

Introduction

This study examines personalised relationships and reciprocity by looking at social support arrangements in rural Chinese people's everyday life since the 1980s. It illustrates that *li shang wanglai*¹, a term rooted in Chinese culture, can be developed as an analytical concept, and even perhaps make a contribution to general anthropology and sociology. I coin the related term *lishang-wanglai*² to describe this concept.

In this introduction I will first provide some background information about social support and the ESRC project, which formed the starting-point for my own research.

Then I will describe the fieldwork site - Kaixiangong Village - giving general information including its location, economic development, administrative history and social and cultural environment. This covers a period of more than 60 years because my study can be longitudinal using data from Fei Xiaotong's (1936) study.

I will then introduce *lishang-wanglai* (the term was used, during my fieldwork, by a Chinese villager). Part I of this dissertation will show villagers' practice of *lishang-wanglai*. Part II will show that this concept is of great significance in studying Chinese society, in particular for dealing with the central issues of *mianzi*, *chaxugeju*, *yuan*, *fu*, *bao*, *huhui*, *guanxi*, *renqing*, *ganqing*, *yang* and *laiwang*, etc. (see section 6.1.1). To some extent its study can answer the question "What holds Chinese society together?" (James L. Watson 1988:3) which has puzzled scholars for decades.

After explaining the general methods I have applied in my fieldwork I will make clear the scope of the research in time and space, and discuss my subject-position as a researcher. Finally the introduction is concluded with a summary of the organisation of the dissertation.

The ESRC project on social support

The idea of studying personalised relationships first came from an ESRC project (1991-94) entitled *Rural social support arrangements and the transformation of local tradition in China* (1979-91).³ Social support has for all countries been the basic way for most people to seek help, before state welfare or social security systems (see section 6.2). About eighty per cent of China's population are rural people who have never been covered by a state benefit system. In order to show clearly how rural Chinese people support each other and arrange their everyday life, I will start with the concept of social security. To a westerner, social security means government payments to people who are unemployed, ill, disabled, etc. In China it is common knowledge that there are different social security systems for urban and rural areas. Before the 1990s there were policies of high employment, high welfare, and low income in urban areas. This meant that almost everybody could be employed with just income for food and basic materials. The employees' medical care, pension, housing, even furniture, all kinds of subsidy and allowance, etc. were all controlled by their workplaces. In other words, urban people's lives were highly reliant on their workplaces. Since the 1990s this employed welfare system has changed very much along with the deeper level of social reform, but this topic is out of the scope of this research.

In rural areas another kind of social security policy was applied in socialist China. It was called the relief system, which combined state relief with people's support of themselves, namely, people with problems could rely on the collective and the collective could rely on the state (Cao, 1991). In other words, it was the collective who played a role of applying and distributing limited social security and welfare between the state and rural people. However, Table 1 shows that the coverage of the social security system by the state for rural people is very small. Up to 1990 only 0.83% of rural people were covered by the social security system (SSB: 1991). This figure comprises temporary relief during major natural calamities, various schemes for chronically poor areas, relief funds for five-guarantee households (*wubaohu*)⁴ and extremely poor households. So only the above people with special difficulties were covered by the state welfare system. The majority of rural people arranged everything for themselves through social support based on

local groupings: collective production brigades in the Mao era, or households themselves post-Mao.

The collective organisations of production were dismantled by the middle 1980s, after which the collective was no longer significant for the distribution of limited social security and welfare. People with problems could not rely on the collective any more, though it continued in name. Households were thenceforth responsible for their own security. How does the rural population acquire basic living security and other needs? What arrangements have people made to protect themselves against extraordinary events and expenses?

The ESRC project explored these questions through a view of social support. It examined social support arrangements and the transformation of local traditions in ten villages from 1979 to 1991.

The significance of studying social support was acknowledged by the Communist Party two years after that study. Social support (*shehui huzhu*), together with personal savings (*geren chuxu*), were added in the decisional document of the Third Plenum of the Fourteenth National Party's Congress in 1993. Thus the Chinese social security system includes: - social insurance; social relief; social welfare; work of *youfu anzhi* (providing preferential treatment to families of soldiers, martyrs, and proper arrangements for the placement of demobilized soldiers)⁵; social support; and personal savings (Bianweihui, 1995). Personal savings is officially defined as any means of financial savings or investment, etc. (Duoji Cairang: 1998). One type of personal savings which relates to social support is a pension fund to provide for old age instead of using the traditional saying "rearing sons against old age (*yang er fang lao*)". Although there have been many studies about saving for old age in rural China, this financial saving has very little to do with rural people's everyday life. We found, in the ESRC project, only about ten per cent of sampled households saved and even these had only small quantities of personal savings. The people preferred to store building materials and other goods rather than make financial savings.

The Communist Party recognised that social security and welfare actually covers a very small proportion of the population in rural areas. This is not only because people with special difficulties, i.e. five-guarantee households, are a very small group in the society, and major natural calamities do not happen often in the same place. The nature of rural social support shows that the party and the state encouraged the majority of people to look after themselves through different sources, e.g. household, neighbours, friends, and so on. Social support was listed as part of the social security system in 1993, but since then little research work has been done by either officials or academics in China, apart from a few policy studies about elderly care in both rural and urban areas, or working mothers in urban areas⁶.

The assumption of the ESRC project was that informal and household-based social support networks were performing much of the function of social security. These social support networks have become much more active than in the Mao era, using relationships of kinship, marriage, neighbours and friendship, and senses of reciprocity. In order to arrange sensibly the data from our survey we redefined the concept of **social support** in our Statistical Report (Chang & Feuchtwang, 1996):

Social support is a relationship in which basic living security and further social needs are gained in one of four ways:- (a) personally, as part of a reciprocal process in which individuals or groups provide material, financial, labour, information, technological, emotional and other resources; (b) impersonally as loans, grants and benefits from government; (c) from savings (premiums) with an insurance company; (d) through other market transactions, such as the hiring of labour and paid consultation with professionals (1996:4).

This is the broadest definition of social support, applicable to any social context. In our survey, a narrower range of social support transactions was defined. Based on this we arranged data in different ways in the statistical report. We classified transactions according to: sources which are household support, private support, and public support; types of social support, which are financial, labour and information; events which are family events, emergency events and investment

events; and range, which is within village and township, and beyond township. Some of these items have been further subdivided. For example, private support includes kin, neighbours, and friends. Under the friend category there also are seven kinds of friends, etc. The above categories will also be used in this dissertation.

One interesting figure from the ESRC project is that 74 per cent of the total number of contacts for social support came from non-agnatic kin⁷ in Kaixiangong (see section 5.1). I focused on this village because the higher proportion of non-agnatic kin played an extraordinary role in social support. After my fieldwork I become particularly interested in the notion of *lishang-wanglai*, a Chinese version of social support and reciprocity (see the section of “An analogy of *lishang-wanglai*” of Introduction), because it explained how non-agnatic kin was so positive in Kaixiangong and provided a framework to understand how the full range of social support works, etc. Therefore, *lishang-wanglai* in this dissertation will be based on the study of social support from my fieldwork, although I will introduce it in a more general way.

Kaixiangong Village

Kaixiangong Village belongs to Qidu Township, Wujiang City, Jiangsu Province. As a fieldwork village, Kaixiangong first appeared in Fei Xiaotong’s (Hsiao-Tung Fei) book of *Peasant life in China* (1939)⁸ in which it is spelled “Kaihsienkung” using the old type of phonetics (*pinyin*). According to Fei this village is located around two streams which look like an arc and arrow forming the shape of an open-string-bow. In Chinese *kaixiangong* literally means “open-string-bow” (see Map 8). This is how the village gets its name (19). Kaixiangong’s other famous name is *Jiangcun* (river village). This first appeared in Chinese characters on the cover of the Chinese version of the book *River village’s economy -- peasant life in China* (《*Jiangcun jingji--Zhanguo nongmin de shenhua*》1986). Although the author’s attention was mainly on the economy, the book touched generally upon every aspect of villagers’ lives. I will contrast it with attention on social and cultural life in the rest of my chapters (see Chapters 1 to 5), but in this section I will give a simple sketch of the village first.

Location and surrounding

Kaixiangong Village is located in Southern Jiangsu Province (*sunan*, see Map 1). It is situated on the south-east bank of Lake Tai and in the lower course of the Yangtze River. As Fei pointed out “The commanding position of this region in the Chinese economy is due partly to its superior natural environment⁹ and partly to its favourable position in the system of communications (1939:11).” Compared with the 1930s the access to land and water transport remains an advantage nowadays. The railway system looks the same from maps (see Maps 2 and 3), but the old single track system was destroyed in the Japanese War and was rebuilt as double tracks afterwards (Shen 1993: 15-16).

Instead of the extensive use of the canals and canalized streams the significant change is the development of the road system starting from the 1980s. The first bus station (Photo sets 1:1) was set up in Kaixiangong in 1983 when a neighbouring village Hehuawan joined it (see Map 8 and 9). It took ten minutes to travel to Zhenze Township by bus, rather than two and half hours by boat in the 1930s, one and half hours to reach Suzhou City 40 miles north of the village, and three hours bus journey to Shanghai rather than eight hours in the 1930s (Shen 1993:16; Fei 1939:12). Maps 3, 4, 5 and 7 show there are highways around the village. The Lake Tai Circular Road connects with the 318 State Highway and 205 Provincial Highway.

From 1996 onwards the village built more than six kilometres of a metalled Round Village Circular Road (*huan cun gonglu*) for vehicles, as a very important addition to the use of the existing boats on village streams, bridges and roads for walking and carts. Some families can now drive their own private cars back to and from home. In 2001 another neighbouring village Xicaotian joined the village (see Map 10). The related roads from it to Kaixiangong were built. Kaixiangong Village is raising money to build another road for Xicaotian access to Hengshan Township (see Map 5).

