

Migration Decision-making: a Case Study of Rural-Urban  
Labour Migration in Shanxi Province, China

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others

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## Abstract

Rural to urban migration in China from early 1980s has been an important phenomenon influencing China's society, economy and politics. Large scale migration has attracted attention from both scholars and policy makers and has given rise to much debate on questions such as who migrates, why and how do they migrate and what influence will migration have.

My study examines labour migration decision-making in Shanxi, a relatively poor province in north China. On the basis of qualitative interviews conducted in villages in Xinzhou, this empirical study explores how individuals make their decisions to migrate from rural to urban areas in relation to three main sets of factors: 1) the costs and benefits of migration 2) the attitudes and norms relevant to migration in rural society and 3) some institutions relevant to migration such as the labour market, social networks and the household.

This study reaches the conclusion that rural people make rational migration decisions based not only on their perceptions of the costs and benefits of migration but also influenced by attitudes, norms and institutions. This study not only contributes to knowledge about migration in Shanxi where little study has previously been done but also adds to our understanding of the nature of migration decision-making.

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## Glossary

buzuo zhengjingshi	不做正经事	do not do regular business
caimi	财迷	mean
cheng	城, 城市	city
chiku	吃苦	eating bitterness
dagong	打工	to work
dagong	大工	skilled labourer
daza	打杂	to do chores
duanlian ziji	锻炼自己	to toughen myself up
getihu	个体户	self-employed household, self employment
gongfen	工分	work point
hukou	户口	the household registration system
hunao	胡闹	muddle-headed
luan	乱	chaotic
mantou he baicai	馒头和白菜	steam bread and Chinese cabbage, a cheap diet in China
meibenshi	没本事	no ability
mu	亩	unit of the measure of land, 1 mu = 0.1647 acres
piaohao	票号	a traditional bank
shouqi	受气	be bullied
tongxiang hui	同乡会	a club or centre for people who come from the same place in China
toqin kaoyou	投亲靠友	relying on relatives and friends
village cadre	村干部	a person in a position of authority in a village, such as the village head or village Party secretary
wan	玩	fun
wuneng	无能	useless
xiang	乡	township
xiaogong	小工	unskilled labouring
yuan	元	unit of Chinese currency. One British pound was roughly equal to 15 yuan in 2004
zhen	镇	township
zijidaomei	自己倒霉	responsible for own bad luck

## **Introduction**

Migration is an important phenomenon that connects with social, economic, demographic and political change. Phenomena such as social transition, economic development, the process of industrialisation and urbanisation and policy or changes of policy all influence migration in various ways. In turn, the volume, direction, the nature and pattern of migration can result in various changes in society, economics, demography and policy. Migration is of particular importance in China. In the last two decades, a massive increase in rural to urban migration has been one of the most significant corollaries of economic reform. Migration provided the huge labour force that economic development needed and also impacted on elements of the social order like the household registration system, transport and the education system in urban China. The question of why and how people migrate became a central concern in China for both scholars and policy makers. Many studies have tried to explain or resolve these questions with varying results. For example, seeking for higher income and good opportunities is generally thought to be a reason for migration, but some studies reveal that in very poor villages, people do not migrate. Many studies suggest that institutions such as the household registration system prevent people from migrating, but other studies argue that rural people use their family and social networks to migrate overcoming all these obstacles (for example, Xiang, 2005). Some studies argue that migration in China is subject to market mechanisms but if the market were perfect, there would not be a large number of migrants working in cities with low wages, low status and no security compared with urban residents. In effect, there is a dual labour market in China. All this suggests that it is necessary to develop an integrated and systemic understanding of migration, or specifically, migration decision-making.

There are a number of ways in which a systemic understanding for migration can be sought for example, by developing a multi-level model of migration or analysing the whole process of migration. It is also feasible to examine the elements, or basic determinants of migration decision-making, and consequently, analyse how other factors influence decision-making in different conditions or stages in order to get a

complete understanding of what makes people migrate. From the decision-makers' perspective, perceptions of costs and benefits of migration might be good indicators or elements of decision-making. However, the process of decision-making, or the costs and benefits themselves may be shaped or influenced by factors such as the household or social networks. So after examining the costs and benefits of migration as a first step, we should explore how migration decision-making, or the costs and benefits of migration are continuously influenced by other factors such as attitudes, social norms, labour market and household, all factors that are of great importance in China. Since China is a large country, migration is different in different areas and there are different types of migration. Moreover, studies of migration decision-making have largely concentrated on migration to large cities like Beijing and Shanghai, as well as some southern cities or areas like the Pearl River Delta. Migration to ordinary cities in the north has attracted little attention and there are few studies of migration based on Shanxi province. I decided on rural to urban labour migration decision-making as my research topic because I thought it is a key to understanding more about the huge volume of migration in contemporary China. I selected Shanxi as my research fieldwork site because I was born there and lived for about 20 years.

The aim of this thesis is to explore systemically and dynamically how individuals make their decisions to migrate from rural to urban areas in Shanxi province. The following research questions will be asked:

- 1) What are the general costs and benefits of migration? How do rural people or migrants regard them and how do they influence migration decision-making, or how rural people react to them? How do these costs and benefits change in different stages of the life cycle, and in the process of migration, in return migration and in repeat migration?
- 2) What are the general attitudes and norms in relation to migration for rural people, how do these attitudes and norms change over time, and how do attitudes and norms influence migration decision-making?
- 3) How do the institutions relevant to migration such as the labour market, social

networks and the household or family influence migration decision making?  
How do they encourage or discourage migration or how are people influenced by them in migration decision-making?

To sum up, my research aims to analyse decision making in relation to three main areas: the costs and benefits of migration and life in the urban areas compared to the rural areas; social attitudes and norms in rural society that influence migration; and some institutions relevant to migration such as labour market, social network and the household. The decision-making analysis is multilevel: cost benefit analysis is at micro level; attitudes and norms analysis and institutional analysis are macro-level. Together these analyses could potentially make a useful contribution to the understanding of migration decision-making in China.

To answer the main question of how individuals make decisions to migrate, I assume that people make decisions that accord with their costs and benefits, and that their decision-making is influenced by attitudes, norms and institutions relevant to migration. To carry out the research, a three-approach framework is employed: cost benefit analysis, attitude and norms analysis and institutional analysis. These will be discussed in detail in the section on framework in first chapter. The fieldwork source for my study is semi-structured interviews conducted in six villages, a noodle factory and a market in the Xinzhou region of Shanxi province, including Xinfu Qu and Kelan County.

The findings from my empirical research will fill a gap in our knowledge about how rural people in Shanxi province make their decisions to migrate and will offer insights into the multilevel nature of migration decision-making.

The chapters are organised as follows:

Chapter one first briefly reviews the general literature related to migration decision-making, and then sets out the theoretical framework for this research, including cost benefit analysis, and analysis of social attitudes and norms and new institution theory. Finally it defines some concepts.

Chapter two first introduces the general background and migration in Shanxi historically. Then it offers a general description of my fieldwork sites, including

Xinzhou region, Xinfu Qu and Kelan, six villages under these areas, and two other sites in Xinzhou and gives an overview of their migration patterns. Finally I discuss how I conducted my fieldwork and the way I collect and analyse my data.

Chapters three, four, five and six draw on material from interviews conducted in six villages and various factories and shops. The following two chapters discuss the costs and benefits of migration revealed in my data. Chapter three examines the material and non-material costs of migration and the transaction costs of migration. I discuss how rural people consider these factors and how they influence migration for different people at different stages of migration. Similarly, in chapter four, I discuss material and non-material benefits of migration, and analyse how each of these influences migration decision-making and how people react to these factors in migration decision-making. Together the two chapters elucidate the role of costs and benefits of migration and the way people response to these factors.

Chapter five investigates the attitudes to and social norms on migration in these villages. I begin with a discussion of ideas about whether or not to migrate, relating them to attitudes or norms on what to do, who to go, how to find jobs and whether to live in cities permanently, I also offer a discussion of gender and age issues in relation to migration. Then I analyse how these attitudes and norms influence migration decision-making.

In chapter six, I analyse three important institutions relevant to migration: labour market, social networks and the household or family. Examining each institution in turn, I consider how they encourage or discourage migration. I first review the changes in the labour market brought about by the economic reforms and show they transformed migration decision-making. In my discussing of social networks, I consider the role played by social networks and their influences on migration decision-making. Finally I analyse the influences of household or family on decision making, following joint decision making between individual and their household members showing how they interact. Together, chapters five and six demonstrate how migration decision-making based on cost benefits analysis is influenced by other factors.

Chapter seven recalls my research questions, attempt to see whether my key findings provide adequate answers to them.

## **Chapter one: Literature Review, theoretical framework and concepts**

This chapter first reviews the general literature related to migration decision-making, including the macro-, micro- perspectives and their development. Then I propose the theoretical framework of my research, including cost benefit analysis, attitudes and norms analysis and institution analysis. Finally, I define some important concepts in my research.

### **1.1 Literature Review**

Migration decision-making is an important and rapid developing topic in migration studies. The concept of decision making “refer(s) to the formation of an intention or disposition that results in a migration behaviour – the decision itself is sometimes conceptualized as actually composed of two parts: the decision to move or stay and the choice of one destination among various alternatives” (De Jong and Gardner, 1981: 3). Migration decision-making is rooted in the basic question of migration: why do people migrate, which can be elaborated into the question: how do people decide to migrate or stay? I briefly review the general theories and models related to decision-making in both macro and micro approaches, and discuss their development. Subsequently I discuss the migration on China.

#### ***1.1-1 Theories and models related to decision-making in macro-approaches***

Generally, macro studies describe or explain the major patterns of migration in population aggregates. Macro-approach studies generally attempt to understand how determinants or phenomena such as wage differentials, distance, occupations and urbanization influence aggregate population trends. Such studies have emerged from disciplines such as economics, sociology and geography and are now quite interdisciplinary in nature. These studies tend to emphasize the influence of the various determinants and indicate the general patterns of migration. They conclude that decision-making is merely a matter of people responding to determinants as for example when people become dissatisfied with their lives, prospects or incomes and migrate to seek better ones.

Ravenstein's "laws of migration" suggested that the rate of migration between two places was inversely related to the distance between them, and that migrants move from areas of low opportunity to area of high opportunity (1889). Ravenstein's was one of the earliest studies of the migration process, and his framework was a starting point for later studies of migration.

In an important theoretical study, the Lewis (1954: 139-191) model explained migration as related to the process of industrialisation. In the Lewis model, the underdeveloped economy consists of two sectors: the rural sector and the industrial sector. The rural sector is traditional and overpopulated and the marginal labour productivity is very low in the agriculture sector while the urban sector has high productivity. The wage in the urban sector is of course higher than in the rural sector. The model focuses both on the process of labour transfer and the growth of output and employment in the urban sector. With the expansion of the urban sector, when new investment takes place, the urban sector needs more labour, which attracts the surplus labour from rural areas. With the rural labour moving out, marginal labour productivity increases in rural areas and decreases in urban areas. The process continues until the marginal productivity in both areas is equal, when migration from rural to urban area ceases. This model reveals the relationship between the migration process and the development of urban areas which is important in China where economic development is especially rapid.

Similarly, Zelinsky (1971: 219-249) suggested that migration was a process related to modernisation. The origin areas were often less developed than destination areas, modernisation led to improvement of personal freedom and encouraged people to migrate.

Following the Ravenstein analysis, Lee (1966) divided factors influencing migration into four groups: 1) factors related to the area of origin, 2) factors related to the area of destination, 3) factors related to intervening obstacles and 4) personal factors. These factors had positive or negative effects on migration, attracting people to migrate or preventing them from doing so.

Migration theories from the discipline of geography focus on analysis of spatial

aspects of migration such as distance, direction of migration, size and connections between places of origin and destination. For example, a study by Hagerstrand (1962: 61-85) based on Ashby in Sweden, found that almost 80 per cent of migrants from rural areas from 1840 to 1944 had travelled within 100 km, and further, 90 per cent of migrants from 1880 to 1944 had not migrated over 60 km and 95 per cent had stayed within 230 km of their place of origin. This pattern of migration suggests that migration usually involved short-distance travel, which it is still the case in many places for example in Shanxi province. (This will be discussed in detail in Chapter two).

Systems approaches shifted the emphasis to the influence of organisations and institutions. For example, the Mabogunje's (1970:1-18) systems approach to migration suggested that rural to urban migration was controlled by various systems: rural control systems, rural adjustment mechanisms, urban control systems and urban adjustment mechanisms as well as positive and negative feedback channels, migration channels and stimuli to migration. System approaches consider migration as a dynamic process within a series of constraints rather than a linear and unidirectional movement. This is special true in China where a variety of systems such as the household registration system (*hukou*) and the rationing system constrain or constrained migration.

There are strengths and weakness in all these approaches. For example, the push-pull theory simplified the factors affecting migration, and the systems approach reveals the influence of factors systemically. However, some of the findings and assumptions of the classic studies do not match migration in the contemporary world. For example, the idea that "the great body of our migrants only proceed a short distance" in Ravenstein's "laws of migration" is outdated. In relation to decision making, the greatest advantage of macro approaches is perhaps that they simplify the migration process, and macro theories and models help to reveal how factors influence migration in aggregates thus explaining patterns of migration. Compared with micro-approach studies, they are not enough concerned with detail to explain how people made decisions based on these factors. Rather,

macro-approaches simply assume that migrants are rational actors who seek a destination better than their place of origin. DaVanzo (1981: 98-99) pointed out several problems of aggregate analysis. For example, aggregate data tend to obliterate the different ages and education levels, and do not distinguish types of migrants. Aggregate data can explain why one group has a higher migration rate than another, but cannot explain why particular members of the group migrate while others do not.

Macro-approach scholars later developed new approaches, looking for example at migration selectivity and differentials such as age, sex, marital status, educational level and occupation, making possible a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the influences that motivate migration and different groups of people. These studies were based on aggregates obtained for example from census data at national or local level for different groups. An important finding of studies on age selectivity revealed that migrants were commonly young people from the late teens to early thirties. Much of literature supported this finding (see, for example, Shryock, 1964). Gender was a less consistent factor influencing migration selectivity than age. The gender influence varies considerably in different places and periods, though it is generally held that males outnumber female migrants. Caldwell's study (1968) found that many more males than females migrated from rural to urban areas in Ghana. However, Shryock (1964) found that female migrants exceeded males in the age group 14-19 years in U.S. migration. In the case of China, according to population census of 2000 (China Census of 2000, 2002), the ratio of male to female migrants was 9: 10. However the figure for females was considerably boosted by marriage migration. Male labour migrants were far numerous than females but in marriage migration, females outnumbered males by 10: 1.

The advantage of this approach was that it could reveal the different influences of migration on different groups of people. However, as Shaw (1975:38) pointed out, an obvious disadvantage of this approach was that it failed to construct migration profiles in the way that scholars using the perspectives of sociology, demography

and economics were able to do.

### ***1.1-2 Theories and models related to decision-making in studies using micro-approaches***

Generally, micro studies focus on the individual and/or the family as the units of analysis in describing and explaining migration behaviour. I will briefly discuss some of the basic micro-approach studies.

The early and best-known of the micro-studies is perhaps push-pull theory. This divides the causes of migration for individuals into push and pull factors. Push factors included poverty, unemployment, racial or political persecution, social or cultural alienation, etc. Pull factors included better economic, educational and environmental opportunities. This theory regards migration as a rationally planned action that is the result of a conscious decision after considering the push and pull factors (for example, Bogue, 1969: 753-754).

The economists' approach to migration employs the concepts of costs and benefits to analyse migration decision-making. An early example was Todaro's model. Todaro (1976) postulated that the migration was a response to expected urban-rural wage differences rather than actual wage differences. He believed that rural people compare the expected wage in the two sectors and then take into account the actual probability of obtaining it. Thus the expected wage of urban sector was actual wage in urban areas multiplied by rate of employment in same area. When the expected wage is higher than it was in the rural area, migration occurs and continues until the expected wage is same in both sectors. Even if there is a high rate of unemployment in urban areas migration takes place, as long as the expected wage is higher than it is in rural areas. The model can explain why the wage is so important for the process of migration and also why there was also so much migration even when a high rate of unemployment exists in urban sectors.

Todaro's model focused on one of the determinants of migration: income. Other studies analysed the total costs and benefits of migration. For example, according to Byerlee (1974), the costs and benefits to the individual migrant consist of monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits. The non-monetary costs include risk,

pollution and overcrowding etc. People's decision to migrate depends on the balance of the costs and benefits.

Sociologists have also analysed migration motivations. Petersen's (1958: 256-266) typology of migration divided migration into two groups: innovating migration, in which migration is a means to "achieve the new" and conservative migration, in which migration is a way for people to "retain what they have had" (Petersen, 1958: 258-259). This classification suggests different motivations for migration.

Taylor (1966: 99-134) produced a more complex model that explored the individual's subjective perception and motives to show how they influenced migration. Based on research among 240 coal mining families from West Durham during 1963-1966, Taylor (1966) concluded that there were four main migrant types - "aspiring", "dislocated", "resultant" and "epiphenomenal". The aspiring type were people who wished to migrate to realise ambitions and aspirations; the dislocated type those who viewed migration passively as a solution to the limitations of the sending place; the resultant type those migrate as the only perceived way to escape factors like unemployment in the sending places or as a way to realise specific objectives; the epiphenomenal type those with special personal reasons for migration such as health problems.

Generally, the motivation approach changed the emphasis from objective factors to subjective ones, i.e. the migrant's own definition of the situation and account of his/her own motives. Willis (1974: 59) summarised four areas of analysis of migration and motivation: the family life cycle, social intergenerational and career mobility, the residential environment and social and locality participation.

Social mobility as a motivation for migration is emphasised in the literature. Aspirations for higher social status are blocked by the lack of opportunities for advancement in rural area. So migration becomes a means to achieve enhanced opportunities for social mobility (Lipset 1955: 220-228).

Different stages of the family life cycle from formation to dissolution are associated with different propensities to move. For example, Foote et al. (1960) analysed general stages of life i.e. (1) marriage-family formation, (2) pre-child –

constant size, (3) child-bearing – increasing size, (4) child-rearing – constant size, (5) child-launching – decreasing size, (6) post-child – constant size and (7) widowhood – family dissolution. He found that for the married couple, mobility propensity was greatest during the family formation, child-bearing and child-launching stages.

The motivational models discussed above did not systemically explain how people move based on different motivations. De Jong and Fawcett (1981:13-58) developed a value-expectancy model to identify migration motivations and behaviour in social and economic contexts at different levels. The basic elements of the value-expectancy model were thus goals or values that were objectives and expectancies that were subjective probabilities. Migration was the function of the sum of the value-expectancy products. The values included wealth, status, comfort, stimulation, autonomy, affiliation and morality. Using this model, De Jong et al. (1996: 748-770) examined the motivations and values in rural Thailand for both male and female migrants.

Micro level studies greatly improved insights into migration decision-making by focusing on individuals and examining their push-pull factors, costs and benefits, perceptions, motives, attitudes and so on. This approach provided an analysis of the way factors influence decision-making and then help to reveal the decision-maker's calculation. However, these studies still have their weakness. For example, push-pull theory can explain what kind of factors are at work in migration. However, it cannot explain why under the same socio-economic conditions some people migrate but others do not. People are affected by their costs and benefits in deciding whether to migrate, however, the costs and benefits are not universal; they are influenced by other factors like the household. Questioning people about their motives could help here; however, such investigation is difficult and involves problems such as the difference between "real" and "stated" motives (Willis, 1974: 59).

### ***1.1-3 Development of literature related to migration decision-making***

The literature related to migration decision-making has developed in various directions. One obvious development is the current tendency to regard the household or family as the unit of decision-making whereas earlier literature tended to treat the individual as the decision-maker. Studies now more often suppose that migration decisions are made not by individuals alone but by larger units such as household and family (Massey, 1990).

For example, Mincer (1978: 749-773) analysed the influence of family ties on migration. He defined “tied persons” in the family as “those whose gains from migration are dominated by the gains or losses of the spouse” (p. 753). For example, take a family with a husband and a wife, whose potential migration is from place  $m$  to place  $n$ . If the wife’s expected earnings in  $n$  were less than in  $m$ , but the husband’s earnings in  $n$  minus previous ones in  $m$  could still offset his wife’s losses, the wife would be a “tied mover”. If the husband failed to offset his wife’s losses, the husband would be a “tied stayer” and they would not move even though the husband’s own benefits exceeded his costs of migration. However, Mincer’s study is based on the situation where the couple will stay together. This is not the case in China where the general pattern is that husband works outside and wife stays at home. Due to landholding and household registration system and the high expense of urban accommodation, it may not make sense for husband and wife to migrate together, to seek higher benefits; rather the best economic option for the couple may be for one to work outside while one stays in the village.

Mincer’s approach focused on the benefits and costs of migration for the married couple. Other approaches analyse the impact of the demographic structure showing how family size, age-sex structure and life-cycle stage constraint the migration decision. For example, a study of rural Punjab suggested that birth order had the influence on migration incentive. Wyon and Gordon (1971) observed that older sons usually stopped going to school and were in effect ‘apprenticed’ to take over the family land holdings while the younger sons were kept in school in order to migrate in the future. In addition to demographic structure, various approaches, for example, family strategy, family function, the relationship between children and

parents, etc. are considered in the literature on the family migration and decision-making (see for example, Harbison: 1981).

In a further development of the study of migration decision-making the process of decision-making was analysed and elaborated. Decision-making was regarded as a dynamic process with several stages, in each of which factors related to the decision must be analysed. Gardner proposed a model of decision-making with five basic points in the decision-making process: 1) "formation of values", 2) influence of "real, place-related macro-level factors". 3) Factors influencing "perception of the place-related factors" and people's "expectations", 4) "objective constraints and facilities to migration" and 5) "factors that affect accurate perception of the constraints and facilitators" (Gardner, 1981: 63-64). In the process, he supposed that a person first used both his own values and the characteristics of place to judge if he was satisfied or dissatisfied with the place he lived. If he was satisfied, he would choose to stay, otherwise, he would take measures to change the situation until he was satisfied and stayed on, or he just tried to move. However, his move was affected by the perceived constraints or facilitating factors. Under these influences, he might choose stay or continue to choose move. Once he began to move, he would be constrained or encouraged by the actual factors, as the same time, his information and ability also affected his desire to move. Then he would make a new decision, to stay or move.

Brown and Sanders developed a two-phase model of the process of decision-making. In each phase, decisions were made according to changing situations and the individuals themselves. For example, phase one focused on the decision to seek a new residential location. People's decisions changed with the needs and stress resulting from the change of environment.

Haberkorn (1981:256-257) developed a social-psychological five-stage process of individual decision-making, which included appraising the challenge, surveying alternatives, weighing alternatives, deliberating about commitment and adhering to the decision despite negative feedback. The advantage of these approaches is that they describe a whole picture of decision-making, in which macro- and micro-

factors can be analysed together. For example, values, attitudes and perceptions, available information and ability are often regarded as micro-level factors, while the characteristics of place are often seen as macro-level factors.

Return and repeat migration have received attention. Much previous literature had simply treated migration as a one-time event and did not examine differences between first time and repeat migration. As Gmelch (1980: 135) pointed out, “the view of migration as a once-and-only phenomenon which arose from the nineteenth century transatlantic experience dominated migration studies”. Earlier literature usually focused on why people migrate, while little touched on why people did not migrate or why people come back. DaVanzo (1976: 13) commented that “few studies had analysed the comparative behaviour of return and non-return migration within the framework of a theory or model able to accommodate both and tested this model with data”. Actually, return and repeat migration are common in many areas of the world. For example circular migration is widespread in China. There is now increasing interest in return and repeat migration. DaVanzo (1981:116) proposed several hypotheses to explain why people returned to a place they previously decided to leave using “location-specific capital” and information. He defined location-specific capital as “any or all of the factors that ‘tie’ a person to a particular place”. When a migrant considers moving again, he prioritises the place of former residence as the destination because he has location-specific capital there - migrants are familiar with their original area and are likely to have friends and relatives there, they can come back more easily than they can go to other places. Migrants do not have perfect information, but they usually have better information for a familiar area (DaVanzo, 1981:116-117).

Women migrants also received attention from the early 1980s (Willis and Yeoh, 2000: *xv*). In the early studies of migration, gender had been largely ignored as a variable. The importance of women had been ignored in both theoretical and empirical studies. Wright (2000: 8) pointed out this neglect, examining the neo-classical model and the structural model of migration and pointing out that both theories were gender blind: “both men and women are subject to the same

motivations to migrate". The literature regarding gender and migration has developed in various areas; macro-approaches have looked at the characteristics and pattern of women's migration while micro-approaches have analysed women's motivation for migration. For example, Radcliffe (1992:31) examined both male and female migration patterns in Peru, and found that women were more likely than men to travel directly from rural areas to metropolitan one.

The theory of relative deprivation indicated the importance of the reference group, which was developed by Stark (1984) and Stark and Taylor (1989). Stark explained that the individual might migrate not to increase his/her absolute income, but rather, to improve his/her position in respect to a certain reference group. A relatively deprived individual in his community has an incentive to migrate. For example, Stark supposed that when there was something a person did not have but knew somebody else had, this person would want to get it, and thinking it was feasible would try to get it through for example migration. The feeling of deprivation resulted from the knowledge that the person did not have something but someone else did. So the richest individuals might have the weak motivation to migrate, while poor individuals might have either a strong or a weak incentive to migrate, depending on their reference groups. Stark and Taylor tested the relative deprivation theory using migration from Mexico to the United States and obtained evidence that favoured the hypothesis. Bhandari (2004) also tested the hypothesis and used data from 1465 farming households in rural Nepal repeatedly found that individuals from more deprived households were more likely to migrate compared with those from less deprived households. The theory of relative deprivation could be regarded as an extension of studies on the perceptions and motivations of migrants, with special attention to the reference group.

The individual's strategies in urban migration have also attracted attention. For example, Nancy B. Graves and Theodore D. Graves argued that the anthropological literature regarding migration before 1970 regarded the individual as either totally passive or active. For example, the idea that migrants were forced out of their rural areas by overpopulation and limited resources seems emphasises the passive nature

of the individual, whereas the idea that migrants were attracted to move out by, for example, higher income or status in urban areas emphasises the active nature of individual. In fact, Graves and Graves supposed that individuals were located in a position between totally passive and active, which they call “interactive”. They argued that people are constrained by many factors and seek to overcome the constraints confronting them by choosing perceived available options, for example, they favour circular migration to decrease the costs of migration. The study examined three sets of adaptations within home community, among the migrants themselves and within the urban host community. For example, within the home community, three major types of migration patterns were found: foraging, circular migration and permanent emigration. Graves and Graves (1974: 145) acclaimed the strength of their framework: “(their framework) will enable us to avoid the sterility of superficial sample surveys while still making the move from description to explanation”.

Following individuals’ strategies, Mendonsa (1982: 643) analyses the various strategies that rural people used to cope with restrictive local labour opportunities in a fishing and tourist village in Nazaré, Portugal, which included international migration, internal migration and non-migration. International migration consisted of long term and short term working abroad. Some people migrated abroad long term and eventually returned, investing the money they earned in Nazaré, others just worked part of the year abroad to survive. Some migrants from elsewhere in Portugal worked in Nazaré, and some of whom were waiting to get jobs abroad. Non-migrants usually worked in fishing, and some rented their homes to tourists during the summer seasons. In his conclusion, Mendonsa pointed out that among these strategies, international migration was a successful one for increasing personal benefits like income when the village provided little opportunity.

In addition to personal strategy, family adaptive strategy has been discussed widely. Strategies are a useful concept to understand the ways families cope with the various constraints of economic, institutional, and social realities. There is a large literature on family strategy. For example, Winters et al. (2001) argues the

importance of family networks in assisting migration in the case of rural Mexico-U.S. migration where families are very important in providing information.

To sum up, the development of migration studies has moved from a largely macro approach that originated in studies of 19<sup>th</sup> century migration from Europe to the New World to much more varied, nuanced and detailed approaches. These take in the many types of migration in the modern world, but particularly offer much that helps us to understand the rural-urban migration in the developing world, the individual's costs and benefits, the incentives, the interrelation between family and gender and migration, the influence of attitudes and norms and the way individual migration decisions are made.

### ***1.1-3 Literature on China***

After the economic reforms of the 1980s, China experienced a rapid growth of rural to urban migration. In the Maoist period, migration was strictly controlled by the household registration (*hukou*) system and other systems such as food rationing. After economic reform, when the *hukou* system and other controls were loosened or abolished, and the market economy gradually developed, migration increased rapidly. By the year 2000, the number of rural migrants in the cities was generally estimated at about 80-100 millions. Migration has had a great influence on the economy, society and politics of China. It has contributed to rapid economic growth in China and has also provided considerable challenge to many institutions such as the *hukou* system and educational and health provision (Davin, 1999: 26). Migration in China has received attention both from policy makers and scholars in China and throughout the world. Policy makers have tended to be concerned with questions such as whether migration is "good" or "bad" in terms of economy and social order, what causes large scale migration, how it be managed by government and how should government control migrants. Scholars have focused on diverse aspects of this. They also discuss the causal factors determining migration but in addition have looked at a wide variety of other subjects including, for example, the influence of migration, the labour market, the migrants' own experiences in both rural and urban China and gender issues (Solinger, 1997, 1999; Mallee, 1998,

Davin, 1998). In a recent examination of the literature on migration in China, Xiang and Tan (2005: 1) found that these studies have moved from treating migration as an aggregate phenomenon to be managed by the state to a migrant-centred narrative focusing on migrants' experiences and problems.

Census and survey data at the national and local levels include the direct answers on the reasons for migration. These are generally divided into 1) work-related reasons including job transfer, job assignment, employment in industry and business, 2) family-related reasons including marriage, living with relatives and friends and migration with family, and 3) other reasons like study and retirement. Labour migration and marriage migration are both major streams.

Although the census suggests some reasons for why people migrate, they are indicative only. They do not explain the background to migration or how social, economic and political determinants work. Various studies explore the overall and deeper causal factors. On macro approaches, for example, Davin (1999:50-71) explored the structural causes of migration such as uneven regional development, rural-urban inequalities and surplus labour. She points out that uneven economic development causes great variations in wages and living standards between regions and between rural and urban areas. Though China has experienced rapid economic growth, regional disparities have not been reduced, indeed they have even increased. The privileges of urban residents such as the social security and medical systems widen the differences between rural and urban areas still further. Chan (1999: 50) lays out some causes of migration, such as rural decollectivization, which revealed surplus labour, the rapid expansion of urban development which created job opportunities for migrants, the relaxation of migration controls and the development of the labour market and migrant networks. Li (1998) examines the nature of surplus labour in rural China and finds that the scarcity of arable land, the decrease in the area of farmland as a result of development and improper land use, the effects of agricultural modernisation and of the household contract responsibility system were all influential. Borrowing from Lewis model, many Chinese studies use the framework of "dual structure" or "dual labour market" to

explore migration, focusing on the factor exchange between the urban areas with modern and high efficiency sectors and the rural areas with traditional and low efficiency sectors (Christiansen, 1995:410-412). The “dual structure” is generally regarded as the basic structure of China and the process of migration is discussed within this framework. (See, for example, Gu, 1994: 173-190, Liu, 2005:196-223 and Li, 2004: 123-142). However, the structure is not a simple economic one as Lewis model suggested. Christiansen (1995: 417) argues that the dual structure in China includes the influence of institutions such as the household registration system, the unified marketing and procurement systems and labour allocation system.

The determinants of migration in China have been widely studied. Some studies use the national or local income gaps between rural and urban areas to examine the influence of income on migration, and some use migrants’ experiences to compare migration income with agricultural income. Gu and Jian (1994: 85) analyse the Hubei provincial data from China’s Fourth National Census and find that the rates of labour in-migration and marriage in-migration in Hubei are both related to regional income. The higher the regional income, the higher the rate of labour and marriage in-migration from other regions. Based on a survey in Jiangxi in 2004, Zeng and Tang (2004: 76) find that 91.5 per cent of rural people agreed that migration income was higher than agricultural income; only 3.5 per cent said that migration income was less than agricultural income, and five per cent of people said they were about same. Thus Zeng and Tang concluded that higher income is an important incentive to migration.

Some studies have analysed the influence of institutions and government policy on migration. For example, Wang and Ruan (2004: 253-268) reviewed 14 institutions constraining migration, including the *hukou* system, the food ticket and other rationing systems, the housing system, the employment system and the educational system. They also found that many local governments encourage their people to migrate because migrants tend to remit money home. Solinger (1999: 11) analysed

the influences of three important institutions relevant to migration including the *hukou*, a set of urban bureaucracies and a regime of planning and rationing.

Scholars have also studied who migrates and how selectivity operates. For example, based on the analysis of the one-percent micro-census of 1987, Judith Banister (1997: 78) finds that the major stream of rural-urban migrants both male and female in 1982-1987 were aged 15-29, and migrants aged 20-24 had the highest rate of migration for rural people in all age groups. Mallee (1997:279) also points out that 70 %-80% migrants were under 30 years old of age in the 1990s. However, based on 20,000 samples in 31 provinces in China, Wang and Ruan (2004: 56) found that the average age of migrants' age was 33.4 in 2002. They also showed that the further migrants go, the younger they are. For example, they found the average age was 36.8 for migrants who work in local cities, 30.6 for those who work in other cities within the same province and 28.1 for those who work in other provinces.

Though macro-approaches indicate the causes and patterns of migration, they can not cover all the reasons for migration or the process of decision-making. As Mallee (2000: 54) points out "people do not act in reaction to vague, macro-level forces. They make decisions in concrete situations, which are embedded in larger settings of which these macro-level forces are a part". This suggests that micro-level studies are necessary and important.

In regard to decision-making at the micro-level, media reports and migration studies in the 1980s tended to regard people's decisions to migrate as "blind" and migrants as irrational. They pointed out that migrants did not know where they would get jobs or how much they would be paid. They constantly reported that migrants gathered at train stations or on busy streets to wait for employment. This bias arose partly because migration was a new phenomenon in China after economic reform and its rapid growth and the numbers involved attracted wide attention and caused alarm. As research has developed, understanding of migration has increased and social scientists have realised that migration in China has many things in common with large-scale migration elsewhere in the world. They now

treat migrants as rational beings whose actions should be analysed and understood. For example, Huang (1997) reveals that people migrate because they are forced to do so by low income in villages but that they often adjust their strategy and behaviour during migration. Wen (2001) further indicates that migrants seek not only higher income, but higher living standards, opportunities for personal development and social status, which he calls “social rationality” to distinguish it from “economic rationality” or “survival rationality”. Based on a study in Sichuan and Anhui, Bai and Song (2002: 61-62) show that both the migration decision and the return decision are rational for migrants who seek not to maximise their own individual benefits but their family benefits.

Liu Huailian (2005: 161-164) has examined various psychological motivations for migration or non-migration. He finds that motivations include seeking higher income to become prosperous, seeking higher status by changing the individual’s or the children’s *hukou* or occupational status, migrating to obtain short-term income needed for marriage or house building, or migrating from a wish to be more prosperous than other villagers.

Some studies find that migrants use their social networks or households to help them to migrate. For example, Xiang’s (2000: 13-17) research on migrants from Zhejiang province to Beijing reveals that migrants used their personal or household’s social network *guanxi* and *xi* to transcend the geographical, social, administrative and ideological boundaries. *Guanxi* refers to the general connections among people however they are made, whereas *xi* refers to specific relationships such as kinship, peer groups from the same village or school, former comrades in arms during the factional fighting of the Cultural Revolution and friendships based on long-time business dealings.

Gender issues are important to an understanding of migration in China. Jacka (2006) analyses the feelings, experience, and motivations of rural women working in Beijing. She finds that the differences of motivation for young and old female migrants, for example, aspirations to find a better life, to leave the backward villages and to achieve a future in cities are common in young female migrants,

while the old are more concerned about the reproduction of their family. Davin (1999:121-150) discuss marriage migration. She points out that marriage migration is gender-specific and decision to marry out is based on maximising advantages to both families. Men and women tend to have different patterns of migration based on their different family roles. For example, based on a review of rural surveys, Mallee (1996: 117) pointed out that women tend to stay in the villages after marriage but marriage has less effect on men's migration decision-making. In to a study of the migration of young women who worked in the silk industry in Sicheng, near Shanghai, Feng Xu (2000:193) found that female migrants felt freer when they had left form home because they were not obliged to do household work. They were motivated by a strong desire to be independent and get from household chores. Some studies specifically analyse the influence of the *hukou* system on women's migration. For example, Zhou (2002) reveals that the *hukou* causes difficulties for women who are not from Shanghai but marry into Shanghai in areas in terms of employment, housing, and the children's *hukou* problems.

The household strategy approach is useful in Chinese migration studies. In China, the family or household is the basic unit of society. After the economic reforms started, when the household responsibility system was implemented in rural China, the household became the unit of production and management in the rural areas. To maximise household benefits, the household members or the household head decide who should migrate and who should work in agriculture. This phenomenon has received attention from many scholars. For example, Bai and Song (2002) find that family reasons are the main explanation for return migration.

In recent years, migrants' living and working conditions in cities, education rights for migrant children and migrants' rights to social insurance, as well as problems with pay arrears and the refusal of pay have been widely reported in the media and academic studies. These factors are regarded as obstacles to migration. A recent study looks at the main problems of migrants including unemployment pay problems, longer working hours and medical problems (Li Qiang, 2004: 114-120).

Migration decision making is not only determined by macro factors or social structure such as income, distance, organisations, social networks and process of industrialisation, but is also determined by micro factors such as the costs and benefits to the individual, their information and motivation. On the one hand, migration is not a purely individual choice; individual choices are constrained or limited by these macro factors. On the other hand, individuals have their own motivations and perceptions of these macro factors. They form their own opinions based on their perceptions in addition to considering aspects of their own human capital like age, education and gender. Some studies try to integrate macro and micro approaches and to analyse factors that have been ignored in the previous studies. This has begun to happen in the study of migration decision-making in China. For example, Yang and Guo (1999) employ three levels – the individual, the household and the community -to analyse gender differences in determinants of temporary labour migration in China, and Zhao (2001) uses the migration process model to integrate macro, micro and meso levels of migration. The process includes decision-making, job seeking, working in cities, adapting to urban environment and returning to sending area. Attempting to contribute to this direction, I propose a multilevel framework to analyse the individual's migration decision-making. It consists of analysing the influences of costs and benefits of migration on decision-making at individual level, the influence of attitudes and social norms of migration on decision-making at village level, and the influences of institutions relevant to migration on decision-making at macro level.

## **1.2 Theoretical framework for individual migration decision-making**

### ***1.2-1 Rational choice: cost benefit analysis***

Cost benefit analysis is the key content of the rational choice approach and is widely used in various disciplines. The rational choice approach is generally called “rational choice theory” in sociology, “neoclassicism” in economics, “expected utility theory” in psychology and “public choice” in politics (Zey, 1998: 1). Most studies of cost benefit analysis adduct a set of objectives to the individual, and

regard an action as rational if it maximises satisfaction. According to the rational choice approach, a decision-maker takes action only after his benefits and costs have been weighed. When benefits are greater than costs, the decision-maker will take action; otherwise, he/she does not act. Benefits and costs are calculated in accordance with the decision-maker's preferences. It is supposed that the decision-maker is purposive and has a hierarchy of preferences, using which the decision-maker can decide how to maximise his/her benefits and minimise costs. The values and utilities are the bases of preference but do not concern rational choice theory. The approach just assumes that actions that are undertaken to achieve aims are consistent with the actor's preference hierarchy. How these values are formed and what their substances are is irrelevant to rational choice theory (Zey, 1998: 2).

The costs and benefits approach has been used to analyse individual's migration decision-making, for example, Sjaastad, (1962), Todaro (1969 and 1976) and Byerlee (1974). In these studies migration is usually regarded as the outcome of a rational evaluation of the costs and benefits of migration. When the benefits are higher than costs, people will migrate, otherwise, they just stay. These studies differ in their identification of the different costs and benefits of migration as well as how these costs and benefits are considered. For example, in Byerlee's study of rural-urban migration in Africa, the monetary costs and returns relating to rural and urban income - education, urban-rural remittances and labour market information as well as psychic costs and returns relating to risk and urban life style are taken into account. These costs and benefits form the expected present value of migration. Todaro (1969) takes the time factor into account in decision-making, supposing that decision-makers not only consider present urban and rural incomes, but what they might be in future. These studies make provide a more sophisticated understanding of decision making.

Generally, the costs of migration include the money cost, including travel costs, accommodation, living costs etc and non-material costs such as the emotional cost for people leaving their families and familiar circumstances. Benefits also include the material and the non-material. Income is one of the main material benefits,

while higher status, for example, is a non-material benefit. In the context of labour migration in China, information flow is characteristically imperfect and the labour market is fragmented. There are obvious obstacles to mobility like the *hukou* system, the cost of seeking jobs and problems like wage refusal and arrears. I consider these as transaction costs and discuss them in detail in chapter three.

The cost benefit approach is a good tool for analysing how individuals make decisions facing various factors in a complex and changing world. In my research, I will first identify what kind of costs and benefits are relevant to migrants and rank their importance in migration according to the individual's perceptions. Then I will analyse how these factors influence migration, or how migrants response to them. Migration is not a single event, in my fieldwork, circular migration is a common form. So I will analyse how costs and benefits change in different stages of migration or for different people. At the same time, migrants do not just passively accept the costs and benefits, they can save costs or increase benefits for example by sharing accommodation and using their friends to find jobs. So I will analyse how these costs and benefits are influenced by people's behaviour, and in turn influence decision-making.

Although rational choice theory provides a systematic framework for the analysis of individuals' decision-making, there have been various challenges to it, of which the social structure theory and new institutional economics are the most important. These theories suggest that though individuals make decisions according to their costs and benefits, these decisions are structured or constrained by specific socio-economic contexts. The varieties of migration types or patterns in different societies or communities reflect the influences of social and economic factors on decision-making.

Rational choice theory scholars agree that rational choice takes place under various constraints, such as the scarcity of resources, opportunity costs, institutional norms and availability of information (Zey, 1998: 2-3). As Zey (1998: 3) explains, "these institutional constraints affect both rewards and costs, providing support for and constraints against individual actors through such mechanisms as family norms,

policies of school and other formal organisations, governmental laws, and church commandments”. Some new types of rational theory have developed such as “bounded rational theory”. Unlike the early rational theory approaches that suppose individuals know all of the information and every consequence of their actions, bounded rational theory suggests that individuals make choices within constraints and they make decisions by selecting satisfying actions rather than optimising ones (see, for example, Simon, 1982). Zey (1998) further points out that rational choice can not explain, or at least not effectively explain, various factors or phenomena like how trust and altruism are produced and maintained by rational actions, considering that the rational individual is seen as motivated by self-interest, and their actions are depended on their benefits.

Generally, the relationship between the individual and macro factors like social structure and institutions is that macro factors constrain the individuals’ actions, and individuals can maximise their benefits only within these constraints. Sociological theory also deals with these approaches. For example, Giddens (1984) proposes a duality of structure between individual action and the social system in which individual actions are formed by structure and the structural factors of social system are determined by individuals’ actions.

The discussion above suggests that a single approach is not enough to give a complete picture of decision-making. To compensate for the weaknesses of rational theory, I will employ two additional approaches: attitudes and norms analysis and institutional analysis. These will be discussed below.

### ***1.2-2 Attitudes and norms analysis***

This second approach is suggested by Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1979). In his theory, the way that people act within certain external constraints is natural. They do not even need to think as they do it, in contrast to the idea of people calculating costs and benefits in rational theory. However, this perspective does not imply that people do not want to benefit themselves or that they are completely frustrated by external constraints, rather, they fit their desire to seek higher benefits around the various constraints. Understood in this way, there is no conflict between the

concept of human nature in both rational choice theory and Bourdieu's theory. Bourdieu uses "habitus" to explain this process. According to Bourdieu (1979:10), habitus is "a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices". Habitus is "created and reformulated through the conjuncture of objective structures and personal history" (Harker, et al., 1990: 10). Habitus can help people to "cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations" (Bourdieu, 1977: 72). Since the habitus is a product of the internalisation of the structure of the social world, the decision based on habitus is spontaneous.

Bourdieu's theory suggests that though decision making may depend on people's costs and benefits, the form of decision-making may be different under different social circumstances. As Massey (1990: 7) points out, "the immediate socio-economic context ...also affects the way that cost-benefit calculations are framed and conceptualised". So it is necessary to analyse attitudes and norms which amount to a kind of "habitus".

