the same manner as an individual (Dewey, 1926).

of how bodily performance and the creation of noise are essential to fullsome participation in hosting environments that take place within karaoke parlours.

Chapter 6: Karaoke migrations: tranquillising homes, relocating pleasures

This chapter starts with a conundrum. Sitting in the guest hall of Mr Huang's home in Red Mountain Town, underneath the television, was a black home karaoke machine. What made this machine intriguing was that it was not plugged in. In fact, it had not been used for many years. Hence we come to chart a series of social transformations that first of all created conditions under which the adoption of these home karaoke machines became popular, before later leading to their subsequent state of disuse. The changing role of the karaoke machine in this transition will, in the same manner as already achieved in chapters 4 and 5, demonstrate the changing preferences amongst townfolk regarding the selection of appropriate places in which to conduct hospitality events. It will provide the clearest example thus far of the material homologies existing between the guest hall and the new commercial hospitality venues found outside the home.

Chau's concept of 'social heat' is first examined in greater detail, and its application to karaoke singing is seen to be especially useful in terms of understanding the materiality and soundscape of karaoke venues. It will also demonstrate how these venues are instrumental in the performance of hospitality situations, and thus in the creation and maintenance of social relationships. We will then turn to examine the recent history of singing as a social practice in the town. The migration of commercial karaoke parlours away from the domestic sphere will be traced, by documenting the diminishing popularity of home karaoke systems since

the late 1990s, coinciding with an increasing abundance of karaoke parlours in the last decade. This transformation provides further evidence that the home is no longer viewed as a location suitable for the creation of certain types of social heat. The comparison of these two spaces demonstrates the clear material homologies acting between the karaoke parlour and the home accompanying the transition. That continuity is used to examine the implications for our understanding of kinship, private and public space, and intimacy in post-socialist small town China.

6.1. Obligatory participation: generating social heat in karaoke parlours

In chapter 3 of this thesis we demonstrated the way in which guests were effectively ‘trapped’ in the guest hall, and obliged to participate in the production of social heat. Karaoke parlours provide an even more compelling example of this, and one that relates more strongly to Chau’s description of people’s involvement in creating social heat. To understand this, we need to focus on a different aspect of social heat production: its participatory qualities. In his ethnography of popular religious practice in rural north-central China, Chau (2006, 2008) highlighted the way in which, when worshippers attended a temple festival, they both created and experienced *honghuo* (literally, ‘red fire’), which he referred to as ‘social heat’ or ‘red-hot sociality’. Chau likened the principle to Durkheim’s (1965) theory of ‘collective effervescence’, which Durkheim used to describe the perceived energy created when people gathered in religious or ritual events.

Chau distinguishes his theory of red-hot sociality from anthropological approaches adopting a model of the senses that is receptive-interpretive in nature. Such approaches attempt to comprehend how informants understand and perceive

the environment through their senses, in response to stimuli from the external world. Chau (2008:488) claims that insufficient focus has been afforded to what he terms the ‘active participatory role’ of individuals themselves in the creation of the sensory stimuli in question:

The prevailing model in most sensory scholarship places the sources of sensory stimuli outside of the body... of the human agent and the reception of the sensory stimuli inside of the same body.

(Chau, 2008:488)

In Chau’s ethnography, Chinese temple festival-goers display a ‘resonant body-person’, which he sees as challenging deep-seated Western assumptions about the necessity of mindful, attentive and passive bodies within Asian religious experience. Significantly, for the purposes of this work, Chau also asserts that the ‘social heat’ found in folk events can potentially emerge in spheres other than temple festivals. Chau provides the examples of communal alcohol consumption and structured drinking games, both of which, as we will see, also occur in Chinese karaoke parlours.

Steinmüller (2011) attempts to apply Chau’s concept of ‘social heat’ to gambling practices in rural central China. He describes how people admire the ‘liveliness’ and ‘hotness’ of the markets and streets of the nearby township, and claims that ‘coming together for any eventful gathering – temple fairs, banquets, or gambling, for instance – produces social heat and ‘red-hot’ exuberance’ (Steinmüller, 2011:267). Steinmüller observes that the social heat produced through gambling is somewhat ambiguous in nature. Though the friendly interaction and atmosphere which gambling practices engender is desirable, he argues that participants can easily get ‘caught up’ in such activities, leading to unrestrained gambling, which in the

extreme scenario, can bring financial ruin. Owing to this, Steinmüller asserts that social heat occupies an ambivalent position: it is welcomed, indeed desired, providing that it occurs within specific social boundaries.

Chau's concept of 'social heat' is belied to lend itself to analysis of the act of karaoke singing observed in Red Mountain Town. Karaoke can be claimed to be a form of social heat in a number of ways, including through the 'heat and sound' of the environment, the obligation to partake, and the delicate social and moral boundaries which these spaces challenge and transgress. A study of karaoke is particularly useful in contributing to our understanding of hosting in Red Mountain Town as it provides clear ethnographic examples of how social heat is created and sustained through the placing upon participants of cyclical obligations to partake in certain activities that create this atmosphere.

6.1.1. The role of sound and obligation

On several occasions in Red Mountain Town's karaoke parlours, friends would remark that the atmosphere was particularly 'hot and noisy' (*re'nao*). Chau (2008:501) notes the significance of the compound *re'nao*, recording that *re* connotes, fervent, feverish, heady, hot and emotional; whilst *nao* implies a variety of kinds of excitement such as agitation, rambunctiousness, hustle bustle, busy, noisy, playful, exuberant, colourful, conflicted, naughtiness, or to make a scene. The word *re'nao*, was thus somewhat homonymic in nature, as it implied not only the material atmosphere, but also a corresponding social state. What is also noteworthy is that whilst *re* relates more strongly to heat, *nao* is associated more clearly to sound and movement. One of the important characteristics of social heat in the way I would

wish to define it, then, is that this heat can include forms of noise and motion. This will be pursued by examining how both the layout of rooms in karaoke parlours and the behaviour of those inside them demonstrated a concerted effort to produce social heat, mainly by means of the production of sound.¹⁰¹

Jo Tacchi (1997), in her analysis of radio use in British homes, argued that people who were alone in their houses used radio sounds to create ‘textured landscapes’, providing a sort of ‘affective momentum’ (Tacchi, 2003:282). Radio thus enabled listeners to alter their own moods by conceptualising particular social relationships, or recalling a specific time or event, and in so doing, contributing to the sociality of an individual. Though group karaoke in Red Mountain Town obviously differed vastly from Tacchi’s experience of lone listening, her notion of sound as carrying an ‘affective momentum’ remains useful, in that it encourages consideration of the specific practices and behaviours such sounds encourage.

The importance of sound manifested itself materially in a number of ways. A single party of friends would usually rent a private and soundproofed room in the karaoke parlour for the evening. The acoustics of this space contained the sound produced within. This was reinforced by the large public address speakers mounted onto the wall a mere metre or two in front of the seating area directly facing the customers. Furthermore, customers were complicit in setting the speaker volumes very loud, to the extent where it was almost impossible to be hold a conversation without shouting in the ear of one’s interlocutor. There was an inescapability about

101. Geertz (1972:35) explains that the Balinese display a similar desire for crowded, noisy, and active social environments. They describe these situations as *ramé*. Geertz notes that occasions such as busy markets and streets, large festivals, and in particular cockfights, all possess *ramé*.

this sound, consistent with Schafer's (2003:25) astute observation that humans 'have no ear lids, we are condemned to listen'. The aural barrage of the karaoke dictated a certain kind of engagement. It was rare to spend an evening at any of Red Mountain Town's karaoke venues without subsequently suffering from at least a mild case of temporary tinnitus.

A further way in which social heat was created during karaoke gatherings in Red Mountain Town was through a perceived obligation between all the attendees to sing at least one song. The fact that karaoke produces such an obligation to participate has also been noted by Lum (1998) in both Japanese and Chinese-American contexts. Similarly, it was the practice in Red Mountain Town for individuals to prompt others who may be reticent to sing. The computer in the karaoke room featured a list of songs that had been pre-selected by patrons which were awaiting playback. If this list of songs was nearing exhaustion, the person who had just sang would normally politely encourage the people around them to select another song. Many of the karaoke parlours in Red Mountain Town also featured a continuity playlist, meaning that music would continue automatically in the event of customer-selected songs running out, so as to avoid the potential for awkward gaps of silence. However it was always preferable to have live performance. This social obligation for participants to alternately act as audience and also perform is yet another way in which karaoke adheres to Chau's (2008) theory of social heat, in that there is an element by which creation of this hot and noisy atmosphere is participatory and self-sustaining.

Furthermore, karaoke singing is an activity that provides an atmosphere within which subsidiary activities that are compatible with generating social heat can

occur concurrently. For example, as Chau (2008:493) notes, and as has been discussed in section 3.3.3, drinking alcohol is ‘always a social activity’: the drinking of liquor being used as a central tool with which to receive guests, which he postulates increase the level of *honghuo*. At karaoke it was common to drink beer, as opposed to drinking during dinners, where it was more common to indulge in the traditional overpowering Chinese liquor *shaojiu*.¹⁰² More expensive karaoke venues in Red Mountain Town offered imported red wine or whisky, which would be mixed with *Sprite*. Although beer did not have the same effect as *shaojiu* in literally warming the throat, it was still the case that a ‘social heat’ was created through toasting together with these substitute drinks, and that drinking and toasting strengthened existing relationships and helped to create new ones. Also, the use of these weaker alcoholic drinks may have meant the social heat could be sustained for longer, and probably allowed more women (most of whom did not typically consume *shaojiu*) to participate.

Also, lively drinking games such as ‘cheat’ (*chuiniu* 吹牛) were often played during karaoke. This form of brag is different to the western version typically played with cards. In *chuiniu* each participant shakes a covered container holding five dice, glances at their own dice, then takes it in turns to predict the cumulative total of dice between the players that have ended on one number. If any player believes that the player who has just guessed has exceeded the total, they can call the player’s bluff. If they are correct, the player who has been called must completely drink their glass; if they are incorrect they must finish their own drink. *Chuiniu* thus possessed a

102. Which was typically between 40-60% by volume.

similarity in form to that of karaoke, collective participation being required, in turn, by the entire gathering. Like karaoke, *chui* players become active in creating the atmosphere, rather than just passively receiving it. At the start of each game, all players shook their dice in a large upturned plastic container, which created a loud clattering sound. Also when one player called another player's bluff, the player would typically slam the cup hard down on the table, shouting 'cheat' (*chui*) to signal to the other players to reveal their dice. The rattling of the dice and the player's shouts further contributes to creating a loud and noisy atmosphere.

A final example of these modes of obligation amongst people in karaoke parlours of Red Mountain Town occurred during birthday parties, and involved the smearing of birthday cake on the faces of attendees. Hosting one's friends to an evening singing karaoke was a popular way in which young and middle aged people might mark their birthdays. In these situations it was common to arrange to bring a birthday cake from one of the town's bakeries. These cakes were sweetened, and featured light, yellow spongy bases, decorated with a large amount of elaborate sweetened cream. However, in birthday karaoke sessions, the main purpose of these cakes was rarely for ingestion. Instead, the prime objective was to daub them over other people's faces. The smearing of birthday cake was another situation where participation is obligatory, often provoking wails and shrieks. Some members of the party were typically keener than others to instigate cake smearing. But once the first people started to smear the cake, everyone quickly followed suit. If someone protested strongly to being smeared (for example, they had a new set of clothes) they might be permitted to escape with just a dab of cream on the nose. The

important principle was that everyone was supposed to be at least slightly compliant in being smeared with cake.

The above section has demonstrated a series of activities that take place in Red Mountain Town's karaoke parlours that are generative of social heat, including singing, alcohol consumption, drinking games and the smearing of cake. Other methods of creating social heat also occurred in karaoke parlours, such as partaking in communal snacks, dancing and the sharing of cigarettes.

6.2. Karaoke migrations

Having established that social heat provides a reasonable framework in which to make sense of Red Mountain Town's karaoke parlours, we now move to consider the transition from home karaoke singing to the consumption of such singing in karaoke parlours. Such a comparison will be aided by a wider consideration of singing and musical performance in Red Mountain Town in general.

6.2.1. Singing as a social practice

As we reach the rivers of Hunan and Hubei we sing the Internationale. It pierces us like a whirlwind from the sky.¹⁰³

Mao Zedong, July 1930 (cited in Mao and Barnstone, 2008:47).

Reasons for the redundant state of the home karaoke machines become clearer once they are considered within the broader context of the development and changes of musicality and singing in Red Mountain Town, since the middle of the twentieth century. Throughout this period, singing has frequently been considered to be

103. The Internationale is a left-wing anthem that became one of the most recognisable songs of the worldwide socialist movement since the late nineteenth century.

particularly suited to collective group activity. In addition to karaoke, contemporary Red Mountain Town does have other, more formal and established outlets for musical endeavour. These include the Song and Dance Group (*gewutuan*), which is supervised by the district's Ministry of Culture (*wenhuabu*). At least one private piano and singing school operates in one of the town's village-in-the-city areas. These institutions are complemented by formalised events, such as the 'cultural festival' (*wenhuajie*) at the local high school, and the town's annual talent show, where young people, such as Mr Huang's son, perform meticulously planned dance routines for the public. More generally, singing and music formed an important part of school life for young people in Red Mountain Town, according with Ho and Law's (2004:149-167) evidence that the state plays a major role in dictating musical knowledge amongst citizens.

