

XI-CHI AS ROOT METAPHOR IN TAIWANESE WEDDINGS

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TAIWANESE WEDDINGS

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Anthropologists have always been interested in implications of each societal unit in different cultures. However, they are also aware of drastic changes in these units in many cultures due to migration, technologies, gay and lesbian movement, and feminism. The primary purpose of this research is to explore how Taiwanese immigrants are maintaining their native cosmology that is central to the basis of family values: marriage. From the analysis of particular terminology, xi-chi, the paper discusses the word is crucial in strengthening the ties not only between husband and wife, but also the two families that are joined through marriage. Moreover, the study will exhibit ways in which immigrants maintain their family values through native tongue in the United States.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing an era of massive migration due to the ease of travel. Countries around the world are increasingly diverse as a result of immigration, and ethnic diversity has become a contentious issue in numerous societies. Convenience in transportation has allowed many more people to travel around the world, and the increased cultural contact that has resulted has facilitated the acceleration of the global cultural melting pot.

Marriage is often defined as a mechanism for alliance in the field of anthropology. According to Levi-Strauss, marriage is a form of wife exchange and the building of an alliance (Levi-Strauss 1969). However, the process by which such alliances are formed is highly diversified across different cultures. There are differences in the sexuality of spouses, obligation of rituals, legitimization of children, or allocation of rights over children. For example, the Nuer culture has the tradition of “ghost marriage”, where women and women marry for the allocation of rights over children (Evans-Pritchard, 1940).

Ritual performances validate the status of the performers, confirming that they have achieved certain position in a society. Marriage is known as one of the most prominent

rites of passage in many cultures. In some cultures weddings are obligatory, but in others they are not. Marriage, therefore, can have many dimensions depending on the cultures within which it is performed.

The purpose of this thesis is focused to examine a specific cosmological perspective of the Taiwanese community in the United States. The main objective of this study is to investigate the central cosmology that Chinese people value in performing wedding rituals through the usage of one particular lexical item: *xi-chi*. *Xi-chi* is a Mandarin Chinese word composed of two morphemes: *xi* and *chi*. In its literal meaning, *xi* is joyous, while the other morpheme, *chi*, is air, or atmosphere. Combining these morphemes conveys the meaning ‘positive aura’. The word *xi-chi* is widely used among not only Taiwanese people, but also people in Hong Kong and China. *Xi-chi* can be used to describe a happy, joyous atmosphere in various contexts, but it is particularly widely used in connection with celebrations of the New Year, births, and weddings. In Taiwanese weddings, the various sequences of rituals as a whole contribute to enhancing *xi-chi*.

The repeated usage of the term is another major issue discussed in this research. In a Taiwanese wedding, the repetition of the term is apparent throughout the wedding rituals, and it is through this series of repetition, that *xi-chi* achieves its meaning and significant position in the context of the wedding. The data used in this research was collected through interviews with Taiwanese living in Auburn, Alabama. Although most of the informants knew the significance of *xi-chi* in a Taiwanese wedding, many failed to provide a clear explanation of this strong attachment. It is possible that *xi-chi* has become part of what Giddens (1984) called ‘practical consciousness’, which involves

actions where the actors cannot explain their actions in words. The discussion parallels that on 'recurrent social practices' by Giddens (1984) in *The Constitution of Society: The Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. In it, he suggested that social practices are not individual random events, but are based on a cyclical relationship between human action and social structure. They are recursive because activities are 'not brought into being by social actors but are continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents produce the conditions that make these activities possible' (Giddens, 1984:2). In other words, social structures are reproduced through a series of repetitive actions of individuals, but in the processes of reproducing structures, they may be changed or replaced differently. As will be shown in Chapter 3, although *xi-chi* is now used a little differently from how it was used in the ancient times, its fundamental meaning still holds true today.

In attempting to define how *xi-chi* is interpreted by Taiwanese people, I will discuss *xi-chi* as a root metaphor in a later section. Victor Turner (1969) suggested in ritual processes, liminality stage is the transition stage that creates *communitas*, a sense of togetherness and oneness. This study examines the hypothesis that *xi-chi* is a root metaphor which helps form the sense of *communitas* in Taiwanese wedding.

Of all the levels of structure in a language, vocabulary-lexicon is the part of language where changes occur most frequently and have the most direct relation to other cultural systems (Needham 1979, Shaul and Furbee 1998). Such changes include loanwords and the invention of new words. Perhaps changes occur as cultural changes do, due to an increase in new inventions or beliefs, or the migration of people from other places. The target population for this study is the Taiwanese community in Auburn,

Alabama. This study attempts to provide an understanding of whether Taiwanese people in this community value *xi-chi* as much as they did before they left their home country. A detailed description of the target population will be given in later chapters, but it is important to mention that at this point two categories of population, namely permanent residents and temporary residents, are compared in this research.

The purpose of this study is also to provide a better understanding of transnationalism, a significant issue in the United States, where there are many immigrants. What immigrants usually preserve as part of their traditional values comes through their language. Most immigrants will maintain their fundamental native values even when they spent long periods of time living in a foreign culture by using their native tongue. *Xi-chi*, it appears, is deeply rooted in both categories of population. Despite the length of time of the residency, each participant agreed that *xi-chi* is an indispensable component of a Taiwanese wedding.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Due to the nature of the subject being studied here, which involved the analysis of specific lexical usage of a specific word, the research was qualitative in nature. The power of an ethnographical study lies in the rich description it can provide based on discourse analysis and participant observation. In this study, the usage of *xi-chi* was investigated through two types of data gathering. The primary data was obtained from semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The data obtained through participant observation were based on regular meetings and parties throughout the period 2002-2004. Regular meetings were held, generally at parks, public areas, or in private homes. People met to celebrate Chinese seasonal events such as Mid-Autumn festivals and New Year. On these occasions most people on the list attended, brought feasts and socialized with each other. Each year I have attended the major three parties held by Taiwanese Student Association (TSA). In addition, private parties were observed at least once a month, with two parties on average every month for the two years of the study. These occasions were valuable for data collection because opinions and thoughts shared at these events provided additional insights that supplemented the interview analysis.

The data gathered from participant observation were collected through these parties, and notes were recorded immediately after each event.

The sample population was resident in Auburn, Alabama during the study period. Potential participants were contacted through the Taiwanese Student Association contact list. However, due to the limited size of the Taiwanese population in the city, informants were also recruited by the snowball sampling method, where each person interviewed was asked to suggest additional people for interviewing. This allowed Taiwanese who did not attend meetings and parties and were not on the list to be recruited for the study. In such cases, snowball sampling was not only useful but necessary, because more candidates and more representative population could be included in the study.

2.1 Population

30 interviews were conducted for this study. There were 16 female informants and 14 male participants. The target group was Taiwanese people who were born in Taiwan, not the United States, but had been living in Auburn for at least three months. The candidates' ages varied from early 20s to mid 50s. There were 9 female informants whose ages ranged from early 20s to mid 30s, and 7 female informants whose ages ranged from late 30s to mid 50s. There were 9 male informants whose ages ranged from early 20s to mid 30s, and 5 male informants whose ages ranged from late 30s to mid 50s. Informants were categorized into permanent residents and temporary residents. Permanent residents were informants who had obtained either a green card, or U.S. citizenship. They were mostly senior in age, 40 years or older. Temporary residents were

students or Auburn graduates who worked at Auburn University. They had neither U.S. citizenship nor a green card; their visa status was either student or working visa.

The younger members of the group, aged from 23 to mid 30s, were mostly graduate students studying at Auburn University, while the remainder were mainly faculty and staff here at Auburn and their families. The study participants had to, either have been married in Taiwan, or attended a Taiwanese styled wedding in the past.

The population was relatively homogeneous, but there were variables in the informants' background. Although they were from the same academic community, the time spent in the United States varied. The only feature that all informants shared was that they were connected with Auburn University; whether they worked at the University as a member of staff, as an academic, or as a student, their background was centered on the academic community. There were some exceptions to this due to the effects of snowball sampling, but most participants were directly or indirectly related to the Taiwanese community in Auburn University. Where informants were from outside the Auburn academic community, then the interview results differed markedly from those who were part of Auburn academic community. Occupation, place of residence, the length of time in America, and marriage status all affected the data. Although it is possible to argue that the sample is biased, this research considered academic background to be one of the independent variables. This is a study focused on Taiwanese living in the United States, including both those who had immigrated and those who remained Taiwanese citizens. The targeted population was well-educated and middle class. Because all the questions were open-ended, impromptu interviews were often inevitable. Some informants were nervous and did not elaborate on their answers, giving only short

replies. At other times informants were unsure that they were giving the right information, so informants were asked to give more details and encouraged to speak.

Open-ended interviews were conducted with Taiwanese people living in Auburn. Each interview was audio-taped, based on a list of open-ended questions (see the appendix for the list of questions asked). The conversations were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, and it was translated by the author. The participant quotations used in the studies were identified using pseudonyms. All the candidates were asked 20 questions, in interviews that lasted no longer than 40 minutes. In each interview, the participant was asked about the most recent Taiwanese style wedding they had attended. Recording the date of the wedding was expected to reveal any trends in the wedding styles. The wedding styles were analyzed to determine whether the newlyweds performed all the rituals. Candidates were asked to give descriptions of the specific rituals that they remembered the best. The lexical terms from the informants' rich descriptions were analyzed. In doing so, it was possible to search for any key terms that they tended to repeat when describing the events. Deciding on the wedding date also is a very important feature of Taiwanese weddings. This was one of the most important features of a Chinese wedding because the date chosen is usually considered to be an as the 'auspicious' day, and thus the most appropriate for a wedding. If a couple omit this step of the wedding process, they will not be able to create *xi-chi*. Another important question asked concerned the colors used in the wedding. As expected almost all the subjects answered that the color red as the dominant color of the wedding. The color used in the wedding is important because it creates the entire atmosphere of the setting, and *xi-chi* is a word that describes atmosphere, or ambience. To obtain more information on the transitions of kin

relations in wedding rituals, the candidates were also asked whether they remembered if any particular family members were suspended from attending rituals.