There are many studies of attitudes and norms. Detailed theory on attitudes and norms will be discussed in chapter five, here, I just lay out how I use them to develop my research. Briefly, I see attitudes in relation to migration, as the way people think about it or regard it and norms as what people consider to be normal migration behaviour or what people should do. These influences may encourage rural people to migrate or constrain them from doing so. For example, when people defy norms to migrate, they may receive sanctions, thus people are discouraged by these norms. In my research, I first examine what kind attitudes and norms are relevant to migration, and then analyse how they influence migration decision-making.

### ***1.2-3 The institutional approach***

The third approach is the institutional approach. This approach is a response to the challenge of rational choice theory – the institutions of a social structure constrain the individual's choices. Generally, three kinds of institutions are involved: the economic, the social and the politic. North (1990: 3) says that

institutions are “the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction”. He divides institutions into informal and formal ones. For example, sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions and codes of conduct constitute the informal institutions and constitutions, laws and property rights are formal ones (North, 1991: 97). Institutional constraints include what individuals are forbidden to do and permitted to do in different conditions (1990: 4). The informal constraints include 1) “extensions, elaborations, and modifications of formal rules”, 2) “socially sanctioned norms of behaviour” and 3) “internally enforced standards of conduct” (1990: 40). North (1990: 46-47) suggests that the “difference between informal and formal constraints is one of degree”. Formal rules cannot only increase the effectiveness of informal constraints but can also change informal constraints.

Transaction costs are a key concept in North’s institutional theory. North (1990: 28) suggests that the total costs of production consist of transformation costs such as the resource inputs of land and labour and transaction costs which are “defining, protecting and enforcing the property rights to goods”. Institutions determine transaction costs. Using transaction costs is better for understanding how individuals’ opportunities are constrained by institutions – higher costs discourage them from exchanging and lower costs encourage them to exchange.

Some studies employ new institutional theory to analyse migration. For example, Guilmoto (1998) uses the basic concepts of institution theory such as institution and contract to analyse migration in the Sahelian region of the Senegal River valley. He finds that migration has itself become a local institution, a system of norms and rules that regulates social behaviour, and long-term migrations rely more on family networks and institutional support. In another study, Guilmoto and Sandron (2001: 149) propose an analytical framework in which migration is considered as an institution. Within this framework, they discuss the role of migration networks, for example, support for the migration project, identification of destination and desirable periods, advance of the costs of moving, and material and nonmaterial exchanges with the sending village.

In my thesis, I use the institutional approach to analyse how institutions influence migration. I focus on how institutions encourage or constrain migration. I select three institutions relevant to migration: the labour market, social networks and the household. These institutions play an important role in migration in China and many studies discuss their general role and their specific significance (e.g., Massey, 1990, Solinger, 1999). I analyse how the institutions encourage or discourage migration, to what extent they influence migration and how rural people respond to these institutions. At the same time, I categorise costs incurred in job seeking and job-related problems as transaction. For organisational reasons, I put this discussion under the first approach of cost benefit analysis.

### **1.3 Concepts**

Migration decision-making in this thesis refers to 1) How individuals in rural China make their decisions to migrate or stay in villages, or whether individuals decide to go or not to go. This is the basic content of decision-making. 2) Since decisions to go or to stay are closely linked to those of where to go, what to do and how long to go for, the detailed decision-making on these issues is also discussed. 3) Decision-making is regarded as a continuous process. Rural people do not make a single choice about the whole of their lives. Their decision-making keeps changing with changes in their own or the external situation.

Rural-urban migration refers to the migration of rural people from rural areas that are generally villages, towns (*zhen*) and townships (*xiang*) to urban areas that is county seat (*xian*) or the city (*cheng*). However, the category of rural people is itself complex. It includes population of the township and the village (*xiangcun renkou*), the agricultural population, the population of the rural collectives and the self employed in the rural areas (Christiansen, 1990:31-33). In my thesis, as most of my interviewees have a pure peasant background, I define rural people as those with agricultural residential status (*hukou*). This produces what may be seen as an anomaly. Many villagers in my fieldwork village of Donglou Cun work in Xinzhou during the day and go home after work. Xinzhou is only 5 kilometres from their village. In other societies such workers might be regarded as commuters. In China, however,

because they have rural *hukou* status, they are perceived as migrant workers. The whole issue of migration in China during the last 20-30 years can only meaningfully be analysed in the context of the whole spectrum of spatial labour mobility that spans from commuting to long-distance migration; sticking to medium- and long distances would, one could argue, distort that understanding of the choices and decisions at work.

Labour migrants are defined as people who migrate for job-related reasons. In China, migration generally takes place for job-related reasons, family or marriage reasons. In this thesis, I focus on labour migration.

## **Chapter two: Shanxi and fieldwork**

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the general historical background in Shanxi, and the second gives a historical account of migration in Shanxi. The third section introduces area where I conducted my fieldwork. In the last section, I explain how I conducted my fieldwork and how I collected data.

### **2.1 General Historical background in Shanxi**

Shanxi province is situated in north west China. Its area is 156 thousand square kilometres, 1.63 per cent of China's total. Shanxi forms part of China's loess plateau and much of the province is covered by loess about 10 to 30 meters thick. Seventy-two per cent of the land area of the province is mountain or hill regions (Lu and Cao, 1990: 11). Many of Shanxi's rivers originate in these mountains, for example, the Feng River, the largest river in Shanxi, rises in the Guancen mountains in the Xinzhou region. The Yellow River flows through the province. Shanxi's borders are marked by mountains or rivers. The Taihang mountains separate Shanxi from Hebei and Henan provinces, and the Yellow River separates it from Shaanxi and Henan provinces.

Shanxi's climate is a continental monsoon one. Winter is cold and dry and summer is hot and rainy. The average temperature is 9.5 degrees. The frost-free period varies from south to north between 80-205 days. Shanxi is a water short province. The annual precipitation is low at only between 400mm-650mm. Drought, frost, hailstorms and xerothermic winds are the main natural disasters influencing agriculture in Shanxi.

Shanxi is rich in mineral resources, especially coal, iron, copper, aluminium and gypsum. The province's coal deposits distributed in six coalfields are one-third of the national total. Iron deposits rank fourth among China's provinces.

The total population of Shanxi was 32 million in 1998, of which 11 million were urban and 21 million were rural (Shanxi Statistical Bureau, 1999: 5). Most of population were of the majority Han nationality. Only 0.32 per cent of total

population belonged to a national minority in 2000 (The Population Census Office of Shanxi Province, 2002).

Historically, especially before 1911, Shanxi was an advanced area in terms of agriculture, economy and politics. The loess plateau is one of the birthplaces of the Chinese nation. In Chinese legend, three famous leaders, Yao, Shun and Yu established their capital in what is now southern Shanxi. In the 21 century BC, the Xia Dynasty was established in southern Shanxi. Centuries later, not only was Shanxi part of the heartland of Chinese civilisation, in some dynasties it was the location of the capital. Its economy was comparatively advanced. For example, according to some authorities, cattle were first used as draught animals in Shanxi. The use of iron tools in agriculture was widespread in Shanxi earlier than in other regions.

From the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), partly due to the population pressure and the encouragement of commerce by the Ming Dynasty, trade in commodities such as salt and tea developed and much of this trade crossed Shanxi. The province became a centre of commerce and finance in China. The earliest banks in China called “piaohao” were set up in Shanxi and their branches spread all over the China. Shanxi gradually became an exceptionally prosperous area. However, modern economic development from the 1860s which took place largely as a result of or a reaction to foreign incursions, tended to be concentrated far away in the coastal regions and along the Yangzi river. Shanxi also suffered exceptionally seriously from the Boxer uprising and its aftermath. By the time of the 1911 Revolution, Shanxi had lost its important role in economics and finance and was in long-term decline. From 1911 to 1949, Shanxi, like the rest of China, suffered from frequent civil war and the Japanese invasion and occupation.

After 1949, Shanxi developed quickly. The population increased dramatically from 1.3 million in 1949 to 2.5 million in 1980 and 3.2 million in 1998. The urban population increased eight times from over a million in 1949 to 8.47 million in 1998, while the agricultural population increased from 11.75million in 1949 to 23.57 million in 1998 (Shanxi Statistical Bureau, 1985 and 1999).

The economy also developed quickly. In 1952, the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in Shanxi was 1.6 million yuan. It increased significantly to almost 43 million yuan in 1990 and 245 billions in 2003. The GDP per capita increased nearly 41 times from 116 yuan in 1952 to 4,727 yuan in 1998. With the development of the economy, people's incomes also rose. The annual disposable income of urban residents was 380 yuan in 1980 and increased to 4,343 yuan in 1998, and net income of rural residents was 156 yuan in 1980 and rose to 3,493 yuan in 1998 (Shanxi Statistical Bureau, 1999).

Due to rich mineral resources, heavy industry makes up a high percentage of total output of industry. For example, in 1952, the gross output value of mining, quarrying and raw material was 55 per cent of total industrial output, and it increased to 78 per cent of total industrial output in 1998 which was 42 per cent of Shanxi's total GDP (Shanxi Statistical Bureau, 1999). Industries are mainly located at Taiyuan, Datong, Changzhi and Yangquan. There are a few large- and medium-sized enterprises such as the Taiyuan Heavy Machinery Group Company, the Taiyuan Mining Machinery Plant and the Yuci Hydraulic Component Plant.

Agriculture in Shanxi mainly consists of the cultivation of corn, paddy and wheat and raising sheep and pigs. In 1998, the output value of cultivation was 64 per cent of all agricultural income, and stock raising was 31 per cent (Shanxi Statistical Bureau, 1999).

Both railway and road transport have developed rapidly. In 1952, there were 1,245 kilometres of railway line in operation; by 1999 this had doubled to 2512 kilometres. Taiyuan is a railway hub, which connects all 11 cities and 87 counties of Shanxi. Highways increased from 2,350 kilometres in 1952 to 52,807 kilometres in 1999. Highways connect 94.4 per cent of all towns and townships, 61.5 per cent of villages have roads surfaced with asphalt, and 96.2 per cent of villages have dirt roads (Shanxi Yearbook Committee, 2005: 246).

Telephone communication has also grown fast. In 1980, 39,000 households in cities had telephones as had 18000 households in rural areas. By 1999, this had increased to 595,000 in cities and 58,000 in villages. In 2003, 6,490,000 households had

telephones and 4,100,000 people had mobile phones. The mobile network covered 95 per cent of total population and 80 per cent of villages (Shanxi Yearbook Committee, 2005: 262).

Though the economy and the lives of both the urban and rural population have improved significantly, compared with other provinces, Shanxi is still relatively poor. Before the economic reforms, per capita GDP in Shanxi was around average for China, sometimes a little over, more often a little under. After economic reform, the gap increased. For example, in 1952, per capita GDP in Shanxi was 116 yuan compared with an average of 119 yuan for China as a whole. It was 16<sup>th</sup> of all 30 provinces. Partly due to the rapid development of mining, the per capita GDP in Shanxi rose rapidly quicker, to 186 yuan in 1957 and 277 in 1970, compared with national averages of 168 in 1957 and 275 in 1970 (Department of Comprehensive Statistics of National Bureau of Statistics, 1999). After the economic reforms, the per capita GDP in Shanxi was lower than the average at 442 yuan in 1980, 7,402 yuan in 2003 and 9,150 yuan in 2004 compared with the national figures of 460 in 1980, 9,111 in 2003 and 10,561 in 2004. In 2004, Shanxi ranked 19<sup>th</sup> among the 31 provinces for per capita GDP. The net income of rural residents also reflects the status of Shanxi's economy. For example, the net income of rural people was 603 yuan in 1990 and 1,905 yuan in 2000, significantly lower than the national average for rural China of 686 in 1990 and 2253 in 2000 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2005; China Agriculture Yearbook Committee, 2004).

To sum up, Shanxi was once a comparatively advanced area in China but it began a relative decline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It developed comparatively quickly in the first years after 1949 but has done less well than the most advanced provinces since the economic reforms. Compared with the regions that have enjoyed the most rapid economic growth, Shanxi is a poor area.

## **2.2 Migration in Shanxi**

Migration in Shanxi has a long history. In peace time, as a comparatively prosperous area, it often experienced voluntary immigration from other areas. For

example, its population stood at only 550,000 in 1291 but had increased significantly to 4,100, 000 by 1393 (Shanxi History Research Institute, 1997: 16-17, my translation).

However, during periods of war or serious natural disaster, forced migration became the major form of migration, including both immigration and out-migration. For example, in 1350-1371, there was a large scale civil war in China. Protected by the natural boundary of Yellow River and good command by a famous general, Shanxi was suffered little damage from this war and the population grew. In the following 40 years, to stimulate the economy and increase population in other areas, the Ming government implemented the large scale migration from Shanxi to other areas. According to some local annuals, in some villages, nearly half of population migrated (Shanxi History Research Institute, 1997: 20-22).

During the Ming and the Qing Dynasties and the early Republic of China, migration for trade and business became important. The trade between Shanxi and the rest of China developed and Shanxi also benefited from being on the trade route to Mongolia, Russia and the Silk Road. When branches of the Shanxi banks were set up in most areas of China, people from Shanxi sent to work in these branches became another type of migrant. Staff were usually sent to work away of periods of two or three years (Huang, 2002a: 66). Shanxi people set up 49 “tongxiang hui” centres for fellow provincials, all over China, (Huang, 2002: 298). With the development of trade and of the banks, in some regions of Shanxi like Pingyao and Linfen, the attitudes to seeking higher social status changed. Where once passing the imperial examinations in order to become an official had been the main way of improving social status, now some people began to regard success in commerce as better. Shanxi ceased to send its full quota of candidates to the examinations (Huang, 2002a: 342).

The economy of Shanxi continued its relative decline under the Republic of China established in 1911. Some trade continued. Silk, tobacco, sugar, salt and tea were imported to Shanxi from Hebei, Hangzhou, Beiping and Tianjin. Some of these commodities were sold in Shanxi, while the rest was transported to Xinjiang, the north-east of China, Mongolia and Russia. On the return trip, traders brought back

horses, camels, furs, golden, silver and raisins to Shanxi and then sold them to other areas. These trades withered from the 1930s because of the Japanese invasion and the subsequent war.

After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, despite economic development in Shanxi, the little migration that continued tended to be planned. For example, between 1954-1960, the Central Government set up various large scale industrial projects in the province and about 800,000 people migrated to work there (Shanxi History Research Institute, 1994: 69). Migration in Shanxi, as elsewhere in China, was strictly controlled by the *hukou* system.

During the economic reforms, migration increased significantly. According to the Population Census (Population Census Office under the State Council and Department of Population Statistics, 2002), in 2000, migrants originating in Shanxi numbered 3,358,344 of which 91 per cent migrated within Shanxi and nine per cent migrated to other provinces. The number of migrants from other provinces was 667,357. So Shanxi was a net immigration province. Rural migrants from Shanxi migrating within Shanxi and the other provinces amounted to 1,056,783, of whom 79,391 migrated to other provinces; the rest stayed in Shanxi, amounting to 92.5 per cent of all Shanxi's rural migrants. The percentage of rural migrants in Shanxi to the total population in Shanxi was 3.3 per cent, which is higher than the average percentage in China of 2.5 per cent and puts Shanxi 5<sup>th</sup> in the provincial order of the proportion of rural migrants to total population. The percentage of rural-urban migrants in the total rural population in Shanxi is 5 per cent, which is also higher than the average percentage in China of 3.9 per cent and puts Shanxi 10<sup>th</sup> in the provincial order of the proportion of rural migrants to rural population. Taking a closer look, 55 per cent of rural migrants in Shanxi just migrated within their local counties. So the pattern of rural-urban migration in Shanxi is that although the rate of migration is relatively high, more than half of all migrants migrate a short distance, just to nearby cities or county towns, and most migrants migrate middle distances - within Shanxi. Of the rest, most migrate to nearby provinces, like Shaanxi, Hebei, Henan and Neimenggu, but some go as far as, e.g. Sichuan and Jilin.

As elsewhere in China, female migrants outnumbered male migrants in Shanxi, and the ratio of male to female was 0.86. However, this is because the census in China shows all population mobility as migration, including moves for marriage. Male migrants move primarily for job reasons, especially for employment in industry and business, while female migrants move primarily for family reasons, above all for marriage but also to join their husbands in migration.

The majority of migrants were between 20 and 35. Shanxi migrants had a similar educational profile to migrants elsewhere in China, which is their educational level was low, the majority having graduated only from junior middle school, but it was higher than the average level for the sending areas.

### **2.3 Fieldwork City and villages**

I selected Xinfu Qu and Kelan County in Xinzhou region (the official name was Xinzhou District until 2001 when it changed to Xinzhou City in 2001) as my fieldwork area. Xinzhou region includes Xinfu Qu (district under the jurisdiction of city), Yuanping City (a county level city) and 12 counties. The map shows the relevant locations.

Xinzhou is located in northern Shanxi. In 16<sup>th</sup> century B.C, The State of Feng in Shang Dynasty is supposed to have established its capital in what is now Xinzhou. Shanxi's strategic geopolitical location meant that it was frequently the location of fortifications by settled Chinese states against invasion from the north. The Ming Dynasty Great Wall runs from Datong in Shanxi through Xinzhou, across into Hebei. Xinzhou was important for trade. Agricultural goods like cotton, tea, silk and salt were transported to Shaanxi, Xinjiang and Neimonggu through Xi' an and Silk Road. After People's Republic of China was established, Xinzhou developed quickly like the rest of Shanxi. Its population of 2,866,115 accounted for nine per cent of total population of the province in 2000. (China Population Census in 2000). Its per capita GDP in 1998 was 2,702 yuan, lower than the average for Shanxi of 4,727 yuan. This low economic status may be due to Xinzhou's comparative lack of coal. In 1998, the total production of coal in Shanxi was 122,300 thousand tons, while the production in

Xinzhou was 1,930 thousand tons, only 1.6 per cent of total production (Shanxi Statistical Bureau, 1999). Table 2.1 shows the disposable income of urban residents and net income of rural residents in Shanxi, Xinzhou City, Xinfu Qu and Kelan in 2004, the year I conducted my fieldwork.

Figure 2.1 The location of Shanxi, Xinzhou, Xinfu Qu and Kelan

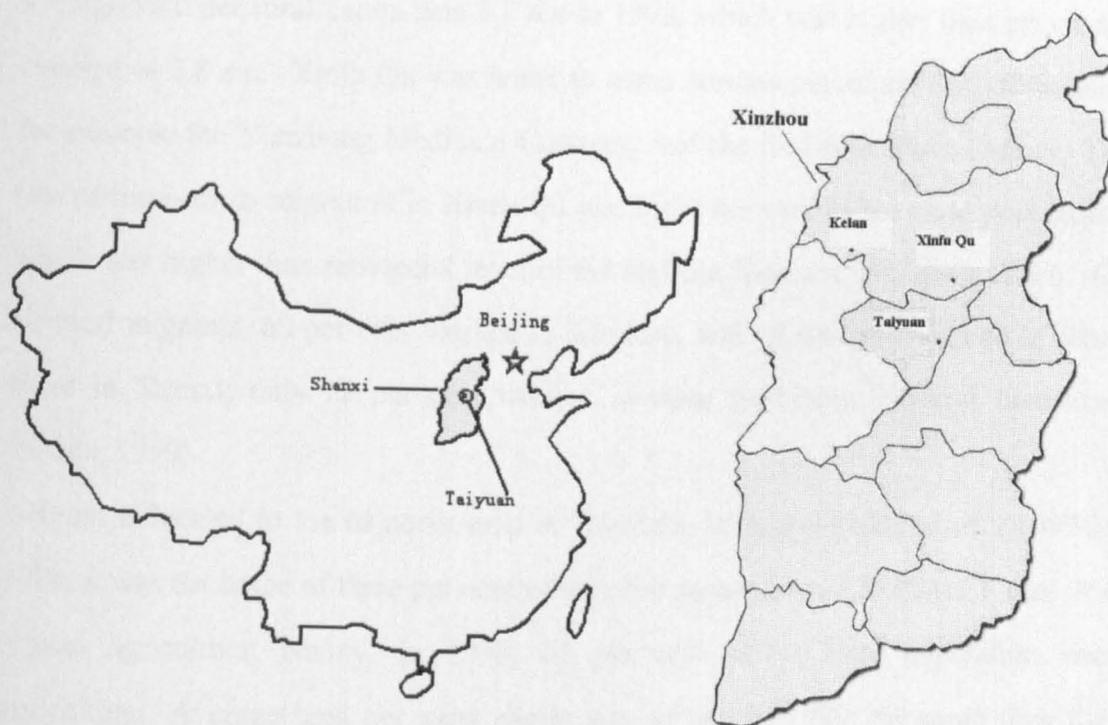


Table 2.1 Individual income for both urban and rural residents in 2004

Areas	Disposable income of urban residents (Yuan)	Net income of rural resident
Shanxi	7,902	2,589
Xinzhou City	6,352	1,778
Xinfu Qu	6,866	2,425
Kelan County	4,842	1,501

Source: Xinzhou Government Report, 2005

Xinfu Qu is the central and most prosperous city in Xinzhou and it is the capital city of Xinzhou. It used to be called Xinzhou City this was changed to Xinfu Qu in 2001. Xinfu Qu had 145, 653 population, 18 per cent of the total population of Xinzhou in 2000 (Population Census Office of Shanxi Province, 2002). Both urban and rural incomes per capita were closer to provincial level and higher than Xinzhou City level. Agricultural production mainly consisted of corn, potato and millet. The average land per rural capita was 3.2 *mu* in 1998, which was higher than provincial average of 2.8 *mu*. Xinfu Qu was home to some famous manufacturing companies, for example the Yunzhong Medicine Company and the Red Star Flour Factory. The rate of rural-urban migration in Xinfu Qu was eight per cent of the rural population, which was higher than provincial level of 6.4 and the Xinzhou City level of 6.6. Of all rural migrants, 60 per cent worked in Xinzhou, and 28 per cent worked in other cities in Shanxi; only 12 per cent worked in other provinces. (Shanxi Statistical Bureau, 1999).

Kelan is located to the of north west of Xinzhou. With a population of 22,097 in 1998, it was the home of three per cent of the total population of Xinzhou. Kelan is a typical agricultural county. In 1998, 84 per cent of its total population was agricultural. Average land per rural capita was 11 *mu* in 1999, far more than the average for Shanxi. There was little industry in Kelan. At 95,030,000 yuan, the gross industrial output value was lower than the agricultural output value of 106,270,000 yuan. The agriculture in Kelan mainly consists of cultivation and animal husbandry. The latter generates more income. For example, in 1998, income from animal husbandry was 80,250,000 yuan, compared to cultivation income which was 20,180,000 yuan (Shanxi Statistical Bureau, 1999).

Partly due to availability of land and the dearth of industry in Kelan, the rural-urban migration rate is low, four per cent of the rural population, which is lower than average level in Shanxi. The major stream of migrants worked in nearby cities as elsewhere in Shanxi, 65 per cent of migrants worked in Xinzhou; 28 per cent of them worked in other cities in Shanxi and only seven per cent worked in other provinces (Population Census Office of Shanxi Province, 2002)

The reasons why I selected Xinfu Qu and Kelan County as my fieldwork areas are as follows: 1) Xinzhou City was fairly typical of the eleven cities in Shanxi. Although its GDP or income per capita is lower the average level in Shanxi, Xinfu Qu, in which income per capita was close to provincial level, was selected to overcome this weakness. So my fieldwork areas could be regarded as a representative of Shanxi as a whole. 2) The rate of migration in both Xinfu Qu and Kelan varied from high to low, which allowed me to find villages with different rates of migration. 3) I have lived in Xinzhou for most of my life, so it is easy for me to collect data. I am familiar with the culture, language and development of Xinzhou. Moreover, my parents and some friends know officials in the Xinzhou Government, which greatly helped me to conduct interview. They also helped me to collect extra data after I had returned to Leeds.

### *Fieldwork villages*

My six fieldwork villages were called Donglou Cun, Sanjiao Cun, Zuotou Cun, Dagou Cun, Liulin Wan and Shang Cun. The first four villages are in Xinfu Qu and the rest are in Kelan County. All of them are in Xinzhou. I selected the six villages by rate of migration in order to ensure that high, middle-range and low level rates were all represented. Donglou Cun was the village with highest rate of migration at 36 per cent of the total population, while Sanjiao Cun, Zuotou Cun and Dagou Cun were middle-ranking with rates of 11 per cent, 13 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. Liulin Wan and Shang Cun had the lowest rates of migration, at only four per cent in each village. Donglou Cun in the first group was the most prosperous of the villages with a net per capita income of 2,900 yuan in 2003 according to the data it reported to the township government. The second group of villages had the middling incomes, at 1,600, 1,400 and 1,190 yuan respectively. Liulin Wan and Shang Cun had net incomes of 1,300 and 850 yuan per capita<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, though most of the labour force in all six villages was educated to middle junior school level, the

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<sup>1</sup> 850 yuan was based on the data Shang Cun reported to the township government. However, I estimate that the true figure should have been about 1200-1500 yuan. This makes allowances for the fact that the village deliberately underreported its income from sheep because the government had forbidden large scale sheep raising. This will be explained in detail in my introduction to Shang Cun.

Donglou labour force had highest proportion of people educated to senior middle school level at 25 per cent of the total and even had one per cent educated to college level, while the labour force in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun had the lowest proportion of people to have received senior middle school education at only two per cent and none of college level. The table 2.2 shows these data in six villages.

The main crops in the six villages were corn, millet, potato and beans. Land per capita varied from 1.5 *mu* in Donglou Cun to 9.8 *mu* in Shang Cun.

Table 2.2 Migration rate, income and education data for the six villages in 2003

Villages	Migration rate (total population)	Net income per capita (yuan)	Percentage of labour force with senior middle school education
Donglou Cun	36%	2,900	25%
Sanjiao Cun	11%	1,600	18%
Zuotou Cun	13%	1,400	3%
Dagou Cun	10%	1,190	17%
Liulin Wan	4%	1,300	2%
Shang Cun	4%	850	2%

Notes: migration rate is percentage of the total population who have migrated for at least one month in the past year.

Source: fieldwork in 2004.

Donglou Cun had the highest population at 5900 in 2004. Donglou villagers held the least land per capita, at only 1.51 *mu*, lower than both the provincial and national levels. However Donglou Cun had the most fertile land and net agricultural income per capita was 1160 yuan while in Shang Cun where there was 9.8 *mu* per capita agricultural income per capita was only 850. The land in Donglou Cun was suitable for machine cultivation. Machines were widely used and the villagers had set up glasshouses to cultivating vegetables that provided city residents with year round fresh food. This brought high income for the villagers, about 2,000-4,000 yuan per *mu*. Donglou Cun is only seven kilometres from Xinfu Qu, the centre of Xinzhou City. Apart from working in cities, Donglou villagers also undertook various non-agricultural activities in villages such as running restaurants and shops. Donglou

villagers had were the most likely to own landline phones or mobile phones, which facilitated working outside. They were also well known in Xinfu Qu and the surrounding towns for their traditional skills in carpentry. Even before the economic reforms, some people had worked in both agriculture and carpentry. After the economic reforms, more and more Donglou people worked in Xinzhou as furniture makers or painters and decorators. As Xinzhou was so near, many villagers worked there during the day and came back at night. Compared with migrants from other villagers, migrants from Donglou Cun worked in relative high status occupations like carpentry. Some of them even ran their own businesses.

Sanjiao Cun, a village in the second group, is located on a hill. Its population was 830 in 2004 and per capita land was 2.7 *mu*. Most labourers worked in agriculture. Compared with Donglou Cun, Sanjiao villagers had lower incomes, averaging 960 yuan in 2003. The rate of migration in Sanjiao Cun was lower than in Donglou Cun. It was 30 kilometres to Xinzhou, migrants could go there and back in a day. Migrants from Sanjiao often worked in construction, restaurants and retail. Some were self-employed, in transporting or running market stalls. Many migrants worked in Taiyuan and half of them worked away for over 6 months in a year. The other villages in the group, Zuotou Cun and Dagou Cun, were similar to Sanjiao Cun.

Shang Cun, in the third group, is located deep in the mountains. Transport was very inconvenient. Though it was only 15 kilometres to Kelan, this was mostly on mountain footpaths. Per capita land was high at 9.8 *mu*, but the fertility of the mountainous, unirrigated soil was low. Shang Cun villagers raised 7.5 sheep per capita more than in any of the other villages. They took these sheep into the mountains by day and took them back home before dark. Sheep brought in good money, as estimated by my interviewees, net income was 100 yuan per sheep. Raising sheep was the best way for them to add to their incomes. However, the local government had forbidden large scale sheep-rearing because over-grazing denudes the mountain land and causes erosion. The hard-pressed villagers responded by continuing to raise sheep but underreporting the number that they actually raised when questioned by township officials. Migration rates in both Shang Cun and Liulin

Wan were low, at only four per cent of the population. Some migrants worked in Kelan or other cities long term, and some migrants from Liulin Wan just worked for a few weeks in their slack seasons like July and August. Table 2.3 shows the basic data for six villages.

Table 2.3 Population, land, agricultural income and distance from city for the six villages

Villages	Population	Average per capita land ( <i>mu</i> )	Net per capita agricultural income	Geography and distance to nearest city or county town
Donglou Cun	5900	1.51	1,160	Suburban, 7 km to Xinfu Qu
Sanjiao Cun	830	2.72	960	Hilly, 30 km to Xinfu Qu
Zuotou Cun	956	3.35	840	Hilly, 17km to Xinfu Qu
Dagou Cun	283	2.60	773	Mountainous, 32km to Xinfu Qu
Liulin Wan	310	4.20	1,300	Mountainous, 8km to Kelan
Shang Cun	109	9.83	850	Mountainous, 15km to Kelan

Source: fieldwork in 2004

Migration in all six villages had the following characteristics: 1) The migration stream was predominantly male and young. Females, especially after marriage, migrated much less than males. Most migrants were aged between 16 and 40. 2) People generally migrated to nearby cities or other cities in Shanxi, few of them migrated to other provinces. 3) Most migrants did low status work like construction, restaurant work and garment selling. Some did more skilled jobs for example as electricians, or government clerks or as staff in large companies. 4) Many migrants who worked in cities left their families in the villages. Many were 'circular' migrants, working in both cities and their own villages. 5) Migrants hardly ever obtain city *hukous*, or live permanently in cities. 6) Most migrants had junior middle or senior middle school education, and migrants with junior middle education outnumbered those with senior middle education. 7) People usually depended on help from family members, friends or fellow villages to migrate. Table 2.4 shows some characteristics of migration in six villages.

The other two fieldwork sites were a noodle factory and a market in Xinzhou. I included these sites for two reasons. Firstly, during my fieldwork, I found that most

of migrants I interviewed worked in Xinzhou, so I decided to extend my data collection from the sending villages to Xinzhou, the major destination for my migrants. Secondly my interviewees often said that their fellow villagers worked in factories or selling clothes, so I added these two sites to collect this perspective. I also interviewed two MA students from Xinzhou although I did not find any in the fieldwork villages. I have used the data from the two urban sites and from the MA students to supplement the data collected in the villages.

Table 2.4: Migration data for six villages in 2004

Villages	Male migrants	Female migrants	Percentage of migrants working within Xinzhou	Percentage of migrants working in other cities in Shanxi	Percentage of migrants working in other provinces	Percentage of migrants migrating for more than 6 months a year
Donglou Cun	1318	674	70%	20%	10%	30%
Sanjiao Cun	70	20	23%	56%	11%	50%
Zuotou Cun	97	28	56%	40%	4%	16%
Dagou Cun	26	3	48%	52%	0	72%
Liulin Wan	10	3	85%	15%	0	54%
Shang Cun	3	1	50%	50%	0	100%

Source: fieldwork in 2004

The market called North Commercial City is located in the city centre of Xinfu Qu. It is privately owned. It has 200 stalls selling daily goods and clothes. The market employed over 1,000 people including 700 from the rural areas. There were 150 male and 800 female staff. The employees with senior middle school were 160 and those with junior middle school were over 800. Sanli Noodle Factory, is located in Xinfu Qu and is also privately owned. It produced instant noodles. It employed 240 people of whom 168 were from the villages. The majority, 185, had junior middle school education. In the two sites, I interviewed 11 people from Xinzhou villages respectively.

## **2.4 Fieldwork Methods**

To obtain general information about each village and migration, I first did a group interview with the head of the town or township in which the fieldwork village was situated and village cadres such as the village head, the Party secretary and the accountant. I obtained general data about the village such as population numbers, land and income, and then turned to the migration. I asked questions such as: How many people migrate? What do they do and where do they go? What are their characteristics? Who does not migrate and what are the attitudes and norms towards migration? After this, I asked them about the history of migration in the village or town (township), and the changes and trends in migration. I asked about policies relevant to migration and their influences. After the group interview had allowed me to form an overall picture of the village, I asked the village cadres to help me to find villagers, both men and women, with varied ages, marriage status, occupations and educational levels whom I could interview. I selected more than 15 interviewees in large villages with populations of over 10,000, 10 in villages with populations under 1000 and 5 where the population was lower than 500.

In individual interviews, I used semi-structured interviews to collect information. Compared with questionnaires, the advantages of interviews were that I could get more relevant information including information about the feelings of my interviewees, their experiences of decision-making and their explanation of what influenced them. Moreover, when I listened to interviewees' stories, I could follow up directly with questions about their special experiences or ask them to clarify what they had said. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed soon afterwards. This made it possible in some cases to ask follow-up questions. In reporting the interviews in this thesis, all names have been changed in order to preserve the anonymity of my interviewees.

Each individual interview proceeded as follows:

Firstly, I asked about the interviewee's basic personal circumstances, including their own name, age, marriage status and how many members their household had, what they do now, what they earn and how many land they hold. Then I asked

interviewees if they had any migration experiences. If the answer was affirmative, I ask them how many times they had migrated, how long they had gone for and where they had been. If it was negative, I asked them what they did now, and how they felt about it.

After getting the basic situations of the interviewees and their households, I asked about the details of each of their migrations starting with the first migration finishing by asking about their future plans. If they had migrated very frequently, like for example, a migrant from Sanjiao Cun who had migrated more than 10 times, I did not ask the details of each migration if they were similar. In some cases, the interviewees were too old to remember much about their early migrations, so I first asked them recent migrations, or the migrations they could recall clearly, and then asked them to recall their early migration experience. In some cases, I asked them how they regard migration for themselves or their household members.

For each migration, I asked the following questions: Who decided to migrate? Why did they decide to migrate? How did they decide where to go, how long to go for, etc. How did they migrate? After migration, how do they feel in the new situation? How did they deal with problems in both cities and villages? How did their family feel about their migration? Why did they not try alternatives, like migrating to other cities or trying to learn more skills before migrating? Did they consider other factors that they hadn't referred to had influenced their migration? What were their plans for the future and for their children? The answers to these questions provided information about various costs and benefits of migration and their influence on the migration decision. When my interviewees referred to attitudes, norms or institutional influences in what they said about migration, I asked for more detail. Otherwise I asked directly about these factors and their influence. In the case of interviewees who had never migrated, I asked if they had wanted to migrate, why they had not migrated, if they were satisfied their current situations and in what situation, they would migrate.

After I came back to Leeds, I found that I had not collected important data that I needed for my study. For example, I had just asked generally about costs of marriage

rather than finding out the detail of who paid what costs, what the breakdown of the spending was and who benefited. With help from my relatives and friends, I collected more data without having to return to Shanxi.

The data analysis began when I came back to Leeds. Before 2006, I mainly analysed the data manually. At that stage, although NVivo software was already available for the analysis of text material, it was not yet suitable for use with Chinese characters. After 2006 the upgrade, NVivo7 which could be used for Chinese characters became available and, I used it to reanalyse my material.

The general information about my interviewees is as below. There are 72 interviewees including three who were interviewed after I returned to Leeds. 48 of them were male and 24 were female. The youngest was 18 and oldest was 70. The average age of interviewees was 39. The average age of first migration was 23 years and the average year of first migration was 1987.

## **Chapter three: Costs of migration**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will discuss the factors that discourage migration using the cost benefit approach. This chapter therefore focuses on costs of migration.

As we discussed in chapter one, much of the literature on migration decision-making uses a framework of cost benefit analysis to look at a variety of costs and benefits relevant to migration. For example, based on research on the motivation for migration in Africa, Byerlee (1974) takes into account costs, including the risks of unemployment and loss of income, the costs of breaking old and setting up new contacts and the costs of suffering overcrowding and pollution in cities. On the whole, costs and benefits are divided into two groups in the literature: material and nonmaterial costs and benefits. In the recent literature, the concept of transaction cost has been widely used. This term is used to cover the costs of coming to an agreement. In this discussion it will include migrants' costs in the process of seeking jobs, finding jobs and completing jobs.

In this chapter, I divide costs in three groups: monetary costs (or material costs), non-monetary costs (or nonmaterial costs) and transaction costs. Strictly speaking, transaction costs must still be either material costs or nonmaterial ones, however, it is useful to focus on costs relevant to process of obtaining employment separately in order to investigate migration decision making, so I will use transaction costs as a third category. Similar, in chapter four, I divide benefits into two groups: monetary benefits mainly focusing on income from agriculture and the wage in cities, and nonmaterial benefits involved those of social status, self improvement, the attraction of cities and looking for a spouse.

Generally, in China there are three or four levels of the costs and benefits of migration: those of the individual, the household and the community or the government. My focus will be on the individual level, rather than the household or community. However, as all the levels are related, I will refer to other levels at times. For example, although the opportunity cost of migration can be considered at the individual level, it is probably opportunity cost at the household level that most

influences the individual's migration decision and I therefore discuss opportunity cost at that level. The organisation of this chapter is as follows.

In the first section on material costs, I first discuss the general costs of migration such as costs of accommodation, food, transport and, for the self-employed, set-up costs, and examine their influences on migration. Then I discuss the influence of opportunity cost. In the section on non-material costs, I discuss the hardships of working and living in cities, problems with employers and city residents, security problems, psychological costs like feeling boredom and worrying about, the risks of migration. In the next section, I mainly focus on how transaction costs influence the migration decision. I discuss three types of transaction costs, including the costs of obtaining information, different ways of migrating and working without formal contract. The last section sums up my conclusions from this chapter.

### **3.2. Monetary costs**

Monetary or material costs are a significant consideration in migration. Monetary costs commonly include those of transport, information, accommodation and life expenses in the cities, etc. The general effect of costs is to constrain migration, especially long-distance migration and to prevent migrants from staying permanently in the cities. Davin (1999: 49) considered that costs of travel and accommodation were the significant factors involved in decision-making of rural to urban migrants in China in the 1990s.

In my fieldwork, migrants often complained about various costs in cities.

*The living expenses are too high; we can't stay in a city long term* (Zhuo Shenzhou, male, 48 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun and interviewed in Dagou Cun).

*Once I ran out of money, I had to come back* (Zhang Haohan, 22 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun, interviewed in Sanjiao Cun).

My fieldwork indicated that living expenses and the costs of accommodation and transport play a significant role in migration, but other costs of communication, medical expenses, entertainment and set-up costs for the self-employed were also significant to some interviewees. Moreover, if migrants had their families with them,

there were other costs such as the fees for their children's education.

These costs vary from one situation to another. For example, migrants who work in restaurants or hotels generally do not need to pay costs of accommodation or meals. As people from Shang Cun rarely became self-employed, they did not worry about the set-up money as people from Donglou Cun did. However, there are some general common considerations. I analyse the usual costs in cities compared with villages, as decision-making is often based on these costs.

### ***3.2-1 Monetary costs in cities***

The first general and important cost is *shenghuo fei* (living costs) including accommodation and food. My interviewees were mostly very aware of these costs: how much they amounted to, how they could be reduced and the ratio of living costs to income. For example, ordinary accommodation costs were usually between 50-150 yuan per person per month, depending on the quality of accommodation. Food cost about 90-150 yuan a person a month. So living costs totalled 140-300 yuan per person per month. However, the lowest wage reported by my interviewees was about 200 yuan, and most interviewees earned 300-500 yuan. So the minimum level of these costs is almost 75 per cent of lowest income and about half of general income. Guan Shihao (female, 24 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan) earned 230-260 yuan a month as a cashier in a supermarket in Kelan, while she spent at least 100 yuan on food and 60 yuan for accommodation. She said she had almost no money left after paying basic expenses, but she was extremely busy compared with when she worked in agriculture. She had therefore decided to come home. To save money, migrants often live in shared rooms with two, four or even ten other people and cook for themselves. What they eat is often cheap food, as they said just "*mantou he baicai*" (steamed bread and Chinese leaves, the cheap diet of the poor in Shanxi) with little meat.

Because of the high costs of accommodation and food, some migrants, especially young people without experience or skills, prefer jobs that offer free accommodation and/or food. An interviewee said that his daughter (23 years old in 2004) and son (20 years old in 2004) worked in a restaurant in Taiyuan. One reason that they selected

jobs in a restaurant was that “they don’t need to worry about accommodation and food working here, while in other jobs they would need to sort this out.” (Fan Youtian, 45 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou). Accommodation comes with jobs in restaurants, hotels, construction work and childcare. For example, construction workers do not usually need to worry about their accommodation, because their employers provide them with bunkhouses or tents near the construction sites. Their accommodation, however, is not always really free. In some cases, a charge is deducted from the migrant’s wage.

Migrants often extend the “living expenses” to “various expenses in the cities” when they consider whether to live in cities long term. Almost all the migrants in my fieldwork agreed, “everything in cities is expensive”. In the long term, life in the city would involve unavoidably large expenses such as buying a house and paying costs for children. Zhu Haitian (female, 56 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun) said that “working in cities is OK, but living there long term is difficult. If you don’t have some special ability, don’t even think about it”.

A major cost is that of setting up a business. This might involve renting a market stall to sell clothes, setting up a restaurant or a shop or hairdressers, buying a truck for transport etc. Compared with the living expenses discussed above, these costs are not absolutely necessary for migrants. However, as migrants aspire to find ways of earning a better living, they don’t want to stay in paid jobs for ever and they are interested in becoming self-employed (*getihu*). As peasants see it, being self-employed has advantages. They earn more money and enjoy relative comfort and higher social status than in labouring jobs like construction. However, self-employment needs investment which is large compared to a migrant’s income. For example, Huo Xufeng (22 years old in 2004, a sales woman in a market in Xinzhou) said that she did not want to carry on as she was. It was hard and she earned little money. She was thinking of going home if no new chances came up. She wanted to rent a stall in the market to sell clothes as her own boss. However, one year’s rent costs 20,000-30,000 yuan depending on the location. She earned 350-400 yuan per month in her current job and could save 100 yuan. To save the necessary sum on her

own would take her nearly 22 years. So Huo Xufeng hoped her parents or friends could come up with this money. Table 3.1 below shows the amounts of money needed to set up various businesses.

Table 3.1: Investment needed for different business

Investment	Yuan
Annual rent on a stall in an indoor market in Xinzhou	20,000
Purchase of a second-hand truck	30,000
Setting up a pig production unit in Xinzhou	470,000

Sources: information from interviewees in 2004 fieldwork

In addition to living and setting up costs, there are costs such as transport, communication, entertainment, and information. Interviewees referred to these costs much less often.

In the literature, the costs of transport and information are usually the main constraints to migration. For example, according to Zipf's gravity model (1946), distance works against migration. Generally, the costs of transport and gathering information are likely to be greater the longer the distance moved. Moreover, the strength of the linkage between the rural and urban areas partly depends on the distance between them. The importance of links with families and friends constrains the distance of migration. People don't want to go too far from home. In case of the Shanxi migrants interviewed, the costs of transport and information seem unimportant in migration. They referred to these issues infrequently, and when asked about them, they often answered as "it's easy", "not a problem" or "does not matter".

The reason they regarded costs of transport and information as unimportant is largely due to the patterns of their migration. Most of my migrant informants worked in local or nearby cities, like Xinzhou and Taiyuan. The transport costs between the rural and urban areas were less than 20 yuan, and generally less than 10 yuan. At the same time, the transport costs within the cities were almost zero as migrants generally live near where they work. They often walked to work or used a bicycle, rather than

taking a bus. Migrants often got job information from family members, friends or acquaintances freely. So the costs seemed nothing for migrants in my fieldwork. However, the pattern of their migration itself reflected their ideas about transport and gathering information. The reason that they selected nearby cities was the “convenience of finding work and coming home”. This was clear when I asked about destinations outside their pattern. For example, when I asked them why they did not go to more distant cities, like Beijing or Shanghai, some of them answered that it was too far and they had no friends there. “Too far” is relevant to distance and to cost of transport and “no friends” is relevant to difficulties of gathering information. Some migrants even complained about a “shortage of information”, within their current migration pattern. Sun Dajie (Male, 57 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun ) ran a transport business in Xinzhou. He often complained that he didn’t get enough information or he got it late. This was bad for his business and sometimes he even thought of giving up working in Xinzhou. So consideration of transport costs and information is linked to migration patterns. Within their pattern, migrants do not need to worry much about these costs. However, we still can see the importance of transport costs, for example, although these costs of transport and information seeking were quite low, some migrants cut down on visits home in order to save money.

