

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL ASPECT OF THE CHINESE

#### IN THE GOOD EARTH

In analysing the cultural aspect, the writer, first analyzes the internal context of the novel using objective theory and structuralism approach. This discussion is presented, so that the readers of this thesis may comprehend more about the intrinsic aspect of the novel. Then, the step further is to comprehend about the extrinsic aspect of the novel, using the mimetic theory and cultural approach, which constitute the main discussion in this thesis. Therefore, the discussions divide into two parts.

#### 4.1 The Intrinsic Analysis

In intrinsic analysis, the writer focuses on the three elements of fiction, respectively, plot, characterization, and setting; since they are representative enough to convey the wholeness of the story.



#### 4.1.1 Plot

Plot is also an integrity of elements which make up a story, so that it becomes the main frame of the story. It means that the main frame is the place in which the sequences of events pass through.

In general, the elements of plot are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution or conclusion. But the important elements of plot are conflict and climax.

The story begins with a young poor peasant, named Wang Lung, who is going to pick his wife up from the House of Hwang, a wealthy and prominent landlord. The Hwangs have numerous slaves, to whom one of them is O-lan, who is promised to Wang Lung. Because of his poverty, he can only take a slave as his wife. Then, the two return together to the house of Wang's father. On the way home, the two young people stop at the temple. They burn the stick of incense and put them in front of the gods of fields, to invoke a blessing on the marriage. This is the exposition of the story. At this scene, the main characters are introduced, Wang Lung and O-lan, and the setting which takes place. The first conflict is also introduced in this chapter, the conflict of Wang Lung toward poverty. Not long time

after, O-lan bears a child, a son. It really arouses Wang's pride, because a son is more respectable than a girl. According to the Chinese tradition, a son can carry on the family's name, so that their generation will continue. To celebrate his son's birth, Wang Lung buys eggs, and dyes them red as based on the custom. Wang distributes them to the villagers as a sign of joy which he hopes the villagers share in his happiness.

The birth of the first son, brings luck in Wang's family. The abundant of harvest, and the buying of Hwang's land indicates his success. Not long, after the new year celebration, he gets a second son. Son is considered as the symbol of luck by the Chinese. That year is another good one for him, the crops are abundant, therefore he has more silver to store in a hole he made in the earthen wall of his bedroom. In this scene, Wang Lung become more prosperous now.

The birth of the third child is considered by him as an evil omen, since she is a girl. A baby girl, in the Chinese life is not considered a blessing, since the family has to support her until the time she marries. When she is strong enough to work in the field, she is usually marry, integrates to her husband's family.

The time of evil comes upon Wang Lung, when the gods turn against him. Since no rain has fallen, a

terrible drought occurs. The great disaster is shown in the following paragraph. The quotations occurring in this thesis refer to Buck's The Good Earth:

The rains, which should have come in early summer, withheld themselves, and day after day the skies shone with fresh and careless brilliance. The parched and starving earth was nothing to them. From dawn to dawn there was not cloud,... (64).

He can not plant anything at all, therefore this family have nothing to eat. It is a long terrible famine. Wang Lung faces the second conflict, a conflict toward nature. It compels the Wangs to evacuate to the South of China to survive from the cruelty of nature.

When starting a new life in Kiangsu, a province in South of China, Wang's eyes are opened to new things and the luxuries of life. But beneath the opulence of this city, the Wang's lived under the line of poverty. They never get any money beyond what they can obtain for their daily food. In this scene, we see that Wang is facing poverty again. During this period Wang Lung longs to be back to his land. However, this is impossible since they don't even have any money and seed to be planted. O-lan suggests that they sell their daughter as a slave in order to get money, however, it is difficult for him to do it. Although the child is a female and is

consequently not very worthy in their philosophy, he loves her dearly. The way out comes when the poor make an invasion to the rich people's house, and get the wealth of the rich. Wang Lung gets a handful of gold coins which enables them to return to the farm.

He starts working hard on his land. On the other hand, the greatness of Hwang's family has dimmed, and Wang Lung buys more land from them. With the fertile lands that have once belonged to the House of Hwang, Wang Lung enriches himself with having abundance crops. He becomes a rich landowner, as the result of his hard work and frugality.

On the other hand, he starts complaining about his wife's appearance. As, she appears very plain and simple woman, not in accordance with him as a rich man. In an angry and impatient mood, he goes to the Tea House. There, he falls in love with Lotus, a prostitute girl, whose beauty has made a strong contrast with the plainness of O-lan. In order to own Lotus entirely, he takes her into his home, being his concubine without considering O-lan's feeling. Although, she is deeply hurt, she can do nothing, except to accept her role as a woman and wife in the conventional oriental mold. This scene shows the position of woman in marriage in the Chinese tradition, in which the woman is merely the

mother of the children and the "servant" of her husband.

A new problem arises when his uncle's family arrives and make themselves at home in Wang's house. They are lazy men and take advantages from the prosperity of their relatives. Actually, Wang hates them very much, but can do nothing. If he chase them away he will be disgraced, because he is bound by a strict code which is based upon honor and the paying homage to one's elders.