The above questions were generally concerned with ways in which *xi-chi* is related to wedding, religion, and kinship systems. Because *xi-chi* is also frequently used in contexts such as New Year or birth celebrations, participants were also asked how *xi-chi* was used differently on such occasions. The differences were expected to elucidate exactly how *xi-chi* serves as a root metaphor of cultural domain in the context of Taiwanese wedding celebrations.

It is important to note that this study was not intended to be generalizable to all Taiwanese in America. The study examined the specific group of Taiwanese living in Auburn. The homogeneity of the population was appropriate for the research. Informants were enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programs, worked as full time faculty members or staff, as were the families of those who worked or who were enrolled at Auburn University. All informants were linked to the University through their career and education. To examine the Chinese population as a whole, it is necessary to take its composition into account. Since the composition of the Chinese population in the U.S. is highly heterogeneous, it would be difficult to conduct research of this type in a larger, mixed Chinese population. Discussions on overseas Chinese are in Chapter 4.

This study provides a general account of specific cultural continuity, along with diasporic experiences. Although geographically disconnected, the continued presence of *xi-chi* in wedding discourse prolongs the community's traditional cultural values. This provides a better understanding of how Taiwanese people are maintaining their cultural ties within their community.

CHAPTER 3
TAIWANESE WEDDINGS AND *XI-CHI*

Historically, the usage of this terminology dates back to one of the most ancient Chinese literary texts. *Shi-chi*, the earliest text on ancient Chinese history, was written during the Han dynasty 145B.C.-91B.C. (Chinese Dictionary 1996). This ancient text described *xi-chi* as an auspicious cloud (*ching-yuin*) in the sky. In this context, *xi-chi* refers to auspiciousness, i.e. an atmosphere that is most likely to bring luck. Later, in the T'ang dynasty (907 A.D.-960 A.D.) and Sung dynasty (960 A.D.-1279 A.D.), *xi-chi* was used to refer to auspiciousness and happiness in ancient China. Although *xi-chi* is used in various contexts, it is prominently used for celebrations of weddings, the New Year, and births. In all these contexts, *xi-chi* is used to illustrate the situation and the atmosphere, and refers to happiness and auspiciousness. It is particularly important that the terminology is used repeatedly both between the newlyweds-to-be and among those who know the couple. On many occasions the groom, the bride, or their family members are required to perform some particular ritual acts. When asked for reasons why they participated in such ritual performances, many answer that it is because they are *xi-chi*.

The term is overtly used in the context of Taiwanese weddings, especially in the banquet setting, dresses, and rituals.

Like most other cultures, Chinese wedding rituals reflect many characteristics of how relationships between the two families are formed. Each family member plays an important role in performing rituals in a Chinese wedding, ranging from its preparation, to the wedding itself, to the banquet that follows, and to the final part of the whole ritual. Previous ethnographies include detailed analyses of wedding rituals (Ahern 1974, Cohen 1976, Freedman 1970, Jordan 1971, Wolf A. 1973, Wolf M. 1972), all of which are based on participant observation. Most studies provide detailed accounts of the wedding rituals, how and what was performed, and why they are important in understanding kinship ties. However, none of these studies focused on one specific lexical category and its role in the context of marriage and wedding rituals. Various ancient Chinese texts depict the importance of *xi-chi* for occasions such as weddings, rituals, births, and celebrations of the New Year (Chen 1936, Ebrey 1991, Guo 2002, Liu 1982, Wang 1998). Stafford (2000) studied differences between kinship ties and friendship based on a careful analysis of specific Chinese words which are thought to be crucial in Chinese society. This implies that analyzing a specific word facilitates eliciting cultural domains. This study of *xi-chi* is significant because it is focused on a specific word. It is language where culture is preserved, and it is in language where cultural traditions and values are reflected (Needham 1979, Shaul and Furbee 1998).

Taiwanese were chosen for this study for various reasons. First, to study Chinese people as a whole would be a powerful study, yet there are far too many ethnic variables, including the different political environments in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and

Singapore. Therefore, this study of *xi-chi* is likely to be too specific to generalize and relate to the Chinese people as a whole. Secondly, many ethnographical studies have been done in Taiwan on kinship, religions, and aborigines, (Freedman 1970, Ahern and Gates 1981, Jordan 1971, Wellar 1981 and 1984, Wolf 1973 and 1974, Wolf and Huang 1980). However, most studies on Taiwan are related to its politics and economy because that reflects the main focus of the history of Taiwan (Shambaugh 1998). Most Taiwanese cultural studies were conducted in the early 20th century, apart from a few exceptions, and very few in-depth cultural studies on Taiwan have been initiated by the academic community. This neglect of the island in the recent academic literature may be due to the fact that Taiwan was a ‘substitute China’ before the 1970s, and Western scholars were barred from field trips within the PRC. Now that the PRC allows Western scholars to conduct fieldwork research, the deficiency of research materials in Taiwan has become more apparent (Lee 1990: xxiv). Consequently there is a wide range of opportunities and advantages for extensive, in-depth study of this island, especially given the possibility that Taiwan has actually preserved many of the Chinese traditions that are now lost in the PRC (Wolf, 1980).

3.1 Wedding Rituals and Kinship in Taiwan: *Li*, the Concept of Rites

Like other cultures, Chinese wedding rituals are not only complex, but also rich with symbolic representations. Even in contemporary Chinese society, the majority of Chinese people still practice wedding rituals. While they may not conduct all the steps of the ritual, there are some steps that most people perform. Chinese society is known for its patrilineal emphasis, which is clearly shown in many parts of the marriage rituals.

Women in Chinese societies are treated as ‘outsiders’ when marrying into their husband’s families, which is also reflected in the rituals. One of the functions of a ritual performance is to frame pivotal life processes, such as marriage, death, birth, and puberty rituals.

In Chinese culture, *li* indicates the essence of cultural continuity. It is an unavoidable theme for those who study Chinese culture and is embedded in history, politics, society, economy, education, and family. *Li* is generally translated as ritual, mannerism, and propriety in Western texts. Generally speaking, *li* is both the ritual and the class of rituals. It manifests itself differently depending on which period of Chinese history one looks at, because in each period the system changes.

Li-chi is one of the oldest ritual texts and was written during the Chou and early Han dynasties (12th century B.C.—206 B.C.), along with two other major ritual texts *Chou-li* and *I-li*. *Chou-li*, the Ritual of Chou, is about rituals related to early Chou political organization while *I-li*, Etiquette and Ritual, consists of fragments of late Chou liturgies. This thesis focuses more on *Li-chi* because the wedding rituals written in the text are based on Confucian ideology, which pervades other domains of Chinese culture. However, *I-li* and *Chou-li* will also be referenced where relevant. Research focusing on *li* has been widely conducted throughout Chinese history, from Confucians to scholars today.

Li-chi is not just a guide to ritual performances; it also contains a collection of Confucian writings on the reinterpretation and meanings of each process of *li* rituals. In *Li-chi* there are descriptions of various types of rituals, which are divided into eight categories: auspicious, funeral, military, political, wedding, ancestor worship, sacrificial

rituals, capping. In Confucian discourses, *li* was perceived as the basis for human development. These include physical, environmental, societal, and most important of all, mental development. Confucians believed that all moral and social order is attained through ritual, and that without ritual virtues cannot be perfected. Observing ritual keeps the powerful from arrogance and the humble from exceeding their station, and a society that observes rituals will be both secure and tranquil (Ebrey 1991: 14). By performing *li* correctly humans are obeying rules, which is the most efficient way to maintain an orderly society and achieve a moral code for individuals. It categorizes society into different classes by assigning types of rituals that must be conducted only by the emperor, by government officials, and others. *Li* therefore divides the ruler from his followers, and parents from their children. They are divided, yet according to Confucius, this division is not due to the conflict, but because they are practicing rituals according to each individual's role; the differentiation results in harmonious coordination (Ebrey 1991: 18). *Li* not only divides but also distinguishes the relationship between, for example, parents and children, humans and animals, rulers and the ruled. In other words, *li* is a guide for people to follow, just like philosophy and religion, and it regulates people's behavior in the same way as laws.

3.2 *Li* and Kinship

Before the Chou dynasty, people performed rituals to show that they distinguished between males and females from the time of birth. According to *Li-chi*, if a boy is born arrows are hung to the left of the door of the house. If a girl is born then a piece of cloth is hung to the right of the door. The arrows symbolize ability in hunting, while cloth

symbolizes obedience and kindness. This ritual implies the division of labor in Chinese society, yet this does not mean that society treats both sexes unequally. Its sole purpose is to distinguish between the sexes: that men are different from women and they have different gender roles.

Generally speaking, there are two prominent features of Chinese kinship systems. Filial piety and respect for others are themes that Confucius emphasizes in *Li-chi*. *Li* provides guidelines for building respectable relationships at the family level in hopes of forming a harmonious society. Filial piety is a central theme of Chinese kinship; an individual is obligated to respect, and take care of his or her parents. Another feature is respect to the elderly. The difference between the two is that filial piety is limited to one's parents, while respect for the elderly extends beyond to cover all other older family members. Thus, filial piety is a way to differentiate the hierarchical order between parents and children and the emphasis on elders probably implies how the younger generation should treat the elder generation so that the family as a whole, or even with other kin groups, can maintain a stable, continuous and amicable relationship.

