

Gender Analysis in the Xizhuang Watershed: A Case Study from Wangjia Village

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Abstract

Women play an important role in the agricultural farming system in Xizhuang Watershed. The case study indicates that most men aged between 20 and 50 years spend about 6 to 10 months per year, and some many years, off-farm outside the watershed on income-generating activities to support their families. The men usually return for the busiest seasons in the agricultural year. This indicates that women are the custodians of most on-farm activities. Women are responsible for most domestic activities, livestock husbandry, childcare, and family education, but decision making and management are largely controlled by men. In 80 per cent of the households surveyed, women were the bankers and men the source of family income. However, traditionally the legal rights of women are not recognised, and women don't have the confidence and education to defend their rights. The majority of dropouts after primary school are girls as many traditional families believe that girls are not as intelligent as boys and not worth investing in, and most families believe that girls should take on extra responsibilities at home. Health and hygiene awareness among the rural population are poor; health facilities are limited and expensive. Poverty often results in poor nutrition and health. Education, legal rights, decision-making power, and control over resources is essential to improve the situation of rural women in the watershed.

Introduction

The People and Resource Dynamics Project (PARDYP) aims to have both direct and indirect impacts on biophysical and socioeconomic conditions, local resource management, and community and local government decision-making and planning processes in the watersheds studied, and to provide information that can be used to achieve these aims across the region. The Kunming Institute of Botany of the Chinese Academy of Sciences has been carrying out activities related to the objectives of PARDYP in the Xizhuang watershed. The watershed is located near Baoshan, it contains two administrative villages covering 10 natural villages, and has a population of 3900. The study described here was concerned with the identification and analysis of gender differences in practices related to resource management.

Study Objectives

It is crucial to the project to understand the socioeconomic dynamics in the project area, particularly gender related aspects of resource management such as gender variation in

knowledge, practices, management systems, and decision-making. Ignorance of gender differences often leads to project failure.

The objectives of the study described here were:

- to understand the role of women in the agricultural farming system;
- to determine gender differences in land use and property rights;
- to analyse women's access to the education system from a historical perspective;
- to assess local health care services;
- to compare men and women's roles in decision making; and
- to provide recommendations for project implementation and local land use planning.

Methodology

Wangjia village was selected for the study. A total of 10 days were spent in the field. Interviews were conducted in 18 of the households in the village, primarily with women. The methods used included:

- participatory observation;
- key informant interviews—e.g., with an 84 year-old woman;
- semi-structured interviews (using checklists) with 17 women aged from 20 to 50 years in rich, moderately well-off, poor, and very poor families;
- group discussions with women and men.

Research Findings and Discussion

Wangjia Village

Wangjia village is 25 km from Baoshan City to which it is linked by a rough watershed road that is difficult to traverse, especially in the rainy season. Watershed residents often walk the two hours to the market in Banqiao. The village is located on a valley slope. A stream separates the village into two hamlets, Lydia village and Ganglia village. The village has a total of 96 households and a population of 414, of which 200 are female. All the village people are from the Han ethnic group. There are three main families, the 'Wan', 'Li', and 'Zhang' families. About half of the households and the village head belong to the 'Wan' family. A three-storey primary school was constructed recently near the village.

Land Use and Cash Income

Wangjia village has a total of 265 *mu* (17.7 ha) of arable land with an average of 0.8 *mu* (0.05 ha) per person. Two main crops are cultivated, wheat in spring and maize in autumn. In 1996, total production was 136 tonnes of maize and 53.5 tonnes of wheat—an average of about 500 kg grain per person per year. The staple food is maize, wheat, and rice. Only a few

households can afford to eat rice every day, and the staple diet for most families consists of two-thirds maize and one-third rice. Poor families consume mainly maize and wheat with occasional rice during guests' visits and festivals. Women usually exchange their maize for rice (2 kg maize for 1 kg rice) through middlemen. Both rich and poor have three meals a day.

After paying the agricultural tax on grain, only 3 of the 17 households interviewed had surplus grain to sell in the market. The income from grain is very low.

Drinking water from the nearby spring is clean and unpolluted. Some villagers use bamboo pipes to deliver spring water to their houses. Other families spend five minutes per load to carry water from the water source.

