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Rong Ma

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Migrant and ethnic integration in the process of socio-economic change in Inner Mongolia, China: a village study

Rong Ma

Since the late 19th century, Han farmers have migrated into the pre-dominantly pastoral Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. A case study of the village of Sanyiefu, which has a mixed ethnic population, examines the effects of the in-migration of Han farmers on the community structures and economic activities of the native population and investigates whether or not the in-migration has had a significant effect upon the environmental conditions of the former grasslands. Compared to other areas, in-migration occurred in a very diffuse way, over a period of sixty years with the result that there has been a relatively smooth integration, with gradual changes in economic activities and ethnic structure. There is currently a high level of intermarriage and ethnic issues are regarded as minor concerns. However, increased population density and changes in economic activities have placed pressure upon the limited natural resources and both agriculture and animal husbandry face difficulties. The worsening environment may become an important factor in determining the socio-economic development of the local community and the relationships among its resident groups.

Introduction

Since the late 19th century, many Han farmers have migrated into Inner Mongolia. The Han population in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region increased from 1.2 million in 1912 to 17.3 million in 1990 (CPIRC 1991) and a large proportion of this growth has been due to in-migration. The rapid population growth, especially the large amount of Han in-migration involved, has changed many aspects of the native Mongolian society: population density, ethnic structure, economic structure, social organization, language use, life customs, and ecological environment. Figure 1 provides a general theoretical framework in understanding the effects of Han in-migration on society in ethnic minority areas (Ma 1987:141). When natural resources were limited and the number of in-migrants was very large as in the case of rural Inner Mongolia, what might happen to community structure and economic activities of the

native society? What might happen to environmental conditions as a result of in-migration of Han farmers and cultivation of grasslands? How might the changes in environment affect native-migrant relationship and the social behaviour of residents?

In order to understand the situation in rural areas of Inner Mongolia, a sample survey on migration and ethnic integration was conducted in Chifeng in 1985. Chifeng is a prefecture of Inner Mongolia (Figure 2). Some results of this survey provide a basic picture of migrant and ethnic integration based on quantitative analyses (Ma and Pan 1988, 1989). However, a questionnaire can contain only a certain number of questions on general issues. Because the process of household interviews had to be completed within a short period of time, we were unable to talk to villagers about their daily life and specific intra-village issues. In order to obtain more detailed information, a village study was carried out in the same area in July 1989. Besides statistics

Figure 1. *The effects of in-migration on society in Inner Mongolia*

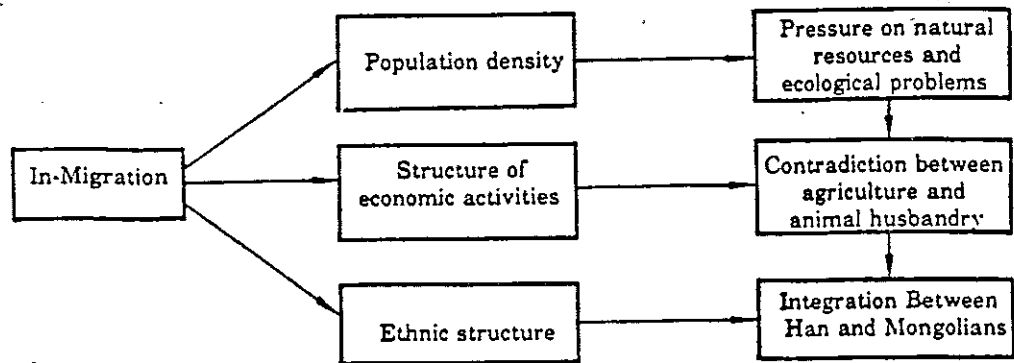
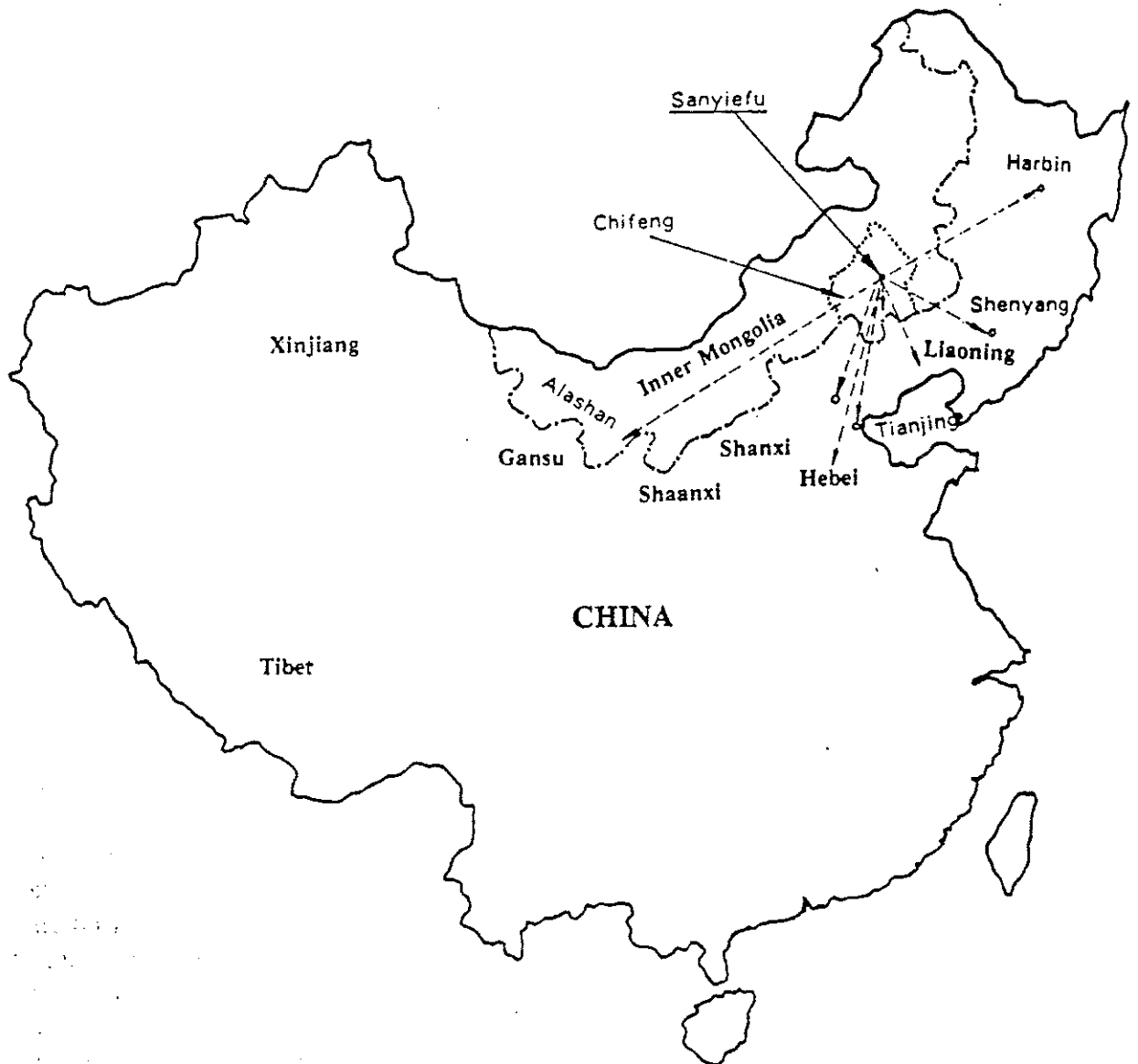


Figure 2. *Location of Sanyiefu village, Chifeng and the destinations of temporary out-migration*



gathered on general social and economic development, living and making friends with the villagers helps in understanding; the migration history of a rural community, relationships among the residents (between natives and in-migrants, between Han and Mongolians); changes in social networks and local economy; problems caused by in-migration; reasons for the success or failure of the projects encouraged or organized by local government; and possible future developments. The 1985 study provides useful background information for a comparative study of change.

