Universidade de Lisboa

Instituto de Ciências Sociais

Flows of Fortune: the Economy of Chinese Migration to Portugal

Irene de Assunção Raposo Rodrigues

Doutoramento em Antropologia

Especialidade: Antropologia da Religião e do Simbólico

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Tese orientada pelo Doutor Ramon Sarró

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ABSTRACT

In the end of the 1970s Chinese people, mostly from the region of Wenzhou (Zhejiang province, Southeast China) recovered previous migratory chains to Europe that dated back to the late nineteenth century. These new migratory flows started at a time when China was precisely making the first steps towards the 'opening and reform' politics (*gaige kaifang*) and when the promise of a new Chinese 'modernity', away from collectivism and closer to market, was the silver lining every cloud must have. The changes brought about by this program created throughout China, particularly in places such as Wenzhou, an atmosphere that became highly favourable to competition for wealth and social prestige. While this new political and economical framework meant more economic development and opportunities, it also implied the growth of inequalities and the increase of emigration. This dissertation argues that aspirations of wealth and the social recognition triggered by the wealth of some, together with the perceived lack of social mobility opportunities, induced emigration from China. It describes and analyses migrants' trajectories from China to Portugal as a 'rite of passage' to a (hopefully) wealthy future, and ethnographically analyses the migrants' main strategies to raise money, namely their saving habits, business strategies and the religious practices employed to putatively attract fortunes. It also discusses how money and material things are used as an investment not only towards social prestige, but also towards the reinforcement of emotional ties with relatives and friends in a logic of exchange. Throughout the dissertation the notion of a 'Chinese modernity', influenced by Chinese folk beliefs and practices and long-term ethics, is gradually unveiled. Contemporary migration appears, in this deeply historical and widely geographical picture, as part of a Chinese strategy of 'indigenization of modernity'.

Keywords: Migration, China, Modernity, Money, Fortune, Consumption, Portugal

RESUMO

No final da década de 1970, chineses provenientes na sua maioria da região de Wenzhou (província de Zhejiang, sudeste da China) recuperaram antigas correntes migratórias para a Europa, que remontavam ao final do século XIX. Estes novos fluxos migratórios começaram no momento em que a China estava precisamente a dar os primeiros passos na política de reforma e abertura (*gaige kaifang*) na nova era pós-Mao, e em que se desenhava a promessa de uma nova "modernidade" chinesa, longe do coletivismo e mais perto do mercado. As mudanças provocadas por este programa implementado por Deng Xiaoping foram-se expandindo a partir das regiões costeiras do Sudeste da China, particularmente de locais como Wenzhou, onde o ambiente se tornou altamente favorável à competição por riqueza e prestígio social. Ao mesmo tempo que este novo quadro político e económico significou mais desenvolvimento económico e mais oportunidades, também implicou o crescimento das desigualdades sociais e económicas e o aumento da emigração. Esta dissertação argumenta que as aspirações de riqueza e reconhecimento social provocadas pela enriquecimento de alguns, juntamente com a perceção de falta de oportunidades de mobilidade social ascendente, deram origem a um forte fluxo de emigração. Esta dissertação parte da análise da relação teórica entre migração e aspirações materiais, nomeadamente dinheiro e consumo, para avaliar a importância de "fazer dinheiro" (*zhuan qian*), principal objectivo da migração tal como verbalizado pelos migrantes chineses em Portugal. Porém, a dissertação não se concentra apenas nos modos de conseguir acumular dinheiro, mas também nos propósitos dessa acumulação e no modo como esse dinheiro é gasto.

Esta etnografia da migração chinesa entre Portugal e a China é baseada numa pesquisa etnográfica com trabalho de campo sobretudo em Lisboa, mas também em várias locais na China, principalmente no município de Wenzhou (Zhejiang), e também em Pequim e no Nordeste da China. Foram seguidas as trajetórias e os quotidianos de 12 famílias chinesas migrantes em Portugal e as redes familiares de algumas delas na China. O principal objectivo foi conhecer e descrever o quotidiano da migração chinesa para Portugal, bem como os meandros das suas motivações, expectativas e desencantos.

O enfoque em Wenzhou deriva da sua posição proeminente como principal região de origem de migrantes chineses para Portugal, mas também pelo seu interessante posicionamento para entender o predicamento da modernidade China na atualidade. Wenzhou é uma cidade média que está entre as cidades mais ricas e

modernas da China, que são em geral de população superior, mas está também entre as regiões que mais envia população para o exterior. A prosperidade de Wenzhou assenta numa produção industrial ligeira sustentada por trabalhadores migrantes provenientes de regiões pobres da China, que nas últimas décadas substituíram os trabalhadores locais que migram para a Europa e para outros locais do globo, motivados pela riqueza e ostentação locais, em busca das oportunidades de enriquecimento que não encontravam em Wenzhou. Esta dissertação evidencia porém o modo como, deslumbrados com uma ideia de Europa como um lugar de "modernidade" imaginada a partir da China, muitos migrantes chineses experimentam um desencantamento pelas condições de vida que encontram na migração e reorientam o seu quotidiano de vida árdua (*chiku*) e as suas "aspirações" de "modernidade" para o futuro e para modelos emanados da nova China moderna e cosmopolita. Estas contradições entre expectativas, quotidiano, e tempos e lugares "imaginados" é evidenciada pelas contradições entre as condições de vida e de trabalho na Europa, sobretudo em bairros antigos e em parte degradados como o Martim Moniz, e os arranha-céus espelhados do município natal de Wenzhou que deixam para trás.

Esta dissertação descreve e analisa as trajetórias da migração da China para Portugal, as suas dificuldades e as suas aspirações, e propõe analisar parte destas trajectórias como um "rito de passagem". Na verdade argumenta-se que a migração é um processo de transformação em que, depois de passarem por uma fase de liminaridade, os migrantes esperam alcançar um futuro de prosperidade e reconhecimento social. Esta fase liminal é aceite como um momento necessário em nome de um futuro radioso, o que permite entender a disposição com que muitos migrantes chineses encaram o trabalho árduo e o sofrimento durante os primeiros anos da migração. Ainda neste âmbito são analisadas etnograficamente as principais estratégias dos migrantes para "fazer dinheiro" (*zhuan qian*), ou seja, os seus hábitos de poupança, as suas estratégias de negócios, as estratégias de enriquecimento rápido e algumas práticas religiosas empregues para supostamente atrair sorte e riqueza. A riqueza, a prosperidade e a possibilidade de serem alcançadas são ainda analisadas no contexto das práticas da religião popular chinesa, através da ideia de destino. Neste aspeto demonstra-se de que modo as aspirações de riqueza e bens materiais associadas à modernidade chinesa, e também à migração proveniente da China, se entrelaçam com práticas populares relacionadas com o jogo e a adivinhação. Assim, a migração pode ser ela própria entendida como uma forma de testar o destino e a sorte com vista a alcançar

a prosperidade. A própria ideia de prosperidade vem dar conteúdo à ideia de "ser moderno" como estando ligados à posse e ao consumo de bens materiais.

A dissertação aborda o modo como o dinheiro e os bens materiais são usados como formas de demonstração do sucesso da migração, mas sobretudo a forma como constituem uma parte importante das relações sociais. O dinheiro e os bens materiais permitem não apenas investir em termos de prestígio social, mas também são fundamentais para o reforço dos laços emocionais com parentes e amigos numa lógica de troca e de reciprocidade. A impossibilidade de cumprir com obrigações de dinheiro e presentes implica o afastamento de redes sociais e familiares, redes que são inclusivamente desenhadas a partir da circulação de dinheiro e de presentes. O próprio consumo conspícuo ritual é aqui entendido não apenas como uma forma hedonista de destruição de bens. Gastos excessivos e transferências avultadas de dinheiro são parte de uma forma de estabelecimento e sustentação das relações sociais na medida em que são entendidos como demonstrações de afeto. A migração é então uma forma de se conseguir responder às exigências materiais das relações sociais e familiares, e o consumo emerge como uma forma de manifestação da lógica cultural chinesa que recentemente incorpora a ideia de luxo associando-a aos gastos rituais conspícuos e à reciprocidade nas relações sociais. Ao longo do texto vão ainda sendo identificados alguns focos de mudança na migração chinesa em Portugal que são evidenciados não apenas pela crise financeira e económica, mas também pelo crescente papel da China ao nível global.

Ao longo da dissertação, é gradualmente revelada uma noção de "modernidade chinesa" influenciada por crenças e práticas populares chinesas e por uma ética de longo prazo na China. A migração chinesa contemporânea surge neste quadro como profundamente histórica e geograficamente ampla, e como parte de uma estratégia chinesa de "indigenização da modernidade".

Palavras-chave: Migração, China, Modernidade, Dinheiro, Fortuna, Consumo, Portugal

To Xavier

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Chapter I

Introduction: The migratory life of money

Money for what?

In October 2008, my friend A-Li invited me to attend a lecture entitled "Mastering the Trend of Producing Wealth" (*zhangwo qushi chuangzao caifu*).[1] In fact the event was a recruitment meeting by Amway (*Anli*) – an American multilevel marketing and direct-selling company.[2] The people attending the meeting were all Chinese migrants in Portugal, and the speakers were also Chinese migrants from elsewhere. During the evening, the speakers gave their testimonies claiming that only by joining Amway had they been able to find their way to fortune after a life of suffering and hard work. According to these testimonies, the company offered an alternative, safe, and faster way of getting rich. The enthusiasm people revealed for Amway, and the event's emphasis on wealth and enrichment, led me to consider researching the 'making money' goal of Chinese migration. Until that moment, money in a migratory context seemed a truism to me – typically people migrate to achieve better living conditions.

[1] In order to protect my interlocutors' privacy, I have changed all personal names, some place names, and also modified some personal details.

[2] Amway markets and sells its products through social networks. In these meetings old members persuade new members to join the organization to sell and consume their wide range of products, such as cosmetics, dietary products, jewelry, homecare products, etc.

At first, I perceived my interlocutors' money-oriented goals as obstacles to my research. Many times I waited long hours in shops and offices because they had to take care of an urgent matter (usually involving money), or because of an unusual influx of customers that day. That particular Amway event was indeed a revelation, in the sense that it made me consider my research on Chinese migration in a different way. I realised how my ethnographic subjects' daily lives were entirely structured around acts of 'making money' (*zhuan qian*), such as working long hours daily, keeping up with severe saving habits, and seizing every opportunity to 'make a little money' (*zhuan yipi qian*). 'Making money' was in fact a central part of their migratory project, and many of the questions concerning their migrant condition in Portugal seem to have a money-related answer. This made me aware how 'money making' was important in migration experiences. However, this was just a simple finding and still not a specific feature of Chinese migration. The reasons behind this 'money obsession' remained obscure to me and the question that followed in my head was, 'money for what?'

My first fieldwork experience among Chinese in Lisbon occurred between 2002 and 2005 for different research projects on gender and migration (see Rodrigues 2003 and 2009).[3] Originally my intention for my PhD research was to consider other theoretical perspectives (e.g. ethnicity and transnationalism) in order to understand the condition of Chinese migrants in Portugal. During my first experience in the field I had been puzzled by Chinese New Year festivities in Lisbon, which clearly celebrated auspiciousness and wealth. On such occasions it was possible to observe Chinese migrants displaying signs of material wealth such as top-end cars, jewels and expensive brand clothes. My first idea was to study how Chinese migrants maintain their sense of being Chinese in an alien social and cultural environment while at the same time seizing on the ideas and symbols of being modern and successful in the place of 'destination'. However, my first data pointed to the idea that notions of what it means to be 'modern' and 'successful' among Chinese migrants did not arise from their migratory experiences, in Portugal or in other places in Europe; on the contrary, the goal of 'making money' is closely entwined with the 'home' context of Chinese migration. Migration was thus not only a modernizing element in these peoples' lives – but was itself a consequence of what Lisa Rofel (2007) calls 'modernity desires' in China.

[3] I have been doing research on Chinese migration in Lisbon since 2002 in team research projects and for my MA thesis on Chinese migrant women in Lisbon.

Events such as the Amway meeting illustrate the modernity expectations of some Chinese people. The main speaker at the event was a man born in mainland China, who told his story of an impoverished childhood and his loss of hope of getting rich through hard work. He explained how his life changed for the better when, in 1995, he joined Amway and moved to Taiwan, where he ran an *Anli* business. Then he was able to pay for his father's medical expenses when he was diagnosed with cancer. Success within Amway also brought him invitations to travel and to give lectures in all parts of the world. A slide show of pictures testified to the man's wealth and success: he lived with his family in a mega mansion with seven floors and 17 bathrooms in the most expensive and powerful Taipei neighborhood, next door to politicians, celebrities and other entrepreneurs; his office was located in a phallic-shaped glazed building in Taipei; and his car was a limousine, though he said he travelled mainly in his private jet. In fact, the man, his wife and their two children appeared in the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. This man's statements express the meaning of getting rich and successful as imagined in Chinese migrants' dreams – a synonym for accumulation of money, property, prestige, social recognition and a life of luxury. A few months later, in December 2008, I was browsing an Amway magazine in a Chinese store in Martim Moniz when I found the list of Amway's 35 best producers (meaning sellers) in the Iberian Peninsula. Among the list were 22 Chinese names (the remaining were Portuguese and Spanish). The massive response of Chinese migrants to proposals of fast and easy enrichment like Amway is consistent with migrants' expectations.

In Martim Moniz, the area of Lisbon with the largest concentration of Chinese migrants (see Chapter 4), I often listened to stories of poor Chinese who had migrated to Europe and got rich. One day, considering everything I had seen and listened to for some time, I asked one of my friends: "Why are you Chinese so fond of money?" "Who isn't?" my friend replied, and continued, "You know, Chinese people say '*Qian bu shi wan neng, mei qian shi wan wan bu neng.*'" A sentence that is usually translated as "Money is not everything, but it helps", though its literal sense is: Money is not all-powerful, but without money you can do absolutely nothing. According to this reasoning, money enables people to do things they could not do before they had money. This led to my next question: what had migrants wanted to do back in China for which they did not have enough money?

Some clues to answering these questions came to me while browsing my field notes, when I came across several similar themes concerning migrants' lives. For many of my interlocutors, only after coming to Portugal could they improve their families' older and younger generations' lives and fulfil money-involving obligations. Furthermore, issues of money were raised almost every time the discussion topic was family. Besides money, my interlocutors also liked to comment on people's material acquisitions such as new and 'modern' houses, cars and clothes. Since the very beginning, my data suggested a strong link between the project of migration, the expectations of wealth, and family obligations, which led me to ask the following questions: What are the meanings of *chiku* (working hard) and *zhuanqian* (making money) for Chinese migrants? How are they related to an idea of 'being modern'? How do ideas of a Chinese modernity combine with long-term conspicuous wealth practices? How do ambitions of wealth relate to family obligations? These are some of the questions I try to answer throughout this dissertation.

I will argue that Chinese migrants' pursuit of money, wealth and success is not simply a product of the Reform and Opening Politics (since 1978) and a concomitant development of private enterprise in China, but is deeply linked to previous ethical and spiritual concerns in Chinese society. These ethical and spiritual concerns are associated with the proper way of being a Chinese person in relation to family and friends, but also in relation to spiritual forces of the cosmos, gods and ancestors. I suggest that money (as well as expensive goods and services) flows through the same familial and religious channels of affection (*renqing*), and it is the most important form of feeding and maintaining social relations. In spite of being morally driven, this ethical discourse also takes advantage of unequal economic conditions, and a history of both poverty and prosperity expectations in Chinese society. In this research, I expect to shed light on some of the questions raised above and at the same time to portray and contextualize Chinese migration to Portugal in the last fifteen years. The title of this chapter is inspired by Arjun Appadurai's edited volume *The Social Life of Things* (1986) – on the one hand it aims to explore the fact that Chinese migratory experience is largely an experience of 'making money' and 'moving' money through certain channels and in order to attain a modernity ideal, on the other hand this dissertation's problematic is situated in the entanglement between materiality and subjectivity in the wake of the materiality turn in anthropology.

In search of a Chinese version of modernity

The theme of this study is the relation between migration and a notion of modernity as an ideal to be achieved in post-Mao China (but one that is deeply marked by a Chinese cultural logic). The year 1978 in China was well marked by the announcement of the Policy of Reform and Opening (*gaige kaifang*) by then-recently-appointed leader Deng Xiaoping. This policy had as its main goal the modernization of China in four key areas (*si xiandaihua*) – industry, agriculture, science and technology, and defense – which would be attained mainly through a reform of the economic system. As a consequence, at the end of the 1970s China started a process of the decollectivization of society, opening to foreign investment and promoting private business, while at the same time encouraging people to get rich and to consume (Ikels 1996). This shift in economic policy carried with it profound changes in social and cultural life in relation to the 30 years of the Maoist period, when China was almost isolated from the outside world and guided by policies that were contrary to personal wealth and private initiative. In 1978, the opening of the economy to foreign investment and to market forces comprised a promise of long-desired prosperity in China. However, the genealogy of this notion of modernity based on wealth, conspicuous consumption and success as a means of social prestige is much deeper, with its roots in China's encounter with Western modernity more than a century before.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese imperial power clashed with Western capitalism unleashing a demand for modern social and cultural forms in Chinese society (Cheng, Lestz and Spence 1999). The great disturbance came when the Western powers' technological superiority during the Opium Wars (1839–42 and 1856–60) exposed China's weaknesses, causing a fatal blow to Chinese imperial cosmology, namely to the assumption of *tianxiadiyi* (first country under heaven). The incapacity of the imperial power to deal with these challenges generated opposition and pressure for reform. The Qing dynasty (1644–1912) was also facing internal problems at the time (van de Ven 1996), caused by a demographic explosion that occurred at the end of the eighteenth century (Spence 1990). China's greater integration into global trade networks in the mid-nineteenth century resulted, on the one hand, in the installation of foreign populations in many port cities, and on the other hand, in Chinese travelling West to work, study or trade (Pan 1994). The flow of people, ideas and objects occasioned by this opening had a tremendous effect on modern Chinese thought and lifestyle. The

contestation to imperial power triggered a modernizing intellectual wave, which came to question the very foundations of the imperial system, paving the way for the republican revolution. The ability of the 'Chinese tradition', namely Confucianism, to guide China's modernization was challenged, a debate that still remains in Chinese society. More often than not, Confucian tradition has been blamed for the 'delay' China exhibited before foreign powers.

Since that time, Chinese intellectuals' relationship with Western modernity was ambivalent. On the one hand, modern Western technology and military superiority had humiliated China, on the other hand, Enlightenment thought and the model of Western societies were the main sources of inspiration for Chinese scholars as they sought to transform China into a 'modern nation'. The influence of the Western Enlightenment in the debate on Chinese modernity was at its highest among the intellectuals of the New Culture Movement at the end of the 1910s (Schwartz 1986; Mitter 2004). This movement became known as the May Fourth Movement when it protested against the outcomes for China of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. In *Chinese Enlightenment* (1986) Vera Schwarcz described this movement as an intellectual laboratory for experimentation with different trends of the European enlightenment legacy and modernity, namely social Darwinism, liberalism, imperialism, capitalism and socialism. As a modernizing and iconoclastic movement (in the broad sense of challenging established norms and structures), there was a relative consensus regarding the impossibility of combining Confucianism and modernity. But there was unanimity concerning the importance of many of the Western Enlightenment's basic assumptions, (such as science, rationalism, technology and political democracy) for the construction of a Chinese modernity (Mitter 2004).

In Chinese language, modernity is translated as *xiandaixing* (meaning the quality of being modern or contemporary), which according to Rana Mitter (2004) expresses how, during this epoch, Chinese intellectuals were interested not so much in debating modernity in general, in its abstract and conceptual terms, as much as in exploring Western modernity's thinking discourses, concepts and ideas that might be useful for making China a modern nation. Since the beginning, modernity debate in China has been embedded in the national debate on modernization (*xiandaihua*), which literally means 'to change for modern'. China's survival was seen as dependent on its modernization. Among the spectrum of modernist thought influences, social Darwinism

was one of the most influential theories among modernizing Chinese intellectual elites of the time, in particular its insistence on competition and the survival of the fittest. The idea of competition and struggle between races was particularly attractive to explain China's situation before Western powers, particularly the British Empire. Confucianism was criticized, especially for maintaining a social hierarchy between groups and individuals, but also for not attaching importance to profit and money (Mitter 2004:112). Even though entrepreneurship and demand for money and profit were seen as being the foundation of Western capitalism (Teng and Fairbank 1982), this was not settled on as the solution to the modernization of China. Many May Fourth thinkers preferred to stress the importance of Western-style education, and not trade, for the modernization of the country (Schwartz 1986). Frank Dikötter (2006) has noted that while intellectuals debated the best way to 'indigenize' modernity as an intellectual project, the influx of new objects from abroad gave the Chinese population in general a more practical and material experience of Western modernity. Similar to what happened in relation to political and social thought, western objects also held a higher status as signs of progress and modernity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, China appropriated for itself a modernity notion in intellectual and material terms, as modernizers rejected the old imperial society and its cultural, social and political stipulations. Chinese nationalism was xenophobic in relation to the hegemony of Western powers, but not in relation to their material and intellectual achievements, which inspired the Chinese modernization movement.

The coming to power of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 represents the victory of one (i.e. socialism) of the many possibilities for China's modernization considered by the modernist and enlightenment thinkers of the May Fourth movement. Shaping a particular version of Marxist modernity, the Maoist period was characterized by the closure and isolation of China and a lack of interest in the outside world. Maoism perceived capitalism and its individual prosperity interests as a threat to revolution (Mitter 2004). At the end of Maoism, Chinese society had not reached collective wealth, but experienced instead collective poverty (Dikötter 2010). The Reform and Opening Politics corresponded then to a reorientation of the project of modernity, closer to Western capitalism, giving way to previously rejected ambitions of individual wealth and prosperity. However, as Donald Nonini (2008:156) argues, there is a continuity with previous political and economic forms in China, in that older elements of Maoist

governance were maintained and conjoined with elements of market liberalization. But, in post-Mao China, the social Darwinist idea of competition (*jingsai*) also appeared combined with the long Chinese tradition of competition for the display of wealth (Granet 1977 [1922]).

Deng Xiaoping's expression 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' underlines the willingness of China to build its own path; different from both Soviet socialism and Western capitalism, while at the same time retaining from its Maoist past the objective of wealth for all. China's modernity has been a process comprised of both ruptures and continuities, not only in relation to modern thinking but also with previous cosmologies that were not simply swallowed up in the 'earthquake of modernity'. This kind of ambivalent and shifting relationship between modernity and local traditions is by no means a particularity of Chinese modernity narratives and it has been described in other ethnographic contexts. For example, Ramon Sarró (2009) showed that among the Baga people of the Guinean coast, traditional religious culture may be kept silent and secret in a context where everybody is supposed to be Christian or Muslim, while it is latent and often plays a part in local politics. Such ambivalence has actually been part and parcel of the analyis of modernity projects in Africa in general (e.g. see Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Donham 1999; Sarró 2009).

In fact these modernizing trends highlight Marshall Sahlins's (1999) notion of the 'indigenization of modernity', described as a project of development following a peoples' own cultural logic to create their own versions of modernity. This notion acknowledges modernity as embedded in Enlightenment thought (Gaonkar 2001), but also acknowledges the way in which the idea of what it means to be modern has been interpreted in different social, cultural, political and economic contexts around the world. This notion of modernity does not imply compliance with the presumption of an 'original' European modernity to which the 'others' are just 'alternative modernities' (Ong and Nonini 1997; Gaonkar 2001), because modernity is more a project of the future which demands liberation from old pasts (Latour 1997; Bauman 2001). The predicament of Chinese modernity both in the nineteenth century and today is that of a national project able to respond to an international standard of being modern while at the same time safeguarding China's distinctiveness. This dissertation aims to demonstrate that through migration Chinese seek to accomplish an ideal of modernity in

post-Mao China – namely *facai* (to get rich) and *chenggong* (to be successful) – that is a more recent expression of China's long-established effort to 'indigenize' modernity.

Coming home 'in silken robes': migrations and consumption

In the nineteenth century the greater integration of China into global trade brought about the dispersal of unprecedented numbers of Chinese people throughout the world (Pan 1994). But Chinese were only a part of the millions of people that moved around the world at that time, particularly to the industrializing cities of Europe and North America (Massey et al. 2005: 1). The center of this movement was the economic development taking place in these territories. It is important to note that a significant portion of the people involved in these flows was not moving freely, even though from their own perspective movement was part of a broader strategy to attain prosperity.

During this period, migration was understood in the context of the large trends of urbanization and industrialization bound up with an economy of money (Simmel 1978 [1907]), which led to the transformation of peasants into urban wage earners. The improvement of material and economic conditions (Simmel 1972: 19) were a part of this urban and modern life. The liberating effect of money, the promotion of individuality and the breakdown of social forms typical of rural societies were also noted by Thomas and Znaniecki (1984) [1918–1920] in their seminal work on Polish peasants migrating to the US at the end of the nineteenth century. The expectations of a better life prompted the movement of Polish peasants when a crisis in the countryside forced them to emigrate. In the cities, peasants experienced more opportunities such as better jobs, better payment and better living conditions (Thomas and Znaniecki 1984). In China at that time people from the countryside and coastal provinces were also embracing the new opportunities made available by capitalism and international trade, resulting in a period of great migration based on the expectation that by working hard abroad it would be possible to save money and return to the home village in 'silken robes' (Pan 1994: 106).

Due to the central role of economic conditions in migration, early theories conceived migration as a rational economic response of individuals to changing economic conditions. This, for instance, is the case with E. G. Ravenstein's classic model of push-pull factors (Ravenstein 1885). As noted by Brettell and Hollifield

(2000), migration was then considered part of the general trend of modernization of societies – people would specifically look for better salaries or for better economic conditions in general. In cultural and social terms, this would correspond to assimilation into urban life and abandonment of rural and ethnic origins (Park 1964). This model was called into question by later works, such as the seminal *Behind the melting pot* (1976), in which sociologists Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan demonstrate that assimilation into mainstream society was not assured as the final stage of the migration process, on the contrary ethnicity and racial solidarities remained in subsequent generations. General trends in international migrations since the 1970s have come to confirm the limited validation of the classic economy and modernization theories' approach to migration (Massey et al. 2005), in the sense that migrants were depicted as passive elements in a system governed by rational factors. Migrants' creative capacity and social and cultural specificities in relation to their place of origin were rarely considered as important motivations for migration. The crisis of rationalist explanations led to the acknowledgment that migration is much more complex in terms of decision-making and drew attention to the necessity of contextualizing migration processes (considering specific social and economic circumstances) in order to understand them (2005).

During the 1980s, there was a general decrease in influence of modernization theory in the study of economic matters in anthropology (Ferguson 1988), and in the 1990s a move towards further consideration of relations between economy, culture and politics as part of a wider trend of assessing the importance of culture in global flows and connections (Featherstone 1990; Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996). In *Modernity at large* (1996) Arjun Appadurai criticizes modernization theories and associated models, precisely for neglecting the importance and power of culture in the economic global flows and for their homogenizing attitude toward globalization. According to Appadurai (1996), communities in diaspora live in (and cross) global landscapes, affirming their identity through imagination and the mobilization of cultural differences (and thereby evincing these disjunctures). The celebration of cultural encounter, hybridization, creolization and heterogenization (Hannerz 1996; Cohen 2007), as opposed to the wearisome cultural homogenization foreseen by modernization theory, occurs under the influence of an overall movement of rejection of pure categories of culture (Clifford 1988; Abu-Lughod 1991). Population movements appeared as a privileged locus to

observe the connections and disjunctures in global flows and ideal to give an account of micro experiences of globalization (Inda and Rosaldo 2002)

Inspired by the experiences of reconstruction and formation of associations and networks of ties connecting people and places and transactions taking place across the limits of nations-states, transnationalism emerged as a conceptual response to flows and connections challenges (Vertovec and Cohen 1999: xxi). In the last two decades the field of migration studies has been dominated by theories on globalization and transnationalism, especially since the publication of Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc "Transnationalism: a new analytic framework for understanding migration" (1992) where a famous definition of transnationalism is advanced:

> (…) the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Immigrants who build such social fields are designated "transmigrants". Transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, male decisions and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously.
>
> (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992: 1–2)

The authors assume transnational migrants (transmigrants as they call them) are different from previous migrants for the reason that they are involved in a more complex and fluid existence, which forces them to cope with different identity constructions such as national, ethnic and racial, and also with different national and global contexts (1992: 5). This perspective does not deny that the world is connected through a global capitalist system nor does it ignore the importance of political economy in migration flows, but it attributes to migrants a fundamental role as culturally creative actors especially through networking (1992: 8). Transnationalism has been focusing on immigrants by researching processes of identity and community construction, the idea of 'place', the connections between migration and capital flows, and migrants' particular ways of political engagement (Vertovec and Cohen 1999). From research on Mexican migrants in Mexico and in the US, Roger Rouse (1992)

argues that transnationalism is different to previous migration situations in that, "Instead of leaving one community and reorienting to another (…), many settlers developed transnational involvements that encompassed both." (1992: 45). Rouse argues that the transnational position of the migrants he studied is characterized by their enlargement of cultural repertoire and their continuing relation to their native place in Mexico through the maintenance of social ties and flows of money. As understood from Rouse's analysis, at the theoretical level, transnationalism's approach to migration contributed to the implosion of dualistic categories in the study of migration, such as 'sending country' and 'receiving country' (Kearney 1995).

The effusive reaction to globalization and transnationalism was followed by intense academic research, publication and discussion on the meaning of transnationalism. The critics pointed out that transnational phenomena are as old as the expansion of capitalism (Mintz 1998: 118) and that the theme has already been tackled within the literature on global history (see Wolf 1982; Wallerstein 1974). The literature of transnationalism and the concept itself were considered abstract due to their emphasis on deterritorialization and the downplaying of locations in transnational phenomena (Guarnizo and Smith 2002). Moreover, transnationalism has been criticized for minimizing the importance of the nation-state (Vertovec and Cohen 1999) and the idea of the nation in transnational movements (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). Regardless of critiques, the conceptualization of migration from a transnational stance brought undeniable conceptual and research dynamism to the field of transnational mobility.

In an attempt to give specific attention to subjects in transnational processes, Aihwa Ong proposed the notion of transnationality to account for the condition of global interconnectivity and mobility through space intensified under capitalism (Ong 1999: 4). Ong links mobility to modernity projects and accords with other scholars who in the last two decades have been discussing modernity expectations brought about by globalization and the expansion of capitalism. On the one hand, this literature states that the promise of modernity contains high expectations of wealth and improvement of the material conditions of life in general (Ferguson 1999; Jean and John Comaroff 1993 and 2000) and, on the other hand, point to the fact that modernity projects are entangled with local cosmologies by providing explanations for economic inequality, attributing new meanings to consumption, or by offering alternative and faster ways of getting rich (Friedman 1994; Sahlins 1994 and 1999; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997 and 2000;

Ferguson 2006). Modernity promises of prosperity are expected to be delivered mainly in improving material conditions of living, namely through consumption. However consumption as a mode of social differentiation (Veblen [1899] 1998; Bourdieu 1979) may enhance social inequality by reproducing class differences and privileges (Baudrillard 1970). This sociological understanding of consumption as a site of accumulation of prestige and display of social upward mobility may elucidate the significance of consumption and prosperity promises in different social and cultural contexts around the world. As Douglas and Isherwood (1980) note, it is necessary to acknowledge the significance of consumption in social obligations, namely how goods are used in reciprocity rituals to demonstrate solidarity, to attract support, to pay kindnesses and to avoid exclusion. The authors further argue that, contrary to what the theory of utility claimed, consumption is oriented both by metaphorical and rational thinking in the sense that goods can be used to solve contradictions in economic life.

The argument of this dissertation, that Chinese migrants seek to increase their consumption capacity in order to respond to social demands, including the obligations of sharing and displaying wealth, is partly inspired by Douglas and Isherwood's proposal. The acknowledgements of the role played by consumption and money in social obligations is also informed by developments in the theory of commodities inspired by Marcel Mauss works (cf. Ferguson 1988). Nancy Munn (1986) and Marilyn Strathern (1988) gave fundamental ethnographical and theoretical grounds for questioning the universality of long-established distinctions such as those between persons/things, subjects/objects, gifts/commodities and reciprocity/market. In a similar vein, Arjun Appadurai's edited volume *The Social Life of Things* (1986) proposed a methodology of analysis that focused on the object route and biography as a way of escaping previous theoretic imperatives of positioning objects either in the sphere of reciprocity or in the sphere of the market (Bohannan 1955), and thus enabling the same thing to be a gift and a commodity. However it should be noted that the meaning of a thing is affected by the social and cultural landscapes where things move. In *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (1989) Bloch and Parry demonstrate how a particular category of things – money – is symbolized in very diverse ways, since notions of production, consumption, circulation and exchange are informed by a cultural matrix. Bloch and Parry's argument is that the different meanings of money are related to its incorporation within the reproduction of different social and cosmic orders, connecting the individual

and the continuous social order – the morality exchanges. If there is a flow of meanings through things across different social and cultural settings, the meaning of things is interpreted using different social and cultural orders. That was also Marshall Sahlins's (1988) argument in his analysis of the Pacific Rim trade in colonial times, where he explores how local cosmologies interact with alien objects and their meanings.[4]

In China this theme has been conceptualized in the context of research on the impact of the economic reforms since the late 1970s, instigating two related lines of research. On the one hand there is the debate on the meaning of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' that extends from discussions on the ideas of socialism and capitalism in China (Redding 1993; Huang 2008; Nonini 2008) to explorations of the relations between market, socialism and gift economy logics (Yang 1994; Yan 1996). On the other hand, there is a discussion more focused on the increasing prominence of consumption in contemporary China. This fact has been interpreted by anthropologists as a consequence of the lack of values in Chinese society (Croll 2006), but also as a fact related to China opening to market forces and to globalization (Ikels 1996; Chao and Myers 1998). In this point it is worth noting James L. Watson and associates research on fast food consumption in East Asia, particularly Yunxiang Yan's (1997) demonstration of how MacDonald's restaurants in Beijing were incorporated in urban Chinese daily practices of consumption and perceived as signs of modernity in China. (Mintz 1997). This case gives evidence of the way Western things have been perceived and used to mark an approximation to market and to Western and modern standards of life in China. The use of Western things to affirm a prestigious and modern way of being has been described by Friedman (1994) in Congo, and by Hansen (1995) in post-colonial Zambia, as well as by scholars such as Rausing (1998) in other post-socialist societies. It is my conviction that Chinese migrants' desires for prosperity, modernization and consumption are part of a wider project of the 'indigenization of modernity' (Sahlins 1999) characterized by a social pressure to be wealthy and successful, but also by growing economic inequalities (Pieke 1999).

Today, as in the end of the nineteenth century, Chinese people leave China in search of better economic and social opportunities that enable them to display their

[4] More recently anthropologists in different ethnographic contexts have described how money and commodities for instance interact with cosmological notions of wealth and prestige in different places such as West Africa (Guyer 2004) and among Ameridians populations in Brazil (Gordon 2006).

success at home. Since the nineteenth century, Chinese migrations have undergone major changes stemming from the historical, political, economical and social transformations of China as well as encompassing the modifications that have occurred in international migrations in general. In the last fifteen years Chinese migration studies, which were previously focused on the study of overseas Chinese and their stories of mobility and success and dominated by an emphasis on Chinese values and norms synthesized in the ideas of commercialism and familism (see Wang 1991; Tu 1994), have moved to a concern with Chinese diaspora and migration, influenced by the transnationalism framework (see Ong and Nonini 1997; Pieke 1999; Yang 1999; Nyíri 1999; Ma 2003; Pieke et al. 2004; Nyíri 2005; Nieto 2007; Thunø 2007). Ong and Nonini (1997) propose the concept of Chinese transnationalism as a way of abandoning the idea of a Chinese identity founded on the essential and primordial characteristics associated with Chinese culture and point to a multiplicity of ways of being Chinese along lines of class, ethnicity and gender. Along the same line of reasoning, Pieke (1999) advocates an approach to Chinese migration that captures all its mobility configuration, i.e., going beyond the statistics of individuals and demarcation of origin and destination places, also giving account of the resources, institutions, networks and the biographical dimensions of migration.

The growing expansion of China's political and economic power and increasing awareness of the embeddedness of Chinese transnational practices in global processes led Pieke et al. (2004) to propose the idea of Chinese globalization as an enlarged context for understanding Chinese migration after 1978, an approach that has been linking contemporaneous Chinese projects of mobility with desires for cosmopolitanism and social recognition (Pieke et al. 2004; Thunø 2007; Chu 2010). The transnational framework has inspired most of the research done on Chinese migration in Europe in the last decade and a half, which began by trying to make sense of the contribution of Chinese flows and mobility (Pieke 1999; Nyíri 2002; Pieke et al. 2004; Béltran 2006) to the constitution of Chinese communities (Christiansen 2003; Nyíri 2005; Nieto 2007). In Portugal the main focus of Chinese research has been the mapping of Chinese flows and entrepreneurial practices (Teixeira 1995; Mapril 2001; Oliveira 2005; Góis, Marques and Oliveira 2005; Rocha-Trindade, Neves and Bongardt 2006; Baptista 2006), and a small number of works have been more concerned with the identity experiences of Chinese migrants in Portugal (Nunes 2008; Rodrigues 2009). Still the field remains

largely under-researched when compared with research into mobility flows from other origins.[5]

Building upon this scholarship, this dissertation aims to respond directly to a lack of research in the field of Chinese migration in Portugal, at the same time that it seeks to explore Chinese migration in a transnational context following the recent research tracks that point to a Chinese idea of mobility linked to desires of cosmopolitanism and modernity (Rofel 2007; Thunø 2007; Chu 2010). This research also owes inspiration to studies of migration that see consumption as a fundamental part of the experience of migration (Gardner 1995; Johnson 1998; Osella and Osella 2000; Salih 2002; Lindridge, Hogg and Shah 2004; Osella and Osella 2004; Watkins 2004; Mapril 2012; Rosales 2010). My aim is to perceive consumption as an important connection axis in Chinese transnational practices. I opened this dissertation asking why Chinese work so hard to make money. The answer is 'consumption', and throughout this dissertation I propose to explore its significance and complexity.

Ethnographic itineraries: times, people, places

In September 2007, when I first applied for the doctoral program, I had just finished my MA thesis on Chinese migrant women in Lisbon (Rodrigues 2009) after a three-year period of extensive fieldwork (2002–2005). As already mentioned, I wanted to continue to do research on Chinese migration in Portugal, but this time focusing on people's experiences and their festivities in order to understand what it meant to be Chinese in Portugal. Besides, I was looking for an approach to explore the meaning of these activities with what I had identified in the field as my interlocutors main concerns: working hard, making money and improving their families' well-being and chances of success. Between October 2007 and October 2008 I spent most of my time doing literature research and building up a research project that could somehow capture these

[5] Since the end of the 1990s there has been a burst of research on immigration in Portugal, particularly on flows from Brazil and former Portuguese African colonies (see for instance Bastos and Bastos 1999; Garcia 2000; Batalha 2002; Grassi 2003; Quintino 2004; Vaz 2006; Dias 2010) as the numbers of people with foreign passport arrive in Portugal in search for economic opportunities. And also in less number from Eastern Europe (Baganha, Marques, Góis 2004 and 2010; Castro 2008; Martins 2008; Vilaça 2008). However flows from Asian countries have remained much less studied (see Mapril 2012 for an exception).

issues. In July 2008 I went back to Martim Moniz, where I had previously been doing fieldwork, to catch up with and recover earlier connections. It was only in September 2008 that I was finally able to fully dedicate to my PhD research, as I was granted a scholarship from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and an exemption from my teaching duties. Thus I had time to do fieldwork for a total period of 21 months, from October 2008 until June 2010.

The great majority of this fieldwork was conducted in Lisbon, especially in the Martim Moniz area, with a fieldtrip to China during April and May 2010. Martim Moniz is an area in downtown Lisbon where Chinese people started to settle for business, work and living around twenty years ago (see Chapter 4). Like many other anthropologists doing research in urban sites, my fieldwork consisted in regular visits to this area, between three and six times a week, to meet people, to attend events and to hang around observing and interacting as much as possible. Chinese people's social activities usually occur indoors, inside shops, warehouses, restaurants, offices, street stores and shopping malls. In spite of my walks through the streets and shopping malls hoping to identify Chinese activities in the area, most of my time was spent inside observing, taking part in the activities and talking to people. I should note that not all the people I talked to were aware of my research purposes, but all the people I asked for an interview and the families I was dealing more closely with were all informed about my research. During the previous fieldwork I had great difficulty in getting interviews with Chinese women (see Rodrigues 2009) and I had often been frustrated with the hours I spent waiting in Chinese shops and restaurants for a half-hour conversation or no conversation at all. From that time I learned to be more patient and to simply enjoy the opportunity to be 'there' in shops, warehouses, restaurants and the homes of Chinese migrants, observing and participating in their daily activities. When I appeared in my interlocutors' workplace or home at a prearranged time, but because they were busy had to wait for long hours, I talked to other members of the family, with other Chinese co-workers, employees, neighbours, friends and clients that happened to be there.

Often I was asked to help solve problems, mostly related to my interlocutors' poor knowledge of the Portuguese language. Common requests were explaining the mail, accompanying parents to their children's school, helping parents find a school for their children recently arrived from China, accompany them to Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF, Foreigners and Borders Office), hospital, social security department

or post office, or talking to clients, suppliers, accountants, lawyers and others. Sometimes they also asked me to help them learn Portuguese. But I was also invited to join them eating in restaurants, at family dinners, in their homes and in restricted areas in offices and stores, and to be the godmother of a child. Some of my Chinese interlocutors and friends also visited me in my home and met my family members as well. I think that one of the most memorable experiences and evidence of people's trust was on one occasion when a Chinese woman whom I had met several months before was busy counting money to deposit in the bank, and seeing me at her doorstep pulled me inside her store's private area, handing me several bundles of banknotes to help her in the task.

Among Chinese I am known especially as a teacher because of the two years I taught Portuguese language to Chinese migrants for free, something I will explore further in the next section. The fact that I was introduced as a friend of the family and as a teacher was very helpful in providing opportunities to interact with many people. I did not want to enter the field using migrant associations as a point of entry, as I feared this would jeopardize my access to people with less power resources or that chose to stay outside these associations. My teaching activities with Chinese allowed me to establish contact with some of them without having to rely on intermediaries.[6] That was how I mapped my own network of interlocutors. Only later did I get to interact with different Chinese associations and leaders, but even at that time I tried to stay outside power circles and associate more closely with the common migrant worker and small businesspeople – the condition of most of the Chinese migrants in Portugal. In this way I was able to expand my network of acquaintances and interlocutors.

Another way of expanding my set of connections was through the growth of the families through migration. During fieldwork I established relatively close ties with 12 families, some of whom were contacts from my previous research. These families were of different sizes, from two to ten people. One case was that of a former student of mine, a woman around 60 years old and her husband, who used to own a shop in Martim Moniz. One day in 2003, while visiting them, they introduced me to their youngest

[6] I wanted to avoid being in a situation where my research would depend on intermediaries' will and *guanxi*, a kind of situation such as the one reported by Rosana Pinheiro-Machado (2009) doing fieldwork in Shenzhen-Hong Kong area. In part I was able to circumvent this issue due to my two years studying Chinese language in China, which allowed me to rely on my own knowledge of the language with help from my Chinese interlocutors and friends to get by in the field.

daughter, recently arrived from China. Three weeks later that daughter's 10-year-old daughter arrived. She also had a son living in Lisbon who, a few years after, returned to his parents' hometown in China to marry. After marriage, he came back to Portugal and his wife joined him only a few months later in Lisbon. A year later, when their first son was born, her parents came to Lisbon to help take care of their grandson for some months. Two years later, a second child was born, and her husband's older sister came from Canada to help her during the first month after birth. In 2010, during my two months fieldtrip to China, I visited them in their hometown, and they introduced me to their relatives and friends living there. So, through this 60-year-old woman I managed to meet directly another fifteen people only from her family. However my findings are based on interaction through conversations, interviews and observation with many more people than this. Considering my field notes I estimate that I have interacted with around 100 people during my almost two years in the field. Nevertheless, the cases presented throughout this dissertation were selected due to their relevance to the situations analysed, sometimes with one person or one family being chosen more than once. This happened because in some cases people revealed themselves as exceptionally good talkers or as people in relation to whom I was able to accumulate detailed information about their situations.

The 12 families I followed were all small traders or employees of other Chinese businesspeople (during fieldwork some of them changed from workers to traders and others from business people to employees.) They were all working in the Martim Moniz area, although three of the families lived outside, in Algés, Sintra and Loures counties. Three of the families came from Wenzhou, one from Qingtian and two from Heilongjiang. All the other families were founded on marriages that took place when at least one of the partners was already in Europe. The members of these families came from different places in China such as Wenzhou and Qingtian (Zhejiang province), places in Shandong and Liaoning provinces, or the municipalities of Beijing and Chongqing. There was no attempt to be representative, though it was important to account for the diversity of people and flows inside Chinese migration. Most of the families started to arrive at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, but there were three families with members who had arrived at the end of the 1980 or the beginning of the 1990s. Three of the families had previous working experiences in another European country, namely Italy, France and Spain. Only one of them were

composed of two married people with no children. In terms of education, half of the people had complete or incomplete (ninth grade) compulsory schooling, while the other half had secondary school or college education.