Most houses are built from wood, tiles, and sun-dried mud brick. A few richer families buy bricks and cement to build their houses. The houses generally have two stories with a living area on the first floor and a grain store on the second floor. Grain is dried in front of the house. Animal stalls are on one side of the house, the kitchen on the other.

The cost of house construction is very high compared with local incomes. An ordinary house costs about RMB 15,000-20,000¹ to build. According to tradition, parents are expected to help their sons to build a house. If a family has many sons, building or dividing houses is a major household problem.

Most families use the energy-saving stoves recommended by the government. Over the year a woman spends about 40-60 working days, the majority during winter, in the collection of fuelwood, pine needles, and leaf litter. At present, one working day is worth about RMB 15. Leaf litter from the forests is used both for fuel and as compost material. Women put leaf litter into pigstys for bedding and subsequent production of compost. Some families sell fuelwood and pine needle ropes (for lighting) in the local markets for cash income; the average income from this source for those involved ranges from RMB 1,000-2,000 per household per year.

Women—The Backbone of the Farming System

Tea plantations and raising pigs are the most important sources of cash income. Tea gardens were introduced in 1982 after a shift from the people's commune to the household responsibility system. Some households have reclaimed wasteland to plant tea.

Women are usually responsible for the management of tea gardens and raising pigs. Women spend about two hours on pig raising every day—this includes the collection of green fodder from the forest. The income from raising pigs varies from family to family within the range RMB 500 to RMB 4,000 per annum. Most families do not have sufficient grain to feed the pigs enough to obtain maximum benefit. All families need at least one pig for the Spring Festival (New Year) and for the provision of salted meat all the year round.

¹In 1999, There were 8.28 RMB to one US\$

Tea can be picked three times a year, spring, summer, and autumn. The season for spring tea lasts 30 to 40 days, for summer tea 15 to 20 days, and for fall tea 15 days. Women are always responsible for picking tea. They usually wake very early, leave for the tea garden after a simple breakfast, lunch in the field, and come back late. They spend 12-14 hours in the garden, picking between 20 and 40 kg of fresh tea per day. During the year, a woman spends 60-75 days picking tea. They either process the tea at home or sell fresh leaf to a small processing factory in Lijiashi village. The annual income from tea per household varies from RMB 500 to RMB 3,500, according to the quantity and quality of the tea. Other products like chickens, mushrooms, pine nuts, and fruit also provide some income.

Most men from Wangjia village work away from the watershed in urban areas, leaving the farming activities in the hands of their wives. Commonly, men between 20 and 50 years of age spend about 6 to 10 months on off-farm work outside the watershed. A few men work away from home for many years. During the busy farm seasons, usually twice a year, they return home for periods of between one and three months to help their wives to harvest and sow. When these busy seasons pass, they leave the village again to search for work elsewhere. Thus most farm work is undertaken by women. The cycle of activities, performance by men and/or women, and the marketable products over the year are shown in Table 13.

An Example of A Household: Mrs. Wan Yulan's Family

At the time of the interview the family had five members (2 men, 2 women, a 50 day-old baby). In 1997, the 26 year-old son worked for nine months on the state forest farm in logging and transportation. He earned between RMB 13 and RMB 15 per day. His father, mother, and wife lived together in the village and were responsible for the farm. The main farm income derived from selling tea (RMB 2,400) and two pigs (RMB 2100). The son returned home to help his family during the busy periods.

The major farming activities during the 1997 farming season are described in the Box.

The labour division in this family can be summarised as follows.

- Over the year, the son did only 16 days of actual farm work, and spent a small amount of additional time on minor farming activities and housework.
- The father did 52 days of on-farm work, and also cared for the two cattle.
- The son's wife did 110 days of farm work.
- The son's mother did 170 days of farm work.

Eight days labour were received in exchange from other families, and returned at another date. Exchanging labour days, particularly with relatives, is very common in rural areas in Yunnan.

