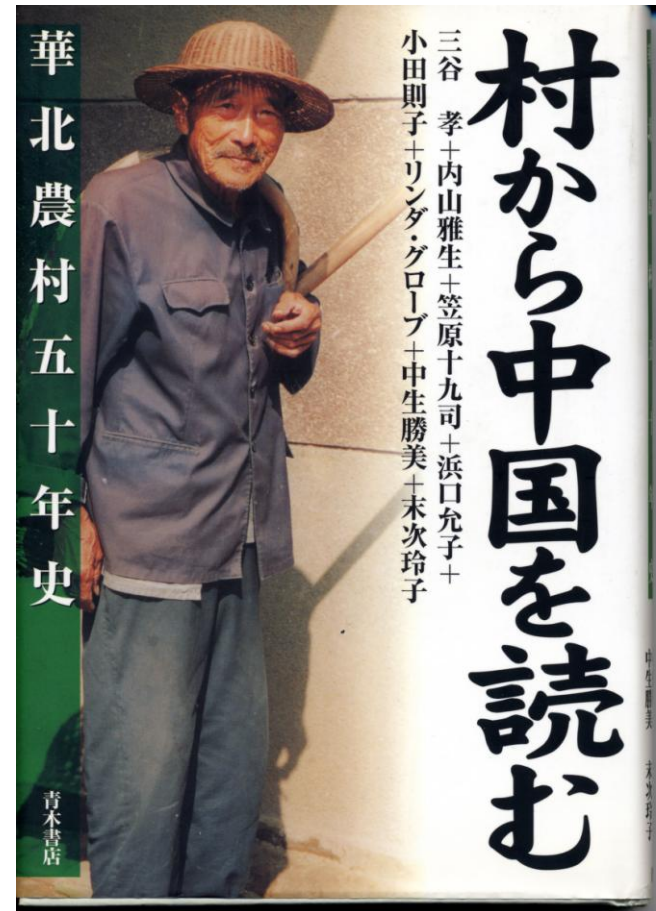


Reading China from the Villages

- Studying Grassroots Change in 20th Century North China
- Linda Grove
- April 16, 2011



Puzzle of Studying Modern and Contemporary Chinese History



How to See China

Positive images

- Chinese Miracle—Rapid Economic Growth
- The Chinese Century—Growing Diplomatic Presence
- World's Factory

Negative images

- Mao's Famine
- One Country/ Two Societies
- State Censorship of the Internet
- Arrests of dissidents

Reading China from the Villages

- Beginnings: Ph.D. dissertation “Rural Society in Revolution” [History, University of California, Berkeley]
 - Social and economic background of the rise of Chinese Communist party
 - Case study of Gaoyang county on the North China plains

China Encounters

- 1979-1980: grant from CSCPRC (Committee on Scholarly Communication with the PRC) as a visiting scholar at Nankai University, Tianjin
- First year of Sino-American academic exchange

Tianjin in 1980

Street in former English concession



Catholic Church in former French concession



Tianjin in 1980

Winter in Tianjin



Earthquake Temporary Housing



Nankai, 1979-1980

Nankai University Library

With Prof. Ding and Ms. Long



Economy of shortages

Key Words

- 排队 (wait in line)
- 没有 (don't have it)
- 卖完了 (sold out)