However, even musical events closely tied to the state have been subject to ongoing transformation and change. One such example was a celebration of International Nurses' Day¹⁰⁴ at the District Conference Hall in Red Mountain Town. This was performed by the staff of the District People's Hospital, and attended by leading government officials, including the Town Chief. The first act of the evening's entertainment was a group of thirty middle-aged nurses, wearing brilliant-white archetypal nurses uniforms, complete with a traditional nurses cap. A male doctor, dressed in a white lab coat stood at the front of the audience, waving a baton, whilst the nurses sang a selection of nationalistic revolutionary 'red songs' (*hongse gequ*), such as Cao Huoxing's rousing 1943 anthem *If there was no communist party, there*

104. 12 May, Florence Nightingale's birthday.

would be no new China (*meiyou gongchang dang, jiu meiyou xin zhongguo*). This led seamlessly into the following act, where ten female nurses, aged between 20-25 years old, performed a dance routine to Lady Gaga's pop song *Poker Face*, while dressed in fishnet stockings, top hats, silk black hotpants and elbow length gloves. Although these two performances may have appeared remarkably different at a surface level, their commonality lay in the gusto and energy with which they were performed. The performers' enthusiasm was also echoed by the compère of the entertainment, who immediately after each act described the preceding performance as 'brilliant' (*jingcai*, literally 'vitality brightness')

The performance given by the middle-aged nurses was indicative of the style of musical performance they would probably have sung together during their youth: songs that were intimately linked to patriotism, the state and a socialist ethic. In a separate case, one elderly informant portrayed the importance of these revolutionary songs in the daily lives of people during that period by saying 'when we weren't working, we were singing'. This interpretation accords with contemporaneous autobiographical accounts (Gao, 1987:82, 94, 283). The strong preferences for music of a particular era displayed by particular age group indicated the importance of activities such as singing together, in restating and affirming the distinctiveness of different age groups. In this vein, it has been argued that one of the defining features of generation is the influence of a common collective affinity with particular kinds of music or clothing (Corsten, 1999; Miller and Woodward, 2012:23). The ability for computerised music libraries in karaoke parlours to hold a large range of songs that covered genres appealing to different age groups was without doubt part of the universal appeal of these venues, and an advantage they held over the home karaoke

machines mentioned here, which had relied on separately purchased VCDs that were capable of only storing a small number of songs each. The primacy of the practice of singing together, rather than the content or style of the songs themselves, meant that Red Mountain Town's karaoke parlours were similarly eclectic in styles, particularly when a group containing different generations were present. These juxtapositions of genres at the venues were never seen to produce any kind of open conflict between different generations.

6.2.2. Home karaoke

Mr Huang is aged in his mid-forties, and is a low-level government official whose job involves telling peasants how to more efficiently grow potatoes.¹⁰⁵ He lives in an apartment provided by his work-unit, a typical five-story block of concrete flats in a quiet government compound that was built in the 1990s. One day, after having eaten dinner, his wife tidied away the dishes, and Mr Huang stood up and moved immediately to the sofa opposite the television in the guest hall of the house. He launched himself enthusiastically on to the sofa, and adopted a supine position, laughing contentedly while remarking “after finishing dinner, just sleep” (*chiwan fan jiu shuijiao*). Mr Huang's post-meal adjournment was remarkably different to his typical after-dinner behaviour outside the home.

In restaurants, by contrast, Mr Huang would frequently feast and drink with his colleagues and friends. He typically displayed determination to turn any dinner

105. However he explains that nowadays the peasants do most learning on their own accord, or with the help of the town's suppliers of industrial fertiliser. Mr Huang is therefore, gloriously unburdened, and occupies most of his working days reading the newspaper and drinking tea.

into a lively alcohol-fuelled gathering. To achieve this, he would systematically ring the contacts on his mobile, scrolling through the phone list one-by-one, cajoling them into joining him. When they came he would proceed to firmly insist (for all men, at least, and often some of the women too) that they joined him in drinking, by competitively toasting others at the table. The end of restaurant dinners rarely signalled a time at which to sleep; it was more usual that he would insist his fellow diners join him in paying a visit to a karaoke parlour, where Huang would continue toasting and singing until late into the night. His wife never joined him on these trips to restaurants or karaoke parlours, disapproving of his dependence on alcohol and the erratic behaviour it induced, and on occasions going so far as to call him a ‘crazy alcoholic’ (*jiufengzi*).

The audio paraphernalia in Mr Huang’s guest hall bore remarkable similarity to the sound system of the elaborately decked-out karaoke parlour. Mounted above Mr Huang’s sofa, facing the television, were two speakers finished in imitation wood. On the other side of the room, a pair of tall speakers lay on either side of the television, and a final speaker sat atop the television as if it were a crown. Together, the five speakers formed a surround-sound constellation, in the centre of which reclined the satiated Mr Huang. Below the television were three separate black stereo units. All of them were Chinese brands. The three units were (according to the English wording on the front of them) a *SHUA* brand ‘Stereo digital equalizer’, a *Malat* ‘VCD karaoke player’ and a *Kones* ‘karaoke amplifier’.

However all the speakers were inactive. None of the units were even plugged into the power outlet. Mr Huang laughed as I cluelessly nudged the buttons, before explaining that he had not used the unit in years. He went on to reminisce that “in the

eighties it was very in vogue (*shimao*), whichever house had this unit, it would be very rare”. Mr Huang claimed to have spent 10,000 RMB on it at the time.

Mr Huang explained that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he would often invite large groups of friends around for dinner, prepared by his wife, and then once they had gotten quite drunk, the meal would naturally turn into a karaoke session. The karaoke machine would be turned on, and they would sing songs together in the living room. For the (at that time) young Mr Huang, the prospect of having associates back to his home, showcasing this expensive piece of technology and turning his home into a hot and noisy space, must have been particularly appealing.

At around the same time in the 1980s as Mr Huang obtained his karaoke machine, Red Mountain Town had also experienced a proliferation of roadside karaoke (*lubian kala OK*) venues. At these roadside venues, karaoke machines and televisions were mounted on small stands situated on the main road of the town, close to what was, at that time, the busiest food market in Red Mountain Town (another ‘hot and noisy’ location). The prices varied, but a customer could typically sing a single song using the system for between 0.5 and 1 RMB. The individuals who carried out this trade did so without the requisite trader’s licence (*yingye zhizhao*), although according to one government official, at that time “nobody cared” (*meiyou ren guan*). In retrospect, this roadside karaoke was distinctive in the history of public singing in the town, as it was at this moment that the act of singing became commodified. Not only had it transformed into a consumptive practice, but this commodification had occurred on the street, the most public of places. One could imagine, then, that Mr Huang was able to obtain much prestige through his ability to invite colleagues back home and entertain them in the private space of his guest hall.

The idea of Mr Huang's house being filled with drunk youngsters singing karaoke was somewhat difficult to envisage when contrasted with the present-day Mr Huang, laid out on his sofa, catnapping to the drone of China Central Television's rolling news channel, surrounded by the cross-stitch tapestry and artificial flowers his wife had made. An atmosphere of hazy satiated post-meal tranquility seemed to engulf the room. He commented that nowadays, having large numbers of people around for dinner was 'too much trouble' (*tai mafan*), and, that the outside venues provided 'convenience' (*fangbian*) in comparison to hosting in the home.

Mr Huang described this convenience as one that removed the onerous burden of preparing meals and cleaning up the house, a responsibility that was mainly shouldered by his wife. However, I suspect these concerns were also motivated by Mr Huang's preference for inviting single women or divorcees to his group dinners in restaurants, endlessly flirting with them and on occasions eventually ending up dancing with them on the tables of the karaoke parlour. Karaoke parlours opened up possibilities of social interactions that the presence of his wife would doubtless have excluded. The redundancy of the home karaoke machine appeared inevitable, once one considered the proliferation of dance halls and karaoke parlours in Red Mountain Town at the start of the twenty-first century, combined with the new, more adventurous forms of entertainment that lay within.

There were various other examples of the gradual abandonment of home karaoke in Red Mountain Town. One village-in-the-city homeowner remarked that they too used to have a home karaoke machine, but threw it away upon purchasing a new, larger television. Similarly, a young female official, who worked for the town-level government and lived with her mother in a former work-unit house, explained

that they had decided to dispose of the unit when they redecorated their ground floor apartment. There were electrical retailers in the town who purchased these unwanted machines and refurbished them to then sell on to (usually rural) customers. The Deng's house was an example of a rural home which had a refurbished karaoke machine.

6.2.3. Karaoke parlours

From around 2004, a flurry of private karaoke parlours had started to appear in Red Mountain Town, and largely brought about the end of home karaoke singing. By 2010 the town had no less than seven different karaoke parlours. These were either standalone businesses, or formed part of a hotel. Karaoke parlours in Red Mountain Town opened at around 7pm every night. Customers would typically arrive in groups, already in a high mood from the social heat created during their dinner, and then rent a private room (*baojian*) for the night (most karaoke parlours closed at 1am).

In addition to the use of the room, the most basic packages provided one or two crates of beer (or a pitcher of soft drinks), a platter of freshly sliced fruit, and a bowl of popcorn. Further refreshments could be purchased separately, typically at prices 4-5 times that of a local supermarket. The rooms of most karaoke parlours cost around 200-600 RMB, depending on both the size of the room and what refreshments were included. This placed occasional karaoke consumption firmly within the price range of many individuals within Red Mountain Town: and even those of limited financial ability were often able to borrow money in order to treat their friends on special occasions. The most expensive karaoke parlour in the town,

the lavishly furnished Glittering Diamond Luxury International Hotel (henceforth referred to as ‘Glittering Diamond’) charged 400 RMB for their smallest room, and 1600 RMB for the largest room, and their packages were exclusive of alcoholic drinks. Employees at Glittering Diamond explained to me that it was not uncommon for corporate customers to run up bills in excess of 10,000 RMB in a single night of entertaining their friends or clients.

A wide range of customers frequented Red Mountain Town’s karaoke parlours, including young adults, work parties, government officials and their associates, rich businesspeople and post-wedding parties. Typically most customers were aged between about 16 and 40. It was illegal for under 18s to enter the karaoke parlour, however this rule was rarely enforced.

Karaoke parlours in Red Mountain Town were split into a number of small, relatively soundproof rooms connecting to a shared central corridor through a door with a frosted glass window set in it. Typically there were no other windows in the room. The rooms also featured an en-suite toilet. This layout meant that customers would have little need to leave the room for the duration of an evening (except to find the waiting staff, or to answer their phone).¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, customers in other rooms who were passing by the door of the karaoke parlour were unable to see inside these rooms. Otake and Hosokawa (1998:180) record the origin of such private

106. The only exception I witnessed to this was in the case of one high-ranking government official who, when he received a telephone call, told one of his subordinates to stop the music, conducted the phone call, and on hanging up, ordered everybody to continue with the singing.

karaoke rooms being in mid 1980s Taiwan. This private, hidden nature of the karaoke space is a key ingredient and we return to it later on.

The first section of this chapter explained how the rooms in these karaoke parlours and the behaviour of singing karaoke were particularly generative of social heat. The second section examined the recent history of singing in Red Mountain Town, showing the transition from karaoke singing in the home to karaoke parlours. We now turn to suggest that this transition cannot solely be explained by the fact that the karaoke parlour offered an environment remarkably different to what was in the home in the first place. Rather, I submit that this transition only occurred because of the construction of home-like structures in the karaoke parlours.

6.3. Making yourself at home in the karaoke

This section will approach the argument for the existence of a homology between the town's karaoke parlours and its homes by starting with some linguistic observations. As already noted, in the Chinese language the word for both family and home is *jia*; however the same character can also be used as a classifier for families or businesses (including karaoke parlours).¹⁰⁷ Indeed, it was not uncommon to find members of the same family working in the same karaoke business (especially at management level). A similar practice existed in other kinds of businesses in China and Taiwan, although such family collectivism in business did not necessarily mean internal equality existed between members of a family (Greenhalgh, 1994). Similarly in Chinese business (including karaoke) customers were typically called *keren*, or guests, the

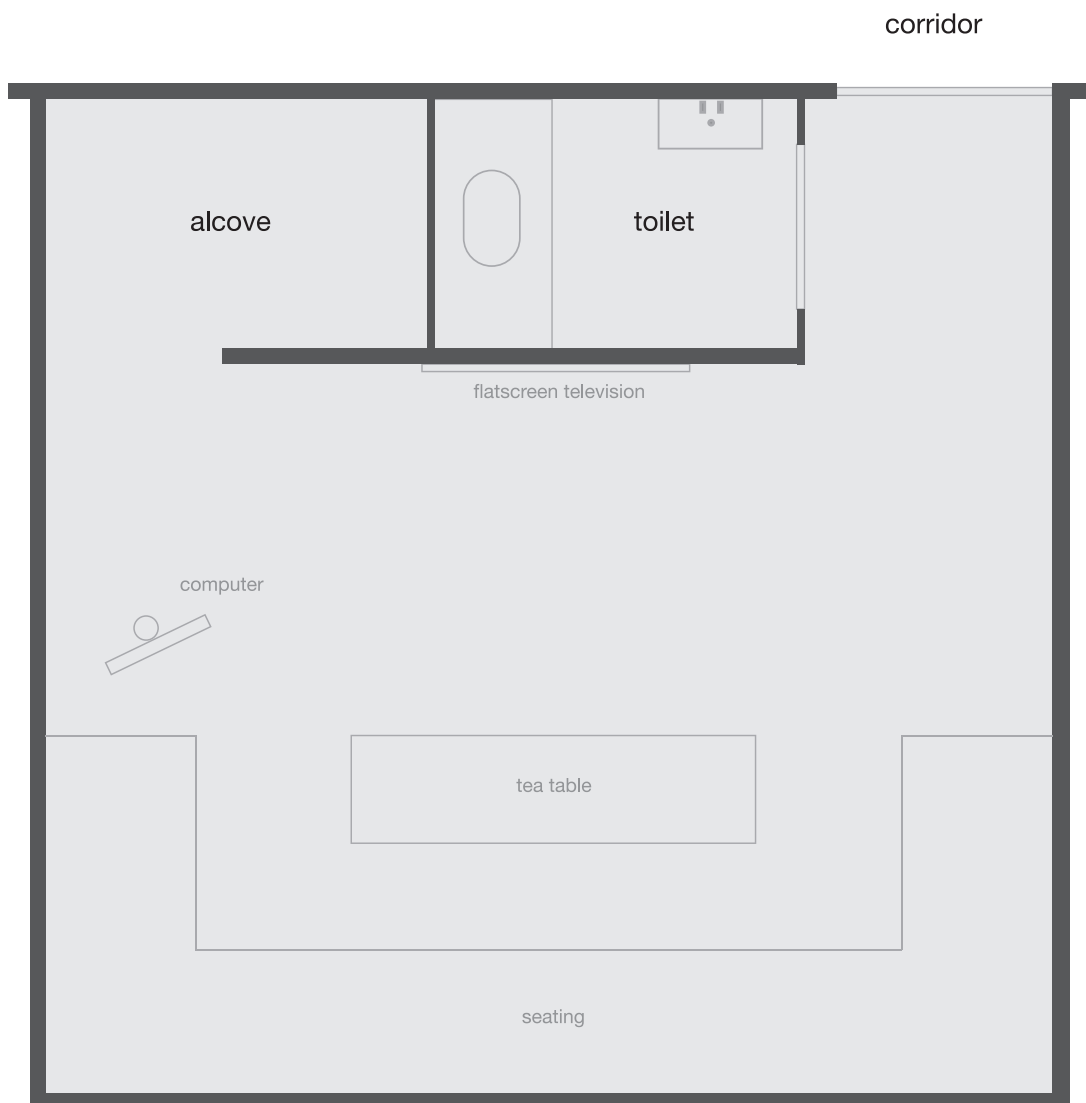
107. The same is also true, but less commonly observed in English. Examples include the term 'public house' to describe a British pub, or the expression 'the house wins' when referring to a casino.

same word that is used to describe visitors to a home. Use of this term has, in recent years, been replaced by the more formal address, *guke*.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, the private rooms of karaoke parlours displayed a strong similarity to the guest halls of the home. As already detailed, 3.2.2a typical guest hall in a Red Mountain Town home would contain a sofa placed directly opposite the television, with two on either side in order to form a ‘U’-shape (see figure 7 on page 80 recall figure 7 on page 80). The most esteemed guest and the host would typically sit next to each other opposite the television (which we previously noted, was almost always turned on when guests were present, in order to provide a background noise and essential social heat).¹⁰⁹ Similarly, in karaoke parlours, almost all rooms followed a layout that mimicked the guest halls (see figure 25). Seating was arranged in a similar ‘U’-shaped arrangement, although it usually consisted of a continuous fitted sofa, constructed from black vinyl imitation leather. On occasions, the attention given to the seating of participants in karaoke was seen to mirror that of hospitality conducted in the home (for example, Mr Yu’s hosting of Director Yuan, as described in section 3.2.2).