Other costs such as communications, medicines and entertainment have little influence on decision-making. For example, when migrants felt sick, they just took some common over-the-counter medicine and rested. Their costs of entertainment were low. Interviewees indicated that they did not have much spare time for entertainment. Popular pastimes were watching TV and playing poker, and they seldom went to the cinema.

Male migrants may spend more money on smoking and drinking. Male migrants often smoked during the interviews. Wei Facai (50 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan) complained that her son who worked in Kelan could not save any money because all his earnings were wasted on drink. By contrast, female migrants spent little on smoking, but some young females liked to spend a lot on clothes.

Compared with the above costs in cities, these costs in village are very low. Most people have their own houses or live with their parents. Once the costs of house building are met, rural people do not need to pay any more for housing. Peasants usually pay little for food, because they grow most of it themselves and buy the rest in local markets. In the village of Sanjiao Cun, an individual's living expenses were usually only 500 yuan a year (Interviewees in Sanjiao Cun, primarily Wang Buhuai, the village accountant). Many interviewees said that their land could provide them with food for whole household.

Most migrants from the villages where I interviewed went to nearby cities where the costs could be predicted from the experience of others. They know little about cities such as Shanghai, though they were sure that costs in these cities were much higher.

When migrants considered the costs of living in cities they excluded costs such as famous-brand clothes that they would never purchase. Moreover they thought about how to minimise even their necessary expenditure by, for example, sharing accommodation and always cooking for themselves. The decision to migrate is taken on the basis of a careful comparison of likely costs and potential income. Friends who have already migrated can help new migrants minimise costs and maximise income. Villagers from Liulin Wan and Shang Cun where migration rate was very low did not have this kind of help, which made their costs higher than those of migrants from other villages.

### *Conclusion and discussion*

The discussion above indicated the different kinds of monetary costs involved in migration and their influence on migration. Influences included 1: preventing/discouraging migration because of the high cost of living as a migrant 2: preventing migrants staying in cities long-term because of the high cost of living in cities, 3: preventing migrants upgrading from employment to self-employment because of high set-up costs and 4: constraining migrants to work only in nearby cities. Migrants make their decisions on the basis of minimum costs in the nearby cities.

Unlike nonmaterial costs that will be mentioned later, monetary costs can directly prevent migration if the would-be migrant lacks the basic funds for migration. Many migrants try to save money by choosing to accept more nonmaterial costs. The extent to which monetary costs constrain migration depends on people's incomes. For example, migrants from Donglou Cun were less concerned about migration costs than people from Shang Cun. The average income per capita in Donglou Cun was 2,900 yuan in 2003 while it was only 850 yuan in Shang Cun. Shang Cun villagers underreported their incomes, but allowing for this, their income far lower than it in Donglou Cun. (I estimate it at 1,600 yuan per capita on the basis that villagers had 7.5 sheep per capita each bringing 100 yuan net income per annum.) People in Shang Cun complained more about the expenses in cities. People in Donglou Cun also complained, but it seemed to discourage them less as can be seen from the table of migration rates below.

Table 3.2 Income per capita and migration rate in two villages

Village	Average income per capita (yuan) in 2003	Migration rate in 2004
Donglou Cun	2,900	36%
Shang Cun	850	4%

Notes: migration rate is calculated here is number of migrants who have migrated for at least one month in a whole year as a percentage of the whole population.

Source: fieldwork in 2004

Although living costs make migration expensive, once migrants get steady well-paid work, costs do not act as a constraint. Some migrants even began to think of going to more distant cities like Beijing after saving some money and getting more experience. The migrants who have the good jobs talk little about costs, but they worry about losing their jobs or they aspire to expect to get better jobs.

*Now my daughter works in restaurant, she never asks me for money. She often says that she wants to go to a better restaurant and doesn't want to stay in the current one long-term. Actually, she has changed jobs several times, from a small restaurant to a*

*big one, and from Xinzhou to Taiyuan* (Fan Youtian, male, 45 years old in 2004, works in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).

### ***3.2-2 Material opportunity costs***

Opportunity costs measure the cost of any economic choice in terms of the next best alternative foregone. The opportunity cost of a decision is based on what must be given up as a result of the decision. It can be considered at the level of the individual, the household and the community. Opportunity cost as a cost of migration has been explored in much of the migration literature, for example in DaVanzo's human capital approach (1976). Here, I will mainly discuss opportunity costs in relation to money issues - how much money a person must be given up as a result of a decision. Non-material opportunity costs such as the emotional costs of missing family will be discussed in the next part of this chapter.

A migrant's material opportunity cost is the income forgone in the village while he/she seeks and does a new job in a city. Migrants who work in the urban areas cannot simultaneously work in rural areas. However, due to ratio of population to land in Shanxi and to the household nature of agricultural production, there are special characteristics to migrants' opportunity costs in this respect. Although an individual may suffer an opportunity cost in leaving for the urban areas, if a member of his immediate family or household takes over the work he would otherwise have done on the land, there may be no cost to the household. The existence of surplus labour or its lack is therefore key to understanding the opportunity cost to the household. We firstly analyse some factors affecting the opportunity costs in my fieldwork, and then move to how these costs influence the migration decision.

#### ***Material opportunity costs in my fieldwork***

Material opportunity costs refer to the incomes that a migrant who had earned in village before migration generally from agricultural and/or sideline work. Since such work is usually done by the whole household, a migrant's material opportunity costs in my fieldwork can be regarded as this person's contribution to his/her household's income. I give some examples supposing that all the household work is in agriculture and without any sidelines. If a person is purely surplus labour for his/her household,

his/her opportunity costs are zero. If this person is the major labour power in the household and his/her departure causes a significant decrease of agricultural income, then his/her opportunity costs may be equal to the major share of the household's agricultural income. Moreover, if a person is the major labour power but he/she migrates at the slack seasons causing no reduction to agricultural income then his/her opportunity costs at this period would be zero. To complicate things further, suppose a person is the only labour for his/her household, but he/she rents the land to others and receives rent, his/her opportunity costs would be the agricultural income minus the rent. So though the nature of opportunity cost is simple, various factors can influence opportunity costs including the ratio of land to population, household structure and position, agriculture tax and other factors like the season and the way of working in agriculture. This will be discussed in detail below. Although in my fieldwork villages, rural people did not, of course, use the term "opportunity cost", they were conscious of the agricultural earnings they might lose due to migration.

The ratio of land to population in the villages that I investigated is shown below. The lowest ratio is 1.51 *mu* per person in Donglou Cun while the highest is in Shang Cun with 9.83 *mu* per person. There was surplus labour in Donglou Cun, Sanjiao Cun, Zuotou Cun and Dagou Cun. This is not unusual - surplus rural labour is a national phenomenon. Different definitions of surplus labour produce varying estimates in the literature but there are generally thought to be at least 100 million surplus labourers in rural China and amounting to 30 per cent of all rural labour (Zeng Yinchu, 2005). In Shanxi, the figure for surplus rural labour has been estimated by one authority at about 3.4 million, equal to 33.3 per cent of the rural labour force in 2004 (Shanxi Agricultural Investigation Team).

After economic reform, the commune system of collective farming was replaced by the household responsibility system. The household had to decide how its available labour was to be used. The opportunity cost for migrants whose labour is surplus to their household's needs is almost zero, mirroring the Lewis Model in which "marginal production is zero" (Lewis, 1954). For example, there is only 1.51 *mu* of land per person in Donglou Cun. The cultivation of a single person's share of land,

including sowing, fertilizing, weeding, irrigating and harvesting can be completed in just 15 days. Unless they find other work, the rest of a peasant's time is just wasted (Village head in Donglou Cun). In many cases, although there is no pure surplus labour in a household, the land can be worked on a part-time business, and peasants can work in both cities and villages. Even those who still need to work part-time in agriculture can still go to work in the cities for some of their time.

Table 3.3 Average lands per capita in six villages in 2003

Villages	Average land per capita ( <i>mu</i> )
Donglou Cun	1.51
Sanjiao Cun	2.72
Zuotou Cun	3.35
Dagou Cun	2.60
Liulin Wan	4.20
Shang Cun	9.83

Source: fieldwork in 2004

By contrast in Shang Cun there is 9.83 *mu* of land per person and the average household holds nearly 40 *mu*. However, the land productivity is lower than in other villages such as Donglou Cun. Pure agricultural income was only 850 yuan per capita in Shang Cun but 1,160 yuan in Donglou Cun. Since land in Shang Cun is mountain land, agriculture cannot be easily mechanised and work is traditional and labour intensive. Agricultural income would be influenced more by migration in Shang Cun than in Donglou Cun. In addition, people in both Liulin Wan and Shang Cun raise sheep. The average number of sheep per household was 25. There was almost no surplus labour in either village. An adult male labourer's migration may cause a sharp reduction in his household's agricultural income. The opportunity costs for people in Shang Cun are therefore significant.

In addition to the ratio of population to land, household structure and the individual's position in the household also influence his/her opportunity costs. For example, in a household with three members, the father is usually the main labour power in agriculture, the mother and the child may be assistants. The father's opportunity costs tend to be higher than those of the mother and the son.

Agricultural tax affected agricultural income and therefore opportunity costs. Agricultural tax was rescinded on January 1, 2006, as determined at the 19th session of the Standing Committee of the Tenth National People's Congress. In 2004 when I did my fieldwork, there was still a land tax although it was decreasing step by step in Shanxi as Premier Wen Jiabao had announced in March 2004 that China planned to scrap all agricultural taxes within five years. Each reduction of tax meant an increase agricultural income, and some migrants who had lent or rented their land to others, asked for it back. For example, Zhen Shengli (38 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun) who worked as an insurance salesman asked for his land that he had previously rent out to others to be returned when tax was reduced.

Other factors like the season influence opportunity cost. For example, an individual's opportunity cost is different depending on whether he/she goes away in the busy season or the slack season. The seasonal difference is greater in villages that raise crops than in pastoral ones where sheep are kept.

In China, due to the land ownership system, the land cannot be bought or sold. However, in 2004 when I conducted my fieldwork, some interviewees said that they or their fellow villagers rented or lent their land to relatives, friends or other villagers. People who rented their lands to others did not need to pay any tax for the land and they could get rents at the level of about 50 yuan or 50 kilograms of flour per *mu* according to their contact. The contract is usually an oral agreement and is renewed annually. There were such cases in my fieldwork villages, although they were not common. This way of working in agriculture influences opportunity costs.

When villagers worked at sidelines, their opportunity costs were higher than if they only worked in agriculture. For example, a Zuotou villager who ran a shop in his village could earn up to 20,000 yuan a year when business was good. Though his wife helped him to look after the shop, he himself did the main job of inputting stock every week. So without him, the shop could not run (Deng Xinhua, 50 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

To sum up, due to the ratio of population to land, household structure and position, tax and other factors, an individual's opportunity cost may range from zero up to the whole household's agricultural or sideline income.

#### *Opportunity cost and decision-making*

Now I move to how opportunity costs influence decision-making. As discussed above, opportunity costs may range from zero to almost the whole household's agricultural income. So I analyse decision-making in relation to three levels of opportunity cost: low costs at around zero, medium costs and high costs at almost the whole agricultural income, comparing each group with migration income.

An individual's opportunity cost is low or zero if he/she is completely surplus labour in the household, or if he/she migrates during the slack seasons. Young people may belong to this group if their parents work in agriculture. This is common in Donglou Cun, Sanjiao Cun and Zuotou Cun. In this situation, the young people will probably wish to migrate and will also be encouraged to migrate by household members. For example,

*After stopping studying at the second year of junior middle school, I came back to my village. However, there was nothing to do for me. My household has 10 mu of land and my parents can manage it easily. I can't learn any thing new in my village. So my parents discussed working outside with me. I thought it was a very good idea. If I worked outside, at least I wouldn't need to spend my parents' money on food; I would be able to make a living on my own. At the same time, I could learn some new things (Zhao Daxue, female, 24 years old in 2004, working and interviewed in a noodle factory).*

Opportunity cost may be in the medium range when, for example, a household head's migration would have a considerable impact on household's agricultural work, but with the help of other household members, the opportunity costs could be reduced. In such cases, migrants are the major labour powers in agriculture for their households but agriculture work would not be too hard for other members, or it would have been easy for household members, except for some reason like the wife needing to look after the baby, which would increase the effect of her husband's

migration on agriculture. In Sanjiao Cun, Dagou Cun and Zuotou Cun, this situation can be found quite often. By contrast in both Liulin Wan and Shang Cun where agricultural work is very hard, a major labour power's migration may result in almost all agricultural income being lost. I will discuss it as the next group.

In the medium range group, the common response of villagers was to keep both agricultural and migration income by migrating in nearby cities and working in both agriculture and cities.

*My household holds seven mu of land. My father died many years ago and my mother lives with me. I have a four-year daughter and my wife looks after her. Since my mother is too old to work in agriculture, and my wife has to look after my daughter and cannot do too much in agriculture, I have to work in both construction and agriculture. Last year our agricultural income was 2000 yuan and my construction wage was 3000 yuan, so I cannot give up my agricultural income. I often come back at holidays to work in agriculture and sometimes ask for leave from construction at harvest time. The harvest season is coming, and this time I will ask for one month's leave from construction (Sun Haoren, 32 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun and interviewed in Zuotou Cun).*

Villagers took this kind of measure to reduce opportunity costs because they needed not only to maximise income but also to reduce risk. For example, Sun Dajie (57, from Donglou Cun) explained, "I work in both transport and agriculture. That way I am sure to earn a basic income even if one of my jobs goes wrong." Many villagers thought that migration income was unreliable and that they had to hold onto agricultural income. This point will be discussed more in the context of migration risk later in this chapter.

Only in a few cases did people give up all their agricultural income, when their income in the city was much higher than agricultural income. For example, a successful migrant who sells clothes in a market could earn a net income of up to 20,000 yuan a year with her son and daughter in Xinzhou, did not cultivate her two *mu* of land, instead she lent it to friends. (Wei Binfu, female, 55 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).

Opportunity cost can be nearly as high as an individual's agricultural income, for example, if a householder in Shang Cun or Liulin Wan worked outside, their agricultural income would be greatly reduced due to high ratio of land to population. Rural people dealt with this in two ways. Firstly the person might not migrate, which often happened in Shang Cun or Liulin Wan. Secondly the person might decide to put up with these opportunity costs, but this only happened when migration income was really high. The following examples illustrate these possibilities:

*I have two daughters, the oldest one is nine years old and the other is four years old. My household holds 50 mu of land and our agricultural income was 7,000 yuan last year. I am the main labour power in my household. My wife hardly helps me with the land because she has to take care of two kids. Our land is in the mountains where we cannot use machines. Working in agriculture is hard. Even when my wife is free from taking care of kids, I am still the main labour power. So I cannot migrate. When kids are old enough to help me, I will get more labour but I want to raise some sheep (Ren Caiqi, male, 30 years, from Shang Cun).*

In the second case migrants simply sacrificed their opportunity cost, and lent or rented their lands to family members, friends or fellow villagers. In these cases, the migrants often had a good paid job in cities and did not mind losing the agricultural income. At the same time, once they lent or rented out, they would no longer be responsible for the land tax, and in some cases, could even get little recompense such as 50 kilograms of flour per *mu* from the person who borrowed or rented the land. However, these people did not give up agriculture easily. Sometimes, they changed their mind. For example,

*I work in the Zhen (township) government and I have a new house in town. My wife and children live with me and my old parents and brothers are left in my village. Since I have settled down in the town and I am paid well, I don't need to worry about my land, so I lend it to my brothers. After a couple of years, I thought why I don't crop it myself. It's not that far from my village to my work place. I can work in the morning before 8am and all day on Sunday, and then I can increase my income. So I*

*have been doing this* (Huo Wuzai, male, 47 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun, interviewed in the township where he worked)

In sum, low opportunity costs do not constrain people from migrating, whereas medium and high opportunity costs prevent people migrating, or make them migrate seasonally. This because that the average migration incomes is generally not extraordinary compared with a good agricultural income in the six villages.

### **3.3 Nonmaterial costs**

This section will discuss some kinds of non-material costs of migration, which include enduring the hardships of work and life in cities, feeling unhappy with employers and city residents, security issues, risk and psychological costs such as loneliness and stress. These costs influence migrants' decision-making on migration to some extent.

#### ***3.3-1 Hardships of work and life in cities***

Work and life for migrants in cities is commonly full of hardship in China. Many surveys have shown that migrants endure hard, dangerous and dirty jobs, long working hours, and poor accommodation. For example, a survey conducted among 100 migrants in Wuhan in 2002 found that majority of migrants worked for 10 hours a day (Qiu Yinyin and Sheng Jianwu, 2002) and lived in simple accommodation shared with more than six people. Another survey of 200 migrants conducted in Beijing in 1999 found that 77.9 per cent of these migrants worked seven days a week and only 9.5 per cent worked five days or less (Liu Ling, 2001).

In my fieldwork, when I asked whether work and life was hard in cities, almost all the interviewees agreed that migration meant enduring hardship and suffering (*chi ku*). Some of them narrated their stories with strong emotion such as anger shown by long silences and sighs.

Sheng Yangfu described her hard life in a clothes factory. She has to work nearly 12 hours a day, from 8am to 11pm with a few hours for dinner and rest and with only

one day off a fortnight. Sometimes she was so tired that she nearly went to sleep at work (30 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

Lang Dongshen narrated his experiences of working in a pig unit.

*My job is very hard and dirty. By day, I am busy raising pigs, cleaning the pig unit and cutting grass. At night, my colleague rides a pedicart to collect leftovers from restaurants for pigswill. I feel greasy all over after we finish this, and I get freezing when we are coming back, sitting at the back of the pedicart exposed to the wind*

He also talked his living conditions when he worked in construction.

*Our meals were terrible. We had two pieces of 'mantou' (steamed bread) and porridge in the morning without any dishes. At noon, the meal was still 'mantou' with boiled vegetables, and supper was still only mantou. Many colleagues complained of constant hunger (36 years old, from Sanjiao Cun).*

Jing Buhuan talked about his accommodation when he worked in construction.

*Our boss provides us with bunkhouses or tents. About 12 people live in a bunkhouse, but there were no beds and we had to sleep on the floor. Generally we slept in tents, which were very cold in winter and hot in summer. I got arthritis, probably from the bad accommodation (48 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

### *Bitterness and decision-making*

Although most migrants in my fieldwork agreed that the life of a migrant was very hard, yet only a few migrants gave up their jobs simply due to hardships of work and life in cities. Young migrants especially tended to put up with conditions. Some older migrants gave up on this, because they thought they were too old to continue to suffer hardships. For example, Zhuo Shenzhou (48 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun) said that he had begun to feel tired and to find it hard to recover after hard work. He decided to come home after finishing the current job and would not migrate again.

Although migrants complained how hard their work and life was, when I asked them whether they regarded hardship as a major discouragement to migrating, most of young and middle-aged migrants did not think so.

What were the reasons for this paradox?

1. Traditionally, hard work is seen as a high virtue; people who can survive hardship are respected by others. On the contrary, people who cannot “endure bitterness” are often despised. Jacka (2006) suggested that this cultural attitude is still powerful in contemporary China. The village cadre in Donglou Cun talked about young migrants who couldn’t bear hardships and returned to village. He said they soon migrated again not only because their family member scolded them, but even their marriages were at risk: girls did not like this kind of “lazy” boy (Wang Baoshan, male, 42 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

2. Some migrants thought all jobs were hard, once they had chosen migration, bitterness was unavoidable. Zhang Xinwei (48 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun) related his experiences.

*I worked in construction but soon found it was too hard. I could hardly stand up at the end of a day's job. So I found another job working in a brick factory. It seemed even harder. I began to realise all the jobs are hard, unless I did not work. So I have no choice but to work here.*

3. Some migrants thought that it was worth eating bitterness. Hu Huaxia worked in construction in Taiyuan. He said sometimes he could even earn 100 yuan a day if there was enough work. Earnings from working in construction for six months were almost two or three times of agricultural income.

*The job is very hard indeed. But when I count the banknotes that I earn, I feel happy and forget the hardship* (Hu Huaxia, 30 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

4. Some migrants regarded “eating bitterness as a blessing”. They thought a person who experienced bitterness could become truly mature. Some adult peasants in Donglou Cun pushed their children to migrate, because they thought “eating bitterness” through migration would make their children become capable. This point has also been observed by Jacka in her survey among women migrants in Beijing. (2006:265)

5. Some migrants thought that hardship in migration was temporary. After they had earned some money and got more experience, they would find comfortable

jobs. It would be “after suffering comes happiness”. Actually, some successful migrants did become bosses after some years of migration. “My son was an apprentice, so the job at that time was certainly hard. After he acquired some skills, the job became relatively easy for me” (Bian Aiguo, 70 years old in 2004, his son, Bian Huanggeng, 38 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

6. Some migrants considered that the capacity of “eating bitterness” or enduring hardship was the advantage they had to compensate for their low educational level and lack of a social network in the cities. Without this limited advantage, they would not be able to compete with city residents. Yu Haili (26 years old in 2004, working a market in Xinzhou) said, “It is true that my job is hard. But if I don’t do this, if I couldn’t take eating bitterness, what else could I do? I am not very educated and I know nothing about other jobs.”
7. Some young migrants did not think their job was particularly hard. Zhang Haohan (22 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun) worked as a janitor in a park. He said his job was too easy and he wanted to find a harder job to earn more money.
8. Some migrants thought their lives would be less hard if they spent more on living costs. However, due to the lack of money, they preferred to suffer a bit of hardship to save money. For example, migrants usually lived in overcrowded conditions sharing accommodation with other people to make the rent cheaper.

However, though young and middle-aged migrants did not think hardship was a serious discouragement from migrating, if they could not get their full wages because employers refused to pay or wouldn’t pay in full, some of them would refuse to put up with any more and would go home. If their wages were lower than they thought they should be, they did not think “eating bitterness” was worth it. A similar phenomenon has been observed in South China. For example, export factories in Dongguan, Guangdong, a city with a population of 1.3 million had difficulties in finding enough people willing to work long hours for low wages in 2005 (Wiseman, 2005).

To sum up, hardship influences decision-making in the following ways:

1. It generally does not prevent young and middle-aged migrants from migrating, but does discourage older people from migrating. All migrants feel discouraged by hardship if in addition the wage is low or is often cut by the employers.
2. Hardships make people search for relatively comfortable jobs before migration, and change to better jobs after a period of migration.
3. To some extent, hardships in daily life are chosen by migrants as a way of saving their limited money.

### ***3.3-2 Poor relationships with the employers and city residents***

Migrants' negative feelings towards employers and city residents were often mentioned by my interviewees. Many migrants talked of their feelings about unfair treatment like a refusal to pay wages, discrimination and prejudice from city residents. These feelings were called *shouqi* (being bullied) by interviewees. Speaking about *chiku* (eating bitterness), they focused on physical suffering, whereas *shouqi* was about psychological hardship.

Discrimination and prejudice against migrants in China is a prevalent problem in China. Many surveys reported this problem (Li Qiang, 1995; Tang Bin, 2002). The rural-urban gap in prosperity, living and educational standards and welfare entitlements and the *hukou* system give peasants a sustained low social and economic status and mean that migrants are often regarded as "outsiders" by city residents. Much of the literature on migrants reports how easily they are identified and how much they are discriminated against (Jacka, 2006; Gaetano and Jacka, 2004). A survey of five hundred households conducted in Shanghai's Pudong New District in the mid-1990s found that residents commonly perceived the migrants to be "bringing negative influences" (Solinger, 1999: 101). Even the migrants regarded themselves as "neither a rural person nor an urbanite", or what have called a "marginal person" by recent Chinese researchers like Yan Deming (2004: 10).

In my fieldwork, most people thought that being bullied or mistreated (*shouqi*) was more difficult to endure than "eating bitterness" (*chiku*). "Eating bitterness" is a kind of virtue and people who can endure bitterness are regarded as capable (*nenggan*) (having ability), while, *shouqi* was a kind of "shame". People who have to put up

with *shouqi* are regarded as *wuneng* (useless). A Chinese proverb “better to be dead than be pushed about” reflects this meaning of *shouqi*. According to my observations, older people seemed to care more about it, while some young people accepted more the concept of the market, and did not care as much as old people did. They thought if they felt unhappy with their bosses, they could change their job.

Although migrants were dissatisfied about discrimination and prejudice, *shouqi* did not seem to discourage them from migrating. Only a few young and middle-aged people returned to village simply because of *shouqi*. Most of them either just put up with it or changed their job.

Just as many thought that hardship was inevitable; when you migrate they thought you could not avoid *shouqi*.

*Bad things often happen. My husband is a carpenter. His boss always asks him to work longer and harder, actually, he works more than 10 hours a day. If my husband does not do as well as he expected, he shouts at him and makes deductions from his wage. My husband often worries that he won't get the money he has earned. But he needs to make a living to support our family. So he just keeps quiet and does what the boss asks* (Long Dahua, 39 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

Some migrants accepted that their social status was really low and so simply put up with the situation.

*We are just peasants. A peasant is a peasant; we don't expect that something like status could improve much. We go to cities just to earn money, so we don't care too much, we just learn to use to put up with things* (Yu Haili, 26 years old in 2004, working as a cloth seller in a market in Xinzhou).

Some migrants believed that if they did well, worked hard and were kind to everyone, the bosses would not be too hard on them.

*My boss trusts me very much. I am always honest and work hard. If I make a mistake, I always say sorry and try not to do it again. Then the boss trusts me more and more and is kind to me* (Zhao Huaicai, 29 years old in 2004, working as a clothes seller in a market in Xinzhou).

*Shouqi* may not prevent discourage people from migrating, but it does have some

effects. Some of my interviewees said that if their boss was kind and paid them on time, they would want to work for him, even if the wage were lower. Some migrants liked to work with their friends or fellow villagers which reduced the problem of *shouqi*.

Many migrants did take *shouqi* into account in their long-term migration decisions, especially when deciding where they will live finally. For example, Lang Dongshen said

*Living in a city seems a good idea. But I do not belong there. The city residents are not as kind as our villagers. Living in cities is not as good as living with our villagers. It is good to live in a city for some years. When I am old, I will still choose to come back* (36 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

To sum up, unhappy feelings about work and life in the cities do not influence the migration decision as directly as monetary costs; however, they play an important role in long-term migration decision-making

### **3.3-3 Security problems**

In China, work-related injuries and deaths are a problem and have received attention from media and government. The Chinese State Administration of Work Safety has revealed that 15,000 people die annually due to industrial accidents (Zhang Hongsheng and Rong Zhongxia, 2005). The state-owned China Youth Daily has reported that accidents in the Pearl River Delta region surrounding Shenzhen claim more than 30,000 fingers each year (Cheng Gang and He Lei, 2005). These problems are especially serious among migrants. They have been widely discussed in the press [see for example articles by Wang Ying (2004) and Du Lirong (2004)].

In my survey, interviewees were concerned about security. According to them, the security problems that they were aware of in cities included: 1) personal security - the danger of violence, sexual attack, being robbed and tricked, etc. 2) work-related injuries 3) fear of picking up “bad habits or behaviours”, such as drinking excessively, betting, stealing and using drugs.

According to my interviews, security problems influence migration decision-making in the following four ways.

1. The impression or perception that there are serious security problems in cities discourages/prevents migration. Especially in villages with low migration rates, like Shang Cun and Liulin Wan, regarded cities as the place of “danger and chaos”. For example,

*I always felt cities were ‘luan’ (chaotic) and dangerous. Though I seldom went to the cities, many of our villagers said so and I thought it was true. My parents also said this and did not agree that I should migrate when I was young. I am 24 this year and my parents have agreed that I can work in Kelan, so I went there to work in a supermarket for six months, I have begun to realize it is not as serious as I thought before (Guan Shihao, 24 years old in 2004, female, from Liulin Wan).*

Peasants in other villages with higher rates of migration, generally did not think it was dangerous enough in the cities to stop them migrating. However, at the beginning of 1980s just after the economic reforms, perceptions of security problems did stop peasants migrating, even where there were some good chances for peasants working in construction in cities. For example, a cadre in Sanjiao Cun explained:

*Some city residents came to our village to offer us jobs in construction in Taiyuan in 1982 and 1983. However, few of our villagers went with them then. Most of us were suspicious and afraid: was the information true? Could we really get the job? What should we do if we were deceived or even killed by them? When more and more villagers went out to work and returned successfully, people became less fearful. (Wei Geidi, 47 years old in 2004, village header of Sanjiao Cun)*

2. Many migrants make decisions based on some general rules about work-related injuries. For example, they think it is better for people not to migrate before they are 16 years old because they lack experience. For construction the limit is 18 years old because it is really heavy work. They think it is better to work in local or nearby cities if possible with their relatives, friends or acquaintances. They try not to work in dangerous occupations like coal mines. For example, Huo Xufeng got her first job was at the age of 18. When she finished junior middle school, she was 16 years old.

Her parents did not want her to work because she was so young. Two years later, when she was 18 years old, her father found her a job in a market working with his friends. (22 years old in 2004)

3. Most migrants regard security as their own problem. If an accident or an injury happens, nobody else and no organisation could be responsible for it, only the person himself or herself (*ziji daomei*). Few migrants knew about the work insurance. Some of them said that once an accident happened, if the boss was kind he might pay some money, otherwise, the victim could not get any compensation.

4. The degree of concern over security problems was different for different migrants. Middle-aged and older migrants seemed to worry more about them than young migrants did. For example, the examples above show that parents that worried about the safety of their children. Few of the young migrants whom I interviewed expressed fear of these problems. Wei Pinan thought that security was the most important matter in migration and earning the second. Her 24-year-old daughter who worked in Xinzhou thought that a job with good prospects or high social status like working for government or a large company was the most important consideration and the second was money (Wei Pinan, 45 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun). Some parents also worried that their children might learn “bad habits” in cities like getting into fights, gambling, making bad friends, etc. The female migrants worried more than male migrants about personal safety, especially about sexual attacks.

To sum up, security is an important factor influencing migration. Migrants and their parents reduce the security risk by preventing migrants going when they are too young and by picking destinations and jobs carefully. They generally thought that if all the conditions above were satisfied, then it would usually be safe. Migrants rarely asked for the help of the law. Rather they take precautions like limiting themselves to short-distance migration so that they are within easy travelling distance of home, they still have a social network, and they can work with friends.

### ***3.3-4 Psychological costs of migration: boredom, loneliness, homesickness and stress***

In the literature relating with the costs of migration, the psychological costs of leaving friends, relatives and familiar surroundings have received attention. For example, psychological costs were an important part of Byerlee's model (1974). In China, the psychological problems of migrants include, depression, loneliness and stress induced by separation from their families and friends and lower economic and social status in the cities (Zeng Li, 2004; Kang Laiyuan, 2004).

In my survey, the general psychological problems reported were boredom, loneliness, homesickness and stress. I will discuss each of these and their influence on migration decision-making.

Many migrants complained that life in city was boring, full of hard work with little entertainment. After a long hard day of working, many of migrants felt too exhausted to do any things but eat and sleep. At the weekend some migrants played cards, mah-jong, watched TV, or read magazines occasionally. Some of the women liked to walk around in the city centre. Few migrants indicated that they watched films. Long Guli who worked in a meat factory described his loneliness

*My job is just to upload, carry and cut meat. I do not have holidays. I work and sleep in the factory everyday. I never see anyone, just meat, meat, meat day after day. I feel bored. I thought I would make some friends and get some experience when I came to work here, however, it seems impossible. Sometimes, I feel I am going crazy (19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

In some cases, however, some young migrants enjoyed the life in cities and they thought it was less boring than living in the villages; at least, they had a chance to have a look at cities.

Compared with the number of migrants who complained of boredom, not many interviewees talked about loneliness in cities. Male migrants especially did not seem to find this a problem. Some unmarried female migrants said that sometimes they wanted to find a boyfriend, so they would feel better when they went home at night after finishing work.

Only a few of the interviewees mentioned homesickness. Some young female migrants said that they often missed home in the first few months of migration, or when they were sick or encountered trouble. Arianne M. Gaetano and Tamara Jacka (2004) also found that few married male migrants were missing home.

On the whole, the feelings of boredom, loneliness and homesickness hardly deterred people from migrating in my fieldwork. They understood these problems were normal and adopted their migration pattern to minimise them. Most people worked in nearby cities. If they wanted to come home, it took just a few hours by train or coach. Migrants from Donglou Cun could come home everyday by bicycle if they worked in Xinzhou. At the same time, some migrants only worked for six months or less per year in the city giving themselves the rest of the year to live with their families. Moreover, some migrants opted to work with people from same village, which relieved their feelings of loneliness. For example, nearly 20 migrants from Zuotou Cun worked together in construction in *Taiyan*.

#### *Pressure*

Some of the interviewees felt the stress of livelihood problems, long-term migration plans, competition etc. Although some migrants had already found jobs, it did not mean they had a permanent foothold in the cities. They felt the pressure of many difficult problems such as the possibility of unemployment, unstable jobs, low wages, the irregular payment of wages and difficulties with their *hukou*, housing, marriage and children's education. None of these questions was easy to resolve.

Ding Meili explained her family dilemma.

*After we got married, my husband worked in construction in Xinzhou or Taiyuan. He worked very hard, nearly 12 hours a day. He always looked tired when he came back. I felt sorry for him, what choice did we have? We owed 20,000 yuan that was spent on our marriage and on building a house and set up house. So my husband has first to return this money. He said that he would try to find a good job after clear this debt. However, he has no skills, and his educational level is low, he can only get construction work. But it is impossible for him to do this job for his whole life. It is so hard that one day he won't be able to do it any more. Then how will we make a living?*

*I worry about this problem, I feel unhappy to see my husband work so hard. I have discussed this with him. He comforts me and tells me not to worry, but he seems to have no idea what our future will be (28 years old in 2004, her husband 32 years old in 2004, both of them from Zuotou Cun).*

From the case above, stress seems not to deter people from migrating in the first place but it does affect migrants' decision-making on long-term migration plans. For example, partly in order to reduce their problems in the cities, some migrants try to learn some skills before they migrate or to acquire them during migration. Some people just regard the city as a place to earn money, and always assume that their village would be their eventual home.

To sum up, feelings of boredom, loneliness, homesickness and stress appear to be very real costs for migrants. However, because my interviewees did not move far from home, most of them could deal with these problems by restricting the length of their stay in the city by making frequent visits home. For this reason, the psychological costs did not seem to have much impact on the decision to migrate or on longer term plans.

### ***3.3-5 Risk and migration decision-making***

Risk is an important concept and tool to analyse human behaviour. However, the definition of risk varies with different disciplines. For example, Wood (1964:83), summarised three definitions of risk in terms of insurance, which are 1) "risk is the chance of loss", 2) "risk is uncertainty"; and 3) risk may be "either the chance or the uncertainty of a loss". In these definitions, risk refers to "loss" or "uncertainty". Adams (1995: 30) defines risk as "the product of the probability and utility of some future event" and points out that risk is the "product discounted to its present value" (1995:94). This definition regards risk as measurable. In relation to sociology, Beck (1992: 21) says that "risk is a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself". In his definition, risk is a way to manage danger rather than an "uncertainty".

In the literature relating to general decision analysis, risk is an important factor influencing decision-making. Risks affect the decision maker's value judgements on costs and benefits. High income jobs are often associated with high risk. At the same time, the decision-maker's attitude to risk plays an important role in forming judgements. Differences in attitude towards risk can make people evaluate the same thing differently. For example, in considering the same job, one person may think it risky, and therefore believe it will not yield a steady income whereas someone else might not perceive any risk and would thus see it as a steady source of income (Keeney, 1982: 804-808).

In the literature regarding migration decision-making, risk and other relevant factors like information and attitude widely discussed. For example, Goodman (1981: 140) found that compared with perfect information, imperfect information leads to higher costs of migration, which results in a lower migration rate.

Here, I use the common meaning of risk, which is "a possibility or likelihood of something happening;...a degree of probability" (Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, 1955: 447). In my fieldwork, the risks of migration are events that could cause migrants lose benefits, like wage refusals. Since attitudes to risk is relevant, I will analyse risk and migration decision-making data from my fieldwork empirically in three aspects: attitudes to risk, the kinds of risks and uncertainties involved in migration and the way migrants consider these risks or uncertainties in making decisions.

### 3.3-5.1 Attitudes to risk

In my fieldwork, to examine the common attitudes to risk, I asked the interviewees questions associated with money use and investment, such as "How do you use your surplus money?" "Would you like to try to get more money by risky but possibly profitable investment?" "If there were two jobs, one stable but low paid, the other high paid but risky, which would choose", etc.

In answer to the first question, over 60 per cent of interviewees answered that they would like to save money or use on it housing, education and improving life. A similar result was found in Zhang Mei's (2003) survey conducted in Shanxi showing

the majority of peasants would like to save or spend money on housing rather than investing in business. This shows that peasants feel insecure about money and do not want to take high risks in their own business. However in my findings, attitudes were different in different villages. More peasants from villages with a higher migration rate like Donglou Cun liked the idea of investing in migration for their own business; however, they usually take a limited risk. In other villages especially in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun, villagers tended to spend money on marriage, house building and investment in raising sheep that they usually regarded it as a steady job without risk.

Some migrants were prepared to take only a very limited risk in setting up their own business. For example, Li Gaocai said that if he had 100 yuan per month, he would be prepared to invest 120 yuan with some risk, but he would not dare to risk more than 200 yuan, a sum which would be double his present income. Young migrants seemed to prefer highly paid and risky work. However they would only switch jobs if there was a high possibility of getting the other job, otherwise, they did not quit their current jobs easily. For example, Lang Dongshen (36 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun) narrated his experiences aged 28.

*I worked at a chicken factory for two years when I was about 28 years old. The wage was 450 yuan per month; however, it never increased at all, while some friends of mine who worked in construction could earn more than 500 a month. They often suggested I should quit my job. I thought that though my current job was comfortable, but paid less, the job in construction was hard, but paid better. Since my friends could easily find a job in construction, so could I. That's how I quit my job.*

Compared to young migrants, middle-aged and old people tend to select a low wage and stable job rather than a high wage and unstable job. For example, Zhu Haitian (55 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun) said, “my husband and I are old. What is important for us is a stable and comfortable work and life. My husband could not take a job which is risky however highly paid.”

To sum up, my interviewees, were, on the whole, inclined to take few risks or not to take risks. The degree of willingness to take risks varied from different one person to another.

### 3.3-5.2 Risks in job seeking

Mei Jingping (2003) lists various risks and uncertainties of migrants in China such as job seeking, wage problems, health, injury and *hukou* problems. In my fieldwork, the risks that they were most concerned with centred around jobs: job seeking and wage problems. They referred little to the *hukou* since most of migrants I interviewed worked in local cities, where it was not difficult to settle with an agricultural *hukou*.

Whether or not they could find a job easily and whether the job was good were major concerns for migrants.

My interviewees reported that, it was generally not so difficult for migrants to find a job, especially if they had a lot of experience or a wide social network. However, it was challenging to find a good job. Most interviewees said that if they weren't bothered about their wages and work conditions, it was not a problem to get a job. To find a good job, they needed a higher educational level or a "strong social network"; otherwise, it was a matter of "good luck". Due to their limited information and the imperfect labour market, migrants often didn't know the real details of employment, and could not judge how good the job was, which made job seeking more risky. Long Guli (19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun) recounted his experiences.

*The boss told me that the job was not hard and the salary was good. It was just unloading the trucks. They even provided me with free accommodation. I was very glad to take the job and thought I was really lucky. But soon I found things were quite different from what the boss had claimed. I had to work both day and night. Once the truck came, no matter what time it was, even if I was sleeping, I had to get up to work. I could not stand working round the clock working so I quit the job after a while*

To reduce risk in job seeking, migrants valued information from relatives, friends and fellow villagers more highly than information from the market and agents

recognising that it was more likely to be true. The general channels of information about job opportunities are the small advertisements in the local shop in street, official or nonofficial labour agencies and personal contacts. In the view of the interviewees, the common labour agencies had the least credibility. Only one of 70 interviewees reported finding a job through a labour agency. According to Mei Jinping (2003), many non-official labour agencies in China did provide unsatisfied services; some even giving false information to deceive the job seeker.

In addition to the risk in job seeking, another risk was whether the job was steady. According to interviewees, a steady job generally implied that the worker could earn a stable income for the long term. Some interviewees added the fixed work place and holiday as further criteria for steady job. For example, construction, a typical job for migrants, was not regarded as stable by most of them. One reason was that when a construction project finished, the job generally finished too. Moreover it was generally felt that the job was too hard for men over 45. Many migrants did not give up agriculture or plan to live in cities long term, because city employment did not offer enough stability. This was especially true in case of Liu Linwan and Shang Cun. Villagers gave them reasons for not migrating was that they did not like the unstable jobs, while their lacks of migration experience and contacts made it difficult for them to get stable jobs.

### 3.3-5.3 Wage problems

It has already been mentioned that some employers make deductions from wages, delay wages or even refuse to pay migrants. This section will focus on wage problem as a migration risk.

Wage arrears have become a prominent topic in the media recently and migrants especially those who work in construction suffer from arrears problems. According to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (China Labour Bulletin, 2005), the total unpaid wages owing to the nation's migrants were estimated at 100 billion yuan in 2004. The migrants most likely to be affected by the problem are in the construction and catering industries.

In my fieldwork, over half of migrants had experienced wage problems, including wage arrears and deduction from wages.

*I am lucky only to have had one year's wage unpaid. Many of my friends and workmates have not been paid for two or three years. The boss always says he has no money and asks us to wait. But who believes him?* (Hu Huaxia, 30 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

*The boss promised that he would pay us 25 yuan per day. After the construction finished, he said we hadn't worked well and we only got 23 yuan per day. We know that he just used the pretext to make deductions. But what we could do? If we insisted on asking for the full wage, we might not get a single cent* (Jing Buhuan, 48 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun, interviewed in Sanjiao Cun).

Knowing wage problems were widespread, migrants took some measures to try to reduce their risk, like assessing the employer in advance and working with friends or relatives. However, there were no certain ways to judge whether this problem would happen to them. Many migrants had to change jobs, or returned to village after a whole year or even two years with wage still unpaid.

Deng Xinhua was a leader of a construction team. The team members were mostly his fellow villagers. When they experienced the wage arrears and refusal, he felt very sorry for his team members. They trusted him and worked with him, but he could not get the money from the boss to pay them. It was not his fault; indeed he himself had not been paid: Deng decided not to migrate again. When I interviewed him, he only worked in agriculture (Deng Xinhua, 58 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

From the discussion we can see people prefer to choose migration with low risk. However, there were risks or uncertainties that they could not predict precisely, like wage problems, and they had to adjust their decisions when they met such risks. Migrants not only choose low risk ways to migrate, but they take measures to reduce risks. However, migrants are limited in their choices due to their own limitations like their educational level. For example, most migrants knew that skilled jobs were steadier than labouring job, but they couldn't get skilled jobs so they had no choice but to take labouring jobs like construction.

To sum up, risks influence migration decision-making in the following ways: 1) Risks increase the costs of migration and thus reduce the desire to migrate. 2) Risks constrain migrants to work in local and nearby cities where their information is better. 3) Risks reduce the migrants' desire to live in cities long-term, and incline them to work both in agriculture and in the cities.

### **3.4 Transaction costs**

Transaction costs are the costs of making exchanges and enforcing agreements. For example, according to Datta and Nugent (1989), transaction costs include 1) obtaining information. 2) Negotiating among the parties to reach agreement on the provisions of the contract, and 3) communicating all such provisions to all the relevant agents. 4) Monitoring and enforcing the terms and conditions of the contracts.

The transaction costs of migration for the individual migrant are all the costs involved in obtaining a job. In China, due to the segmentation of labour market and some policies like the *hukou* system, many migrants, especially in large cities, have to pay various fees such as the temporary residential fee. These can be defined as transaction costs. Research has analysed these costs in China. For example, Jing Xiaoyu (1996) examined three types of transaction cost for migrants in Jiangsu: information seeking, obtaining the contract including the costs of interview, skills training and gifts and permission of to live and work in the city, and complying with contract e.g. pay deposits.

Evidence from my fieldwork shows significant impact of transaction costs on decision-making. I will analyse three types of these costs: obtaining information, ways of migrating and transaction costs with migrant' employers.

#### **3.1 Obtaining information**

In the section on risks and decision-making, I have mentioned that most migrants had great trust in information from relatives and friends which could reduce the risks of migration. However, there are other reasons for migrants preferring this as their main information channel - it is free and sometimes saves them considerable time. Hu Huaxia talked about how he obtained obtaining information.