Economic development

It is not easy to make a strict comparison of population and land of the village from 1930s to today. As I will show in the section “Changes of administrative system”, the size of the village has changed from time to time. In 1935 the village’s total land area was 3065*mu* or 461 acres, total population was 1458 (771 male and 684 female), and 360 households divided into 4 groups or *bao* (1939:17-22; 106-114). In 1995 the village’s total area had decreased to 2540 *mu* and the total population was 2416, comprising 613 households and 19 groups. In 2003 the village had a total population of 2942, comprising 787 households and 25 groups, and a land area of 3049 *mu*. The obvious question is, given that two outlying villages have been added into the Kaixiangong Village, and the population has increased, why has the area of land decreased over this seventy year period? I was given another set of figures of 1784*mu* before 1956, 2356*mu* before 2001 and currently 2937*mu*. These are areas of Households’ Contract Land with the state. These figures show land increasing along with the increasing size of the village. Apart from this, in 1962 everyone was distributed a land of 1.3 *fen* by the state for permanent use as private land. It now can be converted to about 380 *mu*, including another two neighbouring villages. The main reasons for the drop in cultivated land is that the village used land increasingly for factories, shops, school and nursery, roads and residential areas. Land distribution is a very complicated matter and I won’t give further details here (see more details in Shen 1993:17 and 1996 321-391).

It is even more difficult to make an accurate comparison for income and expenditure of the village from 1930s up to the present. I accept W. R. Geddes’s (1956) estimate based on his restudy of Fei’s work in the village in 1956. According to Geddes one Chinese dollar in 1936 was more or less equivalent to 1 *yuan* in 1956 (Appendix in Chinese in Fei, 1986:306). Hereafter I will use *yuan* whenever I mention the unit of money in 1936, with this implied conversion¹⁰. I did not find the figure of income per capita in Kaixiangong in 1936. Fei (1939) provided annual expenditure figures between minimum 263 to 350 *yuan* for an average 4-person household (132-37). We also learnt from Fei that Kaixiangong Village was located in one of the richest areas of China. On Fei’s second visit to Kaixiangong in 1956 he found that Kaixiangong’s income per capita was 90 *yuan*,

whereas the whole of China's income per capita was 50 *yuan* (Fei 1986:237). Fei said that the villagers' income increased but they still complained about a living standard decrease because the new policy restricted the development of sideline productions (*fuye*)¹¹, such as raising silkworms, sheep, fishing, marketing, etc. The proportion of sideline production reduced from 40 per cent to less than 20 per cent of their income (Fei 1986:232). More details about the economic development of the village during the period of 1949 to 1956 can be seen in Hui Haiming's paper (1996:192-415).

According to Fei's report on his third visit to Kaixiangong in 1981, the income per capita was around 114 *yuan* from 1966 to 1978, a small rise, due to the Cultural Revolution, but by 1980 Kaixiangong's income per capita had reached 300 *yuan*. This was a direct result of the new policy of rural social reform in the later 1970s. The proportion of sideline production, in particular raising rabbits, suddenly increased from 10 per cent to 20 percent. Moreover, the village enterprises took 40 per cent of overall income (Fei 1986:253-61). In the 1930s there was only one silk mill in the village, which claimed to be the first rural joint-stock enterprise in China.¹² In 1980 there were four enterprises run by the village collective. They comprised: one reeling silk factory, one silk weaving mill and two tofu mills. Compared with the proportion of 67 per cent rural industry / enterprises run by the collective, 20 per cent agriculture and 13 per cent of sideline production in the surrounding Suzhou Prefecture, it can be seen that the village had fallen behind its local area (Fei 1986:261).

According to Shen Guanbao (1993), Fei's first PhD student whose study covered the period up to 1987, in Kaixiangong Village the proportion of collective run enterprises increased from 51 per cent to 62 per cent, agriculture decreased from 30 to 12 per cent and sideline productions increased from 19 to 27 per cent from 1981 to 1987 (155). Respectively the village's income which came from enterprises took 30 per cent in 1981 and increased to 42 per cent in 1985, agriculture amounted to 36 per cent in 1981 and 28 per cent in 1985, sideline production more or less the same, just above 30 per cent during this period (Shen 1993:170). The income per capita was 550 *yuan* in 1984 and increased to 873 *yuan* in 1987, according to the

village's "Rural Economical Income and Distribution Form (*nongcun jingji shouru fenpei biao*)".

From 1989 to 2003 a 70 year old senior research fellow of Jiangsu Academic and Social Sciences, Wang Huibing, carried out a "retirement leisure social survey" in Kaixiangong. During this period Wang visited the village eleven times and wrote eleven reports (Wang 2002:263-376). According to Wang, the village's income from enterprises increased to 58 per cent in 1989 from 42 per cent in 1985, agriculture decreased to 11 per cent in 1989 from 28 per cent in 1985, and sideline production was 31 per cent which was similar to 1985. The villagers' income per capita in 1989 was 1175 *yuan*. The income from enterprises and sideline productions was 40 per cent each and 20 per cent came from agriculture.

In 1991 Lu Feiyun carried out fieldwork for the ESRC social support project. The villagers' income per capita was 1,346 *yuan* in 1991, according to the village's statistics. This is lower than Lu's finding from the sample households of 1,834 *yuan*. This figure is also lower than the SSB's figure of 1,664.65 *yuan* in Shanghai region: this is the richest region in rural China (SSB, 1991: 296). According to Lu's fieldwork report, Kaixiangong Village had three enterprises run by the collective. They are two silk mills and one factory for rice wine. 48 per cent of the total labourers in the village were engaged in industries, 22 per cent in handicraft industries (*shougongye*), and 30 per cent in agriculture and sideline productions. For the sample households 11.25 per cent of their income came from land, 45.40 per cent came from sideline productions and 43.35 per cent came from enterprise and industry. 28 per cent of their expenditure was on their own produce and 72 per cent was from outside. An average family in the village consisted of five people: three and four generation families being 67.64 per cent of the total (Chang and Feuchtwang, 1997).

In 1996 when I was there for the restudy of the ESRC social support project I found a significant change in that 510 new houses had been built since 1981, compared with 1980 when no new houses were built (Figure 7). This means in 1996 the social support and practice of *lishang-wanglai* in the arrangements of house construction could be seen much more clearly (see 4.1). Every family had

tap water and three out of four families had gas cylinder cooking which affected their life styles (Photo sets 1:18). According to the village's "Rural Economic Income and Distribution Form", in 1995 Kaixiangong had a population of 2416, comprising 613 households and 19 groups, the average income per capita was 4078 *yuan*. This figure more or less agrees with the figures of rural household net income per capita from the Chinese statistical yearbook. It was 4,245.61 *yuan* in the Shanghai region, the richest rural region of China in 1995 (SSB 1996:302). However, I found that my sample households' income per capita was 1,890, which was much lower than the village and the regional figures. I was told by the village treasurer that the "Rural Economic Income and Distribution Form" was a very complicated matter. I won't go into details of how the village statistics worked and how I collected these figures. However, the village cadres and villagers confirmed that my figures were closer to their real lives (I will touch upon the "Income and distribution form" again at the end of this subsection in the subsection on "Society and culture").

There was one more village enterprise apart from the previous three in 1996. It is a chemical plant (Photo sets 1:9). As I will show in (c) of section 7.2.3, Kaixiangong Village's enterprises were in a depressed situation. From the middle 1980s Kaixiangong was a focal village for the "Southern Jiangsu model"¹³, which originally came from Fei's idea,¹⁴ all private business (*siying jingji*) had to be constrained strongly in order to encourage collective economy (*jiti jingji*). "Southern Jiangsu model" has been interpreted by the state to mean that collective economy has played and should always play a leading role in this area. However, during the Post Mao era there have always been dual policies in China. One is to encourage the implications of the Southern Jiangsu model because it represents the socialist direction. The other is based on a slogan by Deng Xiaoping "*rang yi bufen ren xian fu qilai*", literally, to allow some people to get rich first by any ways including to walk on the capitalist road. Although "Southern Jiangsu model" was successful in some villages, the villagers told me that the model was not suitable for Kaixiangong. They understood that the neighbouring villages overtook Kaixiangong because they did not have to be focus villages of "Southern Jiangsu

model”. A villager told me that they expected Fei to use his political influence to relax policy restrictions on the village by speaking to the local officials.

The situation of private economy in the village was that a number of families had a home business of weaving, which was called the family business (*jiating jingji*)¹⁵, and only one privately run enterprise or self employed business, which was called (*geti jingji*). This enterprise’s name was Miaogang Electronic Equipment Ltd. and was established in 1983 (see Photo sets 1:10). Its current name is Wanda Electronic Equipment Ltd. The villagers avoid using private business (*siying jingji*) because the word “private” was not allowed due to its opposition to “collective”. The owner YG Zhou showed me some photos of people who were pulled off the first floor of the workshop (Photo sets 1:11). Zhou got permission to build the workshop but just before the completion of the second floor the township sent some people to take it down and told him that as a private enterprise the workshop was only allowed to build on the ground floor so as to limit its development. A few months after I left the village a new policy of privatisation of collective enterprises system (*gaizhi*) was introduced. The owner of the above private enterprise of the village, YG Zhou, was suddenly appointed by the township government as General Secretary (*shuji*) of the Kaixiangong branch of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) – the number one head of the village, although he was not even a member of CCP. Facing the bankruptcy of all the village collective enterprises, the successful self employed businessman settled the mess peacefully.

The major effect of the bankruptcy was “*xiagang nongmin* (farmer-workers became the unemployed)”. Unlike *xiagang gongren* (urban workers became the unemployed) there was no unemployment benefit paid to them. For example, there were about 200 workers in the silk weaving enterprise (Photo sets 1:8). Although it became a private enterprise and started working again one year later, they lost their income of between 5,000 – 6,000 *yuan* while they were unemployed, with no unemployment relief. During this time they tried many ways to find money to live on. Some of them were even not able to make 1000 *yuan* to buy a loom for work at home. However, four people raised funds of 140,000 *yuan* and took over the enterprise. Two of them came from the village and were self-employed and had some capital. One of them asked two others to join him and raised enough funds to

take over one of the biggest village enterprises. Eventually, they signed a contract with the village in which they became shareholders and managers and about 50 per cent of the unemployed went back to their old jobs again. The annual income of the village workers who lost jobs on average was about 10,000 *yuan*.