108. Part II of this thesis has mostly examined commercial hosting situations in terms of the relationship between customers who host other customers at these venues. However, the position of proprietors of these establishments as being the potential hosts of these customers is also of interest, and further research is necessary on whether such subsidiary hosting might affect the efficacy of the customer-host.

109. According to Zhang (2011:121-122), in modern China’s domestic seating plan, the television has replaced the position previously occupied by the door since the Ming dynasty era.



Not to scale

Figure 25: Floor plan of a typical private room in a karaoke parlour

Yang (1994) notes the significance of ‘throwing banquets and giving gifts’ in Chinese sociality, expressed by the idiom *qingke songli* (literally ‘inviting guests and giving gifts’), as being symbolically laden activities which are incorporated into the art of building ‘connections’ (*guanxi*) in China. Yang posits that banquets ‘impart an aura of *renqing* [human feeling] to an otherwise instrumental relationship’. Karaoke practices provided an excellent opportunity for carrying out these rituals of hosting

and guesting. One person would assume the position of host for a visit to the karaoke parlour, typically choosing who to invite, and also paying for the services and goods consumed. They would often occupy the central seat opposite the television, at least for the start of the evening, with the most important guest(s) sitting next to them. Similar seating practices also occurred on occasions where individuals entertained people in the guest halls of their homes, in restaurants and elsewhere, as has been noted in earlier ethnographic descriptions of China (Kipnis, 1997:39-48).

Away from China, Mitsui and Hosokawa (1998) also observed similar relationships between karaoke and the domestic sphere, in the development of 'karaoke-boxes' in Japan in 1985. Discarded railway containers were placed on the outskirts of cities, filled with furnishings and karaoke equipment, and could then be rented for a small fee. The authors note that 'the homely decorated containers functioned as a substitute for tiny living rooms in Japanese houses' (Mitsui and Hosokawa, 1998:11).

This chapter first examined the Chinese notion of social heat, arguing that it might usefully be applied to understanding practices of karaoke singing in Red Mountain Town. It documented the migration of such singing practices from private rooms to karaoke parlours. It then highlighted the similarity between these private rooms and the guest halls in Red Mountain Town homes. This all leads us to a proposition that the hosting situations which occurred in these karaoke parlours may have been attempting to imply a metaphor of materialised kinship to the creation of social relations with non-kin.

6.3.1. Karaoke kin

Yang's (1994) book *Gifts, favors and Banquets: the art of social relationships in China*, focuses on the study of a local concept called *guanxi*. Yang's (1994:1) interpretation of *guanxi* is not limited to describing relationships between spouses, kin, and friends; she claims it also encompasses a broader spectrum of 'social connections', which she describes as dyadic relationships grounded in implicit understandings of mutual interest and benefit. She notes that once a *guanxi* connection has been made between two individuals, each can ask a favour of the other under an assumption that the debt incurred will be paid back at some point in the future.

Yang (1994:67-68) goes on to examine linguistic terms that are particularly closely associated with *guanxi*, highlighting the term *renqing*, meaning 'human feelings'. Yang argues that *renqing* gives *guanxi* an important ethical dimension, making it less instrumental and instead more concerned with the degree of affective feeling existing between people. As previously noted, the throwing of banquets, and giving of gifts, was seen as an effective way of creating this *renqing*. In this sense, *guanxi*, *renqing* and Chau's notion of 'social heat' all have areas in which they overlap. Could it be that certain venues, such as the home, karaoke or restaurants, provide particularly effectual Goffman-esque (1974) 'frames'? However, these commonly understood arrangements of objects and creations of atmosphere, through which participants can read how they should act, would seem to diverge from Goffman's theory, in that participants also become active in sustaining and reproducing such social frames.

Acknowledging the potential for a relationship between *guanxi* and social heat opens up new possibilities for understanding the significance of structures of the home appearing in the karaoke parlour. Yang (1994:112) also notes that kinship ties in China can entail close ‘emotional feeling’ (*ganqing*) between individuals, encompassing the natal, nuclear, extended family, consanguinial relations and affinal relatives, all to varying degrees. However, Yang goes on to postulate that though kinship provides a foundation on which *guanxi* connections may be built, in large cities it is no longer the main way in which people enter into *guanxi* exchange.

Yang claims that:

in large cities like Beijing, *guanxi* ties based on the familiarity principle have come to supplant the centrality of agnatic and affinal kinship ties described by so many ethnographies of rural Chinese life ... what is now important is the extension of such kinship principles (‘familiarity’, obligation, mutual aid, sharing, and the gauging of relational or affective distance) to [*guanxi*].

(Yang, 1994:114, no italics in original)

In this context, Yang notes the use of fictive kinship ties (addresses such as ‘uncle’, ‘auntie’, or ‘older brother’) in order to bring people outside the family group into circles of ‘familiar and trusted relationships’. Yang explains, however, that such extensions tend to be limited to family friends, neighbours, or personal friends. Similar forms of address were also used by people in Red Mountain Town. It seems to be reasonable to infer that the private rooms of karaoke parlours, through their likeness to the home, were being deployed by hosts in a similar way to the fictional kinship ties described above, perhaps with the intention of implying that the guests were being treated as kin. However, one may also postulate that the karaoke parlour achieves such implications in a far more subtle manner, through what Miller (1987:85) refers to as ‘the humility of objects’. The desirability of such associations

was made explicit on one occasion when accompanying a moderately successful businessman and his friends to a karaoke. The man instructed his guests to eat more of the snacks provided on the table, saying: “Whatever you want to eat, just eat it, just the same as in your own home.”

This chapter has demonstrated the importance of the karaoke parlours of Red Mountain Town in providing spaces for the creation of social heat. It has once more demonstrated the role of social heat in the creation and maintenance of social relationships. However, at the same time it should be recognised that problems have been caused through the adoption of home-like spaces in Red Mountain Town’s karaokes, which have led to sensitive moral concerns, and effects that feed back on to the home and family itself.

6.3.2. Privacy and intimacy

The karaoke parlour created much ambiguity and contradiction through the way in which it managed to unusually conjoin the oppositions of ‘public’ and ‘private’ space, folding them in upon themselves. Officially, all karaoke parlours were ostensibly classified by the government as ‘public places’ (*gonggong changsuo*), and were licenced by both the Cultural Bureau (*wenhua ju*), and the Health Commission (*weisheng ju*). However, at the same time, the architectural arrangements of the venues, their sound-proofed, windowless nature, made them, in many senses, even more private than homes were.

As previously mentioned in section 2.1, Yan (2003) noted similar transformations of private space in some of the house remodelling that took place in rural North China. Yan claimed that the introduction of separate enclosed rooms

created a sense of interiority in homes, fencing off outsiders, hiding private rooms from public gaze and making it harder for others to discern the economic standing of a family. Yan notes that having their own room, often verbally rationalised by villagers as being ‘convenient’, provided increased opportunities for conjugal intimacy. Yan concluded that villagers were attempting to protect their privacy at both individual and family levels.

One of the most significant effects of the configuration of space in karaoke parlours was the opportunity it afforded for intimacy and sexuality. The association between karaoke parlours, hostessing services, accompaniment and prostitution has been lost on neither the anthropological literature, nor on the population of Red Mountain Town in general. Of the former, Zheng (2007, 2008, 2009) and Perkins (2008) both provide excellent, comprehensive, and at times incredibly moving ethnographic accounts of the lives of hostesses in karaoke parlours and dance halls in China. They demonstrate the complexity of the position that these women occupy, how they are often subjected to exploitation and violence, and document their reliance upon complex, informal and often unstable ties with other hostesses which can leave them largely unable to organise resistance or to have agency over their treatment.

It was common knowledge to most Red Mountain Town residents that these types of service were available in many of the town’s various karaoke parlours. However, over the many occasions I accompanied friends to karaoke parlours, I only came into direct contact with the hostesses a couple of times. Most of the groups of young adults, government officials, and work parties displayed no interest whatsoever in these activities. The fact that a karaoke parlour might have offered

such services did not seem to represent any moral barrier to regular customers patronising the same venues, even if consumption of such hostessing services could potentially have been occurring in the neighbouring room. In contrast to Zheng's (2009) description of a karaoke bar in a large Chinese north-eastern city, where rows of hostesses sat prominently in the lobby of karaoke parlours, in Red Mountain Town these women remained discrete, and one caught glimpses of them only as they were walked through the lobby, in single file, towards an awaiting private room.

On one occasion a group of middle-aged male government officials insisted on going to karaoke following a dinner party, and did request the accompaniment of the hostesses.¹¹⁰ The women walked into the room, where they stood in a row opposite the men, and each man picked the woman that they preferred. I, adopting the character of a shy, slightly awkward Englishman, tried to avoid picking anyone, and so was promptly assigned a woman by the other men. There may be a link between this obligatory participation, and that of the drinking, singing and eating mentioned earlier. The women proceeded to accompany the men to drink alcohol, sing and play dice games.

The activities of this group of men also illustrated the intended purpose of another architectural feature built into many private rooms in karaoke parlours, namely a small, partially concealed dark alcove. One-by-one these men took their partner into the alcove, remained obscured from view for a minute or two, and then re-emerged. Upon questioning, the men explained that the purpose of this space was

110. Unbeknown to me at the time.

for “dancing” (*tiaowu*). This was the only time I ever saw this alcove being used in any Red Mountain Town karaoke.

Apart from paid hostessing services, karaoke was an ideal venue for young adults to explore romantic relationships in the presence of their friends; this was often expressed through joint singing, or simply by sitting next to each other. For example, Mr Li’s eldest son, 21 at the time, invited his girlfriend out with him to a night at the karaoke. When I arrived at the karaoke venue, Mr Li’s son had brought several of his male peers from the village, while his girlfriend had brought the corresponding number of female peers. The two groups sat awkwardly, facing each other on opposite sides of the sofa, separated by the couple. There was clearly an intention, or at least hope, that there might be some opposite-sex interaction between other members of the group.

Farrer (1999), in his ethnography of nightlife venues in Shanghai, claims that discos are perceived by local youth as being intended for the consumption of ‘foreign’ sexual styles, providing a place for sexual expression which would be unacceptable in other local social spaces. Though Red Mountain Town’s karaoke parlours may indeed provide a place for liberated sexual expression, I find the notion that this represents some kind of ‘opening up’ debatable, is limiting in that it recasts participants’ own desires within a Japanese or Western cultural framework. A better model for understanding the instances of sexuality and intimacy that occurred within the private rooms of the karaoke parlour may be derived from Steinmüller’s (2011) example of the relationship between social heat and gambling. For Steinmüller, what made gambling significant was its ambiguous nature. The good-natured rowdy, jovial activities of participants as they threw winning hands of cards down on the

table was certainly desirable in terms of creating an atmosphere that was conducive of social relationships. Less desirable, however, was young people's tendency to become caught up by the social heat of such activities, and lose control over the money and time they wasted. The karaoke parlour may embody similar tensions with regards to being a place for intimacy. Whilst it is recognised that private spaces are required to create forms of intimacy, including relations such as that shown by Mr Li's son and his girlfriend, these private spaces can also provide a venue for morally questionable forms of activity such as hostessing services. This is perhaps best exemplified by local television news reports on showing police raids on karaoke parlours that offer hostess services, in an attempt to 'sweep out the yellow'.

At times, the material culture of these venues actively played upon such ambiguity. In the lobby of Glittering Diamond karaoke parlour, glass sheets containing backlit images of reclining Western women were juxtaposed with copies of traditional Chinese calligraphed poetry, some passages written by Chairman Mao himself. Here one is drawn to make a comparison with Buchli's (1999) analysis of the material culture of the Narkomfin Communal house in Soviet Moscow. Buchli takes the example of an elaborately ornate pre-Revolutionary 'petit-bourgeois' buffet cabinet placed in the 'red corner' of a soviet-era house, that improbably co-located the works of Stalin and Lenin with bottles of holy water and Russian Orthodox religious iconography. Buchli (1999:56) questioned how it was that the owner of these 'achingly antagonistic and contradictory objects' could see fit to accommodate them side-by-side.

Buchli tried to account for this through examining the changing way in which material culture was assumed to represent particular sets of values. In early 1920s

Russia there had been a transition from denotative to contextual understandings of material culture, and then in the following period of de-stalinization a gradual return to denotative understandings. That had brought his participants into much confusion as to why objects that had earlier been devalued should now suddenly be of worth again. Buchli feels that the breaking down of the material culture of the Stalinist era in favour of a new mode helped informants to come to terms with the pain and hardships they had experienced earlier, giving them the opportunity to create new rules and order. He gives the example of how old pieces of household memorabilia, hidden from view for several generations, were safely re-incorporated within domestic spaces.

Similarly, in Red Mountain Town, socialism had attempted to reach into the domestic sphere. For example, the remnants of the “10 Star Level Civilized Home” system could be observed, where a sign had been attached above the door of each home. Houses had been graded on what they achieved in different categories of cleanliness, thought, etc. Like Buchli’s post-Stalinist homes, Red Mountain Town houses were gradually seeing the building of a new material order since the ‘opening’. It appeared logical that this process of reclaiming the home should start with the interior of houses. In contrast to Buchli’s case, karaoke parlours not only simulated the hosting function of the house, but played with and modified its form, taking it to even higher levels of opulence and vitality, re-imagining home spaces and the interactions that should occur in them.