Lining up to shop



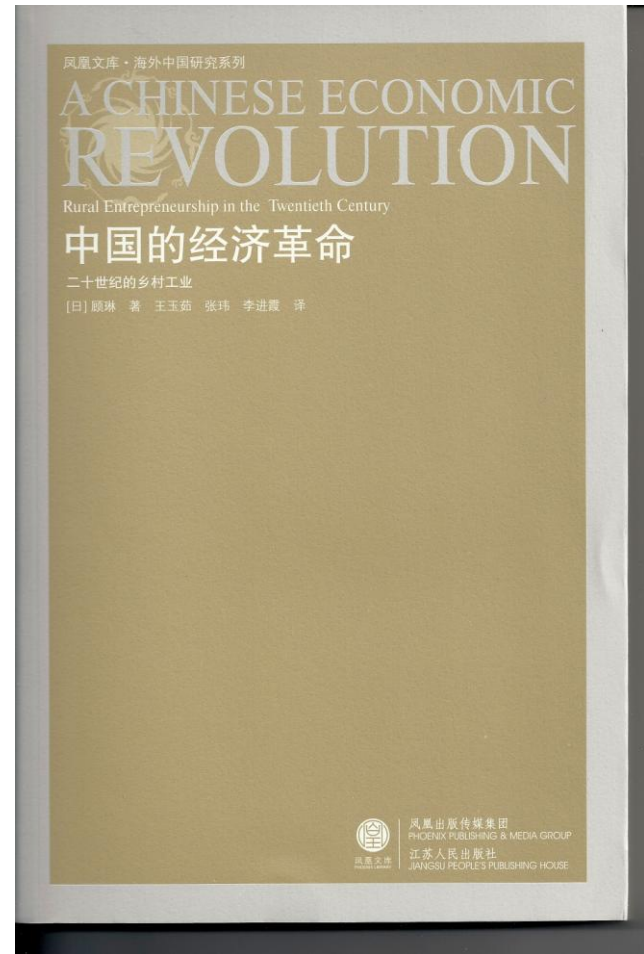
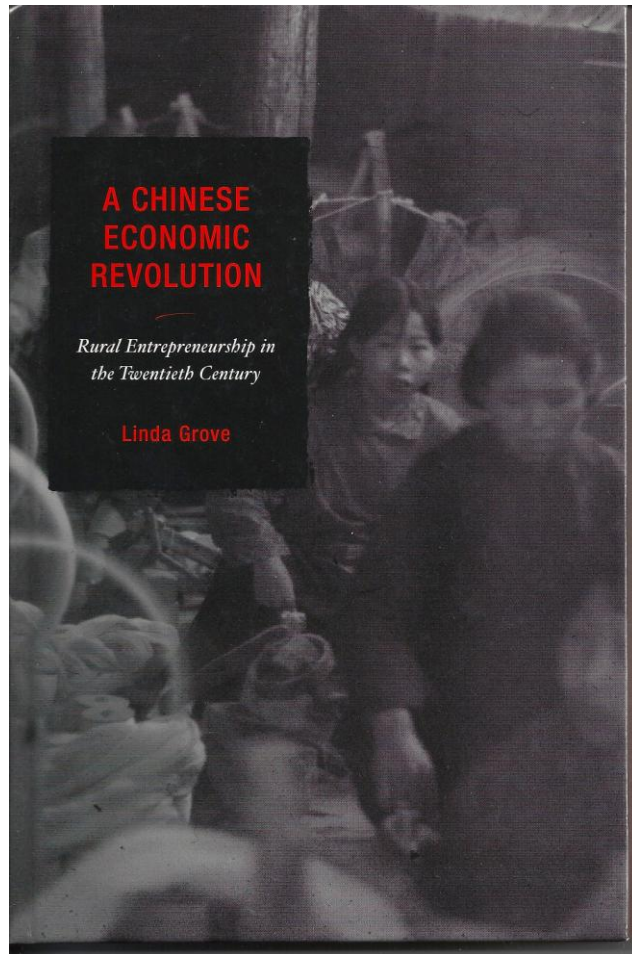
Research Conditions

- Key Words:
 - 外办 (foreign affairs officer)
 - 旅行证 (internal passport)
 - 内部发行 (restricted publications for those with special clearance—not available to foreigners)
 - 批准 (approval)

First Field Work in China

- Gaoyang Project and Oral History
 - Recovering the “voices” of merchants in a rural industrial district
 - Linking history and contemporary developments[
 - Entrepreneurial Traditions

Gaoyang Project



Serendipity

Conditions

- Timing: Early 80s still possible to interview people who were active in the 1930s
- Framing: Japanese connections
- Opening of Archives (1990)

Interviewees



Related Projects

- East Asian Trade History: Market and Networks
- Urban history: Tianjin and its hinterland
- Women's history: women workers; Tianjin women's lifestyles

Studying Rural China

- Songjiang Project
 - 1982-1985
 - Research Restrictions →
 - Taboo of talking about Movements

Life History Strategy



North China Village Project

- 1982: wanted to study the Kankô Chôsa villages, but could not get agreement from any university to take it on
 - “conservative” nature of Hebei provincial government
 - Beijing municipality –too close to the center
 - Shandong—target villages were too poor
 - By late 1980s situation improved, Nankai University historians agreed to collaborate