About 40 per cent of the village workers who lost their jobs were richer than the above people and did not have to wait to be re-employed. The village workers bought one or two looms from one of the enterprises at a cost of about 1000 *yuan* each. This was about ten times cheaper than the original cost. At the end of the year their income was slightly more than 10,000 *yuan* on average per household. They said this was profit by misfortune (*yin huo de fu*) but it was not a gift from the gods (*xi cong tian jiang*) because this was the result that they had been wanting for several years. The rest of the unemployed either worked on little bits of contracted land, or turned to service businesses. One new service was called cooking service (*chushi fuwu*), namely, to cook lunch for the self-employed who were busy working and without time to cook for themselves.

YG Zhou also sorted out a heavy debt of the village enterprises. A few months after the village collective received the 4 million *yuan* loans the collective enterprises were bankrupted with about 10 million *yuan* debts. The immediate result was each household had an average debt of nearly 18,000 *yuan*. The enterprises were privatized under different management from 1997 and they have paid some of the debt since then. The biggest debt of 4 million *yuan* was not paid off until 2004 (see 1.2). Although after the bankruptcy of the collective enterprises in 1997 the villagers thought they had got rid of the bondage of the “Southern Jiangsu model”, a villager said, sighing with emotion, that in the Spring of the market (1993-96) they were left stranded in the Winter of policy; when they were ushered into the Spring of the policy they found themselves in the Winter of the market (1997-2000).¹⁶

Although the villagers complained about missing chances for their economic development, they were much more contented with the improvements in living standards after privatisation over the last five years. According to the “Brief Introduction of Kaixiangong” from the Village Committee in 2003 the village had

a population of 2942, comprising 787 households and 25 groups, and the average income per capita was 5632 *yuan*. It is quite close to the NBS's figure of 6223.55 *yuan* in the Shanghai region, the highest region in rural China in 2002 (NBS¹⁷ 2003:368). In 2002 there were twelve privately run enterprises. Most families were engaged in family industrial business, except the 5 five-guaranteed households (*wubaohu*,¹⁸ see 4.2), 14 extremely poor households (*tekunhu* - income per capita under 1200 *yuan*), and some of households with labourers in the Army or whose main labourers were disabled, etc. The production in the village was very much dispersed. The village's income from industry made up 80 per cent, fishing 6.6 per cent, raising farm animals 4 per cent, agriculture 3.1 per cent, building industry 2.7 per cent, food industry 2 per cent, and transport 1.3 per cent, with 0.4 per cent for domestic service. The numbers of new houses increased to 730 compared with the 510 in 1996 and families with gas cylinder cooking increased to 762. A significant technological increase is that in 2002 there were 286 houses with air conditioning, 645 telephones, 723 mobile phones, 428 motorcycles, and 8 cars in the village.

These figures can be summarized by saying that the villagers' income per capita had not increased significantly in 2002 when compared with 1995, but their quality of life, and use of modern technology, had changed significantly. I was told by different village cadres that the village statistics were sometimes not as reliable as at other times because the figures were sometimes influenced by policy. The 1995 village per capita income was higher than the villagers' average living standard and in 2002 it reflected more or less the villagers' real situation.

Changes in administrative system

From 2003 onwards, administratively Kaixiangong Village has belonged to Qidu Township, Wujiang City (county equivalent, see Map 5), Suzhou City (prefecture equivalent- see Map 4) and Jiangsu Province. It belonged to Zhenze Township in the 1930s and Miaogang Township from 1958 to 2003 (see Map 6 and 7). The unit and size of the village itself changed several times over the last 70 years. In the 1930s it looked like Map 8. According to Fei, the basic administrative system in the village was a kind of *baojia* (*Pao Chea*) and 360 households were divided into 4 groups of *bao* with two heads of the village (*cunzhang*) (1939 106-114).

From 1949 to 1955 during the Land Reform period the village remained with the system with two heads (*cunzhang*). The village was divided into two big groups (*dazu*): the northern group and the southern group, based on the stream in the middle of the village. There was one head for each of the big groups (*dazuzhang*). From 1956 to 1961 under the Co-operation Movement two neighbouring villages (Hehuawan and Huanxiqiao) joined Kaixiangong. The new name for the three villages was “Wujiang Third United Agricultural Cooperative” (in short it was called United Third Cooperative, *liansan she*). In 1958 the United Third Cooperative was turned into “United Third Grand Brigade (*liansan dadui*) which belonged to the Miaogang Commune. There were five cadres: the general secretary (*shuji*) of the local branch the CCP, the head of the Grand Brigade (*daduizhang*), the vice general secretary, the treasurer and the vice Grand Brigade in charge of sideline production (*fuye daduizhang*).

During the “adjustment period (1961-62)”, Huanxiqiao village separated from the “United Third Grand Brigade. Nine productive brigades in the northern village, of the “United Third Grand Brigade”, were organized into one Grand Brigade called Kaixiangong Grand Brigade, while six productive brigades in the southern village united with four productive brigades of Hehuawan into the Hehuawan Grand Brigade. The separation of the southern part from the village destroyed the bow shaped village structure (see Map 8). This situation lasted for twenty years from 1962 to 1982 under the People’s Commune System. During the period of the Cultural Revolution Kaixiangong Grand Brigade was called Lixin Grand Brigade (the Lixin is the second half of the term *pojiu lixin* – destroys the old and establishes the new); whereas Hehuawan Grand Brigade was called Hongwei Grand Brigade (the Hongwei is characters *hongwei* of *hongweibing* – red guards). But Kaixiangong villagers called them Kaixiangong North Village (*beicun*) and Kaixiangong South Village (*nancun*). There were 10 cadres in each village. Apart from the five titles in the previous grand brigade of general secretary, head of the Grand Brigade, vice general secretary, treasurer and vice Grand Brigade in charge of sideline production, the newly added titles of the cadre were: militiaman, battalion commander (*minbing yingzhang*), general secretary of the CYL

(Communist Youth League), head of security (*zhibao zhuren*), head of Women's Federation (*funu zhuren*) and agricultural technician (*nonjiyuan*).

In 1983 under the Household Contract Responsibility System the neighbouring village Hehuawan together with the southern part of six groups of the original Kaixiangong Village reunited with Kaixiangong. There was a population of 2376, comprising 572 households divided into 19 groups. This organization lasted from 1983 to 2000. During this period the village cadres increased to twelve. The general secretary (*shuji*) of the local branch of the CCP was still at the number one (*yibashou*) position in the village and mainly had charge of village enterprises in industry. The number two was the head of the Village Committee (*cunweihui zhuren*) who played the head of village role as it was pre-1949. The number three was the vice general secretary (*fu shuji*) of the local branch of the CCP who held the post of the head of the Rural Economic Co-operation (*nongcun jingji hezuoshe*) and played the role of the head of Grand Brigade. There were two vice heads of the Cooperation (*shezhang* and *fu shezhang*), who played roles of vice Grand Brigades in charge of agricultural and sideline productions. The rest of the cadres remained. This administrative system covered the periods of the ESRC social support project carried out in 1991 and my restudy of it in 1996. See Photo sets 1:6 for the village office. It was sold in 1998 and the village office moved to a building where a chemical plant was located (see Photos sets 1:9). In subsequent chapters whenever I mention "village collective (*cun jiti*)" in refers to the above cadres in general and I will mention each individual cadre by name as necessary in different cases.

It is worth mentioning that during my post-fieldwork period (from later 1997 to earlier 2003) the post of the general secretary (*shuji*) of the local branch the CCP was held by YG Zhou, a non-CCP member. This is an important historical period for the village. During this transition period there were a couple of reforms in the village.

(a) It finished the transition to privatisation from the collective enterprises system, as I have described in the subsection in section "Economic development".

(b) Another reform was to put into effect a new policy “Bring Fees into Tax system (*feigaishui*)”.¹⁹ The direct major effect for local villages was to cut down on unnecessary administrative expenditure, e.g. the numbers of village cadres. Therefore the organization of Rural Economical Co-operation was revoked and the village cadres reduced to nine posts respectively. They were general secretary (YG Zhou, since he is not a member of CCP I will call him “head of the village” with name thereafter), head of the village (JM Wang), two vice general secretaries of CCP (one of each from the Kaixiangong and Xicaotian), vice head of the village in charge of agriculture (FK Yao who was Agricultural Technician of the village), treasurer, general secretary of the CYL, head of the Women’s Federation and militiaman battalion commander.

(c) Carrying out a new policy of Adjustment of Administrative Regions (*xingzheng quyu tiaozheng*), the administrative system of the village changed again. In 2001 another neighbouring village Xicaotian joined Kaixiangong Village. The nature of Kaixiangong Village was moving to a “central village (*zhongxin cun*)” from an “administrative village (*xingzheng cun*)” because it covered a number of natural villages (*zirancun*), e.g. Tianzixu village and Sifangxu village, which were a part of Xicaotian village (see Map 10). Although the households increased from about 600 to 780 and the groups increased from 19 to 25, the numbers of the village cadres gradually reduced. From 2003 the nine posts have been actually held by five cadres. They are: the general secretary of the CCP (YG Zhou), the head of the village, who holds three posts (the others are the vice general secretary of CCP and militiaman battalion commander), the other vice general secretary of the CCP who holds two posts (the other is treasurer), the vice head of the village in charge of agriculture, and finally the general secretary of the CYL holds two posts (another is head of Women’s Federation). Amongst the five cadres three came from Kaixiangong and two from Xicaotian.

After completing all the above reforms YG Zhou was dismissed from his post in 2003, when a new head of Miaogang Township took the number one position in the township. I won’t get into the complicated details of the dramatic changes that resulted in a non-CCP member being chosen for a general secretary of the CCP of the village during a difficult period and how he was removed when the villagers’

lives in good order. Currently, the village still has five cadres who hold nine posts. The replacement of YG Zhou, the new general secretary (*shuji*) of the village branch of the CCP, YL Zhou is also a successful businessman. It appears he is also liked by the villagers whom I talked to by telephone.