The final question that needs raising is whether these new spaces, and the kinship metaphors, they invoke could be changing the nature and structure of the

home itself. Is there a danger, in particular, that in transferring the social heat outside the house, homes themselves may become ‘cold’ and ‘lonely’?

This chapter closes with a final example that suggests that may be the case. One evening, Mr Li’s wife sat in the porch of their home weaving a pair of shoes. Her eldest son was the first to leave the house that night, to go and join his friends at a karaoke parlour. As he ran down the stairs she shouted after him: “Come back early” (*zaodian huilai*). No less than ten minutes later, her husband also departed, making his way out to seek the social heat of gambling by playing *majiang*. She confided that she worried that the purpose of her husband’s *majiang* games were not ‘entertainment’ (*yule*), but rather ‘gambling’ (*dubo*). Meanwhile her youngest son was sat in front of his computer in the bedroom playing *Crossfire*. On observing that almost everybody in the house has gone outside, Mr Li’s wife declared, in an almost dissatisfied tone “It’s like this everyday”.

It seems important to reach a deeper understanding of the social nature of karaoke parlours, and new social spaces like them that are emerging in Red Mountain Town and claiming such large investments of peoples’ time and resources. But to have a full grasp, we must recognise that studies of the economic, political or developmental forces of global flows provide only partial and unsatisfactory explanations of why such spaces exist. Informants in Red Mountain Town never accounted for their attraction to these places in such terms. A theory of ‘social heat’ would better encapsulate informants’ descriptions of the ‘hot and noisy’ atmospheres of such spaces, while at the same time pushing us to explore the wider relationships, structures, and at times unsettling, implications which the karaoke space, and other outside commodifications can have on the home.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: of hosts and homes

We now move to summarise how the elements of Red Mountain Town life described in this research can contribute to the anthropological understanding of *hospitality* and *homes*. What is the significance of homes for other sites and forms of hospitality? How do changes in practices of hospitality relate to the evolution and role of housing provision? What do they tell us of the scope and purpose of hospitality itself? Our conclusions are divided into three sections, drawing together the arguments presented in the preceding chapters.

The first section will concentrate on theoretical implications for what has been the principle ethnographic theme of this thesis: issues of hospitality. Although hospitality appears to be an important activity for Red Mountain Town people, the ethnographic data gathered does not correspond clearly to ‘traditional’ descriptions of hospitality (Pitt-Rivers, 1977; Sahlins, 1985) which focus on the reception afforded to strangers, and the correct way to receive them into a community. Instead, it will argue that the hosting behaviours seen in Red Mountain Town speak more strongly to an understanding of hosting based on elements of social heat and materiality.

The second section of the conclusion will reflect at some length on the interplay between the study of the home and kinship in that context. It will recall the varied role the home has played in the anthropological study of Chinese kinship during the twentieth century. This will be considered against transformations in the role of the home in hosting in Red Mountain Town where home-like structures are being applied to external hospitality situations, involving a subtle extension of

principles of kinship to non-kin relations. This section will close by arguing that although homologies exist between hosting practices inside and outside of Red Mountain Town's homes, these homologies are characterised by their shifting, incomplete, inventive and dynamic nature.

The chapter will conclude with a third section attempting to reconcile the ethnographic reality of Red Mountain Town life with existing anthropological theories of both hospitality and the home. It will argue that the ethnographic evidence from Red Mountain Town fails to neatly correspond with either the major theories of hospitality, or those of the home. However, the shortfalls of both of those approaches, when applied to life in Red Mountain Town, suggests that each might possess what the other is lacking.

We proffer a solution to this situation, through arguing for an anthropological consideration of what might be best termed *structured hosting*. This concept would allow for a reflection on the constant interaction between social heat and materiality in hospitality situations, such as those observed in Red Mountain Town, but independent of location. In closing, the thesis also calls for more work on the concept of social heat, as encountered extensively in Red Mountain Town.

7.1. Hospitality and hosting

不管远近都是客人，请不用客气。

'Our guests, no matter where you come from, please make yourself at home.'

Lyrics to *Beijing Welcomes You*, official song of the Beijing 2008 Olympics.

There is something about the act of hosting that sparks the imagination of Chinese people. In Red Mountain Town, it was an activity in which townspeople usually

delightfully partook.¹¹¹ Townsfolk were seen to invest considerable resources in terms of money, effort and time, to the extent that one might be forgiven for saying that hosting sometimes constituted their very *raison d'être*.

The elaborate nature of Chinese hospitality also captures the imagination of visitors to the country. Stafford (2000b:60), citing James Hevia (1995), notes the historical precedent of this in Qing dynasty China, with accounts of the British embassy's extravagant ritualised reception on their arrival at the imperial centre in 1793. The diplomatic mission's initial delight at their reception soon turned to frustration when they realised the relative indifference their hosts displayed towards matters of trade (which the British perceived as central to diplomatic interaction). When the British announced their intention to depart following rounds of fruitless discussion, the elaborate sending-off rituals were resumed, much to the perplexity and vexation of the diplomatic envoy. Stafford (2000b:56-61) juxtaposes these historical accounts alongside local media coverage of present-day Chinese international diplomacy; and ethnographic observations of the sending-off, detaining and greeting of guests in the everyday life of farming and fishing communities in China and Taiwan respectively, arguing that idioms of separation and reunion can be found within all of these situations.

In contrast to these accounts of hospitality as central to Chinese culture throughout history, the discipline of anthropology has been largely unenthusiastic about treating hospitality with the same degree of verve as the Chinese exhibit in

111. As was demonstrated in section 3.1, which detailed the difficulties faced in successfully inviting someone to be a guest, the same cannot always be said of being a guest.

observing it themselves. As already mentioned in section 1.2, Candea and da Col (2012) note that ethnographic experience is, by its nature, permeated with hospitality, and call for this to be reflected in anthropological theory through a reinvigoration of the study of hospitality. This section of the conclusion aims to contribute to their appeal by demonstrating that hosting practices in Red Mountain Town appear somewhat at-odds with established approaches to hospitality. This will then pave the way to posit that remedies to the shortcomings of hospitality theory may be found in the commonalities of structure between homes and other hosting venues.

In his essay, *The stranger, the guest, and the hostile host*, Pitt-Rivers (1968) aims to create a general theory of hospitality by implying that acts of hospitality follow a ‘natural law’ that is derived from ‘sociological necessity’. For Pitt-Rivers, hospitality always manifests as an especially ambivalent and troublesome situation, one which mutually implies both power and welcome. Candea and da Col describe Pitt-Rivers’ rendering of hosting as a situation in which ‘the guest is necessarily at the mercy of the host, on a knife-edge between suspicion and trust’. The most salient feature of Pitt-Rivers’ (1977:98) portrayal of hosting is that the stranger is a form of radical alterity, conceived of as being absolutely alien and unknown, and as such occupies an almost divine, dangerous status. Pitt-Rivers argues that hospitality acts as a way to stabilise the relationship between the stranger and the host community.

Parts of the ethnographic evidence collected in Red Mountain Town would seem to justify Pitt-Rivers’ assertions about the ambivalent nature of hosting activities. For example, chapter 3 contrasted the salubrious nature of hosting situations with the ‘permanent preparedness’ of the home, illustrating a constant anxiety that guests might suddenly appear. It was noted that this corresponded to a

Chinese model of relationships based on flux (Stafford, 2000b:2). In these cases, the guest who might-at-any-moment-appear could be thought of as being a somewhat divine, mysterious character, existing somewhere 'out there'. The permanent preparedness of the house appeared to suggest the particular fear of improperly hosting these ephemeral guests.

Pitt-Rivers (1977:103) also suggested that the innate inequality between hosts and guests gives rise to the inherent tension found in hosting situations. Both parties are prevented from becoming equals, because such a transformation would open up the possibility of them becoming rivals. Equality is thus prohibited from hosting situations; as such, Pitt-Rivers' version of hospitality centres on this unique play between power and welcome. The hospitality situations reported here do demonstrate ways in which guests were politely pressured into adopting such roles (section 3.2.2), and how guests were often pressured into consuming excessive amounts of food and alcohol by their hosts. These actions would appear to emphasise the power of the host over the guest. Furthermore, section 3.1 showed how the loss of power by the guest meant that inviting guests into the home appeared to be a particularly anxious moment, to the extent that potential guests were sometimes keen to avoid such situations.

A similar kind of anxiety and pressure was also observed in other hosting situations outside Red Mountain Town homes, as was particularly exemplified in the case of karaoke parlours (chapter 6). Although many of the behaviours of hosting (such as informal conversation, toasting, consumption of alcohol and eating) that had occurred in karaoke singing at the home continued in the karaoke parlour, hosting in this venue appeared to develop even more extreme tendencies. Karaoke parlours

were often the sites of excessive drunkenness, especially noisy music and speech, and sometimes the provision of sexual services. Other family members who might have acted as a check on such behaviours, had the same event taken place in the home, were conspicuously absent.

Although the ethnographic situations observed in this study appear to correlate generally with certain characteristics of Pitt-Rivers' theory of hospitality, there was one important aspect in which they differed: his description of the guest as a 'dangerous stranger' that required making safe. In some senses, Red Mountain Town guests did have stranger-like qualities (guests being understood to always be 'out there', and potentially invited in at any time). At the same time, the hosting that actually populated guest halls, karaoke parlours, hair salons, internet cafes, restaurants and other venues on a day-to-day basis in the town did not usually occur between host and stranger. Instead, it generally took place between fellow townfolk, often those who already knew each other quite well. For example, section 3.2.2 recounted how Mr Yu hosted the director of the property-development company where he worked, partly in order to thank him for helping them to obtain the apartment at a sizeable discount. Similarly, when Mr Huang, as described in section 6.2, visited restaurants or karaoke parlours, on most occasions this was with a small group of friends with whom he had attended the Party School with during the late 1960s.

Even though hosting in the town was regularly conducted amongst companions, it was not mechanistic reciprocity which Mauss (1967:16-17) describes in his account of gift exchange. Rather, it was the very emotions, ambivalence and tensions that flowed through these hosting situations which defined their uncertain

and ambiguous nature. It was impossible to reduce this to a simple mechanistic rule that one person hosts on one day, and another hosts on a subsequent occasion. Some may host more than others, possibly reflecting different social or economic statuses, the reasons for convening a meal, the guests present or even the choice of venue. Rather, this generalised and sometimes asynchronous reciprocity emerged through complicated relationships between the material and emotional. Yang describes this relationship as follows:

An important feature of renqing principles is the notion of the necessity of reciprocity, obligation, and indebtedness in human relations. What activates reciprocal relation, what imbues relationships with a sense of obligation and indebtedness are the work of relational sentiments and ethics. Concrete expressions of renqing are found especially in the gift-giving that goes on at special occasions such as births, deaths, weddings and New Year's. Most of the gifts given at these occasions are examples of what, in the case of Japan, has been called "expressive gifts" rather than "instrumental gifts". "Expressive gifts" reinforce the affective sentiments and feelings of obligation that accompany kinship, friendship, and superior-subordinate ties.

(Yang, 1994:122, no italics in original)

Yang's perspective on reciprocity is relevant, as it suggests that it is not necessarily the material gifts that are most significant, but rather a certain kind of mutual expression is being exchanged, which is influential in creating or cementing feelings. This gives us scope to view reciprocity as taking both material and immaterial forms. Yang's account provides an explanation as to why hosting one banquet might not always directly and evenly equate to being the guest at another banquet at a later date.

One such example of this was seen with Mr He. Mr He was a young aspiring businessman, the son of a village head. In his work he had to win favours from many individuals. He was constantly taking his current employees, business relations and friends out to dinner. I frequently witnessed He on the phone, contacting his friends

in the town, asking them if they knew anybody who worked in a particular government department, who might be inclined help him surmount whatever obstacles he was currently facing. If so, he would ask his friends if they were able to persuade them to come out for dinner or elsewhere. In this way, He's life was one virtually lived out of restaurants, saunas, majiang rooms, hotels and trips to Kunming. At this specific point in He's career, he had an overwhelming need to make new acquaintances in order to carry out business, and the hope was that the 'expression' that he was attempting to make through hospitality practices might be returned in other forms of expression useful for the development of his business.

Another notable element of Pitt-Rivers' description of hosting is that guests are forever held in abeyance, and never afforded the political and social rights of the host community. For Pitt-Rivers, hosting is not an act of integration, but rather aims to hold the guest at a distance. Pitt-Rivers' approach contrasts with Sahlins' (1985) description of the stranger-king, where the overwhelming issue is one of incorporation. In Sahlins' account, it is the character of the 'stranger-king' that forms a cosmological basis against which Fijians understand Cook's arrival on the island. For Sahlins, sovereignty and power always comes from 'the outside', and as such a 'sovereign thus begins his career as a usurping guest' (Candea and da Col, 2012:S7). Sahlins' account of hospitality is concerned with the appropriate way in which to integrate the stranger-king. In this case, hospitality becomes a sovereign act, combined with the creation of kinship. Here parallels can also be found with Red Mountain Town. For example, on one occasion the host of a gathering in the private room of a karaoke parlour instructed his guests to eat more of the snacks and food at the table, and to treat it as if it were their own home (section 6.3.1). These

behaviours also correspond with Yang's (1994:114) assertion that in modern Chinese society, familial kinship terms were being idiomatically extended to non-kin. He speculated that the home-like nature of hosting situations might be a more subtle way to achieve the same ends.

Contrasting Pitt-Rivers' and Sahlins' approaches suggests that hospitality in Red Mountain Town actually lies somewhere between these two theories. In common with Pitt-Rivers' description of the tension that exists between host and guest, hosting was shown to involve elements of pressure and obligation. Sahlins' model of a stranger-king may better account for what seems to be an extension of metaphors of kinship onto non-family members. Yet this too becomes problematic when weighed against the fact of Red Mountain Town's regular hosting of friends and fellow townsfolk.

The fact that ideas of kinship might be applied to hosting does not necessarily indicate that relationships are equal, positive or non-exploitative, as is illustrated by Swancutt's (2012:S103) description of Nuosu hospitality practices. Though from a similar region in south-west China to Red Mountain Town, the Nuosu live in quite different conditions to the (mainly) urban Han people of our fieldsite. Swancutt demonstrates how Nuosu slaveholding practices, which were prohibited by the Chinese from the 1950s, had transformed into the present-day taking of 'captive guests'. Swancutt details how hosting a captive-guest from outside differs from the ordinary hosting of guests, in that captive-guests are subject to 'an unceasingly high-flow – and sometimes ironic – hospitality' (Swancutt, 2012:S104). In this model of hosting, the host does their utmost to prevent the captive-guest from reciprocating their hospitality.