3.3 *Li* and Formal Wedding Rituals

There are many rituals relating to these features. For example, there is a ritual where a parent hits his or her child's coffin at their funeral to show anger that the child can no longer fulfill their filial obligation. In Stafford's (2000) article, he discussed the *yang* relationship in Chinese kinship. *Yang* literally means 'to raise', but its meaning also includes 'to take care'. In Chinese culture, *yang* means to support your parents or child both mentally and materially. He considered kinship relationships as having a reciprocal

nature, receiving and giving. But if we relate this reciprocity to *li*, this means that parents *yang* children and children in return should respect and take care of their parents as a filial act. Hence, the coffin hitting ritual symbolizes anger towards the child for ending the reciprocal relationship.

Anthropologists and sinologists have long known that wedding rituals in Chinese societies consist of the Six Rites (Cohen 1976, Freedman 1970, Ebrey 1991, Wellar 1984, Wolf 1980). The ancient text *Li-chi* records these are six important rites for wedding rituals, which are, chronologically: (1) sending the betrothal gifts, (2) asking the girl's name, (3) sending news of the favorable divination, (4) sending the wedding gifts, (5) asking the time of the ceremony, and (6) escorting the bride. Each step of the process will be examined in detail below, after a review of the history of Chinese wedding rituals.

Marriage is one of the biggest events for an individual in many societies. Marriage is called *huen-li* in Chinese, literally meaning 'marriage rite'. According to *I-li*, *huen* referred to dusk during the Chou dynasty, because wedding rituals took place after dusk. Unlike the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220A.D.), when people used red as the primary color for the wedding ritual, during the Chou dynasty (12th century B.C.-221B.C.) people used black as the basic color for weddings. Many scholars speculate that this may be due to the way people at the time performed wedding rituals as a form of abduction (Liu 1982: 444-445). During the Chou dynasty, the person who went to take a wife wore black when escorting the bride. In later periods of history there were rituals that reflected some of the features of an abduction marriage, but these were performed symbolically, not literally. These rituals included the women relatives of the bride hitting the groom while he escorted the bride during the Six dynasties (420 A.D.-529 A.D.). In Guandong, China,

women cry with the bride for three days and recite proverbs containing accusations towards the groom's family and strong sadness for the bride for the 'unfortunate' occasion (Liu 1982: 445). These rituals reflect the remains of the earliest form of abduction weddings. The reference to weddings as an unfortunate occasion is not as explicit in contemporary rituals, but this varies according to geographical region. In marked contrast to ancient perceptions, wedding rituals are now perceived as having an auspicious and happy atmosphere in contemporary Chinese societies.

Even though the ways people perceive wedding rituals have shifted through time, the same six basic rites are still practiced in most Chinese societies. In some areas they may only practice four instead of six, but this does not mean that they omit two steps, but rather they have integrated the rituals and regard them as one ritual. The first step is sending the betrothal gifts. This consists of inquiries made to a girl's family by a go-between (*meiren*) sent by a family seeking a bride. Traditionally, the go-between will consider the age, educational level, and family background of the future couple and assess whether they would make a good match. The go-between also considers whether there have been any conflicts between the two families in the past. Checking the surnames is another important point, because sharing a surname may indicate that they are from the same lineage in the past, and in that case they should reconsider the match in order to avoid an endogamous marriage. In ancient times, families sent gifts to the bride-to-be's family via a go-between on this occasion. The inquiry also includes an appraisal of the potential bride's physical appearance, assessing whether she is really the appropriate bride for the bride seekers. Once the bride's family accepts the gifts, this means they accept the offer. In contemporary Taiwan, the groom goes to the bride-to-be's

home with his parents and the go-between. The bride-to-be offers tea to the guests and they observe each other. If the in-laws are satisfied with each other, then the wife seekers would put some gift money in red envelopes, and place them inside the tea cups. Then the girl's family give them her *pa-tzu*, her horoscope of 'eight characters.' The wife seekers then place her *pa-tzu* on their ancestral alter for three days. If no negative or unpleasant incidents happen, this will be taken as a good sign. They then find a specialist who can determine if they have the compatibility for a successful marriage. The groom's family may reject the marriage if the horoscope's matching does not produce the desired result.

Traditionally, the bride's tea ceremony for the wife seeker's family is considered as the second step, but in recent years most people consider betrothal gifts, asking *pa-tzu*, and the tea ceremony to be a single step. The process of horoscope matching includes not only between the couple, but also between members of both families, including the parents' and grandparents' generations. Each family asks their own specialist, although sometimes only the wife-seeker's family matches the horoscopes for both.

The third step is sending news of the favorable outcome of the divination ritual. The wife seekers will send gifts to the bride-to-be. Traditionally, these gifts include fish, a gold hair stick, a gold ring, candlesticks, firecrackers, incense sticks, pork and lamb, traditional cakes, flowers, noodles, sugar, sticky rice and other items. In recent wedding rituals in Taiwan, the man's family will prepare at least the traditional cake, flowers, the ring, firecrackers, candlesticks, processed ham, noodles, many bags of sweets and most importantly, some cash. The cash given at this stage is just a small part of the betrothal money. The bride will then return some of the gifts, in addition to six to twelve other

gifts. The additional gifts must be presented in an even number, usually in groups of six or twelve gifts. These gifts are for the groom: a new suit, a tie, and a pair of shoes, socks, pen, and a watch, gold jewelry including a ring, necklace, bracelets, belt, attaché case or something equivalent. In Taiwan, sometimes these additional gifts may include digital cameras, mobile phones, and other technological devices. Another minor feature of the ritual is that at this stage the wife seeker will give the bride's family a piece of red paper with some auspicious proverbs and the names of both families written on it. The marriage can be called off at any time during these three steps. These three steps are considered preparations for the marriage and it is through these preliminary rituals that both families have an opportunity to search for a satisfactory marriage (Cohen 1976: 152).

The fourth stage is the sending of wedding gifts and the betrothal ceremony. This is also the time when both families exchange betrothal gifts. The groom's family is the giver of a larger portion of the betrothal gift money, though the bride will eventually return it. Though depending on family wealth, gift money given at this stage is usually four or five times the amount given in the earlier stage. In recent years, both families tend to negotiate the amount of betrothal money during the three early stages of the ritual. This negotiation mainly concerns about whether the bride's family will receive the smaller part of the gift money or the larger part of the gift money. It is usually the case that they do not receive both parts of the gift money. The gift money is negotiable and it is very important to adhere to the decision and not to break it on the day of ritual, because this will be perceived as a negative influence exerted by those who broke the promise that will affect the future relationship of the couple, and the two families. After exchanging

these gifts, the bride's family will invite their family, generally the bride's paternal kin and the groom's kin to a feast.

The fifth stage involves determining the time for the wedding ceremony. At this stage, both families need to decide the date of the wedding ceremony. This is again done by astrology of not only the couple, but the members of both families. The specialist examines each family members' *pa-tzu* and analyzes who can attend the ceremony and who cannot. The specialist will eventually come up with an auspicious date that is appropriate for the ceremony.

Once a date is set, there is usually a period of time set aside for other small rituals such as physical preparation of the bride and 'bed-setting'. Bed-setting is basically the placing of the bed that the newlyweds will be sleeping in after they are married. The bed is usually located in the new home where the couple is planning to live. Traditionally this was in the groom's house where his parents also reside. In contemporary Taiwan, however, the couple may live neolocally. The bed is placed in the particular location at a particular time. The time and the location are again determined based on astrology. After the bed is set, a widow may not enter the room, and the bed must be slept in every night until the wedding day. The bed must be slept in either by the groom or by one of his blood relatives who must be a bachelor. Even after the wedding, the bed must be slept in by the couple to avoid being empty.

On the escorting day, the groom will go to the bride's place, where his arrival is with firecrackers and in response the bride's family will also set some off. Before leaving his natal home, if the groom is the eldest son he will need to pray to the God of Heaven. The groom will see the bride's parents accompanied by the go-between. The bride's

family will offer boiled eggs and if the bride's mother boils the egg hard then this symbolizes that the relationship between the bride and her mother will remain close. The groom will meet the bride and the couple will kneel and show their respect and gratitude to the bride's parents. This is usually the most emotional moment of the ritual. Then the bride is escorted by the groom to an automobile (traditionally a sedan chair). The groom, the best man, and the bride's maid will accompany the couple to the vehicle and they will set off to the groom's home. As he is leaving, the bride is supposed to throw a fan out a window to show that she is leaving behind her temper. The fan will be picked up by a younger member of the bride's family, usually a young boy. The bride's mother will pour out a bucket of water as the car is leaving. This action compares the bride to the water, indicating that the bride shall never be returned after this day. These symbolize moving the bride from the natal home to the husband's lineage. The abandonment of her temper indicates that she is expected to be obedient in her husband's home.

In the evening a banquet is held. This is usually the public highlight of the wedding and typically more than hundred guests are invited. The banquet is paid for by the groom's family, and every guest invited is expected to offer a gift of money. Most of the guests are the groom's relatives and friends, along with a few of the bride's relatives and friends. Again, the guests are negotiable between the two families.