*I work in construction. I never worry too much about where the job is. I have some friends and fellow villagers working in construction, if they get the chance of a job, they will tell me. It is very easy. They just come to my home, or give me a call, asking me “do you want to go with us?” If I am available, I will go with them. With an introduction from my friends, when we go to the work site, I just need to go to see our team leader and I can start work immediately. I always make some new friends working on the job. Most of them are the migrants, like us. We ask about the job when we chat. Sometimes, I have several job opportunities, and then I choose the best. Of course, when I hear of jobs opportunities, I tell my friends at once. I just got home yesterday, and this morning a friend of mine came to see me and invited me to work with on a new site (Hu Huaxia, 30 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

The low transaction costs made migrants prefer the information from relatives and friends. In the case of Liulin Wan and Shang Cun where the migration rate was low, it was difficult to obtain information and transaction costs were thus higher.

*I have never worked outside. After finishing junior middle school, I worked in agriculture. My income is low, only 3,000 yuan a year. Sometimes, I think I would like to try to work in a city, but I don't know where to go or what to do. Most of the villagers just farm like me; nobody can tell me what I need to know to migrate. Now I am 36 years old, I'm not likely to migrate. But if some friends who have worked in cities successfully asked me to work with them, I would go immediately. If I knew the job was stable and well paid, I would rather give up farming (Rao Tianmeng, male, 36 years old in 2004, in Shang Cun).*

### **3.2 Ways of migrating**

According migrants accounts of their experiences, “stage migration” was common. For example, someone might first migrate to a nearby city where waged work was available, and then to a better job or move to another city where the labour market was more attractive.

Migrants had good reasons for selecting this way to migrate. Young migrants who had few experiences and skills were less likely to find a good job the first or second time they went out. They had to learn some skills or accumulate experience so that

they would be more likely to find good jobs in the future. If this behaviour is analysed in terms of transaction costs, it can be seen that it is cost saving. With only the limited information, migrants could not easily find the best jobs in cities. Though a better job may bring them more income, seeking this job would cost them more time and money. To save on these transaction costs, it is necessary to find any job first, and after gaining experiences, when the access to information increases, the migrant can change to a better job.

Another strategy my interviewees employed to reduce their transaction costs was to work in the local or nearby cities. Most of migrants in my fieldwork agreed that wages were higher in large cities than in small ones. For example, a village cadre in Sanjiao Cun said that migrants from his village could earn about 2,000 yuan a year working in the local town, 4,000 yuan in local city, and 6,000-8,000 yuan in large cities. Though expenses were higher in large cities than in small ones, there was no obvious evidence in my fieldwork to show that balance between income and expenses in small cities was more than in large cities. However, most migrants choose to work in nearby cities. Transaction costs were an important reason. Unlike transport costs, transaction costs could not be cleared at once after getting the job. They kept recurring unless the migrant returned home. Many migrants I interviewed had the experience of changing jobs; some of them frequently. The transaction costs increased with the number of job changes. In local cities, these costs could be reduced effectively with the help of friends, while they were relatively difficult to reduce in large cities. Wei Binfu (55 years old in 2004, self-employed, working in a market in Xinzhou) explained the advantages of working in local cities.

*Unexpected things happened. You might lose your job, lose money, be tricked, get sick, have a bad boss, or get send home by the securities forces for not having a temporary resident card. You can deal with all these problems in local cities. At worst you just come home, and even this is quicker when you are nearby.*

### **3.3 Transaction costs of working**

In my fieldwork, the majority of migrants did not sign a formal contract or have insurance arrangement with their employers. Many migrants did not even know what

insurance was. Wages, working hours and workload were almost always decided by employers. This meant that the personal relationship was very important for migrants to keep their job and get their wages on time. As mentioned before, monitoring and enforcing working terms and conditions is a transaction cost. Due to the unbalanced power between migrants and their employers, the transaction cost is high. To reduce the cost, most migrants strove to keep a good relationship with their bosses. For example, Yu Haili explained:

*The important thing is to do as my boss asks. I try to work hard and complain little. When he loses his temper, I just keep quiet and never argue with him at the time; even if what has happened isn't my fault, when he calms down, I explain myself (26 years old in 2004, worked in a market as a cloth seller in Xinzhou).*

Wage arrears or non-payment of wages are common problems for migrants, mentioned in the section on risks. Once wages were in arrears, asking for the money was time consuming and costly.

*I asked the boss for my money many times in the last six months. His attitude was crusty and he told me he had no money. I knew I couldn't push him too much, otherwise, he might turn hostile and then I would never get the money. So I didn't ask him too often, but when I met him, I told how hard my life was and begged him to pay me part of the money. He finally gave me large part of it. Though I didn't get it all, I was satisfied (Wei Xiaobai, 59 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun)*

To sum up, transaction costs have an important impact on the pattern of migration and decision making. High transaction costs can prevent some people from migrating. Migrants choose ways to migrate with low transaction costs. Strategies like using their social networks and migrating to nearby cities can reduce their transaction costs, but also partly determine their migration pattern.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the material, non-material and transaction costs of migration. Material costs include living costs, accommodation, food and transport, and the costs of setting up a business in cities and opportunity costs. Living costs and

the costs of setting up a business can directly prevent people migrating, living in cities long term, or upgrading from employment to self-employment.

When a single person migrates, the opportunity cost may be low as the agriculture work he/she used to do will simply be taken over by other household members. If their agricultural income could potentially be adversely influenced by migration, migrants generally try to protect it by migrating to a nearby city or asking a relative member to help out. They normally do not abandon agriculture unless their migration income is much higher than their agricultural one. In looking at non-material costs, I discussed the hardships of work and life in cities, poor relationships with employers and city residents, security costs, migration risk and psychological costs. Non-material costs generally do not prevent migration immediately but they do discourage long term migration. Although they do not like these costs, migrants can usually endure them in the short-term, or reduce their impact by measures such as working with friends, or working only in nearby cities. They may also feel they are offsetting material costs if they are able to earning more money. In long run, however, as people are generally unwilling to endure these costs all their lives, non-material costs play in persuading migrants to return home. People's perceptions of non-material costs are influenced by traditional attitudes and norms in regard to taking risks and enduring hardship. Transaction costs may also prevent people migrating or affect the way they migrate. For example, when the wage problems are very serious, migrants do not want to work outside. Migrants look for ways to save on or to avoid these costs, for example by obtaining information from relatives or friends and by using "stage migration".

As a whole, the costs of migration are what that a migrant has to pay or give up during migration. These costs arise throughout the process of migration, from obtaining information to beginning to work and live in cities. Their form can be material or non-material. Their influences vary from strong to weak and short term to long term, and they differ according to the stage of migration and characteristics of different individuals.

Migration decisions are greatly influenced by these costs. 1) If the costs are much

higher than people can bear, or higher than the benefits, people do not migrate. 2) In the course of migration, they try to select options with low costs or to economise on costs, in that will not reduce their benefits. 3) People balance costs in order to maximise their benefits. For example, if they are very short of money they will be willing to suffer extra hardship in order to save more money 4) People's perceptions of costs are partly based on the information they can gather and their own experiences. Young people may have different perceptions from older people.

## **Chapter four: Benefits of migration**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the factors which encourage migration, focusing on urban incomes, social status, self-improvement, the attraction of cities and looking for spouses.

In the section on urban incomes, I first discuss the influence of actual wages on migration, examining the significance of money in house building, marriage and education, and then I discuss the long-term influences of low wages for migrant workers. In the section on social status, I first explore rural people's perceptions of job-related social status and examine their references for judging social status, and then I discuss four perspectives on the influence of social status on migration. In the section on self-improvement, I mainly discuss how gaining skills, knowledge and experience influences migration decision-making. In the next section, I discuss how the advantages of cities, ideas about changing one's fate and looking for opportunities affect migration. Finally, I discuss how the desire to look for spouses encourages migration and examine the difference between male and female migrants in this respect.

### **4.2 Income and decision-making**

Looking for higher income in urban areas is an important motivation for migration. The literature relating to income and migration shows that the higher income in urban areas has a positive influence on migration. For example, the Lewis' model (1954) indicates that migration between agriculture and industry takes place in the process of economic development in response to the difference in economic gains: the higher industrial wage. In Sjaastad's model, the different wages and costs in rural and urban areas are the main factors affecting the individual's decision to migrate. Some literature has offered a refined analysis of the relationship between income and migration. For example, Todaro (1976) argues that migration occurs because of the rural-urban differences in *expected* income rather a real wage differences. In their research on migration from Mexico to the United States, Stark and Taylor (1989) find that "relative deprivation", that is income differences between decision maker and

their reference people who are in same villages, plays a significant role in decision-making.

In China, the migration wage plays a very important role in migration decision-making. The literature repeatedly shows that seeking higher income and adding to household income are important reasons for migration (see for example Huang Ping, 1997; Bai Nansheng and Song Hongyuan, 2002). However, according both to media reports and academic studies, migrants' earnings in the urban areas are low compared with those of urban residents and some problems like wage arrears discourage rural-urban migration (Zhang Xianfang, 2004: 13).

In this section, I will examine how people make decisions in relation to higher wages in cities.

#### ***4.2-1 The effect of "actual wage" on migration***

It is commonly agreed that urban incomes are higher than agricultural ones in China (Knight and Song, 1999). In my fieldwork, most of the interviewees agreed that wages in cities were higher than rural incomes, especially when rural income was purely dependent on cultivation. These comparisons were mainly based on the wage rates in their ordinary jobs like construction and in their common destinations, like Xinzhou. Most migrants had a general knowledge of wages in the nearby cities, like Xinzhou and Taiyuan. They knew what was considered a low, medium or high wage and what wage was paid for different types of work, like construction or hotel work. They regarded 200-300 yuan per month as a low or basic income and more than 500 or 600 yuan per month as good money. This information was mostly from their own or their friends' experience of migration. Wages and jobs were hot topics among migrants. Most interviewees said that they often exchanged information on wages and work with their friends. As this information came mainly from direct experience and most migrants did not move far, migrants did not know the wage rates in more distant cities, like Beijing and Shanghai. Their information about wage rates in other cities was fragmented and slight. They simply knew that both wages and expenses were higher than those in nearby cities, but they did not know how much higher, or how much they might be able to save. They also had little idea about wage rates for

jobs that they did not usually do such as office work although they were clear about rates for jobs that migrants often did. People in Shang Cun and Liulin Wan, villages with a low migration rate, were much less well informed than people from villages, such as Donglou Cun with high rates.

Based on general information about wage rates, potential migrants had to make various calculations to compare incomes between cities and villages, due to the considerable differences in the way income was received. For example, if the general wage for migrants in construction work was 25 yuan per day, then the monthly wage would be between 650-750 yuan taking rest days into account. In 2003 the average agricultural income per labour in Donglou Cun for the year was 3,314 yuan. This gave a figure of 276 yuan a month per labour. Income in cities was therefore two or three times agricultural income. Ding Dianwei, 39 years old in 2004 and from Donglou Cun, recalled that in his early job of selling pork, he was really excited that he had earned over 800 yuan a month and 10,000 yuan a year-- more than the agricultural income for his whole household for the year. Migrants often said that they migrated because they heard that the wages would be so high compared with agricultural income. For example, Shi Jianguo said that he went to Taiyuan to work in construction because his friends told him with that piece rates it was possible for a strong man to earn 100 yuan per day (Shi Jianguo, 50 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

Though my interviewees generally agreed that urban wages rates were higher than agricultural earnings and that the higher wages encouraged migration, they were more concerned with what "actual wage" they could finally earn. When I asked interviewees that what they would do if they found a better paid job than their current one or if there was a job that paid higher than their agricultural income, some interviewees asked me "is the pay really higher or does it just sound higher? I would need to make sure because it is different". Most migrants, after a period of migration, found that what they earned finally was less than the nominal wage due to reasons like the nature of the job, refusals to pay, and deductions from wages by their employers. For example, though the monthly wage in construction was much higher

than agricultural income, migrants could generally only work for about six months between late spring and autumn, rather than whole year. At the same time, in summer, if rain halted work they were often paid only 10 yuan per day to cover living expenses. Jing Buhuan said that happened so often that sometimes they could work for only 15 days in a month in summer (Jing Buhuan, 48 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun). When unpaid days, deductions and the refusal of wages are taken into account, the actual income in construction was much less than their employers claimed.

When the actual wages for migrants are considered, the difference between potential urban income and agricultural income was reduced. For some villages, the actual wage in the cities might be even less than the agricultural income that could be earned. For example, the head of Liulin Wan said that a good migrant worker from their village could earn 4,000 yuan a year and an ordinary one could earn 2,000 yuan a year. A good villager could earn 10,000 yuan a year by raising about 100 sheep. Of course not everyone could make so much. The villagers would need money to buy lambs and there were risks in raising sheep. A household might not have surplus labour to raise sheep or enough space in their yards to settle in these sheep. But some of villagers did it successfully. Generally, Liulin Wan households raised an average of 25 sheep each in 2004, using one person per household to look after these sheep, which meant this labourer could earn 2,500 yuan a year. People from Liulin Wan choose to work in village rather than migrate. However there are not many such villages in the Xinzhou region.

The general situation is that most migrants agreed that they earned more in cities than in villages. According to the interviewees, the scope of annual individual agricultural income in the six villages varies from a high of 2,900 yuan in Donglou Cun to a low of 890 yuan in Shang Cun in 2003. By contrast, with the exception of a few people who only worked for very few months due to sickness or other problems, villagers who migrated earned a maximum of 30,000 yuan, and a minimum of a 1,000-2,000 yuan per year.

Information on the “actual wage” was mainly based on migrants’ experiences in the cities, which was passed on to non-migrants. Many migrants did not know how much they would really get, even if their boss made a clear promise. For example, Lang Dongshen said that his boss had promised him 25 yuan a day. However, he finally only got 22 yuan a day because his boss said his work was not as good as he expected. Lang complained the boss just wanted to pay him less, otherwise why hadn’t he warned him earlier about his work. He knew this often happened, but had no idea how to deal with it (36 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

To sum up, though higher income in cities attracts people to migrate, migrants make what enquires they can and come to their decisions based on the “actual money” they expect to be able to earn rather than reported pay rates.

#### ***4.2-2 Demand for money encourages migration***

During the interviews, migrants offered the following reasons for migrating.

*I am near the age of marriage, but I don’t have enough money to do it, that is why I migrated* (Gan Jiangjun, Male, 22 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).

*Our family has run up 20,000 yuan of debts to build a house, I have to work outside to pay the debts off* (Huo Qimeng, male, 22 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).

*My son is studying in junior middle school in Xinzhou, which takes lots of money. My agricultural income isn’t enough to pay it all so I have no choice but to work outside* (Shi Weiming, male, 36 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).

*You ask me why I am old but still work. Well, before I could not work, I am trying to save more money in case of a serious illness. I am old, and may easily get sick. You know, once you get sick, it takes a lot of money. Though my children can support me, I would like to earn more money before I retire completely* (Wei Binfu, female, 55 years old in 2004, interviewed in Beifang Market in Xinzhou).

The need for major expenditure may force people to try to earn more money than agricultural income can produce on its own. House building, marriage costs and the education of the children are the significant expenses for peasants. I will show in the next section that the money spent on these items differs greatly between richer and

poorer villages. First, I will discuss the general situation regarding the price of housing, marriage and education compared with agricultural income.

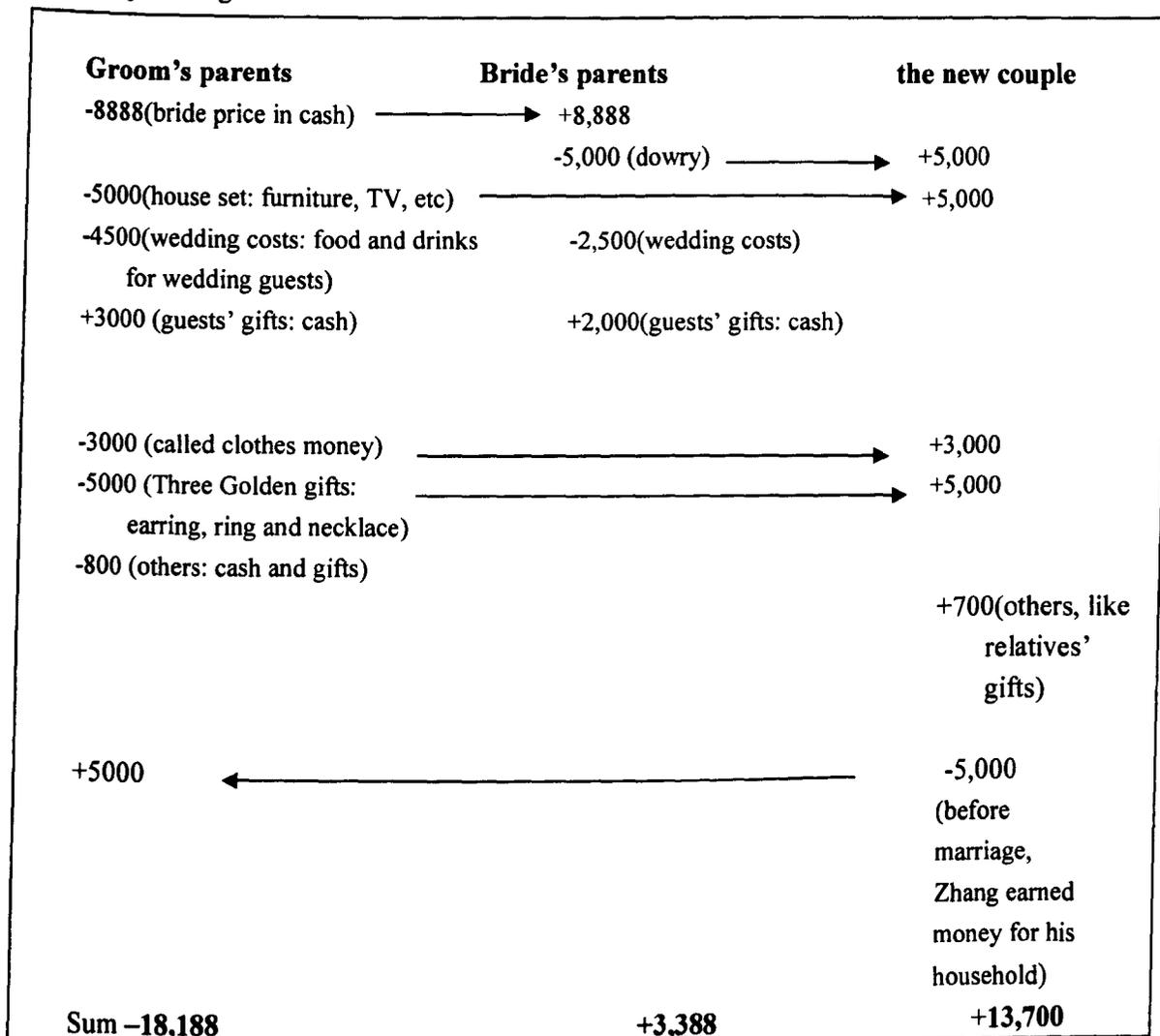
In rural Shanxi as in the rest of China, a good house is often the symbol of wealth. The household with the best house generally is regarded as the richest and most prestigious one in a village. Murphy (2002: 103) suggests that house building is the way that individuals enhance their standing in the village. The new houses in villages in Xinzhou include single-storey and double-storey houses with quite big yards. The common price of building a new house was between 20 and 30 thousand yuan in 2003 and the better ones could cost up to 100 thousand yuan.

In Donglou Cun for example, this sort of expenditure would mean that without the help of the family, an individual would need 20-30 years of agricultural income to build a house. Even looked at in terms of household agricultural income, the cost would be equal to five-seven years income. With the help of migration income however, a household could amass the money in two-three years. In fact, of course, no rural household could channel all its earnings to house building; living costs must always be met. It is hard to build a house depending only on agricultural income. Extra earnings from migration make it much easier.

House building is generally related to marriage. Marriage costs are significant for peasants. Excluding house building, the cost of marriage to the groom's side could nearly be about 20,000 yuan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Xinzhou and Kelan, nearly equal to cost of a normal house. The cost of marriage includes the bride price and part of wedding costs. The costs also include resources passed on to the bride and groom from the parents on both sides to enable them to form a new household. Figure 4.1 shows the marriage expenses and inter household flows for the marriage of Zhang Qunting (Zhang Qunting, male, 26 years old in 2005, from Donglou Cun, married in 2005).

Zhang's parents spent 18,188 yuan on the marriage, the bride's parents received a net sum of 3,388 yuan and Zhang's new household got gifts and cash which were together equal to 13,700 yuan.

Figure 4.1 Financial flows among people involved: groom's parents, bride's parents, the new couple and guests.



Notes: “-” indicates an amount paid, “+” means an amount received.

Marriage costs constitute a heavy burden for the bridegroom's household. Some of the male interviewees said they had incurred big debts in order to marry and had to work hard to return money after marriage. In my fieldwork, women seemed not to worry about the costs of marriage the way men did. Given the pattern of marriage expenditure it is not surprising that I found many cases where a man could not marry due to the lack of money for a marriage, but not a single one of a woman was in this situation. Because a part of both bride price and the dowry will be passed to the new couple after marriage, some young women hope to use it to finance enterprises in migration. For example, Huo Xufeng said she wanted to run a stall in a market that

would cost about 30,000-40,000 yuan to set up including various fees such as annual rent and the cost of stock. One possible way of getting the money was to borrow from her parents and friends, but she was aware of the danger of losing her capital if business was bad. The better way she thought was to use the money she would get from each set of parents after her marriage, and then with extra help from her husband, she might get enough to set up (22 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).

Education costs are also a major expense for rural households, especially if the child goes to senior middle school or college or if there is more than one child at a time in school. Guan Shihao said she stopped school after finishing primary school because her family could not afford to have three children studying at the same time (Guan Shihao, female, 24 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).

Table 4.1 below shows the costs of education based on my interviewees' reports. It can be seen that fees increase significantly with the educational level. The cost at primary and junior middle school level was not too high, because there was a primary school in each village and a junior middle school in a nearby small town. However, students had to go to the city to progress any further. These costs were prohibitive for those whose income depended on agriculture. Shi Weiming who was interviewed in Sanli noodle factory said that his agricultural income was 4,000 yuan a year, while supporting his son in senior middle school in Xinzhou cost 3,000 yuan a year. Gui Yunfei who was studying for a masters degree in Beijing said that his total course fees were 40,000 yuan for three years. With other costs like accommodation and food, he would need up to 7,000 yuan a year. His parents earned 10,000 yuan a year and could not meet these costs. If he had not worked and saved money before studying for his masters degree, he could not have undertaken it.

I have discussed some major expenditure items for peasants. Now I move on to look at the way the need to raise money for this expenditure influences migration decision-making.

Table 4.1 Education costs as reported by selective interviewees, 2004

	Course fees per year, (yuan)	Accommodation and books per year (yuan)	Total per year, (yuan)
Primary school	180	Up to 50	200-230
Junior middle school	500	200	700
Senior middle school	1,200	1,600	2,800
College	1,600	3,000	4,600
Postgraduate studies	7,000-1,3000	3,000-5,000	10,000-18,000

Source: fieldwork in 2004.

#### 4.2-2.1 The influence of the demand for large sums of money on migration

The costs of house building, marriage and education are difficult to meet from agricultural income alone. Peasants are forced to seek work as migrants in order to realize important life goals, including building a house, contracting a marriage and providing education which would otherwise be delayed or would remain out of reach. Peasants sometimes achieve such goals in the short term by taking loans from relatives and friends. The debt itself then becomes the immediate cause of migration, but the ultimate cause is the need to raise money for major expenditure.

Although the pressure of the demand for money leads more people to seek waged work and thus has a positive influence on migration; it may also limit their ability to achieve greater social mobility in the long-term. The immediate need for money may leave migrants no surplus cash or time to invest in learning skills and upgrading their jobs. The following case shows that even if a migrant knows his job has no prospects, debt may prevent him trying for a better one.

*After my marriage, I owed 20,000 yuan which I had borrowed to build my new house and cover the costs of getting married. I have to work hard in construction. I know it is not a good job, but at least I can earn money there. My wife wants me to learn a skill or find a good job, but I have no time, you know, first, I have to pay off my debt. Last year I have paid back 2,000 yuan, but I still have a long way to go (Sun Haoren, 32 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

Though the demand for money encourages migration, the extent of influence was different in my fieldwork villages. As mentioned above, major expenditure was different between rich and poor villages. In the comparatively poor villages of Liulin Wan and Shang Cun where rates of migration were very low, the demand for money seems not to encourage migration. I asked interviewees from both villages if they felt they were short of money and they answered, "yes, always". When asked why they did not opt to migrate, they gave various reasons: "no idea how to migrate", "we can raise more sheep to increase our income" and "finding a good job in cities is difficult".

Both the villages are located in the mountains with inconvenient transport and communication, especially Shang Cun where no-one had a telephone. This may account for the fact that neither village was much influenced by the outside. In the 1970s, there was little labour migration in Shanxi. Most people worked in agriculture and they did not spend much on house building and marriage. In the 1980s after economic reform, migration became possible for families and migration income became an important income source. In these years people from villages such as Donglou Cun began to migrate on a significant scale. Their increased incomes and expanded horizons stimulated expenditure on house building, marriage and education, in turn, the desire to spend more on these things further encouraged people to work in cities. In the 1990s, the costs of house building, marriage and education increased even more due to economic and policy reasons. In this period, the difficulty of anyone achieving their life goals without migration encouraged the practice of migration. None of this happened in villages like Liulin Wan and Shang Cun, from which there was still little migration. Villagers had neither the means nor the desire to increase their expenditure on such things as house building and consequently did not seek work in cities. In both the poor villages, migration rates remained low and people kept their expenditure down.

Spending on house building and education relative to agricultural income was low in these mountain villages compared to that elsewhere. In Donglou Cun and other villages, agricultural income alone could not cover all the money needed for house

building, marriage and education, but in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun, agricultural income was sufficient because of the low costs of house building and education. One reason was that both villages are in the mountains where people generally live in cave dwellings. The cost of digging out and making a cave dwelling is much less than that of building a one or two-storey house. Gan Jiangjun reported that the cost of his parents' house built in 1983 was only 5,000 yuan (Gan Jiangjun, 22 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan). Spending on education in both villages was also lower than in other villages. Donglou Cun with a population of 5,600 had 490 young people who had attended senior middle school, while there were only three in Liulin Wan and one in Shang Cun. Marriage costs in Shang Cun, according to the village head were about 20,000 yuan, if house building was excluded - about the same as in the other villages. He said that villagers often started to save money once their first son born, and took about 20 years to get enough for marriage costs (Wei Facai, 50 years old in 2004, from Shang Cun). In other respects, however, in the poor villages people maintain low levels of consumption; there is thus little pressure to migrate.

#### 4.2-2.2 Household decisions

The high demand for money for house building, marriage and education often leads individuals to make decisions based on the benefit to the family. Generally, house building, marriage and education in rural Shanxi are the responsibility of the whole household. Although marriage costs are sometimes met from the earnings of the principals, the costs of marriage and housing are commonly shared by the parents and their adult children, while the costs of education are usually paid by the parents. These demands for money on the one hand encourage parents to work hard; and on the other make young children feel a responsibility towards their household. The two cases below will show how the demands for money influences the two generations.

The first case is that of Bian Huanggeng who worked in construction in Taiyuan and earned nearly 10,000 yuan a year. His agricultural income was 3,000-4,000 yuan a year. He said that working in construction was really hard, but as his son was studying in junior middle school, he had to do it. He thought education was so important that he sent his son to a good school in Xinzhou costing nearly 4,000 yuan

a year. That was already a lot, but after his son entered senior middle school, it would be even more expensive (Bian Huanggeng, 38 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun, He started to talk when I was interviewing her father).

Another case is that of Gan Jiangjun aged 22 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan. He told his own experiences regarding marriage.

*I began work at 18 years old. At that time, I earned about 300 yuan a month. After I had paid my accommodation and basic living expenses, I had hardly anything left. However, I did not mind about my wages and nor did my parents. I just felt it was fun working in Taiyuan, and didn't consider other things too much. Now I have different ideas. I will marry at the end of this year, which will take at least 20,000 yuan. My family is not rich. I know it is difficult for my parents to pay this money. I should try to reduce their burden. Now a job that pays 300 yuan is no good for me. I need more, about 600-700 yuan per month. Then, I would have more money left after meeting my living expenses. Last year, I sent 2,000 yuan to my parents.*

In sum, earning money for the common goals of the individual and household results in the migration decisions based on household needs and decisions.

#### **4.2-3 The advantages of different income sources**

Higher wage rates in the cities encourage migration. The different nature of agricultural production and working in cities also encourages migration, because it makes it possible for peasants to add their incomes. Different cycles of payment and different risks all affect the migration decision.

##### **4.2-3.1 Different cycles of obtaining cash**

In rural Shanxi, especially in north Shanxi, peasants raise just one crop a year. After selling their harvest, they get cash. They then have to wait for a year before they get any more. By contrast, working in cities, migrants get paid every month or every few months depending on the job. Short cycles of earning money are especially significant for peasants whose agricultural income is not enough to cover everything. Long Dahua explained.

*Before my husband worked in the city, we often didn't have surplus cash to buy basic goods. Sometimes, if my kids asked me for sweets, I couldn't buy them. Now it*

*is different. My husband often sends money back, and I always have some cash in hand. When children ask me to buy something they need, I can give it to them immediately* (Long Dahua, 39 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

#### 4.2-3.2 Different risks of agriculture and migration

In most areas of rural Shanxi, agricultural technology is basic, so that agriculture is highly dependent on the weather. Drought, floods and pests can affect agricultural income. My interviewees told me that due to an unusually rainy autumn in 2004, their crops had not ripened and the harvest was delayed. Serious frosts were quite common in deep autumn, if one of these occurred it would also damage the crops and greatly reduce agricultural income. .

The weather has much less effect on urban earnings. Working in cities therefore reduces these risks for peasants. But continued access to agricultural income also reduces the risk of working in cities. If members of a peasant household are able to work in both agriculture and the cities, the risks are thereby spread. Sun Dajie explained that he worked away from the village to ensure that he would have some income whether there were problems with the crops or with his outside job (Sun Dajie, 57 years old, from Donglou Cun).

#### ***4.2-4 Low wages for migrant workers lead them to return to their villages in the long-term***

Many media reports and academic studies indicate that migrants work for long hours and are paid less than urban residents, and that the violation of their rights can discourage migration (Chan, 1998).

The migrants I interviewed did not complain about earning less than city residents, some did not even realise that their longer working hours were a violation of their rights. Most migrants regarded these conditions as natural. For example, Zhu Haitian said “city residents are different from us of course. They can work in stated-owned companies and in government, while almost nobody from our village has job like that. It is OK for us to earn some money in cities.” (Zhu Haitian, female, 55 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

Though migrants did not complain about the different wage rates for migrants and city residents, they knew that what they earned in cities could not support them to live there in the long-term as city residents did. This money would be enough to live on their village, but not enough long term in the cities. “Living costs in cities are very high. Unless we had a good, steady job, we would never think about living in cities for the long-term” (Shi Zhexue, female, 43 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun). City wages for migrants are thus high enough to encourage temporary migration but low enough to persuade migrants to return home in the long run.

In sum, the urban wage influences migration decisions in four ways: 1) Migrants make their decisions mainly based on information from their own experience and that of other villagers on wages in the nearby cities for ordinary jobs; 2) a promising “actual wage” encourages migration; 3) the high cost of important life-goals such as like house building, marriage and education encourages migration and 4) lower wages compared with higher living costs in cities discourage long-term migration.

### **4.3 Social status and decision-making**

In the literature relating to social mobility as a motivation for migration, the desire to seek higher social status or dissatisfaction with the sending areas tend to be portrayed as playing an important role in migration. Due to lack of opportunities for promotion through education or employment in rural areas, people enhance their opportunities through social migration. For example, based on research on rural areas of Michigan State, Schulze, et al. (1963) show that the aspiration to migrate is inversely related to the extent of satisfaction with the home community. In a study of Oakland mobility, Lipset (1955) finds that migrants from rural areas or small urban communities to metropolitan centres take over the lower-status positions while local city residents move up in the occupational structure. De Jong and Gardner (1981) list some factors relating to status such as “having a prestigious job”, “being looked up in the community”, “obtaining a good education” and “having power and influence”.

In China, seeking higher social status has been found to be the motivation for migration in some empirical studies. For example, Wang Chunguang (2003) found

that young peasants choose to migrate partly due to dissatisfaction with their low status in villages.

In this section, I focus on job-related social status, i.e. what a social status a job could bring for the worker. In my fieldwork, the hope of achieving higher social status was an important motive for migration for many people. For example, one woman thought, “A person who can migrate is generally better than someone who can’t” (Yu Haili, female, 26 years old in 2004, worked in a market in Xinzhou).

Another villager, Ding Dianwei who was 39 years old in 2004 and from Donglou Cun explained. “Being an employee in state-owned company is really good, even if the wage is lower than what I earned as a pork salesman.”

The process of seeking higher social status was related to various questions: how individuals judged social status, which social status they used as a comparison and whether it was difficult for them to attain. I discuss the first two questions on the general role of social status in my fieldwork, and focus on how social status influenced migration from four perspectives, including the difficulties of obtaining high social status.

#### ***4.3-1 Which jobs have high social status***

Generally, villagers judge job-related social status on the basis of prestige, wage and location or the worker’s *hukou* status. The jobs with high prestige include skilled work, self-employed work, and clerical work in large companies or local government.

Skilled jobs such as teaching carpentry and hair-cutting are well paid, comfortable and steady. For example, the wage for an unskilled worker in construction is 25 yuan per day, while it is 35 yuan per day for a skilled worker. Unlike the labourer, the skilled worker does not need to move or carry heavy weights. However, it is not easy for migrants to get such work, due to their low educational level and the difficulty in acquiring skills.

Clerical work in a large company or local government confers high social status on migrants. There are many advantages to this work: high prestige, good pay, working conditions, job-security and high welfare. Some migrants thought it was the best job. However, without a college level education, special experience or a strong social

network, it was almost impossible for a migrant to obtain. Only few migrants, most of whom had college education, had obtained jobs of this sort. As they are so difficult to get, most ordinary rural people do not think about such jobs, although some do hope their children will one day be able to do them.

Self-employment is generally known as being a “*getihu*” (individual entrepreneurial household) or “being a boss”. Self-employment commonly includes renting a stall to sell clothes, running a small shop or restaurant or setting up a workshop for example to make bricks or repair cars. Self-employment confers high social status. In my fieldwork, the richest migrants were often self-employed.

Work like construction was not particularly prestigious because it involved heavy labour, yet it was considered good, or at least not bad, due what for unskilled work was quite a good wage and easy entry. It included heavy and manual work, characterized by heavy work or long working hours with easy entry but little job security. These jobs do not need much skill. Ordinary migrants can do them. They are very hard, in the rural people’s words, doing these jobs is just like “selling one’s strength”. The wage is not bad, if migrants have some experience, they can earn quite good money. However, due to the hardship, many migrants did not regard construction as a viable long-term option.

Cultivation had poor status. In some villages like Donglou Cun and Sanjiao Cun where the land was scarce, cultivation was regarded as the worst. This will be discussed more later.

Location also affected social status. Many migrants believed that a job working in the city was better than the same job in the village. Moreover, a migrant who had become a city resident had higher social status than those doing the same work but still with agricultural *hukou*.

#### ***4.3-2 What social status is used as a reference***

Once a person leaves his village and enters to a city, his social status varies according to the reference community used. In a city, his status is lower than a city resident, but if his home community is the reference, his status may be higher than before or than his fellow villagers. In my fieldwork, migrants generally take their

home community as their reference. This is how they consider their potential social status in cities and current or potential status in their villages. Most migrants will eventually return to their villages when they retire. There were very few reports of migrants who became city residents and lived in a city permanently.

Many migrants therefore believe that they will come back to their villages, and that then the increased status would benefit them even if they suffer from low status in cities. Moreover, in the meantime, they and their household members can gain the satisfaction of increased status within by the home community. My interviewees, especially as they grew older, thought about their future life after migration.

*If I don't or can't work in cities, I will come back to my village. I plan to raise some pigs or cows as my job. In my leisure time, I may have a chat with my old friends and play poker.* (Ji Guifang, 40 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun, interviewed in Sanjiao Cun).

In my fieldwork, migration generally improved rural people's social status in village. A villager's social status is higher in his village if he has the experience of migration than if he does not. Most of my interviewees agreed that cultivation has low status and working in cities has higher status. The detailed reasons will be discussed in next section.

Since circular migration is characteristic of my fieldwork villages, migrants could benefit from improved status when they came back.

*You know, working in cities is very hard. Sometimes, I am so lazy that I don't want to work outside; my mum always blames me and pushes me to go. But when I come back from working and have a short holiday at home, my relatives and friends are very kind to me, even if I do nothing at home* (Zhang Haohan, male, 22 years old, from Sanjiao Cun, worked in a restaurant in Taiyuan, interviewed in his village).

Zhang gained respect from working in Taiyuan. In some cases, migrants' household members could also gain this benefit.

*I work in my town government as a clerk. I am quite busy and don't have enough time to look after my family members and my crops. My fellow villagers are very kind and enthusiastic. They often help me with my farm work, and if there are problems in*

*my family, they will help me to deal with them or tell me as soon as possible (Huo Wuzai, male, 47 years in 2004, from Dagou Cun, interviewed in Zhuangmo town).*

As a rare case of a rural person who works in local government, Huo got higher social status and so his family members were helped by the villagers.

In addition to taking the home community as a reference, people often compared their current status or potential status in the village against that in the cities. For example, a young villager just finishing junior middle school has only peasant status. He has no way to better himself because he has no money to do sideline work. As a construction worker in the city, he might improve his status and could be a skilled worker in a few years. So he compares the status he has as a peasant with that he might achieve as a worker, or a skilled worker.

#### ***4.3-3 Four perspectives on the influence of social status on migration***

##### ***4.2-3.1 The low status of cultivation in land-short villages encourages migration***

There are different views on the social status of people who undertake cultivation. People from villages with little land and higher or middling migration rates regarded anyone working in pure agriculture as having the “least prospects” and said such people were without “ability” (*meibenshi*). Any job whether in the city or the village was better than working in pure agriculture in terms of status. For example, Wei Geidi who was the head of Sanjiao Cun in 2004 compared pure agriculture and other jobs.

*Cultivation is done by the people who have least ability. Nobody respects it. It is so easy to work in cultivation that any human being can do it. Cultivation income is low unless a person holds a lot of land. Any other job is better than agriculture. The worst job in cities is “xiao gong” (heavy unskilled labouring for example in construction), but we think it is better than agriculture because the income better than agriculture. Other jobs in villages such as sidelines and raising sheep or pigs are better than cultivation, because these jobs need some skills and the income is higher. Sometimes these activities are risky. Not everyone can manage them. However, agriculture is stable, easy and gives relative freedom compared with jobs*

*in cities. So it is a good choice for old people and those who are unable to migrate, like women and people in poor health.*

Some young migrants from these villages expressed similar opinions. “Working in agriculture is boring and there are no prospects. Working in cities, no matter what the jobs, is better” (Long Guli, male, 19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

From Long’s statement we can see that once they migrate, people in communities where pure agriculture has low status gain higher status. This is especially true for young people whose current status in the village is usually low. Some villagers who have already achieved higher status in the village worry about losing it. For example, a very successful villager, Zhou Yuwen, who ran a brick factory was not interested in leaving his village “I think even the city resident’s status may not exceed mine, so why should I move to the city?” (Zhou Yuwen, 49 years old in 2004, in Donglou Cun).

People from villages with more land like Liulin Wan and Shang Cun had different attitudes. They thought the social status of pure agriculture might be not very high, but it was not the lowest. Some considered the social status of heavy labouring jobs in the cities was lower than pure agriculture, though they thought the income might be similar. This opinion was common in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun. For example, Wei Facai said that he thought that young migrants from their village who worked in construction were wrong and muddle-headed (*hu nao*). (Wei Facai, 50 years old in 2004, village head in Liulin Wan). However, if migrants could get better job like for example as carpenters, that was all right. But Wei added that few of his villagers had this kind of skill. The higher regard for cultivation in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun was probably due to the great size of land holdings, the possibility of raising sheep and the difficulties of migration.

4.3-3.2 That status in cities is usually higher than any possible status in villages encourages migration

During my interviews, I often heard interviewees compare social status in urban areas with that in villages.

*If you do well enough, you could be a city resident, a boss or an official in the city. However, no matter how hard you work in the villages, you are still a peasant (Li Gaocai, 35 years old in 2004, interviewed in Beifang Market in Xinzhou).*

*The status for the same job in the city is higher than it is in villages. For example, to be a shop owner in the city is better than in a village, because income would be higher in city, and because it is considered better to be in the city (Wei Geidi, 47 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

The hope that migration to the cities will bring higher social status encourages migration. “If I stayed in my village, I know the best I could do. I would raise sheep, like everyone else. However, if I stay in city, I can hope to achieve something much better, even if it never comes” (Huo Qimeng, 22 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).

Except for people from Liulin Wan and Shang Cun, all the villagers agreed that the status of cultivation is lower than that of any other job, however, there was no agreement about the comparative status of the “worst jobs in cities” and sideline work or self-employment in villages. Some people thought that self-employment in villages was better because “we are our own bosses” and heavy manual labour jobs in the city were still waged work. Others thought ordinary self-employment in villages was no better than heavy labour in the cities because the village location implied low status. Male migrants reflected this opinion in choosing employment in construction rather than work in villages. In my fieldwork, I found that young people were more likely to choose work in cities, whereas middle-aged and old people were more likely to choose in villages if they had good sideline jobs. This is not difficult to understand. The attraction of the cities is greater for young people than old people. Young people are more drawn to the idea of adventure and new experience. The higher social status potentially available in cities may also be more attractive to the young. For example one young man said, “If I go to a city early it will help me to continue to improve my status, while staying in my village keep me at same level”. (Zhang Haohan, male, 22 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun). Young migrants wished to improve their status in the future, while old people did not think it was important “I am getting old and

don't think much of status. I just would like to work in my village" (Zhuo Shenzhou, 48 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).

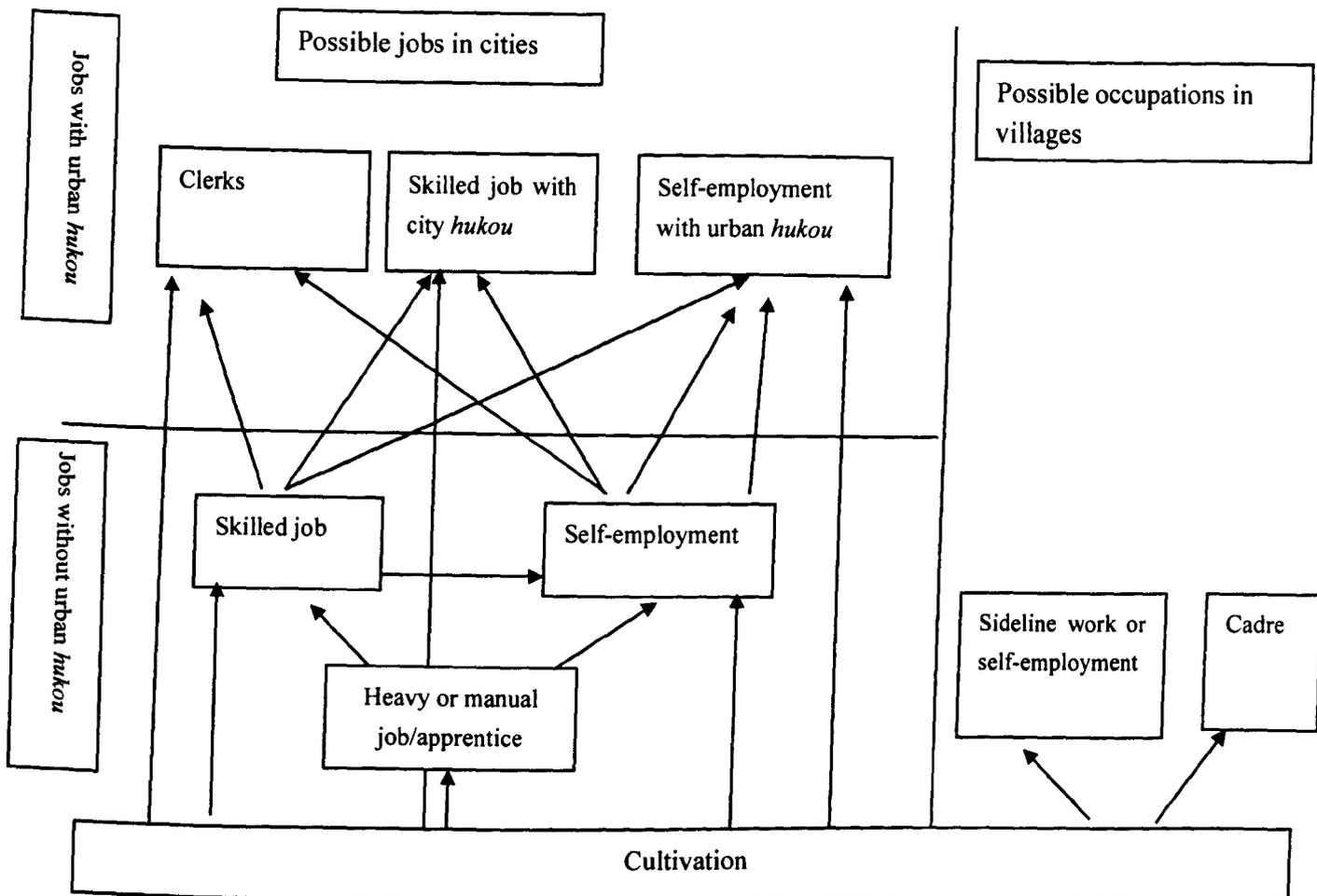
#### 4.3-3.3 The possibility of improving social status encourage migration.