As seen from the example, women contribute by far the largest amount of labour for direct farm work. They also spend a lot of time on other 'minor' work like taking care of the

Table 13: The Agricultural Calendar

Month	Farming activities	Labour intensity	Rainfall cm	Labour division	Marketable products
Jan	Collecting litter and fuelwood	+	Snow	Collecting litter (f) Collecting fuelwood (f,m) Off-farm job (m)	Pigs (f,m)
Feb	Collecting litter and fuelwood	+	Snow	Collecting litter (f) Collecting fuelwood (f,m) Off-farm job (m)	
Mar	Picking tea, raising maize seedlings	++	0	Picking tea (f) Raising maize seedlings (f, m)	Tea (f, m)
Apr	Picking tea, carrying manure, harvesting wheat	++++	1	Picking tea (f) Carrying manure (m) Harvesting wheat (f) Carrying wheat (m)	Tea (f, m)
May	Picking tea, harvesting wheat, planting maize	++++ +	3	Picking tea (f) Harvesting wheat (f) Carrying wheat (m) Ploughing (m) Digging (m,f) Sowing (f)	Tea (f, m)
Jun	Picking tea, planting maize	+++	9	Picking tea (f) Digging (m, f) Sowing (f)	Tea (f, m), Peaches (f),
Jul	Tea picking, weeding, tilling maize field	++	10	Picking tea (f) Weeding and tilling (f, m) Off-farm (m)	Tea (f, m) Pigs (f, m) Mushrooms (f) Apples (f) Peaches (f)
Aug	Picking tea, weeding, tilling soil for maize	++	10	Picking tea (f) Weeding and tilling (f, m) Off-farm job (m)	Tea (f), Pigs (f, m)
Sep	Picking tea	+	5	Picking tea (f) Odd jobs (m)	Tea (f)
Oct	Harvesting maize, planting wheat	+++	4	Harvesting maize (f) Carrying maize (m) Ploughing (m) Digging (m, f) Sowing (f)	Pine nuts (f)
Nov	Collecting litter and fuelwood, applying manure, tilling the tea garden	+	0	Collecting litter (f) Collecting fuelwood (f,m) Applying manure and loosening the soil (f) Off-farm job (m)	Pine nuts (f) Fuelwood (f) Pine needles (f)
Dec	Shelling maize, collecting litter and fuelwood	+	0	Shelling maize (f) Collecting litter (f) Collecting fuelwood (f, m) Off-farm job (m)	Pine needles (f) Fuelwood (f)

Note: f—performed by women; m—performed by men

vegetable garden, collecting mushrooms and pine nuts, and harvesting fruit from orchards. Housework—laundry, cooking, childcare, cleaning house, mending clothes—is also the responsibility of women.

Box 1 FARMING ACTIVITIES

The major farming activities of Mrs. Wan Yulan's household in 1997

Farming activities performed by men and women

- Raising maize seedlings in plastic bags: wife and mother together, 6 working-days
- Harvesting wheat: son, wife, mother, and father together, 12 days; exchange labour, 4 days
- Planting maize: 4 labourers together, 20 days; exchanged labour, 3 days
- First weeding, loosening soil: wife, mother, and father together, 12 days
- Second weeding, loosening soil: wife, mother, and father together, 12 days
- Harvesting maize: son, wife, mother, and father together, 20 days; exchange labour, 1 day
- Planting wheat: son, wife, mother, and father together, 12 days
- Applying manure, loosening soil in tea plantation: wife, mother, and father together, first time 12 days, second time 12 days
- Collecting fuelwood: father and mother together, 30 days
- Spraying pesticide twice: father, 2 days

Farming activities performed by men only

- Ploughing maize fields: father, 2 days
- Ploughing wheat fields: father, 2 days

Farming activities performed by women only

- Picking tea: wife and mother together, 140 days
- Collecting forest litter: mother only (wife pregnant), 60 days
- Raising pigs: wife and mother, 2 hours per day
- Shelling maize: wife and mother, 5 evenings

The Range of Women's Work and the Importance of their Role is not Well Recognised by Men or by the Rural Society

Women's farm work takes much time and energy, but the work is generally considered to be easy and simple. In terms of difficulty and hard work, farm management tasks are considered to range from hard to easy in the following order: ploughing, managing horses and cattle, land preparation, collecting forest litter and fuelwood, plucking tea, weeding, and spraying pesticides. Men are often responsible for labour intensive work such as ploughing, but this generally only occurs twice a year for short periods. The tea picking done by women may be less labour intensive but it lasts for longer—more than 2 months. Some families hire women labourers for tea picking.