CHAPTER 4
AUBURN'S TAIWANESE COMMUNITY: TAIWANESE STUDENT
ASSOCIATION

4.1 Chinese in America

In *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*, Ma (2003) stated that Chinese communities are found in almost every country of the world. Although the majority of overseas Chinese are still found in Asia, communities in Europe, North America and Oceania have all gained in size substantially. Political instability in Hong Kong and Taiwan has prompted a large number of people to move to Canada, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand (Ma 2003: 19). It has been estimated that in 1990, there were 37 million Chinese living outside the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan, with the majority lives in Asia. One-third of the population were living in the U.S., making it home to the largest Chinese community outside of Asia (Fan 2003: 261). The Chinese living in America include Chinese from China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand. The earliest settlement was founded in California in the late eighteenth century, but a large number of Chinese have immigrated to the U.S. in recent years, particularly since the 1980s. Political and economical factors are the major driving forces for Chinese immigration. In 1965, the U.S. Immigration and Nationality

Act was introduced after a series of civil rights movements which eased immigration procedures (Fan 2003: 265). Nixon's visit to China in 1972 improved the China-US relationship, which encouraged more Chinese to come to the United States from the mainland. However this also motivated Taiwanese to emigrate due to concerns over the PRC's increasing power and the U.S.'s recognition of its legitimacy.

The majority of Chinese Americans are foreign born. Although the number of native born has increased over time, the speed of immigration and its scope is increasing the population faster than the increase of the native born Chinese Americans (Fan 2003: 262). The composition of Chinese Americans is extremely heterogeneous in nature. From the earliest settlers, known as sojourners, to the immigrants of the late 20th century, the socioeconomic status of Chinese Americans has varied greatly. There are legal immigrants who arrived as skilled professionals, entrepreneurs, and students. These individuals tend to have higher education levels and a strong economic background. However, there are also illegal immigrants, of which the great majority are from mainland China, who are more restricted in accessing the nation's resources. Geographical factors have also had a great impact in making the community heterogeneous. China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian countries have all have different relationships with the U.S. over the years, and this political ties with the U.S. have also affected these differences.

A large number of immigrants poured into the U.S. from Taiwan, especially in the 1980s, and most were young professionals. Many possessed professional skills, and thus they moved into primarily managerial and administrative careers. There were also a large

numbers of students, many of whom were encouraged by the Taiwanese government at the time to train overseas.

4.2 Auburn's Taiwanese Community

This study focused on the Taiwanese community in Auburn, Alabama. At the time of the study, there were approximately 50 to 60 Taiwanese households in Auburn. All participants in the study were recruited through the Taiwanese Student Association (TSA) of Auburn University. Several of the participants were not on the TSA contact list, but were eligible for inclusion as they were part of the Taiwanese academic community in Auburn.

The community could be categorized into three types of households: those who worked at Auburn University as full time faculty members, those who worked at Auburn University as full time staff members, and those who were enrolled as full time students. Although most on the contact list were directly linked to Auburn University, there were 2 to 3 households who were not. Two faculty members from Tuskegee University, yet had lived in Auburn for more than sixteen years and have close ties with the Auburn Taiwanese community, so they were considered eligible for inclusions in the study.

All the undergraduate students were single; more than half were living with their families who were settled in Auburn, and only 1 out of the 3 undergraduates was enrolled as an international student. At the time this research was conducted, all the Master's students were enrolled as international students. Half of the Master's students were freshly graduated from colleges in Taiwan, while the other half had obtained their undergraduate degree elsewhere in the United States, Canada, or the UK.

Undergraduate, Masters, and Doctoral students were less likely to be in touch with those who were settled in Auburn. Although some students had close ties with Taiwanese faculty members who have settled in Auburn, others did not join in this social circle.

People generally socialized through parties. TSA organized at least two get together parties a year, one in early fall and the other around the time of the Chinese New Year. Apart from the parties planned by the TSA, many households held private home parties and invited people that they got along well with. Naturally groups had formed, and although it was a small community and most of its members knew each other, there were distinct social circles or factions. Since it was a relatively small community, people tended to help each other, but those who did not join specific social circles may have found it harder to find help when needed.

Age and occupational background were probably the most distinctive variables that directly affected the study, followed by the length of time they had been in the United States. The frequency of trips back to Taiwan during their extended stay here also affected the study's findings. The more trips there had been back to Taiwan, the more awareness there was of Taiwanese culture. Students, especially Masters' students, were more likely to go back and spend holidays such as Christmas and summer. More students spent Christmas in Taiwan, because many students preferred to stay during the summer to register for summer classes. Some Ph.D. students spent holidays in Taiwan, but they were more tied down with their work, so most Ph.D. students stayed in Auburn year around. There were some exceptions who were less occupied with their work and who would go back Taiwan every holiday season. Regarding their plans for after graduating,

Masters graduates were more likely to return to Taiwan for their job hunt. Ph.D. graduates were more likely to stay in the U.S., most of whom moved to other states.

When Taiwanese faculty members went back to Taiwan, though they also planned to visit families or friends, their primary goal was often to attend conferences or as a fund raising trip. For conferences, they generally did not stay for a long time, although in some cases the stay extended for more than one month. For example, Dr. Nang's wife said that a group of faculty members were planning to go back to meet Auburn alumni in the summer of 2005. The actual aim of the visit was to raise funds for a particular college. Auburn alumni in Taiwan constitute a large community because there were more than 300 Taiwanese students attended Auburn during the late 1980s and 1990s. Mrs. Nang said that most returned to Taiwan after graduating from Auburn. Faculty members often kept in touch with alumni; in many cases Auburn alumni would persuade students to come to study in Auburn. Therefore this was a small community with a broad network, starting from Auburn University as a hub and extending to and from Taiwan to other universities in the States, and sometimes to other countries. The academic community was closed and tightly connected; a wide range of information was available through word of mouth. During many of the parties it was possible to hear rumors containing amazingly rich information.

Taiwanese staff who worked at Auburn University were able to return to Taiwan less frequently as their work hours were less flexible, which made it difficult for them to plan such trips. Their immigration status was often another concern. While those who worked as staff members at the university encountered difficulties when applying for a green card or US citizenship, nearly all the faculty members who taught at Auburn

possessed one or the other. Many of those with a green card or US citizenship said that their occupation as professors or assistant professors eased the application processes. The types of occupation made a difference, but also in recent years immigration procedures have adopted different policies. The application procedures have become more complex, lengthy, and expensive over the past decade. Their immigration status was a central issue for those who worked in Auburn; not only because they wanted to retain their career, but also because many of them had started families.

The data for this study was collected through attending TSA parties and included a detailed observation of the relationships between people, how each social circle was formed, and how they kept up with news from Taiwan.

4.3 Social Occasions

I have attended most of the Taiwanese meetings and events that were held during the study period. The members of TSA held regular luncheons and evening parties. Although some were planned by TSA, others were privately planned. Occasionally invitations were issued by way of calls. Large scale parties usually included more than 30 people, private parties were usually among smaller groups of people. Invitations generally came through acquaintances or friends. Not knowing any of those invited, made it more difficult to receive an invitation. Through friends and family connections, I met some people on the contact list. Many in the community knew me through my husband, which led to many invitations. This issue also concerns relationships between people. Some were hard to keep in touch with, because they tended to avoid the social circle, while others were always around. I got acquainted with a group that is best

described as the center of the Taiwanese social circle. who were well known for their hospitality to newcomers and often offered places to stay for new students and faculty members. Most are long-term residents of Auburn, ranging from 7 years to 25 years. Although I was not able to attend every function, the parties I attended were rich in information on Taiwanese social circles.

These parties were held to celebrate seasonal events and holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year. Other than the seasonal events, parties were also held for birthdays, football events, and sometimes just for evening feasts, barbeque parties, and garden parties.

Other than the parties organized by the TSA, I was invited to at least one home party per month on average. The number of TSA parties varied depending on the president of TSA, so every year was slightly different. However, a barbecue party in the beginning of the fall semester and the Chinese New Year party were scheduled every year. The barbecue party was held every September. This party celebrated the mid-Autumn festival, a Chinese festival, but its aim was also to welcome new comers to the group. New faculty members and students, whether they were visiting scholars or exchange students, as long as they worked for or were enrolled at Auburn University were all introduced at the party. The TSA prepared some food for the barbecue, but they called each student to bring refreshments, while faculty and staff members brought some cooked dishes. This was an outdoor party, with great home made Chinese food freshly cooked by the faculty wives. A new contact list was handed to every household at the party and everyone was expected to pay their membership fee at this time. The party was a good opportunity to get to know Taiwanese people for the newcomers. One to two

hours of party was enough to greet the new comers, and the contact list was very handy for exchanging numbers, and addresses. Students got together with other students, and faculty members got together with other faculty members. In some cases, new students who had been unable to arrange accommodation before their arrival would stay with some of the faculty members', which also gave them a greater opportunity to get acquainted with the other Taiwanese people in Auburn. Some new students were shy, but they eventually started conversation with others. Emile, a 30 year old who graduated from Auburn and now works at the university said "Sometimes you get to know people from the same high school, or university you went to. When I was still a student here in Auburn, I got to know a faculty member who happened to be my aunt's friend. It's a small world...and if you do something bad, whole community will know."

As well as the barbecue party, the TSA organized a Chinese New Year party every year. The New Year party was a special event because it would select a new president for the following year, and there were also presents for everyone.

At each TSA event, the faculty wives showed off their cooking techniques. They tended to gather in one corner and discuss the dishes they had prepared, their children and their husband's careers. At the party some friendly, chatty wives would try to get to know new students, and they would invite students to their houses occasionally and chat about their studies, families, and relationships.

4.4 Chatterboxes

I got to know some of the faculty members by attending several of the parties described above. Many faculty members' wives were capable of preparing authentic

Chinese cuisine with minimum cooking materials. Many dishes required a certain level of cooking skill to be mastered, but strong cravings for special Chinese dishes drove them to cook almost anything. Even though there were few authentic Chinese restaurants in town, let alone Chinese supermarkets, they cooked a wide range of dishes with little difficulty. The amount of energy they put into their cooking was astonishing. Wives seemed to get together often, with their circles tightly formed. Some worked as part time staff members at Auburn University, but about half were full time housewives.