O-lan, who is forgotten, in which another woman has replaced her position, gets a serious illness. And for the first time in his years, Wang Lung begins to think about her. He tries hard to help recover her health, but O-lan lays dying. Before facing her death, she wants her eldest son to be married. After the wedding day, O-lan died, and Wang Lung makes a ritual ceremony for her. All the relatives accompany her to the burial.

The climax of the story rises, when Wang Lung and the family move into town and live in Hwang House, a great house which in the past he had been afraid even to approach it. Living with his son, daughters in-law, grandchildren and some slaves are the style of the Chinese family system which is called the extended

patriarchal family. He is the head of the great and rich household, and the people refers to him as Wang The Big Man. This scene shows his ultimate success as a man. On the other hand, he has a trouble with his third son, who has gone off to join the army. His son has done this as a protest toward Wang Lung because he has taken a slave to be his other concubine whom his youngest son loved.

While waiting for his death, one day Wang Lung overhears his sons talking about which land they will sell. He insists them that they never sell any of them. The sons tell him that he has misunderstood them. They lie on him, they will sell it soon after his death.

#### 4.1.2 Characterization

Characterization is considered as the creation of images of imaginary persons in drama, narrative poetry, the story, the short story, etc (Shaw, 1972:71). According to E.M Forster the characters in fiction are relatively flat or round. Simple (flat) character is the less representation of a human personality the the embodiment of a single attitude or obsession in a character. He is flat because only one side of him can be seen, and tends to stay the same through out the story which makes him the static character. Whereas

complex (round) character is not simple embodiment of single attitude. All side of him can be seen. This character fully develops in the story, changes during the story, therefore he is categorized as the dynamic character. The main character is usually complex (round), also a dynamic one. While minor character must necessarily remains flat (Kenney, 1966).

Characters in a story although they are fictional men, but imitating the real life. The characters are likely real men, they develop through the struggle of life. And characters take the important role in building a story. In this novel, Wang Lung is the central character where the actions of all the other characters are related directly to him. No one in the story performs any action which is independent from the main action.

#### 4.1.2.1 Wang Lung

Wang Lung, the main character, is a peasant who wears his hair in the braid style which is characteristic of the men of the old China. First, when we read this novel, we can directly imagine that he is diligent and hard-working. These two spirit form his ambition to own a wide land. Although he is an



illiterate and ignorant peasant, he is not as simple as he seems to be. He has the obsession with the idea of land, to him this is the only real wealth, which can not be stolen from a man. So every time he has silver, he buys more land. Eventhough he lives in the basic line of poverty in Kiangsu, he is still obsessed by it.

"If I had the gold and the silver and the jewels, I would buy land with it, good land, and I would bring forth harvest from the land" (Buck, 1958:117).

When living in the South province, he always long for his land; and wants to return and plant new crops.

He is respectful to his father. He takes care and serves him, after his mother's death. He always obeys to what he says. When he wants to marry, his father command him to take an ugly woman to a beautiful one. They don't need a beautiful one, because a beauty needs much money. They are only peasants; the suitable woman for Wang should be a diligent and hard working one.

And what will we do with a pretty woman? We must have a woman who will tend the house and bear children as she works in the fields, and will a pretty woman do these thing?... No, not a pretty woman in our house. We are farmer (Buck, 1958:10).

First, Wang Lung is dissappointed to what his father said, but he thinks that he is right after all. Again,

his respect to his father is shown, when the long famine attacks his village. He endeavors to give him more food from the other members of the family. As seen from this statement:

As for the old man, he fared better than any, for if there was anything to eat he was given it, eventhough the children were without. Wang Lung said to himself proudly that one should in the hour of death he had forgotten his father. Even if his own flesh went to feed him the old man should eat...(117).

Wang Lung sacrifices everything for his father's sake; and this has increased his pride as an obedient son.

The Chinese is known as superstitious men. They believe in good and bad spirits. Buck describes it on her character, Wang Lung. His superstition is emphasized in chapter VII, when a girl child is born, whom he believes it to be an evil omen. On the same day of her birth, his uncle comes to him asking for money.

"It is over once more. It is only a slave this time- not worth mentioning."

Wang Lung stood still. A sense of evil struck him. A girl!... Now a girl had been born into his house as well (62).

Later, on that very day, a flock of black crows has encircled his field. He takes this as another sign of ill-fortune to come.

Across the pale, oyster-colored sky of twilight a flock of crows flew sharply black, and whirred over

him, cawing loudly. He watched them disappear like a cloud into the trees about his house, and he ran at them, shouting and shaking his hoe. They rose again slowly, circling and recycling over his head, mocking him with their cries, and they flew at last into the darkening sky.

He groaned aloud. It was an evil omen (Buck, 1958:63).

What he worries about, really happens. A long dry season attacks and causes the long terrible famine. But he has never surrendered to whatever the difficult conditions that he must face. He has enough strength to defeat the difficulties.

He is in fact a soft-hearted man. He does not have the heart to kill his ox in order to save his family from starvation; since, the ox is his companion, when working in the fields. O-lan and his father insist him, but he only answers;

"Let it be killed then, but I can not do it"  
(Buck, 1958:69).

He also loves his daughter dearly, although he hates her when she was born, because a female is not worthy in the Chinese family. But he has no heart to sell her into slavery, even though he needs money to start a new life on his land. Toward his sons, he shows more attention by sending them to school, since he needs one who can read and write well.