In Lisbon my fieldwork was conducted mainly through doing participant observation, interviews and collecting life stories, mostly in people's workplace or in public sites such as restaurants, cafés or the waiting rooms of public services where they had to go to solve issues. Many fruitful conversations occurred during meals at Martim Moniz Chinese restaurants or inside offices and shops. To have a meal together, especially a Chinese meal, was actually a nice way for my interlocutors to show their willingness in maintain a relationship with me, and of putting me in their sociability and conviviality networks. I also visited some of my Chinese friends in their homes and accompanied them to festivals and other celebrations organized by and for Chinese migrants. As I followed my interlocutors I have also done fieldwork in the Chinese School in Anjos and in Foguangshan Temple in Cabo Ruivo. I have cooperated with the Chinese School in the organization of Spring Festival Celebrations, the School's anniversary celebration, and School's year-end celebration as a presenter and/or as a translator. Occasionally, I have also helped them with administrative paper work. In Foguanshan Temple, I have attended a Buddhism Course, participated in their activities such as Meditation Day and Tea Festival, attended ceremonies in their ritual calendar and Sunday lectures. I have also cooperated in the revision of the Portuguese version (Portugal Portuguese) of one of their books. I also attended festivals and celebrations promoted by other associations and the Chinese Embassy in Lisbon. I kept video and photographic records of most of the celebrations I attended or participated in. However my video and photographic records in Lisbon refer mostly to the public celebrations and activities. My interest in Chinese migrants' lives and my presence around them was perceived as suspicious enough so I decided not to add another disturbing factor. For the same reason I did not record my conversations with Chinese migrants, but took notes with a pencil and a small notebook during the interviews.

In the middle of 2009 I started to tell my interlocutors that I intended to go to China and if possible I wanted to go with them. People started telling me about their travel plans to China and so I managed to arrange my trip to China when some of my Chinese interlocutors and friends in Lisbon were there for different reasons. I also got contacts in Wenzhou from other families I was following in Lisbon. I left Lisbon for

Wenzhou at the end of March to meet one of my interlocutors and a long time friend in the field who was there visiting her relatives. There I remained with her parents and siblings after she left for Portugal a week later. In Wenzhou I also visited another three families whose relatives were known to me in Lisbon. In Wenzhou I interviewed migrants, relatives and friends, a local official, local business people and internal migrants. I participated in celebration dinners, accompanied people to temples and participated in their daily activities. I also visited Qingtian (in Lishui Municipality), a village 50 km away from Wenzhou, and another place of origin of many Chinese migrants in Portugal. Although I had a contact family there it was not possible to meet them during my trip. After almost a month in Wenzhou I went to Shanghai, were I visited a local Foguanshan Temple and its documentation centre (where I interviewed an official and collected documentation). Afterwards I travelled to Beijing for another week where I visited another two families I had met in Lisbon. Once in Beijing I met another of my Lisbon interlocutors who happened to be in the capital to take care of visas, and I went back with her to her hometown in Heilongjiang province for a few days. There I met some of her relatives and friends, some of whom I already knew from Lisbon.

My fieldtrip to China was amazingly productive when compared with fieldwork in Lisbon. If in Lisbon I had trouble in persuading people to find the time for a longer talk and frequently had to deal with people's anxiety about what I wanted to know, in China people talked more naturally and usually were very eager to share their stories and points of view with me. People told me they enjoyed very much my interest in their stories and opinions. I believe the success of my fieldwork in China was due to the fact that I was asking questions about their daily concerns and life issues and people were happy to talk with someone outside the family and the community. On the other hand, most of the people I met in Wenzhou had much more time available than their busy countrymen in Lisbon. Besides, I was considered a guest, and being available to me and making sure I had a good time in Wenzhou was part of their relatives' recommendations from Lisbon. Being a guest also implied that I was chaperoned by at least one person from one of the families I was visiting. If that was good in terms of getting to know people and places and to gather a lot of information in a short time, it also meant that I was never alone outside. One afternoon when I and one of my hostesses were crossing the dirty and confusing streets of one of Wenzhou's rural suburbs and I took out my

camera to register the scene, my hostess nicely told me I should not take pictures of those places because they do not look good. I decided to respect her point of view.

After coming back from China in May 2010, I briefly returned to my home university to teach for two months. After that was I able to revise all my data, to organize it into topics, to select the material to be included in the final text and to draft a rough table of contents. The following five months were spent writing papers and making presentations at international conferences and writing the first chapter of this dissertation (which was later revised). The writing process was interrupted for six months of maternity leave (March–August 2011). The remaining five chapters were written between September 2011 and August 2012, with a less productive period between February and June 2012 when I returned to teaching in my home university. Meanwhile in September 2011 I went to a conference in Rome and took the opportunity to visit and to do some observation in Piazza Vittorio, a neighbourhood of Rome similar to Martim Moniz. The two months of September and October 2012 were spent reviewing the final version of this dissertation.

A *laowai* anthropologist in a Chinese field

When I was doing fieldwork in China in 2010, I casually met a Chinese woman I knew from Lisbon.[7] She invited me to accompany her that evening to her hometown in Northeast China. We headed to one of the busiest railway stations in the capital to buy my ticket (she had hers). While we waited in line at the ticket office, a rough-looking woman with a babe in arms approached my friend and asked her about her destination. Before waiting for the answer, the woman whispered to my friend that there were no tickets for sale, but that she still had some "on the back". And, looking at me, she added: "If you want, you can come with me, but only you. We don't sell to *laowai*."

The attitude of this woman who identified me as a *laowai* reflects, not a special ethics of the Chinese black market of not selling tickets to foreigners, but the recognition of myself as belonging to a different category of people. The seller refused to negotiate with me because the category of people she classified me with – foreigners – corresponds for many Chinese to people overcast by a non-Chinese and "Western" view

[7] This section is a short version of a longer article published in Portuguese in the journal *Etnográfica* (Rodrigues 2012).

of the world, which implies, among other things, a failure to understand the Chinese way of being. That saleswoman hoped to avoid getting into a communication process she anticipated as being full of misconceptions. Among my interlocutors, and in a more general way in many Chinese contexts, *laowai* identifies a "foreigner" or "Westerner". This category became a crucial element of my identity during my fieldwork among Chinese. In this section, I will take this condition of *laowai* to reflect on the conditions of production of ethnographic knowledge in Chinese contexts through discussing the ambivalence and complexity of the relationship, both distant and close, that as an ethnographer I established with my Chinese interlocutors.

Feeling like a stranger and being treated as such in the beginning of fieldwork is an often-reported experience in the ethnographic literature. In their seminal works, both Evans-Pritchard (1974) and Malinowski (1922) refer to how difficult it was for them to overcome the 'stranger' barrier imposed on them by local populations, and how they managed to break with the 'white man' stereotype by behaving in a different manner in relation to the other 'whites' who were living around. My intention here is not only to explore my condition of foreigner in the field, but also to show how, since the beginning by being classified as belonging to a certain category of people (the *laowai*), my position in the field was marked by the perception that my interlocutors had of this category, and this became part of my ethnography. The power of this categorization was constant throughout the research and that led me to seek to understand it in epistemological terms. It is therefore an exercise, not so much reflexive of understanding how my person affected the research, but of looking to understand how it is that this particular ethnographic context – social, political, and historical – understands and classifies people into the category of 'foreign' in which I was included.

My decision to write about this topic holds up well in the literature. On the one hand, the ethnographic literature on China is meager in reflections on the interference of foreign status in the investigation, and even less about what we can learn and take as ethnographic knowledge from this classification. The theme of foreign ethnographers doing fieldwork in China has been partly addressed , by way of describing the political barriers to obtain formal authorization to carry out research (Wolf 1985; Yang 1994; Pieke 2000). On the other hand, the condition of foreigner in Chinese contexts has been addressed from the point of view of Chinese as foreigners – sojourner – living in societies like the US and the UK (Chan 2005; Siu 1952). My argument here is that the

idea of foreigner widespread in China has strong historical nuances and continuities, as it reflects not only the way 'Westerners' are perceived in China, but also the sense of modernity in China and the idea of being Chinese today.[8]My argument is constructed from reflection on situations of social interaction, such as that described above experienced over the years in field, and the various ways I was positioned as a foreigner (*laowai*).

My first direct contact with China occurred in 1999 when I went to study Chinese language in Beijing. A few days after my arrival, I found that the idea I had built on post-Mao China from the literature I had read was confusing, contradictory and had very little to do with what I observed. Until then my travel experiences had been limited to Europe and, for the first time, I found myself in a place where most of the people who inhabited the social space around me where physically different from me, and saw me as a 'foreigner', 'Westerner', 'European'. This perception of difference became very evident from the behavioral reactions of people to my presence in local trade areas and on public transport. These reactions alternated between curiosity and negative differential treatment. As the weeks went by, I started to realize that the looks thrown at me in the street were often accompanied by a pointing finger and a couple of screams exclaiming "*Laowai*! *Laowai*!" Other times, people timidly ventured to ask me if I was *meiguoren* (American). *Laowai* literally means 'old people (*lao*) from outside (*wai*)' and is used by the Chinese to refer to Western Caucasians. This is an ambivalent expression because the character *lao* can be interpreted positively as a form of family treatment, as it happens in expressions like *laopengyou* (old friend) or *laodifang* (the place where we usually meet). Despite this positive element, however, the connotations of the expression *laowai* are mostly negative. In fact it tends to be used in situations where it is presumed that the person who is being referred to does not understand what it means (indeed, it is not frequent that a *laowai* understands the Chinese language). Aware of the racist sense historically involved in this *laowai* category and wanting to intervene positively in the image of China before foreigners, a few years ago the Chinese government launched a campaign of civilization (*wenming*) to promote the proper use of the term *laowai*, aiming to withdraw its negative connotations.

[8] In *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (1992) Frank Dikötter laterally touches on this issue.

In the famous essay “The Stranger”, Simmel (1972) describes a particular type of stranger, a ‘near stranger’ who embodies both the opposite qualities of distance and proximity, ensuring a specific form of social interaction. Simmel’s ‘near stranger’ is modeled on the condition of the Jewish merchant in nineteenth-century Europe, while the status of stranger described here presents configurations related to the particularities of the Chinese context, and which are embodied in the category of *laowai*. So to be a *laowai* is a particular way of being a foreigner, formed from specific historical, political, social and cultural processes. Like the Greeks mentioned by Simmel (1972), the Chinese also considered the peoples inhabiting the periphery of the empire in antiquity as barbarian (Gernet 1974–1975; Fairbank 1992; Dikötter 1992; Fay 1997). Over the centuries, the Great Wall worked as a barrier that established cultural (and sometimes political) boundaries between inner China (*nei*), to the south, and outside China (*wai*), to the north (Gentelle 1994). This strong sense of cultural/civilizational difference between *han* farmers and nomadic cattle breeders of the steppes remained even with the expansion of the limits of the empire to these regions and the conquest by dynastic powers in important historical periods (Mongol or Yuan Dynasty, 1279–1368; and the Manchu or Qing Dynasty, 1644–1911). Although they were incorporated a long time ago into China, even to this day these groups are considered foreign, (not Han) dynasties. Although the relations established to the western regions of the Eurasian continent, first through the Silk Road and after by sea lanes, allowed Western foreigners, especially the Jesuits, to reach the Chinese imperial court at least since the sixteenth century, the management of relations with foreigners was based on the model of relations with the ‘barbarian’ peoples from the steppes. The Chinese Empire understood itself as *tian xia diyi* – the first country under heaven – and the Emperor, who held the title of Son of Heaven, was its highest representative on Earth, all other nations and kingdoms were seen as inferior and its tributaries (Gernet 1974–1975).

From the nineteenth century onwards, the pressure of Western powers led to profound changes in China’s conception of itself and the Chinese perception of foreigners. And it is precisely in the Chinese encounter with Western modernity, and its facets of ambivalence, fascination and disgust, that the strongest sense of the term *laowai* should be sought. As previously mentioned, China felt humiliated by Western military and technological superiority, however Enlightenment thought constituted the main source of inspiration for Chinese intellectuals in search of answers to the

transformation of China into a modern nation. The political and diplomatic downgrading had consequences in everyday relations between Chinese and 'Westerners' in China with deep consequences for the perception of foreigners. From the Opium Wars (1839–1860) to the end of the Japanese invasion (1839–1945), there was a situation of unequal rights between foreigners and Chinese. In concession areas of port cities foreigners were sovereign (extraterritoriality), and in many places Chinese were not allowed to enter. This discrimination and colonial attitude generated anger among revolutionary intellectuals and fed into Chinese nationalism and the fear of 'white peril' (Dikötter 1992; Fitzgerald 1996). The closure of China to the outside world during Maoism perpetuated an image of foreigners as threats to the country, under the slogans of class struggle between colonizers and colonized.

After 1978, the country was open to foreigners, but first in a very controlled manner in a way that until the mid-1990s many municipalities and some provinces were still closed to foreign visitors. The Reform and Opening Politics of 1978, despite seeking to take advantage of the economic and financial interest of foreigners in China, initially also based its mode of relationship in previous discriminatory practices. In short, the humiliation of China before Western powers in the nineteenth century is an important component of Chinese aversion to Westerners, but, paradoxically, the very same sense of inferiority inflicted was also a catalyst of fascination. As Frank Dikötter (2006) demonstrates, the superiority of Western technology embodied in material culture dazzled China. This perception of 'foreign', 'Western' products as 'superior' and Chinese products as 'inferior' is steeped in, but remained well beyond, the period of the Republic of China. The idea of the superiority of Western material culture continues to manifest itself in the consumer culture across Chinese society in post-Mao China (Chao and Myers 1998; Latham 2006). This fascination for Western products is marked by the consumption of luxury goods, but also by an enchantment with Western cultural industries, from fashion to film. Together, these products communicate ideas of prestige, modernity and superiority.

Xiaomei Chen (1995) examines the relationship between China and the West as a self-orientalization process which led to an Occidentalism. This discourse of Occidentalism, originated in the early twentieth century (Dikötter 1992), is still evoked by the Chinese government to support nationalism at home – the Chinese imagination constructs the Westerner 'other' as a way to discipline and dominate the Chinese self at

home (Chen 1995). This Occidentalism reflects an idea of the 'West' as a distant stranger, swaying between a threat and an ideal to be achieved. It is in this context of a strong sense of inferiority and discrimination of Chinese by "Westerners", and of high segregation between these two categories of people, that the notion of *laowai* arises – as a classificatory category that still today carries the charge of a history of unequal and discriminatory perceptions and practices between Chinese and foreigners.

Even today, more than three decades after the beginning of the Reform and Opening Politics, and with China becoming a major world economic power, the idea remains that a *laowai* is automatically wealthier. When I asked my Chinese interlocutors why there is still this idea among ordinary people, they answered almost always in the same way: "In China, people always thinks foreigners are rich and Chinese are poor, so we always ask more money from foreigners." This perceived wealth of foreigners expresses much more than possessing money, it means to have power and to be in a position historically perceived as privileged. Ellen Hertz (1998) in her ethnography of the Shanghai stock market was confronted with the fact that her interlocutors, some of them wealthy Chinese businesspeople, considered themselves poor in relation to her, a PhD student from the US. As described above, there are more sociological dimensions in the Chinese notion of stranger – *laowai* – than in those described by Simmel.

However, it should be noted that a strong differentiation between people is not restricted to the difference between Chinese and foreigners. In China there are also important distinctions within the category "Chinese", namely between *waidiren* – outsiders or strangers – and *dangdiren* – local people, a distinction currently being used to tell apart internal migrants in China. These internal migrants, or *liurenkou* (floating population) as the Chinese government calls them, carry a stigma of crime and illegality. On the one hand they are tolerated in Chinese big cities because they are economically needed as low paid workers and for menial jobs. On the other hand, they are described as latent threats to the peace, tranquility and security of these places. *Waidiren* and *laowai* have in common the fact that they both do not belong to the inside group and so they can be seen as a threat, though they may also be seen as beneficial. The *laowai* are seen as beneficial for investment, scientific knowledge and information about the economy and global capitalism they have brought and may bring to China, but they are perceived as a latent destabilizing threat to the integrity and unity of the nation. In the

past were the Opium Wars, the invasion of Beijing and the imposition of a semi-colonial status on China; more recently *laowai* have supported causes such as the sovereignty of Tibet, Xinjiang or Taiwan and are waving the flag of human rights. In the view of many Chinese these attitudes shows that *laowai* are unable to understand China and the Chinese condition, that there is no *gongtongde yuyan* – a common language. It is this perception of the lack of a common language that positions foreigners, including 'Westerners', as distant from China. That is the same reason that led the woman selling tickets at Beijing train station to refuse negotiating with me – the perception and prejudice that 'Chinese' and *laowai* have in many areas incompatible worldviews.

When I first started my fieldwork among Chinese migrants in Lisbon I wanted to work with Chinese migrant women recently arrived from the People's Republic of China, some of them staying in an irregular situation in Portugal. My experience of two years in China had made me aware of my strong identity as a foreigner among Chinese, a barrier that was many times insurmountable. I knew that I could never go unnoticed in the crowd and that I would necessarily have to deal with my condition as foreigner. Even though the fact I spoke Mandarin (as a foreigner) and have lived in China were favorable aspects, as a foreigner I still had to be prepared to demystify the stereotypes underlying the category of *laowai* among Chinese. *Laowai* implied not only that I could be a potential threat to the already vulnerable position of people, but also that I was supposedly very different in terms of my way of life, morality and worldview.

Initially I naively aimed to overcome the difficulties by showing that they could trust me to be a serious and professional researcher. My first interviewee, whom I met through a colleague in academia, was a woman doing a MBA in a university in Lisbon. I told her about my research project and she agreed to participate; later she introduced me to the owner of a Chinese restaurant near her place. This woman agreed to meet me for an interview scheduled in a few weeks. However, when I returned to contact her, I was intercepted by her husband, who mistook me for a journalist.[9]I tried to explain to him my intentions as a researcher, however I could not convince his wife to talk to me. This episode was very important at the beginning of fieldwork. I realized how difficult it would be to explain my research and to win people's trust. For weeks I took refuge in

[9] Journalists are usually *persona non grata* among Chinese migrants, who perceive journalists as people who usually pose inconvenient questions about human rights and political affairs in a way troubling to the Chinese worldview.

ethnographic literature in search of a miraculous strategy to convince people to at least talk to me. Still with no response to the problem, I become conscious of the opening revealed by the owners of another Chinese restaurant near the university, and where I had attended even before I went to Beijing. This couple from Zhejiang, coming from Spain years before, sometimes asked me to teach them some words or sentences in Portuguese or to help them solve a problem due to their poor knowledge of Portuguese. The fact that the relationship started with a casual business relationship created a foundation of trust between us. With this in mind, I started to teach a Portuguese language class for Chinese people for free. For this purpose, I used a room in the old building of the university. My students were mostly newcomers, employees of restaurants and shops in Lisbon. Despite the previously established schedule, many arrived late, when the class had already started, and left before finishing. They rarely addressed me and (due to their irregular situation) avoided filling in the identification and contact numbers in the student form. In practice, I maintained interactions with three people outside the classroom (from a total of around thirty people). Later I came to meet some of these former students at Chinese weddings and New Year celebrations.

Since the beginning it was easier to establish relationships with people with a higher level of education, even if they worked in Lisbon as waiters or shop assistants, and with women. It was through some of my former students of Portuguese language that I began attending the restaurants, shops and homes of Chinese migrants in Lisbon. Thereafter I began to be viewed more as a teacher and not so much as an anthropologist or researcher (most did not understand the meaning of these terms), not only through teaching at the university, but mainly for having taught Portuguese to Chinese. The classification of teacher was very helpful to me in carrying out the fieldwork for my MA and PhD, especially when there was a strong resistance due to my foreign identity. I learned not to use the word interview but to designate these events as conversations – which actually they were. By following Chinese people around Martim Moniz I was able to do participant observation, to extend my network of interlocutors, and to observe closely their experiences as migrants. As Sarró and Lima (2006: 18) maintain, sharing everyday life with populations under study is one of the defining axes of fieldwork in both metropolitan and classic ethnographies. So by trying to adapt my way of being in the field to the lifestyle of my interlocutors, I ended up sharing with them their everyday life, and thereby had the opportunity to do participant observation, and in time, to talk to

them about the topics that also interested me. Ultimately, in letting my interlocutors find my place in their lives, I found my points of contact in the field (Viegas and Mapril 2012). However, my more contemplative attitude of just 'being there' did not cease to cause a certain strangeness to my interlocutors. My answer that when I was with them I was learning things for my PhD seemed to be relatively reassuring.

In situations of celebration, and fuelled by an intense joy and good humor, my Chinese friends frequently exclaimed: "*Ta shi yiban zhongguoren*!" – She is half Chinese! But my presence in moments of familial and social tension generated uncomfortable situations; when I asked questions or offered an opinion I was often told: "You're not Chinese. You do not understand." On those moments I was sent back to my *laowai* condition of a distant foreigner and so unable to understand the Chinese condition. The benefits of my presence would go beyond the resolution of everyday life practical problems and of teaching Portuguese. In some situations, to come up with a 'foreign' friend was capitalized on by my Chinese friends as an expression of their success in Portugal and so a way to promote their upward social mobility.[10]

Over the years, my presence challenged my interlocutors to find me a place in their world. If I am a teacher in Lisbon, a former foreign student in Beijing, when I visited Wenzhou, hometown of many of my interlocutors in Lisbon, a couple (Zhou and Li) who I met in Lisbon several years before, decided to adopt me and introduce me to their neighbors and friends in the village as their fourth daughter. When Zhou and Li told their neighbors that I was their fourth daughter, they looked at me very closely and exclaimed, "No way! She is *waiguoren*!" Even within the family, where I was encouraged to call my adoptive parents *A-Ma* (mom) and *A-Ba* (dad), or *jiejie* (older sister) and *gege* (older brother) to my adoption siblings, I maintained a condition of foreigner before the younger generation. When I tried to talk to my adoptive nephews, children and adolescents between 12 and 17 years, there was no reaction on their part – they did not even look at me. They just mumbled a quick answer when coerced by an adult to do so: "Respond to *Ayi*! *Ayi* is talking to you! Are you listening?" Although the use of the term *Ayi* implies proximity, as it means aunt – a polite term used to call the

[10] This refers to how the category of *laowai*, historically steeped in power relations of a racial and colonial type, is linked to the notion of *guanxi* (privileged social contacts) and also *mianzi* (face) (Yang 1994) among Chinese, which result in forms of accumulation of social prestige. However, the analysis of the importance of *guanxi* and *mianzi* in fieldwork is beyond the scope of this Introduction.

women of the mother's generation – they still saw me as a stranger, a foreigner. Even though parents and grandparents assured children that I was a family member and that they should treat me as their *xiaoyi* – the youngest aunt – they were never able to overcome this barrier. Their reluctance to relate to me would be linked to the fact that I do not belong to their longtime network of relationships over there, in addition to my lack of Chinese ancestry.

I believe that this experience helps to explain the attitude of many Chinese who, when in a foreign country such as Portugal, tend to rely on a way of understanding the world based on the distinction between insiders (family, hometown, nationality) and outsiders (strangers, outsiders, foreigners), and prefer to interact with those who they perceive as understanding them. During fieldwork, many Chinese migrants told me about their feelings of loneliness and isolation in Lisbon, even in relation to other Chinese, and confessed to me their difficulties in making Chinese friends (not to mention Portuguese) in whom they could truly trust, in the way they trust family and longtime friends. My condition of foreigner among Chinese was thus a key constraint in my ethnography. For my interlocutors my fieldwork period was a process of humanization of my foreign person, endowing me, as they see it, with some ability to understand their way of being in the world, where wide and distant classification categories such as Westerner, American, or Chinese were put aside in order to gave way to closer social relations, thus opening the possibility of mutual understanding.

The meanings implied in this category can be finally thought from what Simmel (1972) tells us about the status of stranger, particularly the tension of a relationship, both distant and close. My description of the category of *laowai* shows that mutual understanding and proximity are both part of the meanings of being *laowai* due to its place in a history of exclusion/inclusion and which is still present in the modes of relationship between people and categorization of the Chinese migrants in Lisbon. At the same time, I also demonstrated how in situations where my proximity and intimacy seemed established that same condition of *laowai* could again project me to my foreign condition as a *laowai*. By being a *laowai*, I experienced the limits the category implies in the access to certain levels of proximity and interaction. Epistemologically, the condition of *laowai* allowed me to achieve a more analytical sense of the interaction processes between the ethnographer and interlocutors in the field and to carry out a

reconfiguration of categories of knowledge considering *laowai* as a native and historically located category.

The structure of this dissertation

The following chapter – 'Moving expectations' – describes the social aspirations and expectations of material improvements behind Chinese migratory movements from China, especially from the Wenzhou region. In this Chapter I try to demonstrate how modernity aspirations and desires for material modernization articulated with core Chinese values.

In Chapter 3 – '*Chiku* for *zhuanqian*: eating bitterness for making money' – I describe Chinese migrants' efforts in Lisbon in order to achieve the material modernization ideals portrayed in Chapter 2. I argue that the great endeavor of Chinese migrants, their working hard and saving hard practices in order to make money, are seen as transitory and a necessary step to wealth and success.

'Martim Moniz: a place in 'remote' Europe' is the title of Chapter 4, where I describe how Chinese migrants have made Martim Moniz part of their transnational 'home', arguing that Martim Moniz is for Chinese a 'remote' place and a kind of Chinese 'last frontier' in Europe.

In Chapter 5 – 'Attracting the flow of fortune' – I argue that Chinese migrants' expectations of prosperity, success and social mobility, and the working hard and saving hard practices described in Chapter 3 are complemented by practices of play and fortune-seeking founded in cosmological beliefs and practices in daily life.

Chapter 6 – 'Ways of spending money' – is dedicated to the uses given to money accumulated by migration, namely its ritual expenditure, conspicuous consumption and the ritual exchange of money, and from where I argue that such spending ia part of the moral obligations of migrants within the networks of relatives, friends and acquaintances.

Ultimately I come to the final conclusions where the themes of previous chapters are recaptured in order to arrive at a final idea of migration as a way of achieving a new and modern Chinese way of being. In this final chapter I also look to the field (after fieldwork), and try to spot some of the changes that are already taking form in a period of further change for Chinese migration to Portugal.

Chapter II

Moving expectations: migration and social aspirations between Wenzhou and Lisbon

Introduction

This chapter explores what motivates the movements of Chinese migrants from China to Portugal – looking at their departures, non-departures, arrivals and returns. It starts by presenting the cases of some migrants from Wenzhou in order to reflect on their expectations, and engages in a dialogue with Appadurai's notion of social aspirations (2004). Presenting an ethnographic account of the expectations of modernity and the origins of social aspirations in Wenzhou city and rural outskirts,[11] the chapter shows the varied ways in which post-Mao economic prosperity and its resulting social and economic inequalities, allied to the existence of networks of trade and migration, have

[11] Wenzhou migrants were chosen for this study because they make up the great majority of Chinese migrants coming from the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) to Portugal (Neves and Rocha-Trindade 2008). In fact, this is a feature of Chinese migration to Continental Europe in general, and not only to Portugal.

created a fertile ground for movement between China and Europe. I argue that this prosperity creates heterotopias, in Foucault's (1967) sense, entangled with practices of strangehood and dislocation. Ultimately, Wenzhou migratory projects are a result of modernity aspirations and desires for material modernization articulated with core Chinese values such as filial piety, so fundamental in the regulation of relations between individuals in the family. I propose that what Chinese migrants mean by 'modernity' is precisely this articulation.

Money, migration and social expectations

From behind the cash register of her warehouse in Martim Moniz, Lanfen confessed to me what she really thought of Lisbon:

> My husband's nephews warned us before we came: "This is worse than China!", but we didn't really believe them. When we arrived here we thought: "Is this the capital? It's like a small town in China!" And everything is so old … look at these buildings! In China now everything is modern and new, especially our city Wenzhou. It is the most modern in China! It seems like Hong Kong … you'll see … but there I never had any money. That people really know how to spend money? ... you'll see … so I came here to make money (*zhuan qian*). There is no way I would live like this there. Our family has no idea what we've been through here!

Lanfen and Bojing have lived together since 1995, when she became pregnant at age 17. They eventually got married when she reached 21 – the minimum legal age for marriage. By that time, they already had their second child. According to the One Child Policy in China, and its specific application in Wenzhou municipality, they were not entitled to have a second child and so they had to be penalized.[12] Since they were running their own businesses, the state could not remove them from their jobs or cut their salaries. As a result, they had to pay a heavy fine for breaking the law: Lanfen was an early mother,

[12] The One Child Policy has been implemented at a national level in a particularly hard way since 1980, although its application has many nuances and exceptions depending on the place of residence of the family, the size of the parents' family of origin, the ethnicity of the parents and the willingness of local authorities to promote or hinder population development.

they had a second child and they did not respect the minimum age for marriage, whose main objective is precisely to shorten women's fertility.[13]

In order to register their children, the couple had to legalize their situation and pay a fine of around 16,000 yuan (around 2000 Euros), an amount that varies according to the estimated income of the parents and the whim of the officials. They were left with only the money they could make from their small businesses. This made life difficult in Wenzhou, where success and power is measured by money-making capacity and conspicuous consumption, both taken as signs of modernity.

While overturning the inside of a box full of shoes in order to satisfy the request of a client, Lanfen explained to me what made her and her husband migrate to Europe:

> The problem is that Wenzhou is a very consumerist (*xiaofeizhuyi*) place. If my friend goes to an expensive place, I also want to go; if my friend buys something, I also want to buy. There is this constant pressure (*yali*) to spend money (*huaqian*). […] We came because we want to improve our lives (*shenghuo hao yidian*). We want to make a change (*bianhua*) for our children.

A degraded and rundown district such as Martim Moniz[14] was clearly not the urban landscape Lanfen and Bojing expected to find in Europe when ten years ago they decided to sell their house and store in Wenzhou in order to pay a smuggler to bring them to Portugal. They were born in one of the many villages surrounding the city of Wenzhou, but at that time they were living in the city center, where Lanfen ran a small grocery store and Bojing worked as a photocopier salesman.

It was after two of Bojing's nephews migrated to Portugal in the late 1990s that Lanfen and Bojing also thought of migrating to Europe, looking for a chance to fulfill their aspirations of a good life. Inspired by Appadurai (2004: 67), here I am using the

[13] The establishment of a minimum legal age for marriage in China has as a main goal the reduction of fertility. In this case, despite having officially complied with age rules, the law in fact was broken because a child was born before marriage. During my research, I found that many Chinese couples present themselves as married, though they never actually undertook the official registration of marriage. Despite this, the union always had a wedding ceremony that marked the social transition.

[14] Chapter 4 will provide a description of Martim Moniz, the area of Lisbon with the main agglomeration of Chinese (and other) ethnic businesses and residences.

term 'aspiration' as shorthand for all the wants, preferences, choices and calculations of individuals. It is my contention that these aspirations have an influence upon decisions to migrate. In Wenzhou the couple felt trapped in a very demanding social environment in terms of social status, and in a social structure that could not offer them opportunities to become wealthy and powerful. They sensed an exit from their 'social dead end' in the narratives of easy prosperity described by relatives working in ethnic Chinese businesses in Portugal.[15] The example of other Chinese people in Europe easily led Lanfen and Bojing to devise a plan: they would start working for other Chinese in restaurants, stores or workshops, and after some time working very hard, and with some luck, they would become traders themselves and thus accumulate a lot of money. Lanfen waited only two months before she was given a ticket to Romania, a non-Schengen country at the time. The flight had a stopover in Paris and inside Charles de Gaulle airport she was given new documents – a plane ticket and a new passport with her photo on it. With these new documents she could enter Schengen and get on a plane to Lisbon. Bojing, her husband, waited another eight months before arriving at Lisbon's airport by the same process. Although Lanfen seemed quite disappointed with what she found in Europe, some years later she encouraged one of her brothers to join her in Lisbon with the same aim of becoming prosperous. Her brother and sister-in-law were also relatively unsuccessful at home and so they, too, risked being smuggled to Portugal. Lanfen has another older brother and two younger sisters, but will not encourage them to migrate: "They all have work unit (*danwei*).[16] They are alright there. My other brother is an engineer, and my two sisters are teachers. I don't want them to come here."

In order to examine Chinese migrants 'dreams of migration' I will resort, on the one hand, to Arjun Appadurai's notion of 'social aspiration' (already introduced) and, on the other hand, to Lisa Rofel's 'cosmopolitanism with Chinese characteristics' (Rofel 2007). According to Appadurai, social aspiration can be seen as a cultural capacity: "(…) in culture ideas of the future, as much as of those about the past, are embedded and nurtured" (Appadurai 2004: 59). These ideas about the future are

[15] The tendency for Chinese migrants to send positive messages to their places of origin in China regarding how easy it is in Europe (as compared to China) to start a business will be explored in the following chapter.

[16] *Danwei* is colloquially used to refer to *gongzuo danwei* (work unit), which in collectivist Maoist times was the first attachment of workers to the Party structure. Although the economic, political and employment situation has changed, the term is still used today to refer to an employment position in a governmental department.

implanted in cosmologies and calculations that allow people to maintain a sense of dignity in poverty (2004: 64–65). In Chapter 5 I will explore the way Chinese cosmologies, namely their notion of fate and their attitude towards the future, deeply influence contemporary aspirations towards wealth and success. Still, expectations of a modern, cosmopolitan and good life that fuel Chinese migration are also informed by the influence of long-term values based on cycles of intergenerational solidarity in the family such as filial piety (*xiao*) and self-sacrifice for others (*qinlao*), which I further develop in Chapter 6.

Lisa Rofel (2007: 1–2) conceives desire in contemporary China as being associated with China's opening out and exposure to global processes, namely heterogeneous liberal economies and liberal politics, under whose influence the Chinese state and Chinese citizens try to attain material and moral parity with the West. Cosmopolitan experiences enable individuals to transcend their localization in China through a kind of virtual mobility. According to Liu (1997), throughout the history of China a connection has existed between the spatial movement of individuals and upward social mobility. At present, this connection has become associated with the opening (*kaifang*) of China to global capitalism through the Special Economic Zones and mobility overseas. Travel and mobility is thus linked to economic and social opportunities. In a time of increasing globalization, migration has become a real option for many people, providing a channel to fulfill their cosmopolitan desires. But these desires incorporate the values of *xiao* and *qinlao* in such a way that the predicament of Chinese modernity for Chinese migrants is a combination of old and new values, of aspirations for social mobility and material well-being, both for oneself and for one's family. This is essentially what Lisa Rofel (2007) describes as 'cosmopolitanism with Chinese characteristics'.

Lanfen emphasizes that her hometown in China is a very cosmopolitan place, and that to be 'cosmopolitan' in Wenzhou requires money, which she did not have. Thus, departure from China was essential to accomplish the modernity experience she observed all around her. The desire to make money, high expectations and a fertile imagination were already identified by Li (1999) as special factors of migration from Wenzhou. In the next sections I will disclose how to be modern and cosmopolite, and to accumulate money, became a form of social communication and of social integration in

places like Wenzhou, informing the daily practices that are themselves a manifestation of expectations for the future.

The creation of a Zone

Traffic jams are a common feature of modern Wenzhou. They are a consequence both of the city's prosperity and of its natural features. Wenzhou is surrounded by misty mountains and permeated by gracious water channels. The former have hampered communications with the rest of the continent for centuries, and the latter have made the construction of a subway network unfeasible and the mobility of more than nine million[17] people who inhabit the municipality very difficult. Back in the 1970s and 1980s, boats were popular among the local population and a convenient means of transportation to go around Wenzhou. Many families had small boats anchored in a nearby channel, but boats also served as public transportation from one place to the other. Some of these boats are left decaying along the channels of Wenzhou. Not many people use them in their daily lives anymore. Nowadays, boats, like everything else, are made profitable according to a 'modern' perception of life in Wenzhou. They are rented for touring in small ponds or, imbued with the post-Mao China competitive spirit, used for training dragon boat races.[18]

Boats fell into disuse in the 1980s when thousands of bicycles started to populate the streets of Wenzhou. The use of this means of transportation was early evidence of the life improvement of Wenzhou inhabitants, when compared to those living in many other poor regions in China. Today, an increasing number of cars similarly serve as a barometer of Wenzhou prosperity. While making their way through traffic jams, Wenzhou drivers mimic their economic, competitive attitudes. Most of people ignore

[17] In 2010, locals told me the official figure was around seven million people, but they acknowledged that the real number would be much higher because of the floating population and children not registered due to the One Child Policy. More recently, while consulting the official website of Wenzhou Municipality, I found that the listed population for 2010 was 9,122,100 (Wenzhou Municipal Government 2012).

[18] Dragon Boat Races are a traditional sport activity very popular in South China based on the competition of boats rowed by villagers. These boats are made of wood and have a dragon-like decoration. Though the competition became professional in the last few decades, it is an ancient Chinese tradition associated with the Dragon Boat Festival (Duanwu Jie), which occurs on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month of the Chinese Lunar Calendar. The festival marks the summer solstice.

traffic lights and the marks of traffic lanes; some even drive in the opposite direction or use sidewalks as a road lane. Car accidents are frequent but amazingly not very serious. Wenzhou people like to compete and take risks in order to win. These characteristics have helped them progress from boat to bicycle to high-end cars, as a result of an impressive path of economic growth since 1978 grounded in the development of rural manufacturing industries for exportation.

Wenzhou, a port city located in the south of Zhejiang province, Southeast China, can be considered an example of what the literature of urban space has recently designated a 'Zone' – a socio-spatial formation of late modernity, which originated as export-zones and turned into places of imagined modernity (Bach 2011).[19] According to the author "The Zone is a spatial capital accumulation machine consisting of a designated physical area in which different rules apply to corporations, and by extension workers, than in the rest of a given state" (Bach 2011: 100). The creation of zones in China took place after 1978 with the outset of Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening Politics (*gaige kaifang*), which aimed to set out the four 'modernizations' (*si xiandaihua)* – industry, agriculture, science & technology and defense – and to turn China into a leading country (Ikels 1996; Hsü 1995; Canon and Jenkins 1996). The reform of the economic system was at the heart of this full-scale modernization drive, although it was emphasized that the opening to market should retain a strong state-directed stance, proper to a country of socialist ideology.

The opening to market signified a decollectivization of society, openness to foreign investment, business development, and encouragement of wealth accumulation and consumption (Ikels 1996). The reform allowed for a two-speed country, where some regions were allowed to get rich first, serving as an example to others (Hsü 1995; Cannon and Jenkins 1996). In this spirit, and with the objective of conducting controlled experiments with the market economy, in 1980 four Special Economic Zones were created along the coast – Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Xiamen and Shantou – located in the southeastern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian respectively. Wenzhou was not part of these initial vanguard spaces of development and economic reform defined by the government. However, it happened that Wenzhou became the first region in China to be dominated by private enterprise after 1978, characterized by an economic development

[19] Following Bach's usage, I capitalized Zone to distinguish it from the common English term "zone".

based on local entrepreneurs. In this way, Wenzhou's economic basis differs fundamentally from the Pearl River Delta region, whose industrialization and economic growth was promoted mainly by foreign investment (Wei and Ye 2005; Yia-Ling Liu 1992; Cannon 1996). Wenzhou economic development was possible thanks to the sagacity of local entrepreneurs.

Alongside the establishment of Special Economic Zones, the Chinese government started to decollectivize society by promoting private enterprise and profit-making in rural areas. The key economic reform was the introduction of the production responsibility system (*zerenzhi)*, which elected the peasant household as the basic unit of production in agriculture and industry (Dong 1989). This new system of organization returned rural land and other production resources back to the farming households, who were given the responsibility to manage resources and to deliver a certain amount of agricultural production (Leeming and Powell 1996). Surplus or profit beyond the level contracted could be retained by the households. This constituted a stimulus to increased productivity and to use resources in a more efficient manner.

From the beginning of the 1980s onwards, rural households were also allowed to establish their own business enterprises and to hire workers. There was also a revival of rural markets with a continued economic regulation of the state (Yia-Ling Liu 1992; Leeming and Powell 1996; Li 1989; Zhang 1989). Wenzhou has a long tradition of long-distance commerce through its port, which has enabled the region to overcome its natural geographic isolation in relation to the rest of the continent and its lack of arable land for agriculture (Thunø 1999; Bramall 1989). As early as the tenth century, people from Wenzhou started to sail to other parts of China (and even outside the country) to sell locally produced handicrafts. Poverty, due to overpopulation and lack of arable land, might have been a crucial motivation for such enterprises (Alan Liu 1992). For centuries, imperial authorities looked upon commerce unfavorably, with Wenzhou being seen as a port of pirates – but trade proceeded on a regular basis. In 1876, in consequence of the Sino-British trade conflicts, Wenzhou became a treaty port, officially opened to international trade. At this time, the region became more and more integrated into global trade flows promoted by colonial capitalism. These conditions greatly favored trade and migration in the region, through the port of Wenzhou.

At the beginning of the twentieth century many peasants from Wenzhou and Qingtian[20] migrated – especially to Europe, but also to other parts of the world – as traders and seamen in foreign vessels. Contract laborers also made their way to England and France during World War I (Thunø 1996, 1999). Chinese vendors reached many cities in Europe during the 1930s (see Christiansen 2003; Skeldon 2003), including Lisbon and Oporto cities in Portugal (Tomé 2002; Teixeira 1995). Until 1949, Wenzhou trade and emigration were strongly linked to its port connections and to the local production of handicraft products. During Maoism, forced collectivization aimed at extinguishing private initiative and trade. This process was received with great resistance in Wenzhou, precisely in light of the challenge it presented to local traditional economic activities (Yia-Ling Liu 1992).[21] However, due to the inventive way in which local cadres complied with the official Maoist policies, these activities were not completely eradicated (Alan Liu 1992; Yia-Ling Liu 1992; Parris 1993). Nevertheless, the establishment of work units (*gongzuo danwei*) and people's communes attached people to place and greatly reduced the mobility needed for trade activities.

The political reforms of 1978 allowed Wenzhou to return to its traditional economic base. Not only did Wenzhou have to rebuild its economy, based on trade and household industry, but it also had to revive its emigration networks linked to trade activities. After 1978 private initiative was slowly permitted and migration was also decriminalized (Thunø 2001). It is important to underline that migration has always played a major role in broadening the Wenzhou area of commercial activity, in the sense that Wenzhou migrants, specialized in trading products from their region, constituted a network of information about markets and trade products to workshop manufacturers back home (Li 1989; Chen 2006; Hoe 2007). The story of Wenzhou's economic development since 1978 is a Chinese tale of 'making money out of nothing'

[20] Today Qingtian county is integrated in Lishui municipality in the west border of Wenzhou municipality. Qingtian town is only 50 kilometers away from the center of Wenzhou city (Wenzhou municipality). Chinese in Europe came mainly from Wenzhou area (Wenzhou and Qingtian), while Chinese migrats to other regions of the world came essentially from the southern provinces of Fujian and Guangdong (Thunø 1996).

[21] The Chinese Communist Party practice of smashing local trade and private production in Wenzhou might have had less to do with an ideological bias against market economy practices, than with the interest in eroding local power structures. Ralph Thaxton Jr. (1997) shows how before 1949 in North China the Chinese Communist Party sided with peasants against Kuomitang's authorities in a dispute for the right to trade salt.

and ‘happy never-ending prosperity’. The position of Wenzhou in post-Mao China, as a model region for Chinese economic development whose prosperity raised from scratch, contrasts with the image of Wenzhou during Maoism, that of a rebel region to socialist practices, which had played an important role during the civil war by supporting the Guomidang (Nationalist Party) side. Wenzhou secular history as an important trade port and a manufacturing center, and the network of Wenzhouese people scattered all over China and beyond, was fundamental to the region’s economic success. The Politics of Reform and Opening, namely its decollectivization and support to private initiative and profit-making practices, constituted the opportunity the Wenzhouese were waiting for.

Another important component of Wenzhou success was productivity. Traditionally Wenzhou people often had to migrate due to the lack of arable land. In a situation of rural industrialization, however, this surplus workforce was channeled into manufacturing enterprises. Initially small household enterprises started to use very cheap labor composed of unoccupied family members. Subsequently they started to contract farming peasants from local and neighboring regions (see Zhang 1989). Working in the manufacturing industry constituted an improvement in the economic situation of these peasants, because they could receive a regular and higher salary compared to their previous income from agriculture. Wenzhou industries managed to achieve high productivity levels by producing ‘without slack’ (using labor in a very intensive way through extending hours and allowing few or no days off), typical of economies of scale.

Another important element was the raw materials, coming mainly from state industries leftovers, used to manufacture all kinds of synthetic products such as buttons, lighters and electric equipments (Li 1989). Following the tradition of Chinese industry production in the nineteenth century (see Dikötter 2006), Wenzhou light industry produced cheap and poor quality products intended for sale in China’s poor and backward regions (Li 1989). In time, these products were also sent to foreign markets. This market expansion was made possible due to the global network of the Wenzhouese. The rapid development of manufacturing based on labor-intensive industries transformed the local economic structure in Wenzhou from one of poor agriculture to one of dynamic commerce and industry (Yia-Ling Liu 1992: 295). In the first years of the 1980s, the percentage of the Wenzhou population employed in agriculture decreased from 89 per cent (in 1978) to 37 per cent (in 1985) (Dong 1989). The success of

Wenzhou's rural industry raised peasants' incomes dramatically, compared to both pre-1978 and to the rest of China.[22] This provided an improvement in peasants' standard of living and changes in consumption patterns (Li 1989). Prosperity enabled people to aspire to a 'modern', more urban lifestyle (Zhang 1989) and Wenzhou became known nationwide for its inhabitant's extravagant spending, not only on housing and clothing but also on weddings, funerals and grave sites (Parris 1993: 258).

Following this stunning economic growth, Wenzhou was eventually incorporated into a national strategy of industrialization supported by export-oriented areas, and in 1984 was appointed one of 14 coastal cities officially opened to foreign investment. Nevertheless, all this economic change was not without tension; Wenzhou economic practices, based on labor exploitation and capital accumulation, were a thorn in the side of the Chinese government in light of the challenges they posed to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology (Yun 2004; Tsang 1996). It is still unclear whether the economic practices of privatization and marketization in Wenzhou started as deviations from state policies, clandestinely pushed by liberal local officials (Yia-Ling Liu 1992), or if they were part of the initial liberalizing break of the central government during the 1980s (Huang 2008).