Before the 1980s, all farmers worked for the people's commune. Their income and grain supply were based on the accumulation of work-points they had earned in the past year. Work-points, recorded each night for each individual by an accountant, indicated the quantity and quality of labour performed. Different work earned a different number of work-

points—heavy or difficult work earned more work-points, easier and simpler work earned less. At the same time, men and women earned a different number of work-points for the same task, 10 work-points for a strong male labourer compared to 8 for a strong female. Thus women's payments were always at least 20 per cent lower than those of men.

It is clear that women are the main on-farm workforce and the more productive sector. They are deeply involved in almost all aspects of agricultural activities and rural daily life, and contribute their entire life to the family and community. However, their contribution and the value of their work is consistently underestimated and neglected.

Land and House Property Rights: Are Men's and Women's Rights the Same?

In 1982, Wangjia village started to practice the economic reform policies dictated by the state. The collective lands were distributed to families according to a points system—adults scored 10 points, the old scored 6 points, and children scored 4 points. Good and bad land was shared evenly, and to achieve this families were often allocated four to eight dispersed small plots. These small dispersed plots are inefficient from the point of view of land management, but the villagers are generally satisfied with the distribution.

Following the land distribution, the families received a contract booklet. In Wangjia this was in the name of the male head of household, as men are considered to be the heads of families. In other areas both men and women, including unmarried daughters, obtained a share of land at the time of distribution. This clearly implies that women do have legal rights to the land. Indeed, the Chinese government has tried to award equal rights to women.

Since 1982, every family in Wangjia village has had a long-term land contract with the village administration. The household contract responsibility system permits the householders to use the land for a long time, but they have to pay agricultural taxes on grain according to the quantity of allocated land. The households have land to earn their living, but they still do not have rights of ownership of 'their' land. Unlike in other communities in Yunnan, the lands in Wangjia village have never been redistributed and the 'land ownership' is the same as in 1982.

What has happened in the fifteen years since the land was distributed? In rural areas, people still practise the traditional patrilineal, patriarchal family system. A woman has to leave the community in which she grew up when she marries and join her new husband in his village. Thus when daughters married and moved out, they lost their share of land in their own village. Women are not permitted to sell or use their land share and have to leave it to brothers or other members of their blood family. Even if they marry in the same village or nearby, they are still not permitted to use 'their' land. As a result, some of the families in Wangjia village that had more daughters at the time of land distribution experienced an increase in land when the daughters grew up and married. This land has generally been passed on to their brothers. The land has always been handed down to males.

Are the rights of the men and woman to the land the same? Legally, yes: actually, no. When girls are in their family of birth they are often treated as outsiders. If the son and daughter quarrel the mother often speaks to the son as follows: "Treat your sister well, she will not stay long here. She will soon be a member of another family. Be patient." Girls are taught not to try to share the property with their brothers. When asked if they wanted to inherit their parents' property, young female members of a family expressed shame and answered: "We never think about it." At marriage, women are officially registered as members of their husband's households, and after marriage the new couple splits from the wife's family, especially if the family has two or more sons. The property of families is divided at the time of marriage of a son rather than after the parents' death. The allocated properties belong to the husbands. Widows face special problems. On the death of her husband, a widow risks losing land and property to her brother-in-law if she has no son. She is generally not allowed to return to her family of birth because her own brother would resent her reappearance.