Although he is shrewd in his business dealings,

and works hard on his land, he doesn't know how to deal with other people's feeling. He does what he wants and thinks is right to him. For example when he takes Lotus, a prostitute girl, from the Tea House home, as his concubine. He has no attention how deeply O-lan's feeling is hurt. This happens again, between Wang Lung and the youngest son. He has a very special interest in Pear Blossom, the slave of the Wang's house. But Wang Lung is jealous of his son when he sees that his son like her, too. Later, when he takes Pear Blossom as his second concubine; he has really hurt his youngest son's feeling, and makes him very angry indeed. He goes off and joins the army, no one knows where he is ever after now. After he has left, Wang Lung fully realizes what he has done, but it is too late.

#### 4.1.2.2 O-lan

She is the second most important character in the story. Physically, she is not an attractive woman. Buck describes her as:

She had a square, honest face, a short, broad nose with large black nostrils and her mouth was wide as a gash in her face. Her eyes were small and of a dull black in color, and were filled with some sadness that was not clearly expressed (20-21).

But, mentally she is really attractive despite all her simplicity. She was an ex-slave in Hwang House, therefore she is accustomed to hard-working. Being Wang's wife, she takes the important role in his success, and a realization of her diligent and hard work. She works industriously side by side with her husband, and as a result, produces an abundant harvest. Besides that, she also works at home, serves the husband, father-in-law, children, without complaining. She is really a strong woman physically and mentally. During her pregnancy, she keeps helping Wang Lung in the fields. She stops her activities in the field when she feels the time for giving birth has finally come. And no one will help her in the birth of her first baby.

She would have no one with her when the hour came. It came one night, early, when the sun was scarcely set. She was working beside him in the harvest field... She had stooped stiffly, because of the burden she bore, and she moved more slowly than he, so that they cut unevenly, his row ahead, and hers behind... She stopped and stood up then, her scythe dropped. On her face was a new sweat, the sweat of a new agony.

"It is come," she said (36).

During the second giving birth, she goes off by herself into the bedroom, when she is ready. Moreover, she has never allowed anyone be near her until the child is born. After giving birth to her child, she will return

to the field to work. The baby is also taken, and she only stops working when she has to feed her baby. She is also the one who displays the real strength during the time of crisis. When facing the period of the starvation, two men come to try to buy Wang's land cheaply. He can do nothing, except being angry; his land is everything for him. O-lan is the one who is in charge in deciding about what to sell, and the money is used for evacuating to the South.

"I shall never sell the land!" he shrieked at them. "Bit by bit I will dig up the fields and feed the earth itself to the children and when they die I will bury them in the land, and I and my wife and my old father, even he, we will die on the land that has given us birth!"

He was weeping violently and his anger went out...

And then suddenly O-lan came to the door and spoke to them, her voice flat and commonplace as though everyday such things were.

"The land we will not sell, surely," she said, "else when we return from the south we shall have nothing to feed, us. But we will sell the table and the two beds and the bedding and the four benches and even the cauldron from the stove. But the rakes and the hoe and the plow we will not sell, nor the land." (83-84)

Again she shows herself as the strong character, when they live in the city. She encourages the children in their begging and even their stealing. This she does eventhough she knows it displeases her husband. She realizes that their conventional morality will not

enable them to survive this disastrous period. For this matter, they have to struggle very hard.

She is what really a good Chinese wife should be. She is an extremely competent housekeeper. She has three sons and two daughters, which arouses her pride as a mother wherein she has given birth of three sons. She is also a good daughter in-law, for Wang's father. She is thrifty and never wastes anything. Unless very necessary, she seldom ask for anything for herself. When the first child is born, she asks for some silver to buy cloth for his son clothing.

Along her life she has served her husband, children and father in-law devotedly. She is really a faithful wife. She realizes her positions as a "servant" to her husband and the mother of the children. She never thinks anything else, except her obligations. She remains faithfulness toward Wang Lung in good or bad time, in wealth as well as in poverty. Although her husband has hurt her, she is still faithful to him and serves him just as before.

O-lan has never been a talkative woman, she only talks if it's necessary.

... to be accustomed to these conversations with her in which her part was a little more than a movement of head or hand, or at most an occasional word dropped unwillingly from her wide mouth (33).

On the other hand, she is also a stoical one. During they stay in the city, when Wang Lung becomes impatient, driven by his desire to get back to his land. O-lan simply tells him to wait.

"If we were only back on our land," he muttered.

Then suddenly it seemed to him that not one more day could he lie in this wretched hut...

"Ah, the fair land!" he cried out suddenly and fell to weeping so that the children were frightened...

And again it was O-lan who said in her flat plain voice,

"Yet a little while and we shall see a thing. There is talk everywhere now." (126)

#### 4.1.2.3 Wang Lung's Eldest Son

He is really like his mother. He is tall and has big bones and ruddy face as men of the North (Buck, 1958:235). But he is really opposed to Wang's character. He is a son of a farmer, but he doesn't want to admit it. He wants to be considered as an aristocrate and scholar.

...We are, after all, country folk."

