Conclusion

As I made explicit at the beginning of the dissertation, this study examines personal relationships by looking at social support arrangements in rural Chinese people's everyday life from 1978 to 2004. In this Conclusion I will focus more specifically on the contributions made by the dissertation, namely, the methodological implications of *lishang*-*wanglai*, *lishang*-*wanglai* as a unified principle and typology of reciprocity, *lishang*-*wanglai* combining a static model and dynamic networks, social creativity as the motivation of *lishang*-*wanglai*, matters of state and gender, etc. raised in studying *lishang*-*wanglai*, and finally, as an open question, I will ask whether *lishang*-*wanglai* can be extended to a general analytic concept.

Lishang-wanglai has methodological implications

This dissertation has contributed to empirical knowledge about Kaixiangong Village, which was introduced to the anthropological field by Fei Xiaotong in the 1930s. It is an update and more thorough ethnography of the village after Fei. It also provides a fuller range of personalised relationships in annual and life cycle events with a highly detailed empirical study. The related ethnographical materials of the village amount to 150,000 words. They are in sections "Kaixiangong Village" and "The villagers' usage of *li shang wanglai*" of the Introduction, Chapters 1 to 5 and sections 7.1 and 7.2. *Lishang*-*wanglai*, no doubt, helped to gain those materials in many ways.

Lishang-*wanglai* is not a research method, but it has methodological implications in fieldwork (see sections 7.1 and 7.2). Looking back on my experiences in gaining access to the field sites I can see that they engaged different types of *wanglai* and revealed varied criteria of *lishang* in the research process, as described in Chapter 7. For example, the Wang Family's sympathy for me made them decide to provide accommodation for me and a policeman's rational calculation led him to help me indirectly through a friend of his rather than in a direct way (Chapter 7). The application of *lishang*-*wanglai* demonstrated self-reflection of my fieldwork experiences with *lishang*-*wanglai* (see section 7.1 and 7.2). Obviously, *lishang*-*wanglai* is a topic for all fieldworkers because they have to establish personal relationships in doing any fieldwork, which will in general be different in every new piece of fieldwork. Fieldworkers must necessarily learn how to relate to the people in their places of investigation. They need to learn the principles of personalised relationships and the local system for establishing trust. *Lishang*-*wanglai* can be helpful in the learning process during periods of conducting fieldwork and post-fieldwork.

The post-fieldwork method (see section "General methods and the scope of the research" in Introduction), which I innovated while developing the *lishang*-*wanglai* concept, benefits from application of *lishang*-*wanglai*. My post-fieldwork experiences and the huge amount of additional empirical data proved that the post-fieldwork method is very helpful for a longitudinal study. I mentioned in the introduction of Part II that I went to Neiguan in 1995 and Kaixiangong in 1996. The reasons I split up the period of six months' fieldwork were that I found something very interesting, and wanted to improve the ESRC project questionnaire. After I digested the fieldwork materials I rewrote the questionnaire and then went to Kaixiangong. Although I only spent three months in Kaixiangong village, it is one month longer than spent by Fei[1] during his fieldwork for the book *Peasant life in China* (1936). Based on the newly adapted and more focused questionnaire I collected as much information as possible when I was in the village. I couldn't systematically ask for materials based on the *lishang*-*wanglai* model because it was developed after my literature review and re-interviews though the "post-fieldwork" method. In this dissertation I dated the additional empirical data via post-fieldwork (1997 – 2004) whenever I used them. They strengthen the *lishang*-*wanglai* model by providing completed cases for the change in types of *wanglai* from one to another over a long period (1.1.1 and 1.1.2), and nearly half of the reasons (principles or criteria -- *lishang*) for the villagers' actions (*wanglai*). I will omit almost all the details of how *lishang*-*wanglai* worked between the informants and me during the post-fieldwork period. I paid a thank you visit to my informants, with gifts which I bought from the UK, immediately after I submitted my dissertation. I learnt this way from my informants. When I asked them "how can I thank you?" they replied "Don't forget us" or "Come and see us" (*lai kankan*), or

"Visit us and share the enjoyment with us (*lai wanwan*), etc. Amongst many reasons for doing this the most important one is that they believed I respected them by continuing *wanglai* physically with them.

The implication of *lishang-wanglai* indicates fieldwork is a process of two-way communication[2] between fieldworkers and informants.[3] In Chapter 7 I showed a fuller account in interviews between myself, the researcher, and the villagers, the informants. The whole process was full of questions, answers, queries, explanations, blame, feedback, etc. between the two sides. Such a *wanglai* indicates that in rural China a researcher may gain a cordial and relaxed fieldwork atmosphere if s/he knows how to develop *wanglai* with informants based on understanding of their *lishang*. This, on the other hand, calls attention to cultural differences, in particular for external researchers. I should point out here that to understand *lishang-wanglai* and to understand a fieldwork site with *lishang-wanglai* is different from learning how to do *lishang-wanglai* with different people. It would take a long time to learn to do it, and even be impossible to do it properly for external researchers: or even many Chinese themselves.

The process of developing *lishang-wanglai* to be a general analytic concept also engages in the two-way communications between nativization and globalization. I reviewed the related Chinese notions in section 6.1.2. They are *mianzi*, *chaxugeju*, *yuan*, *fu*, *bao*, *huhui*, *guanxi*, *renqing*, *ganqing*, *yang* and *laiwang*. I put together in a new way all the previous writings, in both Chinese and English, on personalised relationships by using my field study as an illustration. I have been able to show that what previous researchers considered as quite separate things ought to be put together with previous studies of *mianzi*, *bao*, *chaxugeju*, *yuan*, *fu*, etc. When they had been put together (a) I got a much larger sense of personalised relationships. For example, the fourth criterion of *lishang* – religious sense was added naturally on top of Yan's (1996b) three *renqing* ethics. It is especially useful for understanding Chinese society because China is always a non-religious society, although a religious sense is deeply rooted in people's hearts. (b) I unified all the Chinese notions with a single notion of *lishang-wanglai* as a way of seeing how the numerous different Chinese terms of operation about human conduct or social conduct fit in together. *Lishang-wanglai* does not have the negative and predominately particularistic connotation of *bao* and *guanxi*. It also more conveys a more general notion of social relationships than *renqing* or *ganqing*. It is an appropriate term and an important key to understand reciprocity among Chinese people and society. (c) More importantly this allowed me to forge *lishang*-*wanglai* as a general concept to analyse personalised relationships. I forged the concept *lishang*-*wanglai* from Chinese culture[4], just as Yang Meihui (1994) did with *guanxi* and *guanxixue*, Yan Yunxiang (1996b) did with *guanxi* and *renqing*., Andrew Kipnis (1997) did with *guanxi* and *renqing*, and Charles Stafford (1995, 2000a and c) did with cycles of *yang* and *laiwang*. I believe the process of developing *lishang*-*wanglai* until it becomes a general conceptual tool is one way of globalizing from Chinese culture to general knowledge.