Anyway, in the mid-1980s Wenzhou's spectacular growth became known as the 'Wenzhou model' among scholars and politicians in China. The pressing question among academics both at home and abroad soon became whether Wenzhou's economic growth could be used as a model for the development of other poor and backward rural areas in China (see Bramall 1989; Dong 1989; Li 1989; Zhang 1989; Alan Liu 1992; Yia-Ling Liu 1992; Parris 1993; Ye and Wei 2005; Wei, Li and Wang 2007).[23] Through this self-made process, Wenzhou became an important industrial and exporting zone during the 1980s. The accumulation of capital generated by Wenzhou's labor-intensive industries led to the emergence of a middle class eager to realize the 'dreams of modernity' and to transform this exporting zone into a place, what Bach (2011) calls an Ex-City or an Export City. Unlike the cases of other zones that are 'places without

[22] In China, 'peasant' is a political (not an economic) label related to the residence registration system (*hukou*). Everyone residing outside an urban area is considered a peasant even though he or she might work in industry (see Mackenzie 2002).

[23] On this point see *Market Forces in China: Competition and Small Business: The Wenzhou Debate* edited by Peter Nolan and Furen Dong (1989), a collection of articles by Chinese and foreign academics approaching the Wenzhou case in terms of changes in economic policies.

history' (Bach 2011), Wenzhou was a historical port of Chinese maritime trade deeply connected to global capitalism since the mid-nineteenth century, despite its loss of relevance in the more recent historical period under Maoism, marked by economic collapse and poverty.

After 1978, the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping allowed for the development of flexible strategies of capital accumulation, which were seen as money-making opportunities that were seized on with great tenacity by the Wenzhouese. The capital accumulated was invested in renovation and modernization, especially of the city center in order to transform this middle-sized city in China into a modern and cosmopolite place. This was made possible by the economic prosperity of the last 30 years, and it was financed mainly through fundraising from local entrepreneurs who, in the absence of initiative by the central government, poured money into important public works to improve accessibility and to renovate the city center. Until the end of the 1990s, Wenzhou communications continued to be based mostly around the port, but since then an airport, two railway stations (one of them to receive an high speed train – *dongche* – connecting directly to Shanghai) and four motorways have been built (Wei, Li and Wang 2007).

This modern urban landscape raised and nourished by its dwellers' conspicuous display remains surrounded by rundown suburbs, crowded with sweatshops, where migrant workers live and work in conditions that, to a European eye, look like sheer exploitation and wild competition, but which locally are perceived, both by employers and outside workers, as opportunities to accomplish 'the Chinese dreams of modernity'. In the next sections I apply Michel Foucault's (1967) theory of heterotopias to analyze the social and urban contrasts in the Wenzhou Municipality landscape. The center and the suburb may look like strangers to each other, but in fact they reflect each other like a game of mirrors, and feed into each other materially and symbolically.

Recognizing 'home': Wenzhou in the mirror

Huiqing has spent her last 20 years living in Europe, to where she migrated at the age of 17 to work in a textile workshop in Paris. Until then she was living and working in Nanbaixiang, a rural area in the outskirts of Wenzhou's urban district. During these two decades, she returned to China six times to visit family in her hometown. Wenzhou was

a very different city in the beginning of the 1990s and has evolved very much since she left China. The city has acquired a modern and cosmopolitan look, with many new buildings, especially towers made of glass and concrete built to lodge new businesses and to house the new Wenzhou urbanites. New wide avenues have replaced old Wenzhou alleys and narrow streets. The only survivors are a pair of streets with restored old buildings for tourism and commercial activity near the waterfront.

Whenever she gets back (*hui jia*),[24] besides spending time with her parents in the village, Huiqing likes to enjoy the city center lifestyle. During my stay with her in Wenzhou, a couple of times we went shopping to *Wumajie*, a pedestrian commercial street replete with stores of many local brands, nowadays the city center. For these tours, she always invited other women from the family – her mother and sister – seizing the opportunity to offer them garments, cosmetics or accessories they would not buy otherwise. But she also likes to buy items for herself, especially products not available or more expensive in Portugal. One of her favorite places is a set of smaller and narrower streets around *wumajie* that host a great number of small stores, many of them selling counterfeit goods coming from Wenzhou workshops at convenient prices. However, in China, to bargain (*taojia*) is a balance of power where buyer and seller anticipate the moment when the other will give in, and Huiqing's appearance and behavior of an emigrant warns sellers not to lower the price very much. A shopping trip to the center is also an opportunity to have a pleasant meal in one of the large restaurants, situated in the upper floors of these commercial area buildings, offering the best of local cuisine distinguished for its many dishes of fish and seafood. Whenever Huiqing's son and nephews are also part of the group they inevitably make a stop in one of the American fast food restaurants, such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, which are very popular among Chinese and Portuguese children alike.

Being in Wenzhou is also an opportunity to meet friends from Europe. This time Huiqing got together with Lijuan, a friend from the time she worked in Paris more than ten years earlier. When Huiqing left Paris for Lisbon, Lijuan went to Rome, but they have kept in touch through telephone and Internet ever since. Lijuan is in China for business, essentially to buy new merchandise to sell in her warehouses in Rome. In

[24] *Hui jia* means 'to return home'. The term is used by Chinese migrants to describe their visits to their hometowns in China, although it does not imply a definitive return.

between business activities, they gather for lunch and enjoy a foot massage in one of the many massage centers in the city.

Photograph 1: *Wumajie* pedestrian street in downtown Wenzhou (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2010).

During these encounters they talk about their family lives and their business ventures. Usually they exchange information about business achievements and prospects, about the latest business strategies and about current difficulties. In the past they had collaborated in business, Huiqing helping to gather clients in Lisbon for Lijuan warehouses in Rome. These kinds of informal meetings among acquaintances and friends from Europe are central to managing their lives in Europe. It was through this kind of information exchange that Huiqing decided to move to Lisbon and start a business in Martim Moniz. This was also how she met her husband. These encounters also have an important emotional component. Chinese migrants in Europe share similar experiences, and so they can fully understand the hardships of working in a sweatshop in Prato or of being looked down upon (*kanbuqi*) for being Chinese in a Parisian quarter, something that their relatives in Wenzhou cannot appreciate in the same way.

Photograph 2: Wenzhou skyline viewed from Jiangxingyu Island (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2010).

Although they spend most of their time in Europe, Wenzhouese migrants also participate in the local culture of conspicuous consumption through investments, especially in the real estate market. Recently Lijuan bought a brand new apartment in the city center and took Huiqing to visit it. She was impressed by her friend's new house. It is located near the riverside, one of the prime areas of the city, well-ordered and delimited by modern residential and commercial buildings. According to my Wenzhouese friends, here are situated the most expensive apartments in the city, valuing hundreds of thousands of Euros. The most distinguished hotels are also located here, lodging fancy restaurants and internationally renowned boutiques of French and Italian designers. In the streets of the center high-end cars of renowned European brands abound and people tend to exhibit a modern and sophisticated look.

From her childhood days in the city, Huiqing bears in mind the pleasurable family excursions to Jiangxinyu island to spend a holiday once in a while. The island is an urban park with a temple and an amusement park in the middle of the Oujiang river, and from where today one can observe the Wenzhou skyline resembling the famous Chinese metropolis of Shanghai or Hong Kong. Migration gave Huiqing and thousands of other Wenzhouese the opportunity to participate in Wenzhou's modern lifestyle. As a poor

worker in a shoe factory in Nanbaixiang, Huiqing could never long for a comfortable life like the one she enjoys now. But downtown Wenzhou also exposes the inequalities that underlie the prosperity of private enterprise. In the stores and restaurants we visited are internal migrants working for salaries that locals refuse. When the night falls, beggars, cripples and old people finally dare to roam the streets of the city center.

Photograph 3: A middle-class private condominium under construction in Wenzhou city center (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2010).

Although she does not have an apartment in Wenzhou, Huiqing can enjoy the spanking new apartment bought by her brother in a private condominium in the city center. In Wenzhou center the most expensive residential quarters are organized in private condominiums where communication with the outside is made through several gates guarded by private vigilantes. Inside these residential citadels, a dozen towers (*dasha*) shelter the city's most distinguished dwellers in their comfortable and sumptuous apartments. Her brother and sister-in-law, a business couple in Wenzhou, had attempted, unsuccessfully, a decade or so earlier to be smuggled to Europe. After

this failed attempt, they managed with the help of relatives to open a grocery store in a new neighborhood outside the center. For ten years they lived in the store working everyday from dawn to dusk. Last year they finally bought this new apartment and moved in.

The place where their condominium was built used to be a working-class neighborhood of old four-floor buildings. Part of the neighborhood had already been demolished to make way for residential towers, an urban park with a pond, lawn spaces and some resting areas with park benches and tables. Everyday old people come here to rest for a while, chatting and playing Chinese chess; grandmothers and nannies also come to walk their children. The condominium is a group of recently built 15 towers, with 28 floors each. Some of the apartments are still in construction. In China apartments are bought unfinished, with the interiors still in concrete, so that each can be decorated to the buyer's taste. Huiqing's brother and sister-in-law accumulated during the course of a decade enough to pay 2,800,000 yuan (around 350,000 Euros) to buy a modern apartment. Gone was the time they had spent in the rear of the store or in the modest room in the paternal house after marriage.

In the hall of their building an LCD screen on the wall exhibits advertisements for people waiting for the elevator. The apartment, on the 16th floor, is carefully decorated in a modern, sophisticated and expensive way. The acquisition of the apartment established a new and modern phase of life for this family. They continued to work from dawn to dusk and to spend most of their time in the store, although now they were able to materialize their expectations and efforts. Interestingly, this new phase is marked by new domestic habits, one of them being not to cook at home to preserve the apartment from what they consider to be the smells and deterioration caused by food preparation. The same attitude was observed and transmitted to me by other urban residents of new and expensive apartments. People tell me the great majority of these private condominiums are owned by local businessmen and factory owners, and also by people who live abroad. The selling of prized land for construction in urban Wenzhou also enables owners of old houses to afford new and big apartments in these condominiums.

In a certain sense, to buy an expensive apartment is seen in Wenzhou, and in China, as a first step towards a modern life, which implies a shedding of old habits. These desires for modernity might help to explain the bustle of the real estate market in

China. In Wenzhou, real estate prices are very high compared with the rest of China. Many of those who accumulated money in the manufacturing industry invested in real estate, especially in light of renminbi devaluation. Because there were so many people investing in real estate, prices in Wenzhou increased very quickly. Raising house prices have led to real estate becoming another profitable business in Wenzhou. House prices in the region soared from 2000 yuan per square meter in 2000 to 28,000 yuan in 2010.[25] The Wenzhouese are also responsible for the increase in apartment prices in other Chinese cities. After making huge profits in the real estate market in Wenzhou, Wenzhouese people started to invest in other big cities like Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou causing a striking increase in housing prices, a phenomenon largely documented in the national press. Groups of Wenzhouese businessmen are famous for having purchased, for speculation purposes, hundreds of apartments, even entire towers, in Chinese big cities. “People from other cities are afraid of us. They know that if we start to buy houses there, in only a few years prices go sky high” says Zi, a Wenzhouese civil servant, while exhibiting a slightly proud smile. Indeed, the operations of the speculators have not been restricted to mainland China. The Wenzhouese are also responsible for housing price records in Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore.

In April 2010, during my stay in Wenzhou, news programs commented on the changing conditions of loans for house purchase. By way of these new rules, the government intended to slow the speed of speculation (which was rendering a lot of money to sellers) and to prevent the creation and bursting of a housing bubble (as happened in the United States) that would probably cause major social instability. Apparently, Wenzhouese operations in the real estate caused the government to interfere, allegedly because some people, such as young graduates and the poorest of urban residents, many of them on a low income, were unable to find an offer in the market compatible with their revenues. Through their flexible practices of accumulation, the Wenzhouese tested to the limits the Chinese experiment with the market economy. At first they did this through the manufacturing industry and trade, and later through investment in real estate and finance. Their business practices made them nationally renowned as intelligent and very skilled at business.

Huiqing feels attached to Wenzhou not only because of her origins, but also because to be a Wenzhouese today is to be identified with the modernity the city has

[25] See for instance Ran (2010 and 2011) in *China Daily* and *Shanghai Daily* (2008).

achieved in the national context. Although she does not intend to return to China in the future, Huiqing sees Wenzhou as a place for vacation, and this mood very much dominates her activities and manners in the city. After so many years in Europe her knowledge of the place is that of a tourist. She constantly asks her relatives for information and advice about places, services and itineraries and she also seizes the opportunity of being in town to do sightseeing and to visit local attractions. One of the last times she and her husband visited Wenzhou they even stayed in one of the city's most expensive hotels. Her unawareness of the local habits and lack of orientation skills in Wenzhou is easily perceptible by locals and new locals (internal migrants), making her feel like a stranger in her own land. Interestingly, although she sees Wenzhou and China in a more distant way, Huiqing continues to be very influenced by them. This visit to Wenzhou encouraged her make a decision: she will buy a new house in Portugal.

Huiqing's transnational life between Wenzhou and Lisbon caused a reconfiguration of her sense of 'home', anchored in both places and in the multiple points of migration and business networks by which they are connected. To be at 'home' is not only to be in Wenzhou or in Lisbon, but to be in this transit between the two places. The emergence of a transnational identity of 'home' (Wang and Wong 2007) is very likely the most novel aspect of transnational migration (Al-Ali and Koser 2002). Regarding Chinese migration in particular, the emergence of a transnational notion of 'home' accounts for the lack of intent among my interlocutors to definitely return to China, as used to be common among Chinese migrants before 1978 (see Skeldon 2007). A definitive return 'home' to China becomes pointless in a world where 'home' is perceived as being in a process of dislocation between two sites. Downtown Wenzhou is the quintessence of Wenzhou's heterotopic nature – it is a real place, and yet one whose perfectness creates a sense of illusion (see Foucault 1967) in relation to most external places of the suburbs. The suburb and the center are like the two extremes of a spectrum. The center is an illusion that unfolds many layers of crisis and deviation, mostly represented by old beggars and young migrant workers.[26] Yet, the unattained center also represents a utopia for outsiders, either locals from Wenzhou suburbs or internal migrant workers. For them all, it is the inspirational source of their aspirations.

When Lanfen and Bojing left Wenzhou in the first years of the new millennium, the city was already an economically vibrant place, in the top ten of the most

[26] In the next chapter I will develop precisely the idea of migration as a rite of passage.

economically developed cities in China, thereby offering its residents a materially modern life. The experience of being excluded from participating in this material modernity, portrayed by the acquisition of goods and services, encouraged them to leave. In Wenzhou they had no money and felt poor. These feelings of poverty arise not from starvation or material misery, as in the past, but from contemporary inequalities found throughout Chinese society, and of which Wenzhou is a paradigmatic illustration. Social aspirations are thus the most important aspect of Chinese migration from Wenzhou. In the next chapter I will show how this capacity to aspire and to project into the future is nurtured in the experience of inequality in the present.

Money, mobility and exit in Wenzhou

Walking me around Nanbaixiang surroundings, a rural *zhen*[27] just outside the urban limit of Wenzhou city, Huifang, Huiqing's sister and a local resident, acknowledges the pulse of change in the village, recalling that when she was born in 1965 Wenzhou was very poor. And pointing to a field full of grass, Huifang acknowledges how a few decades ago it would be impossible to see a plot of grown grass like that. When she was a little girl, every day after school her grandfather would send her to harvest grass. At that time, in the early 1970s, hundreds of people roamed the fields in search of grass to feed livestock. Today, locals have abandoned these old habits. In fact, many have abandoned life in Nanbaixiang altogether, migrating to other places in search of money.

Nanbaixiang is a small town (*zhen*) consisting of a conglomerate of villages (*cun*) in Ouhai district in the rural and suburban area of Wenzhou city. The villages spread along the main road in many cluttered streets. The traffic is rather chaotic, with trucks, buses, cars, motorbikes, vans and pulling carts flowing all the time. The great flow of traffic, especially of trucks, is related to the intense industrial activity going on in these villages. Despite being only a 20-minute drive from the center, there is a great distance between the luxury and modernity of Wenzhou urban districts and the unruly landscape of these suburban villages. In daylight, old, dirty and unfinished buildings form a grey smudge on the landscape. Here and there a white spot appears corresponding to more recent white-tile building. Many of these buildings are factories; some of them used to be located in the urban districts of the city, but with the process of urban renewal

[27] Is *zhen* is an administrative division, a town or a conglomerate of villages.

factories have expanded to Ouhai, transforming this former rural area into an industrial place. Construction here, including more recent additions, is rather anarchic. Most of the streets are dirty, and garbage of all kinds accumulates everywhere. Though main streets are asphalted, mud and filth abound on the back of the buildings and on the roadside due to the spring rains.

Nanbaixiang has greatly evolved since Huifang was a little girl. Her own family epitomizes some of these changes. Huifang's father used to work in the fields, but after 1978 he found a job as a locksmith, and only farmed the *shan*[28] as a part-time job. Huifang, her sisters and brother started to work when they were very young. At the age of 14 she started to work in a small shoe factory in a two-storey traditional wooden building near one of the many water channels in Wenzhou. Her younger sister joined her a few years later after finishing the ninth grade. Every day their mother would wake them up early in the morning, then they would ride their bicycles for half an hour to the workshop and came back late at night, after 12 hours' work. The two sisters left the shoe factory more than 15 years ago. Huifang lost her job when she became pregnant with her second child, and her younger sister (*xiaomei*) Huiqing emigrated to France. Her older sister (*damei*) migrated to France in 1985 to marry a boy from a Wenzhou family who had lived there since 1978. Her brother is her only sibling living in Wenzhou. He also manages to be successful, running a store and accumulating a lot of money, through hard work. Now he is living in one of the private middle-class condominiums mentioned above.

Huifang had thought of leaving China when she was younger, but her father would not allow it. He claimed she had to stay to take care of parents when they grew old. Time went by, she got married and had children, and leaving became increasingly more difficult. Some years later her father decided to send her younger sister (*xiaomei*) to France with the help of the other sister, but Huifang remained in the village. Besides her siblings, Huifang saw many of her relatives and hometown fellows make their way to Europe, leaving their Wenzhou low-paid jobs behind. Huifang belongs to a small group of people in the village who did not leave Wenzhou nor engage in developing their own business. Most of her friends are workshop owners or businessmen. The others who, like her, did not succeed in becoming wealthy in Wenzhou migrated in

[28] *Shan* is a small piece of land up in the hill used for farming and in some cases where ancestors are buried.

search of fortune. Changming, Huifang's husband, is a party cadre, he does not earn much money but he also does not work so much, spending most of his time at banquets and cocktails and playing poker with his friends, businessmen and other cadres. Despite his five brothers and sisters having all migrated to Italy and France, he enjoys living in his hometown and does not believe he would do any better abroad.

In the last decades the prestige afforded to Chinese official bureaucracy has decreased compared to the growing power acquired by entrepreneurs because of their capital accumulation capacity. In Wenzhou, this trend is more pronounced than in other parts of China because of Wenzhou's early success after 1978, comparing it for instance to Beijing at the end of the 1980s, where there were still doubts about whether making money could be considered a legitimate means and measure of success (Pieke 1996). Working as a bureaucrat in Wenzhou allows Changming to retain a certain prestige and at the same time to avoid the pressure to migrate. Huifang, on the other hand, continues to think that considering the lack of success opportunities offered to locals in Wenzhou people would do better leaving the country. Huifang's generation started to work in local factories, but they soon discovered they would never better their lives in this manner. So, to borrow from Hirschman's theoretical toolkit (discussed in more detail below), going abroad became the 'exit' towards their upward mobility. Huifang did not take this exit, so she feels stuck in the village – a feeling also recorded ethnographically by Julie Chu (2010) in a migrant area in Fujian province, where success is measured by the capacity for mobility, and to be fixed or 'emplaced' is synonymous with failure.

On one of Wenzhou's moist spring days, Huifang took me to a factory where she had worked until a few months before. The factory, in fact a small workshop, operates in one of the many grey six-floor buildings in the village. On the ground floor, a woman sat on a small stool watched the front door while sewing a fabric. The ground floor is a large warehouse where rolls of fabric are stored. The production unit is located upstairs. Inside a large room, several young men, around 20 years old, cut and sew gloves sitting on small stools with the working materials organized in cardboard boxes. Huifang used to work right here. On the same floor there is a carrier company office, and a reserved area with a kitchen and a few rooms used by the bosses (*laoban*) to cook and rest. *Laoban* have a house, but they live here most of the time. Other floors belong to other companies. Besides the owners, all the other people working here are internal migrants or *waidiren* (literally 'outsiders').

To be ambitious enough to leave one's hometown in search of prosperity is part of the new valorized ethos in China. The condition of being fixed to a place is sensed by Huifang as positioning her in an inferior position, one easily looked down upon by relatives, friends and acquaintances who have managed to move to another place or are upwardly mobile. Huifang explicitly saw her condition being degraded when she accepted *waidiren* work. This meant downward social mobility. Having said that, in post-Mao times there are important values other than money and success that make Huifang's condition more complicated. Old Chinese values such as filial piety and self-sacrifice for others continue to be important and valorized, especially among families. Huifang's positioning between modern and old values exposes some of the moral tensions surrounding projects of making money and becoming successful in Chinese modernity. On the one hand, Huifang told me she sometimes feels looked down upon in respect of her and her husband's immobility, especially before their successful relatives. On the other hand, she is praised by her parents and siblings for her moral qualities in accepting a low-paid job in order to make enough money to help her children and parents. Despite the comments of friends and some relatives, however, she did not think that working in the factory was bad. On the contrary, she told me that in this way she was busy all day working and surrounded by people, instead of being idle at home. In addition, she was acquainted with the owners and so she was treated more favorably than other workers.

Indeed, Huifang did not give up on success in accepting a low-paid job as a means of earning money for her children, in whom she deposits her expectations. She is resorting instead to a different strategy, by postponing success – by passing it down to the next generation. She does not want her children to stay in Wenzhou and accept low-paid jobs as she has done. She wants them to migrate to Europe, and for that she is considering resorting for help to her sisters in France and Portugal. "There's nothing for them to do here. In Europe they can make much more money". In fact, Huifang attributes a lot of value to money, a sign of the times. One of the problems of Wenzhou 'immobility' has to do with the fact that Wenzhou industries did not offer opportunities to climb the ladder. In the majority of the household enterprises there are only two categories of people: employers and workers. The intensive working conditions, and the lack of career opportunities, causes wage labor in factories to be perceived by workers as a transitional situation. People prefer to use their labor energy in their own businesses.

In Wenzhou, international migrants constitute a middle group – those who are aware of their own limits in China, but who have enough financial backing to afford the necessary expense associated with international migration (Hoe 2007).

Migration, due to the region's poverty, had long been a traditional way of moneymaking in Wenzhou. Now, in a period of great affluence (and an atmosphere of growing inequality and intense competition for wealth and success that has come with it), migration is once again an attractive exit. Here I borrow the sense Hirschman (1970) attributes to 'exit' as opposed to 'voice' in his study of management, to account for Wenzhouese's attitude before conditions they perceive as adverse to their advancement. Wenzhouese choose to abandon the social arena instead of voicing their dissatisfaction with it – a characteristic many attribute to the Confucian legacy of not questioning authority.

Waidiren and *dangdiren:* workers and businessmen in the global flows

In Huifang's factory I met Cuifen, a smiling 20-year-old girl from Sichuan province who came to Wenzhou in search of a way to make money. She followed some of her friends who also abandoned their hometown that was without opportunities for ambitious, but uneducated, young people. Cuifen regretted that she did not go to university as some of her primary school classmates had. "Now they are making a lot of money holding well-paid positions in the administration." Cuifen followed a friend who was already working in the factory and also found a job there. Like the majority of workers from other provinces, she intends to go back soon. She has already saved enough to buy a house and to give some money to her parents.

For *waidiren*, outsiders, as for *dangdiren*, locals, mobility is the first step towards success. And the reasons that make people move in search for better-paid jobs are very similar. Migration has been a major influence in the Wenzhou labor market, especially in the manufacturing industry. The migration of locals in search of ways to overcome Wenzhou inequality has deepened the industry dependence on an outside workforce. This is one of the challenges Jianyu, a young Wenzhouese entrepreneur, is currently facing in managing his workshop. Jianyu comes from an entrepreneurial family who were able to financially support him in starting his business, so he never thought of emigrating. Being a businessmen has afforded him the luxury of driving a dark blue

series 500 BMW, and to live in a comfortable and fancy apartment in one of the most expensive condominiums in Wenzhou's city center. Although Jianyu is the owner of the factory he still dedicates all his time to work, being there every day from dawn to dusk, including weekends and holidays, except Chinese New Year.

The workshop manufactures jewelry accessories and is installed in a two-storey house in the middle of the village, among many other workshops. Manufacturing takes place on the ground floor, where there are several machines, while workers live on the upper floor. According to Jianyu, the workforce is composed of around 20 migrant workers from other provinces, especially from Sichuan and Hunan provinces. Each one works 12 hours a day, with one day off per month. Each month they receive 2000 yuan (around 200 Euros) for their work. This is considered a very low salary by local standards, although for *waidiren* it is a very good salary he says, an opinion which is corroborated by many other locals and migrant workers as well. The salary is so good that, ironically, Jianyu is having trouble finding people to work in his factory, and he anticipates the problem is going to worsen. Recently the government has been putting pressure on entrepreneurs to increase workers' wages, so that they can take more money to their home provinces. The lack of workers has led major Wenzhou companies to relocate to poorer provinces, such as Hunan, near the sources of labor (Wei, Li and Wang 2007). Jianyu says he has lost many workers over the years. All his workers have been *waidiren*, internal migrants who come to Wenzhou only to raise enough money to buy or build a house in their hometowns, in the same way as Cuifen is doing. Increased salaries means that workers are making more money sooner, and so they stay less time working in Wenzhou.

Wenzhou industry started to accept *waidiren*, poor peasants coming from the poorest provinces in the interior of China, as early as the 1980s, when political reforms slowly allowed employers to contract workers outside the household. During that time Wenzhou industrial expansion attracted workers from neighboring municipalities and counties (Zhang 1989). Later they started to come from more faraway places such as Sichuan, Yunnan or Gansu provinces. As local workers, such as Huifang's sisters, started to migrate to big cities in China and to Europe (mostly), the labor force in Wenzhou became too small for the city's growing industry. Since the 1980s the industry of Wenzhou has undergone a restructuring process with the emergence of larger firms. In spite of this, Wenzhou's enterprises remain largely dominated by small firms,

workshops that tend to be low tech and lack R&D capacities (Wei, Li and Wang 2007: 440). Nanbaixiang industry is mainly composed of this kind of small workshop operated by *waidiren* workers and local bosses.

The use of *waidiren* workers is by no means a feature exclusive to the development of Wenzhou. It is a widespread phenomenon of the Chinese urban economy due to rapid rates of development (MacKenzie 2002), particularly of the exportation industries in coastal areas (Chen 2006). *Waidiren* workers enable labor-intensive industries to remain competitive in the global market and, at the same time, migrants' remittances and return after years of hard work contribute to developing more remote and backward areas in China. I became familiar with the designation *waidiren* when I lived in Beijing in the end of the 1990s. In the Chinese capital *waidiren* (outsiders or strangers) and *dangdiren* (local people or in this case Pekinese) constituted important distinctions inside the category 'Chinese'. The term *waidiren* did not harmlessly mean outsider, it was rather used in a pejorative sense, assuming these people were not only illegal residents but also potential criminals.

The government designates these internal migrants a floating population (*liurenkou*) and they are tolerated in Chinese megapolises because they are economically necessary to major cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Politically they were described as a latent threat to peace, tranquility and the security of local people. At the turn of the millennium, it was possible to observe in Beijing a large number of humble workers performing tasks, especially physical and poorly paid tasks, rejected by the Pekinese, mainly in the construction industry, which underwent a huge explosion during that period. This floating population occupied the most degraded areas of the city, had no access to social protection (because they had a rural household registration (*hukou*)) and were illegally residing in the city with no prospects of stability there (Solinger 1995).

In fact, *waidiren* has been a phenomenon of post-Mao China that has aroused much tension in the cities between the rural and urban populations precisely because of these labels. In 1995, the central government and the municipality of Beijing conducted a major political campaign against the uncontrolled presence of internal migrants, in particular against Zhejiangcun (Zhejiang village), one of the largest migrant enclaves of the capital, composed of many Wenzhouese people, whose growing power and autonomy were seen as a potential threat to the state (Zhang 2000; Xiang 1999). Over

the past two decades, the Chinese state's manner of dealing with the floating population has been dubious, alternating between 'cleaning' campaigns highlighting security concerns and calling for their expulsion from the cities, and the progressive relaxation of *hukou* rules allowing people to work outside their place of residence registration. Due to the migration of locals, the internal migrant workforce came to perform a major role in Wenzhou economic development, feeding in particular the export industries of the zone, composed mainly of light industries producing electric appliances, textiles, shoes and other leather products. Nanbaixiang is one of the Wenzhou municipalities with high levels of *waidiren*.

Waidiren now make up the majority of inhabitants of *Nanbaixiang zhen*. According to one local cadre, Nanbaixiang has around 17, 000 local inhabitants (of which 7000 are currently living outside the locality) and 200,000 *waidiren* in an area of two square kilometers. Their presence is felt strongly in the streets of the villages. Old walls in the center of the town are filled with telephone numbers handwritten in black offering jobs in the local industry. Every day crowds of people drag huge bags to predetermined spots off the main road where they sit on them waiting for long-distance buses. In Nanbaixiang every day people leave and new people arrive. Over the years *waidiren* have turned Nanbaixiang into their own place and not only an exporting zone. During the day, the streets are vacant and it is hardly believable that so many people work and live in so little space. Factory work is detected through ground shaking and the clap sounds of machines coming from behind a close door. In Nanbaixiang a workshop can be installed almost anywhere: commercial spaces of new residential buildings, old two-storey houses, new multi-storey buildings, warehouses and barracks. Open doors reveal men and women alike operating machines and doing simple manual work in these workshops. Nanbaixiang industry produces mainly leather products such as shoes, coats and bags.

On the rare dry days of Wenzhou spring, workers sometimes sit outside the buildings in order to seize the warm rays of sun while sewing a leather bag, a pair of shoes, or making jewelry necklaces from small pieces. In the spring of 2010, people were talking about an industry crisis with closure of many workshops due to the 2008 financial crisis and a decrease of exports; however the effects were still not evident in the streets of Nanbaixiang.

Photograph 4: A quarter of factories and warehouses in Nanbaixiang, Wenzhou (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2010).

Because *waidiren* workers make up the majority of the population, a series of street businesses, also ran by *waidiren,* have flourished in order to meet this population's needs. The workshops working hours dictate time in the villages. During the day, especially if it rains, the streets are empty and many shopkeepers keep their doors closed while staying inside in their warm thick pajamas. Many migrant shopkeepers do not have any other home besides the shop. So it is possible to see them resting in beds and sofas while watching TV. Commercial businesses tend to open late in the afternoon, around 5 p.m, when some people start to walk the streets, although peak hour is around 8 p.m when people go out for shopping after work, especially to buy food. All around Nanbaixiang there are stalls selling what locals classify as *waidiren* food, such as spicy noodles from Lanzhou (Gansu province) and all kinds of pancakes popular in northwestern China. Local people usually do not use *waidiren* food services. "It's dirty! (*hen zang*)", they say. Vendors of vegetables, meat and fish in the street market are also mostly *waidiren.*

Waidiren are also good business for local people who succeed in making money renting houses and parts of houses to this floating population. In Nanbaixiang I stayed

with Sun and Ma, Huiqing and Huifang's parents, an old couple I met several years ago in Lisbon when they lived there. Their house is located in an area still mostly residential and surrounded by gardens. Moving only a few hundred meters away one can still find a pleasure ground, a mixture of garden and wasteland with small rest retreats, willows, bushes and sprinkled water courses. This small oasis is attended by many old inhabitants of the village in order to rest and to do some physical exercise. This kind of space tends to be found less and less in the villages. In the last five years construction fever has begun to monopolize these gardening terrains, also demolishing old one- or two-storey houses to erect new buildings. These new buildings of lower quality construction, many of them with the walls left in plaster, usually have five floors divided into small humble apartments specifically constructed to rent to *waidiren* workers. Huifang and her husband used to live in a single-floor old house, but eight years ago they moved into a brand new 300-meters apartment, just a few streets away. Their old house was knocked down and in its place a five-storey building was erected. This building was divided in apartments to rent to outside workers. Each apartment is rented for 1600 yuan per month, usually to two couples. This business has thrived after the village became flooded with *waidiren*. The owners of these buildings are local people, some of them migrants abroad, who saw a way of making money out of their old houses and unprofitable terrains. After selling their houses and terrains, those who are not abroad leave the villages to new residential districts in the city center, or simply go abroad.

This new atmosphere makes my hosts Sun and his wife Ma feel torn about their future in Nanbaixiang. They live in a three-storey house Sun built himself. In the beginning it was a one-storey dwelling belonging to Sun's father. He was the eldest son, and so he stayed with his parents after he got married in the second half of the 1960s. When his father died in the late 1970s, Sun became the family provider. In the house, Sun, Ma, their four children, his widow mother and a younger brother all lived together. It was only in the 1980s that he could afford to start building the second and third floors. He told me he built a bigger house because he and his wife hoped at least their only son would stay living with them after he got married. This in fact happened, although a few years later their son started a business in a new neighborhood in the outskirts of Wenzhou and moved out. Because no one uses the third floor anymore, some parts of it remain unfinished. Besides a couple of years they spent in Portugal, Sun and Ma have

lived in the village all their lives. It is their hometown. Although many people have left, they still have a group of friends there and they are afraid that if they leave the neighborhood the atmosphere existing among them will vanish. But lately they have been tempted to agree with their children when they express concerns over them staying in the village. Their children are talking about buying a small new apartment in the center of Wenzhou for them to live. Like other locals, Sun also thinks Nanbaixiang has became a more dangerous place since it was flooded with *waidiren*. As he sees it, part of the problem has to do with the inequality and poverty raging in Wenzhou:

> Many of this young people work in factories during the day, but they are low paid, so after work they engage in robbery, stealing from houses and people in public transportation. They also want to get rich quickly, so they easily pull a knife. They have nothing to lose, they are not afraid to die. Even the police fears them! This is a very difficult situation to solve. Wenzhoueses go to Europe and *waidiren* come to Wenzhou. Everybody is looking for money.

Moreover, the use of adjectives that point to criminality and danger when referring to outsiders, in Beijing and in other places in China, expresses the increasing lack of control of space by locals. This conveys the perception that local space is increasingly becoming other people's space as well, and so locals start to see it as a hostile environment. In Nanbaixiang's case, at the same time *waidiren* make Nanbaixiang their own place, *dangdiren* move to less 'dangerous' and more 'modern' places: the city center or abroad.

Although Wenzhou is itself a land of migrants, the category of *waidiren* continues to be associated with negative stereotypes. In Wenzhou the difference between the *dangdiren* and *waidiren* is also the difference between cleanness and dirtiness, wealth and poverty, urban and peasant. From the standpoint of locals, *waidiren* continue to live in a peasant style, a label Wenzhouese have been striving to get rid of since the early 1980s. In Wenzhou, as a strategy for starting up a conversation, several people asked me how I was dealing with the disorganization and the lack of *keqi* (ceremony) and *wenming* (civilization) of the people, especially in the villages. During these talks I was confronted with locals complaining about this population's lack of *suzhi*. Wenzhouese

participate in the national discourse on population *suzhi*, promoted by the Chinese government (Kipnis 2007), which "incorporates cultural quality, ideological quality and eugenics and physical quality" (Murphy 2002: 45) in order to establish temporal, spatial and social boundaries between locals and migrants.

Waidiren come from poor rural areas, many of them without electricity or paved streets. In Wenzhou they live in small, shared and humble apartments, some of them wash their clothes in the water channels, they keep old furnishings and other things *dangdiren* reject, and accept jobs Wenzhouese despise, working very hard for a handful of money. Wenzhou *dangdiren* consider themselves as living a modern and urban life, especially those inhabiting luxury apartments in private condominiums surrounded by all signs of wealth and success, through ostentation of consumption, money and power. In dreaming of a modern and urban life many wenzhouese leave for Europe. When confronting *waidiren* in Wenzhou, locals sees themselves 30 years ago, with the neither modern nor cosmopolite characteristics they have since striven to get rid of. To stay in Wenzhou working with and as a *waidiren* is to be stuck not only in space but especially to be stuck in time, in a backward temporality.

To continue with Foucault's mirror games, we could say that unsuccessful Wenzhouese look at the 'mirror' of the city center and see themselves in the suburbs. Their exit from Wenzhou is also a way of repositioning themselves in Wenzhou, to place themselves in the center in a way that when they look at the suburbs they see themselves in the modern, cosmopolite and conspicuous city center. It is not only a mirror game of heterotopias, but also, as Foucault would say, of heterochronies (Foucault 1967) in that each of these places is related to a specific temporality: the 'modern' urban center and the 'backward' rural suburbs. As in China in general, the relationship between *waidiren* and *dangdiren* in Wenzhou is ambivalent. In spite of being considered dangerous, *waidiren* are also the ones who provide Wenzhou workshops with cheap labor and, consequently, the means of reducing production costs and ensuring local entrepreneurs huge profits. In search of fortune, Wenzhou *dangdiren* accept becoming *waidiren* in other places when they decide to migrate, and most of the time they take with them the Wenzhou mentality of working, a topic I will develop in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate how prosperity promotes desires of modernity (Rofel 2007) and aspirations of a good life (Appadurai 2004) in Wenzhou. The main argument is that the prosperity of Wenzhou in the post-Mao era supports a modern ideal of living based on money, property and conspicuous consumption that marginalizes those who do not succeed. This argument lines up with earlier arguments by authors studying other migration contexts, namely South Asia, such as Mapril (2012) and Osella and Osella (2000), who demonstrate how conspicuous consumption and spatial mobility have increasingly become measures of modernity and a mode of attaining social respectability at home. It was also shown that Wenzhou's prosperity is based on its constitution as a zone, a process that brought along wealth and stimulated the transformation of the Wenzhou into an Ex-City and a place of modernity. But this prosperity did not reach all, creating increasing contrasts among people and places. In the next chapter, I will explore how Chinese migrants in Lisbon, many of them from Wenzhou, engage in migratory projects as ways of achieving wealth.

Chapter III

Chiku for *zhuanqian*: eating bitterness for making money

Introduction

In this chapter I will approach the initial period of Chinese migrants' experience, in Portugal and in other places in Europe, as a liminal phase (Turner 1969) on their way to modernity. Chinese migrants describe this as a period of *chiku* (eating bitterness), which is seen as transitory and necessary to achieve wealth and success. Throughout the chapter I will demonstrate how this period of *eating bitterness* is a rite of passage and how a migrant's position, status and experience resembles many of the features associated with the ritual subjects in the limbo state of rites of passage (1969). The chapter analyzes the importance of this period in the achievement of the objectives of migration. I will argue that experiences of suffering and privation, together with mixed sentiments of injustice and gratefulness, optimism and dismay, are common among migrants during this time. The period is also crucial to the emergence of migrants as moral persons and to their participation in the *Communitas* (Turner 1969; Esposito 2009) that will later assure them a position in Chinese ethnic business networks in Lisbon and in Europe. Towards the end of the chapter, I consider cases of people who have been

staying longer than expected in this 'in betwixt and between' condition, remaining at the margins of success and modernity. The chapter will conclude by considering how this transition is affected by the modes of experiencing time.

Chiku: migration as liminality

Xiaoxiao and her husband arrived in Portugal in 2006 to work in a Chinese restaurant in Amadora, a suburban city in the northwest of Lisbon's metropolitan area. Due to a heart condition Xiaoxiao has not been able to work almost ever since arriving in Portugal. We met in July 2008 in a Chinese clinic in Martim Moniz in the center of Lisbon where she had turned in search of treatment for her arrhythmias. Sat on a couch and looking through a window from which St George's Castle can be seen, Xiaoxiao confessed to me how she felt about her life in Portugal. The following is a part of that dialogue:

> "Despite the 41Cº [105ºF] that it is now in Qingtian, that's where I want to be. Oh, if I was in China now I would be fine! But here, it's just *chiku* (eating bitterness)." She kept on in this vein, saying her husband was working very hard and she, due to illness, could not help him. Then I asked her: "Why did you come to Portugal? And why don't you go back to China?" She looked at me, like I could not understand her, and replied: "We are from Qingtian. We use to live in *nongcun* (countryside), and in *nongcun* there's no work for us. So we decided to come... Here there are more *jihui* (opportunities) for our children. In Qingtian, *shenme ye mei you* (there's nothing there)".

This dialogue took place in Martim Moniz, in Lisbon, however it could have occurred in Wenzhou. In which case my interlocutors would have been people from the poor and rural western regions of China, the place of origin of many migrant workers in Wenzhou Municipality. The money-making and social mobility opportunities evoked by Xiaoxiao as reasons to migrate to Portugal are, in fact, pretty much the same reasons that internal migrants in China move to Wenzhou, as described in the previous chapter. The similarities between the situation of Chinese as transnational migrants in Lisbon and internal migrants in Wenzhou do not end here. *Waidiren* conditions in Wenzhou are quite similar to Chinese immigrant situations in Portugal and in many other parts of

Europe, at least in the first years of the migration experience. This, as Pieke and Mallee (1999) demonstrate, is because international and internal migration are part of a large and complex Chinese migration system were Wenzhou holds a central position as origin and destination, both in international and internal movements. I will take up the discussion of flows of people and entrepreneurial models between China and Europe in Chapter 4.

For now, I would like to emphasize that, in the same way internal migrants in China are willing to endure harsh living and working conditions in order to make money, Chinese migrants in Portugal also undergo a particularly difficult initial period, both physically demanding and emotionally intense. The difference is that, while internal migrants tend to come from the poor and backward regions of China, a large proportion of Chinese migrants to Portugal come from Wenzhou (Neves and Rocha-Trindade 2008), one of the most prosperous cities in China (see Chapter 2). In order to make the move toward modernity and success, in Portugal and in other places in Europe, migrants submit to what is perceived as a transitory downgrading of their position in order to make money. My proposal here is to view migration as a rite of passage since it implies a dislocation, both in spatial and social terms, and it is particularly distressful in the first years during the settlement period when migrants prepare themselves to succeed. I will argue that this settlement period may be seen as a liminal period in Victor Turner's (1969) sense.

The use of the theory of rites of passage to account for the experience of migration is not exactly original. For example, Aguilar Jr (1999) used the ritual process as a metaphor in accounting for the experiences of expatriate Filipino workers in terms of a modern version of pilgrimage. For Aguilar Jr (1999: 102–103), migration is a modern pilgrimage that has as a destination the higher-wage employment centers and semi-peripheries of global capitalism and ends in a successful homecoming. In this case, the entire duration of the migration experience is considered liminality, since no distinction is made within this period, and migrants only achieve success when and if they return home definitely. In the case of the experiences of Chinese migrants I observed in Lisbon, to see the experience of dislocation from place of origin in China as liminality does not make much sense, mostly because a final return to China is not the goal.

Chinese migrants see themselves as successful once they start to accumulate, and not only when they return home, even though the display of this success involves

sending signs of success back home. As described by Aihwa Ong (1993) in the case of Hong Kong Chinese, Chinese migrants from mainland China also present a flexible attitude concerning the places where they live and accumulate. The diminishing importance of a final return home and the growing importance of experiences abroad to an image of modernity and success are characteristics of post-Mao Chinese migration (Thunø 2007). Thus, if the goal of migration is accumulation and not a return home, the time spent making money is of crucial consequence in Chinese migrants' experiences. In this sense, I follow Cwerner (2001) when he argues that more attention should be paid to time perspectives in migration. In this chapter I will show how the initial period of liminality, which Chinese migrants characterize as *chiku*, affects and is affected by migrants' notions of temporality, of the present and of the future.

I will start by considering briefly Turner's conceptualization of liminality in the ritual process, focusing on the initial period of migration, and I will leave the relation between time and migration for later in the chapter. Based on Arnold van Gennep's theory of the rites of passage, which defines rites of passage or transitions as being marked by three stages – separation, margin or limen and aggregation, Victor Turner focuses on the liminal period or the transition itself, opposing it to the status system (1969: 95). Compared to the status system, liminality is ambiguous, indeterminate, in betwixt and between, characterized by anonymity, absence of property, absence of rank, sexual continence, silence, total obedience, homogeneity, no distinction of wealth, *Communitas*, acceptance of pain and suffering, among others (1969: 106–107). I consider this description of liminality very appropriate in thinking about the Chinese migrants' condition I encountered during my ethnographic research in Lisbon.

Chiku (eating bitterness) was the expression used by Xiaoxiao to account for her migrant experience in Portugal. The same (or similar) expressions was told to me by other Chinese migrants I interacted with in Lisbon. Expressions such as *chiku*, *chiku nailao*, *xinku*, *nanguo* and *tongku* allude to suffering and are used to describe the initial period in Europe. These expressions refer to physical suffering and emotional suffering, which are seen as different, but sometimes appear here as deeply intertwined. The common notion crossing all these expressions is *ku*, which means bitterness, pain and suffering, referring mostly to physical suffering.[29] *Chiku* literally means 'eating

[29] The word 'coolie' used to identify Chinese contract workers in the nineteenth century is translated into Chinese Mandarin as *kuli*, literally 'suffering force'.

bitterness' and it is associated with the idiomatic expression *chiku nailao* – eating bitterness and support hard work. Eating bitterness means to go through hardships and to experience privations to an extreme point. Both *chiku* and *xinku* (working hard) imply suffering, especially physical suffering, which is rather distinct from a more emotional kind of suffering linked to *ganjue* (feelings), and expressed as *nanguo* (sadness) and *tongku* (pain). These latter expressions are used to portray the emotional distress of being away from home, to express feelings of loneliness and longing. The emotional suffering caused by being away and alone was also described to me by many migrants over the course of my fieldwork, by way of explaining to me how, in trying to cope with the suffering and loneliness of the migration experience, they ended up going to the Buddhist Temple or to the Chinese Christian Church.[30]

Working hard and saving hard: the ritual transition to businessmen

Lanfen, already known to us from Chapter 2, got her first job through the migration broker[31] who arranged for her travel in Wenzhou. When she arrived in Lisbon, Lanfen already had a *laoban* and a place to stay. Her first job was in a restaurant, behind the counter giving drinks to *paocan* (waiters). During that time she lived in an apartment rented by the *laoban* to lodge his workers, not very far away from the restaurant. The apartment had two rooms, where the restaurant workers lived. Lanfen shared a room with two other maids. At that time her husband had not arrived yet – she was all alone, but motivated. Lanfen wanted to learn Portuguese because she knew it would be important for starting a business in Portugal in the future. She started to learn from her roommates and, because she strove hard to learn enough, after two months the *laoban* let her begin to work as a *paocan*. Lanfen worked for another four months as a *paocan*.