But young man answered proudly,

"That we are not. Men in the town are beginning to call us the great family Wang." (Buck, 1958:298)

He has the idea to live in Hwang House, to show his aristocracy toward the people and his friends. He spends much money to embellish the house, in order to make it



looks like an aristocratic house not as a peasant's one. He is lazy and doesn't care where the money comes from. He can only spend it without ever considering to earn it. He is only enjoying all the luxuries of life and none of the responsibilities in preserving them.

Physically he is big and strong, but he is really meek and mild to his wife. Since, she is a town girl from aristocratic family.

...a man big in body but afraid of his own town wife...(Buck, 1958:332).

He is also afraid of his cousin, hiding his fears by pretending to be nice to him. Actually, he hates him very much. The cousin has insulted his wife, but he only stands quietly, not objecting at all. He says nothing to defend of his wife.

#### 4.1.2.4 The Wang Lung's Second Son

His physical appearance, as Buck describes him as:

One was short and slight and yellow-skinned, and there was that in him which reminded Wang Lung of his own father, a crafty, sharp, humorous eye, and a turn for malice if the moment came for it (235).

He has grown into a shrewd merchant, and in many side he is just like his father. He holds the grain until the

prices are high. But he is thrifty and stingy, too. He doesn't want to spend money for useless thing. At his own wedding day, he divides the guests according to their position in life and feed each group with food that belongs to their rank and position.

..., for even at the wedding day, which came on, he was careful of the money spent on meats and on wines and he divided the tables carefully, keeping the best meats for his friends in the town who knew the cost of the dishes, and for the tenants and the country people who must be invited he spread tables in the courts, and to these he gave only the second best in meat and wine, since they daily ate coarse fare, and a little better was very good to them.

And the second son watched the money and the gifts that came in...(Buck, 1958:302)

His character is really opposed to his brother. He knows much how to earn money very well, with his skill on trading, and saving it carefully.

The other characters in the novel, play a little part in the action of the story, however they are important to the mood of the novel. Everyone represents the social condition of their society. The old father, for example represents the old Chinese, who must be taken care of by his son. His obligation had finished toward his son, and now the son must "pay" everything for what he had done to him.

The youngest son has a great curiosity about his country. He wants nothing to do with the land as Wang's

wish, but he wants to learn much about history, geography, etc. He is the symbol of the new China.

Lotus, a beautiful woman is a concubine of Wang. Through her, the reader know much about concubinage among the Chinese. She wants all the luxurious thing and comforts easily, therefore she is willing to become a concubine of rich man.

#### 4.1.3 Setting

The setting of the novel is the background against which the characters live out their lives. It can be concerned with the place in which the characters live and also the time in which they live. Guches stated that the setting in fiction refers to the place where the events occur and the time of age of action. It refers to the point in time and space which the events of the plot occur (1980).

The story takes place in China, and the characters are Chinese. By using the peasant as her character, Buck wants to show about the Chinese farmer's dependancy upon land and nature. From land, they can live, and from nature they hope for good harvest. Both are the most

important part in a peasant's life. They are controlled by nature. They can do nothing when nature turn against them. A long dry season will cause a terrible starvation, and rainy season causes flood. Both long dryness and flood are the setting in this novel.

A village in Anhwei province, in North of China is another setting of the story. It is a place where Wang Lung was born and lived.

In Anhwei, where Wang Lung was born,...(Buck, 1958:101).

But, because of the terrible starvation, he and his family evacuate to the South of China in Kiangsu city. This city, is the second background of the place where they spent their life for several years. Buck describes this city as a place with deep social gap between the rich and the poor, as seen through the unfortunaye condition of Wang and the people in his surroundings.

Day by day beneath the opulence of this city Wang Lung lived in the foundations of poverty upon which it was laid. With the food spilling out of the markets, with the streets of the silk shops flying brilliant banners of black and red and orange silk to announce their wares, with rich men clothed in satin and in velvet, soft-fleshed rich-men with their skin covered with garments of silk and their hands like flowers for softness and perfume and the beauty of idleness, with all of these for the regal beauty of the city, in that part where Wang Lung lived there was not enough to feed savage hunger

and not clothes enough to cover bones (Buck, 1958:107-108).

In this setting, Buck shows her readers that the abundance and such poverty stand side by side. And it arouses the social jealousy among the poor. A great political unrest has come over the city where the poors batter the rich's gates down, and rob their wealth.

...the sound of a great door creaking upon its hinges and groaning as it opened unwillingly...

"Now do you still sit here? The hour has come—the gates of the rich man are open to us!"

Then Wang Lung rose up, slowly and half dazed, and he set the girl child down and he went out and there before the great iron gates of the rich man's house a multitude of clamoring common people pressed forward, howling together the deep, tigerish the howl that he had heard, rising and swelling out of the streets, and he knew that at the gates of all rich men there pressed this howling multitude of men and women who had been starved and imprisoned and now were for the moment free to do as they would (Buck, 1958:129-130).

Wang Lung gets a handful of gold coins, and from these coins they return to their village in Anhwei.

The writer of this thesis finds difficulty to identify the setting of time. Since Buck does not describes it clearly, but the only indicator which indicates the setting of time is found in chapter XII.