Lishang-wanglai unified principle and typology of reciprocity

My study on social support and *lishang*-*wanglai* highly engages in reciprocity as a principle form of anthropological obligatory exchange. I suggest the use of reciprocity as both principles and a typology, which can be unified by the single notion of *lishang*-*wanglai*. As I mentioned in section 6.1.3, reciprocity always mixes the principles and a typology of exchange, e.g. Mauss's "the spirit of the gift" (1950), Malinowski's "pure gift" and "real barter" (1922) and "the principle of give-and-take" (1926). Levi-Strauss believes the principle of reciprocity can be a foundation for all social relations (1949). Sahlins (1965/72) made a typology of three kinds of reciprocity, whereas M. Yang (1994) distinguished principle (*guanxixue*) and types (*guanxi*) separately. Y. Yan (1996b) even further divided reciprocity into two types of expressive gift giving and instrumental expressive gift giving categories, two types of unbalanced reciprocity in imbalanced gift exchange, *guanxi* networks and three ethics of *renqing* principle. For me all of these can be unified with the *lishang*-*wanglai* model, which includes *lishang* criteria and *wanglai* typology as I have shown in the previous section and section 6.1.3. In this section I will highlight the points on which *lishang*-*wanglai* is directly built.

(1) *Lishang* criteria are built on previous researchers empirical studies (Chen 1996/98, Yan 1996b, Yang 1995 and Zhai 1993, etc.). In "*Guanxi*" of section 6.1.2 I have shown that Zhai Xuewei (1993) suggested that three Chinese characters

yuan (predestined relationship), *qing* (human feelings), and *lun* (Confucian's relationships) form a Chinese style of interpersonal relationships (*renji guanxi*). Yang Yinyi (1995) used *renqing* (human feelings), *lunli* (Confucius basic relationships) and *yuan* (predestined relationship) to be the principle of *guanxi* concept. Chen Junjie (1996/98) used *lunli* (Confucius basic relationships), *ganqing* (human feelings), and *liyi* (gain, benefit, interests) as the three dimensions for *guanxi* structure. In contrast to the above Chinese works, in Yan Yunxiang's (1996b) English book he defined *renqing* ethics as "rational calculation, moral obligation, and emotional attachment (146)". Amongst the above researchers everybody mentioned morality and human feelings and half mentioned either rational calculation or religious sense. I too agree that morality and human feelings are two important criteria or principles in human beings' actions. Yan's "emotional attachment" is a kind of positive feeling and covers a narrow meaning, whereas the others' human feelings can be positive or negative and cover almost all kinds of human feelings, it is only an elaboration of the same principle. For me there is no doubt about rational calculation being one of the important principles or criteria for a human being's action. This kind of rational-choice exchange theory has already been relatively fully developed. I simply use rational calculation as one of the *lishang* criteria: deriving from the universal truth that individuals always seek to maximise rewards from their interactions with others (i.e. Blau, Homans, etc.).

The complicated principle is "religious sense". When I looked at the questionnaire of the ESRC social support project I was puzzled as to why there were some questions related to religion. Some Chinese colleagues told me this was Feuchtwang's personal interest. However, I was surprised at how helpful and useful those questions were for my fieldwork in the two villages. To my knowledge China has never had any kind of "state religion" which took a real power in governing the country. Although China has many religious beliefs, senses and many religious organisations and textual religious traditions, there wasn't a separation of religion from politics (*zhengjia fenli*). This is an unusual cultural phenomena compared with the West. Religion in Chinese characters is *zongjiao*. Historically there are two basic religions in China: Buddhism (*fojiao*) and Taoism (*daojiao*). Buddhism originally came from India, whereas Taoism (*daojiao*), although indigenous to China, never became an orthodox religion. There was a kind of "state religion": Confucianism (*kongjiao*), which was the official religion but was never accepted by ordinary Chinese people. The kind of "state religion" is more like moral code or ethics which was made by rulers to rule the people rather than a religious spirit which came from inside of them. The religious spirit has been treated as "negative ideology" in Chinese society, especially in Socialist China the religious spirit became synonym for "feudal superstition". Almost all the Chinese scholars I know have a more or less general religious sense, but for them it is taboo to become a religious' believer[5] because even the sage Confucius and the "state religion" of Confucianism can be treated in any way they like by people who are in power. For ordinary Chinese people there are all sorts of popular religions (*minjian zongjiao*). What I learnt from my fieldwork is that ordinary people believe in their own gods, e.g. land god, kitchen god, medicine god and silk god, etc. I do not mean everybody is like this or every believer's belief is at the same level. Although statues of these gods can be smashed and temples can be destroyed, the religious sense is deeply rooted in their hearts and can never be removed. Therefore I add "religious sense" as the fourth criterion of *lishang*. It is very helpful to understand ordinary Chinese people and their behaviour.

(2) Table 3 compares 16 different kinds of typology on social exchange relationships or reciprocity including mine. For my study the influential researchers are, in sequence order, Weber (1904), Parsons (1937/51), Polanyi (1957), L. Yang (1957), Sahlins (1965/72), Befu (1966/67), Mitchell (1969), Wen (1982), Lin (1986), Walder (1986), King (Jin, 1985/94), Hwang (Huang, 1987), Z. Yang (1991), M. Yang (1988/94) and Yan (1996b). The above 16 typologies are fitted into five columns. Apart from generous *wanglai*, expressive *wanglai*, instrumental *wanglai* and negative *wanglai*, there is a column of market exchange (Polanyi, Z. Yang, etc.) or economic exchange (i.e. King). Market or economical exchange is completely different from social or personal exchange relationships, and I do not study it. However, for me once any market or economical exchange relationship has been personalised then the relationship would be a kind of personalised market relationship. Thus the personalised market relationship either falls into the category "expressive *wanglai*" like a shop owner in Kaixiangong, or instrumental *wanglai*

like some villagers who purchased building materials through special *guanxi* (see point 5 of "Clarifications of *wanglai*" in section 6.1.3).