The wives were generally very chatty and gossips was the major attraction after dinner. They talked about local news and current issues in the U.S. and Taiwan. They discussed mainly social issues, such as the current trends in fashion, cooking, politics, career, immigration procedures, and education. It was surprising to hear up to-date discussions on current issues in Taiwan, until it became apparent that many had Chinese cable televisions in their houses. However the most commonly heard topics concerned relationships with people in the Auburn Taiwanese community. Perhaps because the wives got together and talked more often, the topics tended to focus primarily on education, relationships, and marriage. The wives talked less about themselves, but more about other people. In many cases, they were discussing other people's lives, mainly those of other Taiwanese people who were not present at the table. People who engaged in such discussions were generally the older wives, and their knowledge of other people's affairs was amazing. They knew who had married whom, which students were polite and amiable, whose children got into what university with what scholarships, and a great deal about the lives of the Mainland Chinese living in Auburn. When there were students at the table like me, they would ask about and discuss our school lives, offering advice on

what to expect, and what we should do. On one occasion, a graduate student was at the dinner table. He has just finished his thesis, and Mrs. Yang had asked him to come over for dinner. After dinner, she and a few other faculty wives asked him about the graduation processes, whether his family would come over for the graduation ceremony. Their interest focused on his future career: “What is your plan now that you’ve graduated?” asked Mrs. Ceylon. He replied, “I’m still job hunting at the moment. I will go to California for a job interview next week.” “California is a good place,” most of the faculty wives agreed and they started to discuss the expenses of housing in California. The discussion then shifted to his job interviews; he was apparently being interviewed at computer software companies. The faculty wives’ concern, or interest, was mainly on his immigration status. All the wives advised him that “You know you should look for academic positions, because you are more likely to get a green card.” The graduate student replied politely that he would consider it, though his tone did not indicate any great enthusiasm. On another occasion, one faculty wife, Mrs. Lily was unusually friendly with Jennifer, a graduate student. Mrs. Lily invited her over for every dinner party, especially when her son was present. Jennifer was the only new single female graduate student at the time. Remarks were overheard from a few other Taiwanese people saying that Mrs. Lily was very keen on finding a girlfriend for her son. Her son had been living in the U.S. for almost twenty years, but he had never had a chance to get acquainted with Taiwanese girls. Mrs. Lily’s strong wish to have a Taiwanese daughter-in-law drove her to approach Jennifer. In such ways, wives would chat with students in an inquisitive manner about their career options and relationships.

At one party I displayed my wedding photographs, which had been taken in bridal salons back in Taiwan. Many of the wives started heated discussions on the wedding photo salons in Taiwan. The discussion showed their conviction that photographic techniques are more advanced in Taiwan. Mrs. Ceylon said “I tell my daughter to take photos back in Taiwan...when she is going to get married,” then Mrs. Tree agreed “Yes, I understand what you mean.” The whole group nodded and started to discuss the dresses I wore in the photos, and the make up. When asked “Why would you want your daughter to go back to Taiwan just to take photos? Can’t she take them here?” Mrs. Ceylon seemed very surprised to be asked such questions. She answered “Why? You had wedding photo shoots in Taiwan, so I thought you knew. See these? They look a lot prettier than ones you take here in the States. I mean they look more professional, sophisticated.”

The bridal photo salons in Taiwan are widely known for their extravagant services. The popularity of these specialist bridal salons extends from Taiwan to the People’s Republic of China, Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, and in Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. There are also salons that have extended their business to New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Vancouver, and other North American cities with large Chinese communities (Adrian 2003: 7). The popularity of the photos lies in the surreal, highly stylized finish of the photos. The photos resemble the images seen in fashion magazines, and the bride bears very little resemblance to her normal appearance.

The discussions of the photos triggered a discussion of wedding rituals. The wives’ main concern was the cost of the wedding receptions. Mrs. Manning said “You know Mrs. Ceylon. We should have our daughters’ wedding receptions in Taiwan, and our sons’ wedding receptions in the States”, and everybody burst out laughing. When asked

why they found this amusing, Mrs. Manning said “The wedding expenses are all paid by the bride’s side in the States, but in Taiwan, it’s the other way round.”

The faculty wives were all permanent residents of the U.S., and many had been counted the convenience of their immigration status. Their circle was very gossipy, predominantly curious about other people’s lives. They kept in touch with new students as much as possible, sometimes as an opportunity for seeking mates for their own children.

CHAPTER 5

RELIGION AND RITUALS

Mary, a mother of three in her mid 50s, said “We don’t say that we can’t process a wedding without *xi-chi*. Because *xi-chi* is made up as we prepare food, invitation, clothes, and gifts. It is a vibrant, happy (*qui-fen*) aura as we go along every step of wedding rituals.” Jenny, a 28 year old Masters student, said “There’s no wedding without *xi-chi*. Wedding as a whole, is a very *xi-chi* occasion.” When asked what *xi-chi* is, most informants were stunned and had trouble answering. When asked whether a wedding can proceed without *xi-chi*, they all agreed that it would be impossible. This section will summarize informants’ descriptions of wedding rituals, the perceptions of wedding rituals, and *xi-chi*. From the above quotes, it appears that *xi-chi* does not define itself, but it is defined by the ritual processes.

There were few ritual related questions asked in the interview (see Appendix). Informants were asked to give descriptions of the most recent wedding they had attended, and were asked to give a definition of *liu-li*, the six most important rituals for a Taiwanese wedding. They were then asked about the most memorable ritual for them. This was expected to give a clearer picture of the relationship between *xi-chi* and the rituals and to reveal the meaning of each of the rituals and its relevance to the wedding.

5.1 Sources of Wedding Rituals

Wedding rites are complex in most cultures. In some cultures, ritual performances are strict and rigid, often instructed by an authority figure Bell (1997), Wolf (1974). In a church wedding, for example, a priest is needed to guide the wedding rites. Religion validates marriage in many cultures, thus it is not surprising that wedding rites are, by and large, supervised by a religious figure. Christian Taiwanese usually have church weddings, but others who do not have a specific religious affiliation are under no obligation to use an authority figure for a Taiwanese wedding ceremony.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance website records religions in Taiwan as: “Chinese folk religions combined with Buddhism claim the majority (68%) of Taiwanese; many younger people claim no religious affiliation (25%); Christians form a small part (6%) of the population, with Protestants (2%), the most numerous are evangelicals (2.6%); Roman Catholics (1.4%).”

With so many different beliefs in Taiwan, it may be surprising to note that regardless of religious affiliation, there will always be rituals involved in a Taiwanese wedding. The degrees of involvement with the rituals differ according to the religious affiliation. For example, most Taiwanese Christian families have the wedding in a church and skip some of the traditional Taiwanese wedding rituals.

Publications on Taiwanese rituals describe every step of the wedding rites, but the descriptions are not written in the form of an instruction or a guide (Chen 1936, Guo 2002, Liu 1982, Wang 1998, Yang 1991). They are written rather in the form of historical facts. Although there are small sections on rituals in wedding magazines such as *Xin Xinniang* and *Weiwei Xinniang*, They are more like bridal fashion magazines,

introducing wedding photo salons, fashions, and advertising locations for wedding banquets (Adrian 2003:114).

Children's encyclopedias (Guo 2002) may also contain references to Taiwanese wedding rituals. Color photographs on every page of the book introduce historical Taiwanese weddings and discuss the varieties and current trends. Guo's book, for example, is clear and concise to help children to understand the complex and sometimes tedious procedures involved. It does not say what is right or wrong while performing the rituals, but it clearly explains the meanings of most of the wedding rites, focusing on some of the props used during their ritual and the symbolic meanings. However, though this provides a simple guide to understanding an overview of Taiwanese wedding rituals, it is not an appropriate reference for anyone seeking to learn 'how to perform' them. Other related publications are also not appropriate sources of information as instruction manuals, but consist of descriptions of rituals as factual information, describing wedding rituals in the past (Chen 1936, Liu 1982, Wang 1998, Yang 1991).

With so much information, how do people in Taiwan know what and how to perform the rituals? How do they know the taboos in wedding rituals? Where do they look for ritual information? Usually parents, grandparents, or other elder relatives of the couple are the source of ritual information; however, many of those in their 50s admitted that they also turn to books and magazines. A little over 50 % of them answered that they would ask questions of and plan the rituals with the staff in wedding photo salons, engagement cake stores, or the hotels or restaurants where the wedding banquets are held. While 90% of students in their 20-30s said that they would go online for wedding information, two of the 50 year olds also said that they would go online to find sources.

Genie, a 59 year old who lives with her daughter who is a Ph.D. student in Auburn said,

“Do you know that nowadays engagement cake shops offer props for rituals, too. It’s very convenient. We got our red handkerchief and a fan from the shop. Oh, and also the wedding photo salons. They also offer lots of stuff you need to use for the wedding. See, young people nowadays have their wedding banquets in fancy five star hotels, and many of the wedding packages offer help for wedding rituals.”

Cathy, a 55 year old, who works at Auburn, said ‘Online sources are easy and convenient.’ She said ‘You can find so much information on weddings. I don’t need to ask the elderly all the time.’

Younger informants, those aged 25-35 expressed some apprehension in replying to the questions. At first their reactions were puzzling, and led me wonder whether the questions were improper. When asked in Mandarin, “I’m writing my thesis for a Master’s project on Taiwanese wedding rituals, could I ask some questions?” they agreed immediately, though throughout the interviews some could not hide their apprehension. “Do I have to prepare anything?” was the most common reaction. When the interview procedures were explained some panicked and thought that their knowledge would be assessed in some way.