...., and once when Wang Lung heard a young man haranguing a crowd at the corner of the Confucian temple, where any man may stand, if he have the courage to speak out, and the young man said that

China must have a revolution and must rise against the hated foreigners,... (Buck, 1958:102).

It seems that the story refers to the Boxer rebellion, just before the year 1900. The strong indicator in this case, is the revolution of driving the foreigners out of China. There is no other revolution in attacking the foreigners except the Boxer rebellion.

#### 4.2 The Extrinsic Analysis

China, the peoples and all its aspects of life are the main background in The Good Earth. Beside that,

the main story is written by Buck wherein she elevates universal characterization and universal problems among the peoples in the world.

Wang Lung, as the main character, illustrates the superiority of the man of China, on the contrary O-lan who represents the hardship condition of the Chinese woman. In The Good Earth, the characters have reflected their cultural system through their behaviour in the novel.

4 2.1

#### 4.2 Wang's Family System

The Wang's family modeled in the novel illustrates the common phenomenon of the Chinese family system. In Wang's house in the village lives three generations, they are Wang's father (as the oldest), Wang Lung, O-lan, the sons and daughters, and also the concubine, slave and uncle's family. After the death of O-lan and Wang's father, they move to town and live in the Hwang House. In their new house, Wang as the chief of the household leads the married sons, daughters in-law, unmarried son and daughters, grandchildren, concubines, and also slaves. So, there are three generations in their household that form the unity of the family.

.... that here in these courts where the great family of Hwang had once lived now he lived with his wife and his sons and their wives and now a child was to be born of a third generation (Buck, 1958:286).

Their behaviour when living in a group consisting three or more generations in one household is a traditional family type of the Chinese, and it is called the Extended-Patriarchal Family. A type of family organization in which the patriarch exercises more or less absolute control over his wife, his unmarried daughters, and his sons and their wives and children, (Burgess & Locke, 1960:15).

This system has been considered by the Chinese as the best type of family organization, and basically interrelated with its essentially agricultural phenomenon. They are peasants, and the formation of extended family is built in such order so that the other family members can cooperate in the economics of life. In this case, Wang Lung does not employ his sons in his field, since he has enough money to employ the field-hands. He sends them to school. Actually, he wants them to be like any other families do, but his sons are very reluctant to work on his land. On the other hand, he needs someone who can read and clever in all things, it is because he is illiterate and ignorant. But after



they have grown up, he takes them to look after the family business. For the eldest son, he grants him a part of his land, to manage it by himself. And the second son, sells the harvest crop to the market. He is a shrewd trader like his father. They cooperate in business family to support the continuance of their family.

To support this, Burgess and Locke in The Family (1960:12) stated the common characteristic of extended Chinese family, such as: (1) Three or more generations—the patriarch and his wife, married sons and their wives, unmarried sons and daughters, grandchildren and sometimes great grandchildren and even great-great-grandchildren live together and constitute a household. (2) This extended family functions as an economic, social, religious, and political unit. (3) The chief and sometimes absolute control of familial affairs is in the hands of eldest male, in China it is called Chia-Chang.

The roles of individuals in the Chinese extended family are sharply defined by folkways and mores. These family patterns are so interwoven with all aspects of life.

Wang Lung as the patriarch, or the head of the family has the highest status. His primary role is of the general manager or family affairs, particularly the

outdoor activities. Wang Lung manages the land as the center of the family economic life, and in order to produce the good harvest. He sells it and acts as a shrewd merchant, gets as much as profit; so, the necessity of family can be fulfilled. He also manages the income and expenses of the household. Then, he starts to search a good school for his sons; search wives for sons and later a husband for his daughter, who are of the same level with them socially. Then he marries his children off. When O-lan and his father died, he arranges the buried ritual, and buys coffins from the best wood. But after he is old, he surrenders all his obligations to his three sons. He wants to rest in his old age.

O-lan as the mother has three primary duties: to bear children, especially sons and raise them, the second is to manage the household affairs. And the third is to obey her husband as her master. The first, has been done well by her. She has given birth to three sons and two daughters. She is also a competent housekeeper. She always gets up very early in the morning, cooks them food, serves her father-in-law, husband and children. Then, together with Wang Lung go to the fields, work side by side. When the prosperity comes, she is

forbidden to work on the fields. She only does indoor activities. Actually, she is in fact a wonderful and excellent Chinese wife should be. Her job is primarily to be a "servant" to her husband and the mother to her children, as the role of a woman according to the old oriental idea. But, Wang Lung does not appreciate her sacrifice at all. He has hurt her feeling, by taking a concubine. Wang Lung minimized her wife's place in an inferior position.

The sons are expected to do two things: to be respectful and obedient to the parents and to labor for the welfare of the group. They have important role in the groups, since they are males. They also carry on the family name, that is the reason why sons are more highly valued than girls. The eldest male will replace the father's position as the chief of the household. The Wang's sons, have different will in their life. The eldest wants to be a scholar and live as an aristocrate by using his father's wealth. The second is a shrewd merchant, and the youngest does not want to be a farmer, as Wang's wish him to be. He joins the army, separated from Wang. When facing this case, Wang Lung does not worry at all, he knows his land will feed them more than enough.