My findings show that migrants could improve their social status through *upgrading their jobs*. The common pattern was first to work in heavy labour or as apprentices. After learning some skills or saving some money, migrants who did this became skilled labourers or self-employed. If they did better, some could improve to entrepreneurs, or gain a city *hukou*. Figure 4.2 shows the possible ways of upgrading jobs.

Figure 4.2 illustrates two judgements. Firstly, that of many interviewees from villages with high or medium migration-rates who agreed that heavy labouring in urban areas was better than cultivation, and that skilled jobs or self-employment were better than heavy or manual labour. The second was that jobs with an urban *hukou* were better than the ones without it that the most interviewees did. Each job offered different status. The figure shows jobs with different status and the possibility of social mobility.

Significant advancement was difficult for migrants to achieve. For example, it was really a challenge for migrants to move from cultivation to clerical work or to work with the local government, because a lack of education and experience and because of discrimination against them.

Figure 4.2: Common channels for people to improve their social status



Source: fieldwork in 2004

The example below shows how the increased desire for social status encourages migration.

*After finishing senior middle school, I worked in a brick factory for three years. Because I have a high education level, I was a skilled labourer in a factory that was near my village. However, I was thinking that I couldn't do this job all my life. I needed a better job. I had a friend who worked in a large life insurance company in Xinzhou. I was thinking if I get in there, I could be a clerk which was better than working in a factory. It happened that the company was recruiting more staff. I went to apply and they asked me to get a first order then would accept me. I tried my best to sell my first insurance and then got the job successfully. I have worked here for about four years and now I am planning to be a manager, because the income and*

*prospects will be better* (Zhen Shengli, male, 38 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

Zhen's achievement of an urban white collar job and an improving position in the company made him wish to stay in the city.

#### 4.3-3.4 The difficulties of improving status discourage migration

Most of my migrant interviewees could not move upwards into skilled labour or self-employment due to reasons such as lack of money and friends' help, low educational level, and difficulties of migration. Some migrants had worked many years in construction without improving their positions. Jing Buhuan who was 48 years old in 2004, when I interviewed him had worked in construction for 20 years but was still an ordinary worker.

Wei Menzhu's story shows how her dream of higher social status came to nothing.

*After I had finished junior middle school, my relatives introduced me to work in a textile mill. Before I went there, I was thinking that I would work hard and try to improve my position, and maybe become a team leader. However, after I went into the mill, I found how naive my idea was. Our team leader didn't change in five years, and when I left the factory, she was still in the position. Even if she had left, there would have other senior colleagues to replace her. So I gave up the idea of improving my status. I thought earning money might be more important* (Wei Menzhu, 33 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).

This happened to many young migrants. Before migration, seeking higher social status was an important motivation and earning money sometimes was not. After a period of migration, many migrants changed their ideas. Most middle-aged migrants said that earning money had become their central or even their only motivation. As Jing Buhuan put it, "I thought about social status when I was young. But never after some years of migration. Earning money is what matters" (Jing Buhuan, male, 48 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

In my fieldwork, however, there were some very successful migrants. Unlike the middle-aged migrants who usually did not think about improving social status much,

these high achievers not only chased higher income, but also higher social status. But such people were few. Most of my interviewees were poor and their priority was earning money.

To sum up, seeking higher social status does encourage migration for young and successful migrants. However, the extent of influence is limited for most interviewees who are blocked from achieving higher status due to their poverty, low educational level and lack of social networks. In other words, migrants make decisions in terms of social status based first on the different status between people in cities and villages. Once they have migrated, they can gain higher status compared with their status in the villages. When they find what they exactly they earn, and how much they could earn in the future, they can clearly compare their status in cities and villages, and then make new decisions.

#### **4.4 Migrants' self-improvement**

In human capital models of migration, some factors like private returns to education are taken into account (Byerlee, 1974). In these models, migration is viewed as an investment, which is used to explain why the decision maker migrates despite the absence of an immediate increase in earnings - there is a long-term expectation of improvement. Such migration is inversely related to age as old people tend to benefit less than young people from migration. In China, targets such as gaining skills and gaining experience by "seeing the world" have been reported by various researchers (Beynon, 2004; Zhang Li, 2002). In my fieldwork, these factors were also found to influence decision-making. Some migrants, especially young, unmarried ones, expressed their hopes that migration would allow them to "see the world", or "open my eyes", "toughen me up" (*duanli ziji*) and "help me acquire experience and skills". After gaining from these factors, they thought they would be more likely to have more job or development opportunities either in the city or in their own village. In the following section, I will analyse how these factors affect migration decision-making.

My data indicates that the desire to learn skills, gain knowledge and experience and see the world encourages migration. When one generation of migrants gains from migration, a subsequent generation is encouraged to go. This encouragement often works on young and unmarried migrants, rather than middle aged or older people. Additionally, the importance of these factors for young migrants reduces sharply after some years of migration. All this will be discussed as below.

#### ***4.4-1 The wish to learn skills encourages migration.***

In interviews, some migrants said that the wish to “learn skills” and “toughen themselves up” were very important motives for migration. In some cases these aspirations were even more important than earning money. For example, Zhao Daxue said,

*The most important reason for my first migration was just to learn something useful and get experience. I didn't care how much I could earn. Of course, I want to earn more money. However, I migrated not for money but to get skills. I thought that money could only satisfy me now, while good skills could benefit me in the long term. At the same time, my parents didn't expect me to earn much money. They also hoped that I could learn some skills and have a good future life (Zhao Daxue, female, 24 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory).*

This attitude was common among migrants, especially the young and unmarried ones. They generally agreed that good skills might help them to find higher paid, secure and comfortable jobs, and also help them to compete in the cities.

Good skills often allow migrants to find higher paid jobs. Some of my interviewees had skills such as cooking, sewing, repairing, carpentry and electrical work. Workers in construction were divided into two categories by migrants: “unskilled worker” (*xiaogong*) and “skilled worker” (*dagong*). A *xiaogong* could earn 25 yuan a day, while a *dagong* could earn at least 35 yuan a day. Jing Buhuan said that one of his friends had the same educational background as him, however, because his friend had learned to use construction blueprints, he now earned 40 yuan a day, while Jing himself only earned 25 yuan a day in construction (Jing Buhuan, 48 years old in 2004,

from Sanjiao Cun). Additionally, migrants with good skills commonly got steady jobs. For example, Fan Youtian talked about his daughter, Fan Qing.

*She is working in a big restaurant as a waitress in Taiyuan. She likes to learn. When she gets leisure time, she often reads the books about hotel management. She keeps learning English. She has even paid to take English evening class at night at her own expense. Her colleagues, girls of a similar age are busy dating and having fun. My daughter doesn't like this and she keeps learning for the future. Her boss has noticed her and he has gradually promoted her from being an ordinary waitress to a team leader, and then a hall manager. My daughter said that some colleagues who came in the same year as her had been fired because they made mistakes on the job or were not good at it (Fan Youtian, 45 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory, his daughter, Fan Qing, 23 years old in 2004, junior middle school level, from Sanjiao Cun).*

A good skill commonly brings not only higher wages, but also comfort and higher status, another reason for migrants to learn skills. Long Guli explained as below.

*I worked in a restaurant as kitchen porter (daza). Every morning, I had to come early to prepare everything- cleaning vegetables and peeling potatoes. Then the chef came to make the dishes. I had to do what ever he asked. After the restaurant closed, everyone left except me, because I had to clean the kitchen. After I came back to my room, I felt very tired. However, the bad thing was I didn't know when it would be better. I always thought if I were a chef, what a good life I would have. So I often prayed for the chef to teach me some skills (Long Guli, 19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

The wish for less tiring work was one reason migrants wanted to learn knowledge and skills. This is not to say that the desire to obtain skills or knowledge stimulated migration directly, but through migration, migrants realised that skills could help them to decrease the burden of work. Young migrants realised the importance of skills just because the jobs without skills were very hard. Zhang Haohan recounted how his attitude had changed:

*I didn't like to study. After finishing junior middle school, I stopped studying and then worked in Xinzhou. At first, I thought, just earning money was OK. But I soon found I was wrong. My job in road construction was too hard. Everyday I had to work about 10 hours. Some of my friends had skills like knowing how to cook so they had easy jobs. I thought I might learn some skills (Zhang Haohan, 22 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

In some cases, learning skills could add personal respect or “privilege”, which was a reason to encourage migrants to learn skills.

*I work in construction as a xiaogong (his job was heavy labouring doing things carrying cement). I went to work with friends early every day, because I was afraid of being late in case they make deductions from my wage. But a friend who is a dagong (skilled worker) is different. I noted that my boss often gives him lifts to work or home. If there are some problems in construction, the boss asks for his opinion humbly. At noon, we squat by the construction site to have lunch together, while the boss often invites this dagong to have a better lunch in a restaurant or at a food stall. None of the rest of us gets this treatment. It is because that he is a dagong, but we are xiaogong. I am thinking that I should learn some skills (Sun Haoren, 32 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun. Interviewed in Zuotou Cun when he was on holiday).*

Many interviewees believed that good skills or useful experience could improve their job opportunities in both cities and/or villages, although some said that if skills were too specific, they would be of limited use. For example, Wei Menzhu said that working in a textile mill only taught you skills useful for the mills. If you left that job, the skill was no longer useful. (Wei Menzhu, female, 33 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory. She worked in a textile mill).

However, many reported that skills and experiences had been really helpful in enlarging opportunities.

*After I married at 21 in Gao Cun, I wanted to do something useful. I like clothes, so I learned to sew. I learned for one month and became a part-time dressmaker in my village. I worked for about 19 years. In 1993, my daughter left school and my son went to senior high school in Xinzhou. I thought that I could rent a stall in Xinzhou*

*to sell clothes with my daughter's help, and look after my son. I choose selling clothes because I know what clothes will sell well. So I carried out my plan (Zhao Shangjin, female, 51 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).*

Zhao's sewing skills helped her to work in both village and city. These are successful cases. However, even migrants who did not learn special skills still found their experience useful. Most interviewees agreed that people who had migration experience were different from those who have never "gone out". For example, the head of Liulin Wan compared migrants and non-migrants in his village.

*People who have migrated, even if they earned nothing, are different from the those who have never migrated. They often have good ideas and more confidence to do everything. When they meet problems, they try to deal with them positively, while many villagers that have never migrated only know how to worry (Wei Facai, male, 50 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).*

Migration brings new ideas and new ways of dealing with problems and thus enlarges migrants' opportunities. This is especially true for those who engage in repeat migration. The second time they leave the village, their experiences will help them to migrate.

Finally, learning skills helps migrants to compete in the cities. Although some thought that learning skills would enlarge the job opportunities in both cities and villages, not many interviewees thought that learning skills could help them compete in cities, especially not with city residents. However, some migrants with a higher educational level, college level or above, did recognise this.

*When I worked in a branch of China Commercial Bank, I thought, I should acquire more skills to get higher status. Now I am doing an MA in Beijing. I think my educational level is adequate to compete with city residents in small and middle cities. But in large cities, like Beijing, I still feel it's difficult. You know, all the best qualified people gather in Beijing or Shanghai. I am thinking about this because this will decide where I find a job after graduation (Gui Yunfei, 27 years old in 2004, interviewed in Beijing, from Shanding Cun in Xinzhou).*

Most migrants in my fieldwork were junior or senior middle school graduates. Their jobs were generally labour intensive and few of them did the skilled work. Their low educational level and unskilled occupations stop them thinking about competing with city residents. They were satisfied if they could just earn a bit more money.

*I have changed jobs several times, but all have been heavy labouring jobs. I worked in a chemical factory, a casting factory and now in construction. I haven't any special skills and just do labouring work. I am happy that I can earn money here. All I want is to be paid on time without deductions. I don't think much about other things. You ask me if I want to compete better with city residents. How could I? It is even difficult for me to become a dagong (Sun Duanlian, 36 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

#### **4.4-2 Young migrants want to learn skills and knowledge**

In Byerlee's model (1974), migration is viewed as an investment; older people are less likely to migrate because they will benefit less than young people from migration. This was confirmed in my fieldwork. For example, some young migrants thought they would earn more if they got some skills, while old people thought it was no use for them to learn skills.

Generally, the interviewees regarded acquiring skills and knowledge as something for young people. Once they were married, or over 30 years old, they felt it was too late to learn new skills.

*I am 29 years old this year. Too old to learn new skills. My current priority is to earn money, not to learn skills. I learned to drive when I was 25 years old, but still don't drive well. None of the villagers of my age or older are still learning skills (Mei Kongjun, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).*

This is a common attitude regarding the age for learning skills. Young and unmarried migrants do not have heavy family burdens and their parents do not rely too much on their wages for help with the family. This often gives them more freedom to learn skills. By contrast, middle-aged people often have to support their families, and cannot spare time and money to acquire new skills.

*After finishing junior middle school, I helped my parents in agriculture. Actually, they didn't need my help. They could manage on their own. Staying in my village, I learnt nothing. I wanted to work in a city to see the world and open my eyes. At least, I could learn something that can't be learned in my village. My parents had the same idea. They said that I was young and they didn't expect me to earn money for them. They don't need my help in agriculture. They wanted me to learn some skills and get a better future, then try to find a good husband. So I worked in Xinzhou when I was 19 years old (Yu Haili, 26 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou ).*

In some cases, parents forced their adult children to migrate to learn skills because if they stayed in village, these children would do and learn nothing and might get into trouble with nothing to do.

#### ***4.4-3 Young migrants' incentive to learn skills declines after some years of migration***

The early wish to see more of the world and to learn skills often changes over time and migrants tend to lay more emphasis on earning money. In some cases this is because the migrant has acquired enough skills. However, some migrants who haven't managed to learn skills just give up. This is partly due to the costs and partly to increasing economic burdens.

Learning skills does costs like money and time and this is difficult for poor migrants. Mei Kongjun said that he only earned 100 yuan a month when he worked in a restaurant in Xinzhou as an apprentice, while a common worker in this restaurant could earn at least 300 yuan a month. (Mei Kongjun, 29 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factor in Xinzhou).

Moreover, when other economic burdens such as marriage costs could prevent the migrant taking on a low paid job to acquire skills.

*I will marry at the end of this year. I need more money to get ready for it. The first time I worked outside, I wanted to learn something. Now this is not the time. Learning skills means less pay. For example, if I worked as an apprentice in car repair, I would only earn 300 yuan a month. But if I worked in construction, I can earn about 600 yuan a month. Now I just want to earn more money. If I was just 18 years old, I*

would have chosen to learn skills (Gan Jiangjun, 22 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).

In addition to the costs of learning and increasing economic burdens, there are difficulties of learning skills. Migrants' poor educational levels may handicap them. For example, Mei Kongjun said that he had wanted to learn advanced skills to repair cars, so that he could earn more than ordinary workers. But he soon found it too hard to learn. It required knowledge of maths and physics that he never covered before, so he had to give up. (Mei Kongjun, 29 years old in 2004, junior middle school, interviewed in a noodle factor, from Houshe Cun). A second difficulty was that long hours of unskilled work left little opportunity to acquire skills. Wei Pinan talked about her daughter.

*My daughter wanted to learn some skills for the service industry. So she worked in a hotel in Xinzhou. However, every day she said she just tidied the rooms and cleaned the tables. This was not what she wanted to learn. She already knew how to do this. However, the manager just asked her to do it. After two years of migration, She thought she learned nothing* (Wei Pinan, 45 years old in 2004, her daughter, Wei Xiujuan, 20 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

Some migrants really do acquire useful skills or experience in the cities, but many other have to give up their dreams.

*I came to the city with several aims, one was to learn some skills. However, I found it was impossible to learn. I carry bags of cement everyday in my factory, and have no time to contact other people. How can I learn skills? All I can learn is the skill of carrying cement* (Huo Qimeng, 22 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun)

To sum up, the desire for self-improvement does encourage migration. It plays a temporary and strong role in migration for young migrants. People believe self-improvement will bring benefits. When they get more information and know what their real prospects are, they make new decisions for the changed situation.

#### **4.5 Attraction of cities, escaping from the village, changing fate and looking for opportunities.**

In China, the division between the rural and urban areas is profound and absolute. The cities are more prosperous and urban living standards are higher. Mains water and electricity are the norm in the urban areas. There are more amenities, shops and places to spend one's leisure. Urban residents have considerable welfare advantages over rural residents, including higher incomes, access to higher quality schools and other privileges like medical insurance. As Knight and Song (1999: 153) explain, many of these advantages are "birthrights" for urban residents but are not automatically conferred on rural migrants to the cities.

In response to this profound gulf between rural and urban areas, the desire to go to cities because of their attraction, to escape from the villages, to change one's fate and to seek opportunities were commonly found among young migrants in my fieldwork. In this section, I will analyse how these factors influence migration decision-making.

##### ***4.5-1 Attraction of cities and escaping from villages***

My interviewees often said things such as "the city is better than the village"; "I go to cities for fun" (*wan*); "I have never lived in a city, I want to see what the city life is". These migrants were often young, unmarried and had little experience of migration. They did not know much about city life but the picture of city life in their minds was often positive. City life attracts them.

*Cities are amazing. The roads are wide and the buildings are high. There are many shops along the city centre streets; you can get whatever you need there. Life in the city is convenient. You don't need to walk far to buy clothes or other goods. If you are hungry, you just sit down at a food stall by the street and enjoy your meal* (Zhen Wenming, 19 years old in 2004, now a senior middle school graduate, from Donglou Cun).

In some cases, interviewees thought that the bigger the city was, the more attractive it was. For example, some migrants agreed that Taiyuan, the provincial capital of Shanxi was more attractive than Xinzhou, while Beijing and Shanghai were more attractive than Taiyuan.

The attraction of cities often encourages young people to migrate.

*After finishing junior middle school, I helped my parents in agriculture. Life was easy, but I felt bored, because every day was the same. City life seemed to be lively and I want to try a new life. So with friends' help I went to Taiyuan to work. I remember I was so excited at that moment that I just felt happy to come to a big city. I didn't think much about it being tough or what the future would hold. I took all that into account after about a year of migration. My feeling was that I had stepped into a new life and no matter how tough it would be, I could stand it (Sheng Yangfu, female, 30 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

In some cases, the attraction of cities was a strong factor in the young migrants' decision-making, outweighing other motivations like earning money and blinding migrants to other factors, like hardship and low status.

*I migrated when I was 19 years old, just two years after finishing junior middle school. I felt bored living in my village and wanted to have a look what the city life was like. I was so young that I did not consider hardships. Of course I knew working in cities was hard, but I didn't think it mattered. Actually, I feel now that it was very hard, but I didn't recognise it at that time (Mei Kongjun, 29 years old in 2004, junior middle school, interviewed in a noodle factor, from Houshe Cun).*

The apparent prosperity of the city as opposed to the backwardness of the village is recognised as a motive for migration in most of the literature. My findings confirm this. The fact that rural people have little access to city life also encourages migration. Rural people live in their own village for most of their lives. They visit cities to buy goods, visit friends or occasionally go to hospital for a serious sickness. The only reasons why a peasant might stay in a city long term would be to attend senior middle school or college, or to migrate or to marry a city resident. Rural young people knew little of city life. For example, Ren Caiqi said of his visits to cities.

*We go to Kelan once or twice a year to buy goods that we cannot get in my village or town. So far the most distant place I have been to is Kelan. I haven't been to Xinzhou or Taiyuan, never mind Beijing or Shanghai (Ren Caiqi, 30 years old in 2004, from Shang Cun).*

Although the attraction of cities encourages migration, this is a short term effect that lasts only few years. Migrants' low status, lack of skills and lack of rights under *hukou* system means they are denied many of the advantages of cities. Once young migrants experience what life is really like, they often feel that cities are not as good as they thought.

*Before migration, I always thought that life in the city would be good. After some years of migration, I think it is just an illusion. In the cities, we live in tents, eat bad food, and are separated from friends and family. Our boss doesn't treat us fairly. Once I was even robbed* (Lang Dongshen, 36 years old, from Sanjiao Cun).

*We work so hard. Most our time was in the factory. Living in city is no different from living in my village* (Long Guli, 19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

My interviewees commonly agreed that the attractions of the cities were reduced by experience. The main reasons included urban prejudice, hardship and problems of the city itself like noise.

In my fieldwork, few people reported that middle-aged or older people had migrated because of the attractions of city life. According to interviewees, there are several reasons for that. The first one is life cycle. Middle-aged and older people are used to the villages and are not interested in the city life. As one 48 year old put it "it is not the time for me to try a new life. I need a stable life" (Jing Buhuan, male, from Sanjiao Cun). These people often had families. They could not just leave because they wanted to. For example, Xia Tianlen expressed her opinions. "I liked the lively life when I was young. I have always wanted to go to Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, but I cannot. I need to take care of my family. If I left, who would do this?" (Xia Tianlen, female, 42 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun). In other cases, some middle-aged and older people had already experienced city life and been disillusioned by hardship, urban prejudice and unfair treatment.

Like the attraction of cities, the idea of escaping from the village and changing one's fate is a response to the gulf between the cities and villages. The attraction of cities can be seen as a pull factor while poverty in villages is a push factor (Zhou Xinshu, 2005).

The idea of escaping from villages was generally based on a wish to leave behind village characteristics such as poverty, backwardness and the boredom of village life. According to some interviewees, they were not sure that living in city could bring them a good life or future, but they were sure that living in villages meant they would have boring life without prospects.

*I don't want to live in my village my whole life. I can imagine what it would be like if I stayed in my village. For example, I would help my parents in agriculture, cooking meals and cleaning the house. Then I would marry someone who would probably be from the same village or a nearby one. Then I would look after my kids, my husband and my parents. I would save money for my family and try to improve our income. I would also work in agriculture. What a boring life! I think life in village means life with no future. However, I know that living in cities is also difficult. But life in cities is full of hope* (Zhen Wenming, 19 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun)

This feeling is common for young rural people, especially for those who have never migrated or migrated for just few months. The idea of escaping from villages tends to encourage temporary migration. After a few years of migration, some young migrants thought they had been naive to think of escaping from village.

#### **4.5-2 Changing one's fate**

Migration implies changing one's fate. Staying in villages means remaining for ever, while living in cities at least gives a chance of change obtaining urban status. As one of my interviewees said that if she had stayed in her village until she married, she would never have got the chance to migrate. (Huo Xufeng, 22 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou). The idea of changing one's fate was a hope that encouraged migration. For example, some old rural people talked of their desire that their children or grandchildren could go to the cities and become city residents. In some cases, the idea of changing fate encourages longer term migration.

*My parents and grandparents are all peasants. They are very happy that I am the first person who will not be a peasant forever. I have studied and worked hard for years now. I do this because I believe I can change my fate and that of my family* (Gui Yunfei, 27 years old in 2004, interviewed in Beijing, from Shanding Cun in Xinzhou,

an MA student)

#### ***4.5-3 Looking for opportunities***

In addition to the attraction of cities and the desire to escape from villages, looking for opportunities in cities was a motivation for migration. As one young man explained,

*I am working in a cement factory. I want to try other jobs. So I keep in touch with my friends to ask if there are other opportunities to work* (Huo Qimeng, male, 22 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).

It is generally agreed that there are more job opportunities in cities than in villages. For example, the village head of Donglou Cun compared the differences between cities and villages in terms of opportunities.

*There are more opportunities in cities than in villages. If you run a shop in village, for example, you wouldn't have much custom because the village population is small. In cities, you can do many things, such as selling clothes and running restaurants. These things can't be done in village. In cities, there are many jobs like construction. By contrast, there is not much building in my village* (Zhan Xiatian, 53 years old in 2004, head of Donglou Cun).

Most villagers agreed that there were more job opportunities in cities, though migrants often lacked information about these opportunities.

*I am working in construction. The job is hard, but at least I can earn money from it. I want to find a better job, but I am not sure what job I could do. So I keep thinking and asking my friends* (Hu Wenhu, 30 years old in 2004, from Zuotuo Cun).

As I showed in the chapter three, it was not very difficult for migrants to find ordinary jobs, especially for those from Donglou Cun. But the opportunities that they longed for were not the ordinary jobs like construction. They wanted good and steady jobs or ones where they could earn more money. They often took any job and then constantly asked around for something better. This pattern of hunting for opportunities reflected the fact that they lacked information and wanted to save costs in searching for a better job.

*After I finished senior middle school, I learned woodworking and was a carpenter for 8 years. During these years of carpentry, I tried to find good opportunities. At first, I did business on my own account. Two years later, I asked some friends to join me. At the same time, I heard that the transport business was profitable. So I learned to drive and began the new business. I bought bowls at 0.3 yuan each in Xinzhou, and drove to Sichuan to sell them at 1.5 yuan each. Then I bought Chinese medicine in Sichuan cheaply and sold it in Shanxi. I made a lot of money. While I was doing this, I found running a shop was better than transport. Then I set up a shop in my town. Now I find that running a restaurant is more profitable, so recently I have started a restaurant in my town (Zhan Xiatian, 46 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).*

Looking for opportunities encourages migration. However, some give up looking for opportunities when things do not work out for them.

*I am working in Xinzhou just for money. I am old and I am not likely to get a better job, or improve myself. I have no skills, and I don't expect to change to a better paid job. My priority is to keep the job I have and make a living (Wei Menzhu, female, 33 years old, interviewed in a noodle factory).*

To sum up, the attraction of cities, escaping from villages, changing fate and looking for opportunities encourages migration. All these factors generally play a short-term role for young migrants. Migrants make their decisions based on the hope of achieving their targets. They adjust their decision later in the light of their own experience.

#### **4.6 Looking for spouses**

Marriage migration in Shanxi, as in the rest of China, is one of the major streams of migration. According to the 2000 census of Shanxi province, marriage was one of most important causes of migration in Shanxi at 17 per cent of all reasons, while work causes were 25 per cent. In China, marriage migration is highly gender specific (Davin, 2005). In Shanxi as elsewhere in China, the great majority of marriage migrants are women and marriage accounts for 28 per cent of all female migration,

but only four per cent of male migration in 2000 (The Population Census Office under the State Council and Department of Population Statistics, 2002).

In my fieldwork, the aspiration of finding a spouse was one of the motivations of migration. I will analyse how looking for spouses influenced male and female migrants respectively.

#### **4.6-1 Male migrants**

In my fieldwork, few unmarried male migrants talked about looking for spouses through migration. They seemed not to worry whether they could find a spouse. What they worried about was the money for marriage and house building. They thought that if they had enough money these things, it would not be difficult to get a spouse. For example, Hu Ximing, the head of Dagou Cun said that if a male had prepared the house and the money for marriage, there would be no problem (Hu Ximing, 40 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).

Male migrants expected to find village wives and would rely on networks in their villages to do so. A few migrants married women from other provinces such as Sichuan. Their spouses were often introduced by their families, friends or acquaintances. Very few migrants reported that they had married women that they met during migration, most relied on village networks. For example, Gan Jiangjun said of his marriage.

*I will marry at the end of year. My bride is from a nearby village and I have known her since we were young. I have been working away for four years and haven't had time to think about my marriage. Last year when I came back, my parents discussed it with me, and suggested some girls in nearby villages. Then they arranged for me to meet her. The girl and later both families agreed that we could marry (Gan Jiangjun, 22 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).*

This was the typical of the marriage arrangements I found generally in my fieldwork. However, in one mountain village, Dagou Cun, looking for a spouse was a strong motive for male migration. This was due to the characteristics of the village: low income and poor communication conditions. There were over 20 adult men of

marriageable age who could not find spouses. The head of Dagou Cun explained the reasons.

*Our village is so closed. Few outsiders come to our village for a whole year. Women in my village don't want to marry fellow villagers and women from other villages don't want to marry in because our village is poor and remote*

In fact, even the cadres, including the village head, the secretary, and the accountant were unmarried. All of them were over 30 years old in 2004, well over the normal age for marriage in rural China. Men wanted to migrate to search for a wife.

*I want to find a wife while I am working away. In my village, it is difficult to find a girl to marry. When you work outside, you get good chance to know more people. I don't expect to get a city resident as my wife. A girl from another village would be fine* (Huo Qimeng, 22 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun)

Although some male migrants succeeded in finding spouses, such cases were few. Some migrants complained that even though they worked in cities; they had little chance to get know female migrants.

#### **4.6-2 Female migrants**

In my fieldwork, few female migrants younger than 20 mentioned looking for a spouse as a motive for migration. However, some female migrants over 20, especially those over 22 more took marriage into account.

Migrants under 20 years old were more interested in learning skills, seeing the world and trying a new life. However they might see marrying someone as changing their fate and escaping.

*When I finished junior middle school, I was 17 years old. I didn't want to stay in my village for my whole life. I wanted to migrate. My main purpose in migrating was to learn skills and improve myself. Sometimes, I thought if I married, I would marry a person outside, not one from my village so I could escape from my village* (Zhao Huaicai, 29 years old in 2004, from Xiaowang Cun, a village in Xinzhou, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).

Female migrants in their early twenties were concerned with marriage. However, the need to find a spouse has two contradictory effects for female migrants: one is to

encourage migration and the other to encourage returning from migration. This depends on whether the migrant thinks she can marry a city resident or whether she thinks she will come back to the village to marry.

*I am 22 years old. My parents have begun to push me to marry. After I migrated, I wanted to marry a city resident or a villager whose family is well off, because I don't want a poor life. One reason that I keep working here is that I am trying to find a husband in Xinzhou. However, it is not easy. If I can't find one, I will have to go back to marry someone from villages as my parents ask. Though I am still trying to find a husband here, I can't wait too long, otherwise, I will be too old to marry a villager. I can still work here for two or three more years, but no more that (Huo Xufeng, 22 years old in 2004, unmarried, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).*

In fact, female migrants are faced with difficult choices. On the one hand, they may want to find a city resident, but their chances are not good. On the other hand, if they missed the usual age for marriage, they are taking a risk. It quickly becomes difficult to find a good husband.

*I am 26 years old. Most girls in my village at my age are already married. I am thinking about my problem. I have already migrated to the city; I don't want to marry a villager, which would mean I had to return to the village. But it is difficult. I have been in Xinzhou for seven years since I was 19 without finding a city resident. I am getting on and can't delay any longer. My parents want me to come home to marry. I don't know what to do (Yu Haili, 26 years old in 2004, unmarried, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou). In all of the cases known to my interviewees, there was only one instance of a female migrant who had married a city resident. Most migrants had to go back.*

To sum up, the idea of looking for a spouse affects female migrants more than male ones. It plays both positive and negative roles in migration.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the basic and important benefits arising from migration in my fieldwork, including income, social status, migrants' self-improvement, the attraction of cities and the search for spouses.

Higher income, especially higher actual income encourages people to migrate. They need more money for house building, marriage and the education of children, all of which pushes them to work in cities. They are also encouraged to migrate by the risk reduction inherent in having different income sources and dividing their dependence between agriculture and migration. People also seek higher social status. They generally believe that good jobs like skilled and self-employed work in cities have the higher status. However, not everyone can improve their status. When they realize this during migration, people may change their minds about migration. Self-improvement includes seeing the world, learning skills and gaining experience. Young people are especially drawn to migrate by the attraction of self-improvement. However, the difficulties of learning skills discourage people who have migrated for this purpose. People are also encouraged to migrate also because by the attraction of the cities. They believe that they can change their fate, escape from the village and look for opportunities in the cities. Looking for spouses draws unmarried people of both sexes into migration. However, it is less of a draw for men, because they usually expect to marry rural girls who have been introduced by relatives or friends. Females are more ambitious, they want to marry city residents. Moreover, few migrants, whether, male or female migrant succeed in doing this. The general influence of benefits is to encourage migration. Their influence varies according to the strength and duration of the benefit and the individual who is receiving it. People may seek the whole range of possible benefits from migration or just a part of them, and their targets change with different stages of migration. People's perceptions of benefits are limited by their information and experience. When they find that it is difficult to achieve some targets, they change their plans.

Considering costs of migration together, people make their decisions as follows. 1) On the whole, people want to get higher benefits or lower costs. Each cost or benefit

could discourage or encourage migration, but the final decision may be based on the consideration of complete balance of the costs and benefits. However, since some costs and benefits have a strong influence on migration, or people may feel especially strongly one target, a single cost or benefit, or a few important ones, may have an overwhelming influence on migration. 2) People's considerations are often based on limited and relevant information and their experience, which are enforced during migration. 3) The costs and benefits of migration vary for individuals in accordance with factors such as experience, age, different patterns of migration etc.

## **Chapter five: Attitudes and norms relevant to migration**

In chapters three and four, I analysed the material and non-material costs and benefits of migration in cities and villages, showing how these costs and benefits influence people in their decision-making. In addition to these costs and benefits, attitudes and norms relevant to migration play an important role in migration decision-making. In this chapter, I will first establish from interviews with my informants what the relevant attitudes and norms are and then analyse how they influence decision-making.

### **5.1 Attitudes and social norms**

Attitude research is an important field in social psychology. Gordon Allport (1935: 798), a founder of the field, declares, “attitudes are probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary social psychology”. Attitudes make it possible to predict behaviour, they are a selective force in perception and memory and they serve various functions (Pratkanis, et. al., 1989:1-3). Attitudes affect people’s perceptions, other attitudes and behaviour at an individual level, and attitudes are central to intergroup cooperation and conflict (Bohner and Wanke, 2002:14).

My aim in examining attitudes is to explain how they influence migration decisions, or how people make decisions based on their attitudes. In the literature, the topic of attitude-behaviour consistency has been an important subject of argument. Attitudes help people to make sense of the world around them and to adjust in a complex world. They may influence behaviour to a greater or lesser extent (Triandis, 1971:4). Some empirical research supports this point (For example see Kutner, Wilkins and Yarrow, 1952: 649-652). On the other hand, behaviour may be at odds with attitudes. For example, in a survey of over 30 studies of the relationship between attitude and behaviour, Wicker (1969: 41-78) finds that in most cases attitudes were only slightly related or were even unrelated to expected behaviour. The attitude-behaviour relationship is stronger when the attitude is strong and consistent with reality (Bohner and Wanke, 2002:243).

In addition to attitudes, social norms can influence decision-making. Social norms

are generally defined as standards of behaviour shared by a social group, commonly understood by its members as authoritative or obligatory for them. Social norms are enforced by rewards such as praise and punishment like blame. Social norms play an important role in decision-making. Jon Elster (1989:100) explains the influence of social norms on decision-making as offering “predigestion” for example “Do X or don’t do X” for simplest norms and “If you do Y, then do X or if you do Y, don’t do X” for complex ones. McAdams (1997:338-433) argues that esteem-based norms work on the basis of an individual’s internal and external sanctions because he/she will for example feel guilty about violating prescriptions such as how to be a good parent. To explain why people comply with social norms, Elizabeth Anderson (2000: 171) posits that it is rational behaviour; people conform with norms because if they transgress they will suffer. She also points out that norms are a vehicle through which people express their social identities.

Bourdieu uses his concept of “habitus” to explain attitude and norms, as discussed in chapter one (see for example, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). For Bourdieu, individuals are socially bounded and structured, because they are limited by the outside conditions like their upbringing and training. Individuals internalize beliefs and norms through a process of conditioning. The “habitus” is the “socialized subjectivity” that is internalized in an individual from the outside social world. The concept of habitus refers to the person's beliefs and disposition, and prefigures something that that person may choose to do, and refers to various socially acquired aspects such as classificatory propensities, manifested in outlooks, opinions, and embodied phenomena including deportment, posture, ways of walking, sitting, spitting, blowing the nose, etc (Scahill, 1993). Habitus underlies the second nature of human characteristics and their boundless possible variations in different historical and cultural settings. People make their decisions based on the “socialised subjectivity”, i.e. their habitus. The decisions they make are said to “make sense” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 138), in other words to comply both with individuals’ propensities like maximising their benefits and with social restrictions

such as social norms. At the same time, the decision made is not based on carefully worked out calculations, but appears like a natural response to the outside situations.

Both attitudes and norms influence migration decision-making. In the field of migration, much literature explores the social and cultural context in which some general forces of migration such as pull-push factors and life cycle stages operate (for example, Mabogunje, 1970: 1-17). Attitudes and norms are investigated as social and cultural context (For example, Connell et al., 1976). There are various approaches, for example, comparing the different attitudes between migrants and non-migrants (Song, 1998: 35; Zhang Mei, 2003: 86-88) and exploring the norms for the group or community. (Hugo, 1981: 186-224).

I use the term attitudes to explore people's opinions of migration at collective and individual levels. When I focus on general attitudes as opposed to those of individuals, I call them social attitudes. I use the word norm, to discuss what is considered by rural people to be normal behaviour in relation to migration. There are norms for whether to migrate, who should migrate, when they should go, for how long and so on.

## **5.2 Attitudes and norms in villages**

In my fieldwork, many interviewees explained that they migrated or stayed because they believed migration was "the thing they should do" or "most fellow villagers do this, so should I" etc. Others said migration was "no good" or "agriculture is good", so they should not migrate. These claims reflected social attitudes, belief, opinions and norms relevant to migration.

I used group interviews to capture general attitudes by interviewing the village cadres like the village head, the secretary and the accountant as well as head of government in the township to which the village belonged. I then asked individual villagers or migrants questions to confirm the information I had obtained or to find out more. Some attitudes generally form a continuum, like "whether to migrate". Social attitudes are therefore generally measured by dividing attitudes into several groups such as strongly positive, positive, agreeing, negative and strongly negative.

Some attitudes needed detailed narrative explanation like the attitudes on what to do and where to go. I used categories to explore first type of attitudes at village and individual level. The possible answers to the question “what is your attitude or most villagers’ attitude to migration”: were strongly positive, positive, accepting, negative, or absolutely negative. I used open-ended questions to explore the second type of attitudes.

The interviewees’ answers indicated both their own attitudes and social norms. Their opinions covered four areas: whether people should migrate, what they should do, where they should go, and the right age and gender for migration. Some expressed common shared attitudes while others were interviewees’ own ones.

Responses from both group and individual interviews about general attitudes were generally the same; however, individual attitudes were sometimes different, due to the individual’s personal circumstances and different types of migration. For example, *Most of my fellow villagers agree that migration is good especially the young people. But I don’t think so. I think a better way to make money is agriculture. I rent 100 mu for agriculture, and my net income was 20,000 yuan last year and will be up to 30,000 yuan this year. Even migrants could not earn so much money. The great thing is that I earn this money without leaving my village and it is good for my age. Of course, not every one could get hold of so much land. I got the land in 1995, because I opened wasteland and as a reward, the village committee rented it to me for 15 years, and now the contract has been renewed for 15 more years until 2025* (Deng Xinhua, male, 58 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun). The example shows how personal circumstances create differences in attitudes to migration. In addition to land holding, other personal circumstances such as age, sex, marital status and education level can influence attitudes.

The following example shows that although individuals might share general ideas about migration, they might have different attitudes to different types of migration.

*My fellow villagers believe that migration is good. I agree with this, but I think waged migration is not very good, because it doesn’t pay well. It is OK for toughening people up and getting experience. But if people rely on it to earn money,*

*waged migration is not good. Migration for self-employment is good by contrast* (Zhou Yuwen, male, 49 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

According to my interviewees, attitudes and norms were not sharply distinguished. In some cases, they overlapped.

*Migration is highly encouraged in my village. If a normal young male villager never migrates, he will be scolded by his parents and looked down on by other villagers* (Wang Baoshan, male, 42 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

This example indicates that the common social attitude to migration in this village was positive. It was strong enough to create a kind of social norm that pushed young male villagers to migrate. In some villages, like Sanjiao Cun, the social attitude was also fairly positive or at least neutral, but it hadn't yet created a social norm.

In the following section, I will first discuss the four areas covered by attitudes and norms respectively.

### **5.2-1 Whether to migrate**

Whether to migrate might be the most important concern associated with attitudes to migration. The answer to this question was not only a simple “yes” or “no”. The issue involved a mix of traditional and current ideas, and these ideas were undergoing change.

#### **5.2-1.1 Traditional attitudes to migration**

Traditionally, on the whole, attitudes to migration seemed negative, especially in the case of permanent migration. Some traditional sayings reflected these attitudes, for example, “staying at home is better than going out, even if home is poor” “working outside is really hard” and “working for others is like slavery”. Some sayings showed negative attitudes to permanent migration. For example, “whether your home is good or not, it is always your home” showed the feeling of migrants for their native places. “Even the leaves of the tree finally return to their roots” directly indicated the negative attitudes to permanent migration. There were few sayings in favour of migration, like “people could temper themselves by migrating”. Compared with the former sayings, the last one seemed to lack persuasiveness.

Interviewees often used traditional sayings to explain their own attitudes. For

example, a village head said, “Many villagers do migrate, but they usually don’t go far. After all, staying at home is better than going out” (Zhan Xiadian, male, 53 years old in 2004, village head in Donglou Cun). Other surveys confirm such attitudes. For example, Ma Tianrong finds that some rural people in Xinzhou do not migrate because they are satisfied with being “a little bit rich”: so long as they do not need to worry about their own living expenses and they can enjoy the life with family members (Ma Tianrong, 2004, p. 85).

These traditional sayings still held sway in the villages, however, their influence was reduced. Some sayings were endowed with new meaning, some influenced people in different ways, and some mainly influenced the old people in villages. For example, though references to hardships in cities in popular sayings had originally been meant to imply that people should not to migrate, some interviewees used the sayings in reverse to support migration. For example, “the old saying is working outside was hard. Now it is same. Everywhere working outside is hard, so don’t complain, it is no use even if you do complain about it” (Lang Dongshen, 36 years in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

Another example of a saying that has acquired a new meaning was “people can temper themselves by migrating”. The traditional meaning was that people could gain some experience, skills or knowledge through migration. In addition to this meaning, people thought now that while other benefits from migration such as money or status depend on the situation and are always uncertain; the experience will almost certainly be good for them. If the wages are low, migrants may only earn enough to keep themselves and will be not able to help to support their families. When such migrants come back to their villages, their status may fall. However, whatever their success or failure in other respects, migrants do acquire experience, and this is helpful to them when they come back. This can be seen from the case as below:

*My first job was on a construction site near my village, when I was 19 years old and had just graduated from junior middle school. If I try to recall my motive for migration, I don't think I really thought about it. My parents and I did not expect I*

*would earn much money, actually, I still can't. We didn't dream that I could become a head of a construction team because it was obviously impossible. I didn't even plan to work there long term. But working outside can toughen you up. Although I couldn't get much money or anything else, at least I could get some skills and experience* (Li Gaocai, male, 35 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).

In different villages, the sayings affect behaviour in different ways. For example, villagers in Donglou Cun thought the saying of “working for others is like slavery” was right, but they used it to support the idea that one should not be a wage worker, one should be self-employed. In contrast, villagers in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun said it meant it was better not to migrate, just to work in the village on your own land.

Among my interviewees, old people had more conservative attitudes than young people. This was especially true in the villages with low rate of migration such as Shang Cun. Young people were less conservative and in some cases, some of the young migrants did not agree with the attitude expressed by the saying at all: “I don't think working for others is like slavery. I work for a boss and he pays me money. This is a fair exchange” (Zhao Daxue, female, 24 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou). Some young people even disliked the old sayings, since their parents used them as an excuse to prevent them from migrating.

#### 5.2-1.2 Current attitudes to migration

When I asked about attitudes to migration before the economic reforms, people said “we just focused on agriculture” and “we didn't even think about migration”. These attitudes were natural because the strict *hukou* system, the nature of the labour market and the regulations of agricultural collective organisations meant that migration really was unthinkable for most people. One rural official explained:

*Before economic reform, we just worked within production team in collective agriculture. Few people migrated - they could only do so if formally required by the local government. We didn't think about this question. Migration seemed irrelevant*

to us (Wei Geidi, village head of Sanjiao Cun, male, 47 years old in 2004).