Some researchers did not take generous *wanglai* and negative *wanglai* into consideration. For example, Weber's typology of traditional, affective, value-rational or impersonal and end-rational identified with principles of customary, emotional, ultimate values. They looked similar to mine in terms of considering both typology and principles at the same time. However, Weber's typology did not cover the two extreme ends of personal relationships that interested me. Moreover, for me each type of *wanglai* can be judged by all four principles or criteria of *lishang*. "*Wanglai* typology" in section 6.1.3 reviewed how each of the four types of *wanglai* is built on top of previous researchers' work.

I shall highlight the Sahlins's (1965/72) typology of reciprocity which directly influenced mine in many ways (see sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.3). I split Sahlins's generalised reciprocity into generous and expressive *wanglai*; I also redefined the balanced reciprocity to be identical with instrumental *wanglai*; and clarified the negative *wanglai* by distinguishing between a relationship with negative affection and the stopping of a relationship. More importantly, I added how materials and others things flow through those relationships and how changes are made to those relationships. I also show how and why those relationships changed, not chaotically, but by calculation of a set of reasons (*lishang*) behind the changes. I used the dynamic creativity of personalised relationships, going beyond Sahlins' rather too rigid typology of reciprocity. For me, the way of making relationships depended on the calculation of the kind of relationship rather than the assumed closeness or distance of the relationships. Finally, I suggest the use of reciprocity as both a principle and typology, which can be unified by the single notion of *lishang*-*wanglai*.

Here I would like to re-emphasize that in the theory of reciprocity studied by Sahlins and following Sahlins there has been a lack of the dynamic approach that I have introduced. My approach is dynamic and longitudinal, within which there is much more mobility and creativity than can be predicted by just saying "you are close, he is distant". In my study I use networks to analyze one or more processes of starting, maintaining, co-existing, and stopping with different types of relationships in the formation of personalised relationships. This example from China has therefore broadened the scope of what ought to be considered under the topic of reciprocity studied in any other places, e.g. outside the village or outside China. Notions of gift exchange and ego-centered networks can be described as personalised relationships, which include institutions and non-institutions. My study in Kaixiangong suggests the full range of all that can be put together by anyone doing similar work elsewhere.

Lishang-wanglai combined a static model and dynamic networks

This thesis develops the Chinese term *lishang*-*wanglai* as a general concept for analysing personalised relationships through rural Chinese people's reciprocal social support arrangements. *Lishang*-*wanglai* is a creative process of personalised relationships in which different types of reciprocities (*wanglai*) are judged by different criteria (*lishang*), and the flow of materials and other things through different reciprocities (*wanglai*) can be measured with time and space in vertical and horizontal ways. Figure 2 illustrates the concept of *lishang*-*wanglai*, a toolbox, which consists of a static *lishang*-*wanglai* model and dynamic *lishang*-*wanglai* networks. Once the two parts work together it proves the changeability of reciprocity in many ways.

(1) A static *lishang*-*wanglai* model. This includes the *lishang* criteria, which are moral judgment, human feeling, rational choice and religious sense, and the *wanglai* typology, which is generous *wanglai*, expressive *wanglai*, instrumental *wanglai* and negative *wanglai* (see section 6.1.3). Different criteria of *lishang* bring about the typology of *wanglai* in which village customs are used and creatively modified to keep track of *lishang*-*wanglai* networks. Amongst the many hundreds of different relations the *lishang*-*wanglai* model shows what types of basic relations we look at, what are the basic principles that underlie such relationships and why the different cases appear in this or that way. For instance, in section 1.1 generous *wanglai* is mainly characteristic of the relationship between the Tan and the Gu families as it is based on the sense of generosity associated with the adoption of JR by the Gu family. In contrast, the *wanglai* between the Tan family

and their given-up son JR was a negative one that was sometimes perceived as JR's revenge to his natal parents. Section 1.2, on another hand, suggests expressive *wanglai* between BZ and RF's families after their marriage and later instrumental *wanglai* after BZ's death. Chapters 2 - 4 demonstrate expressive *wanglai* and show that social order is normally well kept when a place, e.g. Kaixiangong, is mainly dominated by expressive *wanglai*. When negative *wanglai* is involved either between members of a family or between villagers and local institutions a conflict or disorder may have occurred, e.g. a policy of privatisation or registration of house construction (see section 1.3).

(2) The contents of *lishang*-*wanglai* networks. They are an enlargement of each element of the social support networks (Figure 1 and 2). This framework is mainly based on Philip Seed's (1990) social support network. I identified six kinds of basic resources for exchange via different sources of social support based on previous researchers' work (see Table 2). I use rational choice as one criterion together with other criteria (*lishang*) to examine a set of "personalised relationships (*wanglai*)". The contents of the *lishang*-*wanglai* networks are analysed into sources, resources, events, range, *lishang* criteria and *wanglai* types (Table 4 and Figure 2). As sources, all my informants agreed with me that a family's *lishang*-*wanglai* networks should include members of a family, relatives, neighbours, friends, fellow villagers, the collective, institutions, even the ancestors, and the local gods and goddesses. The source "the collective and institutions" extended relationships between individuals to organizations (see section "Personalised institutional relationships" later in the Conclusion). The source "the ancestors and the local gods and goddesses" extended relationships from social relationships to the nether world. This is why the "religious sense" of *lishang* is very important and the numbers of vertical and horizontal *wanglai* expand from four dimensions to eight dimensions (see point 3 below). *Lishang*-*wanglai* networks' resources include not only finance, labour, and information, but also materials, human feelings, and religious aims and categories, because their exchanging range is much broader. The events in a *lishang*-*wanglai* network include almost everything which regularly happened in villagers' everyday life. It tells us with which sources people tend to exchange the resources, what resources people are looking for, what the resources

are used for and where the people get the resources. I add ego-centered networks into the analysis of reciprocity, and use time or space dimensions to allow *lishang*-*wanglai* networks to work with vertical and horizontal flow together in up to eight directions. The ego-centred criss-cross globe, in the middle of Figure 2, indicates the dynamic nature of *lishang*-*wanglai* networks.