Maria, a second year Ph.D. student, talked extensively about the wedding processes, but she did not explain in detail. All she gave was a list of points, with no detailed descriptions. When asked her to talk about what types of rituals were performed and what they meant, she smiled nervously and said: “I’m not really sure about the

meaning of each ritual. All I know is that there are lots of steps and older people force you to do them.”

They gave a clear impression that they felt ashamed when answering some of the questions. The informants seemed intimidated by questions about historical backgrounds or the meanings of specific ritual symbols. They were stunned at some of the questions asked. When Maria first asked about the process of the six rites, she said: “Do you mean all the processes of a Taiwanese marriage? I read some stuff online last night for today’s interview, you know, you should look at online sources, there is lots of information out there.”

Maria was not the only informant who suggested online sources for wedding rituals. As the informed consent was being explained to Jennifer, a Masters student, she also replied: “You know you can find all this information online. They are very convenient and useful. I mean you know all those bridal gown salons, bridal photo salons, they all have websites and give you lists of information you can find. I think they are more reliable sources. You should look around, because those may be more helpful than what I can give you.”

The same question was posed to Anthony, a second year Masters student and he kindly advised that: “I’m not sure you know this, but since you are the one who is researching the topic, you may already have found some information on the Internet. I didn’t really look for it, but I’m sure you will find enough resources, and besides, they will probably be more useful than my interview.”

These students all strongly recommended looking into online sources. They appeared nervous in giving meanings of rituals, but were more relaxed, and eloquent in

sharing their experiences in attending wedding rituals or wedding banquets. So do all follow online sources? They don't. As Cathy described her daughter's wedding she said that: "Well...in the end, I had to discuss the rituals with the groom's parents, and grandparents. It's important to discuss this between the two families and the elders. We discussed them because each family has different rituals. Some people are very strict, but some are not. We needed to negotiate." This negotiation is not uncommon in Taiwanese weddings.

5.2 Memorable Moments

Because younger informants were unlikely to have attended as many weddings as older informants, they were expected to be less aware of all the ritual processes. However, age was not the only factor affecting the knowledge of wedding rites. As Adrian writes in *Framing the Bride*: "Attendance at ceremonies is usually limited to a dozen or so who are close to the couple and their families...depending on one's position in the family, it is possible to reach marriageable age with little or no experience of betrothal and wedding ceremonies." She (Adrian 2003: 114-115) further writes: "The dictates of fertility and luck exclude certain categories of persons from betrothal and marriage ceremonies, even though all are welcome at banquets. Those born in a tiger year are banned from all wedding ceremonies except when they are the bride or groom, or a parent or grandparent of the bride or groom." Finally she commented that "The timing and location of betrothal and wedding ceremonies limit their attendance. Astrology dictates the exact timing of these ceremonies, and many families prefer to follow astrological counsel even if the ceremony must take place during hours when most

adults work...for these reasons, retirees and housewives make up the bulk of relatives in attendance-substantiating the notion that weddings are indeed old people's business" (2000: 114-115).

The above reference reveals that young people in Taiwan tend to be less exposed to wedding rituals. Younger informants were either freshly graduated from college in Taiwan, or elsewhere; therefore, they were less likely to know the details of rituals. When they were asked to name the most memorable rituals, about 70% of the informants from ages 20-35 said that the tea ceremony and gift exchange were most memorable. In contrast, almost all the informants who were 35 years old or older said that bowing to the ancestor's alter was the most memorable.

The wedding banquet was another major response, next to the betrothal ceremony. John, a 33 year old who works at Auburn University as an IT specialist said "The most memorable moments were at the wedding banquet. I remember the bride's dress very clearly. She was wearing *chung-sum*...you know, Chinese dress, and it was a bright red dress, and I felt, hey, that's nice."

Color may be one of the most attractive features that many remember. Nicky, a 25 year old graduate student, said that "The wedding banquet was very impressive. I attended my mother's friend's daughter's wedding. We're very good friends, so even though I wasn't part of their family, I attended her engagement party, wedding ceremony and the banquet. Her engagement party was the most interesting so I remember it very well. There were lots of gifts and presents, everything was packed in red."

Some were not able to give a most memorable moment. Jennifer, a 29 year old said, "I never attended ceremonies so I don't know anything about rituals. I only

attended banquets, so I guess I can only give you what I thought about the wedding banquet, not the wedding rituals.” She went on, “Even for my older brother’s wedding, I wasn’t allowed to attend the family ceremony because it was a taboo for a sister to be in the same room with the bride, I mean my sister-in-law. As for other relatives, my parents didn’t take me to attend any of my relatives’ weddings.”

Mick, a 30 year old, was critical about attending family weddings. He said, “Family weddings are meaningless. I don’t mean brothers or sisters, but some relatives that you don’t really know. Sometimes the elders tell us to attend the wedding because they are your blood relatives. What’s the point in attending someone’s wedding rituals if you are not close to them? I was born in the year of the tiger, so I couldn’t attend many wedding rituals, especially those of relatives’ rituals. I started to attend weddings after college. I think there is more meaning to attending good friends’ weddings.” People born in the year of the tiger (which occurs once every twelve years, based on the Chinese zodiac) were excluded because it is believed that they would trigger infertility. Some families enforce this rule strictly, while others are more lax (Adrian 2003: 115).

Mick attended his best friend’s wedding as a photographer. “I think a wedding is a happy occasion, so it’s important to celebrate with people that you care about. It’s more real that way. I think rituals have become routine. People do them because they are rituals, not because they want to. I think it has become meaningless.” When asked which ritual left the strongest impression on him, he said “The tea ceremony is a special ritual. I think it is the most memorable part of wedding rituals, especially when the bride offers the tea to her mother-in-law and father-in-law; because she shows respect towards her new family. But nowadays brides smile too much during the tea ceremony. They aren’t

bashful. See, brides should be bashful. They shouldn't be too outgoing.”

Married informants had different views on the most unforgettable moments in Taiwanese weddings, presumably because they were emotionally attached to their personal experiences. Katie, a 30 year old, had been married to her husband Richard for almost three years. She remembered the tea ceremony most clearly, but her most emotional moment was different. She said “My father died when I was only two years old. So when my husband and I had to bow my mother to say good bye, I cried a little. My mother worked very hard to raise me and my sister, so it was too emotional for me. Richard was a Christian, so I didn't have to kneel down in front of his ancestor alter. They didn't have those things. We left Taiwan right after our wedding, so it feels surreal even though I've only been married for three years.”

A 50 year old mechanical technician at Auburn University said that he remembered when he bowed to his father-in-law. “I felt a strong weight of responsibility because her father said ‘I'm counting on you. Please do take care of my daughter well.’ I think that was the most impressive, memorable moment of my wedding.” He went on “I wasn't too clear about each meaning of the ritual, but I knew that they were important for Taiwanese weddings. They were important because it's a *xi-chi* occasion.”

The betrothal ceremony was the most memorable event, yet because it is a specific family occasion, few have experienced it. The nature of the ceremony probably helped in remembering, because it was small, by invitation from the bride's family, and with fewer attendants compared with banquets.

5.3 Memorable Rituals, Important Rituals

To many of the informants, the most memorable moments were also the most important ritual moments, although 70% of the informants added that rituals from the Six Rites are also important. The quotes below are representatives.

Debra, a 29 year old graduate student said “To me, the wedding banquet is most memorable. I think that’s the main event of the wedding because there’re lots of people, lots of food. But I also think that rituals...escorting the bride, asking for the lucky date, and exchanging gifts are also important, just to satisfy older people.”

Thomas, a 32 year old said “All I can remember is the wedding banquet, because I’ve only attended wedding banquets in my life. So the banquet is the most important to me. Maybe if I attend any wedding rituals I might be able to compare.”

Rick, a 50 year old said “The most important ritual? I think that’s when I went to my wife’s house to escort her. She was in a Chinese dress, and...well, it was simple, but emotional, so it was the most unforgettable moment of our wedding.”

The memorable moments almost always coincided with the most important ritual. Each experienced their wedding differently, and because Taiwanese weddings vary so widely, the data also varied.

5.4 Li and Formal Wedding Rituals

Apart from the three oldest informants, who provided full descriptions of *liu-li*, those who tried generally related it to the betrothal ceremony. Angie, a 40 year old Ph.D. student said: “*Liu-li*? You mean gift exchanges? I know there is a ritual where you exchange either six or twelve items. I think six items are more common because it’s

more convenient. In the past they exchanged twelve items.” Tracy, a 30 year old also explained that “*Liu-li*...isn’t that when the bride and groom exchange gifts? I know you have to prepare six or twelve items. I prepared six items for my wedding.” The confusion comes from similar wording. The gift exchange is known as ‘*shi-er-jien-li*’, meaning twelve gifts. Some people who prepare six items of gifts call gift exchange ‘*liu-li*’ for short. This may explain why most informants were confused, because of the same pronunciation.

Since most informants were confused, they were asked “Do you know every step of the Taiwanese wedding ceremony?” The question encouraged informants to give more detailed descriptions on the rituals. Rita, a 25 year old graduate student, was not fluent in describing the whole ritual, but she was more confident when asked for the definition of *liu-li*. “I think I know...that the groom must pick up his bride and...there’s the banquet, right? Oh, and the bride need to throw the fan...I think that’s all I know.” George, a 55 year old who works at Auburn University, said that “I don’t recall all the rituals, but I remember I had to pick up my wife, bow to her parents, and the most important thing is to worship the ancestor alter, and finally, the banquet. We had an engagement party too, but I don’t remember it well enough to tell you.” Descriptions were more fluent, yet in many cases informants could only give the day of the actual wedding.