This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

After economic reform, attitudes to migration gradually changed. Three typical social attitudes to migration have developed at the village level: positive represented by Donglou Cun, accepting as in Sanjiao Cun (as well as Zuotou Cun and Dagou Cun) and negative as in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun. Attitude change may depend on specific village factors, like geographic location, land assignment and the villagers' traditional skills. The new attitudes were consistent with the costs and benefits of migration for people in these villages. I first describe these three typical attitudes to migration, and analyse why they were different.

#### a. Positive attitudes to migration in Donglou Cun

In Donglou Cun migration was generally supported or strongly supported. In group interviews involving the village secretary, village accountant and the vice-head in Donglou Township, all agreed the attitudes to migration in Donglou Cun were positive. For example, the village accountant Wang Baoshan said,

*Migration has become a norm or a custom in my village. If a person who can migrate, chooses not to, he or she, but especially he, will be regarded as useless. He may even be at the risk of not getting a bride from my village. The old people who don't migrate volunteer to help young migrants to look after children, or to farm their land encouraging them to migrate (Wang Baoshan, male, 42 years old in 2004, Donglou Cun accountant).*

This attitude was confirmed by an interviewee, Zhen Shengli, an ordinary villager from Donglou Cun.

*In 1998, I came back to my village because I had quit my factory job. When I came back, my income was low and everyday I seemed to be taking it easy, because agriculture is not hard for me, and we have only 5.4 mu of land. Though I could occasionally earn some money in the village doing odd jobs such as painting the notice board, it was very little. My wife began to complain and said I was just "a do-nothing" quite often. Later I found a job in life insurance and began to earn*

money. Then she stopped complaining (Zhen Shengli, 38 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

The data on migration in Donglou Cun partly reflects the attitudes to migration. In Donglou Cun in 2003 most male labour migrated at least once, that is 79 per cent of the male labour force or 29 per cent of the male population respectively. Female migrants were 45 per cent of the female labour force in the village and 15 per cent of the total female population. Wang Baoshan, the Donglou Cun accountant said that almost all of the young male and unmarried female villagers migrated. (Wang Baoshan, male, 42 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun). The high migration rate reflected the positive attitudes to migration.

Although general attitudes to migration in Donglou Cun were positive, not everyone strongly supported migration. For example, Sun Dajie thought that though migration was good, it was not a long-term solution. He explained the reason.

*Migration can bring some income, it is true. But now the conditions for migrants are really hard. The work in cities is too hard; the wage is low; delay or refusal of wages happens often; the competition is so furious that migrants cannot always rely on selling their strength. Migration may not be a good way to earn money long term* (Shi Lianqian, male, 57 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

Some interviewees emphasised the difference between waged and self-employed migration.

*I wouldn't encourage my son just to go for waged migration. You can't make much money with waged migration. It just offers enough to survive on. If my son migrates, it is better for him to be self-employed. Of course, he can't be self-employed at the beginning, so waged migration might be OK.* (Ding Dianwei, male, 39 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun)

#### b. Neutral attitudes to migration in Sanjiao Cun

Neutral or more or less neutral attitudes to migration were general in three villages: Sanjiao Cun, Zuotou Cun and Dagou Cun. Take Sanjiao Cun as an example, the village head and village accountant explained that the common attitude to migration in their village was that it was acceptable. Villagers did not

think migration was especially good or bad. They migrated because they had to do so to boost their agricultural income. They did not think migration was a long-term business due to various difficulties like wage problems. Young villagers were more motivated to migrate than old people, but young villagers were not so anxious to migrate long term due to low wages and hardships of migration (group interview of the Sanjiao Cun village head, Wei Geidi, male, 47 years old in 2004, , and its accountant Wei Helin, male, 66 years old in 2004).

The data on migration rates and the income sources verify these attitudes. In Sanjiao Cun, in 2003, only 11 per cent of the population or 32 per cent of the labour migrated. In contrast, the percentages were 22 per cent and 63 per cent in Donglou Cun respectively. The percent of households for which migration was the main income source was over half the total in Donglou Cun. (See table 5.1)

Table 5.1: Numbers of households by income source in three villages and each group as a percent of all households in corresponding village in 2004: estimated by cadres in each village.

Villages	Income from agriculture alone	Income from both agriculture and migration, agriculture the main source	Income from both agriculture and migration, migration the main source (including agriculture income is zero)
Donglou Cun	150 9.6%	520 33.1%	900 57.3%
Sanjiao Cun	100 37.0%	90 33.3%	80 29.6%
Liulin Wan	70 93.3%	3 4.0%	2 3.7%

Source: fieldwork in 2004.

In Donglou Cun, the attitudes to migration were so strongly positive that young men who did not migrate would be blamed or looked down on by their household members or fellow villagers. However, attitudes in Sanjiao Cun played a different role. As our villagers explained,

*Our villagers don't look down on a person who is able to migrate but doesn't. We understand that migration is hard and wages are often delayed or the boss refuses to pay. But some migrants may wonder about the non-migrants thinking that if they*

can't earn big money in other ways, why not to try to earn some money from migration? (Wei Geidi, male, 47 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

Although generally attitudes were neutral in Sanjiao Cun, different people still had different ideas. For example, young people, especially those who had never migrated, believed that migration would be a good way for them to get experience and skills.

### c. Negative attitudes to migration in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun

Villagers in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun were generally negative about migration. For example, a village cadre said:

*The standard job for peasants is just agriculture. If a peasant does not work in agriculture, how can he/she be called a peasant? Migration is no good. I look at some of the young people who have migrated, they can't get good work and earn money, and sometimes they waste their parents' money. They have to come back home after a few years of migration. So I think migration is just muddle-headed (hunao).* (Wei Facai, male, 50 years old in 2004, village cadre in Liulin Wan)

In both villages, most people worked in agriculture and the rate of migration was low. Generally, male labour migration was the mainstream, but even so only six cent of the male workforce in Liulin Wan and ten per cent in Shang Cun migrated, compared with 85 per cent in Donglou Cun. The table below shows the migration rates for each village. Not only was the rate of migration was low in both villages, the migration income was also low as a percentage of whole income, shown in the table below.

Table 5.2 The number of households by income source in two villages and the percent of each group to total households in the corresponding village in 2004: estimated by cadres in each village.

Villages	Income only from agriculture	Income from both agriculture and migration, agricultural income the major source	Income from both agricultural and migration, migration income the major source
Liulin Wan	70 93%	3 4%	2 3%
Shang Cun	30 94%	0 0%	2 6%

Source: fieldwork interviews in Xinzhou in 2004

Though the general attitudes to migration were negative, some young people still thought migration was good and want to try it.

*I prefer migration. Everything is good in cities. The transport, environment, entertainment are convenient. Life in the village is dull. If I can't do well in cities, I will come back* (Gan Jiangjun, male, 22 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan. He had migrated to Taiyuan and Xi'an for four years staying with relatives. Interviewed in Liulin Wan)

### 5.2-1.3 The reasons for different attitudes

Traditional attitudes to migration predominated before economic reform and differed little between the six villages. However, after economic reform, attitudes began to change. Now they can be categorised as positive, accepting or negative. All my six villages were in the same province, and came under the same prefecture. However, as I will explain below, they differed in significant ways.

#### a. The degree of urban influence

Though the six villages were located in the same prefecture, the influences of the city on them were different because the distance and communications between the villages and their nearest cities or country towns were quite different.

For example, Donglou Cun is located five kilometres from Xinzhou and seven kilometres from the city centre. It takes half an hour for villagers to go to Xinzhou by bicycle and 10 minutes by bus. So going to Xinzhou and other cities was convenient. In addition to easy transport, communications in Donglou Cun were better than in other villages. There are 805 landline telephones in Donglou Cun, which means on average every second household has a telephone. Migrants owned more than 1,000 mobile phones meaning that 66 per cent of migrants had one. By contrast, Sanjiao Cun is located 30 kilometres from Xinzhou. It is difficult for migrants to come back after a day's work. They rent houses or live in accommodation provided by their employers in Xinzhou or Taiyuan. The villagers had only 50 telephones and migrants had 30 mobile phones meaning that every 5.4 households had a telephone and every three migrants had a mobile phone. Shang Cun, an even greater contrast, is 15 kilometres from Kelan, but most of this distance is mountain footpaths. In 2004 when

I went to Shang Cun, a single-track road which a truck could use had just been finished. Shang Cun was nevertheless still a typical closed village without a single landline phone or a mobile. Villagers knew little about the outside world. Most interviewees in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun said they had just been to Kelan once or twice to purchase goods, for many of them that was the farthest they had ever been.

The short distance and good communications allowed people in Donglou Cun to get more job information and have better opportunities. According to the village head in Donglou Cun, companies such as construction enterprises often came to their village to recruit labour. There were far fewer such opportunities in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun. The lifestyle in Donglou Cun was similar to that of city residents. Although the villagers were peasants, they still often bought eggs, meats and other foods in village market. This would have been very unusual in other villages. The houses that villagers in Donglou Cun lived in were similar to those in Xinzhou. There were five restaurants in Donglou Cun, but none in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun. During my fieldwork, I often saw these restaurants full at lunch time.

In addition to distance and communications, education level and the special skills played a role in the villagers' ability to exploit opportunities in the cities. For example, villagers in Donglou Cun had the advantage of carpentry skills, which made it easy for them to get jobs. Some families traditionally specialised in selling furniture to the surrounding villages or towns. This tradition persists today. In some families two or three generations were engaged in carpentry. Carpentry was a major occupation for male migrants from Donglou Cun and so was related work like house decorating and painting. The Donglou Cun secretary told the story of migration from his village.

*After the economic reform in 1978, the villagers in Donglou Cun gradually began to work as carpenters in Xinzhou. Since the villagers are good at this work, my village was soon well known for good design and high quality furniture. At the same time, the city residents began to have more requirements for house decorating. Some city residents specially asked our villagers to help do up their houses. So more and more people worked in Xinzhou and they branched out from carpentry to decorating, oil*

*painting and installing doors and windows etc. Now most migrants from my village work in these occupations. We have such a reputation that even the people who have good relationships with these migrants have to make an appointment to get their houses decorated two months in advance.* (Zhan Xiatian, male, 46 years old in 2004, village secretary in Donglou Cun )

Unlike villagers in Donglou Cun, villagers in Sanjiao Cun usually did not have special skills. The majority of male migrants worked in construction or restaurants, and female migrants worked as waitresses or saleswomen. The education level in Shang Cun was particularly low. In a labour force of 160, 57 had only primary school education, 100 junior middle and only three had senior middle school education. The low educational level meant villagers had no prospect of good jobs, and their job opportunities were limited.

#### b. The costs and benefits of migration

The different costs and benefits of migration were the main underlying cause of different attitudes.

Because of the distance between the various villages and the cities, existing social network and links with successful migrants, villagers in Donglou Cun had the lowest costs and best benefits of migration, while villagers in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun had disadvantages in both costs and benefits. For example, in Donglou Cun, easy transport and communication made it easier and cheaper for villagers to migrate. As one carpenter explained,

*My two sons and I are carpenters. We usually work in Xinzhou and the surrounding towns or villages. When we work, we just go to the work place by bicycle, which takes about 20-30 minutes. If the employer doesn't provide us with lunch or dinner, or if he is going to charge us for food, we just bring meals with us. After finishing a day's work at about 10 or 11pm, we then come back together. It is just like being a city resident who works in a city* (Wei Xiaobai, 59 years old in 2004, male, from Dongloou Cun).

The short distance saved the time and money for Wei Xiaobai, and it also meant he did not have to leave his family. In other societies such workers might be perceived

as commuters rather than migrants, in China however, because they have rural residential status and travel into urban areas to work, they are counted as migrant workers. Compared with migrants from other villages, these were important advantages. Migrants from other villages had to consider living expenses, accommodation in town, and how to get their farming done while they were away

Another advantage of migration over a short distance was that migrants could take on odd jobs or chores, like moving house for someone or carrying stuff. These jobs were really short-term, perhaps even lasting only one day. Migrants from far distant villages did not like this work, because it was not continuous. Villagers in Donglou Cun did not have this worry.

*I had experience of doing this work. There is a street near the train station, where there are many chances to load stuff on the trains or unload it and transport it somewhere else. So many people wait there to get hired. Now it's become a hiring market, if some city resident needs a cleaner for their house, or they are moving houses, they just go there to get a worker. It's hourly paid. We often bargained with employers, and when we did the work, they gave us cash. After finishing, we went home and went to the street the next day to wait for new work. Of course, there were many workers like me, so there were not always many chances to work. Sometimes, I waited for a whole day and didn't get a single job. Our villagers call this job 'fishing', which means that if you have good luck, you may catch a 'fish'- get a job today and earn about 10-30 yuan, if bad luck, you just waste time. But I didn't need to be afraid. If I stayed at home, I just did nothing. When I "fished", I didn't spend extra money compared with staying at home, because I brought a meal and slept at home. But this work was not good because we couldn't rely on it to earn big money. Later I found a job in a factory and then I didn't do it any more (Zhang Xinwei, 36 years old in 2004, male, from Donglou Cun).*

The social network also created differences in the costs of migration. Donglou Cun with the highest rate of migration, the greatest number of migrants and the most successful migrants among six villages naturally had a good social network that helped villagers to find jobs quickly and easily. In Liulin Wan and Shang Cun,

because few people migrated, there was no social network for migration and costs were consequently higher. As I have already shown in chapter three the main channels for seeking jobs were personal contacts, the size and quality of the social network was decisive for the ease and success of migration:

For villagers in Donglou Cun, migration incomes were the main income source, while in other villages like Sanjiao Cun, migration incomes were only supplementary. In Liulin Wan and Shang Cun they were almost zero. In Donglou Cun, there were some particularly successful migrants. Firstly, many migrants were skilled workers, like carpenters in contrast to other villages where I conducted interviews where there were few skilled workers. Secondly, ten Donglou households owned houses in cities including Xinzhou despite the fact that as I show in chapter four even village house building was a heavy burden for most villagers, while buying house in cities was even more expensive. There was only one reported case of villagers buying a house in a city in all my other fieldwork villages. Thirdly, some Donglou migrants had become entrepreneurs. For example, Zhou Yuwen ran a brick factory and had earned 500,000 yuan a year in recent years. A Donglou Cun villager even ran a restaurant in Guangzhou. Donglou was the most successful migrant village both in terms of the money earned and the position achieved by some of its migrants.

In chapters three and four, I discussed the costs and benefits of migration at individual level indicating that individuals have different costs and benefits. However, within each village the costs and benefits of migration tend to be similar as they are determined by the same factors. The attitudes to migration within each village tend to be consistent with the costs and benefits of migration.

#### c. Village production patterns affect attitudes to migration

In Donglou Cun, migration had become the major way of making money and it was generally believed that if a person wanted to be prosperous, he/she must migrate. According to the accountant, Wang Baoshan, good migrants who worked over 10 months a year could earn 20,000-30,000 yuan, and those who worked about three-five months could earn about 10,000 yuan. (Wang Baoshan, male, 42 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun). The great volume of migration income enhanced the

positive attitudes to migration. In Liulin Wan and Shang Cun, the major sources of income were cultivation and raising sheep. When I asked them how they could become richer, most of them answered “by raising more sheep”. Their type of economic activity had strengthened their negative attitudes to migration.

#### 5.2-2 What to do

The above section focuses on the common social attitudes to migration in different villages. Migration is an important way to make a living, but there are other ways like agriculture and sidelines, the attitudes to which also influence villagers’ migration decisions. Some interviewees explained why they migrated referring to the general attitudes towards agriculture and sidelines. For example, Long Guli explained:

*After I graduated from junior middle school, I was 16 years old. When I thought what I would do in the future, my first idea was to go to cities and not to work in agriculture, because there was no real future in the village, unless you just wanted to be a peasant. If I lived in the village for my whole life, I am sure I’d be bored. It’s really great to live in cities.*

Asked whether he had thought of anything than agriculture and migration, such as raising some pigs or cows, or doing some other sideline work like running a restaurant in the village at that time, Long continued:

*No, not at that time. You know, it is not work that the people do at my age. It is usually done by middle aged people with experience. They have the skills, money and maybe many friends, so they can do it successfully. Without these advantages, it is really difficult to manage. A villager raised many rabbits years ago and when they grew up, they were dead in a week because of a kind of disease. It is risky. But now I have begun to think about this question occasionally. I think that living in my village was not always a bad thing. So if I get tired of migration or when I become old, I plan that I may come back home and raise some cows or pigs. That could earn more money than cultivation, and it is also a higher status job in village. (Long Guli, male, was 19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun.)*

From Long’s story, we can see Long’s opinions on agriculture, sidelines and migration. He had thought about some of the advantages and disadvantages of these

alternatives, when it was better to do the job and what the job required. These opinions mirrored common attitudes among villagers. For example, the opinion that there was no real future in agriculture was widespread in villages like Donglou Cun. People thought that cultivation could only assure that people didn't go hungry and people who only did agricultural work had the least prospects. However, these attitudes were not the same in each village. For example, villagers in Donglou Cun thought agriculture was not good for income or status, while those in Shang Cun or Liulin Wan thought it was OK. The difference arose from the different conditions in these villages. In this discussion, I divide the six villages into three groups according to their migration rates - high, middle-ranking and low - and look at the typical attitudes in each group.

Agriculture in my fieldwork included cultivation (crop-raising), which was common in each of the villages. Crops included corn, potatoes and vegetables, and some villages had orchards. Agricultural conditions varied a lot from one village to another depending on the area of land, fertility and location. When the land was mountainous or flat influenced machine use. For example, villagers in Donglou Cun held the least land at 1.5 *mu* per person, but its fertility was very high while villagers in Shang Cun held the most land at 9.8 *mu* per person, but its fertility was low. Villagers in Donglou Cun could use tractors but villagers in Shang Cun could not as their land was mountainous. Dagou Cun had 2,000 *mu* of forest and villagers in Shang Cun kept an average of 25 sheep per household. Sidelines in all the villages included running shops and restaurants, doing transport, inflating tyres and repairing bicycles. Donglou Cun had the greatest variety and number of sidelines, while Shang Cun had the least.

Attitudes to agriculture, sidelines and migration were linked to income, social status, the difficulties of taking up occupations and people's suitability for them. From table 5.3 it can be seen that people in the villages with high and middle-ranking migration rates considered that agriculture was no good as an occupation due to low earnings and status. However, it was stable and always available, so it was all right for those who did not migrate, like old people. Peasants in villages like this don't have much

land, for example, the average land per person in Donglou Cun was 1.5 *mu* and in Sanjiao Cun it was 2.72 *mu*. In Shangcun where the average land per person was 9.8 *mu*, the villagers considered that agriculture was good and produced quite high income. Each group thought sidelines could bring them higher income and status, however, they were difficult to undertake due to need for money and skills. Villagers in Donglou Cun thought positively about migration, but those in Shang Cun did not.

To sum up, villagers from the different villages have different attitudes towards agriculture, sidelines and migration, which influence their migration decisions.

Table 5.3 Different views on three ways of making a living: agriculture, sideline and migration in villages with high, middle and low rate of migration.

village	Agriculture	Sidelines in villages	Migration
Villages with a high migration rate (Donglou Cun)	Low and steady income, enough to cover food, easy work, more freedom but low status, not good for young male villagers, may be good for people who can't or don't migrate.	Higher income and status than agriculture need money to invest, difficult to manage, need skills, may be risky, suit for people who don't want to migrate, and have ability to do it.	Higher income than agriculture, if they do well, migrants could earn big money and become bosses and city residents, but it is not easy. Self-employed need set up funds, it is also risky. Waged migration suits most people, while self-employed migration only suits people with experience and ability.
Villages with a middle-ranking migration rate (Sanjiao Cun, Zuotou Cun and Dagou Cun)	Low and steady income, enough to cover food, easy work, more freedom but low status, not good for young male villagers, may be good for people who can't or don't migrate.	Higher income and status than agriculture, need money to invest, difficult to manage, need skills, may be risky, suit for people who are able to do it.	It might bring higher income and status, but generally, migrants get short-term jobs with low wage, not good jobs or big money. Migration is very hard and sometimes risky due to wages problems. Suits householder who wants to boost agricultural earnings or young people who want to get experience.
Villagers with a low migration rate (Liulin Wan and Shang Cun)	Low and steady income, enough to cover food, easy work, more freedom but low status, suits most labour.	It could bring higher income and status. But it is very difficult to take it due to money, skills and personal ability. Suit for people who have ability to do it.	Migration income is not necessarily higher than agricultural income, unless you get a good, steady job. But this is rare. May suit people who want to have a look at the outside world and seek opportunities, like young people.

Source: fieldwork interviews in Xinzhou in 2004.

### 5.2-2 Where to go, how to find a job, whether to live in cities permanently.

In this section, I will discuss general attitudes to the decisions that have to be made about migration such as where to go, how to go and whether to live in cities permanently. These questions are related to factors such as types of migration, conditions in the village and personal circumstances. For example, the choice of destination and duration of migration are largely dependent on whether migration is seasonal, circular or permanent (Connell, et al.1976: 78-90 and 121-134).

Attitudes to these questions reflect villagers' general opinions, mirroring their

perceptions of the relationship between themselves and the outside world, which help villagers to make decisions.

#### 5.2-2.1 Where to go

The common attitudes about where to go were that “I will go wherever I can get a job, or earn money” and “the nearer the place is the better”. Many interviewees expressed similar opinions. For example,

*My husband and son work outside. Generally, they go wherever they can get jobs. But my husband is old, so the nearer the better. That's true for my son too, but he can go further.* (Zhu Haitian, female, 55 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun)

The first attitude indicates that destinations were determined by the available jobs. Migrants did not care too much about distance, if only they could get a job and earn good money. For example,

*I have worked in many different cities - Taiyuan, Datong, Beijing and Yinchuan. I go wherever there are jobs. But nowhere can I earn good money. My jobs are often in construction - building houses, paving roads and digging train tunnels. I often go with my friends. I pay the transport costs and live in a tent, like a guerrilla fighter (youjidui). I usually work four to five months a year. I come back home once a month at most, depending on the distance. My mum isn't in good health, so I have to look after her* (Sun Duanlian, male, 36 years old in 2004, unmarried, from Zuotou Cun and interviewed in same village).

The high priority attached to earning money shows what the migrants want and also what they are aiming at but also indicates the difficulties they have in getting good jobs. Most migrants did not care where they went, if only they could get good money.

The second attitude of “the nearer the better” indicated that people’s preference not to go far from home. One informant linked the two attitudes. “I would be happy to go anywhere, if I could get a good job. But if the opportunities were the same, I would prefer nearby cities” (Sun Duanlian, male, 36 years old in 2004, unmarried, from Zuotou Cun and interviewed in same village).

#### 5.2-2.2 How to find a job

Migrants in China, as elsewhere, come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and fill a wide variety of work roles. The literature shows that they seek jobs in all sorts of ways. These include using hiring markets, agencies, advertisements and personal contacts. Different types of migrants use different channels. For example, the relatively educated female migrants interviewed by Hsu Jui-ying (2006: 91-100) in Kunshan, Zhejiang province, used hiring markets, agencies, relatives and friends and the internet. The migrants I interviewed were less educated and were involved in different types of labour market. Unlike the group interviewed by Hsu who mostly came from small towns rather than villages, my migrants were from a real peasant background. Most of them had low educational level and sought jobs in a very limited range of occupations. Even if they had known how to access the internet, the sort of jobs they aspired to are not advertised on it. Their general idea of the best way to find a job was “you go round your relatives and friends” (*touqin kaoyou*). Though in few cases they found work through agencies or TV or newspaper advertisements, the majority found it through personal contacts. What migrants said about the best way to find jobs reflected their recognition of themselves and outside situation. Accustomed to functioning through personal connections in their search for largely casual work, they also felt that neither agencies nor hiring markets could offer them security so they make little use of them.

### 5.2-2.3 Whether to live in cities permanently

Another issue for migrants was whether to migrate long-term or short-term, and whether to live in the cities temporarily or permanently. Typical attitudes included “if you can stay in cities long term then you should” and “don’t live in cities long-term if you don’t have the capability”

This implied that living in cities was good but difficult, and living in cities long term or permanently required real capabilities. For my interviewees, capabilities meant the migrants should have enough money, plenty of friends and a higher educational level or special skills like cooking. If migrants had the chance, choosing to live in city was the first priority and return to the village seemed absurd.

For example, *“I have a BA and will soon get a MA, how could I possibly return to my village?”*(Bian Lianzhu, female, 27 years old in 2004, studied for an M.A. in Shanxi University in 2004, from Yongxin Cun).

If villagers didn't have any special capabilities, they usually thought the best way was to stay in own village. For example,

*Becoming a city resident is good. But it needs ability. I only know about agriculture, if you asked me to live in a city, what would I do and how would I make a living? Cities are good, but they are too far away for me* (Li Huahua, female, 52 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).

This attitude was expressed generally in all six villages, however, when it came to a decision, villagers also considered other advantages and disadvantage of cities and life, for example,

*Though it would be easy for me to become a city resident, I do not want to move to a city. I like living in my village because my friends and family are around me. Anyway, if you have money, it makes no difference whether you live in a city or village* (Zhou Yuwen, a boss of a private brick factory, 49 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

### **5.2-3 Attitudes and gender**

Attitudes to migration vary according to the gender of the migrant. This section will focus on how attitudes to migration are affected by gender. The common attitudes included “men should work outside, while women should stay at home”; “after marriage, women migrants should come home”; and “migration is easier for men than for women”

The attitude that “men should work outside, while women should stay at home” was the traditional one in Shanxi. Traditionally, the roles of men and women in rural households in Shanxi were for men to work outside and earned money to support the family, while women stayed at home to look after household members and took charge of daily life. If a household needed to send a member to work outside, the man should be the first. This traditional attitude still lives on. In my fieldwork, it was common for the husband to migrate and the wife to stay at home,

or for both to migrate or neither. There were very few cases in which the wife worked outside, while husband stayed at home. When this did occur, they usually worked in a job dominated by women in which their husband could not help. For example, Zhao Shangjin worked in a clothes market in Xinzhou; her husband, who was 56 years old, had been a doctor before retirement and was not good at selling clothes. Zhang did not need his help because her daughter and son worked with her. So her husband just stayed at home and worked in agriculture, while she worked in the market with her children (Zhao Shangjin, female, 51 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou). This was a very special situation: normally, if a husband asked his wife to work outside instead of him long term, he would be mocked by other family members and fellow villagers as “useless” and “relying on women for a living”. He would lose his dignity in his village.

The data in my fieldwork indicated that the main stream of migration was male. Table 5.4 shows the migration rate of both sexes in six villages.

Table 5.4 Migration rate by sex in six villages in 2004

Villages	Migration rate	
	Male	Female
Donglou Cun	79%	45%
Sanjiao Cun	50%	14%
Zuotou Cun	40%	16%
Dagou Cun	37%	6%
Liulin Wan	6%	4%
Shang Cun	10%	5%

Notes: Migration rate shows the number of males or females who have migrated within the last year as a percentage of the total male or female labour force.

Though “women should stay at home” was the common attitude, another attitude “After marriage, women migrants should come home” implied that before marriage, women still had the freedom to migrate. Many women migrated before marriage as can be seen by the age of female migrants. For example, in Donglou Cun, 75 per

cent of the female population between 17 and 22 years old migrated, while the figure decreased sharply to 38 per cent for the 22-29 age group.

If an unmarried young woman who is over the normal marriage age stays on in a city for many years, there may be gossip about her. This problem is not experienced by men. For example,

*I am 26 years old and most girls of my age in my village are married. For various reasons, I haven't married. I have worked in Xinzhou for eight years from when I was 17. When I go back home, my close friends tell me that some villagers often discuss me. They speculate that I have got a boyfriend, or wonder if I work and live on my own. They believe I have a boyfriend, but I haven't (Yu Haili, female, 26 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).*

Many unmarried female migrants expressed their worry about the marriage deadline.

*I am 24 years old. My parents have been asking me to come back to marry for several years. Now they are pushing me harder. I don't want to go back, but if I don't, it is a problem for me (Zhao Daxue, female, interviewed in a noodle factory).*

Though most interviewees thought that migration for women should end with marriage, in Donglou Cun, there were some married female migrants. In these cases, they usually worked with their husbands and their parents-in-law helped them to look after the household.

The third attitude was “migration was easier for men than for women”. Interviewees gave many reasons for this. For example, “men can find jobs easily, while women can't.”; “migration is more dangerous for women than for men”; and “men can do many types of work, while women cannot”

Different attitudes to migration by men and women were common in each village in my fieldwork, whether the village rate of migration was high or low. However, although this idea was general in all the villages, it took a different form in some villages. In Donglou Cun, a cadre explained,

*If a young girl finds it difficult to get a job in a city, that is OK, she can just stay at home, doing agriculture and waiting for a chance, because people know it is difficult*

*for women. However, if a young male has the same difficulty, he has to try harder to find a job. He shouldn't just wait, because finding a job is not very difficult for men. If he fails to find one, it is probably his fault. Maybe he hasn't tried* (Zhan Xiatian, male, 46 years old in 2004, the Party secretary in Donglou Cun).

Reflecting the generally more difficult access to jobs, villagers in Liulin Wan said, "Even men find it difficult to find a job, so don't mention women." (Zheng Zhuti, female, 52 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).

There are many explanations for the differences in migration rates between the sexes. As my interviewees said, men could work in a wider range of jobs. The jobs commonly taken by male migrants were in construction, restaurants, trade, transport and factories. They could also be self-employed in small businesses. Ordinary jobs for women were in restaurants, trade and self-employment. They could also find jobs in hairdressing, dressmaking and textiles. But these were more difficult. The first two required skills and the third, regarded as a "good job" could only be obtained through a strong social network. The dominant occupation for men, construction, virtually excluded women. The example below shows the narrow scope of occupations open to women. It also shows that women are hit especially hard by discrimination on grounds of age.

*If I chose to migrate, what kind of job could I take? I am not sure. You suggest I could be a cashier in a supermarket, but this job is so good that I may not be able to get it. Selling newspapers or ice creams? I would only earn nine or ten yuan per day; I do not want this job. Being a waitress? I am 33 years old, who would hire me? Selling vegetables in the market? No, because the number of sellers is even more than buyers. Be an accountant? I don't have the skills. Run my own business? It is difficult actually. It seems impossible for me to find a good job in cities* (Wei Xiaobai's daughter, Wei Aiqing, male, 33 years old from Donglou Cun. She started to talk when I was interviewing her father).

In addition, parents invested in sons rather than daughters. My interviewees revealed that the people who got the money from their parents to learn some skills to prepare the migration were mainly male, and the people who were taken out of school

in order to save money for their brothers' schooling were often female. As females receive less education and training, they were at a disadvantage in migration. Zhan Xiatian explained.

*Our villagers usually support sons and daughters to go to school or learn skills in the same way. The only difference is that in some cases, when the son and daughter need money at the same time, the son is more likely to get it, because most villagers still think that later their daughter will belong to others, whereas a son will always be their own (Zhan Xiatian, village cadre in Donglou Cun, 53 years old in 2004).*

#### **5.2-4 Attitudes and ages**

Common attitudes towards the young, especially young male people in my fieldwork villages were “young people should go far, trying new things and even risky work, trying to earn more money and learn skills”. It was thought that middle-aged people should “try their best and focus on earning money”. The attitude for older people was that they should “just come back to the village or work in nearby cities, doing steady, comfortable work and picking up some money if possible”. These attitudes were common in the villages with high and medium rates of migration.

The attitudes toward young, middle-aged and older people were based on ideas about the life cycle. Young people are considered to be strong and capable of learning new knowledge and skills easily. They have few family burdens, so they can try risky work.

*I worked in a chicken unit for two years. It was an easy job. Everyday I just raised them, cleaned the place and collected eggs. But the wage was low, 450 yuan a month. The common wage at that time was over 500 yuan. I thought young people should go where they could earn more money, and not be afraid of risks. I am not the age just to do a comfortable job. So I quit it and soon found a job in construction with friends' help. (Lang Dongshen, 36 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun, interviewed in the same village).*

Middle-aged people have families. They have less freedom and more economic burdens than young people and this affects their attitudes.

*When they are middle-aged, people always have many problems.' This saying is right. I am close to 50 years old. I have parents who need to be taken care of and two kids. My son aged 25 has married but it took a lot of money and I still owe a lot. My daughter is in junior middle school. I feel I need money everywhere. I have 25 mu of land and can't easily work away from the village. Moreover, I am old and feel it's difficult to learn new skills. But I must try to earn more money. This year there was a chance to work in construction. I earned over 800 yuan in a month but it finished so I had to come back. If I get another chance, I will work outside again (Zhuo Shenzhou, male, 48 years in 2004, from Dagou Cun).*

Old people cannot do the heavy labouring work and they have fewer economic burdens than middle-aged people. So they have a relatively easy life. For example,

*I am 57 years old. I have finished the big things in my life: I built new houses for my two sons who have already married. My daughter is married to someone from Shandong, and now lives there. My health is fine, but I can't do much in my transport business, I just leave it to my son. When I am older, I want to stop transport completely, and try to work in agriculture, not traditional cultivating, but cash crops. I want to contribute to society for the rest of my days (Sun Dajie, male, 57 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).*

There was no consistent general attitude to migration in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun because these villagers had no experience of migration. A few spoke from their personal experience. For example, one man said:

*I think older people may do better with migration than young people do. Older people may earn more because they have more working experience and control themselves. Young people don't have experience, and they may waste money on drinking or smoking (Wei Facai, male, 50 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).*

To sum up, attitudes and social norms cover the key considerations of migration—whether to migrate, what to do, where to go, and how this is affected by gender and age. These attitudes and norms formed gradually in the context of history, policies, the circumstances in particular villages and the costs and benefits of migration.

### **5.3 How attitudes and norms influence migration decision-making**

There are three things that are important to an understanding of how attitudes and norms influence migration decision-making: 1) Attitudes and norms are connected to expectations and to what people think they should do, and they form gradually in as affected by history, policies and situations and the circumstances of particular villages. To some extent they reflect relationships between villagers and their outside world, and provide internal or embedded ways for people to deal with their relations to outside world. In my fieldwork, when attitudes and norms cover the key considerations of migration - whether to migrate, what to do, where to go, and issues of gender and age, they become especially important and could greatly help villagers to make decisions. 2) Norms are a kind of constraint that prevents or limits people from doing various things. If people defy them, they incur punishment probably from themselves and other fellow villagers. Similarly, if they follow norms, they feel better or are supported by others. 3) Attitudes and norms keep changing with the changing outside situation. They are also vague, informal and sometimes out of date. These weaknesses mean that villagers can not totally depend on them for decision and have to analyse their detailed situations to make decisions, like considering the costs and benefits of migration. According to my interviewees, attitudes and norms influence migration decision-making in the following ways.

#### ***5.3-1 Voluntary acceptance of attitudes and norms***

In my fieldwork, villagers or migrants often followed attitudes and norms voluntarily for various reasons, which are summarised as below.

a. People thought following attitudes and norms was a right or a natural thing. For example, in Donglou Cun, if a young person did not choose migration, it would be strange, and if he migrated, then it would be natural. Similarly, it was considered natural for a migrant over 50 to return to his village, and nobody would regard it as odd. However, if a young person who was able to live in a city, came back without special reasons, it would be difficult for the other villagers to understand.

People often accepted things as they were passively. For example, villagers or migrants not to think much of things beyond the scope of what was familiar to them. The responses below illustrate this.

*Q: Do you want to earn more money by migrating?*

*A: I want to earn more money, but not from migrating. My current life is OK. We aren't people who can never be satisfied. If we have more money, that is good. If not, that is fine as long as life can continue. Most of us live similar lives and few of us migrate (Lu Kanhao, female, 30 years old in 2004, from Shang Cun).*

In some cases, people migrated just because others did, “every one does, so I do too”. This reflects the way that social attitudes and norms work. For example,

*Before 1982, I worked as an actor in my village troupe. We organised many entertainment activities and won the first prize in Shanxi province. After 1982, the troupe was disbanded. I had no idea what to do. Many villagers worked as carpenters, but I was not interested in that, moreover, I was 30 years old and too old to learn it. Later, I found more and more villagers had begun to sell clothes in Xinzhou and nearby cities. Even my relatives were doing it and earning a lot. All of them were doing it, so I thought I could too. After all, they are no better than I am, so I invested 4000 yuan which was all the money we had at home. Later, I really earned a lot but it was very busy (Zhan Xiatian, male, 53 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).*

b. People follow norms because if do so their behaviour will be understood or supported by other villagers. For example, in Sanjiao Cun or Zuotou Cun where attitudes to migration were that it was acceptable but difficult, if a person failed in migration and came back, he did not worry his fellow villagers would blame him, either for going or for his return.

*If I return home from migration, that is OK. Nobody will blame me. All of them know migration is difficult. In fact, many people have come back (Jing Buhuan, male, 48 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun and interviewed in Sanjiao Cun).*

Not only do villagers or migrants empathise with migrants, they help each other with migration. For example,

*The common way of finding a job is just to ask help from relatives, friends and acquaintances. If my relatives or friends have some job information, they will tell me, and in turn, I will tell them if I have some. Of course this information is free. Nobody would think of charging others for it. It is open to everyone, but we often tell relevant people. For example, if I have some information about construction jobs, I just tell villagers who often do construction work. Of course, if the others are also interested in it, I could tell them too (Lang Dongshen, male, 36 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

c. People follow attitudes and norms because it is advantageous to do so

There are some advantages to following attitudes and norms. For example, attitudes and norms can be a short-cut to decision-making; following norms can save various costs and it is easy to follow attitudes and norms.

In chapters three and four, I discussed the way an individual's costs and benefits of migration could determinate his/her migration decision. Though people used whatever relevant information about costs and benefits was available to them, in many cases, they still could not judge if their decision would be good. For example, migrants often felt confused about whether they would benefit from long-term migration. They make guesses without making sure.

*Working in construction is the usual job for us. However, has the job got prospects in the future? Can we rely on it long term? I don't know. Our job is to tamp the soil to make the foundations for buildings; but people say this job will be done by machine one day. If this is true, we will lose our jobs (Shi Xinwei, male, 46 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

Many migrants were not sure if their job could last or their earnings be sustained, so they kept changing jobs. They moved both within a particular industry, for example, from one construction company to another, but also from one occupation to another. One of my interviewees began as a construction worker, but he decided this job was no good. To earn big money he said, you needed a good social network. He began to sell clothes and later he opened a shop. When I asked him what he felt about his choices, he said that he had misjudged the first change, the construction

job. He thought the job was no good, but after he left, the local government invested a great deal of money in transport for his village, which provided a lot of employment opportunities in construction. His workmates who had stayed in construction became prosperous, even richer than him (Li Gaocai, male, 35 years old, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).

There were difficulties about long-term predictions. Take learning skills as an example. Learning skills may reduce a migrant's income for the first few years, but benefit him later. Migrants tried to calculate likely costs and benefits but outside situation kept changing with unpredictable fluctuations in the labour market and new opportunities, rural people could not have the exact answers. In my fieldwork, rural people often deal with these problems in the following ways: they considered if they needed money right away or if they could afford to learn skills. Some decided to migrate but kept monitoring the benefits, ready to abandon migration if it wasn't really good for them. Some people used attitudes and norms to make decisions. For example, in Donglou Cun, migration was an important way of making a living and adding income in the long-term. Since it was long term, villagers knew that learning skills would be a good way for them to earn more money long run. Well-established attitudes and norms helped people make life plans. Some young female migrants planned to migrate for some years until they married and settled back in the village. Some people planned to learn skills in the first period of migration and then make money. They planned that when they became old, they would go back to the village to work in some sidelines.

With the help of attitudes and norms, people could make their decision easily without knowing exactly what the costs and benefits would be. For example,

*I sell clothes in Xinzhou. Sometimes, business is really bad. So I think of giving up and coming back. But then I think, many of my fellow villagers want to migrate, and we think migration is good. Since I have this chance, I cannot keep changing my mind again and again. Though currently I am losing money, it may be better later (Li Gaocai, male, 35 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou, from Dun Cun, where the rate of the migration was high).*

There were many similar cases in my fieldwork. Young people often did not know what they would earn or how much they would need to spend but they would still choose migration. One reason was that they knew that if they got a job, at least they could support themselves. They were satisfied with that even if they could not save. They knew they could not earn much, but learning skills or gaining experience was more important for them. Later they expected to change their jobs when they could find better ones. The influence of norms was important here. Since many people like them had migrated, their expectation was that everything would work out for them.

*Before getting my first job, I had decided to migrate, since many villagers work outside. If they can do it, so can I. It is OK for me as long as I get a job that keeps hunger away. But I still try to find a good job or find one later (Long Guli, male, 19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun)*

By following attitudes and norms, people can save costs on information seeking and decision making. In chapters three and four, I mentioned that migrants often compared the costs and benefits of migration, like earning and living costs. However, most people did not make very careful comparisons before they migrated. They just knew it would be OK on the basis of general experiences or attitudes. They did not need to find more information to confirm their impression, rather, they just followed what others had done, which itself could save on their costs of migration.

Similarly, people often explained migration behaviour in very simple terms. “She is going to marry, so she came back to the village” (Wei Pinan said of her daughter’s return to Sanjiao Cun). Pre-existing attitudes and norms were the basis for many people’s decisions and meant that they did not have to consider all sorts of external factors on which they might not have much information. This process simplifies decision-making.

Since attitudes and norms were based on past experience of many villagers, they were generally suitable and practicable for most people. Conforming to norms was relatively easy and less risky. As one man explained about the difference between

finding jobs using friends and relatives, and depending on an agency or advertisements,

*Most people use their relatives or friends to find a job, and most of them succeeded in getting work. Only a few people use an agent or an advertisement. They take risks. If you want to make sure to find a job without taking much of a risk, just use the usual way (Zhan Xiatian, male, 46 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).*

### **5.3-2 People feel they must follow attitudes and norms**

Attitudes and norms themselves cover various considerations of migration – should people migrate, at what age should they go, where should they go, should women go too, what work should they do and how long should they stay. These attitudes and norms to some extent regulate migration: if people do not follow these norms, they may incur the contempt of their fellow villagers.

In Donglou Cun, if young people, especially men, did not migrate unless there were circumstances such as sickness, they would be regarded as “useless” and there was a risk that girls in their village would not like to marry them. In Shang Cun and Liulin Wan, if people did not like to work in agriculture and just wanted to migrate, they were regarded as people who did not do regular business (*buzuo zhengjingshi*) and their behaviour was called muddle-headed (*hu nao*). If old people from Sanjiao Cun still worked outside when they were over 55, or especially over 60, unless they had no other way to earn a living, kind people would say that they did not know how to enjoy life. Unkind people would say they had an “addiction to money” (*cai mi*). Children were often blamed by fellow villagers for not treating their parents well. In Liulin Wan where migration was not the acceptable norm – young migrants often caused their parents concern.

*My son really wanted to work outside. After his graduation from junior middle school, he begged me to agree to him working outside again and again. He said he wanted to have a look. I told him working outside was difficult, but he still wanted to try. Finally, I agreed he could migrate, but only short term. He worked for three years in Taiyuan, Beijing and a city in South China. He always told me migration*

*was OK. I thought he might be doing well, because after all, he hadn't asked me for money to support him in three years. But later a relative of mine in Beijing told me that my son still owed him 2,000 yuan. I think he may have borrowed money not only from this relative, but from other friends. He neither has dared to borrow money from me nor tell me the truth, because he knew if he did this, I would ask him to come back (Wei Facai, 50 years old in 2004, his son, 22 years old, from Liulin Wan).*

Additionally, behaviour that conflicts with attitudes or norms may be stopped or prevented. For example, if unmarried female migrants worked in cities long-term and did not want to come back, their parents would ask them back once and again, and the fellow villagers might spread gossip about them. Some young women tried to migrate while they could, knowing that it was the norm for women to stay at home after marriage and they knew once they married, they might have no chance to migrate again.

*Before I marry, I can work outside for a few years, because once woman have married, it isn't easy to come out again. Even now, my parents have begun to ask me to come back to get married. I am of the age to marry so I don't have much time left here unless something special happens, for example, I marry a city resident or my work goes very well (Huo Xufeng, female, 22 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).*

Another example is that in Liulin Wan where villagers did not favour migration, it was difficult for the head of village to encourage his villagers to migrate.