The focus of the second study, as in our first survey, is migrant and ethnic integration in rural areas. Therefore, literature on migration and ethnic relationships will be briefly reviewed with respect to the research site, then the advantages of doing a village study in this case will be discussed.

Literature review

The process and results of internal migration and its effects on migrants themselves, as well as on the receiving communities, can be studied in relation to several theoretical frameworks: socioeconomic adjustment systems at a macro-level; individual or household 'cost-benefit' rational calculation at a micro-level; life-cycle and psychological aspects; government development strategies and policy implications. These frameworks have been well discussed in the literature (cf. Shaw 1975, Todaro 1976, Findley 1977, De Jong and Gardner 1981, McNamara 1982).

Basic questions which this study address are: Why have people moved and why have they moved to this specific village? Has their move been arranged by the government or was it spontaneous? Did they come here in the same year or in a more diffuse pattern? What is the present situation in native-migrant and Han-Mongolian relationships in this village?

Regarding integration between natives and migrants, several issues need special attention:

(1) The previous studies suggested that Han migrants have significantly affected the life-style of Mongolian natives through their agricultural techniques, their culture, and modern education (Liu and Zheng 1979). The traditional economic activity of the Mongolian is animal husbandry and Mongolians also have their own cultural tradition (Tibetan Buddhism and own language) (Lattimore 1955, Alonso 1979).

(2) Help from family-kin at the destination was important not only for the social adjustment of in-migrants but also provided them with a source of information about the destination before migration. The effects of education and assistance from family-kin at the destination on the adjustment of newcomers were also emphasized by a number of studies (Shaw 1975, Goldscheider 1983). These relatives were usually previous migrants themselves. These migrants who arrived earlier may affect the decision-making of potential migrants and migrant selectivity. The advice of relatives can affect selectivity by age, sex, and skills among potential migrants at the place of origin and their choice of destination. 'Chain migration' (Macdonald and Macdonald 1964) is also a common phenomenon in rural China.

(3) Levels of integration are related, in turn, to the stratification of rural places, linking family units into community networks' (Goldscheider 1984). The community networks built up by previous migrants might help the new in-migrants' integration with natives. Therefore, social networks among residents are an important aspect in the migration and integration process.

(4) Policy is another important factor in migration regulation and integration in Inner Mongolia. The local authorities can generally control and regulate the volume, timing, and destination of in-migration to Inner Mongolia (Ma 1989). 'The changing opportunity structure and government policies operate in that context'

(Goldscheider 1984:293). The third and fourth factors are related to each other because the regulation of in-migration was also based on the opportunity structure at the destination. This, in turn, is closely related to local social networks.

A large volume of in-migration has changed Inner Mongolian rural communities in many ways. In 1989, about 85 percent of the Chifeng population were Han. Hans are predominant in southern agricultural areas while Mongolians concentrate in northern pastoral zones. According to our 1985 survey, over 72 percent of migrants in survey areas were Han. Ethnic integration, therefore, is a central topic of migration study in this area which overlaps migrant integration.

Depending on the actual situation in various settings, many types and degrees of ethnic assimilation may exist, from complete segregation to total assimilation. Gordon (1964:70-82) summarizes seven major variables which are used to analyze the assimilation process: 1) change in cultural patterns ('acculturation'); 2) entrance into the societal network of groups and institutions ('structural assimilation'); 3) intermarriage ('amalgamation'); 4) development of a sense of peoplehood or ethnicity; 5) absence of prejudice; 6) absence of discrimination; 7) absence of value and power conflict. Although these seven variables are closely related, they also represent different dimensions of the assimilation process.

An important component of cultural patterns is language (Gupta 1975:470, Simpson and Yinger 1985:401). In order to understand changes in cultural patterns and trends with respect to language use in the past several decades, it is significant whether native Mongolians commonly use Mandarin (the language of the Han) or Han migrants commonly use the Mongolian language, or whether both languages are publicly used by both groups. Because the influence of Tibetan Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was very weak in the 1980s, with

almost no impact on people's daily life, religion is not a focus of this study.

To study the entrance of migrants (or Han) into a native's social network (or a Mongolian community), information on friendship and neighbourhood patterns were examined. Residential patterns directly affect the chances for the members of different ethnic groups to communicate with each other in their daily life (Shannon 1973, Taeuber 1989, Zanden 1983:227). This information shows whether there is a significant difference between patterns of residential distribution of migrants and natives, and whether there is a significant ethnic residential concentration or segregation in the village.

Large-scale intermarriage between two ethnic groups generally occurs where members of the two groups can communicate quite well, and have wide and good social relationships at both community and individual levels (Gordon 1964:80). "Intermarriage may be considered the most rigid test of assimilation" (Smith 1939:359). The educational and occupational background of intermarriage were given special attention. Changes in life-style, customs, and rituals of native Mongolians might indicate the extent and trend of acculturation. Therefore, language use, social networks, residential patterns, and intermarriage will be the main aspects in this study of ethnic integration.

Obtaining such information on the above topics in a sample survey with questionnaires was difficult. In this case, a study of a village as a basic local community in the central area of Chifeng provides some in-depth insights and detailed case histories to help understand the process of migrant and ethnic integration in Inner Mongolia, and put this into a general framework of social, economic, cultural, and environmental change.

Sanyiefu ('house of third lord') is an ideal village for this purpose. Located in the central area of Wongnioute banner (county)¹. It is a typical semi-agricultural and semi-pastoral area (Figure 2). This village is

mainly engaged in agricultural production with animal husbandry as the important complement. Therefore, the registration status of its residents is 'agricultural' not 'pastoral'. That means they have to supply grain for themselves while paying 'agricultural tax' to the government, which is generally lighter than 'pastoral tax'. Sanyiefu, according to the local officials and agricultural experts, is representative of many rural communities in this region in the aspects of in-migration, ethnic structure, economic activities, educational conditions, transportation, and the standard of living. I visited this village during our survey in 1985. Of the total 70 households at that time, heads of 47 households were interviewed. Cadres at different administrative levels (banner, *sumu*, gaca, village) gave us a thorough introduction to this village. Therefore, in the summer of 1989, we decided to study this village again. In July 1989, I spent about three weeks there with two of my colleagues².

We stayed with a farmer's family, shared their food and followed their daily customs. The household head (Sun Shizhong) migrated here in 1954 with his family, which was classified as 'rich peasant' in the land reform³. There were some pressures on him during the cultural revolution, but under the responsibility system, he became a team leader of one of three teams in this village. He was 50 years old in 1989 and is a very smart farmer. He counted for me detailed costs and benefits of alternative economic activities. He was also able to account for and comment on his income and expenses in the past year. He could read and write, had experience in all the political movements and system changes since 1947, knew much of village affairs and had his own opinions about them. He told me many interesting stories about the past and present when we had meals together or when we enjoyed tea after our daily work.