However, because she had no papers she was only allowed to work the night shift. Her first wage was 350 Euros (in 2002), but her boss increased her salary to 500

[30] In Chapter 5 I use some of material related to Chinese religious practices in order to present some fundamental ideas present in a Chinese cultural logic, however I consider that questions addressing more specifically the religious discourses, practices and places of Chinese migrants in Lisbon fall somewhat outside the scope of this dissertation.

[31] I prefer to use the expression 'migration broker' (as do Pieke et al. (2004)) and not smuggler (as used by Chu (2010)), because it seems more accurate considering that migrants see a migration broker as someone who, in exchange for money, helped them to migrate. The illegal dimension of the act is not so much emphasized.

Euros (plus costumers' tips) when she started to work as a waitress. Every week she had one day off. During the day (as she worked only at night) and on days off, Lanfen worked as a peddler selling any suitable articles she could find in Martim Moniz warehouses. She was selling mainly in Carcavelos train station, a station of the Cascais train line in the suburban area of Lisbon. It was a hard job, putting her articles on the ground and sometimes running away from the police, but this was the time she made the most money in her life, she said to me. When her husband arrived he started to work as a cook in another restaurant. Between them, through their various occupations, they managed to get together a lot of money over a period of four years. They saved almost all the money they made. They did not pay for accommodation or food, as for restaurant employees these expenses are for the account of the employer.[32] nor did they spend money on any other things. They did send a small amount of money back home to relatives taking care of their children to pay for their education, food and clothing, but this was relatively little compared with what they were earning in Euros.

In the previous chapter, I described the way internal migrants in China are called *waidiren* – outside people. The term refers to people who do not belong to a place and who are not inserted into the local relations and hierarchies of status – people on the margins of society. Chinese migrants' experiences in Lisbon and in Europe are very much the situation of outsiders, as if they do not belong there. Abdelmalek Sayad (2004: 125) depicts the condition of the 'emigrant' as a condition of absence, in that he or she is always halfway between presence and absence both in his or her place of origin and in the place where he or she now lives. This idea of the 'double absence' of migrants can be closely applied to the Chinese migrants I encountered during my fieldwork,

[32] Restaurants were the first area of Chinese business in Portugal resorting to the importation of labor from China. Since the beginning, those 'contracts' implied that employers should be responsible for their employees' accommodation and food. I observed similar practices among Chinese migrant workers in Wenzhou suburbs. Nowadays in Portugal this kind of 'work contract' is still common for people working in restaurants, and in warehouses in industrial areas, such as Porto Alto and Varziela (where workers live inside the warehouses), but not so common for other areas of business such as shops, whose main workers are today Brazilians. Considering the history of Chinese migration and businesses in Portugal, it is my conviction that this kind of agreement in restaurants was due, on the one hand, to the necessity of assuring an accommodation near the restaurant which usually have long business hours, on the other hand, it was a way of providing immediate accommodation to workers recently arrived from China. It might also be a mechanism to control their movements and activities.

though in focusing on their conditions in destination places such as Lisbon, I would reformulate Sayad's expression to claim that Chinese migrants experience a 'compression of absences'. This compression is structurally given not only by their position of irregularity vis-à-vis the Portuguese authorities, but also by their position in relation to Chinese social and political networks in Portugal, which generally relegate them to the toughest occupations in the ethnic Chinese labor market as a kind of resistance test (but also because that is where there is a lack of labor). Chinese migrants in Portugal are thus twice outsiders – or doubly absent, as Sayad would put it – firstly as foreigners, i.e. as people with an alien nationality and no residence permit, and secondly as Chinese outside Chinese local networks.

In fact, they are *inside* these networks but possess neither social status nor power within it. Theirs is a condition of anonymity as well. Many of these people arrive in Europe through irregular means and so are absent from official records. They are very dependent on their patrons to live and work and for keeping out of trouble with the authorities. Recently arrived migrants' lack of power in the business network in Portugal allows their bosses to keep them in an ambiguous and silenced position. As passengers and newcomers, migrants have no property, money, power or family, and have with their bosses a relationship of almost full dependence. Although initially there is sometimes a degree of suspicion on the part of both workers and bosses, this kind of relationship is not generally perceived as exploration by either of them. Instead, it is framed in a discourse of mutual help. Bosses provide making-money opportunities for their workers and workers reciprocate by being diligent.

The subaltern, silenced and uncomplaining position of migrant workers at their place of destiny contrasts greatly with the ideas associated with migration in the migrants' places of origin. In Wenzhou and other *qiaoxiang* areas (see Chu 2010) migration is seen as an act of ambition, of nonconformity to the present situation, and of a search for the independency and freedom that money can offer. Migrants are people who move because they do not conform to the current lack of opportunities for upward social mobility. They invest in migration as a lifetime opportunity to improve their lives, and this may help to understand their attitude at their places of destiny. Their condition as passengers and their perception of migration as a stage of transition helps to explain their endurance of suffering, their extreme hard work and their stoicism. In accordance with Turner's (1969: 95) description of liminality, migration as a rite is an ambiguous

and dangerous period, but it is a necessary stage on the way to incorporation into a new status.

The focus on working hard and saving money during this time is perceived as temporary and a crucial part of the process of eventually becoming wealthy and successful. Because it is a rite of passage people are kept separated from the status system – Chinese networks and place of origin and lack of connections in the territory of destination – and this provokes feelings and attitudes of alienation from the surroundings. Due to high expectations of success there is a great willingness to go through this process. Migrants anticipate they will save enough and learn the necessary skills to set up a thriving business and take an ascending road to wealth and social recognition. This is not to say that migrants in these conditions do not question their decisions or complain about their living conditions, but during my fieldwork I did not come across any migrant who said regretted having left China and who returned there during this particularly difficult time. On the contrary, I accumulated many examples of people who continued to endure these conditions despite the difficulties.

In 2006, four years after arriving in Portugal, Lanfen and Bojing finally escaped outside the limbo state. They managed to regularize their situation before the *Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras* (SEF, Portuguese Borders and Foreigners Office), being granted an *Autorização de Residência Temporária* (ART, Temporary Residence Permit). Soon after, they opened their first store in Parede, a locality of Cascais County in the metropolitan area of Lisbon, a store they sold two years later in order to buy a warehouse in Martim Moniz, expecting that the business would be better there. Here the ritual that marks reincorporation is not so much the regularization before Portuguese authorities, but starting a business. Some people manage to regularize after some years but that does not necessarily take them out of their liminal situation, especially their dependent working conditions. I consider the reincorporation moment to happen when migrants start their own business. Because many migrants are single, often getting married and starting a business occur at the same time. For those who do not have a regularized status in Portugal, marrying someone who does helps solve this problem.

The liminal period lasted about four years for Bojing and Lanfen, after which they were able to start their own business and emerge as traders and bosses in the Chinese business network in Portugal. Lanfen and Bojing have a common trajectory among Chinese migrants in Lisbon. The success fairytale they exemplify conveys the

idea that by working hard and saving hard it is relatively easy to thrive in business. Migrants arrive having this kind of exemplary path in mind, as if success occurs as a natural development of a liminal state of *chiku*. Often they could not be further from the truth. Stories told back home are romances, helping to justify the suffering caused by the experience of dislocation and of being a migrant. It follows that when migrants try to make sense of their experiences reporting them back home, they make others believe that to migrate is the best decision for them too.

This was the case with Meixiang and Longwei. Longwei's brother was already in Portugal, working in a warehouse in Vila do Conde, in Porto district in the north of Portugal. It was through him that they got to know of the Chinese business situation in Portugal. In Wenzhou, Longwei was working in the construction industry and Meixiang was a shop assistant. Meixiang and Longwei were seduced by their relatives' saga in Portugal and decided to take their chances there. In Wenzhou, they were poorly paid and had no life improvement expectations. It was with the objective of making money that they left two children in China and arrived in Portugal through the same process previously described for Lanfen, i.e., they had a ticket to a non-Schengen country but they received new documentation in Frankfurt Airport where they entered the Schengen border and got on a plane to Lisbon. It was relatively easy to enter this way. Longwei arrived first and started to work in Martim Moniz as a loader/charger for several warehouses in Centro Comercial da Mouraria. Meixiang arrived a few months later (also in 2007).

Longwei and Meixiang, like other Chinese, risked entering illegally because they were told by others that, once working here and having no problems with the police, they would be legalized without much trouble. However, when I met them in 2009 they were are having serious problems in obtaining legal documentation to stay in Portugal. The SEF was accepting documents to proceed for legalization only if the person had legal entry into Portugal, represented by an official stamp on the passport. This was the SEF's argument for not granting them a resident permit. Previously it was enough to have a stamp of legal entry into one European border, which they had when they arrived in Europe through Frankfurt. In hoping to be granted legal residence, Meixiang got pregnant with their third child. Before Portuguese law this child's parents do not have legal status in Portugal, and so she cannot have Portuguese nationality (at least for now) herself.

In spite of all these problems, Longwei and Meixiang have been able to rent a room in a small old apartment in Lisbon, and to work for other Chinese. Because Longwei was working without a work contract or resident permit, he got an expulsion order from the SEF when he was caught working as a charger in Martim Moniz. Yet the couple did not left leave Portugal. Longwei moved from Martim Moniz to Porto Alto doing some chores there for other Chinese, and making the authorities believe he had left the country. Meixiang kept working as a shop assistant in a Chinese store in the Martim Moniz area. They feed on the hope there will be a legislation change or an extraordinary legalization period so that they may regularize their situation before the Portuguese authorities. They were expecting to regularize their situation much sooner so that they could bring their two children from China. Despite their shaky situation, Longwei and Meixiang told me they do not consider going back to China. While waiting for a regularization opportunity, they work as much as they can to raise money. At most, they may try other European countries if they can expect to find better opportunities for work and legalization.

The highly unstable situation of Chinese migrants, particularly when they remain in an irregular situation due to difficulties in obtaining a legal permit, is not persuasive enough to lessen migration flows. Chinese migrants are attracted first of all by economic prospects and modernity dreams. This is the main component of the Chinese migration 'politics of destination' (Chu 2010), not regularization procedures. So Meixiang and Longwei remain in Portugal as long as they feel they are still making progress in their social mobility endeavors, even if it means that they will stay in a limbo situation for many years to come. Even if they are in a difficult position, a clue to the attractiveness of Europe to Chinese migrants may be found in comparing the situation of Chinese migrant workers in Portugal to that of internal migrant workers in Wenzhou.[33]

In Portugal, migrants not only earn more money in absolute terms, as mentioned above, but may also work less hours per day and per week. Usually shops are open 11 hours a day, six to seven days a week, restaurants may imply more working hours,

[33] I choose to compare the situation of internal migrants in Wenzhou with Chinese (international) migrants in Lisbon because poorly educated Wenzhouese, with no success prospects in business or in the civil service, migrate to Europe precisely to avoid low-paid work in local manufacturing jobs – a labor market left open to internal migrants in Wenzhou.

sometimes 14 hours a day, but the payment is usually higher. In Portugal, workers usually also enjoy a day off. Additionally jobs in Portugal, in commerce and restaurants, are also lighter than working in Wenzhou factories. Besides that, in Portugal workers are also paid in Euros, an important consideration in light of the subsequent investments and financial transactions they hope to make. In Wenzhou, migrant workers work between 12 to 14 hours a day, and only have one day off a month. And more importantly, working in the Wenzhou manufacturing industry does not offer possibilities of improving one's economic situation, namely becoming a businessperson.

In this regard it is also important to consider that a move to Europe is viewed as a sign of modernity and cosmopolitism (and hence of success) right from the very start, while staying in Wenzhou in a low paid job is viewed as a sign of immobility, incapacity, lack of cleverness and failure. Until a few years ago, to migrate from Wenzhou to Europe was seen as a relatively easy way of achieving a desired good life. Stories of Chinese migrants' achievements in Europe keep feeding the flows. Even though the echoes of a saturation of the market in Chinese traditional businesses and the prospects of an economic crisis might be thought enough to discourage people from migrating to Portugal, it is still considered better to work in Chinese businesses in Portugal compared with the alternatives left open to back home.

Lanfen and Bojing's 'aggregation' (Turner 1969) to the Chinese business community in Portugal started when they managed to regularized their situation before the Portuguese authorities and open their first store. In their first years in Lisbon, Lanfen and Bojing worked very hard and saved all the money they could. These were hard times, but it paid off because they finally started their own business and accumulated some money. When they moved from Parede to Lisbon they rented an old, but big, apartment in Rua dos Lagares in Mouraria. About a year ago they decided to finally bring their children to live with them in Lisbon under the family reunification policy. They also lodged Lanfen's brother for some months when he first arrived in Lisbon. They are *laoban* now, but they continue to work hard. Having their own businesses does not mean a decrease in the workload, on the contrary. Their new business status implies obligations and duties that they did not have before, when they were working for others. They need to pay nearly 2500 Euros rent for the warehouse every month, and pay their four employees' salaries. Because they want their business to be successful they continue to work 12 hours a day in the store. It is certain that they

have more money now than ever before, but their lives continue to be structured around *zhuanqian* (making money).

Passengers as moral agents: *Communitas* and competition

Ethics and morality in migration studies usually relate to the positions of nation-states before irregular migration, the morality of sanctions applied to irregular migrants, and the trafficking of human beings as workers in undignified conditions (see for instance Carens 1996; Killias 2010). The global media has placed a special emphasis on the trafficking of workers in obnoxious and unsafe conditions of work and transportation when depicting Chinese migration, an issue that became even more prominent after the 2000 Dover accident with Chinese migrants in the United Kingdom (see Yun 2004). Although under European law many of the forms of entry and working conditions practiced by Chinese are considered illegal, most Chinese migrants do not perceive them as exploitation but as opportunities. Xiulan, a Chinese student turned businesswoman who arrived in Portugal in the mid-2000s, describes Chinese migrants' perceptions of their working conditions as follows:

> Migrants come here dreaming of being *laoban* (boss). They think that to be *laoban* here is like to be *laoban* in China. Things are different here! They cannot live like a boss lives in China, wearing suit and tie and doing nothing all day. He is the boss! But here is different. Despite owning warehouses and having employees, *laoban* also carries bags and boxes of merchandise when needed. Of course whenever he sends a container of material from China he makes a lot of money right there. Here you have money, but working and being a boss is not like being a boss in China. That is why Chinese people's attitude here is as if they were not here. Always working and just watching Chinese movies and soap operas (…). One problem has to do with work. Chinese workers come to Portugal and they think it is like in China. Employers do not pay them vacation nor Christmas bonus, time off, etc., they only receive the monthly salary if they work every day, without breaks, faults or delays. After some time they come to know that, according to Portuguese law, they lost a lot of money. But when they become bosses they do the same to their own

> employees. But I think most of them do not do it in a fully conscious way, they do it because that's how things get done among Chinese. Obviously this problem has to do with the lack of knowledge of the culture in the host society. If they come out they would know more about their rights.

As explained by Xiulan, the practice of not considering Portuguese labor laws ended up turning into the rule, which helped to elaborate an ideal of migrant and worker conduct and personal qualities. Taking ethics as a normative and critical approach to human conduct and character as possessing value in view of a standard or ideal (Muirhead 1916: 414), I want to argue that hard working practices among Chinese migrants are seen not as exploitation by bosses, but as a form of accumulation of money and morality by workers – key capitals in their later entry into the community of Chinese businessmen and women. The initial period as workers is thus a liminal time in a migrant career where the individual needs to prove to others they have *neng chiku* – the capacity to eat bitterness. In this way, the ideal migrant worker should not ask for more time off or more money, otherwise they will be considered lazy, with the attitude of someone who does not want to work and, ultimately, of a deceiver who wants more money without more work. This kind of attitude is consistent with a Confucian morality where boss and worker are linked by a hierarchical relation that should not be questioned bottom up. Workers know that the moral qualities that are impending upon them will be crucial later for them to be considered a serious and abiding person in business. By knowing this, Chinese migrant workers endure *chiku*, focusing on work and on what they will achieve, through this, in the future.

However *chiku* has a more practical meaning than the moral benefits it may bring. As we have seen in Chapter 2, coming to Europe is a major step. Many families run into debt to pay for the journey. Migrants and their families perceive migration as a lifetime opportunity to realize their upward social mobility dreams and that gives them the stamina to bear difficulties and to concentrate on future achievements. To migrate to Europe can be seen as a European version of the American dream, where people arrive with less than nothing in their pockets, but expect to became rich and successful. It is seen as part of the process of social recognition and enrichment.

As a rite of passage this *chiku* period is a moment of learning, preparation and of moral growth. During this time, the migrant expects to learn more about business, and at the same time accumulate the money he or she did not have before and that will be invested in a successful business venture. Finally, the migrant will emerge as someone who suffered to attain success and so is morally worthy of it. At the same time, through their own *chiku*, they will know how to valorize other workers' suffering once they became bosses themselves. Their own workers will not question their authority as a boss, but will admire them, as happened with Zhou, a rich Chinese businessmen, whose story is retold many times in Martim Moniz as an incentive to recently arrived migrants. That was how Li, one of my Chinese friends, told it to me:

> When a person migrates she knows she will have to *tiaoguokong* (skip holes – meaning to overcome difficulties). A person who makes money through *chikunailao* is very much praised and admired by others. When Zhou came to Lisbon he *chile henduo ku* (ate a lot of bitterness) and after that he became rich. During the day he was selling in the streets, fairs and markets. He use to work from 12 to 14 hours a day. In the evening he came back to *Centro Comercial da Mouraria* (Mouraria Mall) where he used to sleep in a warehouse in the basement. This was in the beginning; after, things got better because he managed to make some money and with that money he started to buy stores and warehouses. He is very rich now. People *peifu* (admired) him because he worked very hard to succeed. On the contrary when a person starts by *pianren* (deceiving people) and not by *chiku* (working hard), that person becomes known as a *pianzi* (cheater) and people will not *zunzhong* (respect) her.

Eating bitterness during the initial migration period is, thus, an expected suffering, viewed as transient and meaningful for higher roles. According to the historian Susan Mann (2000: 15), Chinese classical texts attribute great importance to work precisely as a characteristic of the free person – a mark of respectability and a sign of social status. My observations during fieldwork suggest that among Chinese migrants hard work is positively seen as a way of creating a moral being and is not linked to slavery or exploitation. Thus relations between workers and bosses tend to be seen as compatible

and harmonious. If a worker is unsatisfied with his boss and does not have a contract with him he can simply leave, without complaining about the conditions.

Chinese migrants are willing to *chiku* because they believe it is part and parcel of their way to fortune. The morality of *chiku* is rather complex in the way it helps people withstand extremely hard work and living conditions and at the same time softens the position of bosses in a production system based on the intensive use of cheap labor. Workers willingness to make money and to work as much as they can is used by bosses to justify the working conditions. The pattern of *chiku* is reproduced by almost all recently arrived migrants, who having passed through the experience will later participate in the system as *laoban*. Although in a less dependent position, bosses are also subject to moral evaluations. In their relations with employees, bosses are supposed to play their part by paying the amounts agreed, paying all social security and providing workers documentation of their conditions of work when they finally apply for regularization. Their moral authority is enhanced if they themselves endured hardships while workers. Bosses are appreciated for their *renqing* (human qualities) when sharing things with employees in a social manner and showing openness in certain situations, such as releasing them from work for family issues, sometimes involving going back to China.

The importance of a migrant's morality to their later status as business people is related to the fact that Chinese businesses in Portugal (and Europe more generally) depend very much on transactions with other Chinese, following certain business rules such as payment on credit and money lending schemes. To have a reputation as a respectable person is fundamental because it allows people to engage in business with others, enabling them to be part of the business *Communitas*. Here I am using the *Communitas* idea in the sense employed by both Victor Turner (1969) and Roberto Esposito (2009). Chinese migrants, despite their relative isolation and alienation from the outside world during the initial period, share with other Chinese migrants in the same condition places of work and residence and the same liminal condition, which facilitates the emergence of a sentiment of *Communitas* among them. These ties will later be developed as business and personal relations when they migrants succeed in building their own business. These relations are important because they may lead to finding business partners, suppliers and customers, as well as to the exchange of business information. Although previous co-workers are important points in a migrant's

network of contacts, previous bosses and employees are also important for the expansion of business.

A previous worker of a Chinese products warehouse in Martim Moniz, once she sets up her own business to resell that kind of material, will be a good customer to her previous boss if they had a good employer/employee relationship. All these relations are based on an ethic whereby bosses and workers, suppliers and clients have mutual obligations. In Martim Moniz I also found that people who did not know each other previously can also develop a relationship of trust over business; for instance, someone with a restaurant for Chinese people will use (expecting reciprocity) the services of other Chinese businesspeople in Martim Moniz for things such as buying plane tickets in a Chinese travel agency or going to a Chinese hairdresser. This type of relation is not confined to Martim Moniz or to Portugal. Many Chinese businesspeople I met in Lisbon passed their liminal period of migration in Italy or France, where they still have contacts. In fact, Prato Chinese textile factories in Italy are among the greatest suppliers of Chinese textile articles for sale in Martim Moniz. Relations among Chinese people as described above are based on exchange: exchange of information, trust, money, goods, services and kindnesses. Consider Roberto Esposito's (2009: 6) definition of *Communitas*:

> *Communitas* is the totality of persons united not by a 'property' but precisely by an obligation or debt, not by an 'addition' [più] but by a 'subtraction' [meno]: by a lack, a limit that is configured as an onus, or even as a defective modality for him who is 'affected', unlike for him who is instead 'exempt' [esente] or 'exempted'.

I believe the term *Communitas* (and community as such) can be extended not only to the people who share a migratory rite of passage, but also to the network of people to whom one has obligations that are ethical and worthy of that tie.

According to my Chinese interlocutors, one of the advantages of doing business in Portugal compared to China is that it is very easy to open a business here. If someone wants to open a Chinese bazaar for instance, the only initial investment needed is in the rent of the commercial space. All the merchandise to open the store will be acquired

from a Chinese supplier who will trust the goods because among Chinese accounts are settled at the end of the year. In the beginning they do not invest much in staff either. Lanfen and Bojing, for instance, told me that in order not to have many expenses they did not have any employees when they first opened the store. The two of them were the only people working. Fortunately they managed to have a lot of clients and soon after they decided to hire employees, at first other recently arrived Chinese. In their current store, a warehouse in Rua da Palma, they have three Brazilian shop assistants and one Chinese. They said Brazilians are good in dealing with costumers, but they only trust Chinese to be at the cash register whenever they have to leave the warehouse. Chinese workers are also increasingly hard to find because "everyone wants to be a boss!" they say. Contracting Brazilian employees also helps them to avoid the usual progression of Chinese employees who, after some years working, open their own business, usually one similar to their previous bosses', resulting in competition.

Since the end of 2008, many of my Chinese interlocutors have started telling me that business was not so good, that "*Yinian buru yinian* [every year is inferior to the last one]" – a discourse I have heard especially among Chinese shopkeepers. Restaurant owners seem not to complain so much, since they had their own crisis years before when the Portuguese Economic and Food Safety Authority (ASAE – *Autoridade para a Segurança Alimentar e Económica*) closed several Chinese restaurant businesses. This crackdown gave a bad reputation to Chinese restaurants and due to the lowering of costumers many Chinese entrepreneurs moved their commercial operations to the bazaar and textile areas – a tendency that was already on the way in light of the reduced need of investment and the rise in China global exports to Europe after China's entry to the WTO in 2001 provoking an explosion of 'Chinese shops' all over Portugal. Nowadays Chinese shopkeepers complain about the economic and financial crisis that has been affecting costumers' purchasing power and attitudes towards consumption. Despite this, there is a certain unanimity that the main reason why 'Chinese shops' are not so profitable anymore derives from the competition from other Chinese opening a similar business just next door. According to Lanfen, whenever a business is doing well or merchandise is selling very well other Chinese open a similar business or order similar products, increasing competition.

Lately most of my Chinese interlocutors shared with me their fears concerning the consequences of the economic downturn in Portugal due to the financial crisis of

2008. As I write this dissertation, the worst expectations were confirmed by the Portuguese bail out by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European authorities in March 2011, imposing severe wages cuts and tax increases, thus reducing the consumption capacity of the population. Many Chinese who invested in neighborhood bazaar stores[34] were telling me months before that they were no longer making money. Still, despite the effects of the global financial crisis on the Portuguese economy, the main cause of 'Chinese crisis' has been the great expansion and multiplication of stores all over the country in the last ten years, which are now in fierce competition with each other. The deterioration of the economic climate in Portugal since 2008 of course aggravated this problem as clients have less and less money to spend. People tell me that though many businesses are no longer profitable, Wenzhouese and Qingtianese people run into debt in order to keep a working business.

At the margin of business: *guanxi*, education and perseverance

Dong came from his hometown in Shandong province to work in a Chinese restaurant in Lisbon in 1990 when he was only 19 years old. One of his cousins was working in Lisbon for a Chinese businessmen and through him he managed to arrive in Portugal. Since a young age Dong had planned to leave his village in the countryside:

> I thought I'd harness the power of youth to work and make some money. I knew I had to help my parents when they grow old. In China there are no retirement pensions as here. Abroad I would make much more money than working in the fields in my village, I could make enough for me and my parents.

He started to work in Lisbon as a kitchen helper in a restaurant in the center. The work involved leaving home early in the morning and returning late at night. For weeks he never saw daylight and felt very sad. During the day the restaurant was very busy, but he was always in the kitchen and did not see anyone. At home he was again surrounded by his coworkers. Together they lived in an apartment owned by their *laoban*. The small apartment worked as a *sushe* (dormitory). Dong's first salary was 50,000 escudos (about

[34] In Chapter 4 I will present an overview of the evolution of Chinese businesses in Portugal.

250 Euros) in the first month. His last salary in this job, five years later, was 70,000 escudos (about 350 Euros). He served the five years of his contract and, through previous co-workers, he left to work in another Chinese restaurant, but this time as a *paocan* (waiter). Wage, food and accommodation conditions were similar, and he stayed there for one year. After that, for the first time, he ventured into business on his own.

> When I was in my village I never thought of becoming a merchant or an entrepreneur. At that time nobody thought about it there. The people from the north [of China] are different from the people from the south. In the south, the *kaifang* (opening) arrived first and they began to do business much sooner, so they learned and *xiguan le* (gained the habit). We didn't. The north remained closed and, therefore, [business] was something we did not think of doing. The southern Chinese are more *linghuo* (flexible) and *congming* (intelligent) than the northern people. [...] Besides that in China it takes a lot of money to start a business. For instance, you have to pay a year of rent in advance. Here is much easier to start. For example, in China when you rent a commercial space you have to pay one year rental in cash. That is a lot of money, maybe that is why I never thought of it. Here you pay every month.

When Dong first arrived in Portugal he intended to make a little money by working hard for other people. He never thought of conducting his own business. However, seeing how other Chinese people, mainly Wenzhouese, strive to do business, he also considered taking this route. Together with a friend he met in Lisbon, he ventured to Viana do Castelo, one of the most northern districts of Portugal, bordering with Spain, to take in all the religious and popular festivals and fairs in the rural region during the summer of 1998 (between June and October). The pair loaded a van full of all kinds of merchandise, from household appliances to clothes. In each place they stopped, they remained for about a week to ten days, depending on the length of the festival. Dong made a lot money during that summer, money which he put aside. He came back to Lisbon at the end of the summer and again found work as a waiter in another Chinese restaurant. He worked there only for another year or so, until he finally opened his first store in 1999.

This store, a Chinese bazaar in Sapadores, a neighborhood not too far from Martim Moniz, sold almost everything – but it was not selling enough, considering Dong's expectations. So he decided to close it down after only two months and returned to work as an employee, a waiter in another Chinese restaurant. He feared he could not make enough money to pay expenses, and so he decided to close the store in order to avoid losses. A year later he ventured to open another store near Mercês Train Station in Sintra Suburban Train Line. A few months later he also closed this store as a result of it not making enough money. He then left for Varziela in Vila do Conde County, in Porto District (north of Portugal), to work in a Chinese warehouse. For around three years he worked very hard – he had to carry, package, store and deliver goods. Even though the job was poorly paid, he was able to save some money. During this time he was living in the warehouse together with other Chinese workers, and so he had very few expenses.

Dong's first ten years in Portugal were spent by himself working for others and trying to establish himself as a businessman, though without much success. He was now around 30 years old and some friends decided to help him *zhao duixiang* (to look for a wife). He started to correspond with a woman from Wenzhou rural area. In a few months they met and got married. His wife only joined him in Portugal almost three years later. Meanwhile Dong kept on working in Varziela's warehouse. There he heard about Chinese making very good money in Prato (Florence, Italy) and, together with a Chinese friend, he went to Italy in search of business opportunities. However, he returned without any thought of going back to invest in Italy. When his wife joined him in Portugal they decided to move to Lisbon and Dong began working as a driver. His clients were almost exclusively Chinese retailers from all over Portugal. His job consisted in transporting goods acquired in the Martim Moniz warehouses at behest of the client and delivering them to various parts of the country, especially to the centre and south of Portugal. To the north there was not much work, because many Chinese stores are supplied from the Varizela Industrial Zone.

In 2007 he again attempted to be entrepreneur, opening a textile store in Almada. Again, the attempt did not last a year because the business was not going very well. Shortly after it closed down, the 2008 financial crisis came and Dong became more apprehensive of making new business investments. As the economy gets worse in Portugal, he tells me he is waiting for better opportunities and meanwhile doing some chores for friends and acquaintances in Martim Moniz. He sees himself in a relatively

disadvantaged position for not being from Wenzhou in a land where most people came from the Wenzhou area. Wenzhouese tend to form a network among themselves due to previous relationships of acquaintance or family. Coming from Shandong implies different migratory flows and so the reciprocity ties built are sometimes not so important in a territory where business is dominated by the Wenzhouese. It is not that non-Wenzhouese cannot establish good business relations, but sometimes it implies taking more risks, such as investing all their money or lending money, and Dong and other Chinese from outside Wenzhou are afraid of what may happen to them and their families if they lose all their money. Outsiders lack the background network that could help them in difficult situations. Dong attributes his lack of success in business to his lack of Wenzhouese *guanxi* (social contacts)[35] and his unwillingness to risk. In this way, being a non-Wenzhouese in Lisbon may amount in some cases to staying in a liminal condition for much longer than the usual three or four years, sometimes doing menial jobs for decades.

I met Jiayi in Lisbon five years before I encountered her again in Harbin (Heilongjiang province), her family hometown, in 2010. She came to Lisbon at the age of 11 together with her mother. Mingzhu, Jiayi's mother, decided to came to Lisbon after her brothers informed her of the existence of a growing Chinese business community in Portugal. She thought of coming to make some money, first by working hard as an employee and maybe later as a businesswoman. Jiayi arrived with her mother and for three years studied in Lisbon. However, she encountered many difficulties in studying in Portuguese and her mother decided to send her back to China to finish high school. Meanwhile her mother has spent the last five years in Lisbon working in stores, warehouses and restaurants owned by other Chinese from Wenzhou and Qingtian. Over the years she has accumulated experience and knowledge on how to do business in Portugal, but she thought of waiting until her daughter finishes high school before bringing her back to Portugal again. Together they could launch into business, opening a Chinese bazaar. While Jiayi is still under 18, her mother can apply for family reunification. Mingzhu believes there is nothing for her daughter to do in China, and so it would be better for her to come to Portugal and help start a business. In China, Jiayi

[35] Yang (1994) defines *guanxi* among people as 'social contacts', dyadic relationships based on mutual interests and benefits.

told me she preferred to stay where she was, maybe continuing to study, but she thinks it is her duty to help her mother, so she returned to Portugal.

I followed Mingzhu in her business prospecting around Lisbon's suburban area. Some Chinese friends of hers, owners of a restaurant in Cascais, told her about a neighborhood in Carcavelos, also in Cascais County, as possibly a good place to open a store. According to her friends a lot of people lived in that neighborhood and despite the fact there are a few restaurants, some coffee shops, a mini-market, a school, a pharmacy and a nursery, there were still no Chinese shops there. It could be a business opportunity. The neighborhood was composed of groups of buildings of around the same age, between 10 to 15 years old, deposited in several streets. It was a dormitory neighborhood. We drove around for half an hour looking for shops to rent. Mingzhu was trying to assess what was the best spot in the neighborhood. She remains interested in a vacant shop near the school, just next door to a coffee shop. However, she found the space too small for what she planned. She contacted a real estate company from that area to know exactly the dimensions of the space. She was interested in the biggest shop they could provide her. She also wanted information about the neighborhood population, how many people lived there, what kind of people (working-class, middle-class), and what public transportations were available from there to the center of Lisbon.

Later she explained to me what she had in mind with these questions. First of all she wanted to calculate how much she could make in one month based on the number of people living in the neighborhood and their purchasing power. She also wanted to know about public transportation because she has no car, or driver's license, and she would have to travel to Martim Moniz weekly to bring new merchandise to the shop. She also explained to me she wanted to rent a shop facing the street, but also the biggest shop in the neighborhood. In this way she would be preventing other Chinese from opening a bigger store and competing directly with her. According to Mingzhu, costumers always go to the bigger shops because they have more things.

Long ago she aspired to have her own shop. For years Mingzhu has seen her Wenzhouese and Qingtianese bosses, almost illiterate, some without even compulsory schooling, making a lot of money out of their businesses in Martim Moniz. She has a university degree, but in China she was not making enough money as a teacher and so she decided to join her relatives in Lisbon. She also wanted to make a little money. Since she arrived she has been working 12 hours a day, six to seven days a week,

making from 800 to 1000 Euros a month. Now she has saved some money, but she does not intent to invest very much of it in opening her own business. She knows many people in Martim Moniz, and so she will do as other Chinese do: at first she will worry only about the rent; she will go to Martim Moniz in order to fill the store with merchandise; she will pay only at the end of the year and by that time she will have sold enough to pay for it, because the merchandise is very cheap.

However, because of the crisis scenario, Mingzhu thought that opening another Chinese bazaar might not be a good idea. At last she decided to abandon the idea:

> It is too far away from the train station, I had to take the bus to the train station to go to Martim Moniz. Besides that the commercial areas are too small. And I wonder why there are no Chinese stores there yet? Maybe it is not a good place after all.

However, Mingzhu did not give up on the idea of managing her own business. Another Chinese friend told her about a new format of business at which Chinese were being successful. In the last months, several Chinese had rented or bought big stores – big warehouses, ex-furniture stores and supermarkets – to open huge Chinese stores that sell everything but food. The strategy in opening these big stores is to eliminate the competition of small stores, because clients will prefer to go to these big stores and not to the small ones anymore. Mingzhu decided she also wants to open one of these stores and is looking for a convenient location.

In China, Mingzhu had no business experience, but in Portugal watching how Wenzhouese people succeed in doing business almost without any education, she also decided to try her hand at business. As with the majority of Chinese migrant workers-turned-businessmen/women, she plans to invest in a business reputed to be lucrative. The replication of business over the years until a saturation point in the market is reached and the business ceases to be profitable is a feature associated with ethnic Chinese business in other parts of Europe as well (Pieke 1992). The Wenzhouese have a prominent place in Chinese migration and its associated businesses in Europe. As previously alluded to in Dong's words, other Chinese generally attributed Wenzhouese people's success in business to their *huasheng wenhua* (Chinese traders' culture).

Qiqiang, a 60-year-old man, and former civil servant from Liaoning, explained to me the meaning of this 'kind of culture' among Wenzhou and Qingtian people in Europe:

> People from Wenzhou and Qingtian have *huasheng wenhua* (trader culture). That is also a kind of culture, you know? They were *hen pinqiong* (very poor) and starting from their grandfathers they began to do business. So grandfather taught father how to *zuo shang* (to do business) and how to *guo kunnan* (to overcome difficulties), and father taught *haizi* (children). So they learned. We don't have *huasheng wenhua* we have *jiayu wenhua* (education), we just now started in business.

This tension between *huasheng wenhua* and *jiaoyu wenhua* has a long history in China and is related to the Chinese social structure, the importance of imperial bureaucracy and the depreciation of merchants as a means of controlling their activities. Scholars and merchants are historical categories in Chinese society that, despite the many changes that occurred in China during the twentieth century, namely the development of a more money-making oriented society in the last decades, still influence very much what it means to have an education or to be a merchant (Stafford 2004). The Chinese business community in Portugal is composed of many people, especially peasants from the Wenzhou and Qingtian area (and less from other parts of China), but also by educated urban Chinese coming from big cities in China, who arrived in Portugal as students or researchers and afterwards decided to stay and dedicate themselves to business. Some use the opportunity of being in a foreign country as a stepping-stone to migration. In a migratory context old Chinese categories of 'scholar' and 'merchant' are reinterpreted according to the social meanings attributed to education and business skills. *Huasheng wenhua* and *jiaoyu wenhua* are both ways of accumulating prestige and establishing social distinctions, though in different ways. This different cultural capital also interacts with other social distinctions in China such as being of an urban or rural background.

Wang Gungwu (2007) uses the term 'migranthood' to account for Chinese students and researchers who stayed working abroad after moving with academic purposes. He wants to make a distinction between this category of individuals and what some would call 'economic migrants'. 'Migranthood' aims to comprise those educated Chinese who find qualified jobs in the national labor markets, and who therefore end

up maintaining a distance from migrant business communities. In Portugal I met several Chinese researchers and students to whom Wang Gungwu's 'migranthood existence' could be applied. Some indeed manage to stay linked to universities and research institutions, awaiting a better opportunity to move to another country. While some people arrive with the idea of competing in the national labor market, they often end up realizing that it would be more profitable to engage with the ethnic Chinese business sector. This fact is related to the segmented nature of the Portuguese labor market and the lack of a network of industries interested in high-tech professionals. On the other hand, many Chinese that decided to migrate to engage in business and found in academic activities a legal way of doing it instead of arriving through migration brokers. In these cases Wang Gungwu's distinction fades away.

Although urban and educated Chinese admire Wenzhou migrants for their supposed cultural heritage, which proved to be beneficial in an era where successful business is the main source of capital accumulation (and hence social prestige), surprisingly the majority of people from the Wenzhou area I met in Lisbon did not have a family tradition of trading in China or overseas before 1978. Their connection to business networks was much recent and traceable to relatives that migrated to other parts of Europe some years before them. As previously explained, this connection indeed gave them access to a web of business knowledge and resources, including funding sources and suppliers, which helps them in organizing their businesses. In fact, most of them came from peasant origins, as shown in Chapter 2.

My argument here is that for both Wenzhouese people and migrants coming from other parts of China, the training of *chiku* and the learning of business are generally subjected to the same *chiku* experiences. The main difference lies in the fact that Wenzhou migrants in Europe have a competitive advantage in terms of labor, capital, materials and markets in relation to the other Chinese groups entering the market (Pieke 1999: 10). The use of supposedly hereditary cultural features to explain different achievements in business is sometimes used as a critique of Chinese society and its obsession with money, wealth and material accumulation. At the same time, it

justifies the marginal situations and lack of business success and resilience that Chinese migrants such as Dong and Mingzhu experience due a lack of good *guanxi.*[36]

The cultural logic of microwaves: savings, temporalities, and money

In this section I will position the liminal moment of Chinese migrants' paths in a wider context of migration time, considering migrants' expectations. Taking as a starting point Paul Cwerner's (2001) analysis of the relation between migration and time, I will explore how symbolic perspectives of time affect migrants' everyday life practices and decisions. In the final part of this section I use Chinese migrants' condition of liminality to think about how expectations of a prosperous (near) future (Guyer 2007) inspire alienating and frugality practices in the present.

Delun wakes up at the blustering sound of his wife's knocks on the office door at nine in the morning. They live in an old apartment in Intendente, two subway stations away from Martim Moniz, but Delun sometimes works late and stays overnight in the office on the Internet instead of coming back home. The office of their import-export company in Martim Moniz has an annex, a room of around eight square meters, used by them as a private space to perform activities usually done at home. The existence of this space is central to their politics of saving. The annex room is too small to fit a bed in, and Delun sleeps on a small couch purposely brought there for an occasional nap. The couch, an old table, two equally old and unpaired chairs, a shabby desk and a pair of bookshelves make up the main furniture of the room. This used furniture was collected among acquaintances or reused from furniture abandoned in the office by previous tenants. The office's main desk in the public area was also brought from dismantled offices. Here reused materials coexist with new and modern electric appliances and electronic devices.

In Delun and Daiyu's office lies a set of objects commonly found in Chinese offices, stores and warehouses: the microwave, the rice cooker, the electric kettle and the laptop, basic items for the Chinese traders' everyday life. All these objects have their specific utility value, but as a group they serve to facilitate the Chinese migrants' main thrust of daily life: saving money in order to make money. Under the auspices of

[36] *Guanxi* is in fact very important in the making of a Chinese *Communitas* in Lisbon, however I will not focus directly the importance of *guanxi* in migration. For a thorough treatment of *guanxi*, see Yang (1994).

this politics of saving, the microwave is a particularly fundamental device and may be seen as a metaphor for Chinese modern and migrant lives.

Every day Daiyu brings the leftovers from the previous day's dinner for lunch. She has no time to go home to cook nor to have lunch in one of the many Chinese eating houses in the Martim Moniz and Mouraria area. The microwave allows them to save by warming up leftovers and eating them in a small break when customers slow down. They told me they came to Portugal to make money and so they cannot spend time cooking and eating outside and not meeting clients. Frugality and hard saving habits are practices I also observed daily in Chinese homes in Wenzhou and in other places in China where people keep all the leftovers from previous meals under a basket on the dining table until the next meal. If the leftovers are not enough for people to eat, new dishes will be cooked. But previous dishes must all be finished before more food is provided. The dishes are cold when they are served the second time but are naturally warmed by being placed on the top of the rice bowl.

In China, I also observed the improvement represented by the introduction of the microwave (bought with migration money) in modest homes allowing them to warm up their previously cold leftover dishes. The microwave has became an indispensable object to modern Chinese life, present as well in all the modern apartments I visited in Wenzhou. Several people commented to me upon how these days microwaves are becoming more important than stoves. Modern and young families do not cook because they do not want to pollute their brand new apartments with the cooking odors or spend time in food preparation. This makes sense if we consider that there is almost no family daily life in Wenzhou modern homes. Couples spend almost all their time in workplaces, in some cases not even returning home at night or doing so only for the night rest. Children are entrusted to the care of grandparents or teachers or are placed in boarding schools. Thus, all that is required for a quick and occasional meal at home is a microwave.

Despite the many prosperity opportunities that cross Chinese economic life, past hardships continue to hover over the memory of many families. Juan, who came from a rural area in Wenzhou to France 15 years ago and now manages her own warehouse in Centro Comercial da Mouraria, does not forget the hardships she went through during childhood, especially not eating properly. As she eats a meal from her lunchbox after warming it in the store microwave, she replies in the following way to my observation

concerning the proliferation of microwaves and lunchboxes among Chinese in Martim Moniz:

> We should not waste food. My father taught me that to leave a grain of rice in the bowl is like wasting a drop of the sweat of the *nongming* ('peasant') who had worked hard (*hen xinku*) to grow that rice.

Juan's words suggest that she valorizes farmers suffering in working in the fields as much as she valorizes the time she spent working very hard in Paris when she first arrived in Europe. Her four years of work in Paris were very hard, but enabled her to make enough money to establish her own business in Martim Moniz and to make further money. She told me that money is also won through hard work and so should not be spent lavishly.

The microwave allows saving. The saving of time and money is a metaphor for the daily lives of Chinese in Portugal. In this spirit of saving, Huidan's home-like office was the most complete I visited in Martim Moniz. Here most of the furniture – couches, tables and desks – was very used, given by friends or abandoned in apartments and offices they came to rent. The office is also equipped in a way that allows them to stay working 11 hours a day. Besides the microwave there is also a refrigerator, an electric stove, a kettle, a television set and a DVD player. Huidan and her husband can either eat leftovers or cook meals and stay all night if necessary. Here the politics of saving applies not only to furniture and leftovers – old Chinese newspapers are used as table cloths, plastic boxes recycled from packing products or to transport food are used as plates and bowls. Huidan explains their saving ethos by saying that "Chinese are poor. We are here to *zhuan qian*, so we cannot spend money eating good things and eating outside." Saving habits are a hangover from bitter days in China, but now they are used more to take even greater advantage of the opportunities afforded by migration. Before, to eat bitterness was a surviving strategy; today it acts as an adjunct to making money. In this way the cultural logic of the microwave is extended to other areas of migration in order to reduce the time people have to *chiku* in order to make money.

The microwave spirit is reproduced in other areas of migrants' daily lives. Among my Chinese interlocutors I observe a tendency to rent old but spacious

apartments, normally in the vicinity of their workplace. Many Chinese families dwell in the streets of both sides of Av. Almirante Reis between Martim Moniz and Alameda Afonso Henriques along the subway line – a location they find very *fangbian* (convenient), just a couple of subway stations from Martim Moniz. The location in relation to their business place is very important in light of their saving strategies. Most of the people work around 11 hours a day and no less than six days a week. If they live near their business they spend less time and money on transportation. Chinese people usually prefer big apartments because they can be a way of expanding profits or minimizing the rent costs.