*We encourage our villagers to work outside in many ways, like telling them how much they could earn. We even contact some agencies to recruit labour in our village, nannies for example. But only a few villagers have responded and some of those who do go out to work soon come running back (Group interview of some cadres in Liulin Wan and staff in the town government that Liulin Wan comes under).*

According to my fieldwork, three factors seemed to affect the degree of influence of attitudes and norms on decision making. Firstly, the stronger the attitudes or

norms were, the stronger the influence on migration was. For example, in Donglou Cun, the attitudes to migration were strongly positive and they were strongly negative in Shang Cun. The influence on villagers was obvious. However, in other villages where attitudes were accepting rather than strongly positive or negative, the influence was not as obvious as in the above two villages. The second factor was that the norms related to the gender issues like “men should migrate, while women should stay at home especially after marriage” strongly affect migration patterns in all villages. The third was the degree of openness of villages. Donglou Cun was the nearest to Xinzhou, and values there changed quickly with the development of Xinzhou. More and more people from Donglou Cun worked in far distant cities, which was against the current norm. Shang Cun was a closed village with norms much less affected by outside. Few people there acted against the norms.

The above discussion indicated that people’s decisions could be influenced by attitudes and norms directly. In addition, the perceptions of the costs and benefits of migration could be influenced, which also affected decision-making. This will be discussed below.

### ***5.3-3 Attitudes and norms influence migration by influencing perceptions of the costs and benefits of migration***

Attitudes and norms reflect a system of values, and the costs and benefits of migration mentioned in chapter three and four also reflected a value system. In many cases in my fieldwork, we can see that people’s perceptions of costs and benefits of migration were influenced by attitudes and norms.

For example, the norms of “migrating to nearby cities” were essentially consistent with people’s ideas about saving the costs and adding to the benefits of migration. It was true that migrating to nearby cities could save migrant’s costs, but once it became the norm, it enforced that people’s expectation that they would migrate to nearby cities. In many cases, migrants explained that the reasons they migrated to nearby cities were that it was cheap, easy to come back from, made help from friends easier. They also offered reasons such as ‘other people did it, so I followed’. This implies that attitudes and norms could affect an individual’s perceptions of

costs and benefits.

Social attitudes and norms changed perceptions of some costs and benefits and affected expectations or evaluations of migration. For example, the hardship of working in cities was a fact for migrants, and most migrants complained about the hardship. However, they did not think it was an important factor that could prevent them migrating, because they already knew migration was hard and their norms inclined them to put up with hardships and gave them strength to do so.

People who had strongly positive attitudes to migration tended not to fear some non-material costs, like missing home and feeling lonely too much. For example, some young people who had strongly positive attitudes to migration expected that their wage could only meet their basic expenses but did not mind because they attached more importance to learning skills and gaining experience. Some middle-aged people who had their own families were more interested in benefits, but as long as their wages were higher, they did not worry too much about leaving home to go far away. In contrast, people who had negative or neutral attitudes often wanted more income, or more guarantees, like steady jobs or friends to accompanying them before they would decide to go.

*If the money I earned from the migration was just equal to my agricultural income, I wouldn't choose to migrate. I would need to earn at least double my agricultural income to make me migrate, because I would have to leave my home to work outside (Xia Tianlen, female, 42 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).*

*If I were promised a good, steady job outside that my friends introduced me to or where they would work with me, I could consider migrating (Rao Tianmeng, male, 36 years old in 2004, from Shang Cun).*

*I don't want to migrate; even if the income is ten times my agricultural income (Ren Caiqi, male, 30 years old in 2004, from Shang Cun).*

These examples indicate that attitudes could change the perception of costs and benefits. Some attitudes and norms constructed the individual's costs and benefits. For example, "men should work outside, while women should stay at home" constrained women who wanted to migrate. They had to consider carefully if they

would really benefit from migration because it meant defying a norm. Similarly, “men, especially young men, should migrate” put pressure on young men who did not want to migrate in Donglou Cun, and encouraged young men who did want to go.

#### ***5.3-4 The drawbacks of attitudes and norms in relation to decision-making***

Although attitudes and norms influence migration directly and indirectly, they have some drawback in relation to it. For example, attitudes and norms change slowly and may fail to keep pace with the changing outside situation. Before the economic reforms, the general norm in all six villages was “don’t migrate, focus on agriculture”. In the early years after economic reform, about 1980 to 1985, though people gradually began to migrate, they still remained uncertain about migration. Their old norms were intact and new norms had not yet formed. At this stage, they might “have a try” and but were prepared to come back. (This will discuss more in next chapter).

Attitudes and norms can be changed by other factors such as policies. For example, attitudes changed in Liulin Wan as the benefits of migration increased and became better known.

*Our villagers just knew how to cultivate and raise sheep. If you asked them how you could become rich, their answer would be just ‘raising more sheep’; few would think to do other business. But last year, an oil company built a petrol station near our village and soon some people from somewhere else to set up a restaurant close to the petrol station. They can make 1,000 yuan a day. This really happened just down the road. Some villagers began to think: if other people can earn money at our door why don’t we? This direct experience seems to be changing villagers’ ideas (group interview including some village cadres and town cadres).*

Decisions based on attitudes and norms might be incorrect or produce conflicts. For example,

*I worked in the township government as an assistant from 1990. The wage was about 500 yuan a month. When I had been working outside for six or seven years, I had the idea of building a house in the township, so that my whole family could*

*leave the village. However, my wife and some friends didn't agree with me. They said that would be really difficult. Furthermore, when I retired, I would have to come back to this village, so why should I spend money on house building in the town? But others said it was a good idea. They thought building a new house in the town would help me a lot because I had to go to work by motorcycle, and it was very cold in winter. My daughter was studying in the township school which wasn't convenient for her. But I wasn't sure. Building a house in the township would be really expensive and my children needed money to study and for their marriages. Finally, I made the decision to build the house. I built it in 2000 and it cost 200,000 yuan. Even now I owe 40,000 yuan to my friends. Now I think I made the right decision. After moving out, my eyes were more open, and I had more idea how to earn money. This year, I set up a restaurant in the town and it makes a lot of money. Many villagers admire me (Huo Wuzai, male, 47 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun, has now moved to Zuomo Zhen, the township Dagou Cun belongs to).*

Attitudes or norms may have no effect under some special conditions, for example, if people did not have enough money to migrate.

*Attitudes don't play an important role for me in decision making. I think the most important factors would be 'prerequisites'. If you don't have enough money to support yourself, no matter how positive your attitudes, how can you migrate? (Hu Ximing male, 40 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).*

### **5.3-5 Use of attitudes and norms to make decisions**

As discussed above, attitudes and norms influence migration directly by making people follow them and influencing perceptions of costs and benefits of migration. But attitudes and norms have some drawback in relation to for decision-making. In chapters three and four, I have shown how the costs and benefits of migration determine people's decisions. This give rises to a question, what is the relationship between norms and cost benefit analysis?

There is some literature on this relationship. For example, Elster (1989) regards social norms as an independent factor that produces behaviour not reducible to individual's rational choice. He argues the reality and autonomy of norms. "By the

reality of norms I mean their independent motivating power. Norms are not merely ex post rationalisations of self-interest, although they can certainly be that sometimes. They are capable of being ex ante sources of action. By the autonomy of norms I mean their irreducibility to optimisation” (Elster, 1989: 125). Other literature regards the social norm as a constraint or obligation, in which individuals take measures like any rational behaviour. For example, Landa (2006:5-6) points out “...game-theoretic approach is precisely its treatment of social norm-based behaviour as qualitatively the same kind of object as any rational behaviour”. In this view, norms are not different from costs and benefits.

As discussed above, attitudes and norms may have an independent effect on migration. People are expected to follow norms, if not they will be sanctioned. Moreover, norms could help people to make decisions. At the same time, they could influence costs and benefits. Without attitudes or norms, people’s perception of costs and benefits may not be the same as I showed in chapters three and four. So the relationships between decision-making based on attitudes and norms or costs and benefits of migration are 1) attitudes and norms are independent; 2) attitudes and norms are partially embedded in costs and benefits of migration; 3) decisions based on attitudes and norms can be modified on the basis of cost benefit analysis; and 4) costs and benefits change attitudes and norms in actual migration, thus bringing about the transformation of old attitudes and norms.

According to my interviewees, people combine the use of norms and attitudes and costs and benefits in various ways in decision-making. For example, 1) Some mainly considered costs and benefits in making decisions although they used attitudes and norms as a guide or a background. Male migrants with a lot of experience usually fell into this group. 2) Others made decisions based on attitudes and norms as well as the basic costs and benefits at their first stage of migration, and gradually acted more on the basis of costs and benefits of migration in the later stages of migration. Many young people behaved in this way. 3) For those questions like whether to live longer in cities which are related to future costs and benefits of migration, neither attitudes nor costs may give an exact answer, some

people use both attitudes and costs or benefits analysis. 4) Norms were also regarded as an independent factor that had to be considered. For example, for unmarried women marriage was a special issue. If their parents put a lot of pressure on them, they tended to be more affected by marriage norms and to return to the village earlier. If not, they might try to extend their lives as migrants staying away from the village longer.

#### **5. 4 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed attitudes and norms to migration among villagers and how these attitudes and norms influence migration decision-making.

It has considered the main attitudes and norms of the villagers on whether to migrate, what to do, where to go, how long to go for, and on age and gender issues. Three basic attitudes to migration - positive, acceptable and negative have been discussed. The different attitudes are related to various factors such as history, policies and the costs and benefits of migration in specific circumstances. People's attitudes to migration are also related to agriculture and sidelines. Agriculture is often regarded as a steady, easy occupation whereas sidelines are seen as better but more difficult. Migrants want to go a place where they could earn money, but nearer cities were good. They believed that if a person was able to live in a city they should not come back. It was easier for men to migrate than women. Women should stay at home after marriage but before marriage, they could migrate as men did. Young men should do hard work and could take more risks; old people should just come back to the village or do some easy job. These attitudes and/or norms varied in different villages among different people in the same village.

Attitudes and norms may be either a kind of support or a constraint to migration. People follow attitudes and norms either voluntarily or because they feel compelled to do so. Attitudes and norms can influence perceptions of costs and benefits of migration. However, they have drawbacks as a guide to action. They are changing slowly and may be out-of-date. People use attitudes and norms and costs and benefits of migration together to make decisions.

## **Chapter six: Institutions relevant to migration**

In this chapter, I will analyse how institutions influence migration decision-making. Various institutions are relevant to migration, such as the labour markets, the land ownership system, social networks and household. Here I select three main ones: the labour market, the social network and the household to analyse their influences. Migration is dependent on these institutions. The labour market may constrain people from migrating or permit them to do it. Social networks influence migrants' job seeking and their selection of destination. They also help migrants to save on the costs of migration. Households discourage, allow or encourage the migration of their members based on factors such as household structure and their own needs for labour power. These institutions encourage or discourage migration directly, and also influence the costs and benefits of migration. In the following section, I will analyse each of them, focusing on how they affect migration decision-making.

### **6.1 Labour market**

Theoretically, a labour market is an important institutional mechanism through which labour is distributed on the basis of supply and demand. It optimises the use of labour resources and is instrumental in the determination of wage levels. Before the economic reforms of 1978, under the planned economy, China had almost no labour market. Instead, labour was directed by the state. For example, from 1957 to late 1978, the Chinese government implemented planned-labour allocation, which used the plan to govern the supply and demand for labour rather than market wages (Knight and Song, 2005: 16). Labour mobility was controlled by the state which used the *hukou* or household registration system to make it very difficult for people to move their residence unless directed to do so. Under this system, there was little population mobility (Davin, 1999: 4). Christiansen (1990: 94-105) points out that there were essentially three systems that divided urban and rural China preventing the movement of labour between the two areas: the *hukou* system, the administrative system of local government and the collective ownership.

Under the *hukou* system, each person was registered at birth under their current residence (*hukou suozaidi*) and status (agricultural or non-agricultural). In the urban areas, only people with a local *hukou* were entitled to formal jobs, housing, grain, education, medical and other services. The division between agricultural and non-agricultural population plays a key role in migration control. Migrants with agricultural status do not have the privileges of urban residents (Christiansen, 1990: 95). In the past, without an urban *hukou*, migrants could not find jobs or independent accommodation. Grain, oil, cloth and many other products were rationed from the 1950s to the early 1980s. Migrants could not get a grain ration in the cities, but received grain from their own villages. Transfer of *hukou* status from agricultural to non-agricultural was very difficult, and remained so well into the 1990s (Davlin, 1999: 5).

The ownership system was also an obstacle to labour migration. In rural areas, collective ownership was dominant. It consisted of three-level ownership from the commune at the top, through the production brigade to the production team at the basic level. Arable land, large livestock, draught animals, and larger equipment were controlled by the production team. The individual peasant owned only a few ordinary tools such as a reaphook. Individual peasants belonged to a particular team through which they had access to land. They were paid through the work point which also tied them to the land. Rural collective ownership was associated with the *hukou* system, under which each peasant was bound to a specific administrative village (Christiansen, 1990:95-97).

After economic reforms, these administrative controls slackened. In urban areas, state-owned enterprises increased their managerial autonomy and reward was linked to performance (Wong and Mok, 1995:5-6). The administrative allocation of workers to jobs decreased and enterprises gradually gained more power to hire and fire. Lifetime employment was stopped for new workers (Knight and Song, 2005:116). This extended autonomy made it possible for migrants with agricultural *hukou* to get jobs in these enterprises although this remained unusual. The private economy and joint ventures were permitted to develop (Wong and Mok, 1995:5-6). The rapid

growth of the non-state sector provided many job opportunities for people without urban *hukou* status, for example, the increasing labour demand in construction and the service sector attracted much migration (Goldstein, 1990: 675). Many migrants looked for work in the private sector, or ran their own business in the cities, which made their *hukou* status irrelevant. In addition, as rationing came to an end and most commodities were available on the open market, migrants with agricultural *hukou* were able to purchase what they needed to live in cities longer. The effects of the *hukou* system diminished, but the continued restriction on migrants owning land or houses in urban areas or accessing urban schools did mean that levels of permanent migration remained comparatively low (Xiang Biao, 2000: x).

In rural areas, the “responsibility system” for land also brought about major changes. The responsibility system involved a series of contracts between the state, the collective and the household. The state decided types of crops to be grown and the amount to be delivered to the collective. The household contracted to deliver a fixed amount of products to the state and collectives in exchange for the use right to the land (Goldstein and Goldstein, 1987: 96). The responsibility system allowed the household more autonomy in the management of production. Once the household became an independent unit of production and management, it became apparent that there was a huge labour surplus in rural China. This surplus labour was attracted by various non-agricultural activities within the villages, county and market towns and townships (Goldstein, 1987:96).

### ***6.1-1 Decision making before economic reform***

Before economic reform, there was no labour market in Shanxi and the rest of China. Peasants were constrained to work in agriculture. In my fieldwork, the few people who had migrated prior to the reforms had been recruited by state-owned companies or were soldiers. Some villagers did work outside through their production teams. One case was Zhao Xuanli, who worked outside with the village “special skill team” in nearby reservoirs for about four years and came back village at 1976 (Zhao Xuanli, female, 48 years in 2004, from Donglou Cun ).

Peasants who did get a chance of employment in cities were often “good” peasants: those possessing special skills, or with a higher educational level or village cadres. For example, Wei Xiaobai learned carpentry after 1962 and from 1964 worked in village sideline team. He worked so well that he got a job in the Road Bureau in Xinzhou which recruited contract workers, and he worked there till economic reform (Wei Xiaobai, 59 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun). But for most interviewees the lack of any real labour market meant that they could never leave the village. Many interviewees said that migration was not permitted and there were no easy ways to migrate. For example,

*At that time (before economic reform), the collective economy was universal and everywhere was asked to follow Dazhai pattern. (Dazhai was a village in Shanxi famous for its agricultural production records.) Few people worked in cities and free migration wasn't allowed. We were encouraged to work hard in agriculture and contribute to the state economy. Even if you wanted to migrate, it was impossible. How could you go and where would you go? (Liu Kexing, female, 45 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

Liu said that migration was not permitted before economic reform, and in fact, many interviewees had not even thought about migration. “Few people migrated at that time. I never considered whether it would be a good thing or if I would migrate” (Wei Geidi, male, 47 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun). These villagers generally focused on their agricultural work and tried to earn more “work points” (*gongfen*), without considering migration.

*My whole family were peasants. When I was young, I began to work with my parents in the fifth work team. Before the reform, the economy was collective. We worked trying to earn more “gongfen” (work points). Gongfen were very important, if you didn't work, you don't have any gongfen, and then you couldn't get any food. A saying at that time was “gongfen, gongfen, our base of life”. We had no other channels to get food. So my thoughts at that time were all about trying to earn more “gongfen”*

*The economic status of my household was OK in our village. My dad earned 320 “gongfen”, I could earn up to 250, my brother 200 and mom earned 100 in a year. Since I had a part time job in our production team as “gongfen” recorder, I earned more than my brother. Each “gongfen” equalled to 0.4 yuan. We earned a total of 250 kilograms of flour and 350 yuan in one year. If we didn’t have gongfen, we couldn’t get flour or money. Mum also raised a pig and about 10 chickens. That was quite something. A pig could be sold for 80 yuan and 10 chickens including eggs could earn enough money for a whole year’s salt, soy sauce and oil. But the pig had to be sold to the rural food company, it was not allowed for individuals to slaughter it and sell the meat. We weren’t allowed to raise more pigs and fowls because the policy of “cutting capitalist tails” didn’t permit us to do that (Wei Helin, male, 66 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

Wei continued to explain that under the ownership of production team, it seemed impossible to migrate.

*The production team owned almost everything and we only held simple tools like shovels and hoes. You ask me why I didn’t migrate, but if I had left the production team, how could I have survived? The work team allocated all our earnings including the food and money through “gongfen”. If I hadn’t worked for the team, I would not have had food and welfare. Even if I had worked in a city and earned money, I couldn’t have got food there, because food was rationed. I could buy food in a city, but at a much higher price. Working in production team, we had very cheap education costs. The whole year’s schooling cost only three yuan, equal to eight “gongfen”. That means I worked eight days to pay the whole year’s costs. The collective gave us almost everything - food, money and education, so we just needed to work in agriculture (Wei Helin, male, 66 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

The above cases show how the collective economy and grain ration constrained migration. The case below shows that the *hukou* system meant even the temporary migration was not easy.

*Don’t mention a permanent job in state-owned companies. How would you get this job and how would you manage to transfer your hukou? Even temporary*

*workers employed by the mining company needed the agreement of the Labour Bureau. Moreover, you could not go out without an introduction letter issued by the production brigade. The letter was like the present ID card. Without it, you couldn't even stay in a hostel, or look for jobs (Liang Shancai, male, 68 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

There were very few cases in which people migrated without some identification such as introduction letters. In my fieldwork, I found one man had worked in Xinzhou short-term without an introduction, but he was heavily reliant on his relatives, and sometimes, it was more like helping them than doing a job. Moreover, he still needed the agreement of production teams to leave.

*I was a carpenter. I had relatives in Xinzhou. Sometimes, they needed some furniture, or their friends needed chairs and tables for a wedding and they asked me to help. I usually made them at home and they came my home to collect them. They sometimes paid me or gave me gifts to thank me. But sometimes I would just make a chair or something to help them for nothing. If they asked me to make windows or doors, or their furniture was broken, I had to go to their houses to work for a day or a couple of days. I then asked leave from my production team and went to my relatives' house. I didn't need any other identification, because I stayed and ate at my relatives' house. However, if I stayed there longer, I had to bring grain tickets to give them, because they had just enough grain tickets for their own household (Wei Xiaobai, 59 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).*

If someone insisted on migrating without any authorisation, it could cause serious trouble. Such cases were really rare.

*I had a friend who worked in the country fertiliser factory in 1975. He got sick and had asked leave for a couple of months. He told me that if I went to their factory to ask for a temporary position to replace him, I might get the opportunity. Then if they liked me, I might even get a job. I thought it was a good chance and I should jump at it. I discussed with my dad, he did not agree. He said the chance was so slight, and I was nothing special, so why would they employ me. The better thing would be to focus on my own job.*

*I wanted to try so I asked my production team leader for two months' leave. He didn't agree either. He said it was a busy time and I couldn't leave. But my friend told me to come. I was young at that time, about 20 years old, so I simply went there. Unfortunately, I had no luck. The factory had already arranged for someone else to replace my friend. When I went home, a few days later, the worst happened. The production team dismissed me from the part-time job I had before as assistant guard, and gave me a serious warning. After that, I was always treated as a bad example for "breaking the discipline". From this event, I totally gave up the idea of migration (Wang Huiping, 49 years old in 2005, from Donglou Cun).*

To sum up, before economic reform, the lack of a labour market and the constraints of the collective system meant that rural people did not consider migration, or only migrated in a very limited form.

#### **6.1-2 Decision-making after economic reform**

After economic reform, the situation gradually changed. Non-agricultural working opportunities increased. A hiring market developed in Xinzhou. As mentioned before, people from Donglou Cun went to "Sanjiao Dao" to wait to be hired to help people move house, carry luggage, etc. After the reforms, labour agents also began to appear in Shanxi for the first time, but many people complained that these agents cheated. All six villages where I conducted my fieldwork had been visited by construction companies wanting to recruit labour to work in cities which had never happened before economic reform. The villagers' options became much more varied. Rural people were allowed and even encouraged to do non-agricultural work in the villages. In Donglou Cun and Sanjiao Cun, some interviewees said that their cadres encouraged them to take a loan from local agriculture credit organisations. With them they could set up pig units or run restaurants nearby their villages. Migration also became possible. People began to do various jobs such as selling clothes and doing construction work in cities. These new situations influenced migration decision-making in various ways:

### 6.1-2.1 Migration became considered as one of various ways of earning income

Before economic reform, few people considered migration. After economic reform, as the restrictions on labour mobility were eased and rural people were allowed to do both agricultural and non-agricultural work, people began to think of various ways to add their income, and migration was one of them.

*Before economic reform, in addition to agricultural work, I worked for the performance team in my village. After economic reform, in 1982, the team was dissolved along with the production team. I had no idea what to do then. Someone suggested that we should organise a new performance team; he said if we played at nearby villages and townships, we could earn good money. I thought it would be hard to create a new team on our own. Someone suggested doing carpentry, which lots of men did in our village, but I was already about 30 years old and thought I might not be any good at it. Anyway, I didn't like it. A friend suggested raising cows brought in good money and pointed out we were encouraged to raise pigs and cows by the township government. Some fellow villagers were already doing it. But some of them didn't make much because of low prices. A popular way to earn money was to sell clothes in Xinzhou. Lots of people did it, even one of my relatives. So I thought that might be better, and I began to do the same in Xinzhou (Zhan Xiatian, male, 53 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).*

Zhan selected migration as his way to earn money. The case below is of a peasant who thought working in the village was better.

*After economic reform, the collective economy collapsed. I discussed with my wife what we should do. We had 12 mu of land; migration seemed impossible because working 12 mu wasn't too easy. And not many of my fellow villagers had migrated, so I wasn't sure if migration could bring me good money. A better way was to rent an orchard. We had worked in the garden under the production team so we had some experience. Moreover, the township government encouraged people to rent orchards. So that was what we did from 1984 to 1994 (Wei Geidi, 47 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

From the two cases above, we can see that after the constraints lifted, rural people began to think of ways to earn more. Migration was one of the possibilities.

#### 6.2-2.2 Considering if “I will benefit”

Before economic reform, if people thought about migration at all, it was generally to think “it is not allowed”. After economic reform, rural people began to not only to think if they would be allowed to migrate, but if they would benefit. For example,

*I worked in a collective shop in our township. After economic reform, the shop closed so I came back to my village. Then I thought about what to do next. Migration was of course OK, and some of my fellow villagers had migrated, but I thought they can't earn much. if I run a shop in my village, I might earn more. So in 1992, I set up my own shop in my village. I was in charge of getting the stock from Xinzhou, Taiyuan or Shijiazhuang and my wife was to do the selling. But later business became bad. I found that working in construction was better. One friend could earn 100-120 yuan a day, because the work was piecework, we could earn this money as long as we were strong enough. I thought that was better than running a shop, so I migrated as well (Shi Jianguo, male, 50 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

Migration is hardly constrained by movement control policies any more. It is the market that now controls movement. Once the *hukou* system ceased to be severely enforced, as Christiansen (1990: 92) found, “the effectiveness of the household registration system in keeping the population in the countryside depends on the economic possibilities for rural migrants in the big cities”.

In my fieldwork, migrants did not regard the *hukou* as a serious barrier to migration after economic reform. Many people just worked in the nearby cities, like Xinzhou and Taiyuan as contract or temporary workers in the private sector and their *hukou* status did not matter. However, if migrants wanted to live in cities long-term, or became city residents, the *hukou* became an important barrier, because it affected entitlements to healthcare and children’s education. .

In very rare cases, if people did not plan to live in cities longer, they even considered how to transfer back to the villages. For example,

*I have changed my hukou to get urban status. However, I find it isn't always good. My brother is still in our village with an agricultural hukou. He manages a chicken farm and raises 10,000 chickens. He earns much more than I earn in Xinzhou. My husband and I want to copy my brother and raise chickens, but my hukou status isn't agricultural now so it is really difficult for us to rent land in the village (Wei Menzhu, 33 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).*

For migrants to big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, the *hukou* or getting a temporary resident's card is still a problem. For example,

*One afternoon, we were working on a construction site in Beijing. Suddenly, the workers began to shout, "the police are coming". Then they hid themselves away. I didn't know what happened, and just stayed to watch. Two policemen approached, asking me to show a "temporary resident card". I had never heard of this thing, and of course couldn't show one. Then they told me that without this card, I couldn't stay in Beijing. They fined me, but I hadn't any money. So they took me to the police station and asked me to work there for hours. I thought it was better than being fined, so I did as they asked (Lang Dongshen, male, 36 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

#### 6.1-2.3 Other influences: norms and way of migration

When rural people began to compare the different ways of earning, they tended to be quite doubtful about migration and to monitor it to see if it was good way to add to income. Many people were suspicious. For example, the village head of Sanjiao Cun explained, when some construction companies came to the village to recruit labour to work in cities, many villagers thought it might be a trap. They worried that the company would not keep its promise to pay them, or would just cheat them. Some rural people did finally go thinking "I'll have a try, if it's successful, I'll earn good money, if not, then I'll just come back and it will be a few months wasted". The other villagers just watched, if these migrants came back safely with big money, they would follow next time (Wei Geidi, the head of Sanjiao Cun, male, 47 years old in 2004).

Without information about migration or experience of it - how much they could earn, how much they could spent in cities and what to do about dangers such as crime - people were very uncertain about working outside. They were prepared to give it a try however.

*I was the leader of a production team before economic reform. At that time, I had established a construction team to build houses and roads for our village. After economic reform, the team was broken up. However, because I had the experience of setting up a construction team, someone suggested that I should reorganise a team to work in Xinzhou. I wasn't sure if it was a good idea, because I knew nothing about the market: I did not know whether I could bid for a project, and how much we could earn. Later, I had a go, but unfortunately, it was really hard to manage. So after few years, I gave up it (Deng Xinhua, male, 58 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).*

There were fewer opportunities to work in cities in the early years than is now the case so. People did not rely heavily on migration.

*In the early 1980s, just after economic reform, the most usual job was construction work. Unlike now, there were no jobs in hotels, restaurants or transport. Working in construction was too hard. I tried it for a few days, but I felt it was bad, working a 10 hour-day, but earning so little. I wanted to find a better job, otherwise, it was no better than raising pigs or chickens. These days, I would choose being a waiter; after all, work in restaurants would be comfortable (Ji Guifang, male, 40 years old in 2004)*

This having a try attitude had knock-on effects. For example, as people did not think migration was a long-term plan they did not invest in learning skills for it. For example,

*After economic reform, I worked in a construction site. I didn't regard migration as a long term business. There were not many villagers working outside and I just thought it was good enough just to earn some money. So I just kept doing unskilled work in construction and I didn't learn skills like welding. If I were that age now, I*

*would learn some skills. But I am old and tied down by my household; I cannot learn skills* (Jing Buhuan, male, 48 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

The attitude of “having a try” gradually changed as migration increased. When the relevant social attitudes and norms formed, for example, people from Donglou Cun gradually began to regard migration as the main way to earn money, they started to regard migration as a long-term plan and many young people learned some skills to improve their chances in migration. By the time I conducted my fieldwork in Shanxi in 2004, over 20 years after the beginning of the economic reforms, the villages had formed their own attitudes and norms on migration which guided their migration decisions. This echoes Christiansen’s findings in his research on the rural areas of Wuxi and Nanjing from 1978-1989, “Social norms had changed. The move away from agriculture had become a necessity, the ambition to leave the rustic past behind had become a socially accepted norm; success outside agriculture gave social status” (Christiansen, 1990: 139).

## **6.2 Social networks**

The channels of job seeking for migrants in China are the hiring market, job centres run by the local government or private company, social networks, personal contacts or advertisements. Social networks play an important role. Many surveys indicate that social networks are the main channels for rural to urban migration in China. For example, a survey conducted in the Shanghai and Jiangsu region in 1995 found that 75.6 per cent of first time migrants were “self-organised” that is looking for jobs with help from friends or relatives, or going along with others. Subsequent migrants could use social networks that were thus extended (Zhao, 2000: 231-250).

Theory explains the importance of social networks in job seeking. For example, the theorist Lin Nan (2001:19-20) explains how social networks function, facilitating the flow of information, and thus reducing the transaction costs. This in turn exercises an influence on the employers’ hiring decisions. Some empirical studies support Lin’s ideas. For example, based on a study in Handan, Hebei province, Knight and Song (2005:205-228) find that the main source of general information about the jobs is the social network, and the costs of finding jobs this way are lower than through the

media. In a study of thirteen cities in China, Sato (2003:91-115) finds that social networks are particularly useful for migrants in obtaining unskilled and middle-rank jobs.

In my fieldwork, social networks generally comprised relatives, friends, fellow villages, acquaintances and extensions to this core network like relatives' friends, or friends' friends and the new friends that migrants got to know when they migrated. Most migrants relied on social networks to find jobs and shared accommodation during migration. Using social networks was a common way for migrants to make migration easier in my fieldwork. I will first discuss the advantages of social networks according to my interviewees, and then examine how social networks influence migration decision-making.

### ***6.2-1 The advantages of social networks in my fieldwork***

#### **6.2-1.1 Social networks enlarge people's opportunities of migration**

In my fieldwork, my interviewees had used all the possible job-seeking channels: hiring markets, job centres, social networks, personal contacts and advertisements, but social networks were the most important. Only a few people used hiring markets, job centres and advertisements. The hiring market in Xinzhou region was a street in Xinzhou, where people came to hire temporary labour, for example to carry luggage or to help them to move house. Some people in Donglou Cun used the hiring market. Since the market could not provide the long-term jobs, migrants usually stopped going to it once they got better jobs. Some companies recruited labour in the villages, however, these opportunities were few. Donglou villagers had the most chances of employment among the six villages, as companies visited about 5 times a year, but they provided far fewer jobs than people wanted. There was one official job centre in Xinzhou run by the Labour Bureau. Some interviewees complained that most job opportunities provided by the official job centre were for urban residents and there were few available for them. There were many private job centres in Xinzhou and Taiyan, but migrants had no confidence in them; many surveys and the media reported that the private job centres in Shanxi

and the rest of China do a poor job. This was borne out in my fieldwork, for example,

*I heard that a job centre in Xinzhou would give you job opportunities with guarantee for a charge of 50 yuan. I thought it might be good, then I went there for job information. After paying 50 yuan, they immediately gave me a job, working in a restaurant. However, the wage was only 150 yuan a month, and the boss wasn't kind to me. He always blamed me for the least mistake. So I had to quit the job three months later. Now I wonder if it may be a trap: the job centre and the restaurant work together to cheat job seekers through commission fees and low wages (Zhang Haohan, male, 22 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

Migrants also lacked faith in advertisements. Some migrants took jobs in a noodle factory through a TV advertisement because they knew it was a well-known factory in Xinzhou. In another case a migrant read an advertisement but he immediately wanted confirmation:

*When I walked along a prosperous street in Taiyuan, I noticed there were some advertisements posted on poles or windows in front of restaurants or supermarkets, like "a waiter needed, 600 yuan a month, 500 metres ahead" and "a cashier needed, immediate work", etc. I then went to the work place to see if it was available (Long Guli, male, 19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

Social networks could bring job opportunities for migrants that other channels could not which was why migrants relied heavily on their networks. My interviewees called the process of seeking job relying on relatives and friends "touqin kaoyou". In addition, some job information and opportunities were mainly publicised through the social network. For example, in Donglou Cun, a few construction teams and a brick factory recruited labour only from the villagers. If people from other villages wanted to work there, they had to know villagers in Donglou Cun. Similarly, some private companies did not recruit labour publicly but just relied on the social networks. Someone who had no friends or acquaintances to give them information would not know about job opportunities. Another case was the job information in large cities like Beijing or Shanghai. Migrants said that they

could get this kind of information when they worked in Xinzhou or Taiyuan through advertisements, but these were good jobs often in formal sector, for which they had little chance or sometimes, the information might be fake. However, if they had relatives in Beijing, they might get useful from them.

Social networks provided not only job opportunity information, but other relevant information for example about payments. This was especially important as many migrants were paid in arrears or not at all. For example,

*When I get a job opportunity, I often asked my friends if the boss is likely to pay me fully and on time. I try to find out if the boss has a record of refusing to pay and whether he is likely to be able to pay. But even so, my construction team is owed 60,000 yuan from last year. A nearby village needed to pave a village road and their secretary asked me to take over the project. I thought that this was a collective project for his village, the money should be safe, but in the end, they didn't pay me because they couldn't collect enough money. I don't know when they will pay me (Shi Xinwei, male, 46 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

Social networks make it easier for migrants to get jobs easily. For example, if a migrant wanted to work in a construction company and his friend happened to work there, it was quite easy for him to get a job. Social networks are also available for some good jobs like working in local government or good companies. My interviewees said that these jobs often needed either a higher educational level like college level or a strong social network. For example, a person from Donglou Cun worked in the Agricultural Bank of China in Xinzhou, because his father had a good relationship with the bank president (Zhou Tianxin, male, 35 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

Social networks not only provide information, but also assistance with accommodation and money. This facilitates migrants' lives and enhances their ability to stay in cities.

The most important assistance seemed to be sharing accommodation. In chapter three, I have mentioned that living costs were a high percentage of the total cost of migration. Sharing accommodation could help migrants save on house renting and

also allow them to look after each other, for example, if one person became sick. Working together made possible for migrants from the same village to share accommodation. For example, migrants from Sanjiao worked mainly in Xinzhou and people from Zuotou mainly worked in Taiyuan. Some migrants even deliberately sought jobs at the same work site as fellow villagers. Working with friends had other advantages, for example, it would be safer.

*I want to work with fellow villagers. I don't trust outsiders. What if I was killed or sold by them when I migrate? What would I do if the boss refused to pay me? If I work with my friends, I don't need to worry about these problems too much (Lang Dongshen, male, 36 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

Working with friends could reduce the pressure and boredom of life in cities.

*At weekends or holidays, I often walk around with my friends. When my boss is angry with me or I feel upset, I prefer to chat with friends rather than my parents. My friends sometimes give me ideas about how to deal with problems, or comfort me (Huo Xufeng, female, 22 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).*

Borrowing money was important within social network. Migrants often borrowed money from their friends. For example,

*I have worked in Taiyuan, Beijing and Xi'an. Living far away from home, when I need money, friends are the best choice to help. I sometimes borrow 800 or 1,000 from good friends, and pay them back when I get money. I also lend them money when they need it (Gan Jiangjun, male, 22 years old in 2004, from Linlin Wan).*

Social networks help migrants when their bosses will not pay up or when city residents discriminate against them. For example,

*Our boss belongs to the Architecture College in Shanxi; that was a good unit. Last year, three fellow villagers and I worked for him for about half a year. When the time came for him to pay us, he said they didn't have money and wanted us to wait. We asked for our wages several times, but he still gave the same answer. This made us angry. We thought as he worked in a good unit, he would be afraid of losing face before his colleagues. So we went direct to his office at the Architecture College to ask for our wage. He was surprised that we could find him in his office.*

*As we expected, he was so afraid of losing face that he promised to pay us as soon as possible. We soon got our money (Shi Jianguo, male, 50 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

The case below shows that Zhao using her social network against unfair treatment in the market.

*I sell clothes in a shopping centre with my daughter. At first, it was very hard. The other sellers who were city residents often mistreated us. For example, they left us the stall in the corner - a bad position for selling clothes. I complained to the manager, but she thought we were only a couple of women without any background, and did not support us. I felt upset and almost returned home many times. But I had paid the rent for the whole year, and if I had given up, I wouldn't have got a refund. So I persisted. Later we made some friends, some of them big men, such as the other bosses and the police captain. Since I am good at sewing, I often helped them with sewing trousers and upholstery, etc. We got close gradually. They were warm hearted and helpful. When I had problems, they often helped me to deal with them. The police captain even argued with the market manager over her unfair behaviour. Later my daughter married a city resident, and nobody now dares to tease us. Our business is much better now. I have bought a new house in Xinzhou and we all are happy (Zhao Shangjin, 51, female, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).*

### 6.3-1.2 Cost saving

Social networks could enlarge work opportunities for migrants; in addition, compared with other channels of migration, according to my interviewees, they had other advantages: they were reliable and saved time and money. Migrants regarded information provided by social networks as much more reliable than that from private job centres and in villages like Donglou Cun, looking for jobs by relying on social networks had become the norm.

Social networks could save time and money in job seeking. Instead of going to cities for information, a simple phone call or a chat among friends would do. Generally, this information was free. Only in one special case did I find a migrant had paid for information because his work depended so heavily on it. He set up a

construction team that specialised in roofing houses in the surrounding villages and townships. He needed information frequently because each roofing job normally took only a day and if he wanted to work continuously, he had to get more information (Shi Xinwei, male, 46 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

To sum up, social networks can enlarge migrants' job opportunities and can save on the costs of migration in various ways, like job seeking and the help during migration.

## ***6.2-2 Social networks influence migration decision making***

### **6.2-2.1 Good social networks encourage migration**

Widespread social networks provide more information and job opportunities. Most of migrants in my fieldwork got jobs by asking for information from their friends. In Donglou Cun and Sanjiao Cun where social networks were quite good, people used social networks heavily in job seeking. People in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun who did not have good social networks said that if they had some friends who could help them to migrate, or friends they could migrate with, they would like to work outside. Otherwise, they might not migrate because they did not have experience or special skills, and had no idea how to find jobs and work in cities. In most cases, migrants largely relied on social networks. For example, every job that Lang Dongshen, a regular migrant from Sanjiao Cun had had was through his friends or fellow villagers.

Table 6.1 Lang's work history and use of social networks

Order	Year	Age	Work type	Work place	Duration (year)	Introducer
1	1995	27	Construction	Liulin township	1	Relatives
2	1996	28	Chicken farm	Xinzhou	2	Relatives' friends
3	1998	30	Roadman	Datong (in Shanxi)	1	Fellow villagers
4	1999	31	Construction	Wutai (in Shanxi)	1	Fellow villagers
5	2000	32	Stevedore	Taiyuan	10 days	Head of village
6	2000	32	Pig unit	Taiyuan	40 days	Fellow villagers
7	2001	33	Roadman	Beijing	0.25	Fellow villagers
8	2002	34	Construction	Datong	3 days	Fellow villagers
9	2003	35	Construction	Taiyuan	1	Fellow villagers
10	2004	36	Construction	Changzhi (in Shanxi)	0.5	Fellow villagers

Source: fieldwork in Sanjiao Cun, Lang Dongshen was 36 years old in 2004 from Sanjiao Cun.

Migrants often asked for help from their relatives, friends and classmates, and sometimes, used friends' friends, or even more complicated contacts. The case below shows how a migrant used his relatives' social network to find a job in Xinzhou.

*After finishing junior middle school, I came back to my village and worked in agriculture for some years. However, I didn't like that life long. In 1996, a friend told me that working a taxi driver job was very good, and I might earn 20-30 thousand yuan a year. My parents supported me but they didn't know where to learn driving and how to get the job. I had an aunt whose whole family lived in Xinzhou. So my dad got me to ask for help from my aunt.*

*My aunt had no idea where to learn driving, but my aunt's daughter's husband had a friend who worked in a driving school. The driving school was good, run by the transport police in Xinzhou. With his help, I learned to drive there and I even got 500 yuan off the 3,000 yuan tuition fees. With I was learning, I got to know this friend of my relatives. He had many friends in the transport police. Later with his friends' help, I was employed in a taxi company where I have worked until now. While I have been working, their friends gave me great help. For example, when my car was impounded, with their help, I quickly got*

*my it back. Of course, without the help of my aunt's family, I might not have got help from these friends (Wei Guojia was 31 years old in 2004 from Zuotou Cun in Xinzhou)*

### 6.3-2.2 Social networks encourage migration by reducing the costs

In the above section I have shown how social networks can save on migration costs. With social networks, migrants could save money on accommodation and job seeking and reduce the mental problems like boredom. Migrants could help each other and working together made them feel safe. Here I give some examples of the effects of social network on migrants without migration experience who nonetheless decided to take risks.

Young migrants often did not have experience of working and living in cities. Their parents and/or they worried about how they could migrate on their own. Without a social network, they might choose not to migrate. But with the help of a social network, they got more support to migrate. For example,

*After I had graduated from junior middle school, when I was about 19 years old, I didn't have any experience of working outside. I had never gone to cities by myself. I even worried if my accent could be understood easily by city residents. Because my family was very poor, I had to work. At that time, the popular job was construction. My parents wanted me to work in construction, but they worried about me because the work was really hard for a 19-year-old. They weren't sure what I should do. Then our villagers set up a construction work team. The head of team and most of workers were from our village. So my parents were happy to send me with them, because our villagers would look after me. They were very kind to me and never let me do the heaviest work. I worked with the team for about one year and I felt good (Li Gaocai, male, 35 years old in 2004, from Duncun, Xinzhou).*

Another example is that of a female migrant, Zhao Daxue. She had worked in Taiyuan when she was 20 years old. She said she did not have any experience of living and working outside at that time and she even could not even speak Mandarin well. All of her worries were resolved by the boss where she worked,

because the boss was his father's friend and he was in charge of almost everything such as accommodation, food and training. She said, "with the help of this friend, I did not need to worry anything" (Zhao Daxue, 24 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).

However, some people with higher educational levels or special skills seemed to rely on different social networks.

*My fellow villagers often went to work with other villagers. I don't need to go with them. I am a "dagong" (skilled labourer), I don't need to worry about not getting a job. My fellow villagers often asked friends to help, but in my case, the employers often ask me if I would like to work with them (Ji Guifang, male, 40 year old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun, with senior middle school education level).*

#### 6.3-2.3 Social networks can put pressure on people to migrate

In chapter five I have showed that finding jobs by asking friends or fellow villagers had become the usual way to migrate. Here I give an example to show how individual may feel pressurised through a social network.

*I have many friends and fellow villagers working in construction on various sites or cities. When they go there to work, or they get some job information, they often ask me, "Buhuan, would you like to work with me?" They often directly come to my house to persuade me go or they leave a message. Sometimes, several different groups ask me to join them. They are all my friends and really want me to work with them so we can help each other in cities. When they ask me again and again, I have to go, because it is hard to refuse them (Jing Buhuan, male, 46 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

#### 6.3-2.4 Other influences on migration

Social networks are a major job seeking channel that facilitates the migration of rural people. However, depending on the size and quality of social network, it may also constrain migration and influence migration patterns.

In my fieldwork, since most people found jobs through relatives, friends or acquaintances and their social network mainly focused on rural people in the same or surrounding villages, they often got jobs in nearby cities and only a few

worked in far-off cities. For example, of all the migrants from Sanjiao Cun, 95 worked in Shanxi in contrast with 10 in other provinces. Very few can use social networks to work in Beijing or Shanghai. Some did work in far-off cities, like Xi'an and Yinchun, however, as their jobs were in construction, and they went wherever the construction company sent them.

There was "chain migration" in my fieldwork. Within a single household, if one household member migrated, others would migrate often to the same city later. For example, an interviewee named Fan Youtian said that his daughter got a job at a restaurant in Taiyuan with help of his friends. His son went to Taiyuan several years later and worked with her (Fan Youtian, male, 45 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou). In Zuotou Cun, most male migrants worked in the same construction company of which had up to a dozen employees in Taiyuan. Originally, a few villagers had found a job in the company tamping soil for the foundations. When they found it was a good job with high paid, other villagers followed them.

Social networks did not always work effectively, partly depending on their quality. Many rural people did not have many friends, or none who could help them much. "I have only seven friends, most were my classmates when I was in primary school. I don't have influential or rich friends" (Wei Geidi, male, 47 years old in 2004). Many people complained that though they had a few friends, none were much help, because their backgrounds were similar. If one could not find a job, nor could the others. Migrants often made new friends during migration, but most were migrants from other villages in Shanxi or other provinces. They hardly made any friends who were city residents. Most rural people did not have relatives or friends in large cities.