Family conflicts also pose problems. A Chinese proverb says "a married daughter is like water spilt outside". When a woman has a conflict with her husband or members of his family, her own family of birth can be a temporary refuge, but she cannot stay permanently. This situation might explain why the divorce rate is very low in this area. When the head of the womens' group was asked about divorce, she said that nobody had divorced in the three villages nearby and that it was a most unusual occurrence. After completion of the Wangjia village studies it was discovered that two women of the village had divorced and left their husbands, but the interviewees had been too ashamed to record this information during the survey. On leaving their husbands, these women took nothing with them and went to places as far away as they could; one is now in Jiangshu Province the other in Baoshan city. These two women are considered to have 'escaped'. Women think divorce is the worst thing that can happen to them, that divorce is a disgraceful occurrence, and that women leave their husbands as a last resort. Why therefore did these two women leave their husbands? The husband of woman A went to work outside the watershed for several years, but failed to send money for family support. Woman A needed money and assistance, but did not trust her husband, suspected that he had another woman elsewhere, and had to do all the agricultural work, childcare, and housework herself. An old man took advantage of her very difficult position and had an affair with her. This was discovered by her husband's family who then beat her. Local people said she was very ashamed, could not face life in the village anymore, and escaped. She has never gone through divorce procedures. Woman B had a very unsatisfactory marriage. She is a capable, hard-working, and pretty woman, but her husband was incapable and lazy—informants recorded that "he could not do anything at all very well"—with the result that their life was very poor and unhappy. Finally, the woman left. Neither husband nor wife thought that divorce procedures were necessary. In Wangjia village, no divorced woman lives in the husband's village—divorced women prefer to leave.

These two women left their husbands stealthily like criminals and took nothing with them. Both were unaware of their right to be a legatee of their husbands. Although in theory China's legal system protects the personal rights of women, as well as their legitimate

property and equal inheritance rights, this has little influence on everyday life and decisions in rural areas, where traditional logic and customary practices dominate. The traditional customs stem from patrilineal, patriarchal family values. In practice, women's rights to land and other property in rural areas are not the same as the rights of men. The practice of sending daughters away to marry men in other villages immediately places them in unfamiliar communities and a disadvantaged situation. They have no allies and supporters in their new communities. The husband's family and kinsmen can easily deny the new wife her legal rights.

Strengthening rural legal rights and impartial law institutions is only one aspect of the changes that are clearly required. The most important point is to support measures to increase the levels of literacy and education in legal matters among women. These levels must be as high or higher than the levels of education of men if women are to participate actively in social and political institutions. Women must have enough confidence and education to speak out in defence of their rights.

Improving Access to the Education System: A Decade of Progress

Although the educational levels of young women are much better than those of older women, the levels of literacy and education in legal matters remain inadequate. Of the 17 women interviewed between the ages of 34 and 44 years:

- four had never spent a day at school and were completely illiterate;
- five had entered but dropped out of primary school—one staying for only half a year;
- eight had studied for five years and graduated from primary school (primary level schooling now has six grades); and
- two had entered junior middle school, one graduating at 3rd grade.
- None of the 17 had entered high school.

The woman who was educated the longest is both the director of the local women's group and the village doctor. It is a good example. The more schooling received, the more positive a woman's attitude to her own work and her role in the family. Most women over 50 are illiterate.

Although the level of female education in China has made great progress in recent decades, in Wangjia village men are still consistently better educated than their wives. Two of the women interviewed who had never been to school did not know the level of their husband's education—they said they had never asked and were not interested in school or education level. One of these women was actually the wife of a junior middle school graduate who is now a primary school teacher. Of the remaining 15 husbands, all were literate. Three had stayed in primary school for between three and four years and then dropped out; twelve had stayed for five years and graduated from primary school; and of these, eight had entered junior middle school, six staying for one to two years before

dropping out. Two men had graduated from junior middle school and entered high school to study, but neither had graduated from high school.

The men had clearly received more education than the women. Wangjia village residents generally thought that boys must be literate, but for girls it depended on the wealth of the household. It was thought ideal if they could afford to send girls to school, but boy's education was considered first.

The state government has introduced programmes for eliminating illiteracy at all levels, and basic literacy classes and schools have been set up. Many young and middle-aged women who had not previously been provided with the chance to go to school have since learnt reading, writing, and basic arithmetic skills in this way. Some middle-aged women find studying very difficult because they think they are too old to learn. It is very common for a 45 year-old woman to be a grandmother, and these young grandmothers feel they are very old in their ideas. A woman who had previously attended night school told the interview team: "I was so sleepy when I took up the books at night. A day's work in the house and fields is very tiring. I am too old to understand and remember the complicated and deep things that the teacher tells us. Even if I learned something during the class, I forgot it after several weeks. Reading and writing are more difficult than doing all the agricultural work." Having completed the literacy classes, women generally have neither the time nor the energy to make reading or writing a habit, and they find it easy to forget the knowledge they received at school. Eventually, they become illiterate again. The success rate in eliminating illiteracy in the older age groups is therefore very low.