Vacant rooms can be used to accommodate employees or to be rented to a newcomer Chinese migrant or student or to shelter a recently arrived relative who will start by helping in the family business. Many *laoban* also rent or buy apartments specifically to accommodate employees. The rental of a house for the family may also coincide with the application for family reunification to bring younger and/or older generations from China. The coming of relatives from China also represents an important step for business prosperity. Recently arrived family members such as siblings, cousins or older children provide cheap labor for family businesses, at least for some time. Old parents also help in business, usually without a salary, while grandmothers take care of grandchildren allowing savings in terms of nannies and kindergartens, and assuring the children a Chinese-language education at least in the first years of life. In Lisbon, it is common to find three generations living under the same roof; a situation that is no longer desired in China because it creates a fertile ground for conflict. Here avoiding conflict is less of a priority than making money fast.

Migration as a liminal period reflects many of the ambivalences of the migrant experience, namely the fact that many people endure living condition otherwise not tolerated in their countries of origin precisely because it is expected to be a temporary situation (Cwerner 2001: 27). Chinese migrants in Lisbon subject themselves to more hardships than they would at home because they believe that in a short period of time they can achieve what they came for. The alienation towards the surrounding social environment and to almost everything that does not concern work and making money is symptomatic of their suffering, but is also fueled by the expectation that the more focus they have on working for the future, the sooner that future will arrive. To be focused on the future, on what they expect to achieve, helps them cope with everyday suffering and

allows them to *yizhi jianchi* (continue to persist). The future has top priority and so everything that does not concern directly making money is left for downtime. This view has an effect on ritual and social life among Chinese in Lisbon. Events such as wedding banquets and ritual celebrations such as Chinese New Year always start between 11 pm and midnight in order not to collide with restaurant business hours.

Conclusion

The Chinese migrants' cases I ethnographically describe here show an orientation towards near future expectations, in sharp contrast with the long-term 'prophecies' of the macroeconomic capitalist theories which relate wealth to a long-term future, leaving, as Jane Guyer (2007) has argued, no project for the immediate future in the social collective horizon. In the cases I observed, expectations of accumulation of money in a capitalist spirit are part and parcel of any image of a prosperous near future. However, it must be added that in Chinese migrants' cases this overemphasis in the near future, based on the idea that in a few years one will be rich or getting very close to it, is producer of a sense of repression, alienation or sacrifice in the present time. The near future as an ideal time is also subject to being adjusted and postponed according to present circumstances. As time passes many migrants became conscious that their ambitions and expectations are probably not going to be achieved as soon as they expected, and so they are left to the next generation. In a context of reciprocity among the various generations of a family (Stafford 2000), migrants will end up benefiting symbolically from this future wealth through the idea of face, in which the prestige of a member of the family extends to other family members (see for instance Ho 1976). Thus, the achievements of one generation will have the effect of honoring the ancestors. The ethical commitment migrants assume when they engage in a migrant career gives meaning to their suffering. In Chapter 6 I will develop the link between migration and the ethical relations among generations.

Chapter IV

Martim Moniz: a place in 'remote' Europe

Introduction

In Chapter 2 I used Foucault's notion of heterotopias (Foucault 1967) to account for the transformation of Wenzhou from a geographically and politically peripheral place during the Communist era into a 'model' of economic development and a zone (Bach 2011) with the outset of Deng Xiaoping's reforms. In the previous chapter I discussed Chinese migrants' first experiences in Europe in terms of a liminal period on their way to modernity and a transition to their insertion into Chinese business sector networks in Europe.

In this chapter, focusing ethnographically on Chinese activities in the Martim Moniz area of Lisbon, I explore Chinese migration to Europe (and specifically to Portugal) as a journey to a 'remote' place, giving to 'remoteness' the meaning of an imaginary, unknown and utopian place in line with Edwin Ardener's (1987) seminal paper 'On Remote Areas'. First, I use this notion of a 'remote place' to analyze Chinese

migrants' paradoxical perceptions of Martim Moniz, the area of Lisbon with the largest accumulation of Chinese businesses and residences, and the way in which Chinese migrants have made Martim Moniz part of their transnational 'home'. I continue by contextualizing Chinese migration in Portugal within the wider phenomenon of 'New Chinese Migration' to Europe (Nyíri 1999; Pieke et al. 2004; Thunø 2007), demonstrating how Portugal is the last frontier of the Chinese (Lattimore 1937) in Western Europe.

Martim Moniz: how 'remote' can a place be?

A few years ago I was invited by some Chinese friends to have dinner and watch a show at Casino Estoril, a casino and leisure center in Cascais County near Lisbon – and a popular haunt for the Chinese. These Chinese friends frequently mentioned to me their trips to the casino and that night I decided to accept their invitation to go along. As we were crossing the lobby of the casino, between lush chandeliers and colorful carpets, and heading to the hall where we were going to have dinner and watch the show, Hui Dan, a Chinese woman in her sixties, who had migrated from Northeast China six years previous, told me:

> You know Irene, when I first arrived in Portugal in 2001 I was a little disappointed with what I found out… I thought Europe was... *buyiyangde* (different)... But, when a few weeks later I came to the casino I thought: "Oooh…! Now this is Europe!"

At the time her phrase struck me by how well synthesized some of the expectations of Chinese migrants en route to Europe. Like Lanfen (see beginning of Chapter 2), Hui Dan also experienced a sense of disappointment when she landed in Lisbon around the same time. Lanfen and Hui Dan share not only a Chinese passport and a similar sense of having been deceived by 'the Europe' they found in Lisbon, they both also run family businesses in the Martim Moniz area.

Martim Moniz square and the surrounding Mouraria ('Moorish quarter') in the city center of Lisbon is the area exhibiting the largest concentration of Chinese businesses, services and residencies in Lisbon, and a place I will describe

ethnographically throughout this chapter while exploring Chinese migrants 'encounter' with Europe. A similar sense of deception with Lisbon or 'Europe' as that conveyed by Lanfen and Hui Dan was expressed to me by many Chinese migrants, women and men alike, while telling me about their initial experiences in Lisbon or in other places in Europe, such as Prato, Paris or Madrid. On the one hand, this sense of deception is linked to their marginal condition as migrants (as described in Chapter 3), while on the other it results from the contrast between their perception of 'Europe' as imagined from China and their actual experience of living in 'Europe'.

Like downtown Wenzhou (described in Chapter 2), Europe is a utopian place in the transnational network of Chinese migration heterotopias (Foucault 1967). Chinese decide 'to become' migrants when incapable of succeeding places such as Wenzhou city center in China. In this process they redirect their aspirations to other places, which are also projected as being modern and cosmopolite, somehow similar to the images of downtown Manhattan or Central Hong Kong, and where opportunities for upward social mobility are supposedly plentiful. That is how 'remote' Europe is conceived. As mentioned above, here I am employing Edwin Ardener's (1987) notion of 'remoteness' as a perception from an outside perspective, which differs from the perceptions of people on the inside (1987: 531). If "perfect places only exist in the remote imagination" (Sarró 1987: 8, my translation from Spanish), this notion of 'remoteness' is especially appropriate to understand migrants' relations with the places they migrate to.

According to Ardener, a remote place is full of strangers, of innovators, of ruins and of rubbish. It is a place obsessed with communications, full of anxiety and of significant events, where newcomers emerge as the most outstanding entrepreneurs (1987: 527–531). Bearing in mind this description of a remote place, throughout this chapter I will demonstrate how Chinese migrants concretize 'Europe' in Martim Moniz and try to 'domesticate' it by imposing their own meaning and references (Sarró 2008: 2).

From Moors quarter to the town of the Chinese (and others)

In medieval times, after the Christian conquest of the city in the twelfth century, Martim Moniz was the quarter for the Moorish (Muslim) population, and today the area is composed of multiple cultural and historic (but also contemporaneous) layers (Bastos

2001: 304). Between the 1930s and 1960s this part of the city had been a place of prostitutes and scoundrels, which contributed to its bad image and economic depression (Menezes 2009: 307). The installation of migrant businesses here cannot be dissociated from its marginal situation in the city at that time. In the middle of the 1970s, the Martim Moniz area experienced the settling of a first group of Indo-Portuguese migrants, who came from previous Portuguese African colonies. These early migrants took over traditional and stagnant commercial businesses in Martim Moniz, boosting the region and transforming it into a wholesale business area (Malheiros 2001). The attractiveness of the place for this first group of entrepreneur immigrants was precisely its informal practices and marginal place in the economy, ideal for combining structural opportunities with informal practices (Mapril 2010).[37]

The Indo-Portuguese dominated business in the area during the 1980s. I recall going with my mother to Benformoso Street for shopping around 1988. In order to reach the street we had to circumvent the construction works of a huge building (by local standards), which was emerging in front of the narrow and disordered streets composed mostly of very old four-floors buildings. A few months later we returned and this time we went shopping in the new *Centro Comercial da Mouraria* (Mouraria Shopping Mall), whose ground floor shops were already open, though everything was still a bit messy with the surroundings still undergoing a lot of construction work. The *Centro Comercial da Mouraria* opened in 1989, and the following year the *Centro Comercial do Martim Moniz* (Martim Moniz Shopping Mall) opened on the other side of Martim Moniz square. Soon after this, at the beginning of the 1990s, the area started receiving new migrants from other African countries, such as Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Senegal and Zaire, and also from China, Brazil, Bangladesh and Pakistan (Malheiros 2001; Menezes 2009; Mapril 2010).

The first Chinese businesses opened at the beginning of the 1990s (Malheiros 2001; Mapril 2010) when the area experienced a new boost in wholesale business activity after the opening of the shopping malls. The arrival of the Chinese in Martim Moniz coincided with an increase in Chinese migration to Portugal and to Europe more generally, a topic I will explore later in this chapter. When I returned to Martim Moniz in 1998 for my BA thesis research (which I ended up not doing there), the Chinese were

[37] For immigrant entrepreneurship and informal opportunities see, for instance, Bonacich (1973), Hart (1973), Portes and Sassen-Koob (1987), Portes (1999), and Yang (2006).

occupying almost all the upper floors of *Centro Comercial da Mouraria*. In fact, in the second half of the 1990s the majority of entrepreneurs in Martim Moniz were Chinese (Mapril 2001 and 2010; Oliveira 2003).

Chinese Martim Moniz

In Portugal there is no 'Chinatown' as appeared in major US cities in the early twentieth century, and later in some European cities such as London, Liverpool and Amesterdam.[38]

Photograph 5: Martim Moniz Shopping Center, in Martim Moniz square, Lisbon (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2012).

Martim Moniz is more a multicultural district composed of immigrant populations of different origins, though a large number of these are Chinese.[39] When I

[38] There were negotiations between Chinese associations and Portuguese authorities for the development of a Chinatown in Martim Moniz and in Algés (Oeiras County, ten km or six miles from Lisbon center) though an agreement was never reached.

use the toponym Martim Moniz, I am referring to a wider area than the one restricted to Martim Moniz square, where the two shopping malls are situated and the historic Mouraria quarter (where Benformoso Street is located). I am using Martim Moniz area to refer to the Chinese-occupied area in Martim Moniz, Mouraria and the surrounding area, which extends north and south of Martim Moniz square. Besides the high concentration of Chinese businesses in the shopping malls, there are plenty of Chinese shops and warehouses in the neighboring streets such as Mouraria St., Benformoso St., Capelão St., Cavaleiros St., Palma St., and São Lázaro St., and further south in João das Regras St., until Poço do Borratém St., and there are also some Chinese retail shops scattered around the eastern streets of the area known as Baixa Pombalina ('Pombalian Downtown', one kilometer (less than a mile) away from Martim Moniz). Towards the north, the business area stretches through Almirante Reis Avenue until Chile square, around two kilometers (just over a mile) from Martim Moniz square. Inside the malls and in the surroundings streets Chinese businesses are mostly wholesale related, but there are also some service-related businesses specifically directed at the Chinese population.

As we move away from this core area the street shops tend to be retail. At the northeast and northwest of Martim Moniz square there are also some apartments rented by the Chinese for housing, but the Chinese residential area is mostly north of this, in the adjacent streets of both sides Almirante Reis Avenue until Alameda Dom Afonso Henriques (Afonso Henriques lane), around three kilometers (less than two miles) in a straight line from the center. The number of Chinese traders in Martim Moniz increased considerably around the year 2000 when Chinese tradespeople started to occupy a substantial empty area of the Martim Moniz Shopping Center and the kiosks in the center of the square (Mapril 2010; Menezes 2009). Since then the presence of the Chinese population in the area has grown substantially, in keeping with the general trend elsewhere in Portugal (see Table 1). Here, in this old and rundown, but central, area of the city an aged Portuguese population (from Lisbon and other parts of Portugal) and migrants from different origins live side by side with prostitutes, drug addicts and

[39] From my conversations with Chinese people in Martim Moniz I estimate there must be between 4000–5000 Chinese people working or residing (or both) in the Martim Moniz area.

indigents. Martim Moniz meets the requirements of being a perfect example in Europe of both Ardener's 'remote area' and Foucault's 'heterotopia'.[40]

As in the rest of Europe, Chinese entrepreneurs started in Portugal mainly in the catering business, opening Chinese cuisine restaurants (Pieke 1992; Pang 1999; Ceccagno 2007). However, in the Martim Moniz area Chinese businesses are now mainly wholesale, handling a wide range of products such as clothing, home textiles, shoes, imitation jewelry, handbags, wallets, watches and other fashion accessories, house wares, small decorative objects and all kinds of baubles. Areas of specialization occur within this wholesale business in order to lessen competition among traders. The textile products sector, for instance, is composed of many specialized warehouses in women's clothes, underwear, sleepwear, home textile and others.

Indeed, in Martim Moniz the Chinese took for themselves a business sector that was already being explored by others in Portugal. Much of the merchandise sold by Indian traders in Benformoso St. and Mouraria St. in the 1980s, such as toys, imitation jewelry, small electronic appliances, watches, and all kinds of babbles, were coming from China and neighboring territories (see Malheiros 2001). The first Chinese traders saw here a good business opportunity and so, from its inception, the Chinese business sector in Martim Moniz has been selling 'made in China' products. Although in the last decade, textiles products, shoes and bags have come mostly from other places in Europe (such as Paris and Prato) which produce 'made by Chinese products', products such as toys, imitation jewelry, small electronic and electric devices, watches and so on, are still imported directly from China (or indirectly through other Chinese importers in Paris or in Rome).

Chinese wholesale warehouses in Martim Moniz had *Ciganos* (as Portuguese Roma, or 'Gypsies', call themselves) among their best clients, and other vendors in streets, fairs and markets all over the country. In the last decade with the explosion of 'Chinese shops'[41] all over Portugal, Chinese retailers have settled almost everywhere (including Madeira and the Azores Islands) and have become themselves the best clients

[40] There are many similarities between the Martim Moniz area and descriptions of *Quartier de la Porte de Choisy* in Paris, which is also an old popular neighborhood containing several migrant populations, including many Chinese (see Guillon and Leonetti 1986). I also observed a similar atmosphere to Martim Moniz around Piazza Vittorio in Rome.

[41] I use the term 'Chinese shop' as the translation from Portuguese *loja chinesa*, the name usually apllied to Chinese bazaar stores in Portugal.

of the Chinese wholesalers. Everyday there is a considerable movement of trucks, with drivers and carriers loading and unloading boxes of merchandise in front of Mouraria Shopping Center and Martim Moniz Shopping Center.[42] This circuit of merchandise animates the flow of Chinese people and things in Martim Moniz. Chinese retailers from all over Portugal come to Martim Moniz on a weekly or monthly basis (depending from how far they travel) looking for merchandise for their 'Chinese shops'. Chinese wholesalers in Martim Moniz frequently fly to Paris, Prato and Rome, and also to China, looking for supplies. Chinese producers and resellers in other places in Europe frequently fly to Lisbon in order to collect their debts among their Martim Moniz clients.

Photograph 6: Chinese businesses in Benformoso St. (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2012).

The relationships between producers, wholesalers and retailers implies a great deal of trust since it involves a large movement of goods and money flowing between them on

[42] Though there are other Chinese big wholesale centers in Portugal such as in Porto Alto, in Benavente County (around 60 km or 37 miles northeast of Lisbon) and in Vila do Conde (36 km or 22 miles north of Oporto, in the north of the country), Martim Moniz is the major Chinese wholesale market in Portugal for Chinese stores around the country.

credit. As explained in Chapter 3, these relationships have often developed out of preceding employer-employee and co-worker relations.

At the turn of the millennium, the increasing number of Chinese people in the The Chinese population in Martim Moniz is very much a floating one. Many people arrive in Martim Moniz to work for a Chinese boss for some years and after making some money move to other parts of the country to start a business. Other people arrive in Martim Moniz to invest money made in other places in Europe or Portugal, as Martim Moniz is reputed as being a good place for Chinese to get rich. There is also a flow of people between different kinds of positions and businesses in Martim Moniz. After some years, people who arrive in Martim Moniz as workers invest the money they have made in a business opportunity in Martim Moniz, thus becoming bosses themselves. Subsequently, many will invest in more speculative businesses such as real estate, either in Martim Moniz or in other parts of the country such as Vila do Conde and Porto Alto. For instance, a group of Chinese from the Martim Moniz area invested in warehouses in the Zona Industrial da Varziela in Vila do Conde County. Many rented their warehouses to other Chinese or Bangladeshi to do business there.

Martim Moniz area created a demand for Chinese services, and so this became another flourishing area of business. I consider the emergence of a Chinese service sector as a way for migrants to 'domesticate' an 'inhospitable environment' (Sarró 2008) in the 'destination' place.[43] In this process of 'domestication', the Chinese attribute names and meanings to the place from where they operate their money-making activities. Among the Chinese, Martim Moniz is called *mading monisi* (obviously an adaptation of the Portuguese name into Chinese Mandarin pronunciation), while the Mouraria Shopping Center and the Martim Moniz Shopping Center are respectively called *lao huohang* (old cargo line) and *xin huohang* (new cargo line) alluding to the main Chinese activities of wholesale selling in the malls.

As part of creating a more 'Chinese friendly' environment in Martim Moniz a number of food services such as restaurants and takeaway facilities have emerged for Chinese clientele working and visiting local businesses. A paradigmatic case of Chinese food services (and informal sector activities) in Martim Moniz is the emergence of

[43] I place the term 'destination' between inverted commas because I argue there is no final destination in Chinese migration. Chinese migrants' 'destination' in this case is to live a transnational life between several places in Europe and China.

Chinese 'home-restaurants'.[44] In the Martim Moniz area many Chinese restaurants open in the informal sector in the first place, serving food to Chinese people. After gathering enough clients, experience and money, the owners usually open a formal restaurant serving the same kind of food in the formal sector, inside or outside Martim Moniz. During my fieldwork I visited several of this 'home-restaurants', the majority being run by recently arrived families.

Photography 7: Chinese wholesale warehouses in Palma St., Martim Moniz (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2012).

In some cases these become successful businesses in their own right, and people stay in the informal sector for years without planning to move into the formal sector. These 'home-restaurants' tend to specialize in regional cuisine or in a specific dish. During my fieldwork I went to Chinese 'home-restaurants' dedicated only to noodles, *jiaozi* (Chinese dumplings), Shangainese food, Cantonese food, Wenzhou food, South China food and *Dongbei* food (Northeast China). Even though there are other restaurants in Martim Moniz area operating in the formal sector also serving regional

[44] 'Home-restaurants' is my translation of the Portuguese '*restaurante-casa'* to account for restaurants ran by Chinese in residential apartments in the rundown buildings of Mouraria quarter. The name was coined by Portuguese clients attending these places. For the Chinese these places are treated as regular restaurant businesses and simply called *fanguan* or *jiujia* (restaurant).

food (though fewer restaurants), due to the economic and symbolic significance of these 'home-restaurants' I believe it is worth giving a brief description of some of them in order to capture the general atmosphere of Chinese Martim Moniz.

On the second floor of an old and rundown building in one of the narrow streets of Mouraria there are two Chinese 'home-restaurants'. The oldest restaurant, which I visited for the first time around 2006, specializes in noodles. The owners have changed since my first visit. Because it is an apartment the door is always closed and it is necessary to ring the bell to enter. The only announcement of the restaurant are two handwritten Chinese characters *fangguan* near the bell of the apartment on the outside door of the building. There is then a handwritten paper carrying the name of the restaurant in Chinese characters pasted with tape on the apartment door. The door opens into a room of around $15m^2$ with four tables and several chairs. The space is small and it can admit a maximum of twenty people. The appearance of the place is very modest. The material is rather shabby, tables and chairs together with a sideboard, a blower and a LCD television make up the furniture in the room. The place is attended by Chinese, both women and men alike, who come in pairs, in groups of relatives or friends, and also alone to have a quick meal. The waiter is one of the owners' daughters, a teenage girl of around sixteen. She is dressed as any other Portuguese teenager of her age, wearing sneakers, jeans, a t-shirt, and sporting a trendy hairstyle. The other girl is younger, around twelve, and usually runs around the house. On one of the days I visited the restaurant she was sat in the room watching a television series on Fengtai (Phoenix Channel from Hong Kong). The room is linked to the kitchen through a small lobby in an open space manner. In the tiny kitchen the bosses, a couple in their forties, move busily amid saucepans and vegetables to dispatch bowls of noodles to the room or for delivery in Martim Moniz area. The lobby leads to two other rooms, one is a bedroom and the other is used as storage for material.

Another restaurant of this kind in Martim Moniz is located also in an apartment, on the first floor of an old building in a historic street of Mouraria. The path that leads to the restaurant looks very rundown and uninviting to unaccustomed visitors. One of my Chinese friends told me that she brought one of her nephews, born and raised in the Netherlands, to eat at this place. While they were heading to the restaurant, due to the shabbiness of the surroundings, the twenty-year-old boy told his aunt that he did not want to eat in that kind of filthy place. However, she was able to convince him that

despite the untidy look he was going to enjoy the food, which in fact he did. This apartment is bigger than the one previously described, and unlike the other one it is not an open space. The main room has four old wooden tables and several equally worn chairs. The white walls have a few pictures with bucolic landscapes and baroque frames as decoration. There is also a television set, usually broadcasting a soap opera in Chinese. Apart from this, the restaurant has three small rooms used as private rooms, very pleasing to the Chinese costumers. The owner, a forty-year-old woman, serves at the tables. The place is run by her and her husband, and specializes in South China cuisine. The owner also delivers takeaway food orders to nearby places. From the small window in one of the walls clothes can be seen drying outside, and from the same window the noise of people talking loudly in the streets can he heard, reminding us of the surrounding environment of Mouraria. In the Martim Moniz area Chinese businesses live together with Portuguese chop-houses, coffee-shops, bakery-houses, grocery stores, mini markets, African and South Asian food outlets and other services and wholesale businesses.

The Chinese restaurants are mostly attended by Chinese, but will also receive regular costumers of Brazilian and Portuguese origin. Chinese businesses in Martim Moniz also profit from the multicultural nature of the area. Thus, while Chinese supermarkets and greengrocers typically sell Chinese food products, some also specialize in selling products from African countries and other places in Asian, contributing to the transformation of Martim Moniz into a global ecumene (Hannerz 1992).[45] Besides Chinese food services provided by restaurants and supermarkets, in the Martim Moniz area Chinese medicine services, laundry services, travel agencies specialized in travelling to China, accounting offices, a karaoke bar, a bookstore, hairdressers and beauty parlors can also be found. In Martim Moniz it is possible to buy cultural products otherwise only available in China, such as Chinese books and dictionaries, Chinese comics, magazines, DVDs and VCDs of Chinese films, soap operas and music.

During the 2000s there was a Chinese clinic in Martim Moniz providing Chinese health services, namely acupuncture, *tui na* massage, moxibustion and Chinese herbal medicine treatments. The main clients were Chinese migrants, but also Africans,

[45] In 2011 a local association of *bairro da Mouraria* started to organize guided tours to the 'Chinese Mouraria'. This is part of a wider group of activities that seeks to affirm this area as a multicultural and cosmopolitan place in the city.

Portuguese and other Europeans frequented the place in search of alternatives to conventional medicine. The person responsible for the place was a retired physician of Chinese and Western Medicine in China. Many Chinese clients went to her at the same time as receiving treatment from the conventional Portuguese national health services (Serviço Nacional de Saúde (SNS)) in order to confirm the conventional doctor's diagnosis. Clients took all the health examinations and procedures done in the SNS for the Chinese doctor to 'check' and confirm that they were receiving the right treatment. In some cases, clients would also undergo some complementary treatments with Chinese medicine.

At the end of the 1990s a group of Chinese former students of the Portuguese language in Lisbon founded the first Chinese newspaper, *Puhuabao* or *Jornal Sino* (Portuguese name) and began to organize a school for Chinese children on Saturdays. *Puhuabao* and *Puxinbao* (another Chinese newspaper) both have editorial rooms in the Martim Moniz area. The Chinese School (*zhongguo xuexiao*) began operating in the facilities of a school of Chinese medicine ran by Portuguese in Portas de Santo Antão St., not far from Martim Moniz, but in 2007 its Saturday activities were moved to a primary school in Novas Nações square (on a street perpendicular to Almirante Reis Avenue).

Towards the end of my fieldwork, the association that runs the Chinese School managed to rent an apartment in Almirante Reis Avenue and was planning to extend the school's activities to weekdays. In the late 1990s a Buddhist temple was founded by the Buddha's Light Association, as well as two Chinese Christian evangelic churches (the churches are currently located in the Martim Moniz area, while the Buddhist temple is located in Cabo Ruivo).[46] Although the creation of a Chinese sector in the Martim Moniz area is a way of 'domesticating' the area and making it more Chinese, still Chinese migrants do not see Martim Moniz as an ideal place – on the contrary, they generally wish to leave Martim Moniz and move to more middle-class neighbourhoods. Martim Moniz is perceived more as a transitory place, as Caputo (2005) also observed among Arabs in Milan. Martim Moniz is situated in the utopian and 'remote' Europe and shares some of the features attributed to such places.

[46] My aim here is just to acknowledge the concentration of Chinese activities in the Martim Moniz area. In Chapter 7 I will provide more information on the meaning of the Chinese School and of the Buddhist temple (places where I also did fieldwork) to the lives of Chinese migrants in Lisbon.

As suggested above, the area of Martim Moniz in Lisbon can be considered an example of what Ardener refers to as a 'remote' place. Martim Moniz is a place of strangers, where Chinese see themselves surrounded by *laowai* (westerners, in this case refering mainly to Portuguese) or *putaoyaren* (literally Portuguese people), *yinduren* (Hindu, Pakistani and Bangladeshi people), *heiren* (black people) or *feizhouren* (Africans), *baxiren* (Brazilians) and other Chinese.[47] Martim Moniz is also a place of innovators, where the most outstanding entrepreneurs are newcomers. A very old quarter in the city center of Lisbon, Martim Moniz is full of ruins creating a nostalgic and decadent atmosphere, as opposed to all that is modern and new, which is what most Chinese imagined they would find in Europe. Martim Moniz is also a place of interconnection and communication, concentrating and distributing global flows of people, things and ideas. In the next section I discuss Martim Moniz as a place of anxiety and meaningful events.

Three meaningful events: anxieties and perplexities in a 'remote' place

As a 'remote' place, Chinese Martim Moniz is teeming with stories that become 'meaningful events' in the construction of Martim Moniz as a place (and of the position of the Chinese within it). These stories account for Chinese positioning in the Chinese transnational flows, in the Portuguese national context and in the local level of Martim Moniz. The following are three meaningful events that fueled Chinese people's conversations and imagination in Martim Moniz for months and even years. I choose these three specific events because they represent the different flows of information and representations through Martim Moniz. The first story is typically a local story, the second became a national story and the third a transnational one.

The first story was told to me together with other similar stories, and was repeated several times by different people as a way of explaining to me why Chinese prefer to do business with Chinese and should not trust people from other origins that might have ulterior motives. As I mention in Chapter 3, in the last decade Chinese entrepreneurs have begun to hire Brazilian employees, mainly women, as shop assistants in order to improve communication with Portuguese clients and to avoid the

[47] I have been told by many Chinese that although there are many other Chinese around them in Martim Moniz most of them are strangers to them because they can only truly trust people they have known very closely for many years.

future competition of Chinese ex-employees in the same sector of activity. During my fieldwork many negative stories circulated about the Brazilians, women and men alike. The danger envisioned was not that of Brazilian women as 'thieves of husbands' (as found by Rosana Pinheiro-Machado (2009) to be the perception among Chinese women in Brazil), but Brazilians as 'thieves' of 'Chinese money'. I will transcribe the story as it was told to me and written down in my diary:

> A very rich man here in Martim Moniz owning several shops and warehouses in Lisbon, one day in the evening, was attacked by his Brazilian employees who stole a great amount of money from him and stabbed him. The man somehow managed to escape from the shop without getting killed, and reached the middle of the street where he was founded bleeding and wounded. He managed to survive his injuries, but as soon as he recovered he left to Spain. Here he sold off everything and even gave some things away just to get out of here. These *baxiren* (Brazilians) are dangerous. Because they work in Chinese stores they come to know their bosses lives and then pass down the information to other Brazilians that come to assault them. They know the Chinese have a lot of money. Martim Moniz is very dangerous place with these *baxiren*.

This passage reflects the anxieties associated with being Chinese in Martim Moniz, where the Chinese have a reputation of holding a lot of money. This story relates to the tensions among migrants in Martim Moniz, and particularly to relations between migrants of different origins, which in the case of Chinese-Brazilian relations reproduces a tense and suspicious employer-employee set up. The story also points to tensions among Chinese migrants concerning loyalty and solidarity issues. Chinese employees are more trustworthy in the short term, but in the long run they typically become competitors in business. Brazilian employees do not constitute a menace for the future business but are seen as 'dangerous strangers'.[48]

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At the end of April 2009 the Chinese in Martim Moniz were surprised by the news that a Chinese man, a trader who had settled many years earlier in the Azores

[48] For a discussion of the idea of 'stranger' among Chinese see Rodrigues (2012).

Islands, had been sprayed with gasoline and flared up by a transvestite who allegedly was his lover. The entire scene happened in the street near Casal Ribeiro Avenue, an area of Lisbon known for transvestite prostitution. The police took over the case and the national media spread the news as an outrageous event, involving the Chinese, people who are currently portrayed by the Portuguese media as 'silenced', 'mysterious' and 'closed'. The police said the case was under investigation as it might be linked to Chinese mafias. The next day after reading the news in the Portuguese national newspapers, I went to Martim Moniz. While there I was immediately asked by my Chinese interlocutors if I had heard the news and what the newspapers said about the event. The few details I was able to tell them from what I read in the news were commented upon and passed on to other people. Everybody was incredulous commenting on the case, trying to make sense of it. People asked me how common this kind of situation – having sexual relations with transvestites – was in Portugal. There was also a great concern about the Chinese image in the media; people asked me what was being highlighted in relation to this Chinese man: his Chinese origin or the fact that he was gay.

From the Chinese in Martim Moniz I learned that the Chinese man who died was a good client of many people in Martim Moniz. The man was about forty years old and had been in Portugal for over ten years, and in the last five to six years had settled in the Azores. Every three months he came to Martim Moniz to buy merchandise for his shops in the Azores. Though he had many relatives and friends in Lisbon no one knew about this relations or his sexual preferences. In Martim Moniz he was known as a very good person (*henhaoderen*), who honored his promises, and his unexpected death left Chinese in Martim Moniz very worried (*danxin*). Due to the current practice of credit payment (at the end of the year) the man had left around 100,000 Euros in debts. As soon as the news of his death spread creditors flocked to family and friends to collect on these debts.

The death of this Chinese trader astonished both the Chinese and Portuguese public, both of which tried to make sense of the event, revealing ignorance and stereotyped representations on both sides. The Portuguese media emphasized labels currently used to described Chinese migrants, such as 'mysterious' and possibly linked to 'Chinese mafias'. Chinese comments revealed surprise at this man's sexual conduct

and his supposed hidden life, with people searching for a way of trying to understand this and wondering how it related to the influence of Portuguese society.

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"Where are you going to be on August 8? Do you know about the earthquake?" This question was posed to me by a Chinese friend during a dinner in Martim Moniz around Chinese New Year in January 2010. Initially I thought I had misunderstand the question and that he was trying to make conversation about the terrible earthquake that had devastated Haiti two weeks before. He confirmed to me that he was not talking about the past earthquake in Haiti, but was alluding to the fact that Chinese people in Martim Moniz were saying that there was going to be a huge earthquake in Portugal on August 8, which was going to affect mainly the Algarve in the south of the country. In order to avoid the earthquake Chinese people, especially those living in the south, were buying plane tickets anywhere to assure they would be far away from Portugal on that day. Almost speechless, my immediate reaction was to ask: "why on August 8?" I was trying to entangle some hidden meaning between 8/8 (*baba*) and earthquakes, considering that this number is symbolically read as *fafa* (prosper, prosper). However that did not make much sense: why associate a very negative event with an apparently auspicious day? My interlocutor then replied that the Portuguese who previewed the earthquake should know better. All the Chinese people were talking about this because they had read it in a Chinese newspaper.

The next day while talking to other Chinese people in Martim Moniz, I was again asked if I knew something about the 8/8 earthquake in Portugal. Later on, searching the Internet, I found the source from which the scare had originated. An online article in the Portuguese magazine *Ciência Hoje* ('Science Today') analyzed the results of research on the impact of an hypothetical earthquake in Portugal. The geologist interviewed warned that in case of a major earthquake coastal populations are the most vulnerable ones. In trying to demonstrate the severity of the matter he gave an example of the impact of a tsunami on the Portuguese coast if an earthquake were to occur off the Portuguese coast during the peak of the summer season, for instance August 8. Apparently the article had been read by someone who spread the information through a Chinese newspaper as an earthquake prediction for August 8. In order to correct the mistake I emailed the article to several Chinese people and one of them

passed it on to a Chinese newspaper, which published an article rectifying the mistake (apparently the original news had been spread by another Chinese newspaper).

Three months later I went to China for fieldwork. While visiting a relative from a family I had met in Martim Moniz I was suddenly asked: "Is it true that there will be an earthquake in Portugal on August 8? What are you people doing about it?" I immediately tried to explain that it was a misunderstanding caused by a misapprehension of a Portuguese news story by a Chinese newspaper. But the woman simply ignored my explanation on the matter and continued "All Chinese are very concerned about the situation in Portugal you know?" A few days later, I was still in Wenzhou when a major earthquake occurred in Qinghai province (Northwest China). During the following weeks Chinese newspapers reported the arrest of several people for spreading rumors about earthquakes. Earthquakes and rumors about earthquakes have been a hot topic in China since the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. Allegedly the political interpretations of earthquakes and their consequences was one of the reasons why Chinese authorities blocked access to the Facebook social network in China.[49] My aim in presenting this story here is not to explore the links between earthquakes and politics, as this falls beyond this dissertation's scope, but to reveal a transnational flow of information, or rather rumor, composed of elements both distant and near which contribute to the construction of a remote place (ideally, where it is possible to predict earthquakes).

Portugal: the last Chinese frontier in Western Europe

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Chinese people spread across the globe (Skeldon 2003: 52) mainly from the Chinese provinces of Zhejiang, Guangdong and Fujian (Pan 1994).[50] The flow from Zhejiang to Europe is linked to the fact that in 1876 Wenzhou became a treaty port, open to international trade. The first Chinese migrants to arrive in Europe from Wenzhou port were laborers hired to work on the ships, but whose actual aim was to reach European port cities from where they started to

[49] In ancient China, according to the mandate of heaven theory, natural disasters were interpreted as signs of heaven's dissatisfaction with its earth representative (the Emperor).

[50] Migration to continental Europe was mainly from Zhejiang province and (in less quantity) from Fujian province, while migration to North American was mainly from Guangdong and Fujian provinces (Pan 1994).

sell handicrafts (Thunø 1999). This migratory flow attained its highest peak around the 1920s and 1930s.

The influx of Chinese in Portugal dates back precisely to these early decades of the twentieth century, when Chinese from Zhejiang province, mainly from Wenzhou and Qingtian regions, extended their migratory chains across Europe (Thunø 1999). There are accounts of Chinese hawkers in the streets of Lisbon and Oporto during the 1920s and 1930s (Teixeira 1997; Amaro 1998; Tomé 2002). Europe, though, was a relatively late destiny in the global expansion of Chinese migration in the late nineteenth century. The Chinese started to migrate to Southeast Asia as early as the twelfth century and from there they expanded to other colonial territories of the Dutch, British and Portuguese, reaching the American and African continents (Pan 1994). After this peak migratory chains to Europe underwent a major drop during Maoism (1949–1978) (Christiansen 2003; Skeldon 2003). Nevertheless during these three decades there were still some Chinese who managed to arrive in Europe from China as students or political refugees (Pang 1999; Rodrigues 1999).

In the late 1970s political changes in China again made it possible to leave the country. Many Chinese were finally allowed to visit family and friends, and to work and study abroad (Liu 1997). These new migratory flows to Europe in the early 1980s have been termed 'New Chinese Migration',[51] an expression increasingly used among PRC migration scholars to account for the Chinese who in the early 1980s "left China to settle elsewhere regardless of their purpose, legal status and citizenship" (Thunø 2007: 3). This new Chinese migration is carried out by an extremely heterogeneous group, though one that is classified by the racial category 'Chinese' by both outsiders and insiders (Skeldon 2003: 62). This migration is composed of manual labors, students, traders, highly skilled professionals, educated and uneducated people, from rural or urban origins, both men and women, documented or undocumented (Thunø 2007). The main objective is not to escape from poverty as in the nineteenth-century movements, but to improve social and economic status (Nyíri 2002; Xiang 2003). Another important difference in these new flows in relation to previous ones is that Chinese migration is no longer oriented to a home return to China (Skeldon 2007).

[51] Before this the term *huaoqiao* was used to describe mainly Chinese nationals emphasizing their cultural and emotional link to China (Poston and Yu 1990; Wang 1993), and the expressions *huayi* and *huaren* to account for Chinese descendants or Chinese naturals without Chinese citizenship (see Thunø 2007).

As a consequence of this, new Chinese migration is not approached as an exceptional case, as Chinese migration in the past had been (Skeldon 2007), but is studied using theoretical frameworks common to migration studies,[52] such as opportunities and immigrant entrepreneurship (Nyíri 1999), transnationalism (Ong and Nonini 1997; Nyíri 2002; Nieto 2007) and globalization (Pieke et al. 2004). All these approaches highlight new Chinese migrants' transnational practices in a way that migration is one of the faces of Chinese globalization, as defined by Pieke et al. (2004:12):

> Chinese globalization manifests itself in a broad range of contexts and forms, such as China's increased diplomatic and military prowess and role as an emerging regional or even world superpower, the massive flows of capital and commodities to and from China, the much greater prominence of Chinese language and culture outside China, and the spectacular growth and much greater heterogeneity of migration from China.

New Chinese migrants are thus the paradigm of the new global and transnational citizen, flexible and in motion, participating actively in globalization processes through their transnational practices (see Ong and Nonini 1997; Ong 1999; Pieke 2006; Nyíri 2002). As seen in Martim Moniz and in other world places such as South America (Pinheiro-Machado 2009), new Chinese migration to Europe is very much related to international trading in Chinese products and the opening of international consumer markets to China. These new migratory flows, though presenting different features from previous streams of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, use some of the old migration chains towards Europe, especially from Zhejiang province (Thunø 1999; Christiansen 2003),[53] to start and develop a Chinese business sector in Europe, namely

[52] See Massey et al. (1998), Brettell and Hollifield (2000), Brettell (2003), Vertovec and Cohen (1999).

[53] In Portugal this migratory flow from China to Europe originating in Zhejiang province is different from the migratory flow from Mozambique, which originated in the migration of coolies from the Canton province (Guangdong) through Macao. After Mozambique's independence, many Chinese families from Mozambique flew to Portugal and to other territories such as Brazil and Canada. Some of the Mozambican Chinese people that settled in Portugal made close ties with Chinese people arriving in

in France, Italy and the Netherlands, fueling new waves of emigration from China to Europe. Mass migration from China to Europe provided cheap labor for the restaurants and shops owned by first-established Chinese in Western Europe, and created new expansions looking for new economic niches (vending, import, garment manufacturing) and new frontier areas in southern, eastern and northern Europe (Pieke 2004). Chinese restaurants were the initial business sector of the Chinese, starting from the 1980s (Pieke 1992; Pang 1999; Li 2005; Ceccagno 2007), though as China's global economy emerges as a major export player in the world economy the Chinese have moved from restaurants to trade (Nyíri 2002; Ceccagno 2007; Nieto 2003).

Photograph 8: One of the streets surrounding Piazza Vittorio, the Chinese quarter in Rome (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2011).

The expansion into the Mediterranean countries of Europe such as Portugal and Spain occurred during the 1990s and early 2000s. This was facilitated by periods of extraordinary legalization (Christiansen 2003: 104), but was mainly due to a saturation

Portugal during the 1980s, helping them settle and start businesses. Some of these Chinese families from Mozambique maintain a strong link with Chinese networks through marriage and business in Portugal. Due to their knowledge of both the Portuguese and Chinese language some of them provide accounting and translation services to new Chinese migrants in Portugal. On the other hand, many of these Chinese from Mozambique living in Portugal have professional and personal routes that are not linked to China or to Chinese global businesses.

of other European countries' markets (Beltrán-Antolín 2006; Nieto 2007). At the time, countries in Mediterranean Europe became attractive since they were experiencing a period of relative prosperity and were in the process of joining the eurozone. The Chinese business communities in Europe share many resemblances among themselves in terms of their organization and livelihood (Pieke 1999) because they have a common history and are part of the same migration system. For instance, in Italy there are several important centers of Chinese migrants such as Prato (23 km or 14 miles north of Florence) and Rome, in the area around Piazza Vittorio. While Rome is constituted of commercial businesses in a way similar to Martim Moniz, Prato is a manufacturing place where Chinese entrepreneurs provide cheap labor to Italian brands and to Chinese traders in Europe (Campani and Madii 1992; Ceccagno 2007) similar to other Wenzhouese settlements like former Zhejiangcun in Beijing (Tomba 1999; Yang 2000; Zhang 2000 and 2001).

I suggest that Chinese migration and expansion to Europe can be seen as an escape for people who refuse to conform to the social and economic rules existing within the Chinese state and prefer to exit to new territories where they can have more economic freedom. This perspective is inspired by James C. Scott's (2009) description of the history of Zomia (as the region of South East Asia is sometimes called) as a region to where people flee in order to escape from the normativity and constraints of the states of the valleys of Southeast Asia. According to Scott's perspective, living in such inhospitable hills is a conscious decision to remain at the margins of the state, a kind of resistance to its influence. I think that migration from China can easily be seen as a 'resistance' in James Scott's sense. In the Chinese migration case, however, 'exit' (in both Scott's and Hirschman's sense, the latter discussed in Chapter 2) is not a form of resisting the state as such (as Scott's model would suggest) but rather resisting the social and economic environment created by the post-Mao reforms discussed in Chapter 2.

While in Europe, Chinese migrants' transnational practices of expansion and development, which take advantage of while at the same time evading European regulations, can be seen as expansions to a new frontier on the periphery of the Chinese state. Migrants' position in relation to China is a paradoxical one considering that they flee from an economical and social framework inside the Chinese state, but once outside its borders their success opportunities are to be found precisely in the relations thatthey

may be able to establish within this economic and social system from outside. This situation of Chinese people living beyond the boundaries of the nation state reminds the situation of the 'Barbarian'living outside the the Great Wall during the Chinese Empire described in Owen Lattimore seminal article (1937). This author shows how, while on a periphery, these peoples where in a somehowprivileged situation, in economic and political terms;they enjoyed many benefits for the fact that they were outside but connected to the Chinese empire. In this way, Portugal in particular and Europe in general can be conceived as a new frontier of China, where peripheral Chinese populations exploit their positioning in relation to China which afford mutual interests.

In Portugal the Chinese business sector started by setting up Chinese cuisine restaurants. The first Chinese restaurant to open in Lisbon in the late 1960s was run by a Taiwanese natural, and it was only in the 1980s that a truly Chinese restaurant sector emerged, managed by Chinese coming from Taiwan, Macao and Mainland China. The decade of the 1990s was characterized by the expansion of catering activities all over the country, from the north to the south. In the beginning of the 1990s the Chinese started to switch to import-export activities as wholesalers, mainly from Martim Moniz. In the second half of the same decade the Chinese started to invest in retail businesses, believing that the catering sector was already showing signs of saturation in Portugal's large cities.

The first Chinese bazaar stores appeared scattered around major cities. In the beginning of the 1990s cheap 'made in China' products were being sold in stores known as 'Three Hundred Stores' (*Lojas dos Trezentos*).[54] Among the Chinese this kind of Chinese bazaar is still called *sanbaidian* ('Three Hundred Store'), alluding to the origin of the idea of this business. Gradually, Chinese took on this market by opening their own retail stores and expanding it. In time, this sector also expanded to small towns and villages all over the country. These stores would sell all kinds of things, from house ware, to school supplies, cloths, bags and shoes, batteries, watches, toothpaste and so on. In this way the Chinese took over a business sector dedicated to providing lower quality products at lower prices to a segment of the population with lower purchasing

[54] The name refers to the fact that many of them sell products at the fixed price of 300 escudos (Portuguese currency, equivalent to 1.5 Euros).

capacity.[55] The expansion of this sector occurred not only because of thte catering saturation, but also because, as shown in Chapter 3, it is very easy to set up a Chinese bazaar store, while setting up a Chinese restaurant, according to my interlocutors, requires at least 100,000 Euros. At the turn of the millennium, with the introduction of the Euro currency and admission of China in the WTO, the Chinese retail business sector experienced an unprecedented expansion, along with specialization in certain areas such as textiles. It goes without saying that this expansion is linked to Chinese migrants' willingness to become bosses and Chinese wholesalers interest in expanding the market for the flow of products.