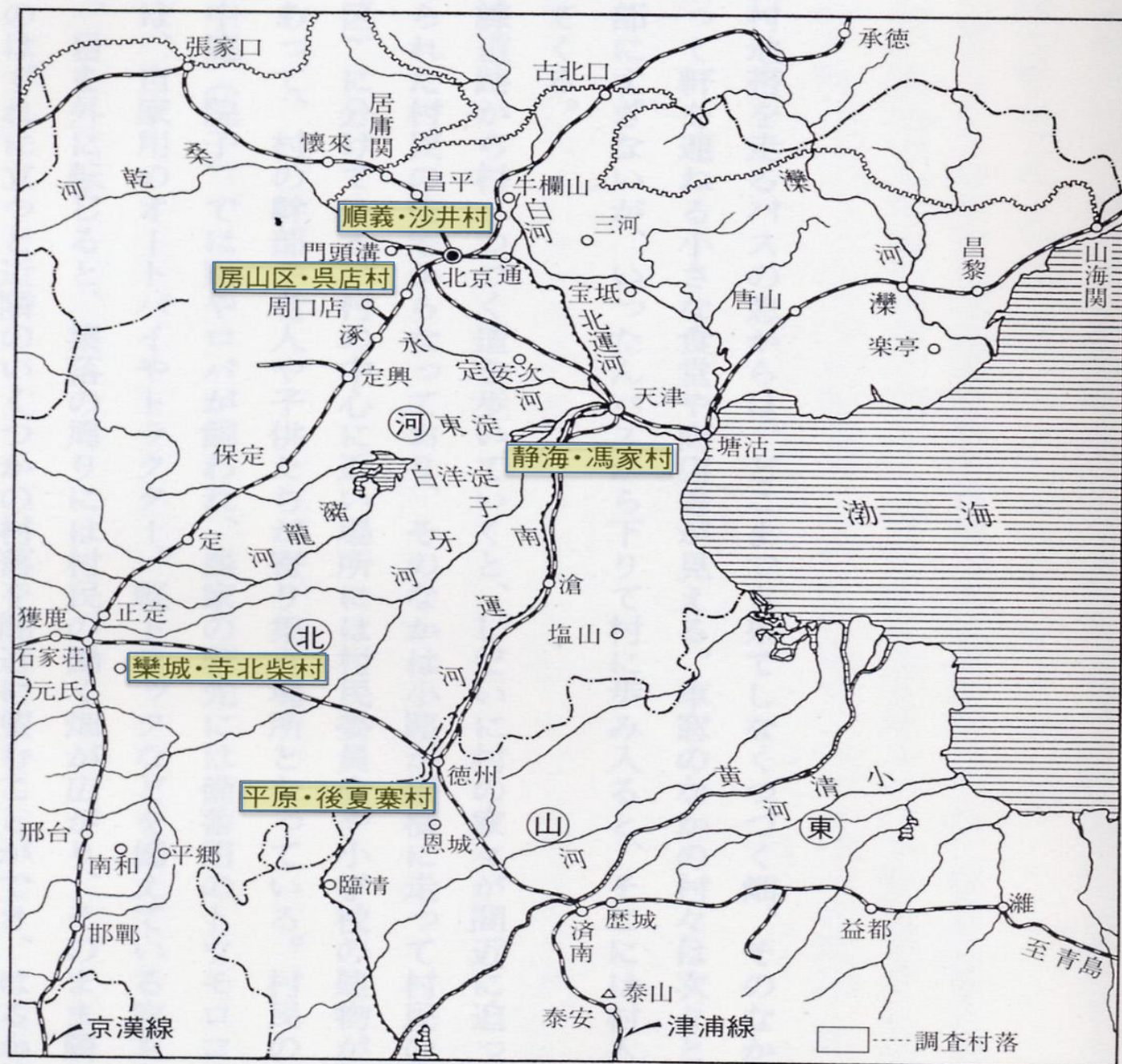
Why the kankô chôsa villages?

- “Interview Transcripts” –giving voice to the voiceless peasants
- Wide perspective of views: similar questions to large number of informants
- Closest we can get to actually walking in the villages of the 1930s and early 1940s

Background of the Kankô Chôsa Project in prewar Japan

- Researchers (Tokyo and Kyoto Universities + staff of the Mantetsu Chosabu)
- Choice of villages
- Focus on “customary law”
- Interview data and post-war publication