By putting a high value to the sons in the Chinese

society means that the system comparatively places a low value on daughters. Her duty is just to obey her parents when she is in her maiden years. The Chinese daughters will only wait for her mate, then she will be taken to the husband's family. That is why a daughter is not expected to be born. This is what Wang thinks about her daughter, when she was born:

..., that the birth of daughters had begun for him, daughters who do not belong to their parents, but are born and reared for other families (Buck, 1958:63).

In the novel, Buck does not describe the roles of Wang's daughters. Since they only play a minor role in the plot.

A daughter in-law is expected to be subservient to her husband, father in-law, the unmarried daughter, and particularly her mother in-law. When O-lan lays dying in her bed, she said to her daughter in-law:

... look to your husband and your husband's father and his grandfather and the poor fool in the court, there is she... (Buck, 1958:254).

O-lan has insisted her daughter in-law to take good care of Wang's family including Wang's daughter who is an idiot. It is the obligation of the daughter in-law to take care of her. Actually, she is expected to do the

work of the house, but she does not have to carry out all the burdens since they have many slaves.

#### 4.2.1.1 Filial Piety

Filial Piety is the common phenomenon among the Chinese to which the younger people should obey their parents. Taking care of the parents when they are old is the obligation of the son. Wang Lung as the only son, after the death of his mother, serves, takes care of his father, respects and obeys him. It is described that Wang Lung every morning:

he had lit the fire, boiled water, and poured the water into a bowl and taken it into the room where his father sat upon his bed, coughing and fumbling.... Every morning for the six years the old man had waited for his son to bring in hot water to ease him of his morning coughing (Buck, 1958:4-5).

After his marriage, O-lan replaces him in serving his father, and her service is even better than him. Therefore, Wang is very proud to have a wife like her. When, the terrible famine comes, he endeavors to give him food better than the others. Although he has to sacrifice his own children, his wife and himself, by being starving.

In the time of his prosperity he never forgets his

obligation as a son, although the old father does not realize yet, what a rich man his son is, now. Wang Lung always ask him whether he has eaten or not , since the only thing that is always remebered by his father is just eating and sleeping.

This manners constitute the expression of Confucian code which states that... "male was superior to female, age to youth: thus husband was obeyed by wife, father by son, elder brother by younger"... (Buckler, McKay, Hill, 1984:166). In The Book of Rites is stated: "Filiality has three expressions: The greatest is to honor one's parents; the second is to refrain from disgracing them; the third is to support them." A Chinese proverb, spells out the advantage of filial piety to parents: "Men plant trees because they want the shade; men rear sons to provide for old age (Scharfstein:6).

Respecting the parents are not only done when they are still alive, but also when they have passed away. The tablets of the ancestors constitute an honourship toward them. When the first grandchild of Wang is born, the eldest son suggests him to make a tablet of ancestors.

"Now that there are the three generations in this house, we should have the tablets of ancestors that the great families have, and we should set the tablets up to be worshipped..."

This pleased Wang Lung greatly, and so he ordered it... and there in the great hall the row of tablets was set up, his grandfather's, and the spaces left empty for Wang Lung's name and his son's when they should die (Buck, 1958:290).

The ancestors come first in the ordinary family at home and they are represented by the carved and painted tablets of wood above the altar in the house. The antecedents can count back their ancestors, so their existence will not be forgotten, although they had passed away for a long time ago.

Wang Lung makes the tablets in order to remind his grandchildren or even great-great grandchildren of their ancestors, well. And at a certain occasion they will worship his soul and the other ancestors, as the expression of their filial piety to the aged. As Durant and Schuster stated in The Story of Civilization Our Oriental Heritage that... "the husband must beget sons not only to sacrifice to him after his death, but to continue the sacrifices to his ancestors." (1978:789)

#### 4.2.2 The Marriage System and Women's Life

Buck describes the marriage system of the Chinese in The Good Earth clearly, with the marriage of the eldest, second, and the youngest daughter. About the

women's life, the writer of this thesis will illustrate O-lan's life as the reflection of the Chinese women's life at that time.

#### 4.2.2.1 The Marriage of Wang's Family

Marriage among the Chinese have little to do with love, since the individual is not free to marry or chooses a marriage partner for himself. It is arranged by the elders, starting from searching the mates till the wedding party. Yu Tang in his book My People and My Land stated that... a marriage in China is not an individual affairs but a family affair (p.148).

Wang Lung as the elders has the obligation to search the mates for his sons and daughter. The role of a matchmaker, in searching the mates are also important, and it is the common case among the Chinese. For the eldest, he wants to search a daughter in-law which is socially, similar to him. Liu's daughter is the appropriate choice. Then, he sends a matchmaker to propose to Liu's daughter. The betrothal is done among them first, till they are seventeen years old, and the wedding day will be performed by Wang.

The proposal is done by the matchmaker to Liu's



daughter, and at that time, Wang Lung gives a substantial present as the dowry.