I also met Chen Juen, a retired *Gong Xiao She* (a countrywide government related store system) cadre. He moved into this village in 1963 as the head of the store. He

has lived in this community for about three decades with generally no conflicts of interest with other villagers because his salary is paid by the government. Therefore, he could provide some objective observations. Li Yonghai, the gaca Party Secretary, lived in another village but often came to Sanyiefu because the gaca Office was here. He introduced me to the general situation of this village and the whole gaca, especially the 'animal husbandry rejuvenation' project⁴.

I interviewed a total of 23 households (some households were visited several times) and had comprehensive conversations with old residents, team and brigade cadres⁵, school teachers, store keepers, the local doctor, and the richest and poorest residents in the village. I learnt much from these people about their life, their happiness and worries, and how they evaluate different things. Many villagers invited us to have dinner with them and these exchanges provided us the opportunities to see various parts and colours of this community. In my point of view, this small community provides valuable information for understanding migrant and ethnic integration in the whole region.

In-migration and history of the village

According to *Local Chronicle of Wongnioute Banner*, Sanyiefu was established in 1924 when the 'third lord' (a younger brother of a Mongolian Prince of Wongnioute banner) moved to this site with seven servant households who served the lord's family and took care of his animals. All were Mongolians. A 75 year old farmer, Miao Sheng, told me about his experience. His family came to work for the lord in 1928, when he was 14 years old. It was the first Han household in this village. At that time, there were 12 Mongolian households and they all engaged in animal husbandry. The arrival of the Miao family started the history of agricultural production in this community.

In 1947, when the region was under the control of the Communist Party, three other Han families moved into this village. In the following years, Han farmers continually migrated here from the southern agricultural areas (1949: 2 households, 1950:5, 192:1, 1953:2, 1954:2, 1955:1, 1956:1, 1957:2, 1958:1, 1960:2, 1961:1, 1963:2, 1969:2, 1971:3, 1973:3). Among the total 29 in-migrant households, only two were non-Han: one Mongolian and one Manchu. Most of them said that pursuit of higher income and a better life were their major motivations for migration. It should be noticed that these migrants came here in a quite diffuse way (a very small number each year). No household in-migration has occurred since 1973, although individuals still migrate here to join existing households (mainly through marriage).

In the summer of 1989, there were a total of 72 households in Sanyiefu (57 Han, 14 Mongolian, and 1 Manchu who was closely associated with the Mongolians through marriage). During 1928-1989, Han households in this village increased from 1 to 57 (32 in-migrated, 5 moved out, and 30 split from existing households). During the same period, Mongolian households increased from 12 to 14 (1 in-migrated, 6 moved out in 1957, and 7 split from existing households). The total population of the village increased, during the past six decades, from about 50 to 320. On one hand, population grew about six times; on the other hand, natural resources belonging to this community were considerably reduced. A nearby village (Tazhiliang), which was established in 1949 only 1 mile away, took a large part of the cultivated land and grassland from Sanyiefu.

Until 1956, agricultural production had been very extensive. There were no furrows and ridges usual in cultivated land in other Han regions. Rather, after a very simple spring ploughing, the seeds were broadcast into the field. Farmers did not water or weed the land. Before the autumn harvest, the only work was protecting crops from cattle and sheep. This method was called

man sa zi (roughly broadcasting seeds). Before the 1950s, the grassland around the village was very good and we were told that the grass could reach people's knees in summer. As a result of the continual in-migration of Han farmers, more and more of the grassland was cultivated for crop production.

When the 'cooperative group' was organized in 1953⁶ the number of Mongolian and Han households were in balance (about 13 and 13). The 'elementary agricultural producer's cooperative', which was established here in 1954, encouraged the cultivation of more land for crop production. Agriculture then became the major economic activity in this village.

The 'advanced agricultural producer's cooperative', which was established in 1956, began to change the method of crop production from *man sa zi* to the traditional Han methods with furrows and ridges. In the next year (1957), six Mongolian households moved to nearby villages (Tazhiliang and Taiji) which had high proportions of native Mongolians still engaged in animal husbandry. Their out-migration was partly due to the flood in that year, partly due to their wish to remain herdsmen. This type of out-migration was not uncommon in those villages with a large volume of Han in-migration, which changed their major economic activities from animal husbandry to agriculture. A similar case was also found in Dali *sumu*, Hexigten banner, in our 1985 survey (Ma 1987:242).

During 1957-1981, households in Sanyiefu increased from 30 to 67. Because of population growth due to both in-migration and natural increase, more and more grassland was cultivated for crop production. Population pressure on natural resources became very obvious. The attitude of residents towards in-migration gradually became negative. As a result, no household in-migration has occurred here since 1973. The residents were now strongly against any male farmers moving into this village when we discussed the in-migration project. "It is out of the question", they

said, "we already have too many people to feed".

Because of poor soil, a short frost-free period and shortage of rainfall, cultivation of the grassland quickly depleted the land and general environment. Ploughing and watering brought up salt and alkali which used to be more than 1 metre below the surface. Strong winds in both winter and spring blew away the topsoil which used to be held by grass roots. The grasslands were now rapidly losing soil as well as humidity, and becoming semi-desert. All these reduced the harvest and badly impoverished the environment. We were told by old residents that the landscape has completely changed in the past several decades.

A senior engineer (Wang Yuan-zhi), who has worked in the Banner Grassland Station for over 40 years, described how the environment has changed. According to the records of his Station, the length of grass in Sanyiefu and nearby areas was 40–60 cm in 1952, 30–50 cm in the late 1950s, 20–40 cm in the 60s, and 'generally no grass at all since 1978'. So most animals of this gaca now have to be located in the grasslands belonging to other gaca of the same *sumu* by negotiation between gaca leaders. During the same period, annual rainfall fell from 460 mm in 1952, to 400–420 mm in the 1960s, 370 mm in the 1970s, and finally around 300 mm in the 1980s. Han in-migration in this area has changed the population density, ethnic

composition, and structure of economic activities. The result of all this has been a changed environment.

The deterioration of land and weather is slowly destroying agricultural production in Sanyiefu. One sign is that over 40 percent of the cultivated land was not sown in 1989 and many residents left the village to search for temporary jobs. We tried to interview more households, but we were told that many household heads were out of the village.