In 2006, due to a high number of complaints, the Portuguese Economic and Food Safety Authority (ASAE) launched a major inspection operation of Chinese restaurants in Portugal. Many restaurants were closed by the ASAE due to irregularities and lack of hygiene. Images of the operation were transmitted on Portuguese television channels and the sector was seriously damaged. Around half of all Chinese restaurants at that time closed, either through the lack of conditions or the lack of customers. Many Chinese told me how outraged they were because Portuguese authorities were only closing Chinese restaurants. Considering the severity of the situation, and in order to avoid further damages, a Chinese association in Lisbon asked the owners of Chinese restaurant to sign an ethical promise of compliance with the law.[56] The extreme competition among restaurants had led to a decrease in the quality of products served. On this occasion, many entrepreneurs left the catering sector, further saturating the Chinese bazaar sector. Others held out, reconverting and improving the quality of their food, reducing staff costs by opening buffets, switching to serving Japanese cuisine (which was not affected in terms of public opinion) or serving good quality regional cuisine.[57]

Around 2008 the Chinese bazaar sector was beyond its saturation point and Chinese people started to talk about a crisis (*fengbo*) in the sector. In the retail sector the

[55] The production of imitations at lowers prices has been a characteristic of Chinese industry since the nineteenth century (see Frank Dikotter 2006).
[56] This was an ethical compromise among Chinese restaurants bosses in order to protect the sector from bad businesses practices.
[57] In the first years of the 2000s, the catering sector started slowly to innovate and at this time the first Japanese cuisine restaurants ran by Chinese began to appear. Some Chinese restaurants owners of Japanese cuisine restaurants sought to convey the idea that the restaurant staff was Japanese in order to maintain an image of authenticity.

competition among Chinese retailers sharpened and some entrepreneurs started to rent or buy large commercial spaces, usually former supermarkets, furniture stores and car showrooms to transform them into big Chinese retail centers selling everything but food.[58] At the same time, some innovators tried new areas outside the traditional areas of catering or the retail of 'made by Chinese' products. The less capitalized became greengrocers, others invested in real estate, not only in shops and warehouses in 'Chinese' areas (such as Martim Moniz, Varziela and Porto Alto), but also in shops in malls and outlets in other regions of Portugal and also in Spain. In recent years, Chinese entrepreneurs have also been more active in the exportation business being responsible for a part of Portuguese exportation to China, especially in Portuguese traditional sectors such as wine and olive oil, but also in plastic waste from Portuguese industry.[59] For others, the solution has been to expand their business to places in Central and Eastern Europe such as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, seen as relatively unexplored by the Chinese.

In 2008 a Chinese business directory advertised a total of 712 firms. The directory was rather incomplete since it left out many companies outside the centers of high Chinese concentration in Portugal. The organizing categories were quite anachronistic, blending spatial and business sectors, but despite this the directory provided some valuable information on Chinese business sectors in Portugal and on important activities for the Chinese population. As well as place categories such as Porto Alto, Mouraria Shopping Mall, Martim Moniz Shopping Mall, Porto and the Varziela Industrial Area (Vila do Conde), there were activity categories divided into: wholesale warehouses; accountants, lawyers, legal counselors; religion/belief; driving schools; computers, internet and technology; transportation, cargo and mechanics; shipping; Chinese schools, home schooling; medical treatments, clinics, beauty treatments; travel agencies, marriage agencies, go-betweens; Chinese language interpreter; supermarkets; Chinese restaurants, Chinese bazaars.

In keeping with Chinese migration to Europe in general, official statistics show that the recent wave of Chinese migration to Portugal began in the mid-1980s. As compared to the great majority of contemporary migration flows there are no accurate

[58] In Portugal selling food requires a different activity permit.
[59] China is a major exporter to Portugal, but between 2008 and 2009 Chinese importations from Portugal increased by around 10,000 USD, while exportations to Portugal decreased by around 40,000 USD (China Statistical Yearbook 2010).

numbers concerning Chinese migration in Portugal, as a significant part of this movement occurred in an irregular manner and inside the Schengen area. It must also be noted that some Chinese people move out the 'Chinese nationals' category through acquiring Portuguese citizenship. In Portugal available statistical data are provided by the Portuguese National Bureau of Statistics (INE, Instituto Nacional de Estatística) and the SEF. Portuguese official tend to generally confirm general trends of expansion relating to Chinese dynamics in Europe and the expansion of Chinese businesses in Portugal. At the beginning of the 1980s Portugal was an insignificant destination among Chinese (see Table 1). However, between 1985 and 1995 the number of people with a PRC passport residing in Portugal almost tripled (coinciding with the first wave of Chinese businesses), from 785 to 2202. Between 1995 and 2005 the number of Chinese people in Portugal increased exponentially, from 2202 to 9237. The highest increase occurred in 2001 and 2008 both periods of extraordinary regularization. Since 2008 the figures have increased more slowly, at the rate of around 1000 people per year. The last figure known for 2011 (released June 2012) is of 16,785. The estimated population numbers by members of Chinese Associations were 10,000 in 2003[60], 13,000 in 2004[61], 15,000 in 2005[62] and 20,000 in 2012[63], roughly a quarter higher than the official statistics.

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2001	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	244	785	1232	2202	3281	7239	9237	10 167	10 448	13 331	14 396	15 699	16 785

Table 1: Evolution of population from PRC in Portugal, between 1980 and 2011 (Source: SEF).

The 'new Chinese migration' to Portugal displays the features generally associated with new Chinese migration (see Thunø 2007: 4). That is to say, Chinese migration to Portugal is inserted into a larger Chinese migration system to Europe composed of several movements that have Europe as 'destination'. This flow consists of manual workers coming from rural and urban areas of the Wenzhou region (including Qingtian) with a long tradition of migratory history, and also from places with no migratory tradition to Europe such as Shandong, Guangxi, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang

[60] Information conveyed by the director of the Chinese newspaper *Jornal Sino*.
[61] Information conveyed by the Chinese association *Liga dos Chineses em Portugal* (Oliveira 2004).
[62] Information conveyed by *Liga dos Chineses em Portugal*.
[63] Information conveyed by *Liga dos Chineses em Portugal* (*Correio da Manhã* (2012)).

or Sichuan. At the same time, there is also a flow of students and educated people from several places in China, namely Chinese urban centers such as Beijing and Shanghai. Many of these migrants have had previous experiences in other European countries such as Spain, Italy, France, Netherlands and Germany. Together with these people coming directly or indirectly from Mainland China there are also Chinese people from Macau and Taiwan (though in small numbers), from previous Portuguese colonies in Africa and from other disparate places such as Canada, Brazil, or Madagascar who for different reasons arrive in Portugal.

For the year 2011 (SEF 2012), statistics show that the Chinese population residing in Portugal is concentrated mainly in the Lisbon area (with 6341 individuals), followed by the districts of Oporto (with 2001 individuals) and Faro (with 1364). The lowest concentration is found in the district of Guarda, in the northern countryside of Portugal, with 141 individuals. This distribution pattern is consistent with the distribution of the Portuguese population. In terms of composition by sex, at the national level there are 8137 women and 8648 men (this statistical trend towards more women than men has been apparent since at least the year 2000 (see Rodrigues 2009). In terms of other population composition indicators, there are still no data available for the 2011 Population Census conducted by INE, but considering the other data provided up until now by the SEF it is expected there will be no large disparities from the previous 2001 Census, which depicted a Chinese population in Portugal characterized as young (average age of thirty), mostly employed in commerce/service or as small business owners and, in terms of qualifications, the majority with compulsory education in China (9^{th} grade) (see Rodrigues 2009).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have contextualized Chinese migration to Portugal within the wider Chinese migration system to Europe. Here I invoked, on the one hand, the notion of a 'remote' place to address Chinese reactions to Europe and, on the other, notions of resistance and frontier to account for the relation that Chinese migrants establish with China from the 'periphery' of its state. What emerges is the image of an elastic relation established by Chinese migrants with China: resistance to the hegemony of the economic and social model is done not through an absolute exit, but through resilience

materialized in a change of position in the complex, entangled and fuzzy Chinese global economy.

Chapter V

Attracting the flow of fortune: fate, auspiciousness and games

Introduction

This chapter takes the celebration of the 2008 Olympic Games in Lisbon and other ethnographic situations related with play, fate and future to argue that expectations of prosperity, success and social mobility in contemporary China are transversal, and are backed up by Chinese cultural logic, cosmological ideas and religious practices. My argument is based on the assumption that social mobility expectations and wealth thinking practices in contemporary China are not a consequence of China's opening to global capitalism after 1978, but are old aspirations of a historically unequal Chinese society where wealth accumulation was a traditional mechanism for overcoming low social status (Gates 1987). These upward social mobility ambitions and religious practices were silenced (by being considered wrong, archaic and forbidden) during the

Maoist Period, though in Post-Mao China they reemerged as supporters in the accomplishment of modernity ideals.

Celebrating the future: the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games in Lisbon

On a Saturday evening in May 2008 around 1000 people, almost all Chinese, got together at Coliseu dos Recreios, a historic concert hall in the centre of Lisbon, to attend a variety show entitled 'The Arrival of the Olympic Games – Beijing 2008'.[64] The show aimed to celebrate the Beijing Olympic Games being held in China in August that year. The show started with half an hour of speeches emphasizing the importance of the Olympics for China, for China's image in the world and for the Chinese community in Portugal.[65] The speakers were the President of the Luso-Chinese Association of Businessmen and Investment (the organizing association), the Chinese Ambassador in Portugal, a representative of the Portuguese Secretary of State for Sports, the President of the Luso-Chinese Association of Industrials and Traders (the most renowned Chinese association in Lisbon) and the CEO of a Chinese company of importation, which also the main sponsor of the event.

The spectacle was accompanied by a 'mission' (*daibiaotuan*) of artists sent from China by the Federation of Overseas Chinese Cultural Industries (*haiwai zhonghua wenhua chanye lianhehui*) to all European countries in order to celebrate among Chinese living in Europe the organization of the Olympic Games in Beijing. In a similar initiative to that done during the Chinese New Year celebrations, the Chinese authorities sent a prepared show, while the Chinese associations in Portugal, together with the Chinese Embassy, provided logistical support for the activities. The mission arrived in Portugal from the Netherlands where it had presented a performance a few days before. The hosts of the spectacle, as well as the majority of the performing artists, were known to the public. For two hours the Coliseu Hall was alive with a parade of Chinese popular songs, accompanied by Chinese traditional instruments, comic dialogues (*xiangsheng*) and small performances of traditional storytelling. The highlight of the show was the

[64] In Portuguese "A Chegada dos Jogos Olímpicos – Pequim 2008".
[65] The word community – *comunidade* in Portuguese – is used by Portuguese authorities and media when referring to Chinese nationals and people of Chinese ancestry living in Portugal. It is also used by Chinese themselves when interacting with Portuguese along ethnic borders. Here the expression is used as a literal translation of the words used by social actors and not as a theoretical concept.

performance of a young singer from Wenzhou. This female performer sang two songs, one in Chinese Mandarin (*putonghua*) and another in English, and dedicated the second of these to the Portuguese audience, while apologizing for not speaking Portuguese. She used a blend of *Putonghua*, English and Wenzhouese,[66] to communicate with the public, conveying a modern and cosmopolite image. The audience responded enthusiastically, first by clapping and yelling, and after by remaining attentive and silent (for the first and only time in the evening) during her performances. After all she was a Wenzhouese, a hometown fellow of many of the people in the audience, and she represented, at least in part, the ambitions that guided the lives of many among them – to be modern, cosmopolite and successful. When the last artist finally performed, a wave of excitement filled the Coliseu as the most awaited moment of the evening arrived: the raffle.

Early on, my Chinese friends had called my attention to the importance of this moment. While handing me the event ticket they said: "Don't forget us if you win something!" A raffle was placed at the center of the stage, from which artists, speakers, the renowned Chinese in Portugal, sponsors and advertisers, in ascending order of importance, drew papers with ticket numbers. The audience was in a great fuss with everyone standing and looking at each other's tickets and at the same time trying to figure out the numbers announced on the stage. The prizewinners arrived at the stage thrilled by the occasion, while the rest of the audience looked forward to the next draw. Following the draw of the eagerly awaited diamond prize (see below), the crowd hurriedly abandoned the room, taking with them t-shirts alluding to the Games and paper flags of the People's Republic of China and of the Olympics handed out early in the evening.

I decided to begin this chapter on attracting the flow of fortune by depicting this Olympic Games celebration in Lisbon precisely because I feel it epitomizes Chinese expectations of modernity: to acquire material wealth, social recognition, and to be 'modern', but also to embrace a Chinese cultural logic (what Steven Sangren (2000: 2) calls a Chinese 'socio-logic') that links individuals, families, communities and the state in a variety of contexts, mainly through rituals and mythologies. This tendency to affirm a strong Chinese order of things while incorporating foreign elements has been apparent in recent decades in scholars' use of Deng Xiaoping's expression "Socialism with

[66] Wenzhouese (*wenzhouhua*) is the speech of Wenzhou.

Chinese characteristics" (namely the part 'with Chinese characteristics') to account for Chinese versions of 'foreign phenomena'. Given the pervasiveness of a string of meanings associated with auspiciousness and prosperity, long-term values in China, in this chapter I propose to understand this Chinese cultural logic as an analogical classification, according to the theory of Rodney Needham (1980).

At first sight, this Olympics celebration seemed to attribute little importance to the legendary sporting event that was being celebrated. Indeed, during the show there were neither sports demonstrations nor artistic performances alluding to the Games. Apart from a comic dialogue playing on Chinese people's willingness and (in)ability to speak English in the face of the expected crowds of foreigners at the Games, there was no mention of the big event or of sport whatsoever. However this makes sense in a way. What was really being celebrated in this event was not the Olympics as a major sporting event, but the meaning of the Beijing Olympic Games for China, as representing a further step towards China's modernity aspirations founded on prosperity and success.

As Jacques deLisle (2008) astutely pointed out, the Beijing Olympic Games constituted China's opportunity to display the modernity and prosperity achieved by post-Mao reforms and, also, to restore China's self-image of centrality in the world, which had been shattered in the mid-nineteenth century by the intervention of foreign powers . The organization of the Games was of paramount importance to China, at a time when the country was positioning itself (as it still is) to be the next world economic power and was therefore eager for international recognition. Consequently, the Chinese government made a real effort to transmit an image of a stable and orderly society and for showing a more considerate attitude towards difficult questions such as human rights, environment and intellectual property rights (2008: 27).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, China had shown a great desire to hold the Olympics, precisely as a means of altering its international image devastated by the Tiananmen events. Hosting the Games allowed China to use the Olympic spirit to project the image of a harmonious and universal world power. It was also an occasion to display development and modernity through the majestic material infrastructure that the organization of the Olympics usually involves. For these reasons, the Beijing Olympic Games held an important political, but also cosmological, significance for China, as a platform from which to realize the promise of a future of prestige and prosperity.

The particular celebration of the Olympics in Lisbon occurred a few months before the Games, clearly as a way of preparing a festive atmosphere and uniting people around the event. In fact, the Coliseu event was not the first celebration of the Beijing Olympic Games in Lisbon. In January 2008, the Chinese Embassy in Lisbon, together with the Luso-Chinese Association of Industrials and Traders, and with the support of a Chinese travel agency based in Lisbon, promoted a photography exhibition about the Beijing Olympic Games in the lobby of Casino Lisboa. The pictures had been shot by international photographers, Chinese photographers and by the Chinese organizers of the Games. The exhibition noted the great investment in infrastructure and changes in the urban landscape of Beijing in order to accommodate the Games. The other main themes were China's nationwide celebrations that followed the announcement of the International Olympic Committee's decision in July 2001 and the importance of sports, namely traditional sports modalities such as Chinese martial arts, in Chinese people's lives. The people attending the opening ceremony of this exhibition (around fifty in total) were mainly institutional representatives or special guests.

On this occasion the discourses proffered by the Chinese Ambassador and the President of the organizing Association were directed at a Portuguese audience and centered on the promotion of China's image abroad, aiming to use the Olympics to promote China as a tourist destination. On the contrary, the May 2008 Coliseu event was intended to celebrate the organization of the Games among Chinese people in Portugal. The 'Arrival of the Olympic Games' event in Lisbon was a celebration of a cosmopolite and modern China among Chinese migrants, who are also part of China's globalized population. As mentioned before, this event was also a celebration of the future, of an anticipated new era of prosperity and power that would take China back to its position of 'first under heaven'. Chinese migrants' social aspirations, which rule their present lives, are part of this national project of modernity and this event aimed at stimulating this bond. These expectations were expressed in the symbolic idiom used to communicate the meaning of the Olympics to China, and to connect Chinese people in Lisbon to the project of a modern, prosperous and successful China.

The backdrop of the stage for the event was a picture of the new Beijing National Stadium (which was also on the cover of the program), known as the Bird Nest Stadium, an exquisite and expensive architectural masterpiece purposely built to affirm the sumptuousness of contemporary China through high-tech construction and an

artistic creativity difficult to match. Besides this picture of the Bird Nest Stadium on the stage and a banner with the title of the event, the remaining decorations were just a few advertising posters of Chinese companies operating in Portugal hanging on the balconies of the concert hall. Indeed, the decoration of the room that evening was quite simple when compared to the colorful and symbolically powerful stages of some Chinese New Year celebrations. This comparison makes sense in that this welcoming show, by taking the form of a variety show, resembles very much the Chinese New Year celebrations organized by Chinese associations in Lisbon. New Year celebrations, in turn, draw inspiration from the Spring Festival special programs on Chinese television channels, namely the renowned CCTV (China Central Television) Spring Festival show.

Photograph 9: The cover of the program of the Olympic Games Welcoming Celebration held in Coliseu dos Recreios, Lisbon, May 2008.

The Chinese New Year celebrations I have attended during my fieldwork, as well as this Olympics spectacle, have in common the fact of being variety shows presenting

modernized versions of Chinese popular culture. This is created by presenting performances that blend styles and inspirations, and manipulate categories such as 'old' and 'new', 'Chinese' and 'foreign', 'Han' and 'non-Han'. Usually the exhibitions include performances of traditional songs of Chinese ethnic minorities such as Tibetan or Mongol sung in Mandarin, modern interpretations of old and popular Chinese songs, rap songs sung in Chinese and hip-hop dances. These performances are lined up alongside *xiangsheng* (comic dialogues), insipid performances of parts of famous Chinese Operas and storytelling performances. The idiom of modernity is conveyed not only through the contemporary interpretations of traditional songs and performances, but also by the scenic arrangements and the appearance of hosts and performers. Despite their modern guise, these shows are very traditional when it comes to the messages they convey and how these messages are transmitted, namely through Chinese-style auspicious metaphors, conveying repeated messages of good fortune and prosperity.

In China it is popularly believed that things (words, objects and images) that somehow represent the idea of wealth are auspicious and are considered to be endowed with the capacity of attracting wealth. This mode of thinking is best understood in Rodney Needham's notion of analogical classification (1980: 58):

> Analogical classification provides an order among a variety of social concerns, and in the case of prescriptive alliance it does so in a total fashion that frames the society and governs the direction of its undertakings: its function is the provision of this order (…).

An analogical classification articulates polythetical homologues (Needham 1980: 56) in sequential relations. In this case, it is based on a common quality related to auspiciousness, so that new elements are added to the semantic field of the dyad auspicious/inauspicious. I consider that the Olympics itself, and this Olympics celebration particularly, disclose the Chinese mode of analogical classification not as a closed system, but as an open mode of ascribing order that, in a *bricoleur*-style manner (Lévi-Strauss 1962), incorporates new elements by analogy. In this particular case the homologous terms for the category 'auspicious' are related in a chain complex (Vygotsky in Needham 1980: 62). The evocation of auspicious symbols intends not

only to assign order, but also to manipulate human affairs. The practices intended to influence the future take place in a close relationship to a particular notion of fate. Throughout this chapter I will position this event and other auspicious practices in the context of Chinese cosmologies, namely those considering a notion of fate and its relation to fortune. I am arguing that this 2008 Olympic Games celebration can be seen as a symbolic manipulation of the flow of fortune in individual and national terms, addressing at the same time the anxieties of modernity and of the future.

For the Chinese in general, the year 2008 held a lot of positive expectations, for this was the year of the rat – the first animal of the Chinese zodiac – thus marking the beginning of a twelve-year cycle. The year also ended in eight, which is considered the most auspicious resonances for wishing and attracting wealth. It was precisely because of the auspicious wishes conveyed by the number eight that the Beijing Olympic Games took this number as a major symbol in the event. The time chosen for the opening ceremony was precisely 8 pm on 8 August (month eight). In this particular celebratory event at the Coliseu of Lisbon the main symbolic theme was also the number eight (*ba*). In Chinese analogical classification eight is a polythetic for wealth. The auspiciousness of the number eight comes by homophony, since *ba* sounds similar to *fa* from *facai*, meaning to flourish (in term of wealth) or to prosper. In Lisbon's celebration, the number eight was also emphatically employed, converting this Olympic party into a celebration of future prosperity for China and for the Chinese people. In an analogical classification numbers are typically meaningful and used in divinatory and religious practices in order to maximize wealth (Stafford 2009: 114).

I called this event a celebration of the future not only because its purpose was to celebrate an event that was expected to represent a turning point in China's future world image, but also because it was also an event aiming to attract good fortune, and thus manipulate fate, particularly through the raffle. The prize draw has been a common element in many of the Chinese New Year celebrations I have watched on Chinese television and attended in Lisbon. The raffle helps to create a festive and auspicious atmosphere. It also acts as an additional attraction to bring more people to the events.

As seen in previous chapters, the Chinese in Lisbon tend to direct all their time to making money, so they are very regimented in the use of their scanty spare time. In fact most people do not attend these celebrations – roughly only 1000 of the 6000 Chinese residents in Lisbon do so. For many of my Chinese interlocutors, these

celebrations represented an opportunity for getting together, for seeing and being seen, and for feeling connected to other Chinese people through celebrating their Chinese identity and the Chinese New Year outside China. However I soon learned that for many of them the spectacle's performances were not, in fact, the main attraction. Most of these kind of events are performed by amateur artists (even if this was not the case in the 'Games' celebration) and present an interpretation of 'Chinese culture' (*Zhongguo wenhua* in their words) with which they do not necessarily identify with. On the other hand, the raffle seems to garner the audience's attention. In fact, it was seen as the most exciting part of the show. During the course of my fieldwork, I have attended several prize draws in Chinese New Year's celebrations, however none of them was so symbolically impressive as the Games celebration, especially outstanding for its prize list and not so much for the draw performance.

One of the pages of the program was dedicated to the list of prizes to be drawn (see Photograph 10). The description of some of the prizes was followed by their monetary value, almost all involving the number eight. A total of 136 items, ordered in a special rank of seven categories, were to be drawn. In ascending order they were: *Fuwa xingyun* or lucky mascots' prizes (referring to the five Beijing Olympics mascots), third prizes, second prizes, first prizes, gold prize, platinum prize and diamond prize. The items to be raffled included television sets, rice cookers, mobile phones, computers and computer equipment, plane tickets to other European countries and to China, restaurants' gift certificates and money prizes. Around twenty of the 35 prize categories were money prizes of 288€, 588€, 888€, 2008€, 3888€. The most desired first rank prize (or diamond prize) of 12 008€ was offered by the main sponsor, an import company recently founded by a lottery winner in China. All money prizes had the number eight. The more number eights it had the better. For instance, the prize of 888€ is symbolically read as *fafafa* or to prosper, prosper, prosper.

The auspiciousness of the draw is bound up in a complex chain of meaning. Firstly auspiciousness is entailed by the possibility of winning, though the prize is valuable not only because of its monetary value. The fact that it includes the number eight is seen as even more auspicious, i.e., involving more possibilities of prosperity. The auspiciousness is even amplified by the influence of such a magnificent and auspicious event as the Olympic Games. In this line of reasoning, to win the diamond prize is even more propitious, since it is the higher premium, and also because it had

been offered by a lottery winner. In Durkheimian language, this powerful prosperity-related symbolism makes the raffle a moment of collective effervescence (Durkheim 1985) produced by the polythetics of the auspicious category.

Photograph 10: The complete list of prizes to be drawn as set out on a page of the program of the 2008 Olympic Games Welcoming Celebration.

In China, the future (and its control) has been a major concern for religious and political authorities throughout history, since as early as the Shang Dynasty (Bary and Bloom 1999: 6). Traditionally, the future was inferred through divination from Nature – heaven and earth – which offered the pattern for every aspect of social organization and personal conduct (Sivin 1995: 7). There should be harmony between the human and the natural order, of which the suzerain was a guardian (Granet 1977: 66). According to Nathan Sivin (1995), from the third century BC onwards, cosmos, state and the (human) body were all shaped by, and entangled in, one single process. In this way it as not

assigned to Nature to have a deterministic influence upon human reality, it was considered that cosmos, state and the human body change together. This conception of cosmos and of change is fundamental for a notion of fate and the perception of its influence in human affairs. Divinatory practices were performed as a means of predicting the future, but considering the possibility of change, these practices also aimed at influencing it. In the next section I will reflect on how this notion of fate operates and mingles with more contemporary ideas of prosperity and future.

Oedipus or Job? Calculating fate and waiting for fortune

In this section I will address the topic of how a conception of a changing fate articulates with migration and with the pursuit of the goals of migration.

> According to A. Dorner (1926: 771–772):
>
> The idea of Fate is found only in conditions where some attempt has been made to trace all phenomena of human life to an ultimate unity. Fate indeed, is precisely this unity apprehended as an inevitable necessity controlling all things, it is the absolutely inscrutable power to which all men are subjected, and may be either personified or represented as impersonal. It is a conception which prevails wherever the mind of man is unable to frame the idea of rational necessity or of a supreme purposive will, and it survives so long as either of these, though within the field of consciousness, is imperfectly realized.

Owing to its totalizing vocation, the idea of fate emerged together with the development of astrological systems in several parts of the world (Dorner 1926: 772). As mentioned above, in China the order of Nature, or the positioning of heaven and earth, determined the limits of a person's fate at birth.[67] However, during the course of life there is the possibility of changing an individual's fate, considering that in every moment the cosmological situation determines and alters the flow of fortune or luck (*yun*). Chinese cosmology is also influenced by the Buddhist notion of karma, which sees an

[67] Here I am using the term fate over destiny considering Dorner's interpretation that destiny may be employed in situations where the rationality of that destiny is not understood (1926: 772). In the notion of fate I am presenting, fate or the knowledge of fate is precisely a way of attributing sense or order to the flow of events.

individual's future as attached to moral actions, thus granting humans a certain portion of control over their future. In a famous text, Meyer Fortes (1983) uses the stories of Oedipus and Job to expose two different modes of relation between man and the spiritual realm concerning the management of the future by humans. Oedipus epitomizes the idea of a fatalist fate, while Job's fate depends largely on choice and its moral relation to a higher power.

In the following ethnographic vignette I account for a notion of fate that I will later discuss as being neither oedipal nor 'jobian' in Fortes' terms. Huiqing (already known to us from Chapter 2) had never consulted a *suanmingren*, a person who calculates fate, until her mother encouraged her to do so on one of her trips to China. Huiqing's mother maintains a very active religious life. She goes to temples almost daily in order to worship the gods and ancestors, and also to consult the gods about her concerns, namely about her children and grandchildren's future lives. Huiqing hesitated to follow her mother's advice. In China, despite being hidden during the last decades, fate-figuring practices have re-emerged as a way of ordering a fast-changing and chaotic contemporaneous life. Fortune-telling is officially considered a superstitious activity and censured as a backward and old practice in many circles of Chinese social life, especially among the political and highly educated. Beliefs and practices associated with Chinese popular religion are seen as not belonging to modern life and society, and in some instances they are seen as partially responsible for China's 'delay' in achieving modernity. Fortune-telling practices are expressly forbidden in many temples of tourist interest in China, nevertheless they are tolerated in more out-of-the-way areas, where these practices are a major part of temples and of the population's everyday lives.[68] This is so in Wenzhou, where the days of shutting down temples and forbidding Chinese traditional religious beliefs and practices as superstitious activities seem to have gone. Nowadays people feel they can express their beliefs and religious convictions more freely. At last Huiqing decided to go and listen to what the *suanmingren* had to say about her life and her future. Important in Huiqing's decision was the fact that the *suanmingren* was a neighbour and a friend of the family, very renowned in the village for his fate-figuring skills.

[68] This is also a previous trend in Chinese history. Richard J. Smith (1993) argues that though divination was widely believed in imperial China the Chinese elite distrusted religious specialists, which were consulted mainly by peasants and other commoners.

The neighbour performs his services at home, in a room decorated with images of Bodhisattvas and Taoist immortals surrounded by fruit offerings. Consultations take place at a big wooden desk-like table where the man, in his late sixties, and his son, of around thirty, calculate clients' fates. On the top of the antique wooden desk there is an ink stone, several brushes, stamps and a pot of water. The father enjoys a good reputation in the village and receives many clients every day. As he is getting old, he now only works part-time and is passing clients on to his son. This is the only son who decided to follow in his father's footsteps in divination. The other two migrated to Europe along with many others in their home village. Even though father and son work side-by-side at the big wooden table in the room, they perform independently for different clients. On the day Huiqing, her mother and I went to their home there were around fifteen people in the room. Not all these people were clients, some were just accompanying other people who came to hear the *suanmingren qi ming* (to calculate fate). Some people make comments, advise or comfort the person under consultation.

The *suanming* asks Huiqing her *bazi* – the eight characters corresponding to the year, month, day and hour of birth, according to the Chinese calendar. He also asks for her husband and son's time of birth in order to consider their destiny connections. Huiqing runs an application on her mobile phone that instantly converts internationally covenanted dates to the dates according to the Chinese calendar. The man uses a brush with black ink to write the characters on a white stone. Then he consults an old book that lies on his side of the table (presumably the *Yi Jing*) for some moments, before adding more characters to those already written on the stone. Looking attentively at the stone the *suanmingren* starts to report what he sees.

First, he refers to Huiqing's infancy and her relationship with her parents. Considering her *bazi* the fortune-teller advises Huiqing not to live near her parents, it is not good for them, especially for her parents' health. She should continue to live abroad and not come back definitely to China. That is the best for all, he says. He continues by making some considerations about her fortune, saying she is a lucky person and advises her to use certain colours in order to maintain and to boost her fortune. Because she is a lucky person, she will have no money problems, he says, though he also makes some admonitions concerning her ways of dealing with money. According to him, she should spend money because it is good to assure a continuous flow of money. It is good to spend some in order not to prevent that flow. The man warns Huiqing that, in her case,

money is supposed to come and go, and as a result if she does not spend money someone else will do it for her. He advises her to spend money, because that she was in a period of time considered particularly propitious for money expenditures. He also makes some considerations and gives some advice about her family life, namely about her relationship with her husband and how to bring up her son, all based on the interpretation of their *bazi*. After the consultation, the man poured some of the water contained in the pot over the stone, erasing all he had written. Huiqing paid 50 yuan (about six Euros or five pounds) for the service and we left.

After arriving back home, Huiqing and her mother informed the father about the results of the fortune-telling, and together they discussed it extensively. They talked over their own life decisions, considering this new knowledge about Huiqing's fate. Huiqing will remain living in Portugal as she planned, but as a filial daughter she promises to send money to her parents in order to provide them with a good life. For Huiqing and many other Chinese, migration poses several challenges to their duties as filial children and divination provides flexibility to established moral rules. According to Chinese moral precepts, the filial child should live near her parents and provide for them when they grow old. That was Huiqing's idea when some years ago, benefiting from the family reunification policy in Portugal, she took her parents to live with her in Lisbon.

That is also the case of many other Chinese living in Lisbon, who after getting relatively established in Portugal send for their children and sometimes also their parents from China. In their company migrants feel less lonely and benefit from their parents' help in domestic and business tasks. At the same time they can be more vigilant about their parents' health and improve their living conditions, given the higher standards of living in Lisbon compared to many Chinese villages. Huiqing's parents lived in Lisbon for a couple of years, but they decided to return to China due to the mother's health. They told Huiqing that they would rather stay in their hometown village where, with less money, they could live a comfortable life surrounded by friends and acquaintances. Another dilemma Huiqing was facing in her life, and about which she also took advice from the fortune-teller, was that of not having more children. The fortune-teller told her that she will have to invest much time and energy in her only son for him to succeed in life. A second child would probably reduce her time and energy to

educate her first and only son. The consultation of diviners is a way of handling delicate issues balancing fate and morality in ambivalent matters.

Huiqing's knowledge of the fate episode reveals the limits and possibilities implied in the Chinese notion of fate, which suggests a notion of fate that is neither fatalist nor based in the moral relation to a higher power (to use Meyer Fortes (1983) distinction). If we compare it with Meyer Fortes findings among the Tallensi, it is possible to find some common ground. Among the Tallensi, descent and kinship fix a person's place in society and their relations towards other kin through a complex system of rights, duties and capacities (1983: 13). An individual's life path is given by a unique configuration of ancestors. Among the Tallensi, ancestors are the guardians of moral values and must be worshipped and enshrined, and fate is settled by the moral bond between the person and the ancestors (1983: 24–25).

Among Chinese the *bazi* (the eight characters) establish by birth are a determined portion of a person's fate. The significance of the moment of birth for that child's fate is the reason why Chinese families, both in China and in Portugal, leave the choosing of the name until after the birth. In this way they can make amends to the child's fate by balancing elements of the name with the elements that determine the cosmological situation at birth. The *bazi* are also important in evaluating relations to other people, but results are not seen as definitive. Naming is one among the numerous practices used to balance and manipulate cosmological forces in an auspicious manner in order to improve a person's fate or future life; engaging in divination practices to know the flow of fortune in particular moments and exchanging with gods are other examples. In Wenzhou many people resort to divination practices to inquire about their migratory decisions. On the day I followed Huiqing and her mother to the *suanmingren*'s home, I met two other migrants to Europe who were also in line for a consultation. For Chinese believers to know a person's fate is very important because it represents the possibility to act upon the future. Fate is not entirely definitive, because it is believed that a person's life can be inflected somehow by fortune or luck. Among Wenzhouese there is the belief that although is not possible to change *ming* (fate, life) one may try to control *yun* (fortune or luck) as a damage control or amplification of opportunities strategy. There are several expedients to act upon fortune, and since fortune involves the idea of wealth people resort to these attracting fortune strategies in order to make money and get rich.

A few days after consulting the *suanmingren*, Huiqing and her mother went to a temple located on the top of one of the many mountains surrounding Wenzhou. The temple is devoted to Guanyin Goddess and has the reputation of being very *ling* (efficacious). The religious complex is composed of several pavilions and altars and continues to expand thanks to devotees' contributions. The trail from the main road to the entrance of the temple is surrounded by many stalls providing all kinds of fortune-telling services and selling candles, incense, oil and gold paper for offerings. At first Huiqing's mother spent some minutes fulfilling the ritual of *baibai* (worshipping) all the gods present in the temple – Buddha (*Fo*), the Eighteen Buddhism Heralds (*Shibaluohan*), Bodhisattva Guanyin (*Guanyin Pusa*) and the Guardian Kings of the Four Quarters of Heaven (*Sifangtian Pusa)*. Afterwards, she lit some candles, carefully putting them in the candlestick, burned incense and gold paper, and poured three big drops of oil (*jia you*) into the altar's lamps. She repeated this procedure in every pavilion she entered (dedicated to different spiritual entities). After the worshipping rituals, she approached one of the several fortune-tellers working inside the temple and asked him for a cup of sticks.

The *Bamboo Sticks* (or *Yarrow Stalks*) is the method she employs most of the time for consulting the gods. It is a very popular method in Wenzhou temples. Other methods available in the stalls inside and outside in the surroundings of the temple include face and palm reading, card reading and *bazi* (eight characters) for destiny calculation. The Bamboo Sticks is a method of consulting the gods through the *The Book of Changes*' hexagrams. The cup has sixty-four numbered straws, each number corresponding to an encrypted text in the *Book* that must be interpreted considering the question posed. Facing the altar of Guanyin Bodhisattva, the mother posed a question to the divinity while shaking the cup with the numbered straws. She picked the first two straws coming out of the cup and showed them to the fortune-teller, who was sat at a desk. The man, wearing a blue cap and jacket – a very popular uniform in Maoist times – knew the corresponding texts by heart and immediately gave the answer to her question. She repeated the procedure each time she posed a question. In other temples I visited, the fortune-tellers do all the procedure, including shaking the cup on their knees in front of the altar, mimicking the emperor ritual divination in dynastic times. The emperor's prestige came from his capacity for communicating with Heaven, in the same

way that the fortune-tellers' prestige – efficacy – also comes from their capacity to interpret the text corresponding to the straw number.

After knowing the divination result, if the answer is favourable, the person should simply leave some money at the moneybox after paying the fortune-teller for his service (usually 50 yuan). If the answer presages bad fortune, the person should seek the divinity's help. On a special paper, typically yellow, the fortune-teller should write the posed question, the answer given and the name and address of the questioner. Some money should be added to this information. The amount of money given in these cases varies according to the severity of the hazard presaged and also according to the giver's economic capacity, and can range from 100 yuan (12 Euros or 10 pounds) to several thousands yuan (hundreds or thousands of Euros). The objective of this gesture is to persuade the god to solve that specific matter as favourably as possible. The paper is then folded with the money inside, and placed in the pavilion's or the god's moneybox. If the matter ends up being more favourable than the initial prophecy, it means that the god interceded and blessed that person. After the danger passes the blessed person should go back to the temple and offer a great amount of money in thanks.

Photograph 11: Offering candles in a Wenzhou temple (Source: Irene Rodrigues 2010).

As in the Tallensi case described by Fortes, fate is also influenced by the relations established with supernatural entities. People should give money in order to win and conserve the gods' favours. This act recognizes the gods' help in the individual's path to success and prosperity. This recognition is fundamental as a display of *ling* (efficacy), which contributes to attract more devotees and more money to gods and temples. According to Hill Gates (1987), the penetration of capitalism into Chinese people's folk ideology, since the mid-nineteen century or earlier, is related to the possibility of social mobility allowed by money accumulation as an alternative to office.[69] Since this time money has become a symbol of wealth and prosperity used in religious practices. Money plays an important role in this process: it can be offered to the temple, or can be offered by being burnt in the form of gold paper or expensive candles (for thousands of yuan). In this way, it is believed that, like humans, gods also valorise money and are keener to help after receiving this kind of worship.

In the many temples I visited in Wenzhou I met other migrants to Europe coming to worship, have their fortunes told and bless small objects to attract good fortune and for protection. In Wenzhou, there seems to be a relationship between religious practices concerning prosperity and migration. Many of the people I met who belong to temple associations (in charge of a temple's management and preservation) were also relatives, especially parents, of people who had migrated to Europe. These elders spend most of their days at the temple performing several tasks while worshipping the gods. They make sure the temple is clean and tidy, and organize and sell materials used in worshipping activities such as candles, incense and *jinzhi* (gold paper). These people are also responsible for collecting and keeping the money made from selling these items and the money deposited in the moneyboxes in altars and doorways. Some of the temples I visited in Wenzhou, especially small and medium-sized ones, had neither Taoist priests nor Buddhist monks, and these elders were the only guardians there. Some temples have a resident couple from the temple association designated to be in charge of the space for an agreed period of time (up to a year or more). Even bigger temples with Buddhist monks will have some laymen, especially elders and women, organizing activities and taking care of the spaces.

[69] However, the Chinese rural economy has been highly monetized since at least the Song period (Elvin 1973).

Huiqing's parents' daily life in Wenzhou is full of religious activities. They are part of a temple association to which they and their children regularly contribute thousands of Euros. Zhou, the mother, goes to temples almost every day and she and her husband often engage in temple-related activities. In temples, they meet other elderly couples to talk and joke around, while sharing a meal of food offered to the gods and cooked in the temple's kitchen. Once in the temple, the mother always questions the gods about her current worries and asks for protection. "While in Wenzhou we can *baibai fo* (worship Buddha) to protect their lives in Europe," they told me. In one Wenzhou temple I also met Wei, a sixty-year-old woman who, five years before, had lived in Italy for a couple of years. While offering me a glass of *acqua* (she insisted on using a few Italian words to talk to me when she learned that I was Portuguese), Wei explained to me that she went to live in Prato (near Florence) with her daughter to take care of her baby grandson right after his birth. But "after that, I came back to Wenzhou. I am better off here, it's my hometown. And being here in the temple I can pray for the sake and good fortune of my family abroad", she explained to me. Chen, an 80-year-old lady, also has two daughters living abroad, in Portugal, each with a store in *xin huohan* (Martim Moniz Shopping Center) in Lisbon. Chen has never visited her daughters, though they have been living in Portugal for almost ten years. Since they left she has been spending most of her days at the temple, where I found her Relatives remaining in China have a leading role in managing fortune matters for their migrant kinsfolk. In situations where fortune is especially unfavorable, people may resort to complex rituals involving the blessing of objects. Shichun's fortune was a case of bad fate (*huai ming*). She migrated to Prato in Italy to work in a sweatshop in the mid 1990s, where she *chile henduo ku* (suffered and worked a lot). Through a friend with whom she had worked in Prato, she managed to find a job as a shop assistant in Martim Moniz, where she moved in the early 2000s.

In Portugal she was able to regularize her situation with the Portuguese authorities and marry a Wenzhou migrant in Paris. Together they opened their first business in Almirante Reis Avenue, not far away from Martim Moniz square. However, business did not go very well – their earnings were just enough to cover their expenses. Shichun's husband also had passport problems with the European authorities because of his initial irregular entry into Europe. While trying to manage the legal affairs through SEF they left the store in Almirante Reis and moved to Martim Moniz to open a retail

warehouse. The new store was located in a corner of the Mouraria Shopping Center and many customers ignored the place. After more than ten years in Europe, Shichun was still trying to deal with settlement issues, was not making money and was still in a liminal position (see Chapter 3). In order to help her cope with her fate, Shichun's mother consulted several *suanmingren* in Wenzhou, who confirmed Shichun's fate was not good and that she would experience difficulties in making money.

In order to favorably change Shichun's life and attract luck, on the 27th day of the second month of the Chinese calendar, her mother went to one of Wenzhou's most reputed (for its efficacy) temples, taking with her five towels and a plastic pot of gold with a fish. In the temple, these objects were *baifo* (blessed by Buddha). In order to perform this kind of custom, people consult the *Huangli* (*The Yellow Almanac*), which is the major source of information for believers on how to perform religious rituals and also on how to conduct daily life. The Almanac provides information on the propitious days for worshipping gods, on how to make requests and on how to offer thanks for granted blessings. It also gives advice on the propitious and nefarious days to perform certain types of activities, such as going out, travelling, spending money and saving money. The blessed objects were subsequently sent to Shichun in Lisbon through a friend visiting Wenzhou. The plastic object represents a pot with gold and a fish. The word fish is pronounced the same way as surplus (*yu*) and, together with gold, expresses abundance of gold or money. As it belongs to an auspicious category, this object should increase chances of attracting money.

Nevertheless, establishing reciprocal relations with gods is not the only way of influencing a person's life. As seen in the raffle episode in the beginning of this chapter, it is believed that fortune flows in certain ways according to the cosmological situation and is attracted by auspicious situations and objects. As seen in the case of Shichun, a combination of gods' blessings and auspicious objects is at play.

In a context of great pressure to prosper, Chinese migrants in Lisbon surround themselves with auspicious objects in their homes and workplaces according to the Chinese belief that these objects will help them to maximize their chances of prosperity. One of the most popular objects among Chinese traders is the image of Caishenye – the god of wealth. It was on the wall of her warehouse in Martim Moniz that Lanfen hung an image of Caishenye. The shelf with the god's image was suspended almost near the ceiling and right next to the entrance door crossed everyday by dozens of clients. Amid

the racks of clothes the picture is quite unnoticed. Lanfen proudly told me about the Chinese belief in Caishenye's image as a way of attracting money, clients and good luck for the business. The god of wealth surrounded by two children and gold coins is also part of Li's family living room decoration.

The image is stamped on a wooden tablet and hung from the ceiling. On the reverse there is the character *fu* (good fortune) inverted, announcing that good fortune has arrived. Next to this, there is another auspicious tablet with the characters *jincai*, which means 'to let wealth come in', and a pig on the reverse – a symbol of the Chinese family. These decorations are especially used for the Chinese New Year, but the Li family use them throughout the year to propitiate a continuous flow of good fortune, especially wealth, to their family. Keeping these objects is seen by the Li as part of their identity as Chinese and neither as a superstitious activity nor incompatible with the fact that they are Christians and part of a Chinese evangelic congregation in Lisbon. Other objects considered auspicious and thus capable of attracting fortune and wealth are the pachira (an ornamental plant known in China as *facai shu* or wealth tree) and the beckoning cat (*zhaocaimao*). These are very popular in business areas, and both were frequently introduced to me by my Chinese interlocutors in Lisbon.

Marcel Granet described Chinese religion as a "superstitious positivism" that accepts all religious formulas as long as they remain effective (1977: 143). *Ling* or efficacy is an important value in Chinese religious practices, for it depends on the keeping of belief and worshipping. Efficacy may be an important element in determining that something might be considered auspicious and incorporated under a *bricolage* spirit that tolerates and accepts new elements and practices. In Chinese territories, religious practices also include pilgrimage to holy places seen as fortunate places, such as the sacred mountains of Buddhism and Taoism. In Portugal, the sanctuary of Fátima, a Catholic Marian devotion shrine, is especially visited by Portuguese migrants and it is a major religious attraction for both Portuguese and foreigners. As such, it is also a major attraction for Chinese, who enjoy visiting the place not only because, with its sumptuous chapels, it is a tourist attraction, but also because it is a place where people go to ask for blessings and which is reputed for being very *ling* (efficacious). The first time Li Pai and Dai Yu went there was a day in which they were in the office and had no customers. Because they had nothing to do they took the time to visit Fátima, which is located ninety minutes away from Lisbon. They told

me that once they arrived at Fátima clients started to call them and they had to go back. They did not even have the opportunity to visit the place properly. Because they were aware of Fátima's reputation their story suggests Fatima's efficacy. Considering the notion of fortune and its relation to wealth and games , in the next section I will explore the influence of these ideas in everyday Chinese life in Lisbon and in attitudes towards the future.