Society and culture

However the administrative system changed there was always an informal system in Kaixiangong Village, which actually held rural society together at the village level. As we can see from Fei's work in the 1930s there was a new administrative system of *baojia* (*pao chea*) imposed on the village organization, but which didn't succeed (1939:109-116). The village had two heads in 1930s, but the numbers of cadres increased to 20 during the Cultural Revolution period. In spite of the village being cut into half the villagers always considered the two Grand Brigades as one Kaixiangong Village. After a cycle of sixty years (*huajia*), the numbers of cadres reduced to five, which was an acceptable figure to the villagers because the original Kaixiangong Village increased its size by taking in Hehuawan and Xicaotian villages. The villagers actually do not need all the changes of administrative systems over the last half century. They have their own ways to organize their life and they knew how to update their system from time to time according to changing situations. Subsequent chapters will show how the villagers' system works through social support and *lishang-wanglai*.

Kaixiangong villagers had their own family networks which consisted of members of a family, relatives, neighbours, friends, fellow villagers, the collective, institutions, and even the ancestors, and the local gods and goddesses. In terms of relatives they were divided by the villagers as agnatic kin (*zijiaren*) and non agnatic kin (*qinqi*). For how they claim quasi kin and include claim both quasi agnatic kin (*ren zijiaren*) and quasi non agnatic kin (*guofang qin*), and even quasi neighbours (*ren linju*) see section 5.1. For a focal family a son's friends are called "little friends" until he marries, whereas a married man's friends are called "old friends". A daughter's friends are called "little sisters" until she marries and the friendships then end (see Chapter 2). Fellow villagers (*tongxiaodui renjia*) include households sharing the same surname but not agnatically related and the

households which live in the same group or the same natural village (*zirancun*). The group is an important social support unit. Almost all the villagers are familiar with details of other households within their own groups.

The collective and institutions are a part of villagers' sources for resources. Villagers always say "*cunli* (village collective)" or "*changli* (enterprises run by village collective)" referring to the village collective, but they get limited support from it. In Socialist China about 80 per cent of rural people are commonly called "second class citizens (*erdeng gongmin*)" due to the fact that they have never been covered by the state social security system. As I mentioned in the section on "The ESRC project on social support", before the 1990s in rural areas in socialist China the social security system hardly ever covered rural areas except for a relief system. This was mainly for natural disasters and people with special difficulties, e.g. the five-guaranteed households or extremely poor households. During that period it was the village collective that played the role of applying and distributing limited social security and welfare between the state and the rural people. From the later 1980s to the middle 1990s some village collectives became very rich due to highly developed village enterprise and industry and provided welfare for villagers, e.g. Jinxing Village of Zhenze Township, one of the ESRC social support project fieldwork villages. From 1997 onwards the privatisation reduced the village collective's power and property but the villagers and the collective are still connected in different ways.

The major dealing between the villagers and the village collective can be seen from the process of how the village cadres collect taxes and fees from the villagers. Basically, the villagers pay for more than 30 different kinds of tax and fees, e.g. Agricultural Tax, irrigation works, electric, medical co-operation, education, welfare fee for the poor, public welfare, administrative fees, etc. (see Table 8)²⁰. The previous head of the village, YG Zhou, told me that the figures for tax and fees do not look big, but they are still burdensome for the villagers. In 1996 the villagers owed a total of 120,000 *yuan* of unpaid taxes and fees, although the village collective or organization paid off the tax and fees to the state and the township for the villagers. After a few years hard work the village cadres reduced the figure to 69,000 *yuan* in 1999. It still involved 118 households. Amongst them

5 refused to pay because they stated clearly that it is not fair to pay so much, 8 of them lived outside the village, 16 extremely poor households were not able to pay, 24 of them were still in debt due to previous family events, and 65 of them kept on delaying to pay off payment. The general feeling is that most of the villagers agreed to pay reasonable tax and fees, but they thought that some fees were unnecessary. Their behaviour of refusing or delaying to pay tax and fees are a complaint about their unfair second-class treatment from the state since the 1949 Liberation.

Both the villagers and village cadres agreed the change of policy on tax and fees was one of *wanglai* result in the process of collecting the tax and fees between the village cadres and villagers and the village cadres and the local officers (See 1.2). The idea of personalised institutional *wanglai* between villagers and village cadres, village cadres and local officials has been proved again recently. I found an item of “fees for *wanglai* with households (*nonghu wanglai e*)” in a form called “2002 Rural Agricultural Tax and others”. The village treasurer told me it was total tax and fees excluding one item of irrigation works which was collected by the irrigation works institution independently from 2002 onwards. This means the village cadres no longer need to collect such a fee from the villagers for the irrigation works institution, but still need to *wanglai* with the villagers for the rest of the tax and fees. Village cadres hoped in the future the electricity fee might be paid directly to the institution by the villagers, so they don’t have to collect so many fees, although it will take time due to the use of electricity being very complicated.

If we zoom out from this point of “cutting down tax and fees” in 2002 to view the issue of tax and fees from the whole period of the Household Responsibility System (1984-2003) we can see how the policies change from time to time. Table 5 just covered this period and provides Kaixiangong’s households’ shares of tax and fees to the state, township and the village collective. It shows that sometimes households pay more and sometimes less, determined by the changes of different policies. Although the particular policy of bringing fees into taxes had a miscarriage a few months after it was put into force due to the goal figures being all wrong (see note 19 of this chapter), the principle of the policy for cutting down

unnecessary tax and fees is positive. Table 5 shows that from 2001 to 2003 the households' shares of Tax and Fees reduced by nearly one quarter. Moreover, the last row of the Table 5 shows that 191,537 *yuan* of the state tax was waived by Suzhou government. If this happened it means 40 per cent of the villagers' burden of tax and fees has been cut down (*jianfu* short for *jianqing nongmin fudan*). The village treasurer told me that it was an initial goal of the "bring fees into tax system" policy. He realized this goal in paper work – the Rural Economic Income and Distributing Form of the village. When I questioned this the treasurer provided me another set of forms. They were the Agricultural Responsibility Contracts Form (2000), Agricultural Tax and other Fees (2001-02) and Households Turn in Statement (2003). The figure in Table 5 of the tax and fees, showing a reduction by one quarter from 2001, is based on those forms (for how the different forms work see a case on repaying a large amount of debt in 1.2). However, the treasurer told me a new local policy actually is recognizing the goal of cutting down 40 per cent of rural people's tax and fees in reality. This new local policy is an application of Premier Wen Jiabao's "Report on the Work of the Government" delivered at the Second Session of the Tenth National People's Congress on 5th March 2004. According to Wen "Solving problems facing agriculture, rural areas and farmers is a top priority in all our work. [We] will press ahead with the reform of rural taxes and administrative charges. ...agricultural taxes will be rescinded in five years."²¹ I was told by many village cadres that Suzhou Prefecture is the first area in the whole of China to decide to rescind agricultural taxes, because the urban area of this region is rich enough to support its rural surrounding area. Suzhou is realizing the famous saying again "up above there is Paradise, down here there are Suzhou and Hangzhou (*shang you tiantang xia you Su-Hang*)". Anyway the villagers felt much happier for being treated more fairly because the villagers count this reduction as a result of a kind of reciprocal *wanglai* with local officials (see 1.2).

Let us now move to another source of the villagers' *lishang-wanglai* networks (see section 6.2). Kaixiangong villagers treated ancestors and the local gods as spiritual sources and resources in family networks, which can be seen from almost every event, whether an annual or life cycle event. The villagers' religious life is

very much mixed with their family life and “largely carried on in their own houses” (see photo sets 6:16; Fei 1939:21). Fei found there were two temples in 1930s: “one at the west end and the other at the north end” (1939:21). After the liberation in 1949 they were no longer residences of local gods and priests as they were in 1930s (Fei: 1939:20). According to Geddes, the two temples still existed and even were repaired by some villagers in 1956 when he visited (Appendix in Fei 1986:306). However, there was no escape for the temples during the Cultural Revolution. When I was there I found one of them located in the east end of the village, the so called East Temple (*dongmiao*).²² As a main temple of the village it was rebuilt in 1993 (see photo sets 1: 25/26). The temple was a simple structure attached to one of the village’s warehouses. It was divided into two parts by using two separate altar tables. The one on the east-side is for *Guandi* (*guandi laoye*) and the one on the west-side is for Bodhisattva *Guanyin* (*guanshiyin niangniang*). On each altar table there were also other different kinds of small statues of Buddha or Taoist gods who in past lives had been Taoist masters. Everything in the temple was thrown out of the temple place (warehouse) and destroyed when I was there in 1996 and it was rebuilt again in 2000 (see Photo sets 1:26, 28 and 29). Moreover, the villagers even built a small temple behind it for the land god and they are still collecting donations in 2004 for repaying the debts of building the temples (see Photo set 1:34 and 30).

The other temple was located in the west of the village, the so called West Temple (*ximiao*). The temple was replaced by a warehouse for the ninth group of the village during the Cultural Revolution. Since there was no more space to build another temple some villagers, again in 1993, simply presented an altar table and placed numbers of small statues of Buddha or Taoist gods on it in one end of the warehouse. In 1996 the East Temple was destroyed, and the altar table, statues, and incense burner, etc. were thrown out from the West Temple / warehouse (photo sets 1: 31/32). It was rebuilt again in 2000 (see photo sets 1: 33). There were two small temples in the original Hehuawan village and two others in the original Xicaotian village. So Kaixiangong now has six temples in total. See section 5.4 for how the villagers *wanglai* with their ancestors and local gods.

Fei mentioned in the 1930s that the main religious activities were carried out at the township (1939:103), but the township was Zhenze. It was still true that the township was an important place for religious activity in 1996. When I was there Zhenze was a center for Christian activities (see photo sets 1: 37-39), whereas for popular religions the centre was in Miaogang. There was a temple called Grandpa Temple (*laotaimiao*) where grandpa Qiu lived. It is located in Miaogang Township at half an hour walking distance from Kaixiangong. The villagers told me that the temple had two other buildings around it and one had a skylight (*tianjing*) in the middle. It was located in a big courtyard within quite a big area of land belonging to the temple. Inside the big courtyard there was a stage for plays. Donors always arranged for theatricals (*xiban*) to play local dramas. There were 14 monks who lived in it. It was partly destroyed from the Great Leap Forward period and completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. In 1993 the temple was rebuilt and still was not completed in 1996 when I was there. However, the temple was completely destroyed again (see photo sets 1: 22 and 23), one day before the Qingming festival²³ in 1996. After the temple disappeared I found other forms of religious activities still existed (see photo sets 1: 27) and shall give details of these later in chapter 1. As Shen noticed, the disappearance of the temples never stopped the villagers' religious activities. He found there was always fresh ash from burned paper money and incense by an old ginkgo tree where the temple was located²⁴ during his fieldwork period from 1985 onward (Shen, 1993:19). The temple was rebuilt again in 1999 (see photo sets 1:24).