Since 1985, some residents have tried to send their adult children away to relatives in other places which might provide for a better future. In the 1980s, the direction of migration then changed from in-migration to out-migration. Table 1 shows the nature of the work, the destination, and the migration distance of temporary out-migrants from Sanyiefu in 1988 and 1989. For example, a farmer (Suen Weixian) has a brother working in a state-owned farm in Alashan league (about 760 miles from the village, Figure 2). Suen's daughter married a local boy of that farm in 1979. She sends money to her parents and visits them every year. In 1987 Suen sent his third son to see his sister. She arranged a job for him in a brick factory where the young man makes 3000 *yuan* a year. Then he recommended three of his neighbours in Sanyiefu to move there as temporary workers. This is a typical 'chain migration'. Suen's second son was

Table 1. Temporary out-migration in Sanyiefu village, 1988 and 1989

Number of migrants	Economic activity	Location	Distance
2	Non-agricultural	Within <i>sumu</i>	About 20 miles
2 (Mongolians)	Animal husbandry	Other <i>sumu</i>	50-85 miles
1	Carpenter	Other <i>sumu</i>	50 miles
5	Non-agricultural	County Town	15 miles
2	Non-agricultural	Chifeng city	75 miles
4 (1 couple)	Brick kiln	Alashan league	760 miles
8 (3 couples)	Brick kiln	Liaoning province	160 miles
4	Non-agricultural	Shenyang city	235 miles
11 (3 couples)	Oil field	Hebei province	350 miles
3	Non-agricultural	Tianjing city	300 miles
1	Non-agricultural	Harbin city	420 miles
Total: 43 migrants (including 7 couples)			

an apprentice in a construction team in the country town. This strategy (sending children to work outside) works very well and the income per capita of this household was 1625 *yuan* in 1988. It became the second richest household in the village.

In the summers of 1988 and 1989, 43 young people of Sanyiefu worked outside the village: 29 men and 7 couples (Table 1). Among them, two Mongolians worked with their relatives in pastoral areas. All Han worked in non-agricultural activities (oil field, brick kiln, construction teams, workshops, etc.). Some travelled over 700 miles to find jobs. Generally, the Mongolians send their sons (through adoption) and daughters (through marriage) to pastoral areas which also became very rich because of rising prices of pastoral products. The Han send their adult children to cities and towns where more temporary work opportunities exist and migration control is less severe under the new economic policies.

The number of households did not decrease but people are leaving. For these farmers, agriculture has been their life for generations. Once so eager to cultivate this virgin land, they are now gradually losing confidence in it.

General economic situation of Sanyiefu

Among the total of 24 households interviewed in 1989, 18 were included in the 1985 sample survey. A comparison of the income levels and the structure of income sources in 1984 and 1988 might provide some insights into changes in the economy of Sanyiefu during the period.

The mean income per capita for 18 households was 382 *yuan* in 1984, and 1043 *yuan* in 1988. But there is a very rich household with a 7060 *yuan* income per capita. Excluding this special case, the mean income per capita for 17 households was 497 *yuan* in 1988. The general income level increased during the period though there was a bad

drought in 1988. The percentage of agricultural income in total increased for 6 households (33 percent), the percentage of animal husbandry income in total increased for 10 households (56 percent), percentage of subsidy income in total increased for 4 households (22 percent) (Table 2). Among the 18 households, only 4 earned less in 1988 than in 1984. Therefore, the income of the majority increased and the increase was mainly due to animal husbandry.

In 1989, there were 520 *mu* (1 *mu* = 0.165 acres) of sown land in the village, less than 2 *mu* per capita. Although total cultivated land was 900 *mu*, people sowed only a part of their land because of the dry spring. In addition, each person has about 1.5–2 *mu* grassland for cutting hay to feed their animals in winter. Income was relatively high in the 1950s when the population was less and the grassland was still fertile. The value of the workpoint in the first year of 'advanced agricultural producer's cooperative' (1956) was 1.75 *yuan*/day. It was reduced to 0.30 *yuan*/day in 1972. The best year was considered to be 1982, the first year of the responsibility system. In 1982, a good harvest and high incomes attracted 12 girls from other villages to marry into Sanyiefu. But the 'Golden Age' was short. Because of soil impoverishment and dry weather, income has continually decreased since then. The lowest income was only 70 *yuan* per capita for a household whose head had been in a bad motor accident the previous year (Case #2 in Table 2). The richest household was a 'hen-raising specialized household' (Case #14), which had over two thousand hens. By selling eggs and chickens at market, this household had 7060 *yuan* income per capita in 1988.

With agriculture and animal husbandry as the main economic activities, two trends in this area need special attention. First, due to lack of an effective irrigation system, corn and millet used to be the major crop in this village. The local authorities introduced a special kind of sunflower for oil extraction in the late 1960s. At that time, an extraction factory was established in the county town.

Table 2. Changes in income and income structure of 18 households in Sanyiefu village (1984-1988)

Case	1984						1988					
	Income (Yuan)		Components (%)				Income (Yuan)		Components (%)			
	Total	per cap	Agr	Ani	Sal	Sub	Total	per cap	Agr	Ani	Sal	Sub
<i>Migrants (after 1947):</i>												
1	2680	446	58	14	0	28	3400	567	41	59	0	0
*2	1250	208	42	52	0	10	350	70	0	100	0	0
3	2240	448	36	38	0	27	1520	507	66	34	0	0
4	1620	180	20	30	44	6	1598	533	36	16	48	0
5	4020	503	39	16	36	10	2276	455	37	25	38	0
6	1015	338	43	47	0	10	1290	430	59	41	0	0
7	2590	324	44	38	0	17	2390	398	82	18	0	0
8	2140	267	58	22	0	19	2475	346	42	41	4	12
9	4800	600	29	31	0	40	6500	1625	12	40	0	48
10	2370	339	51	18	0	32	2350	470	19	60	4	17
<i>Migrants (before 1947) or native born:</i>												
11	3220	644	31	22	28	19	3760	753	23	19	58	0
12	1090	363	54	37	0	9	1250	250	60	40	0	0
13	1835	306	37	7	0	56	1300	325	23	50	0	27
*14	3950	658	46	22	0	33	49420	7060	0	3	0	97
15	1380	460	44	28	0	29	960	480	38	0	0	63
16	950	190	32	26	0	42	1256	419	56	18	0	26
17	2420	484	34	29	25	12	4000	667	13	50	21	16
18	930	155	59	9	0	32	1560	312	46	9	45	0

* Case 2 (Wang shu) had a bad accident and could not work.

* Case 14 (Zhang xiao) is a "hen-raising household".

Agr: income from agriculture

Ani: income from animal husbandry

Sal: income from salary

Sub: income from subsidy (or outside village work)

The price of sunflower seeds was higher (around 1.40-1.50 yuan/kg) than corn (0.20 yuan/kg) and millet (0.30 yuan/kg). Because the income from the same area of land was usually three times higher when planted to sunflowers than corn or millet, farmers soon turned to sunflower production. But it is well-known that sunflowers can greatly reduce the fertility of soil. Experienced farmers in the village said that sunflowers should be planted every third year, with a two-year interval for soybean or millet production in order to recover soil fertility. Otherwise, the colour of the soil would change from black or brown to grey and the surface of the soil would harden. Therefore, the area sown to sunflowers was

controlled by the commune and brigade authorities at that time⁷.

Since 1981 when the household responsibility system started in practice, there has been no control over which crop is sown. Among the 23 households I interviewed in 1989, 14 grew only sunflowers in 1988 and 1989. The remaining 9 households also grew sunflowers as their main crop. This trend has slowed in the past two years due to an infectious plant disease which caused putrescence of sunflower seeds. Someone said that the spread of this disease was certainly not good for the farmers' purse, but might be good for their land.