Swancutt recounts the process by which she herself was taken captive by her host, claiming that one of the key elements that differentiates this from the hosting of ordinary guests is the offer of some-sort of long term engagement or agreement. In Swancutt's (2012:S111-S112) case, this entrapment manifested itself in the means by which her shamanic host attempted to give Swancutt the impression that he was drawing her into his lineage by bestowing a modified version of his deceased father's name upon her (the father also having been a shaman). The intention was apparently to encourage her to remain, or at the very least return. Though Swancutt thought that her new name might overturn her status of captive-guest, she found that when she used the name the Nuosu reacted with incredulity. To them the ridiculousness of the name merely served to emphasise the impossibility of her becoming a part of the Nuosu lineage. In Swancutt's case the extension of the idiom of family to non-kin is not necessarily about integration, but is here shown to conform to Pitt-River's idea of holding guests in abeyance.

Red Mountain Town, however, exhibited a quite a different alignment of kinship and hospitality. It being the case that most hosting and guesting occurred between fellow townsfolk, it appeared as if hosting practices were more concerned with drawing people who the host *already* held to be familiar, further in towards them. In this case, I believe, the use of metaphors of home throughout hosting situations, regardless of whether they occurred within the domestic sphere or in external commercial venues, were genuine attempts to create a sense of affection and warmth between people. Of course, there were occasions in which the people being hosted were strangers from outside (my own treatment being one such instance), and some of my experiences of being hosted certainly do appear to partially resonate

with Swancutt's.¹¹² The preference for hosting acquaintances seen in Red Mountain Town suggests that, unlike the accounts of hospitality put forward by Pitt-Rivers, Sahlins and Swancutt, understanding the town's hosting practices calls for a stronger focus on familiarity, obligation, emotion and feeling.

In this connection, the studies here clearly demonstrated that in Red Mountain Town affections between people are engendered and encouraged through a heavy reliance upon material means. It seems that hospitality and hosting situations cannot successfully take place without the appropriate seating, tea, food, and alcohol. Likewise, Candea and da Col (2012:S8) critique Pitt-Rivers' account of hospitality for its tendency to reduce hospitality to a relationship between people on a conceptual, ethical or structural level. In so doing, they claim that Pitt-Rivers' failed to attend to issues of materiality and substance in hosting. The examples given throughout this work make it clear that one should not ignore the materiality of hosting in Red Mountain Town. This is particularly confirmed by the example of a primary school teacher given in section 3.3.3, where it was noted that within the town, those with the least material resources (typically migrants) tended not to host others in their homes.¹¹³

112. I myself was jokingly (and somewhat unwittingly) incorporated into one man's family as his 'dry son' (*gan'erzi*). At times, my 'dry father' (*gandie*) was incredibly domineering, and seemed to want to use our relationship partly to create advantage in his other relationships. (See Allès, 2003 for similar examples of the use of the term). The resonance between my own experiences and Swancutt's could question the degree to which the hosting behaviours she observed were unique to Nuosu, as opposed to being general to both Han and Nuosu groups.

113. Similarly, Miller (1988, 2008:8-17), in his studies of homes in London, notes a general correlation between the amount of material culture people have in their homes, and the size of their networks of social relationships.

In this connection, McCracken (1989, 2005:22-47) provides a differing explanation of the material and emotional foundations of hospitality in his description of the character of 'homeyness' found in North American homes. McCracken's argument is based almost entirely on his description of the material culture of the home itself, as opposed to observed behaviour or practice. Through this description, McCracken illustrates the way in which various properties of homeyness found in the domestic sphere appear to constitute an act of hospitality *in and of itself*. In particular, a 'homey' home is described as presenting itself to be diminutive, embracing, engaging, informal and situating. As such, homes with this homey character demonstrate a form of hospitality that contrasts markedly with descriptions of hosting that centre on power and status, such as those of Pitt-Rivers and Sahlins, McCracken's homey hospitality rather has the capacity to be egalitarian in nature. He describes this homeyness as being a 'status corrector', allowing the individual to defend against others' use of objects to communicate status, a role that had been central to much of American social sciences since Veblen (1925) and Simmel (1978).

That is not to suggest that Red Mountain Town homes display the same form of egalitarian hospitality as the 'homey' dwellings that McCracken describes. Indeed, chapter 3 of the thesis demonstrated the existence of a general wariness, amongst many Red Mountain Townspeople, of accepting invitations to be a guest in other people's homes, owing to the inversion of social status it might potentially carry. Instead, McCracken's example is of relevance because it illustrates the way in which a common structure of homeyness, and the implied hospitality it offers, finds itself appropriated by quite different social groups within a society. McCracken

demonstrates how this structure exists across domestic spaces, arguing it to be one of ‘the most crucial cultural categories’ (McCracken, 2005:46) in highly differentiated North American society.¹¹⁴ Clearly there exists a parallel in Red Mountain Town, in that this work has demonstrated not only the existence of these common structures of hospitality across rural, village-in-the-city, work-unit and commercial homes, but furthermore how such hospitality structures have transitioned into commercial spaces outside the home.

This transition of home-like material arrangements and hospitality practices from the domestic sphere to commercial spaces underlines an important way in which hosting in Red Mountain Town differs from the ‘homey’ nature of North American homes. McCracken claims that homeyness functions as a ‘marketplace corrector’ that is able to strip possessions of their commercially assigned meanings. He argues that, rather than being passive receptors of manipulation by the marketplace, the desire to create homeyness demonstrates North American ability to judiciously choose and manipulate the meaning of consumer goods for one’s own ends. However, Red Mountain Town presents a very different alignment of the commercial and the domestic. Hospitality in internet cafes, hair salons and karaoke parlours are not merely commercial acts. Those who partake in such acts make much of the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to spend large amounts of money on their guests in these home-like hospitality events. A further degree of differentiation is added by the fact that all these commercial venues utilise highly aggregated

114. An exception to this, McCracken (2005:42) notes, is high-standing social groups, who exhibit a somewhat more ambivalent attitude toward homeyness.

pricing plans.¹¹⁵ Rather than the home being opposed to the commercial sphere, as detailed by McCracken, this thesis highlights the compatibility of concepts of the home with commercial practices. Indeed, as hospitality is viewed to be essential to the wealth and prosperity of a home, spending money during hospitality situations can arguably be seen as having the potential to increase the wealth of a host family (particularly in the longer term), rather than decreasing it.

Ortner (1978) provides a further case supporting the argument that studies of hospitality ought to consider materiality. Ortner recasts hospitality as a schema that can be commonly appreciated by her informants, within which social actions are enacted and understood. The schema of hospitality, Ortner notes, exhibits stable characteristics, and occurs across society. For Ortner, material hospitality becomes the primary ritual way in which social relations are created and expressed. In the case of Red Mountain Town, it would seem as though the imperative to consider the material in order to achieve an understanding of hospitality occupies a similar, if not more significant, position to that implied in Ortner's account.

In a similar fashion to Ortner, Chau (2006:129-146) attempts to demonstrate the shifting scales of hospitality in Shaanbei, through comparing a funeral and a temple festival. Chau refers to both these activities as 'event productions'. He defines an event production as being a cultural production that is clearly different from everyday life, and as such, event productions are inclusive of all rituals (though not necessarily vice versa). Chau (2006:125) explains that such events combine both

115. In internet cafes pricing plans differentiated preferential customer seating areas. The cost of evening packages offered by karaoke parlours was also correlated to the size of the room and amount of food and drink included in the packages.

ritual-procedural aspects with hosting aspects. He explains that, whilst anthropology is fixated with recording the finer details of the ritual-procedural parts of these events, studies generally ignore the hosting aspect, resulting in a somewhat skewed understanding of the events. He argues this has led to a failure to recognise the fact that a commonality exists between the mechanisms and principles that organise both large and small-scale religious events.

Chau demonstrates how, during a funeral, families feel an intense pressure to correctly execute both the ritual-procedural and hosting parts of the event. He notes that families invite ritual specialists to take care of the ritual-procedural part, and that a household's spending on the hosting elements of the funeral often exceeds their spending on the ritual-procedural. The same situation was apparent in two house-based funerals I attended during my period of fieldwork in Red Mountain Town.¹¹⁶ In these funerals, in a similar fashion to that described by Chau, a spirit tent (*lingpeng*) had been erected outside the house of the deceased, wherein the deceased's coffined body was placed. The Fengshui Master¹¹⁷ (*fengshui xiansheng*) spent most of his time inside the tent engaged in chanting, whereas members of the deceased's immediate family were mainly occupied with tasks relating to receiving a steady stream of visitors, such as sharing conversation, and offering visitors tea and snacks. Like Chau, I was impressed by the way in which what were obviously aspects of ritual appeared to be comfortably counterposed with the hosting of guests,

116. While an analysis of funerals leads us beyond the intended focus of my fieldwork, it is introduced at this stage because, as will be seen, it bears some uncanny resemblances to features of hosting recognised in Red Mountain Town, not least the significance of social heat.

117. Which Chau refers to as the *yinyang xiansheng*.

suggesting that activities of hospitality were central to a successful funeral, rather than peripheral to it.

Chau speculates that successful organisation of such major household hospitality events is significant, because each of these events ‘most importantly constitutes the personhood and identity of the head of household and, by extension, establishes and confirms the standing of the household in the community’ (Chau, 2006:127). He emphasises that funerals are key events because people base their judgements on the moral and social worth of the household on these occasions. Chau asserts that, like cases of Imperial Grand Sacrifice, funerals act as occasions where the ‘sovereignty’ of the host household (*zhujia*), of which the (usually) male head positions himself as master, are made clear and given reverence. Chau describes how the same mechanisms and principles of organisation seen at a household funeral also exist in a temple festival, although with slight differences: in this case, the deity is the host, and the organisers take the role of ‘helping’ the deity to put on a hosting event. Nevertheless, the events are both similar in that they entail organisation of venues, time, helping out, ritual-procedural concerns, ritual professionals, catering for guests and ways of producing excitement (Chau, 2006:144).

Chau’s analysis is compelling and particularly relevant for our own understanding of Red Mountain Town. However one of the ways our respective approaches differ is that Chau places less of a focus on the material culture of the environment, his descriptions concentrating more heavily on the roles which people are assigned to and end up acting out. Nevertheless, Chau does not completely ignore the influence of the material on hospitality. Its significance is perhaps most impressively illustrated through his description of social heat, which has been

referred to throughout this thesis (especially in chapters 2, 3.3, 4 and 6.3). Chau links social heat to the material in a number of ways that were found to be similarly expressed in Red Mountain Town. For example, section 3.3.1 demonstrated an emphasis on liquor as an essential element in the creation of a hot and lively environment amongst the residents of Red Mountain Town.

Like Chau, we also noted the attention given to the sonic environment in the creation of an appropriate atmosphere. Chau shows this to emerge through the boisterous shouting that occurs during drinking games, or to be provided by dance troupes or musicians at festivals and funerals. Though all these are present in Red Mountain Town, our work attempts to treat such sounds as affective material arrangements, whether this be through turning on the television when guests arrive in the guest hall (section 3.2.1), or by placing pressure on guests to constantly select and sing songs at a karaoke parlour (6.1). Treating sound as material has also forced a consideration of its emotional nature, and how it is put to use not only to create the right atmosphere, but also in the hope of encouraging and sustaining the participation of guests.

Affording closer attention to the materiality of hosting events further emphasises the link between these events and home-like structures. Chau himself hints at the similarity between the home and temple, when mentioning that the ‘temple is supposed to be the deity’s domicile on earth’ (Chau, 2006:137). Yet whilst providing very complete plans, photographs and description of the local temple in his fieldsite, the account of Shaanbei homes he gives is limited to a few pages (Chau, 2006:39-43), and little direct comparison is made between the two. Equally, this work has not attempted to conduct a comprehensive comparison of the material

culture of homes and temples in Red Mountain Town (to be discussed in more detail shortly), but it is striking that they share important architectural characteristics of enclosure, symmetry and axiality.¹¹⁸ However, our analysis has concentrated on considering the similarities between the home and commercial spheres in creating hosting environments. It has found that similarities of spatial arrangements and behaviours between these domains are a testimony to their efficacy in promoting social heat.

A further ethnographic distinction from Chau's work is that while the latter mainly focuses on hospitality situations in ritual 'cultural event production', such as funerals and temple festivals, my main concern was on more mundane activities involving the day-to-day hosting of guests. It has addressed an imbalance in terms of the fact that hair salons, karaoke parlours and internet cafes appear to be some of the most frequent sites of hosting practices in the town, whilst finding themselves less often at the centre of sino-anthropological inquiry. It was somewhat unexpected, then, that these domains all pointed back to some of the rituals of popular religion that Chau captured through the concept of social heat.

There may be problems with implying that the hospitality that occurs in homes and commercial venues can be assumed to operate on a comparable level (or even, as inferred through use of the Beijing Olympic quote at the start of this section, that domestic hospitality might 'scale-up' to the level of the nation-state). According to Candea (2012), this analytical tendency to 'zoom in' and 'zoom out' when considering hospitality is particularly problematic. Instead, Candea argues for

118. Which Knapp (2005c:195) lists as being the defining features of Chinese homes.

hospitality to be considered as being more than metaphor, advocating that our focus needs to be on the materiality of ‘metaphors’ in, and of, themselves. The approach Candea (2012:S46) suggests is that hospitality should be ‘treated not as something which encompasses, frames, or explains people’s actions, but as an object of contention, concern and debate.’ Rather than making individuals, settlements, and nations the same, Candea calls for an understanding of hospitality that instead makes these things ‘commensurable – and thus, in some respects, interchangeable’ (Candea, 2012:S43).

Candea’s approach of hospitality as a practice that ‘makes things commensurable’ would appear consistent with Chau’s ethnography, where he argues that it is the ‘*same principles and mechanisms of organization*’ (2006:143, italics in original) that underlie both funerals and temple festivals. Chau describes a situation in which everybody involved in an event production, regardless of its scale, appears to know what to do, requiring little in the way of directions. It is these ‘common bridges’, combinations of people knowing what roles to take, having the material to do it, and putting it into action that make these hosting situations commensurable.