In the 1930s the informal gatherings in evenings were around the bridges and there was no special place for public life (1939:19-20). In 1996 the informal evening gatherings were still around the bridges, but the village's warehouses were used for Spring Entertainment (see 4.1.3; photo sets 2:4-6). The village now had two common rooms for the elderly. There are two clinics in the village. Photo sets 2:4 shows a newly built clinic in Kaixiangong in 1995, the other clinic came with Xicaotian when it joined the village.

There was one public school in 1930. The school was still there in 2003 (Photo sets 1:5). It was rebuilt in 1974 as a bungalow including 21 classrooms. It was rebuilt again as a three storey building in 1991 (See Wang 2002 for more details).

Currently there are 12 classes, 23 teachers and 471 pupils. There is also a nursery with 3 classes, 3 teachers and 80 children. The children and pupils came from Kaixiangong and neighbouring villages. Nowadays more and more pupils in year 5 and year 6 moved to Miaogang and Zhenze Township for a better quality of education. There is a special rush hour bus to provide transport for them.

This completes my short description of the village, its historical changes of economy, administration, social and cultural aspects.

The villagers' usage of lishang-wanglai

The motivation for using *lishang-wanglai* (see section 6.1.3 for theoretical review) as a key concept for my study is derived from my fieldwork. The phrase *li shang wanglai*, came from a male villager in Kaixiangong Village, whereas a woman used the metaphor of fattening pigs (*yangzhu*) to mean the same thing (Chang, 1999: 156-174). In order to distinguish my terminology from the standard folk expression *li shang wanglai* I will use *lishang-wanglai* in this dissertation to describe social support and reciprocity. In other words, although the term of *lishang-wanglai* is a literal rendering of the villagers' usage of *li shang wanglai* the folk expression, the model of *lishang-wanglai* is my interpretation of patterns of social relationships based on certain implicit cultural models in Kaixiangong village. In this section I will firstly relate the practice of fattening pigs to *lishang-wanglai*, to understand the villagers' usage of *lishang-wanglai*. The analogy of 'fattening pigs' was given by an old woman in the village. She explained that almost every household in the village has one or more pigs. Pig feed in 1996 cost about 500 *yuan* a year for a normal sized pig. The pig itself sells for about 600-650 *yuan*. The profit from raising household pigs is less than the overall cost including both pig feed and labour. Therefore one cannot expect to earn much money from fattening household pigs. But why are people still raising pigs? The villagers told me that the benefits from fattening pigs are various. (a) Plenty of farmyard manure from a small daily amount of pig fodder; meat for a wedding or funeral feast; and immediate cash from selling the pig when money is needed urgently. These benefits can be described by *li* and *yi* which are villagers' versions of rational calculation. (b) Fattening or raising pigs in Chinese is *yangzhu* which is

related to a study of ‘yang’ (Stafford, 1995; 2000a and c). For example, the villagers say “fattening a big fat pig” (*yang zhi da pang zhu*) in the same way as they say “fattening a big fat son” (*yang ge da pang erzi*). This involves human feeling (*qing*). This explains why, as the villagers told me, some women would cry when their pig was killed. (c) For the villagers the pig also has symbolic meaning, e.g. to have a big fat pig means to have good fortune (*youfu*). (d) To offer sacrifices to the ancestors with a whole pig is better than half, and half better than an upper part of leg (*tipang*). There is a village saying that without the upper part of one leg of pork there can be no feast (*meiyou tipang bu cheng yan*), due to the *tipang*’s symbolic meaning. This involves ideas of both a religious sense and enjoyment. The above points show that although the process of raising or fattening pigs is an action or practice of feasting and gift-giving (*wanglai*), there is always a multiplicity of principles (*lishang*) behind the action.

So in maintaining relationships and arranging resources for their welfare the phrase ‘fattening pigs’ is used to imply a set of criteria, *liyi* (benefit), *ganqing* (human feeling), *fuqi* (religious sense), etc. In addition, there are ‘women’s gifts’, which can be described as different kinds of *wanglai*²⁵, and are given for ancestor worship, a wedding, a visit to a sick person, or even to gain a job opportunity in a village enterprise. The way in which the villagers use *lishang-wanglai* is concrete. They always count how often they visit or contact each other, whether or not they attend someone’s wedding, how long they stay there, how many gifts and what kind of gift they should bring to the occasion etc., to judge the quality of relationships.

For the Kaixiangong villagers, *wanglai* is also called *zouwang* (meaning to visit each other, to come and go, and to contact or to connect with somebody) and describes the condition of relationships with other households.²⁶ The villagers believe that *wanglai* is the most important way to make and maintain personal relationships. They said *qinqi yue zou yue qin* and *pengyou yue zou yue jin* (the more *wanglai* with relatives the deeper the relationship; the more *wanglai* with friends the closer the relationship). For them, different kinds of relationships (kin, neighbour, friend, etc.) in the village and other places can have different qualities (close or loose, good or bad) of relatedness. For example, most people indicated in

their responses to the ESRC survey that they would wish to treat their neighbours as relatives. As the old saying says: “a relative far off is less help than a neighbour close by; neighbours are dearer than distant relatives (*yuanqin buru jinlin*)”. However it is not easy to do so because of the large amount of obligations that would be involved in neighbourhood relationships. There are even a few extreme examples in the village of close relatives who live as neighbours but do not maintain a close relationship. For example, a mother and a son’s family live as neighbours but never talk to each other (see the Zhou family example in of 1.3). Some educated villagers quoted Lao Tzu’s famous passage to describe such a situation. It says *ji-quan zhi sheng xiang wen, lao si bu xiang wanglai* (Literally, people grow old and die without even going where others live close by). It is clear that the original meaning of the passage referred to two villages next to each other. However, the passage has had many interpretations over more than two thousand years. The villagers’ interpretation was that it is very inappropriate for brothers never to *wanglai* to each other even though they lived within the same village and their houses shared the same courtyard.

Wanglai’s rich contents can be described in different ways. I found that rural people usually use *zoudong*, *zouwang*, or *zoufang*, for long-term interactive relationships with other people or families, whereas urban people or well-educated people often use *wanglai* or *jiaowang* for the same thing. Here the *zou* of *zoudong*, *zouwang*, or *zoufang* means walk. Perhaps this is because originally in rural society people lived closely together, with walking as the only means of contact, so walking was essential to *wanglai*. *Jiao* of *jiaowang* is also used in *jiaotong* (transport) and *jiaodao* (contact with others). These words appeared before socialist China in urban areas and have been used continuously until now. In urban areas relatives and friends normally live in different places between which transport is easy.²⁷ There are some other related terms used by people: *da jiaodao* (contact, or make contact with), *jiaowang* (contact), *jiaoqing* (friendly relations, friendship), but the term of *jiaoji* (social intercourse) was used less often. Yang and Peng (1999) found more and more Chinese business people using *jiaoji* to describe the first stage of making their relationships from the 1990s.

The villagers have concrete explanations for *lishang*. For instance, suppose a guest brings a gift which is inferior in quality or quantity, or his/her behaviour is bad (attending too late, wearing improper clothes, or not being polite to other guests). This guest, normally, would receive an even worse reply from the host, unless there is a special reason involved. According to the villagers the host treating the guest in such a way is proper because: (1) it is morally right -- it would help the guest to realise he or she has behaved badly to the host without involving any words. (2) It would remind the host to review whether or not this relationship should be maintained. If this is a sign of the end of *yuan* (fate, predestined relationship) he or she should happily see a natural ending to the relationship. (3) The process of arranging gifts involves rational calculation. Wives of the agnatic kin normally sort out all gifts received by a host. The same women also prepare the return gifts (*huili*).²⁸ This is a kind of important labour support because both sorting out gifts and preparing return gifts involved understanding local customs and the quality of relations of the gifts receiver. (4) There is always social creativity in the event. Apart from organising the event the host also needs to work out who wants to be close to him or her and who wants to keep a distance from him or her, according to information from gift giving and behaviour at the event. This is hard work because his or her policy in relationships with others should be applied in a proper way when he or she attends any of these guests' events in the future. Almost all my informants actually enjoyed the process of reviewing relationships because it is creative work.

The creativity in making and maintaining a relationship with *lishang-wanglai* is complicated. As Kipnis (1997) noticed "no unchanging, single form of *guanxi* exists ...each of these relationships (*guanxi*) carries its own connotations and its own social / historical specificity. The meanings of words like *guanxi* and *ganqing* cannot be fixed" (184). However, the complicated relationships or unfixed meanings of different types of relationship, i.e. *guanxi* or *renqing*, can be explained by noting the different principles of *li* of *lishang-wanglai*. There is a Chinese saying *yi bubian ying wan bian*. That is to say "meeting all changes by remaining unchanged – cope with a constantly changing situation by sticking to a fixed principle or policy". Any relationship can be changed, but the principles behind the

change remain the same. The changes are based on different types of *lishang* and people's understandings of *lishang* change interdependently. Thus, relationships can be fixed by *lishang*, whether in loose, temporary, permanent, completed, or continuous forms. In practice, people can choose different ways to have *wanglai* within different relationships. In chapters 1 to 4, I will show how, in rural China, villagers use local customs (*lishang*) in constant discussion and deliberate action (*wanglai*), which can change according to changing circumstances.

Based on these understandings from the villagers, both male and female, I define *lishang-wanglai* as a key concept for my study. *Lishang-wanglai* relates to a creative process of personal or personalised reciprocal relationships in which different types of reciprocities (*wanglai*) are judged by different criteria (*lishang*). I will show how the common usage of *li shang wanglai* and my interpretation of the Kaixiangong villagers' usage of *lishang-wanglai* is turned into *lishang-wanglai* in section 6.1.

General methods and the scope of the research

Since the notion of *li shang wanglai* is very old, complicated and central to Chinese Culture (see 6.1.3), it is therefore necessary to set some boundaries for the usage in my study. After I describe how I conducted my own fieldwork I will then clarify three things about my work: its precise time, space, and discipline, namely, the subject position of the researcher.