For a long period, the prices of all kinds of grains (corn, millet, wheat, rice, etc.) have

been kept very low by the Government Grain Bureau, whose branches buy grains from farmers. Under the responsibility system, farmers are contracted to sell a certain amount of grains to the government at government prices. The farmers can then sell the rest in a free market. The prices quoted by the government are usually one-half, or even one-third of the free market price. With the rapid increase of costs of agricultural production inputs—seed, oil, chemical fertilizer, electricity—it is clear that grain production is not profitable. Therefore, farmers prefer sunflowers and pay less attention to the worsening condition of the land. Because policies in China have changed so often in the past, farmers still worry about how long the responsibility system will last and the possibility of losing the land again. They hesitate to make any long-run investment (irrigation, recovery of soil fertility, etc.) in the land and have extracted as much as possible from the land still in their hands.

Animal husbandry has been an important part of the village's economy. Sanyiefu used to be a pure pastoral area before 1928 and only took on significant crop production since the early 1950s. With government emphasis on grain production and reduced areas of grassland due to both cultivation and environmental deterioration, the number of animals decreased by about 40 percent from 1930 to 1980. This situation has also changed since the responsibility system was introduced in 1981. First, after the animals were redistributed among residents, local authorities had no control on numbers of animals and use of the grassland. With the countrywide development of a market economy, prices of pastoral products (wool, meat, leather, especially cashmere) increased. For example, the price of raw cashmere was 7 *yuan*/kg in 1973, about 76 *yuan*/kg in 1985, and about 220 *yuan*/kg in 1988. In 1989, the price offered by parastatal *Gong Xiao She* (a countrywide local store system) was 140 *yuan*/kg, and by private buyers from Han regions was 180–200 *yuan*/kg. This situation greatly stimulated both farmers and herdsmen to in-

crease the number of animals, especially goats.

The total number of animals in the whole *sumu* (which has 19 villages including Sanyiefu) doubled from 1981 to 1988. Among these animals, goats increased from about 5,000 in 1981 to 23,887 in 1989, an increase of almost five times. The number for 1989 was reported by people themselves and the actual number could be much higher. The *sumu* Official Assistant who provided me with these numbers gave me an example: a Mongolian herdsman (Taogetao) who reported to have 1,100 goats was believed by his neighbours to have over 2,000 goats.

Obviously, raising sheep and goats to sell wool and cashmere has become a very important source of income. Among 21 households I interviewed in 1989⁸, 10 obtained over 40 percent of their income from selling wool or cashmere while 9 obtained over 40 percent of income from selling sunflower seeds.

But, as was the case with sunflowers, there was another environmental problem with goats. Goats are very smart animals. They can peel off the bark of trees and shrubs, as well as dig up grass roots. This is especially true in winter and spring. According to the Chief of the *sumu* Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Station, one goat can destroy the same amount of grassland as five sheep. Therefore, the banner government issued a special document limiting the number of goats to two per capita and asked goat owners to pay an annual fee of 15 *yuan* per extra goat for grassland reconstruction.

However, under the responsibility system, neither the *sumu* nor village cadres have any real sanctions, or the necessary authority, to enforce this document. In the *sumu* which Sanyiefu belongs to, the self-reported number of goats in 1989 exceeded four goats per capita and nobody paid the fee. The *sumu* cadres estimated that a Mongolian herdsman in Dongba village, owning over 2,000 goats, had an annual income of at least 300,000 *yuan* and that most of his

income was from his goats. I saw him laughing at the speech made by the *sumu* Party Secretary asking people to limit the number of their goats. People said that he told his friends about his plan: he will sell all his cashmere and goats when all the grass and bushes within the border of his village were eaten up. Then he would move to the city to enjoy life with all the money he earned. This is another kind of short-term money-making strategy. "What a devil" his neighbours said, "he will leave us only bare desert. But what can we do about it? Even the banner government borrowed about 250,000 *yuan* from him in 1988 with a high interest rate. Not surprisingly, his horse's tail was cut by someone when he went shopping at the store and his windows were broken by stones, but there seems no way to stop him". This herdsman and the residents in his village were all Mongolians.

Clearly, rapid growth of goats resulted in a serious destruction of vegetation, impoverishment of grassland, and expansion of desert. Land lost grass roots and its topsoil was then carried away by wind. Dunes lost bushes and started to expand and move. The landscape in this area became a terrible scene like other places in Inner Mongolia described by previous studies (Myers 1956:507). When I first visited Sanyiefu in 1985, I still could see some short grass around the village. I saw only grey and white bare land in 1989. Destruction of vegetation led to less rainfall, and less rainfall led to a further destruction of vegetation. The people of Sanyiefu have now fallen into this vicious cycle.

Residents, including both cadres and older farmers, recognize their difficult position. There was a drought in 1988. Because of this, although they sowed three times in the spring, there was a very poor harvest (about one third of the usual). The drought in 1989 was even more damaging. I went to the fields in July and saw that more than half the sown land was bare. In the other half of the sown land, sunflowers and other crops were quite uneven in length. It was obvious that there would be almost no har-

vest in the fall. The 1988 drought resulted in a ridiculously high price of hay in the winter (0.32–0.34 *yuan*/kg), similar to the price of corn. People had to buy hay to save their animals which they had recently bought at a very high price⁹ These animals corroded their purse before bringing them any fortune. In regards to the more serious drought in 1989, a *sumu* leader estimated that about half of the animals of this *sumu* (including a reported 24,000 goats and 18,000 sheep) would be sold or killed before winter.

The people of Sanyiefu had a very hard time in 1989. The 1988 drought had several direct or indirect results: first, the crop harvest was too poor to provide enough food while the sunflower harvest was too poor to provide cash to buy grain for the following year; second, the drought raised the prices of crops and it now cost much more for Sanyiefu residents to buy grain on the market¹⁰; third, they had to pay a higher price for hay to feed their animals because the drought also resulted in a shortage of hay; fourth, they did not get cash payments for the wool and cashmere sold to the *Gong Xiao She* (government store)¹¹ that summer, instead, they received a receipt which they were not able to use to buy grain¹²; and finally, when they were willing to sell a large part of their animals to avoid another disastrous winter, the price of sheep and goats went down because many animal owners were doing the same thing. That is typical in a market economy, and China currently has a market economy in regards to pastoral production.

Because people can do almost nothing about dry weather (no more anti-dry, movements organized and financially supported by the communes), the villagers had to abandon their land and send their young men to towns or cities in search of temporary work to survive. At the time we were in the village (July 1989), over one third of its labourers were away. Many of them (63 percent) even crossed provincial borders (Table 1).

When we visited this village in 1985, we were introduced to a project to improve both the environment and villagers' income. It was called 'turning agriculture back to animal husbandry' or 'animal husbandry rejuvenation', and was designed for the semi-agricultural and semi-pastoral areas which have a deteriorating economy and environment. Such a plan needed the government to do three things: (1) supply low-priced grains to villagers who changed their status from 'agricultural' to 'pastoral'; (2) find employment opportunities for surplus labourers because pastoral production needs much less labour than agricultural production within the same area of land; and (3) provide funds for grassland reconstruction (about 250–260 *yuan* / *mu*). Chinese peasants are used to relying on government funds for a project organized by the government. The banner government was unable to do these things. Later on, the project was abandoned.