After the informants had described their unique experiences and knowledge of wedding rituals, they were asked “Can we have a wedding without *xi-chi*?” No one said that it was possible to have a Taiwanese wedding without *xi-chi*. To be more precise, Cathy said that “What do you mean if there’s no *xi-chi*? That’s not possible. See, if you’re Taiwanese, you know that wedding is a (*xi-shi*) happy affair. The six rituals are

very important in making everybody involved in a happy occasion. Young people might not know them, but they are important in the Taiwanese wedding ritual. But you know, some families omit a few small rituals...some don't. You can say that every household has a unique wedding.”

In sum, although *liu-li* sounds unfamiliar and is often confused with the gift exchange ceremony, it is important in keeping the wedding a happy occasion. As Mary said:

“I think the whole sequence of wedding rituals lightens up the mood. It starts off with meetings of the parents from the two families, astrology readings, the betrothal ceremony, and the actual wedding. As we prepare for the wedding, people interact differently. I guess you can feel that people are more active, lively, loud, but careful. They are careful to create a happy, joyous wedding. There are lots of people, so a Taiwanese wedding is very lively and loud. “

5.5 Symbolic Representations of *Xi-chi*

Informants were asked what they first thought of when they heard the phrase *xi-chi*. Interestingly, many answers were driven by colors and characters. A 35 year old graduate student said “*Xi-chi*? I think of a wedding banquet right away. Maybe because of the color. You know how much we use the color red.” Indeed, Taiwanese weddings use the color red throughout, from invitation cards to the red envelopes, from small fans to the handkerchief used in the ritual. Thus, it was not unexpected for other informants to give the same answer. Ray, a 37 year old graduate student said “I think of the banquet,

receptions, that's it." One other common answer was the red slip of paper with the *xi* character on it.

John, a 35 year old technician working at Auburn University, said "Anything that has to do with the color red. For example, the bride's dress, or how the newlyweds' bedroom is decorated in reds, with a red 'xi' character decorated on the wall and stuff."

Furthermore, Jennifer, a 27 year old graduate student replied with no hesitation, "The xi word, the gold xi word on red paper." The red square of paper is almost everywhere on the wedding day.

There were a few exceptions such as Mick, who answered that "I think of *tan yuan*, because they are supposed to represent the happy marriage of the groom and the bride." He may have already considered his answer, because he thought and answered very differently from the rest of the informants. Note that *tan yuan* is usually presented as pink and white in color. Color usage is again, important

Color generally created a strong impression on the viewers. When asked why, every one answered that red is *xi-chi*, except for one person who gave a detailed definition.

5.6 Taiwanese Wedding Color

Color usage is significantly related to ritual performances. Colors become meaningful in each event; particular colors are considered as good and must be used, while others may be considered taboo and are not used. Colors become symbolic in rituals; Taiwanese weddings are no exception.

When informants were asked: “What color represents Taiwanese weddings the best?” No one gave any color other than red. Although this was an expected result, the perfect consensus that red is the color for Taiwanese weddings was amazing. From personal experience, red is a significant color for Taiwanese weddings. Red not only appears in the rituals, but is also used in many other ways, from the large ornaments that decorate the walls to the small ones used in wedding banquets, clothes, and invitation cards,

They were also asked: “Why do you think red best represents Taiwanese weddings?” Most informants answered: “Because red represents *xi-chi*” or “Because red is *xi-chi*.” About 10% of informants answered “Because red represents luck,” or “Because red is prosperous.”

Fifty year old Jason, who teaches in Auburn, said:

“Red was a very important color from ancient times among Chinese people. I think it is the color of blood, which can also mean that the color represents life. See, a wedding is strongly related to life, because it’s a very big turning point for one. We celebrate a couple’s happiness, but most importantly, we wish them a prosperous life. By prosperous we also mean bearing children, creating a new generation.”

His answer was the most complete and detailed. Minnie, a 54 year old lady who works at Auburn University said: “Oh, red is definitely the color for a Taiwanese wedding, because it represents *xi-chi*, and it’s a very happy color.”

Jane, a 30 year old Ph.D. student at Auburn said: “It’s all red, isn’t it? I mean red is *xi-chi*. You know people use red for the New Year and all that, too. It’s because it’s *xi-chi*. Maybe because it makes you feel happier.”

John, a 35 year old who works at Auburn University, said:

“Definitely red. Pink is ok. See, we call wedding banquet as ‘xi-yen’ and we use red all the time. I guess white is more westernized. White isn’t good for Chinese weddings because it’s mainly for funerals. Always red, the more the better. I think it’s because it represents happiness, and prosperity, and “good luck” (said in English). You know how we get red envelopes for money? Yeah, it always meant good stuff.”

Yau’s article “Use of color in China” discusses the various influences of color usage in China (Yau 1994: 151-163). She writes that in ancient China, color was used to distinguish rank, title, and status. Political regulation of color usage was common. Some colors were restricted. The restricted colors were different according to the dynasty, or royal family, that was ruling the country. For every dynasty, different colors were selected for restricted use. There were colors for the emperor and his family and colors for the officials and nobles. Colors represented the social hierarchy. In most time periods, commoners wore quiet, rather dull colors while the royals, nobles, and officials wore bright, lavish colors. Colors were especially restricted for outer wear; jewelry, shoes, and embroidery displayed more freedom in the expression of color. On special occasions or celebrations Chinese use more colors to express their individuality.

Red has always been a favorite color nationally. Red firecrackers were hung and set off from the roof beams on occasions such as starting a business, completing a

building, and weddings. Guests usually brought two strips of red fabric bearing congratulatory poems for wedding receptions.

Furthermore, the article mentioned that the color usage by Chinese people followed the 'Five Element Theory' (Yau 1994: 157). The Chinese used colors to represent the elements, locations, and seasons. The five elements are: gold, wood, water, fire, earth. The five colors used to represent each element, respectively, white, blue, black, red, and yellow.

Red represents fire; yellow symbolizes gold. Since fire was regarded as a necessary element in the process of refining gold, together they were thought to convey luck. Sometimes a small fire inside a building was viewed as a sign of impending wealth. Red also represents the positive essence (Yang) and Heaven, while yellow symbolizes the negative essence (Yin) and Earth. When the two colors are combined, these two colors complement each other and constitute a whole. Brides therefore wear a red dress because it symbolizes fertility.

Other colors are also used for wedding rituals. The informants all answered "red" without hesitation, but when they were asked to give other colors that are used for Taiwanese wedding rituals, almost half of them could not answer the question instantly.

CHAPTER 6

XI-CHI AS A ROOT METAPHOR

Metaphor is the figurative use of language and rituals rich in symbolism are often targeted for metaphorical analysis. Linguists believe that metaphor provides a way to map one source domain to some target domain, and metaphor structures ways of thinking (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Cognitive anthropologists argue that cultural understanding underlies metaphor use, and there is more to culture than just metaphor (Quinn 1991:57). Fernandez (1974) suggested that studying metaphor gives us a clear view of the culture that is being studied. Victor Turner (1974) discussed how a metaphor is a result of two different thoughts interacting together and the interaction is supported by a single word or a phrase. One of the five characteristics he introduced pertains to the study of *xi-chi*. That is, the metaphor selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the principal subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject (Turner 1974:30). Thus, it seems likely that *xi-chi* is a root metaphor that organizes all the symbols, and expressions involved in the Taiwanese wedding ritual.

As discussed in previous sections, Taiwanese wedding rituals are complex, with rich symbolism. This section presents a metaphorical analysis of the Taiwanese wedding ritual symbols. This illustrates how ritual performances and taboos link *xi-chi*, and shows

how this link is essential in assisting people to consider *xi-chi* as a central concept in the context of Taiwanese weddings.

6.1 Liminality and Communitas

Anti-structure, or communitas and liminality, are the conditions for the production of root metaphors (Turner 1974: 50). Liminality is “a sphere or domain of action or thought rather than a social modality” (Turner 1974: 52). It is ambiguous in nature, and this condition is described as a passive state. According to Turner, communitas is an experience of collective identity, a strong emotional experience of social unity. At this stage, everyone is embraced as equal beings. It is a transient stage rather than a permanent state. It is “the transformative experience that goes to the roots of each person’s being and finds in that being something profoundly communal and shared” (Turner 1969: 138).

The Taiwanese wedding rituals have been discussed in earlier chapters, along with a summary of the most memorable rituals the informants recalled. The summary also included an account of what the informants came up with when they thought of *xi-chi*. The most memorable moments overall were the tea ceremony, wedding banquet, and also the color. The most important ritual and the most memorable usually coincided, though there were a few exceptions. These exceptions were minor, and the memorable and most important rituals generally combined to form *xi-chi*.

6.2 Fertility, Alliance, and Negotiation

Based on the analysis of rituals, there are three elements that contribute to the concept of *xi-chi*: fertility, alliance, and negotiation. These three elements are embedded within each other. They are interrelated, because a Taiwanese wedding is a process of negotiation towards building an amiable alliance, but its ultimate goal is procreation.

When informants were asked the first thing that occurred when they thought of *xi-chi*, color seemed to play a key role. Red is well known as the Taiwanese wedding color, and is central to the entire wedding. It is everywhere in the ritual, most obviously in the invitation cards, and the red envelopes used to present gift money. Invitation cards (*xi-tieh*) are gold on red, meaning that the letters are written in gold ink on a bright red card. Nowadays there are cards with lacey designs, and even white invitation cards are available, but many couples are still forced to choose red invitation cards by their elderly relatives.