Nevertheless, educational opportunities have improved markedly for the young. All levels of government have carried out steps to meet the objectives of the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, which has made education compulsory for children of school age. In Wangjia village there is a new primary school. In comparison with other schools in Yunnan Province, the facilities are excellent. The children have a new three-storey building with new desks and chairs. The school was funded by the education department of Baoshan city, the village administration, and the villagers. It has seven classes, one preparatory and grades one to six, and seven teachers (one female). Four of the teachers are graduates from a teacher training school, and three have graduated from junior middle school. All 104 children of compulsory school age in Wangjia village attend the school, and all must graduate.

An illustration of the recent change in attitudes toward education is that some parents are becoming concerned about the quality of the education provided: "the building may be good but the children's scores in the graduation examinations were not good relative to those in other schools in the area". The parents believe that the main problem is the quality of the teachers and their teaching methods. Most parents like to send their children to school, and hope that in the future their children will be able to find non-agricultural work in the city. Only a few parents are unwilling to send their daughters to school, but the law is the law and they must comply. According to the village rules, if parents do not send their

children to school, the parent's names are announced over the village loudspeaker and they have to pay a fine. Primary schools are therefore well attended.

Problems arise, however, after primary school. At present, 20 per cent of the Wangjia village children drop out after primary school, although 80 per cent continue to junior middle school in Qingshui township. More than half those who don't continue to junior middle school are girls. The most important reason given by the parents is cost. The cost of putting one student through middle school is RMB 1,500 per year, and it is clear that some families really cannot afford this.

In order to send sons to school, daughters are often asked to leave and return home as boys are considered to be more important than girls in terms of a family's future. Traditionally, educating a daughter is considered to be an investment for 'outsiders'. Although ideas have changed, most of the villagers still prefer to bring daughters home so that sons can continue their education. Another problem is the unsatisfactory examination results of some girls at the middle school. Girls in primary school record better results than boys—girls are thought to study harder than boys at this level and to be more responsible and obedient. However, at middle school boys are considered to develop faster and some girls have trouble keeping up with them. This leads many people to believe that girls are not as intelligent as boys, although others realise that girls have extra responsibilities at home which demand early mornings and late nights, and that they often undertake the mother's role at home. During special occasions or emergencies, parents always rely on these 14-15 year old girls.

In conclusion, the government's efforts at improving education facilities for all children, especially for girls in mountain areas, has resulted in enormous improvements. However, the level of literacy is still lower for girls than for boys, and daughters are still disadvantaged in terms of access to education. In Wangjia village, improvements are required in the quality of the teachers and the teaching methods, and this will require greater investment and continued change in long-held traditional ideas.

Health Care: A Combination of Traditional Practices and Modern Medicine

There is one primary health centre with one male doctor for the whole of Wangjia. The resources of the centre are not sufficient to meet the needs of the local people. There are three other private doctors (one female and two male), but they do not work in the primary health centre. These private doctors began practising in the village a few months after completion of training and none have received formal medical training from a school or college.

Mrs Wan Guoqiong is the private female village doctor and director of the village womens' group. She is responsible for the promotion of family planning in the village and has attended three training courses (three months) on family planning and women's health. She began practising medicine as a private doctor using the knowledge from these short training courses and a simple, easy to read medical book. Her entire medical equipment fits

in a box, which she takes with her on house calls. She earns about 200 RMB per month as a doctor. She has three kinds of work and income—doctor, cadre, and farmer. Despite her hard work and dedication, there is a clearly an urgent need for more modern medical equipment and more professional staff.