When this project was introduced to the five villages of Heitazhi gaca (including Sanyiefu) in 1984, the banner government was willing to provide a small fund for planting grass (3 *yuan* / *mu* for ploughing) and free grass seeds. Only one village (Chenjiadian) planted 800 *mu* and obtained some benefits from this new grassland. The hay production, if turned into cash according to the price in the respective year, was about 22 *yuan* in 1985, 30 *yuan* in 1986, and 65 *yuan* in 1988 per capita. The numbers are not large, but hay production per capita in those years could generally feed 2 goats or 1.5 sheep for one winter and spring. These animals will produce 120 *yuan* of cashmere or 70 *yuan* of wool. This is a significant income per capita in this area. I asked why Sanyiefu did not join the project at that time. I was told that the residents expected too much from the government. They wanted to receive more government funding and change their registration status from 'agricultural' to 'pastoral'. Compared with Chenjiadian village, there was no strong leadership in this community. Sanyiefu residents thought the government subsidy

was too small and they had to contribute too much energy and time for a result which was still uncertain. Now, there is no hope for reviving the 'animal husbandry rejuvenation' project because the financial situation of the banner government is even worse than before.

I also spoke often with the villagers about alternative solutions to their economic and environment problems. In our discussion, three measures were considered by many residents to be practical: (1) by digging small wells in their gardens for vegetable production, they may sell vegetables in the county town free market (which is about 15 miles away) to earn cash¹³; (2) digging two motor-pumped well to irrigate 600 *mu* for wheat production, which will provide enough food to feed the population of the whole village; and (3) taking a chance that the coming disaster, which would cause a rapid decline in animal numbers and limit the number of animals to actual grass supply, would then encourage people to plant grass trees and lead to recovery of the environment.

The first measure can be arranged by each household itself because one small well will only cost 1,300 *yuan*. Motor-pumped wells are much more expensive. The expense of digging one motor-pumped well and the relevant equipment is about 15,000 *yuan*. Such an intervention depends mainly on obtaining a loan from the banner government. Because the village cadres have no authority to arrange pastoral production and grassland construction for the villagers, the only hope for the third measure is that these farmers have learnt their lessons from disasters in the past two years.

Relationship between Han and Mongolians

Acculturation and intermarriage

Sixty years have passed since the first Han family moved into this village. Now one cannot tell the difference between this village and other Han villages in southern Chifeng. The landscape, the appearances of houses, the way people dress, the food they eat, all seem to be the same and in the Han style. When Mongolian herdsmen adopted agriculture as their main economic activity, such a fundamental change inevitably resulted in changes in dress, diet, housing, life customs, and even the way of thinking.

Miao Sheng (75 years old), a member of the first Han household in this village, told me that he learnt to speak Mongolian when he was young because all his neighbours and playmates could only speak Mongolian. A Mongolian woman (50 year old) has two sons and four daughters. She told me that her second son (26 years old) could not speak good Mongolian and had married a Han woman. She had hoped that her two grandsons would learn Mongolian and tried to teach them. But it seems that she was not very successful because the boys talked Mandarin all the time. There was no class taught in Mongolian in the primary school of the village because the number of Mongolian children was too small. Three of her four daughters got married and, and all of them married Mongolian herdsmen in the pastoral areas and moved away. When I asked about whether she would like to see her youngest daughter marry a Han boy, she smiled and said "no", then she continued, "but this affair, to a certain extent, depends on how she thinks. It is not the old time for parents to make the decision". It is interesting that all the intermarriages (a total of four cases, I found) in this village were of the type Mongolian husband-Han wife, all were relatively young couples (around 20 to 40 years old), and all the children from the intermarriages are registered as Mongolians.

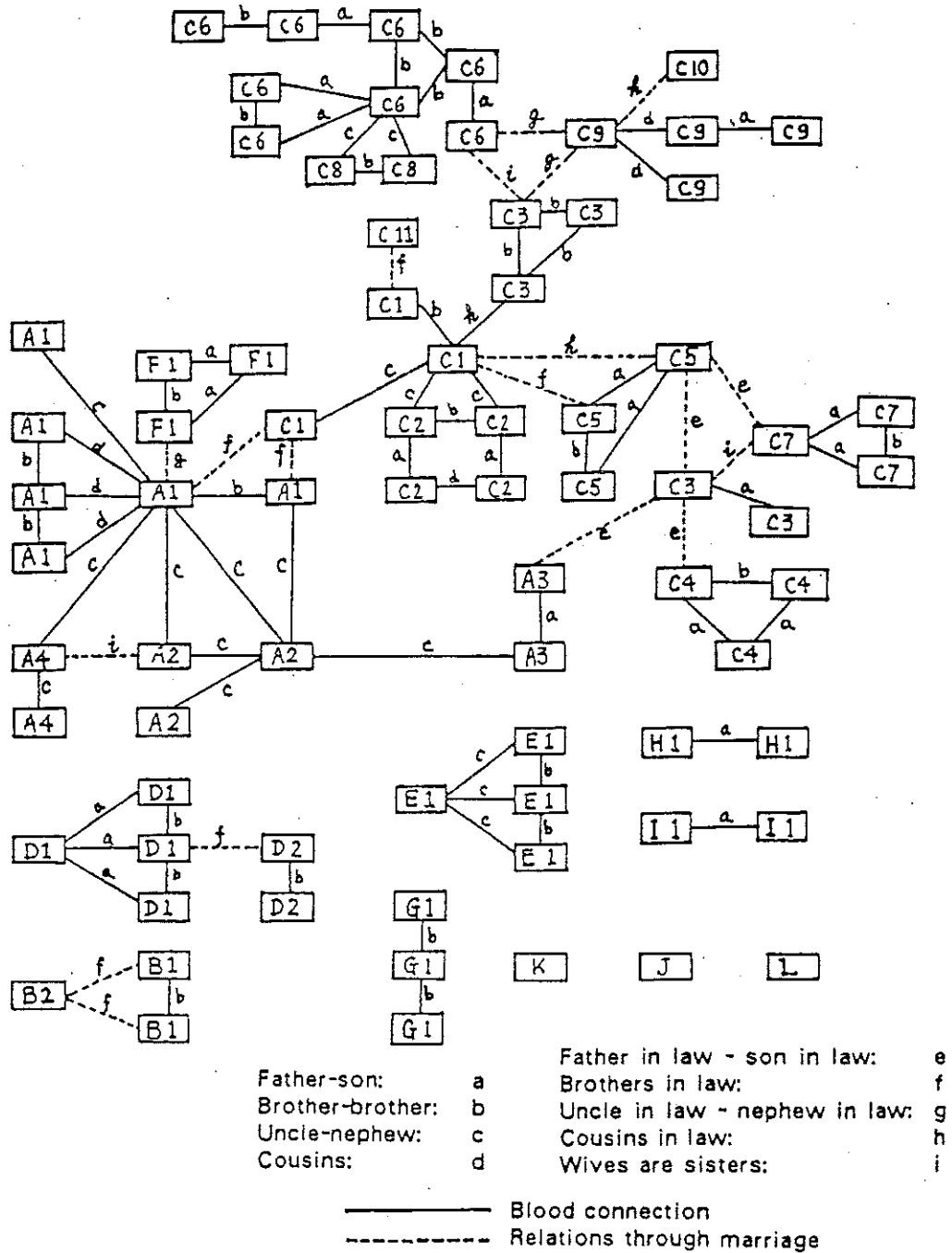
I asked the villagers about the remaining differences in customs between Han and Mongolians in this village. They always took a period of time to think, and the examples they gave were quite small. The wedding ceremony of Mongolians are now the same as the Han. The Mongolians used to have a different style of funeral: a vertical coffin in which the corpse sat cross-legged. That kind of funeral disappeared in the late 1960s. Residents can recall few other custom differences between Han and Mongolians.