Playing with games and fortune

The documentary *Floating Dust* (2003) by the Chinese film director Huang Wenhai narrates the story of a group of people subsisting in the city of Yaoyang (Hunan province, China) who spend their days gambling and expecting to make money quickly. They live in a rundown building where a couple operates an illegal Mahjong club. Some of these people are unemployed internal migrants or people who lost their money in a bad business. In order to pass the time (and also with the objective of becoming wealthy), these women and men play several games and use different strategies in order to become wealthy. One of their hobbies is to bet illegally on the famous MarkSix lottery operating in Hong Kong and broadcast live on television. Among these people there is a common belief that the lucky numbers appear in the children's television series *Teletubbies*. So, the gamblers watch the show devoutly in search of clues and signs that may possibly indicate to them the lucky numbers. Meanwhile, the characters lives are trespassed by events such as pregnancy, failed suicide or unemployment that constantly place risk, game and luck at the center of this social drama.

To a certain extent, the narrative of Huang Wenhai's documentary recalls the lives of many of the Chinese migrants I followed in Portugal and in China. Imaginative wealth seeking practices and great ambitions of prosperity and success are part of everyday life in Chinese contemporary society. The daily concentration on the future and the hardships endured in the present act as driving forces for this kind of behavior. Regardless of overworking, many Chinese in Lisbon also engage in several kinds of games expecting that their playing and gambling practices will make them rich and/or predict a sudden change of fortune. In a similar way to what has happened in other

social and cultural settings, divination and fortune-telling practices have been used to inquire about the future as well as being recreational activities (Reith 1999).

Recreational games and other activities involving a certain risk have maintained a sense of the divinatory dimension associated with oracles. As seen above, in the case of the raffle, playing games is also a way of testing ones luck in a metaphorical way and whose propitious or unpropitious results are taken as a fortune-telling result. All kinds of activities, not only games (although this is the main category), may perform this role. Such beliefs and practices about games and gambling are part of a symbolic ritual of humankind's struggle to deal with uncertainty. They also offer an alternative way for those outside socially legitimate avenues to pursue wealth (Reith 1999: 1–8). As among the people of the city of Yaoyang (depicted in the documentary), playing the lottery is one of those strategies to try one's luck and possibly get rich quickly. Playing is a form of entertainment, but also a way of trying *yunqi* (luck) and getting rich. Because of luck's indetermination, to play is both an attractive and hazardous activity.

Migration itself can be seen as a first bet on the road to attaining prosperity. As described in the previous chapters, migration is a major move in people's lives. It involves not only movements covering long distances, but also a difficult transition – and thus a huge change in life (a big and favorable change is precisely this journey's most important goal). Change has an important cosmological significance in the Chinese way of interpreting reality and history. In a short but thoughtful text, Erh-ming Wang (1993) discloses how some Chinese intellectuals of the nineteenth century framed the arrival of Westerners in China not as a disaster, as officially proclaimed, but as an opportunity for China. According to Wang this was framed through the idea of a 'turn of fortune' (*yun hui*), meaning an extraordinary cosmic situation that may provide unique opportunities. I am arguing here that migration represents for Chinese migrants a kind of 'turn of fortune' in their lives, a cosmological opportunity that may send their lives into a new and prosperous direction. A cosmological break may occur in an extraordinarily auspicious moment such as the 2008 Olympic Games opening ceremony moment – 8 pm on the 8 August (month eight) of the year 2008.

While As long as this cosmological opportunity does not arise, playing is a way of inquiring about a person's relation to fortune. Playing mahjong in front of their stores as a distraction while waiting for customers is part of the everyday practice of some Chinese traders of the Mouraria Shopping Center. Chinese migrants, being either

workers or bosses, maintain a very busy daily life in their businesses and workplaces with the aim of making money. In their free time they engage in leisure activities with co-workers, friends and relatives, and playing *majiang* (mahjong) and *puke* (poker) are among the most popular game activities. To play *majiang* is also a way of strengthening social relations among family and friends, especially when in the evening and at weekends people get together to play *majiang* for both amusement and trying one's luck. Losers are a source of fun, mocked by their fellow players for their bad luck. To play *majiang* in this way does not involve much money, only one or two Euros per game to make it more interesting. Winning at mahjong may be interpreted as enjoying a prosperous flow of fortune, and that person may venture into more risky situations, such as starting a new business involving a great amount of money or moving on to gamble at higher stakes. The Chinese New Year is a period when people typically engage in these activities, precisely to learn about their fortune for the New Year. Along with Chinese New Year's television programs and the New Year's meal, *da majiang pai* (to play *majiang*) is part of the *guo nian* (New Year) activities.

My observations of this 'playing with games' indicate a distinction earlier noted by João Pina-Cabral (2002) between a mode of *wan* (fun, game, play), which is play that is socially welcomed, and a more dangerous and socially disapproved kind of play *du*, corresponding to gambling. However, the limits between playing and gambling are difficult to settle, especially in those cases where friends or co-workers regularly join to play poker or mahjong involving considerable sums of money (hundreds of Euros or even more). These mahjong and poker games take place at homes and workplaces and not necessarily in casinos. At the point the game starts to become risky and dangerous by involving large sums of money, it falls into the gambling category. In this case, people may incur debt to co-workers, employees or employers, muddying relations in the workplace that already essentially revolve around money. To play among co-workers and friends is an activity that involves both men and women, but high risk gambling seems to be more connected with gender codes and the construction of masculinity among Chinese men (Steinmuller 2011).

To play at the casino is also beyond the pure objective of getting rich, it is an indication of wealth and a source of social status, exhibiting a capacity to spend great amounts of money. I met a few women who also engage in gambling in the casino, however I learned of more cases of men involved in high stakes gambling. Because it is

socially problematic, many men and women often play without the awareness or consent of their relatives. In fact, gambling is considered a very serious character flaw when assessing a person's morality. Some of these men had run into debt and put their families in danger. However, if the person gets rich, he will be admired for his wealth and good fortune as well. Using this kind of device to become wealthy allows migrants to leap through the liminal period, avoiding several years of hard work. This possibility of escaping present difficulties is a strong motivation for gambling. My argument relating business and gambling is in accord with Steinmuller (2011) and Bosco et al. (2009) when they interpret the relationship between the two not as a phenomena of neoliberal influence, but as a result of long-term gambling practices in Chinese society and a certain notion of happiness that includes wealth as a major component.

Gambling it is also very much related to business and migration ventures among Chinese people. It is not unusual for players to arrive at the gambling table already indebted. These debts may result from the need to pay back the transit fare from China to relatives, to friends or to the migration broker. Indebtedness may occur only later when people start a new business and borrow money from friends or moneylenders at high interest rates. Lately, due to the *fengbo* (Chinese business crisis), people run into debt to maintain their family and to keep their business open while waiting for a change of luck or a new business opportunity. Some people see gambling as a way out of this kind of financial problem.

However gambling is also responsible for exacerbating these problems by attracting even larger debts, which the debtors will be forced to pay. Sometimes punters bet borrowed money. If they lose they must pay not only the borrowed amount, but a very high interest (sometimes fifty percent) charged by loan sharks. If the defaulter does not pay, the debt will be charged to the family. On other occasions people bet all the money they have made during a long period of time in one night at the casino, and lose everything. For all these, gambling represents a financial and security risk for both the individual and their families. When I was doing fieldwork in Martim Moniz, the owner of a textile warehouse in *laohuohan* allegedly fled leaving a trail of debts behind. The case came to my attention through some people whom he had failed to pay before he disappeared. For a few months preceding his disappearance he had been postponing some important payments. When people started to came to collect the debts he left for good. Just before vanishing the man was seen selling off his things. He had not paid his

rent for the last six months and left debts to a lot of other traders in the area. It was rumored that he lost 500 000 Euros (almost 390 000 pounds) in the casino. Because he did not have that amount of money he borrowed and gave his mother as a guarantor.

As mentioned above, bets in business can be seen as another form of playing with fortune and getting rich. Instead of working very hard and saving as much as they can, people try more risky businesses that can make them rich more quickly. Any business is of course risky, but some are more risky and at the same time eventually more profitable than others, for example lending money to other people, playing the stock market or engaging in pyramidal schemes such as Amway (see Chapter 1).

Strategies for attracting fortune in order to prosper quickly in some sense seem to contradict the hardworking practices of migrants as a way of getting rich described in Chapter 3. This contradiction is also noted by Ellen Basu (1991) among Chinese overseas in Calcutta. Basu links the Chinese approach to gambling with an entrepreneurial ethos – people gamble in order to get rich. I prefer to complement this with the fact that though they gamble to make money they also gamble to know if they are going to make money. In this point I tend to line up with Steven Harrell (1987), who argues that failure and success differences among practitioners of the ethic of hard work and frugality tend to be explained by fate. My findings also suggest that although fate establishes and explains differences in wealth and success, this notion of fate is not deterministic as it also enfolds the possibility that against all odds a unique opportunity of fortune may arise. In part this keeps people's expectations both in gambling and in working hard.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I try to argue that even though economic disparities may be at the root of migration they are not enough to force people to move. This movement only happens because people accumulate expectations of prosperity and the belief that it is possible to achieve them. In this way, notions of fate and fortune, the cosmological possibility of handling the future and the chance of a major life breakthrough create a fertile land for imagining a life 'after migration'. I consider these findings make a useful contribution to migration theory, namely for understanding the density and contradictions associated with the migrant predicament. In a way it may be tempting to

frame this ‘making money migration flow’ in John and Jean Comaroff’s (2000) terms as a symptom of the global capitulation to capitalism, though as I have tried to show throughout the previous chapters of this dissertation there is a Chinese cultural logic in the way these migration flows are organized that goes beyond China’s exposure to global capitalism. I prefer to describe new Chinese migration through the theory of cumulative causality (see Massey at al. 2005), by seeing traditional cosmologies and modernity expectations as important elements in a migration situation. In this chapter I described precisely the way a capitalist spirit that searches accumulation meets popular religious practices such as divination and worshipping, and beliefs such as auspiciousness and efficacy. This points to the idea of ‘economic hybridity’ used by May-fair Yang (2000), which I will develop in the next chapter by focusing on the consumption practices and money expenditures of Chinese migrants in Portugal and in China.

Chapter VI

Ways of spending money: rituals, conspicuous consumption and reciprocity

Introduction

After examining the different strategies employed by migrants in order to make money, such as working hard (Chapter 3) or manipulating luck (Chapter 5), the time has come to examine what this money is actually used for. In this chapter I focus on ritual expenditure, conspicuous consumption and the ritual exchange of money, all of which is made possible by migration. I argue that this is all part and parcel of the moral obligations so well established among Chinese people. I rely on literature on *guanxi* (social relations) and exchange in China, especially Yang (1994), Yan (1996) and Stafford (2000), as well as on literature on migration and consumption.

Chinese potlatch

In December 2007, Delun, a Chinese friend from Martim Moniz, invited me to attend his wedding ceremony in a luxurious hotel in Lisbon. Six months before, this 30-year-old man went to China to marry a young woman from his parents' hometown. Three months after this first wedding in China the bride joined her husband in Portugal. The invitation to a second wedding, this time in Lisbon, was not a surprise. In fact, it is common among Chinese migrants to offer different wedding celebrations, considering the different places – and respective networks of family, friends and acquaintances – where their lives take place. Thus, after the wedding banquet for the bride and groom's families in China, another celebration was held in Lisbon, where Delun and his parents had been living for the last eight years. The place chosen for the ceremony was, I felt, somehow unexpected. It is one of the most luxurious, expensive and exquisite hotels in Lisbon, a national monument listed among the one hundred best hotels in the world, and a common lodging to globally known music and movie stars, where a room per night can cost between several hundred to several thousand Euros. This place suggested a lavishness that seems preposterous taking into account the frugal daily lives of Delun's family members in Martim Moniz. The first among these arrived in Portugal in the mid-1990s and settled in a modest rented apartment on the east side of Almirante Reis Avenue, where they were still living in 2007. For a while they even rented one of the rooms of the apartment to other Chinese in order to improve their income. Despite their relatively successful businesses in Martim Moniz, they had no car, and dressed and ate in a very parsimonious manner. They spent most of their time working, and sometimes I heard them moaning about not making enough money in Portugal.

When I arrived at the hotel for the wedding ceremony I was informed that the couple were installed in one of the most expensive suites, located in the part of the hotel that used to be the residential palace of a Portuguese bourgeois family in the nineteenth century, whose rooms boast a Versailles-inspired luxury decoration. Inside the suite, all the details were worthy of a princely life, from the furniture to the decoration of the walls, tissue covers and bedspreads, chairs and armchairs. The family had arrived the day before. The groom's parents, the bride and the groom and the groom's niece had all spent the night in the suite. In the morning when I arrived, there were also a make-up artist and a photographer in the suite, both acquaintances of the groom. Daiyu and Delun were already dressed in their bride and groom apparel, he was wearing a black

suit and a red tie, and she was wearing a white wedding dress. On the suite walls there were posters of Daiyu and Delun dressed in various festive costumes, including Chinese traditional wedding dresses. These posters were strategically positioned to be captured by the photographer's lens. During a couple of hours the couple posed for photos in various locations throughout the hotel. First inside the suite in the room, hall and balcony, and then after the ceremony in the hotel's living rooms and gardens.

Shortly after my arrival someone knocked on the door. It was a man of Chinese origin dressed in a dark suit with a calm and serene look. He was the pastor of the Chinese Evangelical Church attended by the family in Lisbon and he was there to conduct the wedding ceremony. Although several dozen people were invited to the banquet that was to take place that evening in a Chinese restaurant in Martim Moniz, I was informed that no more guests were expected at the wedding ceremony. Despite it being a special day for the newlyweds and their families, for the other guests it was just one more normal 'making money day'. The ceremony took place in the small and sober Catholic chapel located on the ground floor of the palace building. After a quick ceremony, which reminded me of other Catholic weddings I have attended, we all left the chapel to continue the photography session for another hour and a half, first in the beautifully decorated rooms inside the palace, and then around the magnificent orientally inspired rear garden. After this the bride changed her outfit, the groom settled accounts at the reception desk, and the family left the hotel in a rented SUV (Sport Utility Vehicle). Almost a year later, upon meeting again some members of the bride's family, I learned of the astonishment that the wedding pictures had caused in their hometown in China.

My purpose for presenting this vignette is to unveil the logic behind the 'making money' goal of migration. More precisely I try to answer the question "Money for what?" posed at the beginning of this dissertation. I intend to show how Chinese migrants use the money they earn, and how these investments in conspicuous consumption connect with a Chinese idea of modernity knitted together with native notions of moral personhood. As I argued at the end of Chapter 2, migration in and from China is linked to a lack of access to wealth, where migration is seen as a gateway to achieve a modernity ideal based on money, property and conspicuous consumption, even if, as I argued in Chapter 5, ideas about what it is to be modern and successful tend to be interpreted within a cosmological frame in which wealth and auspiciousness

acquire very specific cultural values. Having said that, I consider that this wedding ceremony sheds light on how conspicuous consumption, especially on ritual occasions, has to be interpreted through the cultural logic of a specifically Chinese modernity.

As a starting point for this discussion I will use Mayfair Yang's (2000) analysis of ritual expenditure in post-Mao Wenzhou, where Yang proposes the notion of 'economic hybridity' to account for the merging of ritual economy and capitalist economic forms. According to Yang, the Wenzhou ritual economy shows how "a native non-capitalist logic of ritual economy made use of capitalist forms for self renewal" (2000: 481). Interestingly, she compares this to the way waged labor increased potlatch among Native Americans in Vancouver Island in the nineteenth century, as described and analysed by Codere (1950). Yang builds her argument based on the critique of capitalism made by scholars inspired by Marcel Mauss's (1990) theory of the gift economy, in particular Georges Bataille (Bataille 1985). Along the lines of Bataille's reasoning, Yang contends that ritual expenditure in Wenzhou is part of the process of the reconstruction of the Wenzhou ritual economy and local kinship relations and structures in the post-Mao era, and thus a subversion of capitalism. In this process Yang sees the ritual economy as a traditional practice that stands in opposition to capitalism, thus implying a rather stark distinction between 'ritual expenditure' and 'capitalist consumption'. She invokes the notion of economic hybridity to describe the fact that Wenzhou people present a 'capitalist behavior' while making money, but instead of accumulating or investing that money in a capitalist way, they prefer to channel it into the ritual economy, namely to collective consumption and community redistribution, which are linked to religious practices.

In making such a strong demarcation between a capitalist mode of making money and a ritual and traditional way of spending it, Yang may somehow reproduce some of the analytical issues raised by the classical works of Bronislaw Malinowski (1932) and Marcel Mauss (1990 [1923–24]), namely how to accommodate the changes that such gift systems underwent in the face of capitalist contact and colonial rule. Building on these seminal works, more recent authors such as Paul Bohannan (1955) on the Tiv of Nigeria, and Georges Balandier (1961) on *bilaba* and *malaki* (African gift institutions) sought precisely to demonstrate how these traditional economic forms were being influenced by contact with European colonial powers and capitalism, even though both texts promotes the idea that change represented a menace to these 'pure' and

'timeless' systems. Yang's account of the Wenzhou ritual economy breaks away from that Weberian grid, demonstrating how a capitalist mode of production may enhance and even invigorate ritual economic practices, a perspective also shared by Yunxiang Yan (1996) in his ethnography on gifts and reciprocity in north rural China. Yang's insights are no doubt most useful in understanding the logic behind China's economic development. However, I believe it might be more productive to think about the ritual economy not in opposition to 'capitalist consumption', as Yang does, but as a blended product in itself. My proposal here is to approach consumption not from a capitalist point of view, but as a metonym of modernity in Chinese terms.

In *The World of Goods* (1980) Douglas and Isherwood propose a symbolic approach to the study of consumption criticizing Veblen's (1998 [1898]) notion of conspicuous consumption, namely its overemphasis in the construction of prestige. Douglas and Isherwood introduce a consideration of the individual social obligations in the acts of consumption. Goods can be used to overcome contradictions in the economic life, thus requiring at the same time metaphorical and rational thinking. Thus the authors redirect the discussion away from an idea of class and distinction in Baudrillard's (1970) and Bourdieu's (1979) senses. The same posture of conjunction (or should I say disjuncture) between a symbolic and a market view is evident in Arjun Appadurai et al.'s (1986) methodological focus on things and their social trajectories, as they acknowledge the possibility that the same thing can be both a gift and a commodity (cf. Ferguson 1988). With the above discussion in mind, I propose to approach Chinese migrants' ritual and gift economy also as consumption, supposing that things circulating can be both commodities and gifts, and gifts in exchange can be both money and objects of consumption. Here besides the literature on consumption (Appadurai 1986; Miller 1995) I am following some of the literature on migration that focuses on the impact of migration on consumption and rituals in places of origin, such as Gardner (1995), Gardner and Grillo (2002), Salih (2003), Osella and Osella (2004).

Inspired by the work of Charles Stafford, in this chapter I should also like to highlight the importance of these exchanges in the cycles of *yang* and *laiwang* and in the constitution of moral persons. According to Stafford (2000), alongside patriliny and affinity one finds in Chinese relatedness the two cycles of *yang* and *laiwang*. The cycle of *yang* centers on the parent–child relationship, which is bounded by parents' obligation to nurture children and children's obligation to reciprocate by taking care of

parents in their old age. The cycle of *laiwang* is a system of mutual support among friends, neighbors and acquaintances consisting of ceremonial transactions. Both *yang* and *laiwang* cycles are maintained by transfers of money and food.

In a Chinese marriage the groom's parents typically pay the wedding expenses, though that money usually comes from money transferred to them by their children since they started earning. In the case of Chinese migrants in Lisbon, often parents do not come from China to attend the wedding and so they are not involved in the marriage transaction ceremonially. In these cases, the bride and groom (especially the groom) hold the ceremony, paying for the expenses and receiving the money gifts. In this case there is not a ceremonial exchange of money in terms of *yang*. In a certain sense, because most women also send money regularly to their parents, the *caifu* (bridewealth), the big compensation for the lost of a daughter, does not make much sense anymore. Though I noted that in marriage situations where parents were important players there where ceremonial exchanges of money. In this case the daughter-in-law receives the *caifu*, which she shares with her parents, and after marriage she tends not to make regular contributions to her parents, though she may assist them financially in exceptional cases. I am convinced that *caifu* continues to be used as a marker of status and wealth, and among many groom's migrant families there is no means of affording a dignifying *caifu* for the bride. The *caifu* is undergoing considerable change and reinterpretation in China, but it depends very much on the families' economic situation. In a more traditional version of *caifu*, it is part of the *yang* – a woman's parents receive part of the *caifu* given to their daughter as part of a transfer of her *yang* obligation from her parents to her parents-in-law. I was told that nowadays in China a *caifu* may include an amount of money, cars, houses and jewelry, but in a migratory context where people are striving to make money it is usually more moderate. The amount of money transferred and the banquet quality will thus depend very much on the groom's financial situation. As Stafford (2000) showed, marriage also implies money and food transfers in the cycle of *laiwang*: whereas the groom's family offers the banquet, the guests should reciprocate in money. In Chinese weddings I attended in Lisbon, guests were expected to contribute at least one hundred Euros before entering the banquet room in the restaurant. The guest name and the amount given were then carefully annotated in a book.

In the marriage ritual described earlier there is a striking potlatch aspect in the overspending, especially conspicuous by the luxury of the hotel where the event took place. At first sight, the choice of the place, the western clothing and the Christian wedding might suggest an 'appropriation' of Portuguese codes of prestige by migrants, but these elements have become part and parcel of most ritual weddings in China, especially those happening in urban places. Both in China and abroad they are better seen as an expression of a Chinese way of being modern (and this is how my Chinese interlocutors see them as well) than as a particular form of 'assimilation' produced by migration. In a certain way migration only made it easier for Chinese to access the elements of modernity as they perceive it. In Wenzhou, Beijing, and Shanghai I was able to verify the performance of wedding ceremonies in expensive hotels, with brides and grooms shooting pictures in public gardens and squares in the center of the cities, wearing suits and white wedding dresses (see Photograph 12). Here the fact that white is the Chinese color for mourning seems irrelevant. When I ask people why they wear western ceremony cloths, they say it is modern and everybody wants to be modern.

Photograph 12: A wedding couple waiting for pictures in a public garden in Wenzhou (Source: Irene Rodrigues April 2010).

Daiyu and Delun's wedding in Lisbon took place in a hotel that used to be the residence of a wealthy and successful family, and qualities of material success and conspicuous consumption continue to radiate from the place. The fact that rock stars and Hollywood actors choose to stay there conveys an image of what is globally recognized as success, which is also seen as modern by my Chinese interlocutors. In China shooting sessions also occur hours or days before the banquet and without guests being presented, except for the *bangniang* and *banglang* (respectively, bride assistant and groom assistant) – friends of the bride and groom who chaperon and assist them during the wedding day.

The excessive materialization of the ritual moment in hundreds of pictures aimed at crystallizing and prolonging the scenes asserting success and wealth. Although guests had not been present in the ceremony at the hotel, the circulation of the pictures through networks of relatives, friends and acquaintances ensures the successful dissemination of the prestigious images of modernity.[70] I observed the same kind of conspicuous consumption display in other ritual situations aimed at cultivating social relations, namely in banquets among relatives, friends and acquaintances, in business or for celebrative purposes such as weddings, birthdays or birth celebrations. In these kinds of ritual situations, the lavishness of a meal was achieved by serving expensive and fine food products, such as good quality shellfish and other Chinese delicacies, and an excessive number of dishes. It is important to note that these events were full of auspicious metaphors. For instance, in these banquets there was always a dish of noodles meaning long relationships and/or long life.[71]

Conspicuous consumption seems to be an important part of rites of passage in general. In a funeral I attended in Lisbon in May 2011, as in the wedding described above, there were marks of both affluence and modernity. In this funeral, the departed was a woman who held a leadership position in the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) in Lisbon, a civil association coupled to the Foguangshan temple attended by many Chinese people.[72] In a much-ritualized ceremony family and

[70] It should be noted that as a *laowai* (a white Westerner) I was myself an element in the scenery.
[71] Noodles is pronounced *mian* which sounds close to *lian* of *lianxi* (contact, link), and its appearance suggest long things.
[72] Foguangshan (Buddha's Light Mountain) is a monastic order based in Taiwan and founded in mainland China by Venerable Master Xing Yun in 1967. It follows Mahayana Buddhism and preaches a Humanist Buddhism, which seeks to be

distinguished Chinese in Lisbon were called to pay homage to the deceased. The following is an excerpt from my diary of 22 May 2011.

> The hall of access to the multi devotional chapels was decorated with dozens of wreaths from the entrance to the chapel door and around the walls of the room (of around 200m^2). In the first room I saw the dharma masters gathering together in preparation for the ceremony. At the entrance of the chapel several Portuguese men, identified with a card from the funeral home, helped organize the ceremony. The room was almost full with people (I counted 150 people), much more people than usually attend the Sunday ceremonies in the temple. The initiated women from the temple were all dressed in black cloaks. Wei was there. The president of the association and his wife were also there. She was the one who conducted the ceremony. There were many people from the temple and many more people I know from Martim Moniz [where the family held businesses]. The room was decorated with the wooden altar I recognize from the temple room. On the top there were several dishes with food offerings of fruit (mango, kiwi, green apples, and tangerines), tofu, and other vegetables. There is also a photograph of the deceased and a small image of three bodhisattvas. Many flowers still decorate the altar, mostly in shades of white, similar to the wreaths which decorated the entrance and the walls of the room. Behind the altar is the

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disseminated throughout the world. It has temples in five continents, in thirty countries such as Australia, Malaysia, People's Republic of China, South Africa, Brazil, EUA, Switzerland, UK, France and Portugal. Following the Chinese religious tradition of founding lay associations alongside the temples (Chau 2006), in 1992 Master Xing Yun founded the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA), which is associated with the monastic order for the purpose of spreading Buddhism in the world through educational and cultural activities. In Lisbon the first steps for the establishment of the association and the temple were taken at the end of the 1990s by devotees from Taiwan and mainland China. It has a weekly service in Chinese mandarin on Sunday afternoon attended by approximately fifty to sixty people, but in some celebrations it reaches 500 people. It is the Chinese religious institution with the most devotees in Lisbon (when compared to Christian Churches). BLIA promotes cultural activities such as summer camps, Chinese New Year celebrations, karaoke contests, vegetarian festivals and Chinese language courses. In more religious matters the temple follows the celebrations of the Buddhist ritual calendar, promotes Buddhism courses, lectures on Buddhist philosophy and stages retreats and meditation sessions. It is said to be one of the most important Buddhist movements coming from Taiwan. For a very complete description of the Foguangshan order see Chandler (2004).

coffin. All the people in the room were dressed in black or black and white (I am not aware if a dress code was defined). Ling announces the beginning of the ceremony, which is conducted by BLIAS's abbess in Europe. There was also the master that came from Switzerland to help in last year's Chinese New Year celebrations. There is another master I do not know, and the temple's master. (…) The deceased family members paid special tribute at the center of the room. Organized in two rows, they offered incense (the husband and oldest daughter), fruits (the youngest daughter, grandson and son) and flowers (daughter-in-law). In line at the left were the eldest daughter, then the youngest daughter, and the eldest daughter's husband. In line at the right there were the husband, grandson, son and daughter-in-law. They are all fully dressed in black and, except for the husband, they all wear long black robes. (…) At the end of the chanting, it was announced the presence and special honor of the president of a Chinese association in Lisbon, the president and vice-president of the Chinese school of Lisbon, the leader of a renowned Chinese business group in Martim Moniz. They were all called in groups of two to offer incense, fruits and flowers at the altar. After, another group of distinguished people were called: the president of BLIA and two senior members of the congregation (one man and one woman) who also offered incense, flowers and fruit. (…) The abbess gives a sermon extolling the deceased's personality. (…) The president of BLIA in Lisbon addressed a few words regarding the loss of an important and dear member of the congregation. (…) The oldest daughter read a small, prepared speech. She told about her loss stating how her deceased mother loved, helped and educated them [her children]. She recounted an episode when she was studying very hard in England and, feeling sad and lonely, called her mother who comforted her by saying she would be very happy to visit her if she could. (…) She ended by saying she was not a good student because at that moment she could not find the words to express her love for her mother. (…) In the end, row-by-row those present were invited to pay tribute to the deceased by offering a white rose given by the organization of the ceremony. (…) On leaving, the family was at the doorway thanking everyone's presence. (…) At the entrance there were five funerary cars, four of them were devoted only to the dozens of wreaths that

adorned the ceremony. Almost an hour later the funeral left to another cemetery where the coffin is going to be deposited in a tomb.

As in the wedding ceremony the funeral exhibited a ritual excess linked to wealth and prestige as well as the influence of Western codes by using mostly black clothes instead of white (Chinese traditional mourning color). Weddings and funerals, as important moments in the life cycle, are profusely celebrated and part of the ceremonial exchange in the obligations of *yang* and *laiwang* cycles. The event should occur in accordance with the family's capacity and are ways in which people seek to accumulate prestige. In this way, when Delun and Daiyu got married in a luxury hotel they were not only displaying wealth and prestige, but as filial children they were also returning prestige to their parents. The same principle of repayment by spending money and assigning prestige can be applied to the funeral described where the deceased children and grandchildren, especially the older daughter who assumed a major role, and together with the members of the congregation, pay homage and attach prestige to the woman who was passing to the status of ancestor. This death ritual in particular was organized by a Buddhist order and association originated in Taiwan whose discourses and practices tend to move away from practices associated with Chinese folk religion such as the ritual burning of paper money or the more recent burning of real money (see Yang 2000). However the principle of ritual excess in terms of displaying wealth and prestige is also there, in that this funeral cost several tens of thousands of Euros, and it may be as conspicuous as the practice of burning real money. So cycles of *yang* and *laiwang* described by Stafford (2000) also consist in a ritual exchange of prestige, where sons seek to repay prestige to their parents and ancestors and guests. Indeed the more prominent guests also lend some of their prestige in being present in ceremonies, either weddings or funerals.

At this point, in trying to make sense of this interplay between change and continuity in Chinese rituals, considering the accounts of the global flows of things, cultural meanings and ideas (Hannerz 1996; Appadurai 1991), but also according the subject the capacity to create their own identity through consumption (Miller 1998), I cannot help thinking (again) of Lévi-Strauss's (1962) *bricoleur* metaphor to describe the way a kind of Chinese mode of ordering the world is maintained, whereby in a creative way new materials are used and attuned to old significations in order to reinvent them.

The same reasoning underlies Jonathan Friedman's (1994) analysis of the expansion of modernity ideas in the world. Friedman actually considers that these 'new' objects and ideas about being modern strengthen native logics, because there is a tendency to use them in a congruous manner with native cosmologies (Friedman 1994: 28–32). My observations suggest that the notion of the 'indigenization of modernity' (Sahlins 1999) is also useful to understand the way Chinese people resort to a modernity discourse to combine ritual and consumption, while reaffirming moral values linked to reciprocity and the accumulation of prestige through ritual exchange. The 'obligation of wealth' (Yang 2000: 487) is an important component of these ritual practices, and accounts at least in part for the spirit of competition and desire to become wealthy among people in Wenzhou and in many other places in China. In this context, migration appears as a way of achieving the necessary resources to fulfill social obligations and compete socially in this wealth displaying and prestige accumulation practices.

In the next section I will explore how consumption of goods, namely luxury items, is also incorporated in this cultural logic.

Handbags: luxury and counterfeiting in social life

Just a fifteen minute walk away from Martim Moniz is Liberdade Avenue, a boulevard of restaurants, cafés, hotels and the place where you find luxury brand boutiques in Lisbon. It was some of this avenue's most exclusive stores that Daiyu visited in an autumn afternoon in 2009 looking to buy items from a list of products that had been sent to her by her sister in Beijing. She was able to buy the Dunhill and Gucci brand belts her sister asked, but the Louis Vuitton purse she was dreaming about was only available on request. In total Daiyu spent almost a thousand Euros on purchases that she would send back to Beijing through relatives. It was the first time Daiyu herself had entered these stores in Lisbon. She usually did her shopping in her hometown in China (whenever she went back), in Chinese shops in the Martim Moniz area and in some medium-rank brand stores in outlet shopping malls in the Lisbon area. When I asked her what she thought about her sister's expensive tastes, she told me: "It's a question of choice, you know? It's not that I do not have that money, it's just that I choose not to spend it in that way." The list with names and references of products included also the prices in China, and Daiyu was specifically asked to confirm that the prices were lower.

In China foreign brand items are generally more expensive due to a 'luxury tax', an aggregate of VAT and import taxes that considerably raises the prices of imported goods in China. The increasing demand for luxury products and their higher prices in mainland China during the last decade has made Hong Kong a big shopping mall for mainland Chinese tourists who queue at the door of the most expensive stores. Chinese who cannot travel abroad, but who have relatives, say, in Portugal, ask them to purchase these kind of prestigious European and American luxury brand goods in outlets or in regular stores. This shopping-by-proxy strategy allows them to save a few hundred Euros in taxes and, at the same time, to capitalize on the fact that the item was purchased abroad, as if goods obtained this way were even more original and modern than those acquired in China.[73]

On another occasion Daiyu was visited by an old friend who had come to a conference in Europe. As a good cicerone, Daiyu prepared an entertaining program, which included a tour around Lisbon's shopping centers, where her friend expected to buy European brand items at lower prices than in China. Notwithstanding, prices in outlets and regular stores in Portugal are still expensive and Daiyu's friend left Europe a little frustrated: she wanted to buy an expensive Swiss brand watch and a luxury French designer handbag, instead all she could bring home from these shopping temples was a Swatch brand watch and a Mango brand bag, which she later discovered was made in China. Brand products of European and American origin, which have became global icons of luxury, are the evidence of cosmopolitanism and modernity to be taken home from a trip to Europe. Chinese working in Portugal as guides for Chinese tourists coming from mainland China told me about their clients' shopping preferences in going to places where they can buy good quality products at lower prices, and that many times they complain because they expected that products of globally renowned brands would be much cheaper there.

The contemporary eagerness for luxury foreign brands in China contrasts sharply with the attitude of indifference displayed by Qianlong Emperor to the McCartney Embassy presents (Sahlins 1994), which were framed as the traditional tribute from barbarian peoples to the Chinese emperor (Gernet 1974–1975; and

[73] Things of 'Western origin' have been described in different ethnographic contexts in different historical moments as carrying values of modernity (Gardner 1995; Hansen 1995; Watson 1997; Mapril 2008) and civilization (Hugh-Jones 1992).

Fairbank 1992).[74] However, the contempt showed by imperial authorities in this specific occasion was more a manifestation of superiority toward foreign peoples than of disdain for foreign things, which were considered exotic and were objects of desire for emperors and empresses throughout Chinese history (Dikötter 2006: 26). In an impressively detailed historical account of opium consumption in China from the fifteenth century until 1949, Zheng Yangwen demonstrates how Chinese emperors became great lovers of foreign products, namely opium and tobacco. The consumption of these exotic products (which arrived at the court as tribute) began as a marker of social distinction in Bourdieu's sense (1979), but in time it also filtered down to the lower classes. Zheng Yangwen argues that the expansion of the consumption of opium, tobacco and other products of foreign origin in China followed a 'Chinese law of consumption', meaning that in order to be widely consumed in China a foreign product must be harmonized with Chinese social values and cultural practices (2005: 206).

Yunxian's Yan (1997) research on the MacDonald's fast-food company in Beijing in the 1990s, points in the same direction considering the different interpretations and implications of a fast-food meal in China, and the company's localization strategies in order to successfully adapt to the Beijing context. But whereas opium was considered exotic by emperors in the fifteenth century, at the end of the twentieth century MacDonald's fast food was seen as an experience of modernity (Mintz 1997). This transition from exotic to modern occurred at the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) when, as noted in Chapter 1, China became exposed to Western modernity's ideas, technology and goods. Western things were thus no longer seen as exotic and conceived in the classic tribute view, but are increasingly understood as superior and more advanced, thus as modern. In *Exotic Commodities* (2006), Frank Dikötter (2006: 45) describes the creative appropriation of foreign goods by different Chinese classes during that period:

> In a country marked by opposition between the poverty of the many and the riches of the few, luxury imports were used by elites as visual evidence of social status, while cheap imitations satisfied the demand for new products among

[74] For a fine description of Lord McCartney's embassy to the Qianlong court see Alain Peyrefitte (1989).

> ordinary people: both were included in a culture which worshipped the tangible and craved the new.

At the turn of the twentieth century Chinese imperial power was under great pressure, both foreign and internal, to open to foreign trade and modernize. These internal struggles between conservative and modernizing forces were also manifest in different attitudes toward foreign things. While there were conservative elites who refused to buy foreign goods for political reasons, generally foreign things were enthusiastically received by all classes of society due to their practical utility, particularly by the poor who had access to an imitation market (Dikötter 2006). In this period the consumption of foreign goods and their imitations can be seen as expressions of a modernizing desire among Chinese population opposing imperial conservative power. Using de Certeau's (1980) terminology, we could perhaps see this appropriation of foreign things through consumption as a form of 'subversion'. Money and material things were then the more visible face of Western modernity in China (Croll 2006) and Western models of economic development based on its material achievements, namely on science and technology, became ideals to be followed and imitated, though there was always an anxiety concerning the continuity of a Chinese identity (Mitter 2004). In the context of a quest for China's economic and political strengthening, people were encouraged to produce and consume Chinese imitations of Western things, nevertheless Chinese imitations continued to be seen as of lower rank (Dikötter 2006). If consumption became part of Chinese modern and urban life during the republican era, it was later purged from the Maoist Chinese modernity version. The Maoist emphasis on production and equality led to the eradication of free markets and to the strict control of consumption by the state. Consumption and wealth became heavily penalized, politically and socially.

The return to market and private enterprise after 1978 caused the reemergence of consumption practices linked with ideas of being advanced, modern, developed, progressive, Western, cosmopolite or global (Ikels 1996; Croll 2006), thus reusing previous binary categories which associated foreign products to original and high quality and Chinese one to imitation and low quality. This dichotomy encapsulates a discourse of social affirmation and accumulation of prestige, through conspicuous consumption based on luxury products mainly of foreign origin and a general

depreciation of Chinese imitations and original brand products. The acquisition of luxury items is part of the phenomenon associated with a growing urban and enriched middle class born out of the economic reforms after 1978, whose lifestyle is acting as an ideal to other, lower classes.

As seen in Chapter 2, Wenzhou was one of the first places where the economic success of the market reforms was observed and where it was followed by a culture of consumption, ritual expenditure and gift-giving practices as displays of wealth and modernity. Starting from the coastal urban centers (where reforms where first felt), these trends in consumption and ritual expenditure spread across China together with economic growth and social inequality, in such a way that Chao and Myers (1998) speak about a consumer revolution in China during the 1990s. In Chapter 2, I have already pointed out how houses and cars became the first markers of wealth and success in Wenzhou, and that other important expressions of conspicuous consumption, including fashion, are all part of a modern image. The popularity of globally known fashion design brands in China and their association with modernity in the post-Mao era can be observed in the transformation of China's large cities centers into shopping malls where costly brand stores multiply. Boutique shops of French and Italian brands have acquired a prominent place in a Chinese luxury market targeted to affluent middle classes, as manifested in the heart of Shanghai where the outer wall of Nanjing West Road's most exclusive shopping mall is a Louis Vuitton suitcase.

Photograph 13: The outer wall of Plaza 66 Shopping Mall at Nanjing West Road, Shanghai (Source: Irene Rodrigues May 2010).

The architectural and artistic investments made by these luxury brands have contributed to the aesthetic enrichment of the places where set up shop, confirming them as symbols of a modern and urban Chinese lifestyle. As a symbol of wealth and success, Louis Vuitton and other fashion designer brands are used to stand for China's post-Mao materialist values.

During my fieldwork in Lisbon I came to realize that one of the most desired and commented upon objects of consumption among my female Chinese interlocutors were designer handbags, especially of the brand *Luyi Wei Deng* (Louis Vuitton). My focus on purses and handbags is related to the impressive pervasiveness of these kinds of luxury items, original or counterfeit, among the Chinese women I met. As I described above, these objects connected people, either by fulfilling the request of a relative or a friend who wished to acquire one of these objects, or by acting as gifts in the maintenance of friendship and business relations. The money spent by people on these kinds of fashion items, and information on how and where to buy cheap originals or fake but rather faithful imitations, were common conversation topics in Lisbon. While doing fieldwork in China in 2010, I realized that many of the women I came across, migrants and non-migrants, in Wenzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing as well as in northeast China, possessed at least one Louis Vuitton handbag, original or fake.[75] My ethnography may in fact point to a gender aspect of luxury spending and desire among Chinese people, though that is not entirely the case. If many women I met dreamed about having a top brand purse, men also cherished the desire to drive a top German brand car. Furthermore, men also participate in the fashion luxury market while shopping for expensive brand shirts, shoes and watches, among other items.

Money making and money spending are hot topics in Chinese talks. Some of my interlocutors enjoyed describing to each other in detail the prices of their houses, household furniture, cars, children's college tuition, as well as the brands and prices of their clothes and accessories, cell phones, laptops, inter alia. Minzhu, a shop assistant in

[75] Since the opening of the first Louis Vuitton store in mainland China in 1992, the brand has expanded in line with China's economic growth rhythm. The internet site of the company shows 34 flagship stores in mainland China, from Harbin to Kunming. When compared to Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, which altogether make up 20 stores, or with the hundreds of stores in the United States, it is not much considering China's population, but it gives evidence of China's amazing growth in the consumption of luxury brands in the last two decades.

Martim Moniz, described to me how she spent around twenty per cent of her monthly salary on two fake Louis Vuitton articles, a purse and a handbag, that she asked a friend to bring from a shopping center specializing in this kind of goods in Guangdong. While we were strolling around her hometown in northeast China, we visited a recently opened shopping mall composed of luxury stores such as Louis Vuitton. Mingzhu proudly show me her fake Louis Vuitton articles similar to the original ones on display in the store. Her brother came with us on this tour and took note of some products in those stores, such as shoes and bags that he wanted her to bring from Portugal. Mingzhu like many of her countrymen decided to leave the country in order to improve her and her family's future. In Portugal she continues to struggle daily with long working hours and enduring privations and, as an employee working for others, she continues to be in a bottom position. The counterfeit market allows people like Mingzhu to fulfill their ambition of participating in China's new modern identity and lifestyle by exhibiting some markers of prestige and success and engaging in the social flows of exchange, reciprocities and conversations involving these objects. Maybe that is the contradiction goods came to solve in Chinese social life (Douglas and Isherwood 1980). In Chinese migrants' lives in particular, acquiring luxury items attenuates the contradiction between the expectations of wealth and the hardships of real life.

As a form of accumulation and affirmation of social prestige, migrants capitalize on conspicuous consumption as evidence of their upward social mobility and success through migration. The possession and display of different kinds of consumer goods allows migrants to reposition themselves in the social scale and claim a modern identity, also observed by Gardner (1995) and Osella and Osella (2004) and Mapril (2012). The exhibition of things such as a luxury brand handbag is clearly a mode of sending social mobility messages, though it may have different readings according to the type of handbag a person acquires. The Chinese counterfeit industry itself has been adapting to different customers in such a way that there are now in China different quality and price ranges of counterfeit goods. A frugal Chinese shop assistant in Martim Moniz such as Mingzhu uses her 'perfect counterfeit' Louis Vuitton to express this, even if she is only doing well enough to afford a quality copy of a prestigious brand. Huiqing, co-owner of a business in Martim Moniz, prefers to buy original products, but to do this in outlet stores. In this way she can enjoy the social reputation of exhibiting original products without spending a small fortune on their acquisitions.

These strategies also demonstrate the cleverness of customers in possessing very similar articles and spending much less money. But the value of designer brands is not limited to their ostentatious value, they may be considered literally an investment. A middle class woman from Beijing told me that, whereas a common brand bag had no value in the next season, a Louis Vuitton bag had even more value, and that was the reason why she possessed five of them. In a kind of capitalist investment logic another common explanation I was given to account for Chinese luxury tastes was that to display expensive, quality and foreign luxury products was good for business. In fact, these products may convey an image of quality, modernity and success business people wish to transmit to their clients and business partners. Yet I wonder if this totally accounts for the enthusiasm surrounding luxury goods among Chinese, and if luxury objects have an additional value in China, considering that lately consumer goods have become objects of worship, like a cargo-cult (Croll 2006: 24).

Photograph 14: Monument to Gucci bags, Nanjing West Road Shanghai (Source: Irene Rodrigues May 2010).

During my stay in Shanghai in 2010 I came across a monument designed by a Chinese artist, and located in Nanjing West Road, precisely at the heart of the city, whose label indicates it was homage to Gucci bags (see Photography 14). This religious aspect of luxury consumption in post-Mao China leads me to ask to what extent luxury consumption is linked to Chinese religious logic, and whether there are many practical differences between the interpretation and incorporation of Western goods in a post-

Mao modernity narrative and the way in which Hawaiians and Kwakiutl incorporated Western goods into their native cosmologies in the nineteenth century (see Sahlins 1994). What I am trying to argue is that the enthusiasm and the significance of money and luxury consumption in contemporary China may reflect their incorporation in Chinese cosmological ideas and religious practices. In Chapter 5 I demonstrated how new elements related to the idea of modernity were symbolically interpreted in the semantic field of auspiciousness, and how new practices such as the visit to a Catholic sanctuary seem to point to new practices of attracting fortune. Considering the plasticity and openness of Chinese analogical classification, the great significance attached to money, wealth and luxury, and actions undertaken to achieve them, namely migration, I think that consumption of luxury items, apart from being a conspicuous consumption, also plays a role in religious practices for attracting fortune. According to the form of incorporation and reasoning of Chinese folk religion, as symbols of prestige, success and wealth luxury items also attract these benefits. In this line of reasoning, to be in possession of luxury objects may be a way of attracting wealth and prestige as well. Hence, to buy a fake or original Louis Vuitton can be seen in part as having the same practical significance as buying a money-tree to decorate a living room – the aim of both is to attract wealth.