In summary, the hosting behaviours of Red Mountain Town people do not fit cleanly with ‘traditional’ theories of hospitality, such as those advanced by Pitt-Rivers and Sahlins. This is because in the hospitality situations of Red Mountain Town, despite a degree of ambivalence, the guest was frequently already known by, and complicit in participating in the aggrandisement of, the host. The ethnography from Red Mountain Town is more in tune with writings on hospitality, such as those highlighted by Candea and da Col (2012:S8-S16), that emphasise hospitality in

relation to a wide range of anthropological concerns: the ethical, material, temporal, cosmopolitical, along with topics of sovereignty and scale.

It became more fruitful to think of the host and their house (or venue) as working together to induce the guest into what might best be termed a state of *polite obligatory participation* in the creation of the social heat of the home (or karaoke, restaurant, etc.). This was developed by looking at how the materiality of hosting in Red Mountain Town seems to be generative of things that are uniquely immaterial, and yet, owing to the material, are seen to be self-evident. At this point the analysis called upon Chau's theory of social heat, showing how the theory demonstrated the importance of hospitality in producing 'cultural events' both of a ritual and non-ritual nature, because of the common organisational logic, in which people come together to produce social heat. We finished by pointing out that Chau's argument might be further improved by a description of the way in which materiality is conducive to the creation of such heat. We attempted to do so while adhering to Candea's entreatment for caution in the application of hospitality's scalar properties, and calling for an awareness of how hospitality is treated as an object itself.

7.2. Homes and homologues of kinship

The above section on hospitality revealed the home and its associated hosting to be particularly dynamic entities, not only on account of the way in which practices of hosting and guesting implicated a flow of people into and out of houses, but also because they illustrate how 'home-like' structures were becoming incorporated into commercial venues outside the domestic sphere, for the purpose of enabling hosting situations and activities to take place.

Section 1.1 of this thesis noted the importance kinship has always been afforded in the anthropology of China. It reviewed the varied ways the home has been used to provide evidence and support for different kinship theories over time. Freedman's (1958, 1966) lineage-paradigm was to provide, arguably, the most influential theory of Chinese kinship in the twentieth century. His view of lineage almost entirely obscured the house, mainly relegating it to be considered a form of property that constituted the economic reason behind the descent system. This contrasted with a number of important pre- and post-Freedman ethnographies of China, that offered more diversified recognition to the house as a way to understand kinship and social relationships (especially Hsu, 1967:28-53; Kipnis, 1997; Yan, 2003; Stafford, 2000b:87-99), including an opportunity to consider its materiality.

The ethnographic data collected in Red Mountain Town could be said to partially support, in various ways, all the approaches to kinship covered in section 1.1. For example, section 2.1 noted the significance of room allocation in emphasising particular positions in the kinship system, either generationally or by gender, marital status, etc.; this feature of the house was similarly noted by Fei (1939:61) and Hsu (1967:28-33). The desire to expand the home in section 2.2 also chimed with Hsu's description, as well as that detailed by Knapp (2005b:44). Nor can the economic reasons for expansion be ignored. The same section noted the desire to add extra floors onto village-in-the-city homes: a trend that was partially caused by the fact that the added floor space increased the potential buy-out value of the land, were it to be purchased by property developers for the construction of new apartment buildings. This resonates, in a minor way, with Freedman's (1958:22)

description of the house as a form of property essential in the descent system.¹¹⁹ Section 1.3.4 also demonstrated how transformations in approaches to kinship were mirrored by transformations in various regimes of property ownership throughout China during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the products of which can be partially observed in the differing housing types existing in Red Mountain Town today.

Chapter 3 moved to the hosting of guests in the home. Section 3.3.2 showed how the pressures of hosting appeared to unite the family, while also creating tensions in the home, specifically related to the burden of housework, which normally fell to females. This was seen to speak partially to Freedman's (1958:21) description of antagonism between a 'male' public sphere and a 'female' domestic sphere.

If the evidence collected on the nature of Red Mountain Town homes in chapters 2 and 3 provided only fragmentary support for each of the varying theories of kinship that had been advanced in the twentieth century, chapter 3 did, at least, lay the ground for comparison of the house with a range of places outside the domestic sphere, which is the task that part II of the thesis addressed. Section 1.1 noted that there already existed a precedent for making such comparisons in Chinese kinship

119. There are noteworthy differences. Freedman's description of the home detailed in section 1.1 is of a stable enduring one, which grows with the expansion of the family, for the purpose of containing and protecting the family, expressly for the continuity of lineage and home. By contrast, the vertical expansion of village-in-the-city homes, described in section 2.2.1, is primarily for the creation of wealth rather than enclosing growth; the growth is linked to the desolation of that specific home, instead of its generational endurance. Nevertheless, the wealth resulting from such desolation could still enable the continuation of the family through the purchase of further homes.

studies, as in Kipnis' (1997:46-57) recording of the importance of banquets in the creation of *guanxi*. Kipnis switched his analysis of hosting between banquets held in village homes and those of 'official village banquets' taking place in village government buildings. Similarly, Stafford (2000b) notes separation and reunion as important perspectives through which hosting situations, amongst other activities, are viewed. Though Stafford's ethnographic examples were primarily centred on the home, his analysis also demonstrated the separation and reunion related to hosting events in imperial China, by the nation state, and other organisations.

Part II of this thesis concentrated precisely on such shifts in location, through a comparison of how both the materiality of the home and the behaviours of hospitality can be seen to extend from inside to outside spaces. As such, the ethnographic evidence from Red Mountain Town forces a consideration of the home not only as a source of homologies and structure, but also demonstrates the process of dispersal of these homologies and structures into other spheres.

As already noted in section 2.4, Lévi-Strauss (1983:163-187) initially developed his notion of house societies as a response to Boas' ethnography of the Kwakiutl, which appeared to have both matrilineal and patrilineal features. Lévi-Strauss described house societies as corporate bodies perpetuating themselves through time by transmitting wealth, names and title down a 'real or imaginary line'. Lévi-Strauss' was critiqued in that despite foregrounding the house as an organising feature of society, he paid very little attention to the actual physical nature of the home. Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995:12) view this as a 'striking omission' by Lévi-Strauss, specifically mentioning how *The Way of Masks* was accompanied with plate

images of the elaborate facades of Kwakiutl homes (Lévi-Strauss, 1983:190-191) despite Lévi-Strauss making little direct analysis of their meaning or significance.

By contrast, Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995:37-41) argue that houses, in common with kinship and social groups, need to be understood in processual terms, emphasising the continuity between buildings and the people that occupy them. Whilst section 2.2 of this thesis observed elements of this in action in the continuing desire for Red Mountain Town homes to expand in response to the growth of family or availability of funds, this expansion cannot simply be reduced to part of a teleological process. The ethnographic descriptions detailed in this thesis rather emphasise that the home is not merely an instrument for the creation of relationships. The ‘dysfunctionality’ (section 3.4) seen in Red Mountain Town complicates this by indicating that the home is no longer working in the processual nature assumed (or it perhaps should), and that parts of this process are now more suited to other places.

Waterson (1990) similarly stressed the materiality of the home. She provided her own summary of Lévi-Strauss’ criteria of house societies as being those in which the home acted as (a) a place in which ritual ceremonies took place; (b) having an elaborately decorated exterior; (c) using imagery to express kinship and marriage; (d) having a location inspired-name; and, (e) the house being continually perpetuated over time (Waterson, 1990:139). Waterson sought to test these criteria against south-east Asian homes. Section 2.4 similarly attempted to apply these five criteria to Red Mountain Town houses. It found that while the first three of these criteria did appear to apply, Red Mountain Town homes differed from Lévi-Strauss’ description of a house society in that they did not carry a name, nor were they perpetuated over time. There were very few houses in the town that had existed for more than a couple of

generations; and particularly in the village-in-the-city areas, many houses were being destroyed to make way for new ones on the same site. The fact that perpetuation of the physical structure of the house over time seemed to be of little importance to Red Mountain Town people, combined with our strong evidence of the desire for a home that could facilitate expansion, means that Red Mountain Town houses appear to be a particularly elastic entities, especially in terms of their physicality.

The fact that houses in Red Mountain Town do exhibit several of Lévi-Strauss' criteria may be seen to confirm the importance and cultural significance that Red Mountain Town people attach to their home, embracing the myriad ways in which homes are used to understand kinship and family relations, as well as ancestors, ghosts, and other characters. Where Lévi-Strauss' criteria are not met by Red Mountain Town houses, on areas such as the impermanence and lack of perpetuation of the house over time, it is argued that this might account for a lessened importance of the house for hosting. That has in turn allowed for the proliferation of domestic structures into commercial spaces, and also their ability to act as an idiom for hospitality in Red Mountain Town life. Furthermore, it might have allowed the family to reconceptualise the house as a place to relax.

Part I also observed the way in which the materiality of the home was essential to the construction of things that appeared to be immaterial. Section 2.3 introduced social heat as a recurrent theme in these Chinese homes. It demonstrated that Red Mountain Town residents used the notion of heat and applied it to their lives in order to understand their own home in relation to other houses, both within the town and elsewhere (section 2.3.1). The nearby provincial capital, Kunming, was known amongst townsfolk for the comparative 'coldness' of its people. This was

contrasted to the idealised ‘warmth’ and welcoming nature of village homes, particularly during feast occasions such as the ‘slaughter of the first pig meal’. Red Mountain Town people were content to conflate the atmosphere of a place with the character of the people that inhabited it. It was demonstrated how this logic also applied locally, to judge the heat of houses within the town. Newly-built commercial apartments in development areas in the south of the town, with their sparsely populated compounds and empty homes were described by some as being ‘cold’ or ‘lacking atmosphere’. This was contrasted with the constant noise and motion of the village-in-the-city, and the busy-yet-civil work-unit compounds.

Although it appeared from this narrative that wealthier people were viewed as ‘colder’ than poorer ones, people’s behaviours contradicted this discourse, as in everyday practice the creation of social heat and prosperity seemed insolubly linked. People required a house (or the temporary rental of a commercial venue) in which to conduct hospitality situations where heat was created. As has already been mentioned, material items such as seating, food and drink were essential to the performance of this care. There was a hope that the heat created within these situations would transfer into an enduring warm relationship, or feeling (*ganqing*) between people; that might make the subsequent asking of favours, or the continuation of positive relationships, easier in the future. One of the key contentions of this thesis is that the use of social heat, and the way in which this heat is understood as being directly transferable – between materials, atmospheres of places and both the tone and character of persons – can contribute towards a more nuanced understanding of the creation of social relationships necessary needed to ensure prosperity than the more instrumental accounts given by Yang (1994).

Section 2.3.2 documented the increasing importance of the guest hall (contrary what its name suggests) as a site for relaxation by the family alone. The Red Mountain Townsfolk of this study described their guest halls as a place where they sought to relax, be comfortable, and felt they could be themselves. This contrasted with the outside of the house, where social relations were often described as lacking in authenticity. The inward orientation was also reflected in the materiality of the guest hall, characterised by its long, comfortable and cool sofas used for lounging in front of the television, in addition to displays of bodily contact or intimacy between family members.

Examining the materiality and physical nature of the house has enabled us to reach a markedly different understanding as to the sociality of the home than that put forward by Lévi-Strauss. Consideration of the material culture of the home has emphasised that ideas of heat were important to these people, and fundamental to their expression of care and concern for others in building social relationships.

The examination of the home and family in chapter 2 persuaded us that Red Mountain Town did not present itself as an idealised Lévi-Straussian house society, owing primarily to the fact that these homes did not perpetuate themselves through time. However, what remained remarkable was that, in spite of the emergence of new styles of housing in Red Mountain Town over recent decades, the basic structures of hospitality had nonetheless endured. The materiality of the house, and its appearance in new commercial situations as analysed here was more akin to the approach advocated by Miller (2001:4). Instead of thinking of the home as representing a normative order through the use of symbolic contrast, à la Bourdieu (1973), one can rather consider the home as having agency in and of itself, and being both the

generator and site of social change. Indeed, houses in Red Mountain Town add a further degree of complexity to this account. They demonstrated a structural continuity to hospitality despite the fact that the materiality of the town was changing so rapidly. Chapter 3, which concentrated on the relationship between guests and the guest hall, thus provided a prime example of the agency that the house was seen as having on social relationships, the world outside, and on its own development and utilisation.

Section 3.1 detailed the difficulty felt in inviting guests into the home, and the frequency with which many potential guests were frequently seen to be reluctant to accept invitations proffered. That was due in part to the obligation that would be placed upon them, once the hosting situation was underway, to collaborate in the production of social heat, but also owing to the unique nature of these hosting situations, which could frequently result in a reversal of social status between host and guest. Likewise, section 3.2 examined how hosts marshalled the materiality of the guest hall in service of their relationships to their guests, highlighting the way in which householders kept their home permanently prepared for guests through an ever-waiting arsenal of seating, snacks and tea (section 3.2.1). This constant effort to maintain a state of readiness, in case a number of guests should arrive, was combined with anxieties over the potential embarrassment of guests not being adequately catered for. It revealed a striking contradiction, insofar as these concerns lay at-odds with the fact that most of the homes in Red Mountain Town, particularly the village-in-the-city dwellings, actually entertained guests very rarely. Moreover, once guests did arrive in the home, the material arrangements often conspired to render them uncomfortably immobile. Section 3.2.2 described how the ‘U’-shaped pattern of

seating in the guest hall placed the main guest in its centre, where they could be most readily pressured with alcohol and food.

Finally, chapter 3 built on the concept of heat that was introduced in chapter 2, through a focus on the way guests themselves became embroiled in the creation of social heat in the home. Section 3.3 covered three different aspects of social heat in guesting situations within the home. Section 3.3.1 illustrated the expansive nature of social heat, and how it was seen as being particularly efficacious in terms of creating and maintaining social relationships. This was not only because the right ambience was thought to provide comfortable surroundings in which to socialise, but also because the production of this atmosphere necessitated the participation of guests. Section 3.3.2 considered the unifying effect that this creation of heat could be said to have within families, due to the way they were obliged to co-operate in creating successful hosting situations, and since the presence of strangers in the house meant that hosting situations gave the family an acute sense of awareness of their own status in relation to outsiders. Finally, section 3.3.3 considered social heat production with guests as an act of speculation, emphasising the inherently risky nature of hosting, which obliged hosts and guests to convene in the creation of social heat, all too often requiring somewhat boisterous behaviour, and involving the materials of food and alcohol to fuel social heat.