At present, no Han can speak Mongolian. Those early Han in-migrants who learnt Mongolian when they arrived now only remember a few Mongolian words. The language used for communication among residents, even within Mongolian households is Mandarin. Mongolians above 30 years old still understand some Mongolian, but Mongolians under 20 cannot speak it at all. It is clear that after three generations, the process of 'Han-oriented' acculturation is almost complete in this village.

Kinship networks and residential patterns

Figure 3 shows kinship networks among household heads in Sanyiefu village in 1989. All households are marked with letters and numbers. Each letter (e.g. A) indicates a kinship group within a wider category. Households under the same letter are relatives through marriage, such as 'father' and 'son-in-law'. Households with the same number under the same letter indicate family groups with blood connections, such as 'father' and 'son', 'brothers', and 'uncle' and 'nephew', etc. For example, A1, A2, and A3 mean that the A group was composed of three family groups (in each family group, the household heads have the same family name and blood connection). The six households marked A1 have kinship relations with A2 and A3 through marriage. Both A and B groups were Mongolians; the households with other letters were Han.

Figure 3. Kinship networks in Sanyiefu village



By carefully grouping all households, it was found that A was the major Mongolian kinship group (including 87 percent of the total Mongolian households in the village) while C was the major Han kinship group (including 61 percent of the total Han households). Through Mongolian-Han intermarriages between the members of A and C groups, these two largest kinship groups made up a larger kinship network. The

combined A-C group includes over two-thirds of the total households in the village. In other words, over two-thirds of residents were relatives through various connections. I was told that, in some cases, marriages were carefully designed to link different family groups. With a strong tradition, in both Han and Mongolian societies, emphasizing the importance of family and kinship, we can see that family and kinship

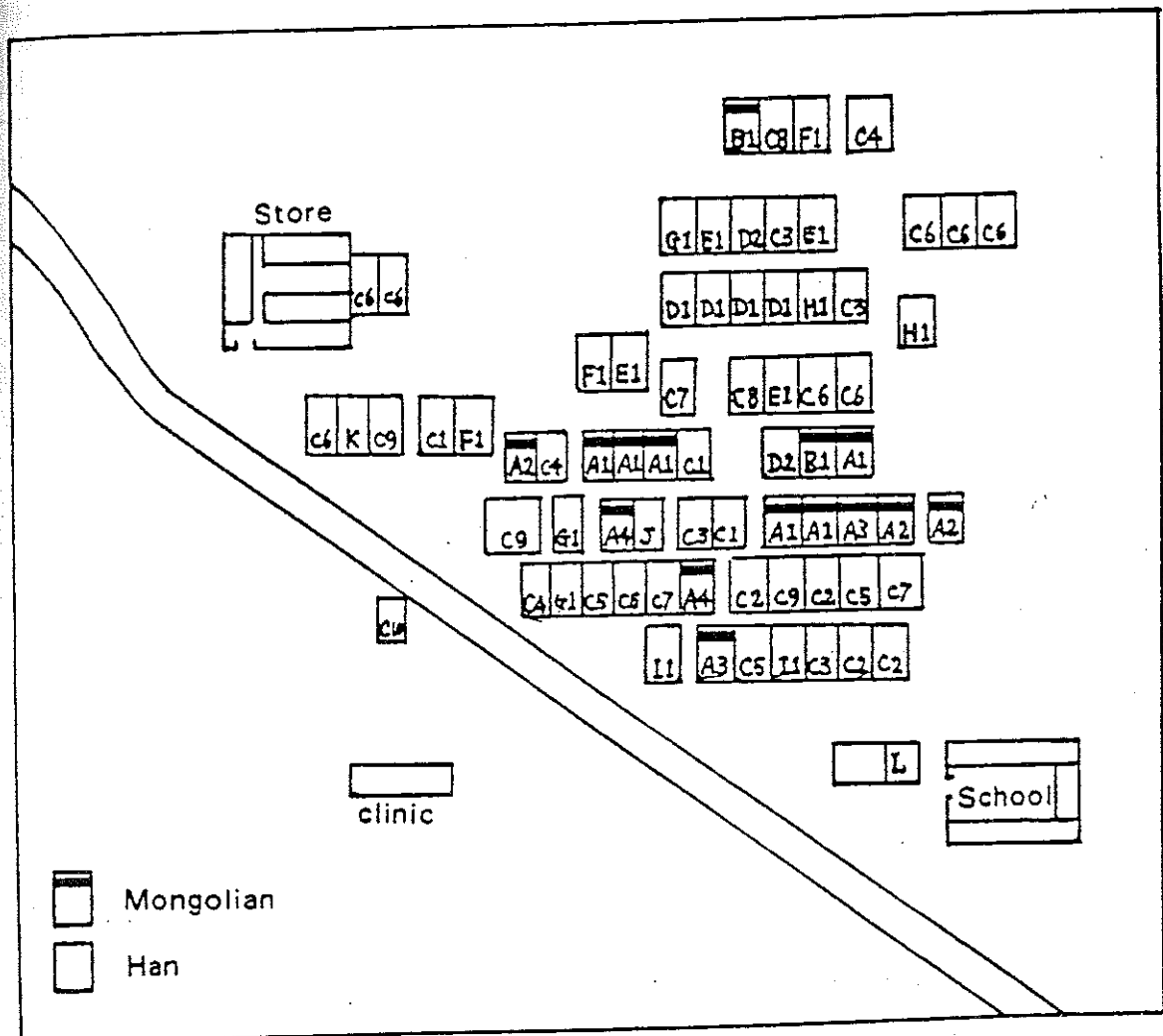
still play an important role in this village despite a long history of Han in-migration and a significant change in its ethnic structure. The Han-Mongolian integration and migrant-native integration overlap with family-linking.

In many aspects, Sanyiefu is still a traditional community. In the past, many residents could migrate to and be registered in this village just because of their kinship with its residents. We noticed that relatives shared water from small wells for gardening, borrowed grain and money from each other, helped each other to build houses, and travelled together in search of jobs. Family background and social communication have always been taken into account in local cadre elections. To figure out the kinship relations among the residents is the

key in understanding their daily behaviour and the structure and functions of this community.

From the map in Figure 4, we may obtain a basic idea about the household distribution in Sanyiefu village. All houses in this map are marked with letters and numbers in the same way as in Figure 3. This map shows that almost all Mongolian households live in close proximity. The Mongolian households of A group live in two ranks in the middle of the village, which is the old neighbourhood of the village. The two or three exceptions were young couples newly separated from their parents. When they wanted to build their own houses, there was no space available near their parents' house and they had to build at the edge of the village. From this map,

Figure 4. Distribution of households in Sanyiefu by ethnic status and kinship networks



many cases can be found in which relatives live next to each other. It is clear that the residential pattern reflects the kinship networks among residents.