General methods

I conducted my fieldwork in Neiguan Village, Gansu Province (see Map 1), from late August to the middle of November 1995, and in Kaixiangong Village, Jiangsu Province, from the middle of February to the middle of May 1996. In my fieldwork I mixed the use of questionnaire surveys, interviews, direct observation, documentary research, and case study methods. This is similar to the ESRC project methodology. I interviewed the households in the original study, which were selected by random probability sampling from the administrative village household registers.²⁹ I interviewed 30 households in Neiguan - the identical households to those used in the original study. However, I interviewed 32 households in

Kaixiangong - two households less than the original survey. One of the two missing households was an old couple who moved to a city and lived with their daughter's family. Another was a single father's family. The son went away from the village before his father died, when he was aged 16 years old (more details see chapter 1.2).

There is little agreement about fieldwork methods and methodology on the topic of social support and *lishang-wanglai* in China. I had to develop my own fieldwork methods while I was doing the fieldwork (see 7.1 and 7.2). In this section I will describe a few of these methods. I will also sometimes refer back to the ESRC project guide because it provides the baseline for a longitudinal study. The way in which I refer to the ESRC guide is by adding more information to it, including more intensive fieldwork on each household.

It is important to learn local languages to carry out fieldwork. I found that I had to learn the local languages at the beginning of my fieldwork because I only understood about sixty per cent of words spoken in the two villages when I arrived there. Apart from the many minority languages there are a few major Chinese language families in *Han* dominated Chinese society, i.e. *ganyu* in Jiangxi Province, *minyu* in Fujian; *wuyu* in Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang; *yueyu* in Guangdong; and Mandarin which covers most of the rest of China. It would be feasible for a Mandarin speaker to do fieldwork in most of China, although there are some local accents and intonations in different areas. It would be difficult for a Mandarin speaker to do fieldwork in the non-Mandarin speaking provinces, which require special language skills. The way in which I learnt the local languages was by checking the copies of "local language rules" from the general records of the two counties (*xianzhi*), while I was doing interviews with informants. These rules are mainly related to pronunciation. The grammar rules are quite similar everywhere in China. It took me a few days' study to understand ninety per cent of both local languages. The local accent in Neiguan Village was not too difficult, because their language can be counted as part of Mandarin, whereas the Kaixiangong people spoke another family of languages (*wuyu yuxi*). Luckily I understood some *wu* language because when I was a teenager I spent a year living with some Shanghainese in a professional Ping-Pong training team. I can also

speak one of the above most difficult local languages (*ganyu*), because I was born and grew up in Jiangxi Province. This provides me with a foundation for understanding different dialects in China. But it would be impossible to conduct fieldwork in Fujian, where two villages were selected for the ESRC project, without proper advanced language training. To learn *minyu* is as difficult as to learn Guangdongese (*yueyu*) for a Mandarin speaker.

How to use a local guide is another issue. Fieldwork researchers would normally be introduced or accompanied by a local guide. It was not clear to me who my local guide should be and how I should use the local guide, because different researchers have had different relationships with them. The local guide can be an assistant who could come from any level: province, county, township or village. The broadest understanding of a local guide's role would be to expect the local guide to take part in the interviews, to translate where necessary and sometimes to interpret meanings. This happened in the original study. According to the original fieldwork guide, researchers should be helped by a locally born village guide. It was clear, if I followed this, the local guide should come from the village, but it was still unclear how to use the local guide. After my fieldwork I have concluded that it is wrong to have such high expectations from a village guide. I found that the village guide could comprise one person (in Neiguan Village) or several people (in Kaixiangong Village). They normally would be village cadres, i.e. the treasurer in Neiguan, and the agrotechnician and the director of the Village Women's Federation in Kaixiangong. It was part of their "job" to introduce a researcher briefly to every sample household and to answer general questions about the village and their own fields. The cadres or guides were told by the head of the village to do so for almost all the researchers and visitors. So these kinds of local guides cannot be informants or key actors (Bailey, 1996) because they play a limited role. However, if their households are used as part of the sample, as happened in Kaixiangong Village, they could be much more helpful because they would have been interviewed with a big questionnaire, understand more of the research, been able to introduce more related detailed information, and so on. Then they can be proper key actors, but the chance of this is not big because of the way in which sampling works randomly. If they were experts in local customs or knowledge themselves they could also be key

actors. Anyway, I found that the village guides' roles, if they were village cadres, are limited and the key actors of a particular project cannot be the same people, i.e. village guides or cadres. Who can be key actors in the village depends on the subject of the research and they can only be found through interviewing all the sample households and by talking to many local people.

How to define a respondent, informant, interviewee, or key actor was another problem for me. I used the same questionnaire and fieldwork guide as the ESRC project in my fieldwork. The questionnaire mixed both sociological and anthropological elements and was made up of 111 questions, which included both closed and open questions. I would normally call people who filled or answered standard sociological questionnaires the respondents, and standard anthropological questionnaires the interviewees or informants. Informants can also be key actors who provide much more useful information, but not necessarily through answering a questionnaire, as I mentioned in the previous paragraph. I tended to avoid the term of key actors because there were so many people involved in my fieldwork who were "key" in different ways. I will use the term informant to refer to those people who either answered the questionnaire, or extra questions, or both, but I will make clear what each person's role was when I describe my fieldwork. Interviewee is the broadest term with which to address anybody to whom I asked any question, whether or not they answered the questionnaire, and provided more or less information. One household can therefore have different interviewees. In the original ESRC study, the researchers often broke the long questionnaire into more than one session in order to complete it, and I followed this practice. However, I found that the same informant from the same household sometimes provided different answers to the same question on different visits! Therefore, I then checked with the informant for detailed reasons and found how he weighted different reasons in different situations. Instead of interviewing one person (aged above 18) in each household, as the previous study required, I also interviewed a representative cross-section of each household: male and female, old and young. One main reason to involve female informants is that almost all the annual life events (see 4.1) involved labour support between women. When I asked a male informant about labour support he advised me to ask his wife for details. The

annual events originally were not on my questionnaire and could be ignored if the male informant did not notice this or I did not pay attention to his referral. However, when I put the same question to the female informants from my sampled households, they listed the above events naturally. This gave me the idea that interviewing different genders with the same questionnaire could get different results, and this may be considered as an addition to the general fieldwork method.

I will now move onto another issue relating to the contents of the fieldwork questionnaire. This mixed sociology and anthropology questionnaire was too long and had too many open questions to be a sociological questionnaire, and it was also too long, but too simple, to be an anthropological questionnaire. I found that it was not adequate for the purpose of finding out how rural Chinese made their social support arrangements. So I added more questions in order to get more detailed information. Instead of asking for information on two major support events, I have obtained the whole list of different types of social support (financial, labour and information) from all different sources (household, private -- kin, neighbour and friend and public) for all kind of events (family, emergency and investment) from each household. This list includes all events from 1979 to 1996. I also obtained the whole structure of the kinship network of every sample household, and a large number of supporting documents and materials from the different types of organisations, the village committee and the different departments of the local government.

My observations were broader than the original ESRC fieldwork in two ways. (a) I attended many different types of funerals, weddings, and other important events to observe how social support works. I spent time with the local people on the official National Day and the Moon Day (the 15th of the 8th lunar month) in Neiguan, the Chinese New Year, Lantern Festival (the 15th of the 1st lunar month), Qingming Day (the day marking the beginning of the 5th solar term, the 4th, 5th or 6th April),³⁰ in Kaixiangong. I also attended many feasts for the ceremony of house-building completion in Kaixiangong. (b) I visited all the temples around the villages and townships³¹, and those in neighbouring villages and townships in order to feel the social changes peculiar to the local culture and how they affected villagers' lives. I also visited all kinds of factories, works, institutes run by individual people, the

village committee, and also the local government to know about the social change in and around the village.

In addition I innovated a post-fieldwork follow up with my informants, through telephone and email interview from 1997 to 2004. I have noticed a tendency in fieldwork duration and method of contact³². That is, the time lived in a field site has become shorter and shorter (from one year, to six months, to three months minimum) but more and more frequent. The information revolution has made it possible to do post-fieldwork interviews by telephone and email. For example, there were only a few households with their own telephone in the village when I was there in 1996, while in September 2002 more than 80 per cent of families had telephones. Although there are few people using email, still it's very useful to get some documentary attachments this way. The cost of telephone calls to an informant in the village also went down significantly³³, from 19p (1998) to 2p (2004). PC to phone calling provided an even lower cost, but at reduced quality. Both telephone and computer recorders help to keep all the related information. If technology eventually allows high recognition voice to text transfer then this would make the process of sorting out such interview materials even easier and quicker. Initially I was using telephone interviews as an addition to my fieldwork. It was mainly used for the longitudinal study of some uncompleted cases. If my description mentions something which happened after my fieldwork period, readers should assume that the information came from my telephone interviews. As time went by, the telephone and email interviews became more and more important to my study. Using email can not only transfer texts, tables and also digital photographs. Technology is moving so rapidly which allows researchers to apply it during fieldwork and post-fieldworks. In 1996 there wasn't any digital camcorder available. My study requests record process of event. The photographs only reflect a part of the villagers' events because I was occupied by my camcorder at the same time whenever I took part in an event. Nowadays digital camcorder can solve this problem. With the technological advantage I am setting up Kaixingong village webpage at the moment and will have a short visit to the village in April 2004.

The most important finding on my fieldwork is that in China the process of fieldwork is a two-way communication. This can be described, in the terminology I

developed in this dissertation, as *wanglai* with the informants. Sometimes I checked different answers with my informants because I found they gave me different answers at different times. After they explained something to me sometimes they would shout “it is so obvious why do you still not see it? (*shuo de zheme mingxian ni zenme hai kan bu chulai*)”.³⁴ Since I was involved with almost all the adult members of each family in my interview, there were fewer inhibitions and the atmosphere was much more cordial and relaxed. At the start of my fieldwork, in more than one case my informants blamed me for not thinking independently when I was listening. I argued, why should I think for you instead of you providing a clear answer to my questions? They said that it was I who was interested in them and therefore it was my job to read their minds. They used an analogy to describe this, which is that a lazy child has only to open his mouth to be fed and hold out his arms to be dressed (*fan lai zhangkou yi lai shenshou*). This was confirmed by all the members of the corresponding interview households. So I worked out the correct answers together with them by checking often with them “is this what you mean...?” or “is that what you mean...?”, paraphrasing back to them their own answer. They said that this active approach is much better than simply to ask them “are you sure...?” They seemed always unsure of one particular answer to explain their complicated methods of resources arrangement, because all the other related answers to the same question pulled in different ways. During the fieldwork itself, I very much enjoyed teasing out the different reasons and principles of social support with them, and benefited from it. An analysis of this led to the different criteria of *lishang*, developed in this dissertation.