Red symbolizes fertility. Yau (1994) mentioned that red has long been the favorite color among the Chinese. It is frequently used in many contexts to represent joyous ambience. In the context of weddings, red is used for the dresses, decorations, and so on. Red is also 'the color of blood and life,' one informant said. Apparently red is a strong metaphor for fertility among Chinese. When the purpose of selecting red is asked, all informants replied that red represents '*xi-chi*.' They all agreed that it is the most important color in decorating places for the engagement party and wedding banquet, and the new room (*xin-fang*), which is the couple's bedroom.

Other than the color, there were many rules that were designed to ensure fertility. For example, people who were born in the year of the tiger were not allowed to attend

family rituals. In particular, they were prohibited from the new room, because people born in the year of the tiger are considered to trigger miscarriages. Some families are particularly persistent in enforcing this rule, while others are more lax. In the interviews, few informants were born in the year of tiger and they had not been welcomed at the rituals. There was no information available on how the rule affected infertility, but in *Framing the Bride* (2003: 115), Adrian mentioned that there were cases where people who were born in the year of tiger attended family rituals and the bride had later miscarried.

Building amiable alliances is embedded in the idea of fertility. “Marriage is an affair between the two families. They discuss money, gifts, and the banquet through all the processes and get to know each other,” said Ringo, a 37 year old graduate student. He added “The wedding banquet is like an exhibition. It’s an exhibition because both families will invite some people they know who have high social status to provide speeches at the banquet. That’s why we talk about *men-dan-hu-duei*.” *Men-dan-hu-duei* means the proper matching of social classes. This matching eases the negotiating process, especially when the two families come to negotiate the amount of gift money to be given at the betrothal ceremony.

The Taiwanese wedding is a process of negotiation. From the name asking to the final wedding banquet, the two families constantly work on negotiating the dates of the wedding, engagement, gift money, wedding banquet, and so on. As mentioned in section 3.3, the key person in the wedding process in the past was the go-between who had a good knowledge of both families. The go-between served as a matchmaker at the time; she or he would be involved throughout the process of negotiation between the two

families. In recent years, the go-between has changed into a couple often with substantial socioeconomic status, who are usually introduced by the groom's family when the marriage is certain. The role of the go-between has slightly changed over time, mainly because young people now tend to search for a mate themselves. In the past, the marriage was initiated by the go-between; however, in recent years the go-between is more likely to be chosen after the two families have decided to hold a wedding. Ways in which go-between are chosen vary. Sometimes they are chosen from among the couple's friends, co-workers, or acquaintances. In some cases, the go-between holds a special place as the *jieshaoren* (introducer), and may be invited to give a speech at the banquet, although in these cases they seldom serve as the actual go-between for the families (Adrian 2003: 123). There are also cases where the go-between is chosen by the groom's family after the couple have announced their wedding. In such cases, the go-between assists the families with the marriage negotiations over matters such as the bride-price and engagement cakes (Adrian 2003: 123).

Although the go-between today is less likely to initiate the wedding process, one of their primary functions has not changed. They are an important part of the wedding because their mission is to assist in building amiable family relationships. If the two families disagree over issues such as the wedding date, engagement party or wedding banquet, it is the go-between's responsibility to relieve the tension. The go-between is most helpful when money negotiations seemed to be causing problems.

For example, Connie, a 54 year old whose daughter was married few years ago in Taiwan, provided a very detailed account of her wedding. Before the betrothal ceremony was set up, the families (namely the couple's parents and the go-between, the couple

themselves were excluded) had a meeting to discuss the bride-price (*pinjin*). First the groom's parents announced how much money they were prepared to offer, which is usually in two lump sums. One is larger (*daping*), four times the amount of the other (*xiaoping*). This price is negotiable. Connie had asked for NT\$60,000 (about \$1,790 U.S.) for the smaller amount and NT\$200,000 (about \$6000 U.S.) for the larger amount of the bride-price. If the bride-price is satisfactory, the bride's parents prepare a dowry that is appropriate for the money offered. If the amount offered by the groom's side was not satisfactory, then they need to discuss further. Connie explained "My daughter studied abroad, she speaks more than three languages, and she has all the potential ahead of her. If they offered a lower price than expected, then we would probably have to work it out, maybe with a help of the go-between." Whether the bride will take both portions of the money is another issue. In Connie's daughter's case, she only took the smaller amount of the bride-price. She explained why:

"I need to tell them whether I will take the money or not prior to the betrothal ceremony. This prevents hurting the relationship, you see, because sometimes the bride's family says that they won't take both of them, but they ended up taking the both large and small bride-price money at the ceremony. It's very sad. A promise is a promise. Of course, in that case the families won't be able to have a good relationship. Some people take one or the other, some take both and some people won't take either. It all depends on how you will be offering the dowry in return. It's an exchanging process. If you take all the money, you will probably need to prepare everything, including house mortgage, cars, very big spending."

Younger informants (age 25-35), including those who were married, had little knowledge of the negotiation process involved in the betrothal ceremony. They were more informed about the gifts that the bride needed to prepare, the tea ceremony, and the engagement cakes. This is probably because they had not taken part in the negotiation meetings.

In sum, the interrelation of fertility and color symbols and the negotiation procedures during the betrothal ceremony together contribute to building an amiable alliance between the families. It is through the word *xi-chi* that people select the important rituals and organize other main features, such as the colors used in the wedding and the food that is eaten at the wedding banquet. As they go about organizing the wedding, people repeatedly remind themselves to create *xi-chi*. Consequently, the wedding becomes a *xi-chi* occasion.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis attempted to illustrate the significance of *xi-chi* in the context of Taiwanese weddings, based on a series of interviews with a group of Taiwanese people in Auburn, Alabama. The interviews revealed that the overstating of the word led to most informants being unable to give a detailed description of *xi-chi* and the reasons for its importance in Taiwanese wedding.

The results showed that although the permanent residents had only vague memories of Taiwanese wedding rituals they had attended, they were very much aware of the importance of wedding rituals and *xi-chi*. Permanent residents particularly stressed the rituals such as bowing to the parents, escorting the bride, and the betrothal ceremony as the most memorable parts of the wedding. Family rituals, not the wedding banquet, were more 'vivid' in their memories even after 10 to 20 years. Temporary residents, however, were less aware of the rituals in relation to *xi-chi*, because they tended to be younger and had less exposure to wedding rituals. In sum, age accounted for most of the disparity observed. This implies that familiarity and awareness of ritual significance is completely experience based.

The informants who had been living in the U.S. for less than five years were all students freshly out of college and were less aware of the wedding procedures. This is because younger informants are less likely to have attended ritual ceremonies than the older informants.

Despite expectations, temporary residents were more responsive to commercial services such as bridal photo salons, engagement cake brands, and the hotels and restaurants that host wedding banquets and receptions. One other particular trend in the data was that younger informants frequently offered suggestions in looking for Taiwanese wedding materials online. Living in a world of rapid transmigration, cultural values seem to fade easily, but because of the ease of technology, it is possible to search for cultural practices through the Internet. The Internet is a rich information source and also provides a virtual community that reduces geographic distance. Because anyone can post directions for the rituals, there will be many disparities in the information available. Culture is then transformed into many possible variants.

An earlier chapter detailed the answers from the informants saying that *xi-chi* is a by product of all the rituals. To investigate the role of *xi-chi* in Taiwanese wedding, the symbols that were most commonly found in the interviews were examined more closely. Symbols and expressions from each ritual were linked, revealing that fertility underlies most of the rituals, followed by the need to build an amiable alliance between the two families, and the negotiation process. Building an amiable alliance is embedded in the idea of fertility; therefore, these elements as a whole transmit *xi-chi* along with the ritual processes. *Xi-chi* can then be treated as a root metaphor that directly or indirectly links to each ritual performance. Although the whole ritual processes are practiced to build

amicable relationship between two families, whether they can maintain the relationship after the wedding is beyond the scope of this research.

Everyone insists that *xi-chi* is vital, yet the majority of the people interviewed could not explain exactly what *xi-chi* was, and why it was important to the wedding. As important an element as it is, explaining this root metaphor of *xi-chi* is harder than it seems due to practical consciousness. Because of practical consciousness, actors often know very little about *xi-chi* themselves. This causes observers to be even less knowledgeable about the wedding and *xi-chi*. The situation creates a vicious cycle where the practitioners of the rituals have very little understanding of the origins and why the rituals are performed, but know it's related to *xi-chi*. This incomplete understanding further makes the concept of *xi-chi* more abstract. Over the years, this cycle of incomplete understanding and abstraction has created the paradox where a vital element of wedding rituals, *xi-chi*, has become so transparent that no one can explain it or understand why, beyond an educated guess.

In a nutshell, Taiwanese wedding rituals are performed in many different ways, and have repeatedly changed throughout the centuries. The fundamental meaning of *xi-chi*, being a root metaphor, has not changed, but because the word is overstated the people who use it seldom think of the word and its relation to the context in which it is being used.

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APPENDIX

Questions used in the interviews.

Q1. What is your age?

Q2. What is your occupation?

Q3. How long have you been living in the United States?

Q4. When was the last time you attended a Taiwanese wedding?

Q5. Whose wedding did you attend?

Q6. Please describe what you know about the Six Rites.

Q7. How was the wedding date decided?

Q8. What color is the best choice for a Taiwanese wedding?

Q9. Please describe any taboos you know.

Q10. Please give the historical usage of the term xi-chi.

Q11. What is the difference between xi-chi in the wedding context and other contexts?

Q12. Do you think xi-chi is the most significant feature in a wedding ritual?

Q13. Can one have a Taiwanese wedding without xi-chi?

Q14. What best represents xi-chi in a Taiwanese wedding?