Mrs Wan Guoqiong said that most women suffer from gynaecological problems because they pay little attention to hygiene. Twelve of the 17 women interviewed had experienced induced abortion or miscarriage. One woman had had 10 induced abortions. The women are responsible for family planning, and the most common methods used are IUDs and sterilisation. As in other areas, there are many failures with the IUDs. Women think their husbands are more important because they are responsible for heavy work, and therefore agree to have an IUD inserted or undergo sterilisation themselves. Formal hospital facilities are far away from the village, thus gynaecological diseases are not uncommon.

All of the 17 women gave birth to their children at home attended by a village doctor or midwife, rather than in a local hospital. They did not use the hospital because of the cost and the long distance. Hospital visits to see a formally educated doctor in Baoshan City are made only when absolutely necessary. The women handle minor health problems like colds and fever on their own, using traditional methods of self-cure. Many of the village women know some common herbal remedies. If traditional remedies do not work, they see the village doctors to get western medicines or injections.

There is a very high rate of parasitic disease in the village, at least in part because of a special food prepared when guests are coming and at times of festivals, weddings, and funerals. This special dish is raw meat with vegetables, hot peppers, ginger, and seasonings. Although delicious, the parasite problem is so severe in some cases that people have died after eating this raw meat dish. Some villagers suffer permanently from parasitic infection, with secondary anaemia and undernourishment.

When women cannot or do not want access to modern medicine, they turn to the local traditional doctors for help. There are two 'witchdoctors' and one 'sorcerer' in Wangjia village. The two 'witchdoctors' have been established for a long time and are often invited to see patients, mostly women, who find themselves in a tight corner. The two women are rarely at home and hardly take any part in agricultural work. The 'sorcerer' is 24 years old and has just started up in his chosen profession. He is not as famous as the two 'witchdoctors' and is still an active farm worker. He earns about RMB 100 per month, whereas the two 'witchdoctors' can earn between RMB 300 and RMB 500 per month plus gifts and payments in grain, meat, oil, and chicken. The 'witchdoctors' are more experienced, knowledgeable, and worldly-wise than most rural woman. A special proverb warns women not to go on long journeys: "Young women are leaving, rumours and slanders are coming". Two of the 17 women interviewed had never been to Baoshan, 25 km from the village. Such cultures, traditions, and beliefs place the witchdoctors in an advantageous position. The local women believe in the witchdoctor's craft. It is said that when a witchdoctor sings and prays, gods and ghosts come into her body, and that it is

these gods or ghosts that talk to people about their illnesses and problems rather than the witchdoctor. The witchdoctors often ask for more money and food on behalf of the god. Thus it is easy for a witchdoctor to reap profits from these rural women, who very rarely visit a real doctor in a formal hospital. Some illnesses become more serious as a result of this tradition.

Although the government has several policies aimed at guaranteeing the health of mothers and children, it does not have sufficient funds to train community health workers and improve medical facilities and equipment. While city women enjoy medical check-ups before marriage and during pregnancy, rural village women cannot even obtain formal medical care during birth. Poverty often results in poor nutrition and health care, and traditional customs have a great impact on health, especially that of women and children. The poor, and particularly women, avoid high-priced modern medicine, and turn to the witchdoctors as an alternative.

Decision-making

Most rural areas in China are patrilineal and patriarchal and follow the practice of sending daughters to live with their husbands in other villages and with other communities. For the young women, it is difficult to speak in front of the husband's family, especially in the early days. As a newcomer, a bride is often quiet, silent, and obedient, partly because she is not familiar with the new community and family, partly because it is a custom that she should follow. Before marriage, a bride is taught how to get along well with the new members of the family, and the appropriate behaviour, demeanour, and attitude towards the husband, parents-in-law, and other relatives. The most important principle to learn is how to avoid offensive behaviour to anybody in the family or community. She should respect her father and mother-in-law, and the other old people in the community. A common saying teaches: 'quietly immerse yourself in hard work, silently lower your head beside the dinner table'. Speaking loud and especially making decisions like a man in front of the husband and husband's parents are thought impolite and unreasonable. The incoming bride has a lower status and is rarely permitted to express her own ideas and opinions. Decisions are taken by her husband and the husband's relatives. After a young woman has lived in her new family for several years, she should have formed a good relationship with the members of the family and community. She will have some supporters and allies who will help her to express her own ideas. She can then begin to suggest options in family meetings. However, even if a young woman has set up a good support group within the family, she cannot count on anybody listening to her. When a woman and her husband split from the joint family, the situation is different. It is easier to express her ideas and provide ideas and suggestions to her husband especially in the home. Decision-making systems vary from family to family and it depends somewhat on the personality and capability of a woman relative to her husband. As families become smaller, women's decision-making rights are improving. Men and women were asked who had the most influence on decisions in different areas. The results are summarised in Tables 14 and 15.