(3) The dynamic or mobile nature of the concept of *lishang*-*wanglai* proves the changeability of reciprocity. I introduced ego-entered networks into social support network or *lishang*-*wanglai* networks. As I have shown in section 7.2.2, the *lishang*-*wanglai* network presents criss-cross patterns of horizontal and vertical circles in five basic dimensions. They are time vertical, time horizontal, space vertical, space horizontal and a pair of basic dialectic changes based on the Taiji Diagram. These dimensions can be doubled when they are applied to an imaginary world. They can also be looked at from the different directions of bottom up, top down, inside and outside for the purpose of analysis.

I should point out that for either vertical or horizontal *wanglai* the ego can be involved in different types of *wanglai* within one or more relationships at different times or even at the same time. That is to say there are four possibilities: the ego can have a relationship with **a particular person or institution or spiritual being** with one or more than one type of *wanglai* at the **same time** or at **different times**; the ego can have a relationship with **a different person or institution or spiritual being** with one or more than one type of *wanglai* at the **same time** or at **different times**. In short, each relationship of reciprocity or *wanglai* can change from one kind of *wanglai* to another (see sections 6.2.2).

Within this framework *lishang*-*wanglai* relates to a creative process of reciprocal personal or personalised relationships in which different types of reciprocities (*wanglai*) are judged by different criteria (*lishang*), as in the relationship between a western professor (SF) and local officials in our fieldwork (see section 7.3). Each relationship of reciprocity or *wanglai* is judged on four different kinds of *lishang* criteria. These criteria are weighted differently from case to case. The criteria were refined for analysis of reciprocity based on the operators themselves, Kaixiangong villagers.

Lishang-wanglai's motivation is social creativity

My fieldwork shows that the motive force for driving the ego-centred *lishang*-*wanglai* networks is social creativity. I had a strong sense that there is a deeper level motivation, rather than multi-reasons of *lishang* which drove Kaixiangong villagers' actions in making *lishang*-*wanglai* networks. I also feel that one difference between Chinese and Western cultures is that the reasons for actions that make or change social relationships are well understood and elaborated by Chinese people – in the West such a deliberate approach to social relationships might be thought artificial. In Northern American or Northern European countries the idea of sincerity and spontaneity is so strong that to talk about how you calculate relationships is embarrassing. Rural Chinese people enjoy talking about it and it doesn't say anything about being insincere when they talk about it, whereas when people in Northern American or Northern European countries talk about it, it means they are calculating and insincere. The enjoyment of the creativity inherent in calculating relationships is a part of culture that I see in China. For the Chinese, social creativity is the innovatory sense of sheer enjoyment which comes from the human heart (*renxin*, Liang's term 1949/75).

After contrasting Kipnis's (1997), Liang Shumin's (1949/95) and Davis's (1994) works I worked out that they are all related to the topic of social creativity. I joined Kipnis's notion of "nonrepresentational ethics" and Liang Shumin's idea of "human heart" to Davis's social creativity and used it as motivation for *lishang*-*wanglai* based on both literature and my empirical studies. Kipnis distinguished another kind of *ganqing* which is more to do with human feelings, rather than *renqing* ethics, with the notion of "nonrepresentational ethics" (see "*Renqing* and *ganqing*" in section 6.1.2). The three kinds of *ganqing*: *ganqing* (human feelings)-one of the *lishang* criteria (human feelings), *ganqing* with the meaning of "nonrepresentational ethics and *ganqing* of the motivation of *lishang*-*wanglai*, are all close in meaning, but must be distinguished. This is why I borrowed Liang Shumin's term human heart (*renxin*) for describing the motivation of *lishang*-*wanglai* to distinguish this from human feelings of *lishang* criteria (see section 6.3.1). Liang's human heart is related to three *xing*s (go-aheadism, flexibility and planning) partially proved by one of my important findings that *lishang*-*wanglai* is the way in which participants enjoy balancing the multiple criteria in personalising different relationships (see section 6.3). *Lishang*-*wanglai* describes the way in which Chinese people deal with the complex process of making and using social relationships. In my work I use these concepts as an analytical tool to understand my fieldwork observations. In so doing I have formalised some ideas that explain my observations, but are not explicitly present within the Chinese socio-cultural context. The use of *lishang*-*wanglai* by Chinese people is an example of social creativity. The successful practice of *lishang*-*wanglai* is enjoyed by the practitioner, and admired by Chinese observers, quite apart from its utility in furthering the social goals of the practitioner. For example, in social events both the host and guests would make judgments on relationships with each other based on *lishang* and all my informants enjoyed this process of reviewing relationships because they regarded it as creative work, as discussed in the section "The villagers' usage of *li shang wanglai*" of the Introduction. Therefore villagers enlarged the content of *lishang*-*wanglai* not only by redefining but also by reviewing constantly their relationships within the *lishang*-*wanglai* networks. For them *lishang*-*wanglai* is a creative process. The continuous knitting of *lishang*-*wanglai* networks from birth to death can be seen from Chapters 1 to 4.

Davis's idea of social creativity reaches the same goal as Liang's three *xing*s by different routes. According to Davis, social creativity is purposeful action because the social order people seek is a series of ramshackle contraptions and inherently unstable, but they are ingenious, clever, pleasing to contemplate and need continual affirmative re-creation and maintenance. Therefore, social creativity is the motivation for making and maintaining personalised relationships in Kaixiangong. I then demonstrated social creativity as a motivation for changing relationships in seven ways (see section 6.3).