There was seen to be a common risk that such behaviours might also spill over moral boundaries and the limits of respectability. Such overspill became particularly problematic when the home was chosen as the site in which to conduct hosting. Chapter 3 detailed the case of a rambunctious gathering where people lost their temper, leading to a physical altercation taking place on the flat roof of one

house, resulting in crowds of onlookers and a loss of face for the family. This example showed that, just as hosts sought to use hospitality events to express the status of their household and those who occupied it in a positive light, it was possible for social heat to spiral out of control, resulting in embarrassment and social stigma. It was noted that this accorded with Steinmüller's (2011) description of the moving moral boundaries of social heat. In Red Mountain Town this tended to result in the relocation of such boisterous events to locations outside the home, in an effort to mitigate possible conflicts that might arise between the increasing amounts of social heat required in hospitality practices, and the conception of the domestic space as a place for families to 'relax'. For example, although it had been traditional to conduct 'teasing of the groom' parties in the groom's house after a wedding, the increasingly exuberant nature of these events meant that many were no longer inclined to perform them in the home. On the other hand, cases were also observed where gatherings failed to achieve the desired atmosphere, with hosts either lacking a suitable home or the social panache to achieve a sufficiently warm atmosphere, resulting in cold and awkward situations.

To summarise, part I (chapters 2 and 3) of this thesis demonstrated that rather than Red Mountain Town's homes being the institutions around which societies reproduced in a Lévi-Straussian way, their lack of a permanence and of a certain solidity made them an altogether different type of entity. Here guests were invited into the home, and appeared to be viewed by family members as necessary in order to keep the house warm and provide vital heat.

Of prime importance were activities as occurring around the central guest hall, both in terms of relaxation between family members, and the hosting of guests.

These practices generated heat and warmth that Red Mountain Town people saw to be desirable. Such practices occurred at a wide range of events such as Chinese New Year, the slaughter of the first pig and mid-autumn festivals in the home, but also during day-to-day hosting occasions, and even, at a lower key, when families were gathered together watching the television on their own in the guest hall of their homes.

A useful analytical concept with which to examine these gatherings is Wilk and Netting's (1984:5) notion of *activity groups* (explored in detail from page 75 onwards). Wilk and Netting proposed that the concept of activity groups might be a useful unit of study as a solution to academic debates relating to the problems of how to define a household, because the concept provides a basis for understanding how social groups become constituted around common actions. Wilk and Netting argue that these groups can be assigned a relative density depending upon how frequently they operate. As such, the household stands to be a relatively high-density site. Furthermore, Wilk and Netting's approach encourages us to go beyond the established boundaries of the house, the walls and barriers that we may take for granted as delimiting the bounds of the household, and instead engage in comparison with the activities taking place in the associated social spaces outside the home. Following this approach, part II of the thesis concentrated on what appeared to be 'house-like' material arrangements and behaviours in three situations: an internet cafe (chapter 4), a hair salon (chapter 5) and a karaoke parlour (chapter 6).

This comparison between the structures reproduced inside and outside of the home is especially reminiscent of Bourdieu's (1973) analysis of the Kabyle house. Bourdieu's publication came at a similar time to Lévi-Strauss', but Bourdieu's

approach distinguished itself from the somewhat formulaic characteristics of Lévi-Strauss' theory of house societies. Its strictly defined 'types' of house society, for instance, made it far too specific to be a viable analytic model for cross-cultural comparison between quite diverse cultures and societies (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995:15).

Bourdieu's approach focused instead on practice as being pivotal in the house. Bourdieu attempted to demonstrate that the Kabyle house comprised a series of oppositions between the external and internal worlds; light and dark; male and female. Bourdieu posited that when the Kabyle cross the threshold of the home their world effectively becomes reversed. His emphasis rested on the opposition between interior and exterior, and a proposition that the homology existing between these domains that becomes clear through the movement of bodies between them. In this sense, Miller points out how much Bourdieu owes to Lévi-Strauss' approach:

Although Bourdieu stressed the degree to which he was transforming the legacy of Lévi-Strauss by emphasizing practice and thereby time, contingency and strategy as against what were already by then coming to be seen as the more formulaic and static aspects of Lévi-Straussian structuralism... the study of the Kabyle house harks back to the core of structuralist teaching. In a sense it almost outdoes Lévi-Strauss himself in demonstrating how a series of core symbolic oppositions constitute the unspoken foundation for how a people express their beliefs about the world in material culture.

(Miller, 2001:5)

So although this work in Red Mountain Town makes clear the strong behavioural similarities existing between the home and the commercial hosting venues, it should be stressed that these are not strict homologies in the Lévi-Straussian sense, or even as interpreted by Bourdieu. Part II demonstrated the house-like nature of karaoke parlours, internet cafes and hair salons, owing to the significant ways in which they

arranged furniture in a similar fashion to the guest hall and used similar materials to create hospitality and heat. This spread of both material aspects of the home and the human behaviours associated with them would appear to substantiate Miller's (2001:4) assertion that a concern with 'the agency of the home itself', its conceptualisation and manifestation, is not only a viable approach for understanding the home, but is also one that allows for a model of the home that could take into account its dispersed, fragmentary state as found in the social spheres of Red Mountain Town. As Miller notes, such approaches provide a critique of post-1980s perspectives which focused on the 'active agency' of people consuming and transforming their homes. But the present work takes us further, by capturing a telling moment in the home's agency: the point at which the home appears to dictate that certain activities are no longer suitable for taking place within its confines.

A consideration of the house as something possessing agency is further borne out in an interesting final twist to the story of the ongoing changes in the homes of Red Mountain Town. The town's commercial spaces have now reached a level of popularity where their threat to the integrity of the home and mutual co-presence of its occupants has become clear to those involved. One now sees the home increasingly incorporating elements from the commercial venues in a response to this, as demonstrated in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Chapter 4 illustrated how Red Mountain Town homes were installing home internet connections in an attempt to win their offspring back from the internet cafe, some of whom were choosing to, quite literally, make the cafe their home. In one house, the layout of their computer, on a black glass desk with microphone headset and swivel chair bore an uncanny resemblance to the setup of the town's internet

cafes (section 4.3). In a separate case, which beautifully exemplifies the home as a site of constant change and negotiation, the internet connection installed in the home brought unexpected consequences by disrupting the daily routine rhythms of the domestic sphere, particularly watching television together as a family. In this case the only way tensions could be resolved was through the parents' realisation that online streaming of television programmes allowed the family to appropriate the internet in a way that was already familiar and acceptable to them, thus re-creating a shared activity that was seen as conducive to social relationships within the household.

Chapter 5 turned to an examination of Red Mountain Town's hair salons. Salons differed from the internet cafes and karaoke parlours detailed in chapters 4 and 6, in that salons were not immediately identifiable as being home-like in the same way as these other venues. Nonetheless, the salon was revealed as being a site that Red Mountain Town people strongly associated with the theme of 'enjoyment' (*xiangshou*). Section 5.1 noted how this association drew salons into an unusual constellation with a range of other *xiangshou* activities, most of which took place outside the home, with a significant proportion being related to the town's beauty industry.

Ethnographic examples from two salons in Red Mountain Town were compared, one of which was presented as a highly *xiangshou* salon, and the other as a non-*xiangshou* salon. The *xiangshou* salon was a site where customers performed hospitality, whilst the non-*xiangshou* salon was not. The *xiangshou* salon recast the experience of hair washing as a Chinese medical treatment. Mass-produced hair lotions containing Chinese herbal ingredients, many of which were held to increase

the body's internal fire, were applied to the scalp using massage techniques that were also said to 'dredge the energy channels'. This was complemented by the oral ingestion of a home-brewed beverage containing ginger, Coca-Cola and plant roots at the end of the treatment. Despite being less home-like than karaoke parlours or internet-cafes, salons were often used for hospitality and hosting situations. In common with these forms of *xiangshou*, there were early indications that the increasingly lavish bathrooms of new commercial apartments in the town were appropriating certain *xiangshou* elements (see note 95 on page 244).

Chapter 6 demonstrated, in turn, that in the karaoke parlours of Red Mountain Town, the arrangement of furniture in the private rooms strongly mirrored the nature of guest halls found in the domestic sphere. Like the guest hall, karaoke venues almost always had 'U'-shaped sofas arranged around a low, glittery central table facing a large television, all laid out on a single symmetrical axis. This similarity was perhaps most forcefully exemplified by the rural home of the village head of one of the most remote and poorest villages of the district surrounding Red Mountain Town. The guest hall of their house was furnished with a large, black faux leather, 'U'-shaped sofa and accompanying low-level black polished glitter-glass table that had been reclaimed directly from a Red Mountain Town karaoke parlour that had gone out of business. IISuch instances again serve to confirm Miller's (2001:4) argument that the home can be emphasised as a site and source of mobility and change.¹²⁰ But they also extend this argument by demonstrating how the home

120. An approach which Miller (2001:4) claims can provide an antidote to the emphasis 'on the home as a representation of normative order through symbolic contrast'.

(both conceptually and materially) generates and provides changes in non-domestic spaces throughout Red Mountain Town society, changes which reverberate and eventually return to impact back on the domestic spaces from which these structures of hospitality flowed.

The ethnographic data presented here demonstrated the existence of certain homologies between hospitality situations inside and outside homes in Red Mountain Town. However, these homologies do not exhibit the same strict nature as those described in Bourdieu's (1973) analysis of the Kabyle house. Instead, what we see are somewhat piecemeal and incomplete adoptions of certain structures of the home, in some types of hospitality situation throughout the town.

Furthermore, the partial, dyadic and shifting nature of these homologies also points us to a reconsideration of the way in which 'inside' (*nei*) and 'outside' (*wai*) are understood in such a context. In common with that noted of Japanese homes, it has revealed 'the complexity and ambiguity surrounding these boundaries' (Daniels, 2008:133-134). Inside and outside are, of course, popular and enduring motifs in Chinese cosmological thought. Stafford (2000b:88) sees doors and gates as instrumental in establishing not only the borderline between 'inside' and 'outside', but also acting as mediating spaces between members of a household, and even between nations and other entities. He shows how through these doors come not only people, but also ghosts and energies. Red Mountain Town also suggests the existence of an additional flow between the interior and the exterior: namely a flow of materials and structures, albeit as a somewhat sporadic eruption.

In that context, we have perhaps reached an understanding of the house that appears to be much more coherent with recent developments in Chinese kinship, by

its accommodation of themes of *guanxi*, reciprocity, relatedness, attachment, desire, practice and social change. It is within this space that I finally turn to consider the potential value of arguing for a greater anthropological awareness of the role the home plays within *structured hosting*.

7.3. Structured hosting and heat

It will be evident that the ethnographic evidence gathered in Red Mountain Town fails to neatly correspond to either anthropological theories of hospitality, or those of the home. The first section of this conclusion showed these hosting situations to invite a renewed focus on the material and scalar dimensions of hosting, including the enigmatic role of social heat. The second section demonstrated the existence of homologies between the home and commercial venues in the town, but that such homologies happen to be weak ones. This, combined with the impermanent nature of many of these home, suggests that a deeper understanding of the domestic sphere might be better achieved through an examination of the gatherings of people and activities that take place both within and without.

This situation suggests that each element – hospitality and the home – may provide a key to the other. Looking at homes, where we would expect to see an emphasis on fixed physicality, we instead observe groups and gatherings in flux. In hospitality, where we are led to expect to see the performance of fixed roles and rites, we instead observe an overriding emphasis on the material and scalar as intrinsic to symbolically-charged hosting events. It is this somewhat unexpected inversion of defining characteristics found in Red Mountain Town that I propose might be bridged through introducing a concept of *structured hosting*: that is, hosting

which follows an apparent pattern (be that behavioural, material or social) independent of or transcending its location.

This notion of structured hosting would not pertain solely to sequences of hospitality practice deemed to be appropriate, but is instead a concept that attempts to encompass the broader, constant interaction between activity, place and dwelling. I find such a concept helpful in characterising this fundamental part of Red Mountain Town sociality, because it is able to encompass the interconnectedness of the home with acts of hospitality that have been shown to exist elsewhere in the town.

The concept of structured hosting is powerful in not being spatially limited to the domestic sphere. Rather, it highlights the way in which concepts and understandings of the home become materially and behaviourally applied and dispersed across other domains in the execution of hosting situations. The structured hosting concept seeks to avoid the problems of scale raised by Candea (2012), by providing scope to consider, for example, features of the home being creatively applied across domains outside the domestic sphere, in the hope of inducing or abetting hosting situations.

This work has focused on investigating the narrowly defined issue of the homologies existing between the guest hall of the home and new commercial spaces that have emerged outside the house. One of the limitations of the research is that, although my ethnographic evidence has persuasively illustrated this transition in structured hosting from home to commercial venues over the course of the Chinese economic reform era, this analysis must be balanced against the fact that the home is unlikely ever to have been the ultimate *fons et origo* of all hospitality situations in

Red Mountain Town. What has been observed in the town during this fieldwork is likely a partial moment within broader spatial and temporal registers of habitus.

For example, in focussing on more mundane aspects of everyday hosting, this research has not had the opportunity to consider at first hand the relationship between the domestic sphere and temple spaces. Recent accounts of popular religious life in China suggest strong contiguities in structured hosting across such spaces (Chau, 2006:138; Feuchtwang, 2007), and also between temples and the modern nation state (Feuchtwang, 2008). Similarly, literature exists suggesting that the structured hosting observed in modern day Red Mountain Town may have roots in a *longue durée* of habituated practice throughout China, harking back at least to the Qing dynasty, where imperial guest rituals positioned the emperor as supreme host over their dominion (Hevia, 1995:212; Zito, 1997:26-30). Indeed, Wheatley's (1971:34) archaeological analysis of the origin of the Chinese city traces the emergence of centrally sited ceremonial and administrative enclaves as far back as the Shang and Chou dynasties, postulating that these ceremonial centres were occupied by royal lineages and priests, with the peasants in the surrounding countryside providing them with ritual furniture and apparatus. Such accounts would imply that structured hosting observed in homes and commercial venues today may have emerged from the rites performed in imperial urban centres, long before they became inscribed in the domestic sphere.¹²¹ These selected sources indicate a

121. In this connection, Wright (1977) emphasises the Chinese classics, rather than popular religion, as the primary source of the cosmology of the Chinese urban form, which was 'made up of elements drawn from the core ideology of the Great Tradition – enriched at times by borrowings from the Little Traditions of the peasant villages' (1977:34).

potential for further socio-historical study of structured hosting, offering the opportunities to observe the ‘slow unfolding of structural realities, to see things in the very long term’ (Braudel, 1975:23).