On this day, therefore, he said to Cuckoo, "Let it be as you said. Go to the grain merchant and arrange the matter. Let the doery be good but not too great if the girl is suitable and if it can be arranged."(218)

According to the Chinese tradition, the dowry is not only given by the father's groom, but also the bride is expected to take the dowry when the marriage is performed. This is performed by the second son, when he tells to his father a type of woman he might to be his wife:

"I desire a maid..., and one who will bring a good dowry with her,...(279)

Durant stated in The Story of Civilization Our Oriental Heritage that... the father of the boy usually sent a substantial present to the father of the girl, but the girl in her turn was expected to bring a considerable dowry, chiefly in the form of goods, to her husband; and gifts of some value were ordinarily exchanged between the families at the marriage (1935:791).

The Chinese custom forbids the bride and the groom to see each other until the marriage ceremony. It is expressed from their attitude in concealing the bride

from the eyes of the groom.

Now the maid who was to be wed must not of course be seen by the young man and Lotus took her into the inner court to prepare her for marriage,...(Buck, 1958:251).

So, they are to see their partner for the first time in the marriage ceremony. To support this Burgess and Locke stated about it as... "according to Chinese tradition the bride and the groom are not supposed to meet until after the marriage ceremony". (1960:43).

After the marriage the eldest son and his wife live in the Wang's house. The wife integrates into Wang's family and separates herself from her own family. The husband taking his wife to live in his family, in the anthropology term is called as patrilocal. It is a tradition in China concerning the residence pattern after marriage.

In searching for the mate, sometimes the son tell his father, the type of woman he likes. It's done by the second son, he says to his father:

"I desire a maid from a village, of good landed family and without poor relatives, and one who will bring a good dowry with her, neither plain nor fair to look upon, and a good cook, so that even though there are servants in the kitchen she may watch them. And she must be such a one that if she buys rice it will be enough and not a handful over and if she buys cloth the garment will be well cut so that the scraps of cloth left over should lie in

the palm of her hand. Such an one I want" (Buck, 1958:279).

Actually, Wang Lung is startled toward his choice, since being the rich family, his son can choose any woman with the more highly status. But he follows his desire, and commands the matchmaker to search a mate as required by his son. In this case parents still have an authority to hold the son's mate.

For the youngest daughter Wang Lung has thought about it when she is in early years old. As stated in The Story of Civilization Our Oriental Heritage (1935)..., parents arranged the betrothal of their children soon after puberty, sometimes before puberty, sometimes before birth (p.791). He has betrothed his daughter with Liu's son, the eldest's father in-law. But, because of the uncle's son's bad-manners toward his youngest daughter, Wang Lung surrenders her to Liu's family, since, he can not keep watch on her virginity. This case can occur in China, because of some reasons. The case of child betrothal where the girl is brought into the boy's home at early age and the children grow up together (Burgess & Locke, 1960:41).

#### 4.2.2.2 O-lan's position in the marriage

In the marriage, women are in an inferior position.

The role of a woman is primarily to be a "servant" to her husband and a mother of her children. Husband is her master, not a partner for sharing. The important decision is taken by a husband without considering to his wife. The woman's position on marriage is described by Buck through O-lan's character.

Confucianism stated that woman has been thought such feminine virtues as quietness, obedience, good manners, personal neatness, ability in cooking and spinning, respect for the husband's brothers, and all those virtues desirable from the male point of view (Yu Tang,....:139). All of these feminine virtues has replaced women in inferior position, and all of these has been done well by O-lan. In the difficult times, O-lan stands next to Wang by working in the fields side by side; works at home to serve the Wang's father, Wang and the children; then, bears babies without anybody accompanying her. She always appears as the decision maker in the time of crisis, in the mean time Wang can not decide what to do. She really takes a big role in Wang's success. But, when prosperity come, he throws her away into the corner of hopelessness, just because he feels that she is too plain and ugly being a landlords's wife.

... that her hair was rough and brown and uncoiled and that her face was large and flat and coarse-skinned, and her features too large altogether and without any sort of beauty or light.

"Now anyone looking at you would say you were the wife of a common fellow and never of one who has land which he hires men to plough!" (BUck, 19658:161)

When facing her husband's anger toward her appearance, O-lan can not argue at all. Then he replaces O-lan by taking a concubine from the Tea House. His manners really hurt her feeling. Since nothing can be done, shee can only obey what his will. From that time on, he never cares of her anymore. What he does is just for Lotus, his concubine. He has also taken O-lan's pearl which she loves very much. And he gives it to Lotus. She can do nothing but obey to what her master's will. This manners shows the expression of the feminine virtues toward men.

The inferiority of woman upon male is more emphasized in the three obediences: when a woman is in her maiden home she obeys her father; and when married she obeys her husband ; and when her husband dies she obeys her son (Yu Tang:140). Throughout her life the China woman is undercontrolled by man. It shows how big the male's authority is in China.

#### 4.2.2.3 Concubinage

The concubinage practice constitute the polygamy system among the Chinese. All men are free to have concubines and nothing in their selection as the only standard of preferences is physical beauty. And, it usually occurs in the wealthy families, since keeping a concubine needs much money. This case is reflected clearly, in the novel through the behaviour of the Old Lord of Hwang and Wang Lung. Both show the concubinage practice among the Chinese in the novel.