In point (4) of the above section 6.3, I pointed out that Chinese people prefer to do things in a way that is indirect: hazy, dim, or allusive. This can be found from Kaixiangong villagers' everyday life in which the updating of their *lishang*-*wanglai* networks often involves no words (Chapters 1 - 4). This can also be found from Chinese scholars' academic habits tending to the allusive (*hanxu*), which might occur because of a lack of independence from political power. In the West, as is common knowledge, there was a separation of religion from politics after the Renaissance, separation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers after the Enlightenment and independence of liberal intellectuals from the 18th Century. As Yu Yingshi (1987b) pointed out, there is a cultural phenomenon in China, perhaps unique in the world, that Chinese scholars (*shi* – equivalent to modern intellectuals in the West) have continued for more than two and a half thousand years without a break (Preface: 2). Chinese scholars (*shidafu* - scholar-bureaucrat or scholar-officials) have been at the top stratum of the Chinese hierarchical system, although during a particular historical period, e.g. the Cultural Revolution, their social status temporarily dropped down to the bottom of society. The big "drop" didn't alter Chinese scholars' relative status because they lost their high positions together with officials including Liu Shaoqi, the former President of the P. R. China, and were "raised to the Heaven"[6] together again soon after the Cultural Revolution finished. Therefore, the relationships between Chinese scholars and officials are very close, as in Mao Zedong's analogy that they are hairs on skin (literally, a part of body). To carry out human and social science studies in China has never been a purely institutional relationship with the institution where one works and colleagues with whom one works. Personalised institutional relations between a scholar and his or her academic institutions and colleagues are always prevalent. For Chinese scholars it is only safe to say something new if this is done without great precision in order to avoid political danger. Nobody wants to have a negative *wanglai* with one's work place (*danwei*) or colleagues (*tongshi*). The feelings of fear and enjoyment of classics or other knowledge is one kind of *lishang* criterion.

Anyway, both Kaixiangong villagers and Chinese scholars have had to create different ways in dealing with different relationships all the time because they live in ingenious, clever, ramshackle contraptions and an inherently unstable environment (See sections 2.2, 2.3, 5.8 and "state" in the Conclusion).

Lishang-wanglai and issues of state and gender

Echoing the question “What holds Chinese society together?”, mentioned at the beginning of the dissertation, I move onto issues raised in studying *lishang*-*wanglai*. The above question was asked before the June 4th Event (The Tiananmen Square Massacre) in 1989 in “studies of Chinese funerals” (James L. Watson 1988:3). After the event, socialist regimes in the USSR and Eastern Europe fell from power like dominoes whilst the Chinese government steadfastly stood its ground under economic sanctions by many major Western countries. The question of “What holds Chinese society together?” was raised again in the context of the economy, international relations and people interested in China and Chinese studies. The study of rural Chinese people’s social support arrangements and *lishang*-*wanglai* reflected the above question from a different angle.

It is common knowledge that the Chinese state system has been an autocracy since the first Chinese Emperor united China in the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.). Over the last two thousand plus years, although the dynasties changed every couple of dozen years or more, their autocratic nature has never changed. Even the Republic of China, which appeared early last century, and the People’s Republic of China from the middle of the last century, are no exception. The changes of dynasties or names for the state are like a vicious circle in which every dynasty is governed by an enlightened emperor (*mingjun*) to begin with and ends with a fatuous and self-indulgent ruler (*hunjun*) or tyrant or despot (*baojun*). These changes can be one individual changing from enlightened emperor to tyrant, or later generations ruling tyrannically after an enlightened ancestor. In section 6.2.2 I introduced the Taiji Diagram and pointed out that the relationships between a ruler and people are like those between a boat and water. This cycle is one way in which Chinese people conceive of historical change and act historically.

My point is that the relationship between the state and people can be seen as a vertical circle: either a vicious circle or a virtuous circle. Although the people in the Republic of China in the mainland are still dominated by autocracy in a new form, after the Republic of China moved to Taiwan its nature has gradually changed to democracy towards the end of the last Century. This illustrates that the relationship between the state and people entered a virtuous circle in Taiwanese society. The Taiji Diagram oriented *lishang*-*wanglai* framework can demonstrate how the relationship between the state and people co-existed, in either a vicious circle or a virtuous circle, and how a change occurred within the relationship. This can be a tool to answer the question “What holds Chinese society together”. I have demonstrated how particularism and universalism co-existed in Chinese society and how the relationship changed along with changing situation in section 6.2.3. In this section I will demonstrate two major issues which are raised in studying *lishang*-*wanglai* in Kaixiangong and, to a lesser degree, Neiguan villages. They are the relationship between the state and the people, and the relationship between males and females, in resource exchange.

(1) The state played an important role in the villagers’ life, although the majority of villagers in China hardly ever received social welfare from the state system except in exceptional circumstances (see section “the ESRC project on social support” in Introduction). The ESRC project looked at three main sources for villagers to seek social support. They are household, private and public. Public support refers to resources from the village collective, township, credit cooperative and bank, etc. (see Table 4). The Statistical Report on the project shows the numbers of contacts (*wanglai*) for financial support from public source makes up 9.3 percent in Kaixiangong village (Chang and Feuchtwang 1996: 8 of Kaixiangong section). It is mainly for emergency events. This data agreed with the state figure of very little input to rural areas that I mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph. The problem is now how can I explain the huge difference between this quantitative data and the qualitative data that I researched.

Firstly, I shall make clear that the relationship between rural people and the state is an administrative relationship, which is nothing to do with *lishang*-*wanglai*. However, the state’s policies are through its various institutions, and local officials and village cadres to affect rural people’s life. The category of public support in the ESRC project doesn’t distinguish between pure administrative relationships and those relationships involving *lishang*-*wanglai*. Therefore it cannot explain how the individuals sought support from public sources. It is a key point to understand the relationship and interactions between the state and the rural people because the most important resources from the public source are policy and power, which cannot be quantified. This is why I involved Polanyi's (1957) redistributive political exchange, another principal form of anthropological obligatory exchange, and Parsons's (1937/51) work on personal relationships (see the 5th point in subsection Clarifications of *wanglai*" in section 6.1.3). For me, once an institutional relationship has been personalised it can then be expressed as a kind of *lishang*-*wanglai* relationship and therefore the *lishang*-*wanglai* model (see section 6.1.3) and networks (see section 6.2) can be applied for further analysis. This extended the flow of social support and *lishang*-*wanglai* from relationships between individuals to relationships between individuals and any institutions.