Indeed, even in the short timescales adopted for this work, the effects of the dispersal of structured hosting in Red Mountain Town have been seen as feeding back onto the domestic sphere. As such, the idea of structured hosting proposed here is also beneficial in that it recognises, in an acute way, the constant re-construction of the home, both on a conceptual and material level, and the dialectical and negotiated nature of this interaction. The attractive and luxurious new commercial spaces of Red Mountain Town acted as a draw on family members, who increasingly socialised away from home. As a response, homes appeared to be adopting some of the materiality of those commercial spaces. One is left wondering whether family members (especially children) are effectively being hosted-back into their own homes as a consequence. A further advantage of the term structured hosting notion is that it enables exploration of the wider nuances and idiosyncrasies, such as these, that have emerged from the flows of structure between domains.

A theory of structured hosting could also facilitate an understanding of the role of the body within such practices. The body appears as a recurrent theme in the study of the home, with Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995:2-4) noting material and historical anthropomorphisms often associated with the domestic sphere. Similarly, Bourdieu (1973) posits that it is the movement of the body across the threshold of the Kabyle house that causes a cosmological inversion, an observation which paved the way for his subsequent understanding of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). Yet ethnologies rarely afford sufficient attention to the role of the body in hosting

practices, a situation contradicted by the intensely corporeal nature of hospitality in Red Mountain Town. The bodily practices of sitting, eating, drinking, and the creation of sound and waste, have been seen to be integral to structured hosting in Red Mountain Town. Moreover, social heat, which is perceived by these townsfolk as being both intrinsic to and generated from successful hosting situations, is also seen as influencing the health of the body, and the character of hosts, guests and family members alike.

The subtle weft that social heat has weaved throughout this thesis has now to be acknowledged. In many ways, its manifestation in my work has been aptly characteristic of the amorphous, ephemeral qualities that heat itself represents to the people of Red Mountain Town. This thesis has used ethnographic examples of social heat in order to contribute to the anthropological understanding of practice theory, the home and hospitality. This has reflected a commitment to what Miller and Woodward (2007:335) define as anthropology's endeavour to reach for philosophical insight, whilst still remaining anchored in the experiences of ordinary people, as glimpsed through ethnography. However, I have equally grappled with whether or not I ought to have let that local understanding of heat 'speak for itself', and occupy a more central strain of the thesis. Reservations in that regard led me to believe that a further study of social heat in its own right is warranted, approaching heat not as an abstract concept, but investigating how its meanings are imbued in these people's performance of specific practices and reactions to broader interests (Empson, 2011:15).

Social heat is held by many studied here as essential to structured hosting situations, owing to its ability to attract participants, maintain and heighten

involvement, and act as a testimony to the successful organisation of such events. In this context, heat gives rise to, permeates through, and is the desired outcome of hospitality. However, the analysis could easily have demonstrated instead the way in which heat is used by Red Mountain Town people as a way to reckon and influence a number of other themes surrounding houses, bodies, kinship and wealth.

For example, in relation to homes, heat has been shown as essential for the establishment of new homes, such as in housewarming events (section 2.3.1); or in the obligation to spend the first Chinese New Year in a new home together as a family (section 3.3.2). Equally, regular efforts to tend to the heat of the home play a role in maintaining, renewing and confirming this vitality, not only in annual feasts, such as the ‘slaughter of the first pig meal’ (section 2.3.1), but also through the family reunion that occurs during Chinese New Year (section 2.1), and indeed in every successful hosting event that takes place within the home (chapter 2). Heat can help to prevent misfortune, not only in a direct manner by scaring away ghosts and other malevolent forces; but also indirectly, in that its cultivation ensures that an atmosphere exists which is conducive to the creation of warm relationships between people.

In this connection, heat has also been shown to have an effect upon our understandings of kinship. Heat has been demonstrated as being unifying in some contexts, in that its production in the guest hall of the home obliges family members to co-operate in its creation (section 3.3.2). But heat can also be divisive, as seen when the salubrious heat of events outside the home finds itself increasingly in conflict with the idea of the home as a more lukewarm site of familial relaxation (section 3.4). Heat also has extending characteristics, owing to its ability to attract

other people into its sphere, it can not only create social relationships, but in so doing, these relationships are believed to contribute towards and deepen social heat. In this sense, heat appears to be compatible with broader developments in Chinese kinship studies, in reconsidering the roles of *ganqing*, *guanxi*, and separation and reunion.

Heat has also been shown to be intensely corporeal. This thesis has cited how notions of heat applied to the ingestion of foods (sections 3.2.1, 5.2.2 and 6.3.1), or in the application of hair products that increase internal fire (section 5.2.2). Heat is seen to have a social effect on the body, in that it can alter one's character, making an individual or group more amenable to socialising. Conversely, if the body heat is imbalanced, it can result in persons having a cold or temperamental character (section 3.3.3). It has been found that notions of heat which are embedded in structured hosting situations allow people to express control over, or to care for others during these social events (section 5.2.4). Furthermore, we have begun to reveal a complex relationship between heat, pleasure and enjoyment (chapter 5).

Heat has also been important in the way that it relates to containers and boundaries. Most significantly, the studies have described how the creation of social heat in hospitality situations is frequently hidden and concealed in semi-private spaces. In all our examples of situations where social heat is created, it typically occurs away from the purview of the general public. This containment was seen in the guest halls of the home (chapter 3); in internet cafes set away from the street (chapter 4); in the innermost wash and protect treatment areas of salons (chapter 5); and, in the private rooms of karaoke parlours (chapter 6). That is not to say that the creation of social heat is always concealed: for major events such as Chinese New

Year, the entire town (and nation) partakes in, and displays social heat by illuminating the landscape with fireworks and firecrackers (sections 2.3.1). This suggests that heat may have a similar capacity to appear within and act at different scales to that of the Buriad notion of fortune described by Empson (2011:74), which can be found in the person, family, household and nation.

Notwithstanding such concealment, more intimate, heat can also be displayed. It has elements that attract and entreat people, and the process of inviting guests is one way in which this occurs. One may be tempted to compare this to Daniels' (2003:624) example of Japanese *enigmono* charms that are held to have individual agency owing to their properties. Daniels mentions how these items – such as rice scoops or rakes – both attract and release luck, through the implication of physical action and homophonic association. In the same way, heat has a certain engaging quality: as demonstrated by the way in which invitations are proffered (section 3.1), and guest halls are kept prepared to draw people in, and entrap them for the creation of heat (section 3.2.1).

Despite having laid the ground for a study of social heat in its own right, it remains necessary to briefly justify the way the concept has been put to use in this thesis to illuminate the practice of hosting. It is precisely because issues surrounding social heat appeared especially prominent within hosting situations in Red Mountain Town, that this study has led us to become far more aware of the specific characteristics and nature of that social heat. Nonetheless, a consideration of social heat in non-hospitality related situations would also seem to be apt terrain for exploration.

In detailing the practices of hospitality in Red Mountain Town, this account has been able to go some length towards explaining the complexity of structures of hosting within the town. It has shown the manifold ways in which structures operate and change in hospitality situations. It has included an appreciation of the town's social structure, and the way in which hospitality situations express, enact, and transform such structures. It has identified the migration of hosting from domestic to commercial; spheres, and occasionally back again. It has also considered the inner structures of the hospitality practices themselves, and the attendant rites, sequences and obligations which such acts entail. Finally, structure has also been observed in the inseparability of behaviours of hosting from the arrangements of materials within spaces in which the hospitality practices occur.

Most of all, though, it is my hope and wish that the inevitable emphasises of this thesis on describing and analysing the structures of habituated practice that generate and permeate such hospitality situations has not worked to obscure the many moments of discussion, laughter, sharing, intimacy and warmth that underlie the hospitality between people in Red Mountain Town, and which made it for me such a pleasurable and deeply fascinating experience in which to share.

Glossary of selected Chinese characters

<i>Pinyin</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>English</i>
a'yi	阿姨	auntie
anquan	安全	safe
bamen guanle	把门关了	close the door
Baizu	白族	Bai nationality
baojian	包间	private room
bianhua	变化	change
bingduo	病多	many illnesses
buzui bugui	不醉不归	if you are not drunk, then you can't return home
chazhuo	茶桌	tea table
chai	拆	to demolish
chi guazi	吃瓜子	eat sunflower seeds
chipa le	吃怕了	to eat something to the extent that one becomes scared of eating more of it
chongshui qu	冲水区	rinse area
chu shehui	出社会	to enter society
Chengshi Guanli	城市管理	City Administration
chengzhongcun fang	城中村房	village-in-the-city home
chuanyue huoxian	穿越火线	Crossfire (computer game)
chuiiniu	吹牛	brag
cun	村	village
dafang	大方	generous
daxing jiqi	大型机器	large machines
danchun	单纯	simple natured
dandiao	单调	monotonous
dandiao	单吊	to 'single out'

danwei	单位	work-unit
danwei fang	单位房	work-unit home
dibao	低保	welfare benefits
dianshi beijing qiang	电视背景墙	television background wall
dubo	赌博	gambling
fangbian	方便	convenient
fangzi	房子	house
fangsong	放松	relax
fengshui	风水	geomancy
fengshui xiansheng	风水先生	fengshui master
fuli fang	福利房	social welfare housing
fuza	复杂	complex, complicated
fushe	辐射	radiation
ganqing	感情	sentiment
gao keji	高科技	high technology
getihu	个体户	self employed, private enterprise
gonggong changsuo	公共场所	public places
gongting	公厅	common hall
guke	顾客	client, customer
guanxi	关系	relationship
guo	国	country, nation
guojia	国家	country, nation
Han	汉	Han Chinese
haochi	好吃	tastes good
haoke	好客	generous, hospitable
haowan	好玩	fun (to do)
honghuo	红火	red fire, heat
hongse gequ	红色歌曲	revolutionary songs

hu	护	protection
hu	户	household
hukou	户口	household registration
huanbao	环保	environmentally friendly
Huizu	回族	Hui (Islam) nationality
huo	火	fire
huoxue	活血	to enliven blood circulation
ji	级	level
jia	家	family, home, house, classifier
jia	嫁	to marry (a husband)
jiating	家庭	household
jian	间	space, measure word
jianfa	剪发	hair cutting
jianfa qu	剪发区	haircut area
jingluo	经络	energy channels (in Chinese medicine)
jingcai	精彩	brilliant
jingshuang	净爽	clean and fresh
jiugui	酒柜	alcohol cabinet
kang	炕	kang (a heatable brick bed)
keren	客人	guest
keting	客厅	guest hall
keting deng	客厅灯	guest hall light
kuaile	快乐	happy
kuaishi	快事	a pleasurable activity
kuangye ju	矿业局	Mining Bureau
laiwang	来往	to come and go, to keep in touch with
leshi	乐事	a pleasurable activity
lengdan	冷淡	cold, indifferent

lengmo	冷漠	cold and distant
liangkuai	凉快	cool
lifa shi	理发师	hairdresser
lubian kala OK	路边卡拉OK	roadside karaoke
luan	乱	messy
luohou	落后	backwards
meiwei	美味	beautiful taste
milian	迷恋	infatuated
mofan gongren	模范工人	model worker
nao dongfang	闹洞房	teasing the groom
nei	内	inside
nongcun jianshe	农村建设	countryside construction
nongjia le	农家乐	'cheerful peasant home' restaurants
nv	女	woman
pa jinqu	怕进去	to fear entering
paidu	排毒	remove the toxins
piqi huobao	脾气火爆	fiery temper
qi	气	'chi', vital breath
qifen	气氛	atmosphere
qiaoqian	乔迁	house warming
qingke	请客	to invite guests
qingke songli	请客送礼	to invite guests and give gifts
quhuo	去火	to move the fire
re	热	hot
re'nao	热闹	hot and noisy
renduo	人多	too many people
reqing	热情	cordial, enthusiastic
shazhufan	杀猪饭	slaughter of the first pig meal

shanghuo	上火	to increase one's internal heat, to get angry
shangpin fang	商品房	commercial home
shangyan	伤眼	to harm one's eyes
shaojiu	烧酒	Chinese liquor
she	舍	cottage, shed, household
sheng	省	province
shi	事	matter, affair
shiyong minaji	使用面积	useable area
shou buliao	受不了	unable to bear
shu	熟	cooked, ripe, mature
shufu	舒服	comfortable
shuxi	熟悉	to be familiar with
suzhi	素质	inner quality
tai mafan	太麻烦	too much trouble
tangran	烫染	treating (hair)
tangran qu	烫染区	treatment area
tangwu	堂屋	main hall
tezhong fuwu	特种服务	'special' services, prostitution
tiaowu	跳舞	to dance
tingtang	厅堂	hall
tongxiao	通宵	all night
tu fang	土房	soil housing
tuanyuan fan	团圆饭	reunion meal
wai	外	outside
wan	玩	to play
wangba	网吧	internet cafe
wu	乌	black
wuxing	五行	Five Phases

wuzang	五脏	Five Organs
xifa	洗发	hair washing
xihu qu	洗护区	wash and protect area
xi jinqu	吸进去	to absorb
xian	县	county
xiandai	现代	modern
xianjin	先进	advanced
xiang zenme zuo, jiu zenme zuo	想怎么做, 就怎么做	to do whatever one wants to do
xiangshou	享受	to enjoy
xiangshou shenghuo	享受生活	enjoy life
xiaoqi	小气	miserly
xiaoqu	小区	little district, neighbourhood
xiao shipin	小食品	little foodstuffs
xunxian	寻仙	Finding Immortality (computer game)
yanwei	烟味	smell of smoke
yang	养	nurturance
yang	阳	Yang (the positive principle of Yin and Yang)
yangsheng	养生	'life cultivation'
yang yanjing	养眼睛	to nourish the eyes
yi chumen, jiu chuhan	一出门, 就出汗	as soon as you step out of the door, you'll sweat
yishi	意识	consciousness, awareness
Yizu	彝族	Yi nationality
yin	阴	Yin (the negative principle of Yin and Yang)
you shi	有事	to have a matter
youni	油腻	oily greasy
yule	娱乐	entertainment
yuan	缘	predestined affinity

yuanfen	缘分	destiny that ties people together
zai shehui shang	在社会上	in society
zong mianji	总面积	total area
zhen	镇	town
zhengchang	正常	normal
zhengting	正厅	middle hall
zhengwu	正屋	middle hall
Zhongguo Dianxin	中国电信	China Telecom
Zhongguo Liantong	中国联通	China Unicom
ziyuan fuwu	自愿服务	voluntary service
zhuli	助理	assistants
zhuren	主人	host
zhuanhun	砖混	brick-mix
zutang	祖堂	ancestral hall
zuo	坐	to sit
zuo toufa	做头发	doing hair

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