It is particularly important for external fieldwork researchers to catch the cultural flavours from local languages. Kaixiangong villagers always use the character *yisi* in different contexts: i.e. *bugou yisi* (not properly express somebody’s appreciation or gratitude), *buhao yisi* (embarrassed), *hen you yisi* (very interesting, fun), *meide yisi* (meaningless, tasteless, dull), *shenme yisi* (meaning, opinion), *xiao yisi* (a token of appreciation or gratitude), *yisi yisi* (to express somebody’s appreciation or gratitude in a reasonable way), etc. After I worked out the above different meanings of *yisi* I understood more of the way in which social support worked in the village. Examples of this occur, in Kaixiangong, when villagers ask for

payback from those people they have helped, or refuse those people who are asking for help even though they would really like to help, or delay the return of a favour to someone who has helped them before, etc. The villagers describe the feelings involved in such situations with the term *buhao yisi* (feel shy, shame, embarrassed, or humiliation, etc.). This related to *mianzi* (face, see section 6.1.), although the villagers care more about their *lianmian* (*lian* + *mianzi*, cheek and face) rather than face (*mianzi* and *lian*). I will use *lishang-wanglai* model to demonstrate how I gained access to the fieldwork sites and got to know the informants in sections 7.1 and 7.2.

From social reform to present

My work will focus on the post-Mao period from 1978 to 2004, which covers the Deng and Jiang regimes and extends to Hu's. This period starts with the Deng regime and his economic reforms. After the June 4th Event in 1989 Jiang Zemin came into power and partly handed over it to Hu in 2003. The difference between the times of Mao and this post-Mao period in socialist China is huge. The former is characterised by the collective and the latter by the individual. In the latter the establishment of the household responsibility system in rural China, went with the disintegration of the People's Commune System. Under the Commune System rural people lived in shared poverty. The Household Responsibility System broke away from the old mode of production, which was based on the production brigade or team, and provided the opportunity for rural people to arrange their lives for themselves. So many aspects of social relations can be seen more clearly in the freer post-Mao era than previously when rural people's lives were highly controlled by their production brigades and their living standard was very low.

Chinese society and rural people's life have changed almost beyond recognition over the twenty-plus years of economic reform after Mao. There were three major changes that happened in this historical period. The first change, dating from 1985, was the abovementioned establishment of the household responsibility system and replacement of the People's Commune System by a system of administrative townships and villages. This led to economic reform of the whole society.

The second change was the policy of “fast economic development” that was brought into the party’s declared guiding principles in 1993. This new encouragement of privatisation and marketisation was initiated in some talks by Deng Xiaoping in 1992 in Guangzhou, endorsing that city’s fast capitalist development. There were to be no more pronouncements against the idea of bourgeoisification. Formalised repetitions of the Four Political Principles of adherence to Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Zedong-thought disappeared. 1992 was also an economic turning point in the development of rural industrial enterprises, so called ‘township and village enterprises’ (TVEs). In 1992 the number of workers in TVEs rose above the number employed in state-owned enterprises (Guo, 1993).

The third change, in 1996, was the privatisation of the ‘township and village enterprises’ (TVEs) system. The establishment of TVEs, on the one hand, gave some villages additional welfare resources, e.g. Fanggan Village, Shandong Province, and Jinxing Village, Jiangsu Province, which I visited in 1993 and 1996. On the other hand, lots of TVEs overstocked bad quality products and became stuck in heavy debt. Kaixiangong is one of those. The changed ownership from the TVEs to private (*gaizhi* - privatisation) provided opportunities of economic development to Kaixiangong Village.

The above changes have enriched very much the fabric of social support during the period after Mao. Social support as a way in which rural people arrange their life in rural China is a reciprocal process. One can only see clearly the dynamics of this complicated process by looking at it through an extended period. Twenty-five years is an appropriate length of time for this study. The ESRC project and my own fieldwork’s records of social support arrangements cover 1978 to 1996, with additional information gathered by telephone until 2004. Where it is relevant I will also use some materials from previous studies in Kaixiangong Village, which commenced in the 1930s. For example, I use information from Fei 1939, Geddes 1963, Hui 1996a, 1996b, 1999, Li 1996, Liu 1996, Lu, 1993, Shen 1993, 1996, Wang, 2002 and my own interviews with Hui when he visited London in 1999. My post-fieldwork material, obtained by keeping up contacts made during fieldwork by telephone and e-mail, is described in the previous section.

By supplementing direct fieldwork with this additional material it is possible to examine more clearly the ways in which *lishang-wanglai* adapts and changes.

From a Chinese village to the world at large

My research is based primarily on the detailed study of one Chinese village – Kaixiangong. However, my views of social support and *lishang-wanglai* will also radiate to wider areas. For example, Neiguan, Gansu Province, my other fieldwork village³⁵ and other parts of rural China (e.g. materials from ESRC project villages³⁶, He 1993, Yan 1996a and b, 2003, Kipnis 1997, Stafford 1995, 2000a and c etc.). This is how I generalise my work from one place to the rest of rural China. Therefore, I felt justified in talking about the whole of rural China because there is sufficient similarity between the very different places. Where appropriate, I will also use materials from urban areas in China, and even my experiences of living in the UK!

Previous researchers' work and my own fieldwork experience told me that something can be generalised to a national level from studying social support. I regret that I didn't visit Xianfeng Village, a neighbouring village to Neiguan, Gansu Province. I controlled my urge to visit the village several times whenever I passed that village because I thought then that I should keep a very pure experience within one particular village. However, local officers of the county helped me to see many other villages after I finished my fieldwork. This was helpful in a number of ways. After I finished my fieldwork in Kaixiangong Village I also visited another village of the same province. These villages are very different but there are nevertheless some similarities in the way in which social support works. Also, my fieldwork was carried out as part of a restudy of the ESRC social support project. My central framework of *lishang-wanglai* was refined during my writing up and after all the fieldwork was completed. In other words, my fieldwork was not designed for *lishang-wanglai*. In this dissertation I have therefore omitted much of my original fieldwork material, and supplemented my work with material from other researchers.

I have been living in England since 1991 and married an English man in 1996. We lived in a small village, in a Conservation Area, in North-West London for six

years. We were involved in the village residents association when we lived there. After we moved to the Moat Mount Nature Reservation area I became involved again in both the residents association and my son's school PTA (Parents and Teachers Association). My personal experiences of living in England and participating in local activities provide me with opportunities to observe how ordinary English people arrange their everyday life and relate to each other. Although this dissertation will not make a scholarly comparison between Chinese rural villages and English urban villages, I will sometimes give examples from England, to form a contrast. It would appear that *lishang-wanglai* can be used in different cultural contexts, therefore ways in which it is common or different amongst different cultures and people make a fascinating object for further study.

The subject-position of the researcher

I mentioned at the end of section of “The villagers’ usage of *lishang-wanglai*” that the vitality of *lishang-wanglai* comes from an enjoyment of creativity under uncertain conditions which could bring sometimes benefit and at other times trouble for the same person’s life. It is not easy to maintain a lukewarm relationship with it.

I never thought I would involve myself in the subject of *lishang-wanglai* because I have been a rebel against complicated social or human relationships in China, in particular *guanxi*, *renqing*, and *lishang-wanglai*. For example, I had two major escapes³⁷ during my personal career in China. The first was in 1983 when I was selected as one of the candidates of the third generation of successors, so called “the third echelon (*disan tidui*)”, to be the vice General Secretary of the Communist Youth League (CYL) of the Shenyang Music College where I worked. The rank of this is equivalent to a vice head of a county or a vice Regimental Commander (*xian-tuan ji*). The second was in 1990 when I was the first candidate, as a kind of model, to be an associate professor (reader equivalent) in the Chinese People’s Public Security University. There was a new policy after the June 4th Event 1989 which allowed some young scholars, under 30 years old, who had made a special contribution to their fields to be promoted as associated professors. I was considered to fit into the policy because I won first prize at the first

competitive academic award given in the university. I escaped from the above two occasions by the excuses that I wanted to do my MA in 1983 and to go abroad for a Ph.D. in 1990, although I got a research job long before I started doing my PhD.

When I was working out the methodological implications of *lishang-wanglai* from my own fieldwork experiences, I actually was treating myself as an interviewee (see 7.1 and 7.2). I found that although I try to escape from the complexities of *lishang-wanglai* I have to involve my life in such a process one way or the other. I found the villagers have been using the basic principles of *lishang* for themselves to improve their lives, as well as getting enjoyment from the process of *lishang-wanglai*. I also found that they sometimes escaped from over-personalising relationships in order to keep distance and their own space. So, I am writing *lishang-wanglai* as a practitioner, as well as somebody who wishes to escape it, and therefore, like the villagers, to keep my distance from it.

In order to integrate different partial understandings of the process of *lishang-wanglai* I intend to find a position or space where I am looking at it both from the outside and inside. What I am in that position is neither Chinese nor British. In this position my goal is more task-oriented, and not personalised. My judgement is based on merit but not on personalised relationships. This means I am, in my writing, moving away from the personal substance and enjoyment of *lishang-wanglai*. This is a social anthropologist's position. Although I cannot be a purely abstract person, I can use this space to move from one position to the other within a sociological and an anthropological discipline. This will be my subject-position.