Secondly, since the contacts (*wanglai*) between the villagers and the various institutions, local officials, village cadres can be personalised, therefore, *lishang*-*wanglai* is engaged. We call this kind of *lishang*-*wanglai* personalised institutional *wanglai*, and it can be divided into generous, expressive, instrumental and negative *wanglai*. Those *wanglai* can act in either bottom up or top down directions vertically with the participants and can be explained with *lishang* criteria. Sections 1.2, 2.2 and 2.3 show that the state and its various institutions have a huge impact on the villagers' everyday life, not just during times of disaster and medical care. One obvious example is the impact of the one child policy on the marriage system through the increasing frequency of taking a man into a family marriage (*zhaonuxu*). Another is the impact of policy, e.g. preferential duties on enterprises of the disabled and handicapped, which promoted vigorous development of the related industries and therefore became one of the main financial sources for the local official welfare system, etc.

Thirdly, the Statistical Report on the ESRC social support project also shows the numbers of contacts (*wanglai*) for financial support for investment from all sources makes up 77.1 percent in Kaixiangong village (Chang and Feuchtwang 1996: 8 of Kaixiangong section). This is mainly for house construction. However, sections 4.1 and 5.3 show that before 1996 house construction in Kaixiangong Village was a major family event rather than an investment. Once the item of house construction is moved from investment to family event then the item of investment was almost non-existent. The question is why are Kaixiangong villagers so interested in building houses and why does it ignore financial investment completely? The answer is that the phenomenon was driven by the invisible hand of the state rather than by the market economy. On the one hand, after the social reforms of the later 1970s the villagers stored up enough money or materials for building new houses since the Liberation (after 1949). On the other hand, as I have shown in section “Kaixiangong Village” in the Introduction, private economy was not allowed in Kaixiangong before 1996 because the village was a model of the socialist collective economy. The villagers were quite sensible in that they adapted themselves to any changes of policy. In their words, the state controls the whole country and the villagers manage their own life (*zhengfu guanli guojia zhege dajia, women guanhao ziji de xiajia)*. This means that they manage their life within a boundary of the given conditions. At the same time they create ways to protect and comfort themselves. In the case of burning incense on a burned honeycomb briquette outside houses, JY Yao and her neighbours felt enjoyment in creating ways to keep their religious contacts with local gods when the local temples were destroyed by the local government in 1996 (See section 1.1).

Fourthly, it is not the case that the villagers were passive in their lives. Here I would like to illustrate the relationship between the state and rural people with Taiji Diagram, the Taoism Symbol, which I borrowed for construction of the *lishang-wanglai* networks (see section 6.2.2). The visible very limited social relief fund provided by the state can be seen as a black dot in the white section of the *yin-yang* diagram where rural people are based, whereas the invisible concern of the state on rural people can be seen as a white dot in the black section of the diagram where the state is based. It more or less represents the real situation of the state’s input (the “black dot”) to rural areas and the state’s concern (“white dot”) for rural people in 1996 when I was in Kaixiangong village. However, the proportion between the state and the villagers changed along with the application of a new policy of privatization since 1997. An initial finding from my very brief restudy of the ESRC social support project (1997 to 2004) in April 2004 was that over the last eight year period the most obvious financial support was for investment. To contrast with the major event of house construction before the privatization, Kaixiangong villagers also created different ways for investment over the last eight years, which can also be described and analysed with the *lishang*-*wanglai* concept. In the section “Economic development” of the Introduction I have shown that it is one of the results of villagers’ practices of *lishang*-*wanglai* with village cadres and local officials over many years. Another result can be seen from Table 5, that 191,537 *yuan* of the state tax from Kaixingong villagers was waived in 2003 by the Suzhou government. It means 40 per cent of the villagers’ burden of tax and fees has been eliminated (see section “Society and culture” in the Introduction). For the villagers, a reduction of this burden means increased income.

Finally, I will show how these changes between the state and the villagers occurred with the concept of *lishang*-*wanglai*. I mentioned earlier that the state’s power is another important resource for the state to control the villagers’ life effectively. This is why Kaixiangong villagers adapted themselves to any changes of policy most times. They also created their way to *wanglai* with the state through their representative – village cadres or local officials as necessary. For example, Kaixiangong villagers’ state tax increased from 32,671 *yuan* in 1985 to 163,300 *yuan* in 2000. The villagers decided to have a negative *wanglai* with the state by delaying or refusing to pay it. Initially the local government decided to send some people to court and asked for a list of names from the village. However, the head of the village provided a full list, which shows nearly 20 per cent of household heads refused to pay the state tax, amounting to 49.8 per cent of the total. The village cadre suggested to the local officials that the numbers would increase if someone was sent into jail because they believed a Chinese saying that law can’t punish the mass (*fa bu ze zhong*). The local government then reported the real situation to central government. A few years later the policy changed in favour of the rural people. Thus, the size of the black dot (state’s input to rural area) in the white section enlarged along with the enlargement of white dot (state’s concern of rural people) in the black section.

(2) The practices of gift-giving, social support and *lishang*-*wanglai* are heavily imbued with gender-specificity in the ethnographic chapters, although I didn’t make this an issue in the chapters on theory and methodology (see Chapters 6 and

7). This section will discuss the gender-significance of virtually all practices of *lishang-wanglai*.

I would like to start this by reflecting back to one piece of my earlier work. In 1995 I presented a paper titled "Gender difference in rural social support in China in the post-Mao era (1979-1991) -- An analysis of differences between agnatic and non-agnatic kin" in a conference on Socioeconomic Transformation and Women in China. It was based on the ESRC social support project's data on ten villages. The data shows there are three tendencies on gender differences in social support arrangements: a) the number of contacts of labour support from agnates is more than from non-agnates; b) in investment (house construction) the number of contacts from non-agnates in financial support are more than from agnates; c) the number of contacts of support from agnates is higher than from non-agnates in the same village.

I tested these gender tendencies in Kaixiangong Village and found out the explanation for them. a) Sections 5.1 proved the data by providing fuller information that customarily there is a division of various mutual supports between agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin in Kaixiangong. The rest of the ethnographic chapters repeatedly show how agnatic kin provided labour for feasts, whereas non-agnatic kin attended events with gifts (*lipin*) or gifts money (*lijin*). b) Section 4.1 also proved the point that non-agnatic kin provided a large amount of gifts for house construction and shows details about it. c) Obviously agnatic kin who live in the same village are obliged to attend every event or labour support for every feast or house construction (see Chapters 3 and 4, and section 5.1).