The taking of the concubine is done by men just for pleasures to fulfill the male's libido. As shown by The Old Lord of Hwang:

... the Old Lord took yet another concubine.... This child of the slave, who was not more than sixteen, he now saw with fresh lust, for as he grew old and infirm and heavy with flesh he seemed to desire more and more women who slight and young, even to childhood, so that there was no slaking his lust (Buck, 1958:65-66).

For Wang Lung, he takes a concubine to satisfy his desire about everything which he can not be found in his own wife.

Lotus for his toy and his pleasure and to satisfy his delight in beauty and in smallness and in the joy of her pure sex,.. (Buck, 1958:204).

This polygamy system treat wife unfairly. On one

side, women is bound toward the feminine virtues, such as obedience and loyalty, and on the other side men hurt their feelings by taking a second wife.

#### 4.2.2.4 The Footbinding

The definition of footbinding is the binding of the feet by long yards of binding cloth and the discarding of the socks (Yu Tang, ...:166). The binding of feet in order that the women's feet are small and narrow. It is a symbol of woman's beauty in China. In the novel, the footbinding case can be found in the scene when Wang Lung for the first time saw O-lan.

The woman's hair was neat and smooth and her coat clean. He saw with an instant's disappointment that her feet were not bound...(Buck, 1958:162).

Then, his disappointment arises again, when he has been a rich landlord. He sees:

...that she was altogether hideous, but the most hideous of all were her big feet in their loose cotton cloth shoes, and he looked at them with anger...(Buck, 1958:162).

She defends herself and says in a hopelessly voice:

"My mother did not bind them, since I was sold so young. But the girl's feet I will bind-the younger girl's feet I will bind" (Buck, 1958:162).

Mothers who wanted their girls to grow up becoming ladies and marry into good homes have to bind their feet when very young as a measure of parental foresight. Therefore, O-lan binds her youngest daughter's feet in order to that she will marry a good husband and be loved forever. But her bound feet are painful, during the time of growing youth. As expressed:

... he saw the marks of tears on her cheeks, and her face was a shade too pale and grave for her years,...

"Now why have you wept?"

...  
"Because my mother binds a cloth about my feet more tightly everyday and I can not sleep at night."  
(Buck, 1958:238)

Actually, the footbinding is a symbol of the seclusion and suppression of women. The China men worship women's feet, and it is also a sex appeal toward the beauty of women. A good face of a woman is immeasurably when compares to the pride of having her small feet. The well-shaped pair is her pride for life (Yu Tang :168).

#### 4.2.2.5 The Birth

By giving birth to children, especially sons, it means the continuity of life and also the continuity of



ancestral cult. The giving birth of first child, a son, arouse the proud of Wang Lung as the father and the pride of O-lan as the mother. In China, a mother is shamed forever if she has none. Her prestige will increase based on the number of son that she could have. As the writer has explained before, the eldest son has important roles in the group.

In the second birth, Wang Lung is very happy, when the second son is born. A son is considered as a fortune whereas daughter is a bad luck.

...son every year; the house was full of good fortune-...(Buck,1958:55).

The giving birth of the third child, a daughter, does not encourage him at all. Even, it strikes him as an evil omen. The Chinese admit the son as the continuity of the group, meanwhile daughter is not. The quotation about inequility between son and daughter can be found in Book of Poems "when a baby boy was born, he was laid on the bed, and given jade to play with, and when a baby girl was born, she was laid on the floor and given a tile to play with." From this quotation, girl is considered worthless among the Chinese.

Girls in the hard times whereas the parents are very poor to feed them, can be sold by them to rich

families as slaves or if they are beautiful, they can be concubines of the rich men.

... while it was difficult for a man to find a way of earning his living, girls, on the contrary, could be placed in rich familie as concubines, companions...(Gernet, 1962:148)

Poor families had yet another means of getting rid of children whom they could not provide for:...or employed them as domestic servant (Gernet, 1962:150).

The selling of a daughter to the wealthy family is almost done by Wang Lung, since he needs money to take the family back to his homeland. But he does not have the heart to sell her. But his friend has sold his daughters since he can't feed them.

Last winter we sold two girls and endured, and this winter, if this one my woman bears is a girl, we will sell again. One slave I have kept-the first. The others it is better to sell than to kill,...(BUck,1958:113).

This kind of trading girls is the general phenomena among the Chinese. It seems not humanitarian, but it is their culture.

#### 4.2.3 Wang's Belief

Wang Lung believes in many gods, that's why in every occasion he respects them. The gods of earth and

the gods of field, the two gods which are most worshipped by him. The purpose is to have good harvest and prosperity. To show respect to them is done by burning the sticks of incense and wearing a new robe them on the gods statue:

At this moment, however, the robes were still new, since the year was but well begun, and Wang lung was proud of their spruce appearance...., and when he had found them he stuck them side by side in the ashes of other sticks of incense that were heaped before the gods, for the whole neighborhood worshipped these two small figures (Buck, 1958:23).

Worshiping the goddess of mercy is done so that the child who will be born is a son. It occurs when his daughter-in-law will give birth, he promises to the gods if the grandchild is a son, he will buy her a new robe.

All these reflects the beliefs which is adhered. In the Negara dan Bangsa it is stated that traditionally, the Chinese believe in many gods or in other word, polytheism. They are not monotheism, who worship the only one god (14).