Organisation of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of an Introduction, Parts I and II and the Conclusion. In the Introduction I introduce the ESRC social support project, fieldwork site, the villagers' usage of *lishang-wanglai*, and general methods and the scope of the research. In the Conclusion, I summarise the dissertation and highlight its main research contributions. According to a newer fashion in presentation (e.g. Yang 1994, Kipnis 1997), the arrangement of the main body is that the ethnographical

materials are foregrounded. Thus practices of *lishang-wanglai* with systematic empirical data on Kaixiangong villagers' everyday life and major events are followed by theoretical approaches on the *lishang-wanglai* model and its methodological applications, etc.

Part I includes four chapters which show how social relationships are experienced by ordinary people in modern China, and how *lishang-wanglai* is developed with empirical data. I have organised this material according to the type of *wanglai*: my typology, presented in section 6.1.3, which is a development of Sahlins's categorization of reciprocity (see section 6.1.1). Chapter 1 discusses generous, instrumental and negative *wanglai*. The instrumental and negative *wanglai* have been observed and discussed at length by previous researchers (although not within the framework of *lishang-wanglai*) so my treatment here can rely on previous work. The next three chapters deal with primarily expressive *wanglai* - the area where my thesis makes a major contribution. The fieldwork here shows how this is central to Chinese rural life, and its use in annual events and emergencies (Chapter 2), and life cycle events (Chapters 3 & 4). The theoretical work on *lishang-wanglai* discussed in Chapter 6 was developed in order to make sense of this important fieldwork, and so the conceptual framework discussed more fully there is used to describe villager's activities in these three Chapters.

Part II contains three chapters. Chapter 5 systemically lists fieldwork materials on Kaixiangong villagers' everyday life and major events. Chapter 6 describes the different strands which, when brought together, form the theoretical background to my study. The central idea of *lishang-wanglai*, introduced in the above section "The villagers' usage of *lishang-wanglai*", is revisited in 6.1.3 as part of the discussion of reciprocity. Chapter 7 gives information about the fieldwork site and describes my fieldwork methodology.

¹ Words in italics are phonetic translation (*pinyin*) of Chinese characters, phrases, etc. in the standard current in the People's Republic of China. This will apply throughout. This current usage of *pinyin* follows both the practice and principles which are set out in *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Revised Edition), 1995. In cases where phrases are not in the dictionary I follow my understanding of these principles. The form used is therefore consistent for any given phrase.

² The *pinyin* form of *li shang wanglai* came from *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Revised Edition), p598, 1995. It is different from *li shang wang lai* (Stafford 1995, 2000a and c). It is also different from *lishang-wanglai* which I used in describing and analysing my fieldwork data (see the section of "The villagers' usage of *lishang-wanglai*" in the Introduction and 6.1.3).

³ The Economic and Social Research Council of the UK from 1991-94, grant number is R-000-23-2585. Seven researchers (for names see Acknowledgements) spent substantial periods of time during 1991 and 1992 interviewing 304 households in ten villages which were located in five provinces (details see section Introduction). A large number of documents, observational records, and questionnaire returns were acquired as a result. This research is a pioneer in its field as well as in its definition (Chang & Feuchtwang, 1996: 5-6).

⁴ They are food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses for the aged and infirm without family support.

⁵ These four items were clarified in the Seventh Five-year Plan of the state in 1986.

⁶ Sociology tendency: Hu Ruquan 1986, Xia 1988, Pan 1992, Ruan et al. 1990 and 1997, Yuen-Tsang 1997, Philip Olson 1986, Kallgren 1992, Sun and Sung 1993, Wenger and Liu 1998, Thomas Schweizer 1991 and 1996, Bian Y. & Ang, S. 1997, Kimberley Manning 1999, etc. Sino-anthropological tendency: Fei 1947, Hu Ruquan 1986, Walder 1986 Oi 1986 and 1999, Deborah Davis 1993, Selden 1993, Unger 1993, Yang 1994, Yan 1997, Cai et al. 1997, etc.

⁷ Agnatic kin are those related to the household through the direct male line, either as ancestors or descendants, plus the women who marry into the household and minus the women who marry out. Non-agnatic kin are related through a female link. Normally, in a three-generation household these include the male household-head's married-out paternal aunt(s)' relatives, his mother's relatives, his married-out sister(s)' relatives, his wife's relatives, his married-out daughter(s)' relatives and so on.

⁸ Due to this book Fei was awarded the Huxley Memorial Medal from the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1981.

⁹ The geographical foundation of region where Kaixiangong lies can be seen from Fei's citation from G.B. Cressey (Fei 1939: 10-12).

¹⁰ In the Chinese version of Fei's book the money unit of dollar is simply translated into *yuan*.

¹¹ For the development of Kaixiangong's sideline productions over the last 60 years see Liu Haoxing's paper (1996:416-494).

¹² The source for this saying see: “中国首家农村股份制合作企业”, <<江苏丝绸>>1999 年第 3 期 <http://jfsilk.com/D-MJBD2.htm> . In fact the experimental reeling mill was established in 1929 in Kaixiangong Village. It is still located in Kaixiangong but belonged to the Miaogang Township until 1997. Its current name is Wujiang City Miaogang Reeling Co., Ltd. I mentioned it had tense relationship with Kaixiangong Village in (5) of “Clarifications of *wanglai*” of 2.2.3.

¹³ It was “Civilized Village of Jiangsu province” in 1982 and “A Pearl of Lake Tai” of the Wujiang City in 1987 (see Kaixiangong Village Memorabilia, by Wang Huaibing).

¹⁴ The theory was established by Fei Xiaotong in 1983 (Zhu and Wu, 1994:15).

¹⁵ See Li Youmei's paper on family business of the village (1996:195-530)

¹⁶ It is commonly known in China that the four seasons correspond to different characteristics. This can be traced back to Dong Zhongshu (Tung Chung-shu) in Han Dynasty. According to Dong, “the sage in his conduct of government, duplicates the movements of Heaven. Thus with his beneficence he duplicates warmth and accords with spring, with his conferring of rewards he duplicates heat and an accord with summer, with his punishments he duplicates coolness and accords with autumn, and with his executions he duplicates coldness and accords with winter.” *Ch'un-ch'iu Fan-lu*, chap. 13, p.1a-b; translated by Bodde in Fung, op. Cit., p48.

¹⁷ The SSB (State Statistical Bureau) changed its English translation into NBS (National Bureau of Statistics), but the Chinese name is always the same: 中国国家统计局.

¹⁸ A household is given five guarantees by the social security system. They are guaranteed food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses.

¹⁹ The policy of “Bring fees into Tax System” applied in Kaixiangong Village from 2000. The purpose of it is to remove unnecessary fees from peasants and at the same time strengthen the tax system.

However, the policy miscarried a few months after it was put in force because a local official wrote a report to the previous Premier, Zhu Rongji, that the policy was impossible to apply due to the target figures of the policy being all wrong, although the principle was positive. However, Li Changping's saying of "three nong (农民真苦, 农村真穷, 农业真危险 *nongmin zhenku, gongcun zhenqiong, nongye zheweixian*, literally, a peasant's life is so hard, rural area is poor and agriculture is so dangerous)" drew heavy attention from the government and society (see Li Changping, 2002 in Chinese).

²⁰ Table 8 shows details of more than 30 different fees that the villagers had to pay in 1998 in Chinese

²¹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-03/16/content_1368830.htm

²² The temples actually were located at the north east end and the south west end of the village. Fei's descriptions were based on the Village Plan but not the villagers' usage. So sometimes he called them the north temple and west temple (Fei, 1939:20-21), sometimes he called them the south temple and east temple (Fei, 1939:104-5).

²³ The day marking the beginning of the 5th solar term, April 4, 5, or 6.

²⁴ There is no tree by the north or east temple in Kaixiangong Village, the old ginkgo tree where Shen saw incense ash actually was by the original *laotai* temple place in Miaogang Township.

²⁵ *Wanglai* can be interchangeable with Stafford's *laiwang* and Stafford's exposition of *yang* can be understood as a small part of *lishang*.

²⁶ In the ESRC project the concept of contact has been understood as *wanglai*. "Every transaction of social support for every event from every source to every household, and sub-categories of these. Note that contact is not the same as person, since the same person may have been contacted for different kinds of support and for different events many times" (Chang and Feuchtwang, 1996:17).

²⁷ In socialist China people who work in the same work unit (*danwei*) live in the same big court (*dayuan*) or big building (*dalou*), which belongs to *danwei*. Although they sometimes visit each other (so-called *chuanmen*, not *zouwang*) within walking distance, theirs are mainly colleagues' relationships and hardly ever friends' relationships because there is competition among them in sharing the same resources from the *danwei*. This is another topic.

²⁸ According to the local custom nobody should bring an empty gift container back home. There are many details covering what and how many gifts should be presented in each event and what and how many things should be returned after the event. See Part I.

²⁹ In two villages with dense populations, namely Jinxing and Kaixiangong of Jiangsu province, 36 and 34 households were chosen. In Xianfeng of Gansu Province with a scattered population only 24 households were chosen. In the other seven villages 30 households were chosen.

³⁰ Traditionally observed as a festival for worshipping at ancestral graves, technically known as “sweeping the graves”.

³¹ Except one temple in Neiguan Village, where women were not allowed to enter.

³² Some researchers also noticed it in a workshop on fieldwork research methods in contemporary Chinese society (Oxford, 18 – 21 September 2000).

³³ However, the rates to China were affected by changes of Chinese policy. For example, after a sudden action taken by the Chinese government with an increased termination charge from 1st November 2002, Communication 2000 increased its rate from 5p to 15p per minute, Planet Talk from 10p to 19p and VoizFone from 7 US cents to 22 cents. From early 2003 all the related telephone rates adjusted downwards after complaints by overseas Chinese and foreign business people. Currently, the cheapest rate to China is 2p per minute through Telediscount and Call 18866.

³⁴ Yan Yunxiang (2003: 255) was also expected by Xiajia villagers to understand their meanings of something without further clear explanations.

³⁵ Given the wealth of fieldwork I have accumulated, a full comparison of the two villages would be too large in scope for one thesis.

³⁶ The regional coverage of the ten villages of the ESRC project is wide. They are administrative villages, which contain a number of natural settlements – hamlets or natural villages.

³⁷ Some sinologists (Jin or King 1989a; Hwang 1982, etc.) use the term of “escape” to describe someone leaving a difficult situation when he or she recognises that the negative side of *renqing* or *wanglai* could destroy one’s work or life.