Emotion and the morality of migration money

Despite the fact that today access to consumption goods is mediated essentially through money, my observations point to a moral discourse emerging alongside and associated with consumption and the spending of money among Chinese. Regardless of the enormous pressure to display wealth, money expenditures should be the expression of a person and her family's social and economic situation. If a person spends all her money in consumption and does not share it with others she is not considered a proper moral person. In the same way ritual excess is a form of redistribution of wealth, consumption should also be part of this exchange and reciprocity culture and should not put it in danger.

Occasionally, once or twice a year, the Foguangshan temple organizes public lectures on Buddhist philosophy given by prominent masters of the movement. In November 2008, a Malaysian master doing service in mainland China came to Lisbon

to give a lecture on 'The DNA of the mind'. The speech was delivered in one of the auditoriums of the University of Lisbon, and which on that Sunday afternoon was filled almost entirely with Chinese migrants. The lecture dealt with the human emotions (*xinli*), as a way of explaining the importance of the senses in the transmission of information to the mind and the storage of emotions and images.[76] The master explained that emotions stay in the mind in a similar way to memory (*jiyili*) and may act upon individual lives as karma (*yinguo*). In order to better explain the effects of emotions in the spirit, the speaker used several parables. In the following excerpt from my diary I transcribe parts of this lecture, namely some of these small stories addressing questions of money and morality in migration. I will use them as a starting point to discuss Chinese migrants' uses of money and its relation to the constitution of a moral Chinese person.

> (…) "Two men, a rich man and a poor man, meet a beggar on the street. The rich man thinks: 'I will not give anything because if I give him a part of my fortune, I will no longer be so rich.' The poor man thinks: 'I would like to give something because this man is very *kelian* (poor, miserable), but I have nothing to give.' The two men died at the same time and when they come to court (at this stage they still have the eighth consciousness) they are given the same option: to be the type of person that every day gives money or to be the type of person that every day receives money. The rich man chooses to receive money every day and the poor man chooses to give money every day. Both reincarnate, the rich man reincarnated in a bum, and the poor man reincarnated in a rich man." After this story, the master initiates a whole discourse around money and wealth, noting that money is important, but that money only serves to create *guanxi* (connection, affection). He then restarts a round of illustrations on how money should be used. (…) "If we pass in front of a store and saw a jewel that we love, and we can't stop thinking about this jewel (it can also be brand clothing or a car), the conclusion is that we must *kongzhi ziji* (control ourselves), to control our mind and to be happy with what we have. But money is important to buy gifts for our parents and our family. Thus, money and wealth are good for

[76] *Xinli* literally means 'in the heart'.

> creating connections with others and emotion in a positive way: making others happy." After he gives examples of links between *qian* (money) and *shehui guanxi* (social relations): "Chinese migrants come to Portugal in order to *zhuanqian* (make money), and they call other relatives and friends who are still in China to also come and make money. This creates a connection. But it is important that people do not become *zisi* (selfish) as happened to the man in the story, or else they will reincarnate in a worse manner. Everything that is done in this life is related to the previous lives. (…) The only solution to escape reincarnation is the perfection of behavior. This is the most important." (…) The master concluded by stressing that Buddhism wants *dajia facai* (everyone to be rich), but it takes emotional intelligence to know how to deal with the eighth consciousness and reincarnation.

In addressing the issue of money and wealth distribution in moral terms, the speaker's discourse is positioned midway between the Buddhist contempt for material things and Chinese migrants desire to be rich. Several Buddhist texts emphasize this ethical behaviour concerning money and presents (see Bary and Bloom, 1999). This positioning related to the proselytizing function of these lectures, but also resonates with the Foguangshan approach to Buddhism (a subject that falls beyond the scope of this dissertation). One of the central themes of the lecture ended up being how to turn the materialist desire to get rich into moral actions. While the master supports the control of 'selfish consumption', his words express Chinese traditional morality in dealing with consumption and wealth desires. The morality underlying social relations and gift-giving was thoroughly described by Yunxiang Yan (1996) in *The Flow of the Gifts*, an ethnography of a north China village where Yan shows how *guanxi* building encompasses the relations of proximity established by a person in a more close-knit and emotional form of *guanxi* typical of rural places, than the more distant relations involved in the *guanxixue* described in post-Mao urban China (see Yang 1994).

Earlier in this chapter I drew attention to the meaning of social prestige accumulation among Chinese, and in this section I would like to emphasize the significance of affection (*renqing*) in the establishment of social relations under the cycles of *yang* and *laiwang* and in the constitution of a moral Chinese person. This is an

extremely complex and embracing theme in China, and so my approach here will address how these issues are related and interact with new challenges posed by migration. As I mentioned before, it is my conviction that migration in China and from China is related to a desire to improve the material conditions of living as an obligation of parents towards children and of children towards old parents, but also to a desire to improve social status in the community, namely by being able to meet solicitations for an exchange of gifts among networks of relatives, friends and acquaintances. In a certain way such a predicament is expressed in the following outburst by one of my Chinese friends in Lisbon: "We Chinese live for others, we don't live for ourselves." Living for others and for future generations is at the center of the constitution of the Chinese family and of Chinese migration projects.[77]

A 27-year-old woman from Wenzhou, married and recently pregnant, shared with me some of her views concerning marriage and family in China. When we talked she was exultant about her pregnancy. According to her it was of paramount importance for marriage in that it is only after the birth of the first child that the couple really unites in common goals. These common goals are the future and the wellbeing of the family, which is achieved by working hard and making money. Based on Marcel Granet's findings, Marcel Mauss (1938) argued that in China there was no development towards individuality as in the Christian world because the person proceeded to be seen as part of a collective, whose moral rules Confucianism helped to establish through the *wulun* (five relations) theory.[78] Thus the constitution of a social person is done through reference to relations to others, through an ethics of reciprocity and obligation (Walshe 1916: 17). A good future implies a good education for the child and this implies a lot of money in China. A good parent, especially a good father and husband, is the one who is always providing for his family even if that means being away from them most of the time. I listen to the same type of discourse from Chinese migrants in Lisbon while making sense of their experiences of hard work and separation from other family

[77] The use of migration money to fulfill social obligations towards family, relatives and friends is by no means a Chinese migration peculiarity (see Osella and Osella 2000 and Watkins 2004).

[78] The theory of the five relationships (*wulun*) conceives that the whole of Chinese society is organized according to the following five types of social relationships: ruler/ruled, father/son, older brother/younger brother, husband/wife, friend/friend. Except for the last one, all these relationships are hierarchical and bonded by duty and obedience (Baker 1979).

members, namely their children. To provide better opportunities for their children and a livelihood for their ageing parents were the most common justifications of migration that I heard. The great investment made in education by middle-class families in China is closely followed by lower layers of the population in ambitions relating to social mobility.

As Mary W. Crabb (2010), following Anagnost, argues, Chinese middle-class parents have become consumers/investors in a transnational education that will allow the achievement of promises of a Chinese cosmopolitan modernity (2010: 387). This investment has the effect of raising standards in the *yang* cycle. It is expected that parents provide a good education for their children and that this great investment will bring reciprocation for parents not only in terms of providing their livelihood, but also in prestige and social recognition for having educated such a successful person. Whenever a person does good or bad actions, parents are seen as responsible for their acts in the way they were responsible for their education.[79] It is common for parents to apologize for an adult son's behavior, such as having committed adultery or for gambling, and receive compliments from other people when he does good deeds, like showing altruistic behavior in helping others or being successful professionally. In this way, the *yang* cycle comprises also the idea of reciprocating prestige for the investment made by parents. The one-child policy also contributed to raising standards in education and in payback because parents have only one child to rely on. In Wenzhou and in Lisbon I could observe the seriousness surrounding children's schooling.

In Wenzhou, the children I met from local resident families and from migrant families all spent the entire week away from home in boarding schools or in teachers' homes (in the case of children still attending elementary school). Secondary schools are mostly boarding schools where children stay from Monday to Friday and, in some cases during the weekends also, being allowed to come out only once a month. Spending more time in school is understood by parents and teachers as offering more time for learning and so more chance of being successful. If children are very good students, the most prestigious schools may offer scholarships to encourage them to stay, but if they are medium or low-rank students parents told me that they have to give money to teachers and other staff in schools in order to ensure their children will enter a good

[79] Formal education in China is seen as imparting ethical values in the Confucian tradition of scholars (Maclagan 1916; Stafford 1995).

school. Parents still multiply their efforts to improve children's grades and chances of success by sending them to external tutors at weekends and holidays. Thus the pressure to be successful, and the weight of reciprocity, starts very early in life through school.

There is a great debate around the pressure exerted on children by parents in order to provide them a good education and ensure a successful future. Among parents, grandparents, teachers and senior students alike, there is a widespread and growing tendency to consider the number of hours of study excessive, and the importance given to a graduation for a person's success overrated, when comparing the condition of contemporary children with children from other generations in China and to students in other countries. In this debate the experiences of migrant children in foreign countries are used as a measure of comparison. But conversations almost always end up with parents arguing that they could not do otherwise, considering the immense population of China and the few opportunities for people without good social contacts (*guanxi*). So to provide an outstanding education is all a good parent can do for a child. Due to the immense pressure to be successful (which means mostly to be rich), migration is the exit not only for people with low education, but also for many graduates in China. In Lisbon I met several people that, although graduates from a Chinese university, choose to come abroad looking to seek out opportunities for being successful.

In Portugal, the education of children is also part of the financial effort and social mobility investments and expectations of Chinese migrants. Depending on the financial situation of the family, there are different levels of investment and expectation. Many families choose to leave their children in China in an expensive boarding school (by Chinese standards) or in custody with relatives, such as grandparents and uncles. However to leave a child in China has its costs. To take care of other people's children implies transfers of money not only to cover the child's expenses, but also as a payment for the service. Sometimes the amount of expenses requested by relatives are sources of distrust and anxiety for migrants, who suspect people are taking advantage of the situation. In this situation parents visit children usually only once a year, which leads to another problem: some children transfer their affection to grandparents and uncles and see parents as strangers. This situation may endanger the normal course of reciprocation in the future. The ideal situation is in fact to keep children in Portugal near them. Even then many Chinese parents decide to leave their children in China before they reach school age and beyond, because kindergartens and nannies in Portugal are rather

expensive and do not completely release them from parenting obligations. Because of this some parents leave children with Portuguese nannies all week, a practice I trace from the late 1980s (Rodrigues 2009) and which has caused great controversy among Chinese migrants.

During fieldwork I talked to a sixty-year-old Portuguese woman who took care of several children all week for less than 300 Euros. For many parents it has been the solution to continue their hard working practices, though there is a great discussion regarding the effects on the child's relationship to her parents and to her Chineseness. People commented on cases of children from Chinese parents who had been raised by Portuguese nannies and who ended up not establishing an emotional relationship with their parents. Children learn to speak Portuguese, while parents only speak Chinese, which troubles very much their mutual understanding. I got to know the case of a boy who as an adult looked for comfort and advice from his Portuguese nanny and treated his parents as strangers. It is important to note that this situation of separation between parents and children in favour of work is very common in China and is by no means an uncommon feature of Chinese migration in Portugal.

In Portugal many Chinese children attend public schools, but there are also many children of Chinese business people in Martim Moniz attending expensive private schools in Lisbon and on the outskirts, especially elite private schools in the Cascais area. The fact that families can afford investments of thousands to tens of thousands of Euros annually in private schools can act as a form of conspicuous consumption and also an investment in upward social mobility in the next generation.[80] Many Chinese I met in Martim Moniz had their children in private schools and many others dream about it. Among parents top preferences are schools that appear in the top of national ranks, and schools that pay special attention to the learning of a language other than Portuguese, especially English. Since very early, Chinese parents start to think of the possibility of sending their children to study in world-class universities in the UK and USA. Some of them succeed in going to these countries to pursue graduate studies sponsored by their parents' businesses in Portugal. In some of these cases the parents themselves had hardly completed compulsory schooling in China (the ninth grade), have a poor knowledge of the Portuguese language, conduct their businesses in Martim

[80] In his research among middle-class Bangladeshis in Portugal and in Daka, Mapril (2010) also noted the phenomenon of education as consumption.

Moniz and live nearby in modest apartments. When I ask about the reasons for such a big investment in their children's education, usually people point to the parents' social aspirations and the desire to provide children with an education that ensures their future. Some people added that parents want to ensure their children will make good *guanxi* among the Portuguese elite in private schools.

Other people consider it simply a way of displaying wealth. If we consider education as consumption, the principles governing the acquisition of luxury handbags can be applied to elite schools, both act as symbols of wealth and both work for 'attracting' it. In Lisbon, as in China, overinvestment in education is also the cause of talk and critique, especially where it appears to be moved by a great desire for social recognition. Talking to children's parents about their choices, many simply expressed to me how they wish to give a good education to their children so that they will have a better life. Among Chinese parents in Lisbon I also found a great concern with learning the Chinese language. Most children attend Chinese school on Saturdays or alternatively have private classes at home.[81] Many of those who never studied in China are sent by parents to spend a semester or two studying in a Chinese university after secondary school or after graduation in order to improve their Chinese skills. Parents think children should learn Chinese to better understand family members, because the Chinese language is fundamental to their Chineseness, but also for their future in business or perhaps in China.[82]

These investments in education are perceived by parents as investments in *yang* and as *renqing* (affection), and seen by children as expressions of parental concern and

[81] The Chinese School of Lisbon was founded at the end of the 1990s by Chinese students of Portuguese language in Lisbon together with Puhuabao, the first Chinese language newspaper in Portugal. During the 2000s the school worked on Saturdays in the School of Chinese Traditional Medicine in Portas de Santo Antão St., near Martim Moniz. In 2007 it moved and held its activities in a public primary school in Novas Nações Square, on the eastern side of Almirante Reis Avenue, also not very far away from Martim Moniz. At the end of the 2000s the school had around 700 children in different levels, including a course on the Chinese language for non-Chinese children. Nowadays the school is managed by a Chinese association run by the school teachers, which organizes other cultural activities such as New Year and end of school year celebrations and dance classes. In 2009 they rented an apartment in Almirante Reis Avenue and moved some of their activities there, including after school activities during the week.

[82] The fact that China's power is rising on the international scene in economic and political terms has awakened Chinese parents even more to the importance of learning Chinese.

as a gift they must repay. Chinese migrants whose parents invested heavily in their education, especially in university, exhibit a great sense of debt and feel very much obliged to repay the older generation. They acknowledge that their parents worked very hard and have lived a very frugal life precisely to provide them with an outstanding educational opportunity. The obligation of *yang* is thus an important theme underlying Chinese migration. Besides providing education for their children, many migrants told me that one of their first objectives was to buy a new house for their parents in China, as well as to provide enough to afford them a comfortable life. Depending on place and social origin in China, this may mean giving a worthy house to parents who used to live in rather poor conditions, or to provide them with a new house in a better social environment. After only a few years in Portugal Dong managed to gave his parents a new home which cost him some hundred Euros. Migration also enabled him to pay for his father's medical treatment after he had a stroke. Besides that, since he arrived in Portugal, every year he sends them some hundred Euros for their livelihood.

Dong sees these money transfers as his own obligation as son. As a symbol of wealth and status, houses are significant gifts in the *yang* cycle. Daiyu told me many times that her great ambition was to make enough money to afford a house for her parents. Even though they had recently bought a new house in China, Daiyu told me she thinks she should be the one paying for the house as a way of rewarding them for many years of privation and effort to put her through study. Children perceive education as a gift that must be repaid, and before reciprocation is made children carry a feeling of debt toward their parents.

The importance of feelings for the flow of money among parents and children is more clearly seen in the case of Sun and Ma's, my hosts in China, bond to their children. All their children regularly give them money according to their own income, except one daughter who has run a small business in Italy for more than twenty years and who has never given money to her parents. The situation is a matter of discussion in the family, not only because she refuses "to be the parents' daughter", as one of them put it, but also because she refuses to engage in ritual exchange of money with her siblings. This does not in fact mean that she has abandoned her parents whatsoever – she calls them every day and whenever she goes to China brings them gifts from Europe and buys them presents; but she never gives them money. In the family they say that because she

has been away for a long time already, she and her Chinese husband have gone *waiguoren* (foreigner).[83]

According to my Chinese interlocutors in Portugal and in China, to be a good Chinese person is also to be a good child, which implies giving money to parents. This is perceived as one of the distinctive features of Chinese people, and an important distinction between Chinese and 'foreigners' (Europeans in this case).[84] According to my Chinese interlocutors that is the main reason why Chinese parents strongly discourage their children from marrying foreigners. In a country where the great majority of the people do not have a retirement pension or access to health care for free, children play a fundamental role in parents' old age. This situation became even more serious due to the one-child policy, which reduces parents' sources of future of income.

I heard a similar concern from Chinese parents in China, who expressed to me their anxieties over their children's decisions to follow the foreigners' path (*zou waiguorende lu*), which may mean to abandon the family and Chinese ways (such as the giving money obligation). This kind of discourse may give the idea that giving money to parents is a universal practice in China, and although it is a very generalized practice especially among lowers classes and in rural areas, among urban middle-class families entitled to retirement, the practice of giving money, when it happens, is more symbolic than practical. So, the practice of providing for parents' livelihood, food, sickness and housing is linked to the situation of most Chinese people who do not have a retirement pension and their livelihood depends on a moral distribution of wealth by informal networks such as the *yang* cycle. Actually parents should not work until too late (not after 60 years old) because by then they should already be supported by their children. The increase in life expectancy today causes many situations in which children give money to parents, who share a part of it with their own still-living parents. The economic reforms of the 1980s brought about the free market but did not bring social security or health care for all. The idioms of morality and affection used to generate solidarity among generations at a time when life expectancy increased and the number of children for couples decreased contributes to the pressure on younger generations.

[83] *Waiguoren* is used to describe any non-Chinese person, but in this context refers especially to Westerners whose societies are seen as based on individualism and contempt for the family.

[84] In Fiji, Toren (1989) also found a notion of Europeans as amoral and whose focus on money was conceived as the cause of alienation from the family.

Before 1949, women were seen as provisional members of their families of origin in that after marriage they would integrate with their husband's family. Sons, especially the firstborn, were seen as having the obligation to provide for parents in their old age (Baker 1979).[85] The effort of Maoism to promote equality among daughters and sons in the family and women's emancipation through work (Croll 1995; Wolf 1985) helped to establish closer ties between parents and their daughters. The firstborn male continued to be perceived as a compulsory provider whereas daughters with an income tend to be seen as having the moral obligation to share that wealth with parents. If a woman does not work she is not obliged to contribute, unless she is an only child and her parents have no other income sources. In a certain way female practices of gift-giving seem to be more an expression of *renqing* (affection) than a moral obligation.

It was precisely by acknowledging the importance of affection in the flows of money that Huifang commented on the Chinese preferences for sons in contemporary China. Huifang's first child is a girl and because they live in a rural area they were authorized to have another child eight years later, to try to have a boy, which they had. When I ask her why it was so important for them to have a son, she thought for a moment and then told me:

> I think people don't think very well when they said they want a son. People used to like sons because of the land, the daughters did not get land, but today land is not important anymore and people still want sons. They think wrongly! Nowadays after marriage sons go with their wives families and daughters always stay more close to parents. Besides that today girls also earn money so they can provide for parents as much as sons. Sometimes they even gave more money than sons because they feel more close to them.

[85] In China there is a traditional association between many children and prosperity, children being seen as a form of wealth. This fact might suggest a form of social organization of wealth similar to wealth-in-people in equatorial Africa (Guyer and Belinga 1995). Although whereas wealth-in-people is characterized by accumulation strategies, where people are seen as important assets, the *yang and laiwang* cycles (Stafford 2000) in China consists in networks of related people that exchange things among them. Children are important for what they may bring in return. In a time when the Chinese family is shrinking, families have less and less people in their network of exchange, so invest more in the only or few children they have expecting as much in return.

Huifang is here acknowledging the importance of the expression of emotion through the transfers of money from daughters to parents in a time when women's emancipation provides them, in many cases, with their own income. This points to what João Pina-Cabral has described as "the apparent incongruity between the symbolic subalternity and the practical empowerment of Southern Chinese middle class women " (Pina-Cabral 2002: 179).

A person is constituted as a moral person not only by her relation to children, parents and parents-in-law in the cycle of *yang*, but also by engaging in a series of ritual exchanges in order to establish *guanxi* relations with siblings, distant relatives and friends, which correspond to what Charles Stafford (2000) called the *laiwang* cycle. As Yunxiang Yan (1996) sees it, *guanxi* is a way of building a social world and also a way of culturally constructing oneself. This gift economy existed before 1949 and did not stop during Maoism, although it underwent change and transformation (Yan 1996: 249). Yan identified the introduction of new gift-giving rituals such as house construction, birth celebrations and when women were subjected to sterilization, and a purge of religious elements from gift-giving rituals. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, ritual celebrations tend to occur through the offering of food at banquets, though banquets are part of wider ritual exchanges involving other things, namely money, goods and/or services.

In April 2010 I attended a banquet in Wenzhou aimed at celebrating the buying of a new house by the brother of Huiqing. She explained to me that when she arrived she gave her brother 2000 Euros as a gift for his new house. The brother accepted the money and held a banquet for his sister, inviting all the members of the family (parents, sister and brother-in-law, and nephews). He paid for the banquet with the money his sister gave him, around 300 Euros, and a few days before she left to Portugal, he returned her another part of that money, around 400 Euros. In the end he kept around 1300 Euros as a gift. People are requested to offer money in very different events such as weddings, funerals or paying a visit to an ill person. And the inability to have enough money to fulfill these *laiwang* obligations was also part of the reasons to migrate in search of money.

Migrants are away from their families during long periods of time and so their return home is itself an event that needs to be celebrated, and one that requires gift-

giving, especially money. Some migrants told me that they avoid going back many times because when they are in China they have to spend money all the time and resources are scarce in this gift economy.[86] In this way they choose whom they want to make and maintain *guanxi* with and gift-giving is established only with those persons. As Foster (2008) noted in Melanesian societies, the exchange of gifts implies a creative value, which in this case adds moral value to things exchanged. Sun explained to me that he has a lot of brothers and sister, but he never tells them whenever his sisters from Europe are in town, if he announced it the whole family would come to see them and the sisters would have to give them money. Gifts are not danger free (Parry 1989) in the sense that the reciprocity obligation may brings moral perils for a person involved in a *guanxi*, especially in a long distance one (Yang 1994; Stafford 2006).

In this *guanxi* building strategy, gift-giving is usually limited to close members of the family, which may consist of ten to twenty people or more, including parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, in-laws and nephews. A money gift given to relatives in China may have a ritual significance. When it comes to people who migrant wanting to maintain a good *guanxi* and express their *renqing* with, for example, siblings, the donor should be generous in the gift. In exchange, the recipient pays for the donor's expenses – food, housing and the donor's small expenses in town. For instance, I was told that I should not be seen paying for things for my local friends in China, which would be embarrassing for them, in the same way that the residing members of the family should be the ones paying for migrants, though the money is firstly given by the migrants themselves. But before the 'migrant–donor' leaves his hometown, the recipient should return him or her a small part of the money. I consider this ritualized exchange of money between migrants and their relatives at home a way of performing a distribution of wealth, but bearing in mind the unequal capacities of donor and recipient it is symbolically conducted in a way that the recipient is seen as having repaid the gift, and so there is no sense of debt. The money people receive from their migrant relatives is also used to establish and maintain their own *guanxi* with other relatives, friends and acquaintances and is thus central to the constitution of personhood. "Those who have no money have no friends," an old man explained in emphasizing to me the importance of the money transfers from their children in Europe.

[86] Francis Watkins (2004) found identical discourses of hard work, suffering and big saving efforts among Pakistani Pakhtuns men in the Gulf States in order to send resources to be consumed by their families at home in reproduction strategies.

Migrant gift-giving practices in their 'homecomings' also include commodities especially identified with life in Europe and unavailable or very expensive in China. Among these things it is possible to find different kinds of goods such as fashion articles from renowned European brands, cosmetics, personal hygiene products, vitamin supplements, detergents, and food stuffs such as wine, olive oil and baby milk.[87] Migrants also take back presents on their way back home, namely Chinese foodstuffs and tea rather expensive or hard to find in Europe, books in the Chinese language and imitations of expensive goods.

While making a fortune, a person must have an ethic of sharing that fortune. This ethical uses of money in establishing *guanxi* and *renqing* also implies engaging in exchange with spiritual entities, namely the gods. As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, the influx of money in Wenzhou through local business and through migration and the slowdown of religious repression (especially on Chinese folk religious practices) has led to the renewal of temples and the slow reintegration of religious practices and temple life in everyday life. In return for offerings of money and food, and by burning spiritual money, incense and candles in temples, devotees, migrants and non-migrants alike expect luck and protection for their businesses to prosper, protection in their travel and success in school for their children. This gesture is the fulfilment of an ethical commitment as well as a way of assuring that the flow of money will maintain the flow of good fortune. After all, according to the parable, good moral deeds are rewarded with good material conditions.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have shown how new elements of consumption, infused in ritual and conspicuous consumption, have been incorporated in a Chinese modern way of displaying wealth and sharing as moral obligations. I have also established that conspicuous consumption became a symbol of the modern and successful in China, and that migrants participate very actively in this potlatch-like culture, also discussing the various ways in which they do so. In a similar way to Moroccan migrants as described

[87] Once again the value of these products is linked to a (sometimes accurate) perception that many products of world famous brands selling in Chinese stores are counterfeit, and so people ask relatives in Europe to bring original and supposedly good ones.

by Salih (2001), there is an appropriation and negotiation of a modern identity through consumption goods, which is central to migrants' relation to relatives and friends in their places or origin. Once in Europe migrants, both Chinese and Moroccan, have at their disposal more consumption possibilities, not only because goods more are readily available but also because they generally have more income. Because of this, relatives and friends in their places of origin also exert great consuming and distribution pressure on migrants. The amount of money circulating due to migration has not only reactivated traditional wealth displaying practices but has also transformed them in such a way that instead of appearing 'old', 'feudal' or 'bourgeois', they are seen by the actors as 'modern' and morally congruent with their notion of modernity.

Chapter VII

Conclusion: Migration fortunes and the future

In the first pages of this dissertation I described an Amway meeting for Chinese migrants in Lisbon, which I attended at the beginning of my fieldwork. I explained how this particular meeting caught my attention for the way it focused Chinese migrants' expectations of material prosperity in the form of money and conspicuous consumption which were perceived as signs of being 'modern' and successful. That particular event helped me to elaborate part of the argument of this dissertation that now comes to a close, namely that Chinese migration is motivated by aspirations of a perceived modernity, mostly based on consumption and social recognition, entangled with older values such as the accomplishment of ethical obligations towards related people and the search for fortune.

In this concluding chapter, I would like to recount a conversation I had with a Chinese young man on a train from Shanghai to Beijing in May 2010. I believe this dialogue encapsulates the idea of Chinese modernity as some Chinese people conveyed it to me and as I also tried to describe it throughout the previous chapters. This man,

who had been sitting next to me for a couple of hours, finally decided to start a conversation after having inadvertently spilled some tea over my feet. Despite the fact he had learned English, he felt more comfortable speaking to me in Chinese. For a little while we talked about the changes that had occurred in mainland China over the last decade acknowledging essentially the economic and infra-structural development. Even though my interlocutor recognized the immense progress achieved in China during this time, he seemed rather unsatisfied. He was of the opinion that there was still much to be done in other areas. And pointing to the book about Chinese folk religion I was holding in my hands, he exclaimed: "That is the problem with China. On the outside we are very different, we have changed a lot, we have more things, modern things such as trains and houses, but on the inside we remain the same. And that is because of Confucius."

These words point to what I have argued in this dissertation as being the predicament of modern and contemporary China, and which has been a powerful force in propelling Chinese migration, internally and abroad – the search for a Chinese modernity. Such a Chinese modernity is characterized by a particular cultural logic that on the one hand affirms its singularity, while causing tension on the other hand. This tension derives from China's relation of anxiety with Western modernity that positions Chinese modernity somewhere between Chinese distinctiveness and global recognition, and is expressed in the ambivalence towards categories such as new, modern, old and antique. Since the beginning of the modernity debate in China, the incorporation of Western materiality has been seen as not representing a real menace to the Chinese worldview (Schwartz 1986; Mitter 2004) as long as Chinese thought was somehow preserved. In fact, what I have tried to argue, especially in Chapters 5 and 6, is how Chinese cosmological notions of prosperity and happiness connect with a notion of modernity that is very much grounded in material things.

In the last three decades China has entered a new era of economic development improving the living conditions of the population in general by allowing private entrepreneurship and accumulation of wealth, considered as the new modern ethos. A social atmosphere emerged dominated by the idea that those who do not have these ambitions or who do not pursue them are considered lazy, immobile and not modern, as demonstrated by Julie Chu (2010). Therefore 'exit' became an immediate option towards the achievement of modernity. Many people opted to leave their places of origin and move elsewhere, either in China or abroad, in search of opportunities to

become wealthy and successful. In Chapter 3 I argued that migration is not simply moving to somewhere: it is also a transformative process, perceived by Chinese themselves to be a transformation towards a more 'modern' condition. This transformative process is expected and desired for the outcomes it may bring to make migrants 'modern' and wealthy. Migration, I contend, must be understood as a rite of passage and the migrant condition as one of liminality. This forces us to pay attention to the 'in-betweenness' (between places and statuses), in tune with migrants' own words and focus on the process of *chiku*, a category implying suffering, hard work and privation. This condition of being at the margin both in China and in Portugal is related to the living and working conditions of migrants. Additionally these narratives of suffering and expectation of material success are grounded on the one hand in prospects of fortune and, on the other hand, on an emotional and filial discourse that accounts for the way modernity aspirations in China were integrated into the social obligations of the person.

This relation between ethical values and wealth in contemporary China inevitably recalls Max Weber's renowned *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1992 [1904]). In fact, theories that establish an 'elective affinity' between Chinese cultural values and norms – namely the prominence of the family and Chinese entrepreneurial success – explicitly evoke Weber's model (Redding 1993). Max Weber himself also attempted to show how capitalism could not flourish in other societies. In *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (1968[1915]) Weber analyses Chinese social, political, economic and religious institutions in order to demonstrate how Chinese religions and the patrimonial features of the Chinese state did not favour the development of capitalism. As C. K. Yang acknowledges in the English introduction to Weber's book (Yang 1968), the fact that Weber relied mostly on the classics and did not consider the absolutely crucial changes that were taking place in China in the Republican period may explain his scepticism towards the Chinese case. If Weber had lived long enough to reach the end of the twentieth century, he would probably be surprised to find how the Chinese state embraced the market economy with great success for the development of the Chinese economy and how Chinese people were able to make ethical statements from the accumulation of wealth. Contemporary China would have also amazed Chinese intellectuals of the end of the nineteenth century for whom Western societies were the ones conceived as being based in the 'cult of money'

and in the 'search for profit' and characterized by a hatred for ethics (Teng and Fairbank 1982).

My point in discussing this issue here is not to make a comparison between Chinese ethics and the protestant ethic, nor to expose a supposed failure in Weber's theory of China, rather I would like to emphasize the highly unpredictable character of social and cultural change in human societies and the role of historical process. Throughout the previous chapters I have argued that the Chinese notion of modernity is permeated by a Chinese cultural logic, but this cultural logic should be seen as flexible and adjustable and not so much in its more rigid historical forms as understood by Weber. In fact, I believe that the lessons taken from how China was perceived at the end of the nineteenth century and its present situation demonstrates the great changes undergone by the country during this period, indicating that historic change is a major force pushing those transformations. Underlying the historical process there is a cultural logic ascribing order to apparently chaotic events and unbundled elements, which accounts for the way China reconstituted herself after these great changes. Giovanni da Col and Caroline Humphrey (2012) have recently edited a collection of works focusing precisely on the importance of cosmologies in economic projects in a variety of ethnographic settings. As world economic power shifts, it will certainly be an attractive area of research over the next years to learn more about the impact of these kinds of global economic events from the perspective of particular worldviews. Nevertheless it is important to call attention to the fact that this is nothing new, but is an ongoing process.
In the Chinese case, a greater change occurred in the period of great expansion of Western trade and material goods in China, which is conterminous with the beginning of a great epoch of international migration. At that time, migration from China had as a main goal the improvement of social status and living conditions, an objective that still accounts today for the motivations behind Chinese migration. However, at the end of the nineteenth century people longed for a return home to accomplish that goal, while new Chinese migration valorizes cosmopolitanism as modernity, and movement and consumption as its expressions. A definite return home is seen today as immobility, probably a result of the increasing globalization of China (Pieke 2004).

My ethnography also suggests that Chinese migration continues to be very much oriented towards the future, which is envisaged in a flexible way as described by Aihwa Ong (1993) in the case of Hong Kong residents before the handover of the territory to

China in 1997. Chinese migration plans are characterized by a great flexibility in the way migrants face the difficult and unknown conditions of migration, in terms of labor functions, types of businesses, and the easiness with which people change city, country or business in order to pursue their goals. Flexibility is central in increasing the chances of achieving the main goals of migration; however, the goals themselves – to become rich and successful –are relatively inflexible. People should do everything they possibly can to accomplish that same goal. After migrating and considering the particular conditions of migration and fortune prospects, people may deal with these plans of wealth in a more flexible way by postponing them to the next generation and seeing migration as a first step in a journey towards success. This unyielding quest for an ideal condition that lies somewhere in the future positions Chinese migrants in a situation of constant possible mobility and sometimes of dissatisfaction with the present situation.

As I write the final words of this dissertation the economic and financial crisis in Portugal sharpens, affecting Chinese sectors of activity as well. In Centro Comercial da Mouraria, in Martim Moniz, some stores previously operated by Chinese traders are now closed, expressing the effects of the economic recession among the Portuguese middle and working classes, the main clients of Chinese traditional businesses in the country. When I started to do fieldwork in Martim Moniz in the first half of the 2000s, it was extremely difficult to find a vacant store in that same mall. Some people with business connections in other countries in Europe moved ahead of the economic crisis in an attempt to escape the exacerbation of the crisis. Even so, many of those who are still doing well or that expect to move from worker to trader try to move ahead with their prosperity plan, though less optimistically. Still, as Portugal constitutes a less and less attractive place for Chinese migration and its small businesses due to the financial crisis, it became a vantage point for Chinese state-owned companies to make investments in Europe, taking important positions in Portuguese economic financial and energy sectors. These facts point to the idea that the Chinese presence in Portugal is certainly at a turning point, and in the future there will be much to research on how these two Chinese sectors in Portugal will relate, and how the new role of China in the Portuguese and European economy will be understand by Chinese people in Portugal.

Another issue, which is tangential to the changes occurring in the Chinese economy in Portugal, is the possibility of a reversal towards China, not as a return 'home', but as a flow of migration and investment of both Chinese in Portugal and

Portuguese towards China, now seen as a 'land of opportunities' in a similar manner to how Europe and other places has been previously perceived by Chinese migrants. There are already some movements of this type occurring, for example, the increasing exportation of Portuguese products to China, the growing interest of Portuguese businesspeople in China, the similarly growing interest of Portuguese and 'second generation' Chinese to acquire skills in the Chinese language, and the interest of Portuguese young educated people to have a period of work experience in the increasingly cosmopolitan Chinese metropolises of Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong. Lately I detected an increasing interest among my interlocutors in buying houses in Chinese big cities. I see this new interest not so much as a return 'home', but as part of the flexible strategy of accumulation and of dealing with the uncertainties of the future, in view of the rise of China as a world economic and political power.

In relation to the traditional migratory flow from the Wenzhou region, it is expected that a serious decline will occur, as soon as the news spreads that Chinese people are leaving to other places outside Portugal in search of better 'making money' opportunities. Unless these flows coming from China change direction to other places, namely to Africa and South America, social tension in China may rise and constitute a major challenge to the Chinese state in coming years. As I have argued in this dissertation, migratory flows from China are constituted not by the poorest of all, but by middle class people, from diverse backgrounds, who feel precisely a lack of opportunities in China for their ambitions of upward social mobility. Migration provides a way of escaping immobility and the downgrading of social status that would be experienced at home. Because of the financial and economic crisis in Europe and North America, countries that traditionally receive this type of flow cease to become attractive 'money making' places. Fortune and success, but also risk and suffering, are likely to be sought for in other, now maybe unexpected, places. Let future researchers on Chinese migration tell us which ones and which negotiations occur in them. I can only hope that my dissertation will help them understand how things took place in Portugal in the first decade of the twenty-first century and how the negotiations I observed inscribe themselves in a much wider and longer ongoing process.

GLOSSARY

This dissertation uses the *Hanyu pinyi* system for the romanization of Chinese language, and also uses Chinese simplified characters.

Hanyu pinyi Chinese simplified characters – English

a-Ma 阿马 – mum

a-Ba 阿爸 – dad

ayi 阿姨 – aunt

anli 安利 – Chinese name of the company Amway

ba 八 – eight

baxiren 巴西人 – Brazilian

bazi 八字 – the eight characters corresponding to the year, month, day and hour of birth

bai 拜 – to worship, to be blessed

banglang 帮郎 – groom assistant

bangniang 帮娘 – bride assistant

beijing 北京 – the capital of China

bianhua 变化 – to change, a change

bu 不 – not, no

buru 不如 – not as good as

buyiyangde 不一样的 – different

cai 财 – wealth, fortune

caifu 财富 – bridewealth, wealth

caipiao 彩票 – lottery ticket

caishenye 财神爷 – the god of wealth

chanye 产业 – industry

chenggong 成功 –success, to succeed

chi 吃 – to eat, to undergo

chiku 吃苦 – working hard

chiku nailao 吃苦耐劳 – eating bitterness and support hard work

chuangzao 创造 – to produce

congming 聪明 – clever, intelligent

cun 村 – village

da 打– to play

dajia 大家 – everyone

damei – older younger sister

da sha 大厦 – tower

daibiaotuan 代表团 – a mission, a group of representatives

gongzuo danwei 工作单位 – work unit; the same as 单位 dan wei

danxin 担心 – to worry; worried

dangdiren 当地人 – local people

deng xiaoping 邓小平 – the name of a Chinese politician

dongbei 东北 – Northeast China

du 赌 – to gamble

duanwujie 端午节 – Dragon Boat Festival

gaige kaifang 改革开放 – Reform and Opening Policy

fa 发 – to prosper

facai 发财 – fortune; to get rich

facaishu 发财树 – pachira, the wealth tree

fanguan 饭馆 – restaurant

fangbian 方便 – convenient

feizhouren 非洲人 – Africans

fengbo 风波 – crisis; disturbance

fengtai 凤台 – the name of a television channel from Hong Kong

fo 佛 – Buddha

foguangshan 佛光山 – the Chinese name of the Buddhist monastic order Buddha's Light (literally Mountain of Buddha's Light)

fu 副 – good fortune; happiness

fuwa xingyun 伏瓦幸运 – Lucky mascots, the name of the five Beijing Olympic Games mascots

fujian 福建 – name of a province

ganjue 感觉 – feelings

gege 哥哥 – older brother

gongtong 共同 – common

guanyin pusa 观音菩萨 – Bodhisattva Guanyin

guanxi 关系 – social contacts, social relations; privileged social contacts; connection, affection

guanxixue 关系学 – the art of social relations

guangdong 广东 – the name of a province

guangxi 广西 – the name of a province

guo 过 – to pass

guo nian 过年 – new year

haiwai 海外 – overseas

haizi 孩子 – children

han 汉 – Chinese, Chinese ethnic group

hao 好 – good

heilongjiang 黑龙江 – the name of a province

heiren 黑人 – black people

hen 很 – very

henduo 很多 – very much

henhao 很好 – very good

hukou 户口 – residence registration system

huaqian 花钱 – to spend money

huaqiao 华侨 – Chinese national living abroad

huasheng 花生 – Chinese trader

huayi 华裔 – Chinese descendant

huaren 华人 – ethnic Chinese without Chinese citizenship

huangli 黄历 – *The Yellow Almanac*

hui jia 回家 – to return home

jiyili 记忆力 – memory

jia you 加油 – to pour oil

jianchi 坚持 – to persist

jilin 吉林 – the name of a province

jiangxin yu 江心屿 – the name of an islet

jiaoyu 教育 – education

jiaozi 饺子 – Chinese dumplings

jiejie 姐姐 – older sister

jin 金 – gold

jinzhi 金纸 – gold paper

jin 进 – to come in

jingsai 竞赛 – competition

jiujia 酒家 – restaurant

kaifang 开放 – opening

kanbuqi 看不起 – looked down upon

kelian 可怜 – poor, miserable

keqi 客气 – ceremony

kongzhi 控制 – to control

kuli 苦力 – coolie

kunnan 困难 – to overcome difficulties

laiwang 来往 – come and go; intercourse; exchanges among friends, neighbors and acquaintances

lao 老 – old

laoban 老板 – boss

laodifang 老地方 – the place where we usually meet (literally old place)

lao huohang 老货行 – Mouraria Shopping Center (literally old cargo line)

laopengyou 老朋友 – old friend

laowai 老外 – a foreigner

lishui 丽水 – the name of a municipality

lianhehui 联合会 – federation

lianxi 联系 – contact, link

liaoning 辽宁 – the name of a province in northeast China

ling 灵 – efficacy; efficacious

linghuo 灵活 – flexible

liurenkou 流人口 – floating population

lu 路 – path, way

luyi wei deng 路易威登 – the Chinese name of the brand Louis Vuitton

mading monisi 马丁默尼斯 – Martim Moniz

majiang 麻将 – mahjong; the same as 麻将牌 majiang pai

mei 没– not, no

meiguoren 美国人 – American people

mian 面 – noodles

mianzi 面子 – face

nanbaixiang 南白相 – the name of a *zhen*

nanguo 难过 – sad

nei 内 – inner

neng 能 – to have the capacity to

nongming 农民 – peasant

oujiang 瓯江 – the name of a river

paocan 跑餐 – waiter

peifu 佩服 – to admire

pianren 骗人 – to deceive people

pianzi 骗子 – cheater

pinqiong 贫穷 – poor

puhuabao 葡华报 – the Chinese name of the newspaper *Jornal Sino*

puke 扑克 – poker

putaoyaren 葡萄牙人 – Portuguese people

putonghua 普通话 – Chinese Mandarin

puxinbao 葡新报 – the name of a Chinese newspaper

qi ming 起命 – to set up or expose fate

qian 钱 – money

qinlao 勤劳 – self-sacrifice for others

qingtian 青天 – the name of a city

qiaoxiang 侨乡 – place of origin of overseas Chinese or *huaqiao*

qushi 趋势 – trend

renqing 人情 – human qualities

sanbaidian 三百店 – three hundred store; Chinese bazaar

shan 山 – a small piece of land to cultivate; mountain

shandong 山东 – the name of a province

shantou 汕头 – the name of a city

shanghai 上海 – the name of a city

shenzhen 深圳 – the name of a city

shehui 社会 – social; society

shenghuo 生活 – to live, life

shi 是 – to be

shibaluohan 十八罗汉 – the Eighteen Buddhism Heralds

sichuan 四川 – the name of a province

sifangtian pusa 四方天菩萨 – Guardian Kings of the Four Quarters of Heaven

si xiandaihua 四现代化 – the four ‘modernizations’

suanmingren 算命 – a fortune teller

sushe 宿舍 – dormitory

suzhi 素质 – quality

ta 他 – he

ta 她 – she

ren 人 – person, people

renqing 人情 – affection

taojia 讨价 – to bargain

tianxiadiyi 天下第一 – first country under heaven

tiaoguokong 跳过孔 – skip holes

tongku 痛苦– pain

tui na 推拿 – massage

wai 外 – outside

waidiren 外地人 – outsider

waiguoren 外国人 – foreigner

wan 玩 – fun, game, play

wan wan 万万 – absolutely

wenhua 文化 – culture

wenming 文明 – civilization

wenzhou 温州 – the name of a city

wenzhouhua 温州话 – the speech of Wenzhou

wulun 五论 – five relations

wumajie 五马街 – the name of a street

xiguan 习惯 – to gain the habit

xiamen 厦门 – the name of a city

xiaoshun 孝顺 (or xiao 孝) – filial piety

xiao 小 – small, younger, the contrary of *da* 大 big

xiaomei 小妹 – younger sister

xiaofeizhuyi 消费主义 – consumerist

xiaoyi 小姨 – the youngest aunt

xiandaihua 现代化 – modernization

xiandaixing 现代性 – modernity; the quality of being modern or contemporary

xinli 心理 – human emotions

xinku 辛苦 – working hard

xin huohang 新货行 – Martim Moniz Shopping Center (literally new cargo line)

xiangsheng 相声 – comic dialogues

xuexiao 学校 – school

yali 压力 – pressure

yang 养 – to nurture, to take care; parent–child relationship

yaoyang 摇漾 – the name of a city

yi 一 – one

yiban 一半 – half

yidian 一点 – a little

yijing 易经 – *The Book of Changes*

yi nian 一年 – one year

yipi 一批 – a little

yizhi 一直 – to continue

yinduren 印度人 – Hindu people, but is colloquially used to refer also to Pakistani and Bangladeshi people

yinguo 因果 – karma; cause and effect

yu 鱼 – fish

yu 余 – surplus, abundance

yuyan 语言 – language

yun hui 运会 – turn of fortune

yunqi 运气 – luck

zang 脏 – dirty

zhaocaimao 招财猫 – beckoning cat

zhangwo 掌握 – to master, to dominate

zhao duixiang 找对象 – to look for a partner in marriage

zerenzhi 责任制 – production responsibility system

zhejiang 浙江– the name of a province

zhen 真 – an administrative division, a town or a conglomerate of villages

zhonghua 中华 – China

zhongguo 中国 – China

zhonguoren 中国人 – Chinese people

zhuhai 珠海 – the name of a city

zhuan qian 赚钱 – make money

ziji 自己 – ourselves

zisi 自私 – selfish

zou 走 – to follow, to go

zunzhong 尊重 – to respect

zuo sheng 做生 – to do business

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