Some people relied heavily on social networks, but might miss market opportunities because they trusted them less. For example, the village head of Liulin Wan said that occasionally some companies came to their village to recruit labour, but their villagers did not believe in these opportunities; though cadres

encouraged them to migrate, few people did (Wei Facai, male, 50 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).

Social networks could save time for people looking for information. However, it they may not be able to solve problems like the shortage continuous jobs as opposed to seasonal ones. For example, in summer, migrants working in construction often had many job opportunities, while in winter, even they wanted to work and asked help from friends, they rarely got jobs.

To sum up, social networks encourage people to migrate, and may also constrain migration and influence migration patterns.

### **6.3 Household and decision making**

As much literature indicates, in addition to the individual as the migration decision-maker, the household or family may also be important. As Davin (1999: 74-76) points out, the household controls a pooled budget and deploys its own labour force. Decisions such as who will work, where they work for how long and what types of job will be performed within the household are made according to the opportunities available and costs and benefits. Household structure, function and strategies play an important role in migration. Household structure, including size, age-sex structure and life-cycle stage affect migration (Harbison, 1981:232). For example, in a study of villages in Jiangxi province, China, Murphy (2002: 59) found that the economic standing of household with one migrant is almost the same as that of those without migrants, while households with two or more migrants have the higher economic standing. According to Harbison (1981:238), the family has an influence on migration through its functions as a subsistence unit, a socializing unit and a supplier of a social group and social network. Literature on family strategy generally regards the family as a decision-making unit attempting to maximize its utility. For example, sending a migrant in a city may reduce income risk for a household (Rosenzweig and Stark, 1997:749). Harbison (1981:250) indicates that the structure and function of family affects migration motivation through its influence on

migration goals, the availability of the individual for migration and likelihood of goal fulfilment.

The household is the basic unit of society in China. It generally consists of relatives who live and have meals together. The distinguishing feature of the household is that it has a common budget and a single kitchen (Croll, 1994: 163). In my fieldwork, the household had two common forms: the two generational household consisting of parents and children, and the three generational one of grandparents, parents and children. In this section, I will discuss how household influences its individual members to migrate. Factors such as common benefits, emotional ties, household work and labour division, migration support and the relevant norms are discussed. This discussion of the household is mainly based on the household in villages. I will not discuss how migrants influence their household members to join them in cities because I discovered few instances of this in my fieldwork villages.

### ***6.3-1 How the household influences its members on migration***

#### **6.3-1.1 The common benefits**

Individuals often share common benefits with their household, including both material and non-material benefits.

The common material benefits arise from income pooling and common household expenditure. On the income side, in a nuclear household, agricultural income is usually considered to belong to both the household head (usually a male) and his wife, and they have the power to decide how to spend this money. If children do not migrate, they usually have no income or power to control money. When the household head or his wife work outside, the new income belongs to both of them. If children migrate before marriage, they generally keep what they needed for themselves, and give the rest to their parents. Most of my unmarried migrant interviewees sent the money to their parents. After marriage, most of the money that they earned was sent back to their new household. On the expenditure side, the couple shared responsibility for all household expenditure, including daily expenses, the costs of children's education and old people's medical costs. The parents paid for their sons' marriages and house building but sons who had migrated generally

made some contribution to these expenses in cash. If they hadn't migrated, they did extra household work or agricultural work. The family works as a co-operative unit in which children benefit: their living and education costs are met by their parents when they are growing up. Sons have a particular benefit in that their marriage and housing costs are met by the family. As young people grow up, a part or the whole of what they earn is contributed to the common budget or the family in which they live. It is in the context that I talk of common benefits. The family generally shares a budget to a greater or lesser extent until it divides, as for example on the marriage of a son. The expectation is that absent members will remit a part of their earnings if they have any to spare.

In Donglou Cun and Sanjiao Cun, young people had no way of contributing to the household if they did not migrate, because land holdings was so small. Thus if young people could work outside, it benefited both the young people and their households.

*I began to work at 16 years old. I worked with my friends in Xinzhou, Taiyuan and other cities in construction and restaurants, etc. At first, I just earned 150 yuan a month. It was just enough for my living expense in cities but I could not give much to my parents. But it was OK, because I didn't need to use my parents' money. My parents agreed that I could migrate (Long Guli, 19 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).*

As they share the benefits, household members whether parents or children, tend to want to maximise household income. For example, in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun, parents often asked the young people to help them to do agricultural work, because they believed that working in their village could bring more money than migration.

The migration of individuals not only brought current economic benefits for their household, but also long-term ones. For example,

*My older daughter used to work in Xinzhou as a waitress and my younger daughter works in the same restaurant now. My older daughter used to earn 200 yuan a month and the second now gets 300 yuan. The money is not much, but it*

*isn't a problem. So long as they can learn some skills and have a better future, that is enough. They are happy and so we are* (Wei Pinan, female, 45 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

Some parents did obtain benefits from their children's "better future". Wang Xiasheng's son finished college and got a good job in Dalian (a large city in Liaoning province). Wang stayed in Dalian with her son for half a year and feel very good (Wang Xiasheng, female, 50 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).

This shows that individuals shared both material and non-material benefits with their households. This could be true in other ways:

*I supported my son's wish to work outside. If he didn't work outside, he would have felt bored in the village, and he would do nothing and learn nothing. I might have felt bothered if he had been hanging around every day. And I would also have worried that he would get into fights or quarrels with others if he had too much time on his hands* (Deng Xinhua, male, 58 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun, he had two sons).

Migration could bring higher status to the migrant's household. Some young interviewees said that if they did nothing at home, they would be blamed for being lazy, but if they returned home from migration for a holiday, they were not blamed. One reason was that their migration could also bring prestige for their households. Successful migrants brought more prestige. For example, Huo Wuzai worked in a township government. It was not easy to get such a good job. Many fellow villagers admired Huo, and they often helped Huo's family for example by working on his land if needed. Huo said, "If I need help, I can easily get more than 10 people to help me" (Huo Wuzai, male, 47 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).

The pooling of benefits meant individuals and their households usually agreed on the migration decision. So individuals might be encouraged or constrained in their decision-making by costs and benefits to themselves or to their households. For example, to maximise the household's benefits, the household and individual often agree that it may be necessary for its members to migrate or work in agriculture, depending on their situation. Household members encouraged migrants by giving

or lending them money, using their social networks to find jobs and helping migrants to take care of children. At the same time, due to the shared budget, individuals could understand the difficulties of their household and did not make inordinate demands on their parents. For example, an interviewee said that though he did not like working in a restaurant, he still did so for two years. That was because his father wanted him to do the job since it provided free accommodation and food, and eased his father's burden of supporting him (Mei Kongjun, male, 29 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).

However, the individual's interests did not always coincide with these of the household. In the chapters three and four, I discussed in detail the material and non-material costs and benefits of migration for the individual. Household members may have different perceptions of costs and benefits. For example, young people may not think security problem is a serious concern, while their parents do. A migrant may suffer from boredom in the cities, but their household members will not experience the feeling. Individuals may put a high priority on learning skills; while their households may think what is important is earning more money in case the migrant marries soon and needs the money. When migrants go to work in cities, their household members often have to do more agricultural work than they did before. Migrants may not consider this "cost" as it does not impact directly on them but household members will be aware of it. Young migrants thought "opening their eyes to the world", "having fun" or even "freedom" in cities were benefits, their parents may not think the same. This is supported by much of the literature. For example, Jacka observed that two types of daughter were recognised by parents, the "filial daughter" and the "rebellious daughter" (Jacka, 2006: 166). The rebellious daughter is the daughter pursues her own benefits, not those of her parents.

These different costs and benefits sometimes caused the parents to disagree with their children about migrating, or to have different opinions on detailed questions, like where to go and how long to stay. How such differences are settled may partly depend on power of relationships. If young people had no money and they wanted to migrate, they had initially to ask for money from their parents whereas if they

could raise money, they could go. According to my interviewees, villagers generally tend to make agreements by talking things over. They seldom just run off to the city or threaten suicide.

There were some cases where the balances of costs and benefits were different for the household and the individual but the household forced the individual member to follow its wishes. For example, Zhang Haohan thought it was too hard to work in construction, and wanted to change his job or have a break. But his parents thought he just wanted to avoid hardship. During the interview, his mother kept criticizing his laziness and said, “why can’t you do it when others can?” Zhang Haohan thought his mother was unfair, but he did not have any idea of what he wanted to do (Zhang Haohan, male, 22 years old, from Sanjiao Cun). Zhang may be forced by his household to migrate for its material benefits.

By contrast, some cases show the household stopping young members from staying away. For example, Bian Aiguo forced his son to leave work in coal mine. He said that when his son found a job in a coal mine with high pay, he immediately asked him to quit the job because he himself worked in a coal mine before and he thought it was very dangerous (Bian Aiguo, male, 70 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

To sum up, the household may encourage its members to migrate or constrain them from doing so according to its perception of the benefits. Although generally the process was peaceful, in some cases, individuals were coerced.

#### 6.4-1.2 Emotional ties

When interviewees explained why they did not migrate to distant cities, one reason they gave was that they wanted to be able to come home easily to look after their households. There were many such cases in my fieldwork. Luo Geng’s wife was deaf and dumb. She could not communicate with other villagers without Luo Geng’s help. Luo decided to stay at home to look after his wife rather than migrating (Luo Geng, 35 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan). Luo Liu’s story also showed the influence of household needs

*My parents divorced long ago. I am unmarried and still live with my father.*

*When my father was young, I often worked in construction as he didn't need my help. Now he is old, 65 years old, and I worry that he may not look after himself well. So I don't want to migrate. If I didn't have this problem, I would migrate (Lou Liu, male, 40 years old in 2004, from Liulin Wan).*

Emotional ties could constrain migration, but in some cases, they encouraged it. For example,

*In 1993, my son was studying in senior middle school; he was a boarder in Xinzhou. You know, studying was really hard in senior middle school because of college entrance. He was thin and could not eat well in school. My daughter had not got a job, so I thought why not sell clothes in Xinzhou? On the one hand, I could look after my son; on the other hand, I could resolve my daughter's work problem. Of course, if business was good, I could earn money too (Zhao Shangjin, female, 51 years old in 2004).*

Another case reflected the emotional ties between husband and wife. Bian Huanggeng worked in construction. After he was promoted to be a team leader, he asked his wife to live with him, and he also applied a position for her in the construction team, cooking meals for workers (Bian Huanggeng, 38 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

Emotional ties among household members harmonized individual and household decisions. In my fieldwork, there were many cases where love and care was shown among household members. For example, many young people said that their parents did not expect them to earn much money for them, they just wanted them to take care of themselves, learn some skills and have a better future. This attitude was illustrated by a grandmother.

*I hope my grandchild can have better life in the future. No matter how poor we are, we are willing to support him to go to college, and even study overseas, if only he can (Zhang Qiaoxian, 55 years old in 2004, her older grandchild was nine years old, from Donglou Cun)*

A young person said:

*I feel, and so do my friends, no matter how hard we suffer from the hard work, we should give a better life to our parents. At least, we shouldn't let them suffer from hard work. If I get money, I can hire a person to take care of them specially* (Rao Deting, male, 21 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

Interviewees did not often talk directly about how they loved their spouses, probably due to shyness. But we can see it indirectly. For example, Long Dahua said she often worried about her husband's working conditions, wondering if it was cold and if he needed warm clothes (Long Dahua, 39 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun). Hu Wenhui said that his wife always got new clothes for him and their child, but not as many for herself (Hu Wenhui, 30 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

### 6.3-1.3 Household work and labour division

To maintain a household, certain basic tasks have to be performed. For example, the children and old people must be taken care of. Household work and the labour division have a great influence on migration. According to Jacka, the traditional gender divisions of labour in rural China were that men did the "outside" work and women did the "inside" work. The meanings of "outside" and "inside" varied in different parts of China and also changed over time. For example, women usually did the domestic work within the home and men did the most of the agricultural work in rural China, but more women worked in agriculture as well in south China whereas fewer did so north China. Women also worked in nearby townships or villages in commerce, but generally they travelled shorter distances than men did (Jacka, 1997: 21-25).

In my fieldwork, the prevailing labour division was usually that the male adult was the "money earner" and was expected to earn money to support his household. He was expected to do whatever could bring the most income for him, whether in agriculture or migration. His wife focused on the maintenance of her household which included cooking meals, washing clothes, taking care of children and parents, looking after poultry or pigs and helping her husband, for example by working in agriculture. Children often helped their parents. Children before marriage had less

responsibility for household work than their parents. The division of labour was not strictly fixed. Various factors influenced this pattern such as workload and household structure. For example, when a householder worked outside the village, most agricultural work was done by women or old people. When a woman had a baby, the husband did more domestic work. When a household had several children, the children's roles were not exactly same.

*I have one older brother and three younger brothers. The five of us have different jobs now. My older brother joined army after leaving school, and now drives taxis in Kelan. I work in my village and have never worked in cities. My first younger brother followed our older brother and learnt to drive. My second and third younger brothers are janitors in Kelan. How did we each chose own jobs? Actually, it wasn't difficult; we did not even consider this issue seriously. After my older brother graduated from junior high school, he firstly helped our dad working in agriculture before joining the army. We have 30 mu of land and it was not easy for my parents to work it. The four of us still were in primary or junior high school, though we also helped our parents, we couldn't do much. That was the reason that my older brother worked in agriculture. After I graduated, there was a chance to join the army. My old brother and I were available to join. However, our three younger brothers were still in school, so one of us had to stay to work on the land with parents. I did not want to join army or work in other cities, so I stayed in our village. Actually, there are so many in our family there is always somebody who wants to stay in village, while somebody else wants to go out. At the same time, we couldn't have everyone staying at home, or everyone working in the cities, otherwise, we'd have too much labour or too little. When my three younger brothers graduated, since our older brother was working in Kelan, they all followed him one by one. I later became the head of our village and am less likely to migrate (Zhang Haoshi, male, 44 years old in 2004, from Shangcun).*

Due to the labour division within household, women have fewer opportunities to migrate than man. The general pattern of migration in my fieldwork was that the husband migrated, leaving his wife and other household members behind. His wife,

and his parents if they were still around, were responsible for the agricultural work and taking care of children and old people. At the busiest season, if the wife and other household members could not do everything on their own, the husband would come back to help, and then migrate again. Children had fewer constraints, but when household work was really heavy, they were asked to help. For example, in Liulin Wan and Shang Cun, young people often asked by their parents to help cultivate holdings of nearly 50 *mu* of land. Other work could also constrain migration. For example, Huo Qimeng's father built a new house in 2000, and since Huo's older brother worked in Taiyuan, he had to help his father to build the house. (Huo Qimeng, 22 years old in Dagou Cun)

In my fieldwork, taking care of household members including children and old or sick people was one of the most important factors influencing migration. There were a lot of cases where neither men nor women could migrate because they were "taking care of children or parents". Wives took the main responsibility but grandparents often helped to take care of a child. If the wife was not available, or there was too much work for the wife and parents together, the husband would not migrate. For example, Long Duhua's son had epilepsy. Because she could not take care of him on her own, her husband did not migrate. When her son was better, her husband then migrated (Long Duhua, 39 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

#### 6.3-1.4 Migration support

The household as a whole possesses more resources than a single household member does. Money, job information and social networks are very important for supporting migration. As young people usually had no independent income when they migrated they relied heavily on the money that their parents gave or lent them for travel and basic living costs. Many migrants also borrowed money from parents or other relatives to set up their own businesses. For example, Zhao Huaicai borrowed 40,000 yuan to rent a shop to sell clothes (Zhao Huaicai, female, 29 years old in 2004, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou). Many interviewees said the parents and relatives were their first choice when they needed to borrow money. A poor household usually lacks such funds for migration. For example, an interviewee

said that she wanted to be taxi driver, but since her household did not have money even to buy a second-hand car, she still worked in agriculture (Xia Tianlen, 42 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun). Social networks and information were an important support for migrants.

Parents' help in the household for their children was also an important form of support. In my fieldwork, when a man's parents were in good health, they did not need their children to look after them, and they would also help with grandchildren. The man could then migrate without worrying about his household.

### 6.3-1.5 Relevant norms

In a household, there are norms related to the roles in household members according to their positions. Traditionally, the roles within a household was "father guides son and husband guides wife" (*fu wei zi gang, fu wei qi gang*). In contemporary China, although these roles have been discarded, their influences still influence the new norms. For example, the household head in rural Shanxi is still the father or husband and when there is a big decision for the household to make, like building a house, it is usually the household head who has the power to decide. Wives and children are expected to respect the household head and children should be filial to their parents and listen to what they say. These models have an influence on migration. For example, Zhao Xuanli, a villager in Donglou Cun, said that her son wanted to work in Beijing. Afraid she that she would not agree, he gave her advertisements for jobs in Beijing, hinting that he wanted to go there. Since Zhao thought her son was still young, she would not allow him to go. Instead, in the last few years he has worked in a restaurant in Xinzhou. (Zhao Xuanli, 48 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun, her son, 19 years old). Another case was Wei Helin. His son did not work hard in Xinzhou and was always changing jobs. Wei did not like this and warned his son many times. However, his son didn't change. Wei was so angry that he wanted frighten his son into reforming himself by threatening to disown him. (Wei Helin, 66 years old in 2004, from Sanjiao Cun).

I discussed some household norms relevant to migration in chapter five. When individuals behaved as norms required, their households would understand them and support them. For example,

*My son now works in Beijing with his wife. I look after his little son. I don't generally intervene in his life. As long as he works hard and doesn't do bad things, that is OK. Actually, my son is really good. He first got a job in Taiyuan, working very hard. After four years there, he got a job opportunity in Beijing, setting up curtains in a factory. Then he tried to get a job for his wife. If he wants to live in Beijing long term, that is OK. But I know it would be hard to get this chance, if he could, of course it would be good* (Wei Shubao, female, 49 years old in 2004, his son is 29 years old, from Zuotou Cun).

To sum up, households encourage or discourage migration on the basis of the common benefits, emotional ties, household work and labour division, migration support and norms. At different stages of the household cycle, these factors may exert different influences on migration.

### **6.3-2 Agreement and disagreement between the individual and the household**

As has been shown above, the decisions of individuals about migration may be affected positively or negatively by the household. Here I discuss how individuals made their decisions in the context of encouragement or discouragement from their households. I show that generally in my fieldwork, individuals made the same decisions as their households.

When I asked my interviewees, “who decided whether you would leave home or stay, yourself or your parents, or other household members?”, the responses included 1) “I decided by myself, the other household members agreed with me, they had no clear idea what was best to do”, 2) “I made the decision by myself, and my parents/spouse agreed with me”, 3) “My parents/spouse and I decided together”, 4) “My parents/spouse suggested what I should do, and I agreed with them, so I did it”, 5) “I insist on going/staying, even though my parents or other household members opposed me”, and 6) “my parents forced me to stay/leave, even I didn't like it”

Responses one to four indicated there were no serious conflict between individuals and their household members over the decision. No matter who had made the decision, the other party agreed with. Many interviewees said that they did not feel too much pressure from household members, they made decisions freely. Responses five and six show conflict in decisions between individuals and household members. Few people checked responses five or six in my fieldwork. Most checked one, two, three or four.

The head of household, usually male and less than 50 years old tended to give the answer one. For example,

*I work in construction in Taiyuan. My dad has been dead for some years, my mom lives with me and my wife. I have a four-year-old daughter, and my mom and wife are looking after her. They don't have any idea about what I should do or what is better to do. They usually support me whatever I want to do, no matter whether I migrate or work in agriculture (Sun Haoren, male, 32 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

When I interviewed his wife, she said the same.

*My husband works in construction. It is very hard. My main task is to take care of our daughter and I can't do much in agriculture. My mom-in-law helps me. My husband works very hard. He always said we should earn more money to pay off our debt and get a better life. I will support him whether he works outside or in our village. But I want him to change jobs, because construction work is too hard. When I tell him my opinion, he said, that is OK, don't worry (Ding Meili, Sun Haoren's wife, 28 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).*

Young people and women generally gave answers two, three or four. Many young migrants, especially if unmarried, gave answer two. For example,

*I myself wanted to go to cities to work, or at least, have a look. But I didn't have any good idea where to go and what to do. My parents supported me. Later, my father helped me to find a job in Taiyuan and I worked with his friends (Zhao Daxue, female, 24 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).*

Married women tended to discuss whether they should migrate with their

husbands. For example,

*My first migration was in 1993, when I was 39. Many people from our village wanted to sell clothes in Xinzhou, I wanted to, too. So I discussed it with my husband. He supported me. He worked in a hospital, and could look after himself. My son boarded in senior middle school. So we didn't have to worry about him either. My daughter had finished school, and could help me to sell clothes. So my working in Xinzhou didn't influence my home too much (Wei Binfu, 55-years old, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).*

People who gave answer four were often those who personally wanted to migrate but who considered their households' situation, and followed the wishes of household members. But unlike with five and six, this was often voluntary. For example,

*Before 1983, I had worked in Taiyuan for three years until I got married. I like to work outside, and don't like work such as washing dishes and cultivating the land. After marriage, my husband said it would be OK for me just to stay at home. At that time, I was pregnant, it was better for me to stay at home. I thought my husband was right, so I stayed at home, until now. Now my husband is willing for me to work outside, but we don't have any idea where I should work (Xia Tianlen, 42 years old in 2004, from Dagou Cun).*

A few people checked answers five and six - "I insist on going/staying, even though my parents or other household members opposed me" and "my parents forced me to stay/leave, even I didn't like it". One case was that Zhang Huwang who found out on a business trip that there were many good job opportunities in Sichuan. The family was unhappy because Sichuan is far from Shanxi. After Zhang had stayed there a few months, his father himself went to Sichuan and found him, and said if he didn't come back with him, he would commit suicide. So Zhan Xiatian had to come back with his father (Zhan Xiatian, male, 46 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun).

My interviewees told a story of a young man who defied his parents and migrated. When he had just finished junior middle school he wanted to work in

Xinzhou, but his parents thought he was too young. He disagreed and thought his parents were using an excuse to stop him. He ran away to Xinzhou by himself without telling his parents, but had to come back a few days later after his money had run out. The relationship between him and his parents subsequently became very tense (The young person was male, name was not clear, about 16 years old, from Donglou Cun).

Such cases were rare. The general situation was that when an individual and parents/spouses had conflicting ideas about migration, the household did not usually coerce its members or ask them not to migrate. They usually gave the individual time to think things over, or allowed them to have a try. When unmarried girls wanted to go on working in cities they were often allowed to. For example,

*I have worked in a shop as cloth seller for seven years. I am now 26 years old and still single. Most of my female friends of the same age have married. I want to marry a city resident, and then I could leave my village. However, it is not easy to find a city resident. My parents have asked me many times to go home and marry a rural resident. Recently, they have been pushing me harder. I know they are doing it for my own good. But if I could find a good husband in cities, they would certainly be happy. I can still stay in Xinzhou for a while, but not too much longer, if I am still not married (Yu Haili, female, 26 years old, interviewed in a market in Xinzhou).*

Another case that I have mentioned in chapter five was that of Wei Facai's son who wanted to migrate. The general norm in his village was not to migrate. His son asked him many times if he could go. Wei finally agreed that his son could go on condition that he only went for a short time and things were difficult, he should just come back (Wei Facai, 50 years old in 2004, his son, 22 years old, from Liulin Wan).

My interviewees indicated that individuals and their household members usually had the same general ideas about migration. But when it came to the details of what to do, where to go and how long to stay, individuals sometimes disagreed with their household members. For example, a young person named Feng Xiaogang

aged 19, wanted to go to a large city, while his mother just wanted him to work in Xinzhou (Feng Xiaogang, male, 19 years old in 2004, from Donglou Cun). Another case was that of Zhao Daxue. Her mother wanted her to be a teacher, but she did not like the idea, and she got a job in a noodle factory (Zhao Daxue, 24 years old in 2004, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).

Such differences were generally discussed within the household. For example, *After I left senior middle school, I didn't know what kind of job I should look for or where I should go. I just wanted to go to a city rather than staying at home. My parents were in favour of me working outside. One of my father's friends runs a small restaurant in Taiyuan. I like Taiyuan, but I didn't know if the job was good. My father told me that as we had friends there, and we wouldn't need to worry about problems like accommodation, security and whether I would be paid. I thought he was right. So with father's introduction, I went to Taiyuan to work there* (Zhao Daxue, 24 years old in 2004, female, interviewed in a noodle factory in Xinzhou).

In a few cases parents forced their migrant children to follow their ideas. For example, as mentioned before, Bian Aiguo thought working in coal mine was too dangerous, so asked his son to come back (Bian Aiguo, male, 70 years old in 2004, from Zuotou Cun).

The household usually agree with individual member's decisions on migration because the same factors influenced them all: common benefits, emotional reasons and shared norms. However, the norm that women should not migrate was beginning to break down in some of my villages, at least in relation to young women. Many people now accepted it as a norm that unmarried women should migrate but older ideas tended to prevail for married women. Married women seldom complained that it was unfair that their husbands could migrate, while they could not. Sometimes individuals had different perceptions of costs and benefits from those of their households. Thus although individuals and their households usually agreed on migration decisions there were a few cases in my fieldwork where they held different ideas.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the influence on migration on three institutions: the labour market, social networks and the household and considers how people are influenced by these institutions as they make their decisions.

Before economic reform, there was no labour market and migration was strictly controlled by the *hukou* and other systems. After economic reform, the development of the labour market in China encouraged migration. People began to try migration and compared it with other ways of earning money. Social networks widened rural people's opportunities for employment. Seeking jobs by using social networks is easy, quick and costs little. It also influences the pattern of migration, for example by encouraging chain migration. The household can encourage its members to migrate or discourage them from doing so because of common benefits, emotional ties, labour division, migration support and relevant norms. On the whole, its members make decisions that are consistent with what the household wants.

Generally, these three institutions influence migration decision-making in two ways: 1) they directly influence migration through their own powers or resources. For example, before economic reform, migration was strictly controlled by government and free migration was forbidden; social networks could enlarge people's job opportunities. Today the household can use its power or control over its members' position to influence their migration. 2) Institutions can influence migration indirectly. For example, during period of strict control of migration, the norm of villagers was to work hard in agriculture. Social networks can save costs of migration in money and time. Households can support their members for example with money and information. The influence of institutions may encourage or discourage migration. When the institutions are strong, the influence may extent to permission or prohibition.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

The purpose of this thesis, as explained in chapter one, is to analyse systematically how rural people make their decisions to migrate or not to migrate according to their costs and benefits and attitudes, norms and institutions relevant to migration and to add to the understanding of migration decision-making. The data was collected from people with a nearly pure peasant background and low educational level who tend to engage in circular migration over short distances, leaving their families behind and doing low status jobs in cities in poor areas of Shanxi. This thesis therefore adds to knowledge by looking at migration among the rural poor of Shanxi province, where little migration research has been done, by studying on a group whose migration is largely over short distances to small and medium sized cities within the same province and by taking the migration decision as its central concern. In this chapter, I will first recall the main findings of my research in relation to the costs and benefits of migration and the attitudes and norms and institutions relevant to migration, showing how I contribute to migration decision-making empirically and then I consider the shortcomings of my thesis and propose some points for future research.

### **Costs and benefits of migration**

In chapters three and four, I empirically analysed the perceptions of costs and benefits of migration that were generally regarded as important by my interviewees. These costs include the material costs of migration to the cities such as living costs and opportunity costs, the non-material costs such as hardship in cities and emotional pressures, and transaction costs like wage refusals. The benefits include higher incomes, social status, self-improvement, the attractions of cities and the possibility of finding a spouse. The analysis of these costs and benefits show the effects of these factors on migration decision-making, and the findings generally support some of the macro-approach research on migration in China discussed in the literature review in chapter one, for example, it is clear that people tend to migrate to urban areas for higher income. However, my research shows in detail what the perceptions of these costs and benefits are, how these costs and benefits influence migration, and how

these factors interact in the calculations made by migrants/rural people. For example, though higher income in cities encourages people to migrate, most rural people set a high importance on the “actual wage” they themselves will receive rather than simply on higher wage rates in cities. Although migrants’ social status in cities was lower than that of urban residents, since rural people compare the status gained from a sojourn in the city with their status in the village, they thought it worth migrating to realise higher status. However, when they migrated long-term and found it was really difficult to get higher status they expected, they might change their minds. The high expenses in cities discourage migration, however, my research further indicates migrants can adopt measures to decrease some costs, for example by sharing accommodation. I show how people seek the benefits of migration to achieve particular goals and how perceptions of costs are formed. For example, the high costs of house building, and of education for children and marriage force peasants to migrate to raise money to cover these costs. Moreover the norms of hard work mean that people do not fear it, especially in the short-term. In addition, I analyse how costs and benefits may change, for example, the acquisition of skills was strong aspiration for young migrants, but this reduced when they found out how difficult it was in the course of migration.

The characteristics of my interviewees implied some special costs and benefits. For example, transport costs for my interviewees were not particularly significant because they just migrated to nearby cities. Looking for spouses was an important motive for those from Dagou Cun, because remoteness of their village made it hard for unmarried males to find wives nearer home. Shang Cun villagers regarded agricultural income as higher than wages in cities because they lived in a remote area and were involved in sheep rearing. All of the above findings suggest that perceptions of costs and benefits of migration were not simply influenced by macro-factors such as income, but also by the detailed situation of migrants, and other factors like social norms.

The outcome of migration decision-making based on cost benefit analysis supports the theory of rational choice: people migrate because they think it is worth doing so.

*Hardly anyone in my fieldwork thought migration or non-migration would not benefit them benefit, still engaged in it, especially in the long term. My research shows some following features of decision-making. 1) Migrants' or rural people's information about costs and benefits was often from relatives, friends, acquaintances and their personal experiences, and often limited to nearby cities. They made decisions on the basis of this information and often made new decisions when they got new information or when their aspirations or own situations changed. 2) In different stages, people may have different costs and benefits, and the most important costs and benefit may decide what people do. For example, the aspiration to learn skills was very important for young migrants, and if the balance of other costs and benefits was not too bad, they would choose to migrate. 3) The balance of the costs and benefits of migration can be changed by a conscious choice. For example, by enduring more hardship for example by sharing accommodation people can increase their benefit by saving money. Far from passively accepting costs and benefits; they can take measures to change them, for example by using social networks.*

### **Attitude and norm analysis**

In chapter five, I examined and analysed attitudes and norms relevant migration in my fieldwork villages. Though attitude and norm analysis as an approach has been employed in some research on migration, it has not been widely used in research on migration decision-making in China, and let alone Shanxi. So my contribution here is first to show what attitudes and norms relevant to migration exist in my fieldwork villages and then to demonstrate how they influence migration.

Attitudes and norms relevant to migration relate to many issues - whether to go, how to go, what to do in cities and gender and age issues. Although some attitudes and norms were common to the different fieldwork villages, others could be different. On the whole, attitudes and norms relevant to migration are connected to issues around what people are expected to do or what they should do, and they are embedded in people's views of migration. Attitudes and norms make it easier for people to come to decisions about migration, what they should do or expect to do and

how they should do it. They consider attitudes and norms as to whether they should migrate; whether to choose migration, agriculture or sidelines; what is appropriate for them given their age or gender, and how to they migrate or find jobs and what to do in cities. Thus, attitudes and norms function as a short cut that can guide people on what they should do, even if they lack information on the costs and benefits of migration. In addition, to some degree, people have to act in accordance with attitudes and norms. This is because norms themselves are rules or regulations. If people do not want to be sanctioned, or if they want approval, it is better for them to follow norms. The influence of attitudes and norms is important, especially for people who lack sufficient information or other support, because their migration largely depends on their community or social networks. People who are likely to return to their village after some years of migration are also unlikely to defy the norms of their community.

Aside from the above direct influences, attitudes and norms can influence the perception of costs and benefits of migration and even the way people calculate costs and benefits. For example, people from Shang Cun wanted more benefits or guarantees before they would migrate, while Donglou villagers would migrate if benefits were even a little higher than costs. In their turn the costs and benefits of migration also influence the formation of attitudes and norms. In addition, other factors such as policy and the particular village circumstances may cause attitudes and norms to change.

However, attitudes and norms constitute an imperfect guide to decision-making and may mislead people if, for example, they are out of date. In making decisions people may consider a combination of attitudes and norms with the expected costs and benefits.

So when attitudes, norms, and costs and benefits are all considered together, one new characteristic of decision-making can be added: people not only make their decisions by thinking carefully about costs and benefits, they may also act spontaneously on the basis of attitudes and norms. These routes may be not come into conflict because people often take attitudes and norms as a background or guide

to migration, and think about costs and benefits in this context, taking all these factors together. So my contribution here is to indicate the way attitudes and norms work on migration decision-making and the interaction between attitudes, norms, and costs and benefits. However, because these findings are from the data gathered from six villages they may not have validity for other migration decision-making. This will be discussed in my examination of the shortcomings of my research in the last section of this chapter.

### **Institutional analysis**

In chapter six, I use analyse how institutions relevant to migration influence migration decision-making. Unlike attitude and norm analysis, institution analysis is not a new field in relation to migration on China. Many studies have already looked at institutions such as the labour market, social networks and households and their strategies. My findings are generally consistent with these previous studies, for example, before economic reform, individuals rarely migrated and planned migration involved very few people who migrated under strict controls. After economic reform, people migrated quite freely; social networks facilitated migration; and households could help their members to migrate or prevent them from doing so. My contribution here is mainly an empirical study of the detailed response of people to these institutions in which I find that these institutions influence decision-making not only directly, but also through attitudes and norms, and the cost and benefits of migration. This is showed as below.

Before economic reforms, few people migrated because free migration was strictly controlled. Not only was it prohibited by the government, there were various difficulties in living and working in cities. In these circumstances, the ordinary social norm was that agricultural work was natural; migration was not even considered. After the economic reforms, people began to think about migration, but compared the benefits from the different ways of earning a living: agriculture, sidelines and migration. New norms were slow to develop, people still remained suspicious of migration and even if they tried it, they were prepared to return if they failed. Social

networks helped people by enlarging their opportunities of employment and saving on the costs of migration. Households have a powerful influence over the individual's migration decision. The household may see it as appropriate or inappropriate for a household member to migrate according to the individual's position in the household, their age and gender and the division of labour within the household. Common benefits, emotional ties and mutual aid give the household an interest in the migration decision of its members and give the individual an interest in complying with the wishes of senior members of the household. The household may therefore encourage or discourage its members to migrate according to the circumstances, but on the whole, the final decision will be based on a consensus.

All three of these institutions may "encourage" or "discourage" migration. When these influences of these institutions are strong enough, one may say that they "allow" or "prohibit" it.

When all of the factors— costs and benefits, attitudes, norms and institutions – are considered together, there are three ways that people make their decision to migrate or not to migrate. They may think carefully about costs and benefits of migration, they may spontaneously follow attitudes and norms, and or they may be encouraged/allowed or discouraged/forbidden to migrate by institutions relevant to migration. These three ways are connected: institutions can influence attitudes and norms, and then influence costs and benefits, and institutions can also influence costs and benefits of migration directly. Attitudes and norms can influence the costs and benefits of migration, in turn, they can also be influenced by costs and benefits.

This thesis has focused on certain aspects of migration decision-making among a particular group in a particular time and place. Inevitably, it is far from comprehensive.

1. Since the fieldwork was conducted in a small part of Shanxi province, its findings may not hold good for other areas. As my interviewees were involved mostly in agriculture, they are probably quite different even from other

migrants in Shanxi. To get a fuller picture of migration decision-making in China, many case studies carried in different regions and among different socio-economic groups are required.

2. This thesis has focused mainly on labour migration. My data shed little light on decision-making in marriage or other migration for family reasons. I also collected less data on female migration decisions than on male ones because female migration was less prevalent. Nonetheless, the subject merits future research.
3. This thesis is an empirical study of decision-making. It is still far from achieving a general model of decision-making, for which much more research would be necessary. For example, theoretically, an analysis of the costs and benefits of migration analysis should cover all the considerations of migration. Potential migrants just need to calculate their costs and benefits in order to decide whether to migrate or not. As showed in chapters three and four, people do make their decisions as this way. However, their costs and benefits, or the way that people perceive and calculate these costs and benefits are influenced by attitudes, norms and institutions relevant to migration, which have been discussed in chapters five and six.

So far, I have briefly summarised my contribution to migration decision-making: 1) I gathered empirical data on and have discussed the detailed costs, benefits, attitudes, norms and institutions relevant to migration and their influences respectively which few previous studies have done and 2) I have tried to analyse the connections between them, giving special attention to how attitudes, norms and institutions influence the costs and benefits of migration, thus adding to the understanding of the nature of migration decision-making. However, since my fieldwork was conducted in small part of Shanxi, these contributions may be applicable only to Shanxi or even only to a part of that province.

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### Appendix. List of interviewees

Interviewees number	Name	Sex	Age in 2004	Marriage status in 2004	Educational level in 2004	If migrating in 2004 (at least one month)	Migration work or work in village in 2004	Sending village	Migration Destination in 2004
1	Sun Dajie	M	57	Y	JMS	Y	Transport	Donglou Cun	No fixed destination
2	Zhu Haitian	F	55	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Donglou Cun	
3	Yan Tiancai	M	64	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Donglou Cun	
4	Zhen Shengli	M	38	Y	SMS	Y	Insurance seller	Donglou Cun	Xinzhou
5	Deng Xinhua	M	58	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Donglou Cun	
6	Wei Xiaobai	M	59	Y	JMS	Y	Carpenter	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
7	Zhou Yuwen	M	49	Y	College	Y	Private brick factory	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
8	Zhao Xuanli	F	48	Y	JMS	Y	Brick factory	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
9	Zhang Xinwei	M	48	Y	PS	Y	Brick factory	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
10	Ding Dianwei	M	39	Y	JMS	Y	Pig factory	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
11	Zhuo Tianxin	M	35	Y	JMS	Y	Pig factory	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
12	Zhen Wenming	F	19	Y	SMS	Y	Student	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
13	Rao Deting	M	21	Y	College	Y	Student	Donglou Cun	Taiyuan
14	Zhuang Lili	F	18	Y	SMS	Y	Student	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
15	Zhong Dianting	M	53	Y	SMS	N	Village cadre	Donglou Cun	
16	Zhan Xiatian	M	46	Y	SMS	N	Village cadre	Donglou Cun	
17	Zhang Qunting	M	25	N	SMS	Y	Construction	Donglou Cun	Xinfu Qu
18	Wang Huiping	M	49	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Donglou Cun	
19	Wei Helin	M	66	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Sanjiao Cun	
20	Wei Geidi	M	47	Y	SMS	N	Village cadre	Sanjiao Cun	

Interviewees number	Name	Sex	Age in 2004	Marriage status in 2004	Educational level in 2004	If migrating in 2004 (at least one month)	Migration work or work in village in 2004	Sending village	Migration Destination in 2004
21	Long Dahua	F	39	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Sanjiao Cun	
22	Shi Zhexue	F	43	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Sanjiao Cun	
23	Wei Pinan	F	45	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Sanjiao Cun	
24	Lang Dongshen	M	36	N	PS	Y	Construction	Sanjiao Cun	Changzhi (a city in Shanxi)
25	Long Guli	M	19	N	JMS	Y	Construction	Sanjiao Cun	Xinzhou
26	Zhang Haohan	M	22	N	JMS	Y	Security	Sanjiao Cun	Xinzhou
27	Jing Buhuan	M	48	Y	JMS	Y	Construction	Sanjiao Cun	Taiyuan
28	Ji Guifang	M	40	N	SMS	Y	Construction	Sanjiao Cun	Xinzhou
29	Liang Shancai	M	68	Y	Illiterate	N	Agriculture	Sanjiao Cun	
30	Liu Kexing	F	45	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Zuotou Cun	
31	Sheng Yangfu	F	30	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Zuotou Cun	
32	Ding Meili	F	28	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Zuotou Cun	
33	Wei Shubao	M	49	Y	Illiterate	N	Agriculture	Zuotou Cun	
34	Bian Aiguo	M	70	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Zuotou Cun	
35	Shi Xinwei	M	46	Y	SMS	Y	Construction	Zuotou Cun	Xinfu Qu
36	Shi Jianguo	M	50	Y	JMS	Y	Construction	Zuotou Cun	Taiyuan
37	Sun Haoren	M	32	Y	PS	Y	Construction	Zuotou Cun	Taiyuan
38	Hu Huaxia	M	30	Y	JMS	Y	Construction	Zuotou Cun	Taiyuan
39	Sun Duanlian	M	36	N	JMS	Y	Construction	Zuotou Cun	Xinzhou
40	Wei Guojia	M	31	Y	JMS	Y	Taxi Driver	Zuotou Cun	Xinfu Qu
41	Hu Ximing	M	40	Y	JMS	N	Village cadre	Dagou Cun	
42	Zhuo Shenzhou	M	48	Y	JMS	Y	Agriculture	Dagou Cun	
43	Huo Qimeng	M	22	N	JMS	Y	Factory	Dagou Cun	Taiyuan
44	Zhao Beichu	M	37	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Dagou Cun	
45	Xia Tianlen	F	42	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Dagou Cun	

Interviewees number	Name	Sex	Age in 2004	Marriage status in 2004	Educational level in 2004	If migrating in 2004 (at least one month)	Migration work or work in village in 2004	Sending village	Migration Destination in 2004
46	Huo Wuzai	M	47	Y	JMS	Y	Town government clerk	Dagou Cun	Xinfu Qu
47	Wang Xiasheng	F	50	Y	PS	Y	Unemployment	Dagou Cun	Xinfu Qu
48	Gan Jiangjun	M	22	N	JMS	Y	Seller	Liulin Wan	Xi' an (In Shaanxi Province)
49	Guan Shihao	F	24	N	PS	Y	Cashier	Liulin Wan	Kelan
50	Li Huahua	F	52	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Liulin Wan	
51	Luo Geng	M	35	Y	Illiterate	N	Agriculture	Liulin Wan	
52	Lou Liu	M	40	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Liulin Wan	
53	Zheng Zhuti	F	52	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Liulin Wan	
54	Wei Facai	M	50	Y	PS	N	Village cadre	Liulin Wan	
55	Rao Tianmeng	M	36	Y	JMS	N	Agriculture	Shang Cun	
56	Lu Kanhao	F	30	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Shang Cun	
57	Mei Zhunshi	M	48	Y	PS	N	Agriculture	Shang Cun	
58	Ren Caiqi	M	30	Y	Illiterate	N	Agriculture	Shang Cun	
59	Zhang Haoshi	M	44	N	JMS	N	Village cadre	Shang Cun	
60	Wei Menzhu	F	33	Y	JMS	Y	Noodle factory	Haiyuan Cun (had gotten city <i>hukou</i> )	Xifu Qu
61	Mei Kongjun	M	29	N	JMS	Y	Noodle factory	Houshe Cun	Xifu Qu
62	Zhao Daxue	F	24	N	JMS	Y	Noodle factory	Gujia Guang	Xifu Qu
63	Fan Youtian	M	45	Y	JMS	Y	Noodle factory	Taiping Cun	Xifu Qu
64	Shi Weiming	M	36	Y	JMS	Y	Noodle factory	Ershilipu Cun	Xifu Qu
65	Li Gaocai	M	35	Y	JMS	Y	Clothes seller	Dun Cun	Xifu Qu

<b>Interviewees number</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age in 2004</b>	<b>Marriage status in 2004</b>	<b>Educational level in 2004</b>	<b>If migrating in 2004 (at least one month)</b>	<b>Migration work or work in village in 2004</b>	<b>Sending village</b>	<b>Migration Destination in 2004</b>
66	Huo Xufeng	F	22	N	JMS	Y	Clothes seller	Xizhang Cun	Xifu Qu
67	Wei Binfu	F	55	Y	PS	Y	Clothes seller	Kuang Cun	Xifu Qu
68	Zhao Huaicai	F	29	Y	JMS	Y	Clothes seller	Xiaowang Cun	Xifu Qu
69	Yu Haili	F	26	N	JMS	Y	Clothes seller	Jiaojia Zhuang	Xifu Qu
70	Zhao Shangjin	F	51	Y	JMS	Y	Clothes seller	Gao Cun	Xifu Qu
71	Gui Yunfei	M	28	Y	Master	Y	Student	Shanding Cun	Beijing
72	Bian Lianzhu	F	25	N	Master	Y	Student	Yongxin Cun	Taiyuan

- Notes: 1) I list all of names for individual interview but do not list all of names for group interviewees like town leaders' names  
2) I do not list the name of the household members of the people in this table, although I referred some names in the thesis.  
3) PS: primary school, JMS: junior middle school and SML: senior middle school.