During our stay in the village, we noticed that Han and Mongolians visited each other to predict the weather and discuss plans for sowing next year. They sat down together and discussed their common future. Their children studied and played together in school and in their yards. It seems that the issue of ethnic status was not raised but for questions raised by strangers like us. When we asked about major problems in this village, people first complained about the natural conditions: dry weather and bad harvests. Second, they complained about the behaviour of some specific persons, e.g. the stinginess and tyranny of the richest person in the village (the hen-raising 'specialized household'). Third, they complained about the weakness of local government: the old motor-pump well did not work well because of bad management; the local tax (*tong chou*, 33.5 yuan per capita in 1988) was not paid by many residents because of the lack of a village authority (this tax was the major source of income of local teachers, cadres, and construction projects); some poor families who had tractor accidents or other disasters had to take care of themselves because the gaca and the village do not have the capacity to help them under the responsibility system¹⁴; and, the irrigation system, which was built under the commune and benefited the village harvest in the past, was damaged but nobody wanted to do anything about it. Fourth, they complained that they did not receive sufficient financial aid and subsidies from the banner government in their production, construction and welfare.

When listening to these people (including both Han and Mongolians, natives and previous migrants) who sat together to talk about these affairs, we felt that this was an integrated community. The members of this community shared common interest and worries. There was general agreement on most issues, and if there was some disa-

greement, there was no obvious concern over people's ethnic status or migration background.

Conclusion

The discussion in this paper may be summarised as follows:

(1) To an important extent, Sanyiefu is a community of in-migrants and their descendants. First, this area was used by Mongolian nomads as their pasture for centuries until a group of Mongolian herdsmen settled here. Soon after that, the first Han farmer appeared. He and his family worked for the Mongolian lord and produced grains using very crude methods. About 20 years later, when this area was under the control of a strong government which encouraged agricultural production, other Han farmers gradually migrated here. As Han continually moved in, some native Mongolians moved out. Those who remained were gradually assimilated with the Han, who became the majority of the residents. After about another 25 years, in-migration by households stopped. Then, with obvious pressure of population on natural resources, individual in-migration also declined. Finally, with an impoverished environment and a fragile economy, marriage migration became out-oriented and some young people began searching for opportunities through out-migration.

(2) Han in-migration in this village was a long process. It began 60 years ago and occurred in a very diffuse way. Each year, a very small number moved to the village in individual households. Therefore, the changes in economic activities and ethnic structure of the community were very slow, followed by a gradual process of acculturation and intermarriage. Today's 60 year old Mongolians started to play with Han children when they were babies, and to the younger generations of Mongolians, living together with Han is very natural.

(3) It seems that no major conflicts have occurred between Han and Mongolians in

the past 60 years. In all the periods—'cooperative transformation', 'communes system', 'responsibility system', even during the 'cultural revolution'—Han and Mongolians seem to have got along very well. This impression was also confirmed during household interviews. In our conversation, people paid more attention to the weather, the possibility of obtaining a loan from the banner government to dig motor-pump wells, and job opportunities in other places than to ethnic issues. Obviously, there was no conflict of interest between Han and Mongolian residents in this village. Both Han and Mongolians face the same problems in their agricultural and pastoral production. Under this kind of situation, ethnic identity (it has become very weak in the past) as well as native-migrant content (they all were migrants, having come here earlier or later) are minor concerns.

The situation in Sanyiefu provides a sample for a comparative study. If the Han who arrived here in the past 20 or 30 years had come in groups large enough to significantly change the ethnic structure of the local community all at once, the relations between Han in-migrants and Mongolian natives could have been fragile. The picture would have been quite different from the current situation in Sanyiefu. In such a case (which was found in Balin banner in our Chifeng survey), the Mongolian household heads (usually 40–50 years old) might have easily recognized the cultural differences between the two ethnic groups, and realized that new comers take away natural resources which had belonged to natives. Conflicts of interest are thus likely to be played out in ethnic relationships.

If the Han and the Mongolians lived in separate villages, next to each other, engaged in different economic activities, the situation might be very serious. In that case, conflicts in economic activities (farmers cultivate grassland while herdsman's animals eat crops) might occur often. These would become conflicts between two communities, and finally appear as ethnic conflicts stimulated by ethnic consciousness.

In a case we found in Jerim league, the situation was even worse because the Han village and the Mongolian village belong to a different county and banner. Cadres took the side of their locality and finally the senior officers had to be called in to mediate.

Therefore, comparing the experience of Sanyiefu with other cases, we can say that although in-migration involves ethnic content and changes in economic activities, it can result in a smooth integration. This is possible in a diffuse process which stops before the pressure of population on natural resources becomes unbearable. Ethnic consciousness and cultural factors are important in the process of social and economic development, but their impact is minimal if contact occurs gradually over a long period of time.

Finally, the experience of Sanyiefu also shows that environmental deterioration has become a serious problem in semi-agricultural and semi-pastoral areas in Inner Mongolia. In-migration of Han farmers resulted in an increase in population density and changes in economic activities. When population pressure on natural resources reaches a certain level, the environment becomes fragile and both agriculture and animal husbandry face difficulties. The situation becomes worse when the administration loses its control over land use, the market, and the number of animals allowed. The cases of sunflowers in agriculture and goats in animal husbandry are two examples of short-term money-making strategies of farmers and herdsman, which have disastrous results on the environment. The worsening environment has reduced people's income and become a new factor in socio-economic development of the local community and the relationships among its resident groups.

Notes

- ¹ It is part of Heitazhi *gaca* (brigade), Bahantala *sumu* (commune).
- ² Mr. Li Li and Mr. Bao Zhiming (a Mongolian). They both worked in the institute of Sociology at Peking University at that time. Another friend of mine, Mr. Wu Jiakai working in the Banner Statistical Bureau, also joined us for a period.
- ³ The status of all who were classified as 'landlord' or 'rich peasant' were changed into 'grain peasant' (Liang Nong) in the late 1970s.
- ⁴ The project is called *Tuei Geng Huan Mu* (returning agriculture back to animal husbandry) in Chinese.
- ⁵ Although they have different official names now under the responsibility system, villagers still call them by their former titles.
- ⁶ Land reform was carried out here in 1947, and the land and animals were redistributed among all village residents.
- ⁷ The commune system was established in 1958 and ended in 1981.
- ⁸ A hen-raising 'specialized household' and another one whose head worked in *sumu* Junior Middle School were excluded because their income resources are very different from the rest.
- ⁹ According to several farmers, an adult sheep was worth about 70 *yuan* in the market in 1987, rose to 150–200 *yuan* in 1988, and was expected to be below 120 *yuan* in 1989.
- ¹⁰ In the summer of 1989, the price of millet was 1.20 *yuan*/kg and corn flour was 0.60 *yuan*/kg in the free market. These prices can be compared with the prices at which the government store supplied town residents: 0.24 *yuan*/kg for corn flour and 0.32 *yuan*/kg for millet.
- ¹¹ To sell these products to private buyers was forbidden by the policy of Inner Mongolia, but many residents still do so.
- ¹² The drought also resulted in financial problems for Chifeng government which had less income but had to pay more for welfare programmes. The villages got their cash payment around November that year.
- ¹³ There were 14 such small wells in Sanyiefu and all were dug in 1988 and 1989. They brought their owners a considerable amount of cash and were called the 'garden economy'.
- ¹⁴ Generally, the rich wanted a weak local authority while the poor wanted a stronger local authority to take care of them.

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Rong Ma is Professor and Deputy Director, Sociology and Anthropology Institute, Peking University, China.