The test result shows that the numerous divisions between agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin in social support arrangement are based on local customs. The problem is that both agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin are formed from male and female. What is the real difference between male and female? After I came back from Kaixiangong I replaced the above paper with a new paper titled "Fattening pigs and women's gifts" in the published conference collection (West at el 1999). This more precisely addressed women's role in practices of social support and linked the role to women's status. As I said: "A woman's status in a household is based on her understanding of customs, the principle of ‘fattening pigs’ and the meaning of gifts, and hence her ability to provide resources through mutual support with other households”, but “how much it affects the status of women and whether any causal link exists between household wealth and numbers of social support contacts are still unclear” (Chang 1999:173). In other words, a woman’s family status is largely based on her understanding of *lishang* and ability to *wanglai* with others for the purpose of providing resources to the household. Although a woman’s role in using *lishang*-*wanglai* to provide family social support is clearly important, it seems that this does not override the tendency of men to view their activities as of primary importance! A previous head of the village told me that the above statement is also true for a man except replace the “family status” with “social status”. This, to some extent, is confirmed by a popular saying in urban China from the 1980s to 1990s: “one’s success depends on three parts of ability and seven parts of special relationships” (*sanfen nengli, qifen guanxi*).

Now I am engaging the concept of *lishang*-*wanglai* to develop this issue further. Firstly, I will bring Neiguan’s case for comparison horizontally. I tested the gender issues in Neiguan Village a few months before I did my fieldwork in Kaixiangong. The results of the divisions between agnatic kin and non-agnatic kin are more or less the same. One of the major differences is that the major events, i.e. weddings, funerals, festivals, or religious activities in Neiguan were arranged or participated in by men. I remember that when I was stopped from entering a village temple because I was a woman I sought reasons for the gender difference. The obvious reason I was not allowed to go to the temple is a religious sense. They told me that they didn’t want women to pollute the temple because they were dirty with menstrual blood. It was very clear to me that the above major events were counted as part of the Neiguan villagers’ social life. Male heads of households were representatives of their households for attending the major social life, which reflected their local social status. Males can also provide labour support for the funerals, which related to the rational calculation of *lishang* criterion. The difference between Neiguan and Kaixiangong reminded me of another tendency I found from data in the ESRC social support project: the richer areas have a larger number of social support contacts and the poorer areas have fewer contacts. I mentioned in section 7.1 that amongst the ten villages of the ESRC project Kaixiangong is one of richest, whereas Neiguan is the poorest one. This is true, i.e. the feasts for the major events in Neiguan were very very simple and required no labour support. The phenomenon of males' participation in the major events in Neiguan is just like males working as secretaries or typists in Victorian times. Nowadays it is usual that this is mainly female's work. Equally, for Kaixiangong villagers it is usual that the arrangements of social support mainly are female's work.

Secondly, I will now move to a vertical time dimension of *lishang-wanglai* to see whether there was any gender difference in Kaixiangong village between when it was poor and it was rich. I should point out that even when Kaixiangong was much poorer than it is now, but it was still relatively much better off than Neiguan in the context of the rest of China in Fei's time (1930s). Kaixiangong has been a rich village in contemporary China except for a few years in the Japanese Way period in the 1940s and the Great Famine period of the 1960s. Women's status indeed has risen over the last 60 years. I noticed there has been a movement towards greater valuation of daughters compared with sons. This can be seen from the changing of a traditional saying of the idea of rearing sons against old age (*yang er fang lao*) from relying on sons to relying on children including daughters. This can be seen from many aspects. (a) Traditionally in Kaixiangong Village a marriage of taking a son-in-law (*zhaonuxu*) into a family was seen as kind of misfortune due to the family having no son and the son-in-law's social status was low since he was poor. Nowadays more and more families accept this kind of marriage model. Some people even admire such marriage arrangements, e.g. HL Wang's younger son said if he was taken into a richer family he wouldn't feel poor. Although uxorilocal marriage was always for the sons of the poor, the feelings of admiring such marriages and it being widely accepted by the villagers is an obvious change. The change of the villagers to favour daughters rather than sons or to feel easy without sons might have been affected by the one child family policy, which applied from the early 1980s. The fact that about one half of all families had just one daughter changed the villagers' view and attitude towards uxorilocal marriage and also affected the arrangement of elderly care. (b) Daughters married into other families are also expected to be able to take responsibility for arrangements of family events and updating the families’ *lishang-wanglai* networks based on local customs. This custom was quite new compared with the new wives in the 1930s (Fei, 1939:45-50). The significant change of a daughter-in-law’s status is a challenge for them because if they are not careful a mistake would cost the married family loss of face or a source of resources, although it is not unwelcome: some women told me they enjoyed themselves very much making such arrangements. (c) The married out daughters also created opportunities to get close with their natal families. Traditionally the villagers only celebrate the one month, one year and sixteen year old birthdays for children, and the sixty-sixth birthday for the elderly as family events. Nowadays, some families celebrate children’s birthdays every year and elders’ birthdays every five years from sixty years old onwards. This is influenced by urban people. Although the birthday ceremonies are relatively small, low key and had not yet been widely spread in the village, married out daughters involved their natal families in the birthday ceremonies one way or the other. (d) Like girls in Beijing or Shanghai who normally wouldn’t want to move away from their natal town to other parts of China, Kaixiangong Village’s girls also preferred to get married and settled in their life locally. This gave them opportunities to *wanglai* with their natal families conveniently for both annual events and life cycle events. For the natal families the daughters are no longer “spilled water that cannot be gathered up” as in Fei’s time (1939:46). Instead they are now mothers’ padded body vests (literally, a daughter is truly close to a mother compared with a son, *nuer shi mama de tiexinao*). Anyway, the movement towards greater valuation of daughters indicates that their status has changed significantly between now and the time of sixty years before. It is clear that women’s participation in knitting family *lishang-wanglai* networks helped to raise their family status and also even social status at the local level. From my fieldwork it must be noted that it is not necessarily women who practice *lishang-wanglai* – but the fact that in many cases it is the women who control *lishang-wanglai* must therefore mean that they have a status and importance that would not exist in a society in which *lishang-wanglai* were less important. Further investigation of the relationship between *lishang-wanglai* and gender is clearly a topic for further research.