Table 14: Evaluation by Men's Group of Balance in Decision-making between Men and Women in Wanjia Village^a

	Farm Activities	Expenditure	Children's Education	Care of Elderly	Birth	See a Doctor	Housework
Men	8	8	5	9	5	5	1
Women	2	2	5	1	5	5	9

Note: the higher the number the greater the decision-making responsibility, 10 is the highest score

Table 15: Evaluation by Women's Group of Balance in Decision-making between Men and Women in Wanjia Village

	Farm Activities	Expenditure	Children's Education	Care of Elderly	Birth	See a Doctor	Housework
Men	5	7	5	8	5	5	2
Women	5	3	5	2	5	5	8

Note: the higher the number the greater the decision-making responsibility, 10 is the highest score

Overall, men and women had a similar view of the degree of responsibility each had for decisions, although men believed they had more power over decisions related to agriculture than did women. The men's ideas appear to follow the traditional idea of what men should do and how they should behave, whereas the women's point of view appears more related to actual practice. Supporting the aged and arranging funerals are two big items that are decided mainly by the husband's family, with the husband and his brothers playing a key role and the women a background role. Selling or buying expensive items like cattle, house materials, big pigs, and machinery are decided mainly by men, as they think that they have more information about price and the quality of goods. As men have more chance to go out of the village, this is in most cases true. Women are permitted to make decisions on buying and selling of small items like chickens, mushrooms, tea, and daily necessities. Sending children to school, seeing doctors, and aspects of birth are decided jointly by men and women. Women decide about almost all aspects of housework and the daily life of the family. In 80 per cent of households, women keep the money according to the traditional custom which follows the proverb: "a woman is a dam, a man is a river." This was explained by an elderly lady—a woman is thrifty in running her home and accumulates money like a dam, but men are the source of family income like a river. However, a bad dam cannot hold back water, even if the river pours a lot of water into it. Thus, although women keep the money, the men still control it.

Young people tend to decide who they wish to marry. Parents might suggest and cajole, but their real role is in arranging the chosen marriage. The parents of both sides meet with two matchmakers and discuss (several times) how much the boy's family will give the girl and the girl's parents to cover the bride price. At present, the bride price is RMB 4,000 to 6000; this is divided into two shares, one for the girl, one for the girl's parents. The girl's share is brought to the husband's family as the girl's own property.

Thus it seems that women play an active role in the planning and management of cultivated land and the family economy, and mothers play an important role in sending

children to school and seeing doctors, and control the daily life of the families, but the character of decision making in the village is that the more important the decision, the less the control the women have.

in the Xizhuang Watershed

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Abstract

Local farmers in the Xizhuang watershed of the Yunnan province in China have several priority water problems in the use and management of their water resources. The main problem in the watershed face shortages of drinking and irrigation water by different degrees. Several local solutions and alternatives for water resource management were generated. Whether financial and technical support would be needed for the construction of drinking water supply and water harvesting and irrigation systems. The shortage of farmland is another challenge for local planners. Some farmers hope to develop marginal mountain areas and watersheds for fruit tree orchards and tea gardens to help meet the demands of the rapidly increasing population for food. Other widespread concerns are the stabilisation of eroding landslides, the reduction of damage from landslides, floods, and gully and mudflows; the control of soil erosion and improvement of soil fertility; the introduction of high-yield crop varieties; the control of crop pests and diseases; construction of transportation routes; the promotion and development of agricultural products; and the increase of agricultural income. The government and other agencies are asked to provide more technical support and assistance for the pattern development and processing, and community level of management. The priority building of local institutions and organisations is also of great