Finally, I would like to involve the Taiji Diagram, the Taoism Symbol, again (see section 6.2.2). The basic idea of *yin* and *yang* is that the former is associated with the characters of quiet, female, intuitive and receiving force, whereas the latter is associated with the characters of strong, male, creative and giving force. According to this the male is always a black dot in the white section of the *yin-yang* diagram where the female is based, whereas the female is always a white dot in the black section of the diagram where the male is based. The dots inside the white and black halves indicate that within each is the seed of the other. It means males have female strengths and females have male strengths inside themselves. They can both carry out similar jobs e.g. typewriting or arranging resources for families. I interviewed three families without housewives: in one family the related family arrangements were all done by the husband who was a restauranteur, in another family they were done by the grandmother, and in the last family they were done by a grandfather who used to be a treasurer of one of groups of the village and had retired from a township enterprise. His wife said the reason he did this for the family is because he was good at dealing with different relationships. In Kaixiangong there were families which had less strong *lishang*-*wanglai* networks, i.e. the village vet's family or FS Zhou's family. There were also many families which had strong *lishang*-*wanglai* networks, i.e. FK Yao's family or BY Zhou's family.

So, Kaixiangong's case shows it is not necessarily that village cadres' families absorbed larger networks than others as in Xiajia Village (Yan 1996b). It is also not necessary that women are good at making *lishang*-*wanglai* networks. In section 7.1 I have shown that my informants were old, young, male and female because they provided information from different angles. Some women acted in the traditional husband's role and vice versa. Their families were involved in the *lishang*-*wanglai* networks in different degrees. Therefore, I started my research with a concern for the gender issue but this led me to much broader non-gender-specific issues.

To summarise: the significance of gender is that both male and female act differently in arrangements of social support and practices of *lishang*-*wanglai*, but their roles can if necessary be changed along with a change of situations.

Can lishang-wanglai be a general analytic concept?

The theoretical framework of *lishang*-*wanglai* developed here is very general and likely to be applicable throughout Chinese society. I extracted personalised relationships from Chinese people who were maybe more willing to talk about this sort of things than others. I have shown that in a fairly complex and advanced society like China personalised relationships are extremely important. In China understanding personalised relationships is a key to understand the combination of changeability and stability of Chinese society. This new way of looking at change as well as stability can be applied to any part of China, both rural and urban.

Furthermore, it is likely that personalised relationships are quite important in all societies because things happening in China are likely to exist elsewhere in the world, although people in other societies might be less willing to talk about their equivalent of *lishang*-*wanglai*. It is also possible to find out how they do this and how it is important to them, although in each culture or society they will be differently constructed, construed and created. Society is formed by different kinds of reciprocal relationships, which can be personalised by different people. Society is also formed by human beings and human beings have human feelings, which is the most important criterion to distinguish personalised relationships from other types of relationships. It needs to be tested to see empirically whether and how *lishang*-*wanglai* is applicable to other cultures, although I mention some cases briefly in my thesis which suggest this.

The fieldwork on which this study is based derives primarily from one Chinese rural village (Kaixiangong). The status of this village, as one much studied by social scientists in the past, is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it enables longitudinal comparisons to be made which would not otherwise be possible. On the other, the influence of researchers on the object of research could in theory lead to some contamination of the fieldwork results. Further work to see how well *lishang*-*wanglai* captures the dynamics of social relationships in other parts of China, and indeed in other countries, is therefore motivated.

One interesting question as yet unanswered, which such work could address, relates to the universality of *lishang*-*wanglai*. To what extent is this concept, although embedded in Chinese culture, of universal applicability to the examination of human reciprocity? Investigation of this question in a cross-cultural context may lead to interesting new perspectives on Chinese and western societies.

Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 6, *lishang*-*wanglai* has some claim to be a universal theory of human reciprocity. There may be other ways of describing what I have described as *lishang*-*wanglai*, e.g. traditionally in anthropology relationships of descent, kinship, family, etc. have been studied. Compared with those ways of looking at relationships which are more structural and abstract as inherited relationships which do not allow for much choice, I am looking at the chosen aspects of kinship relationships. That is to say, how one kin is made closer and another kin is made more distant. Nevertheless there could be other ways of studying some of the relationships that I looked at as *lishang*-*wanglai*. For instance, suppose I were looking at customs, not just the custom of *lishang*, but those that say what is expected in terms of rights and duties like a kind of law. I would be following another traditional way in which anthropology studied roles. People expected somebody to play a particular kind of role within a set of roles. So there is a pressure on them to perform according to expectations from others. *Lishang*-*wanglai* is not exclusive and there are other ways to study these relationships, which would be divided up in a different way. My aim has been to formulate a new way to look at these relationships, not to subsume the other ways of viewing them.

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[1] In the Introduction of the Chinese version of Fei's *Peasants life in China* (1986) Fei said he conducted fieldwork in Kaixingong for one month or so (*yige duo yue*) (1986:1),

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although in the main text he said it was two months (1939:26). The Chinese version of the book said it was sometime between July and August (1986:19).

[2] In a globalising world, “communication” is becoming increasingly important in shaping both our institutions and everyday lives. The BACS’s (British Association for Chinese Studies) Annual Conference “Goutong: Communicating”, January 2004, Durham involved sinological aspects in this topic. City University held a workshop on the theme of communication on 2 June 2004, which brought together researchers with research interests in an open-ended view of “communication” to encourage multi-disciplinary research initiatives.

[3] I showed this in a postgraduate workshop on fieldwork research methods in contemporary Chinese Studies, Oxford on 19-21 September, 2000. The title of the paper is “Importance of intermediaries in gaining access to a Chinese village with *lishang-wanglai*”.

[4] My ideas of hammering a conceptual tool from Chinese culture and the trend of internationalization and nativization between China and the rest of world can be seen from my book in Chinese (1992: 545-47).

[5] It is different from to be religious believers as a kind of “flower vase” of rulers or to study religions as a job.

[6] A popular saying was then “the smelly scholars risen to the Heaven again (*chou laojiu you shen shang tian le*)”.