華北農村調查略図



Sino-Japanese Research Team

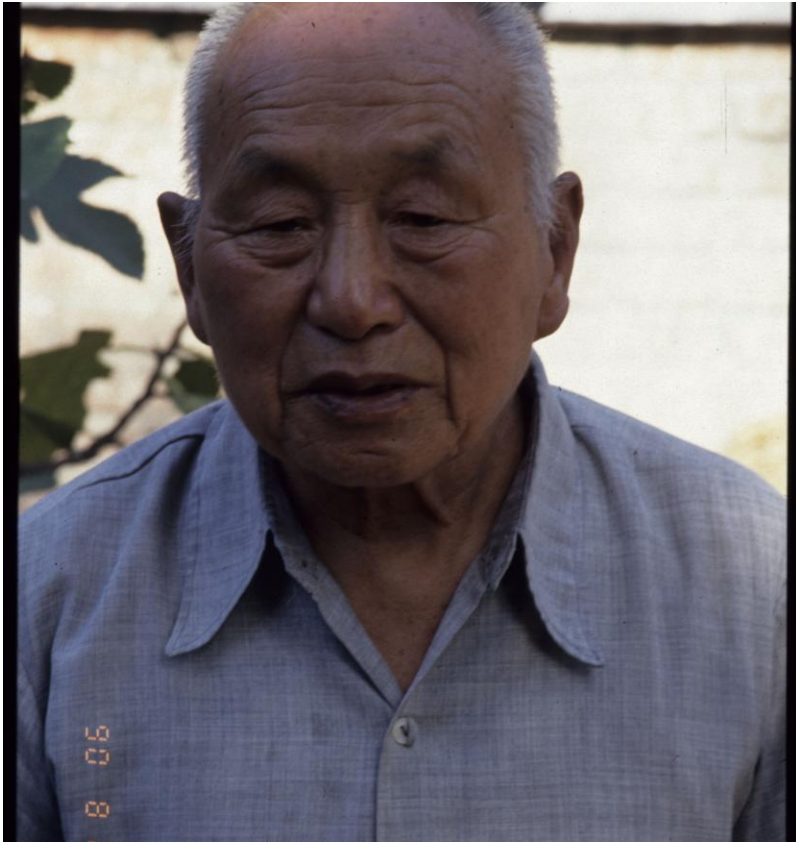
- Japan: 中国農村研究会
- China: 南开大学 历史系
- Fieldwork
 - Informal visits: 1986, 1988
 - Formal interviews: 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995
 - Follow-up visits: 1999, 2000, 2007, 2008, 2009,
 - 2010
 - 1990-1995: total of 511 interviews by team members



Kankô chôsa villages in discourses on rural China

- 旗田魏、“共同体”理論
- Ramon Myers, 1970
- Philip Huang, 1985
- Prasenjit Duara, 1988
- Uchiyama Masao, Qi Jianmin, etc.

Interview Methods



- Life history
- Childhood, family, marriage, lineage, etc.
- Economic status of family
- Experience of political movements
- Daily Work, life
- Specific topics



Shajing (Shunyi District, Beijing)





Shajing in the early 90s



Village street, Shajing



Shajing (Shunyi county)

-  Location in Beijing municipality, near airport
-  Prewar: classic poor North China village, no major landlords
-  Collectively-owned enterprises
-  Reform era: rapid move away from agriculture--industrial employment, taxi driving, etc.

Fengjiacun (Jinghai County, Tianjin)






Village street



Music ensemble



Fengjiacun (Tianjin municipality, Jinghai county)

-  Prewar: land of poor quality, survival on handicraft and outside hired labor
-  Importance of water control
-  “Planned village” following great flood of 1963
-  1990s “suburban” village: supplying vegetables, etc. to city
-  Traditional rural culture –music, dance

Sibeichai (Luancheng County, Hebei Province)






Village street



Theater at “Temple Fair”



Sibeichai

-  Representative of cash-cropping village
-  Cotton production and the rise of tenancy in the pre-war period
-  Problems of “village community”
-  Tribulations of rural industrialization--the village that could not work together
-  Rebuilt temple, revival of “temple fair”

Houxiazhai (Pingyuan County, Shandong)






Cattle market--1995



Basket weaving -1995

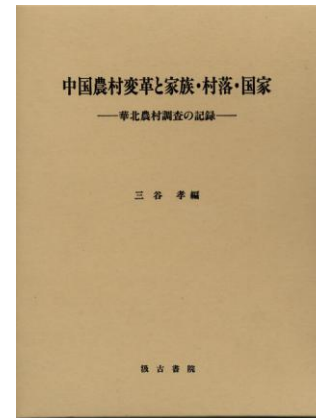
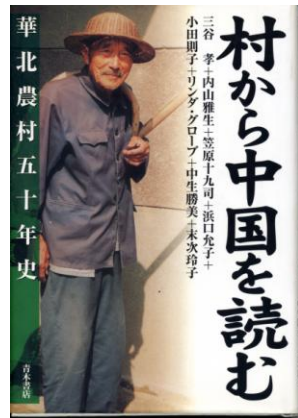
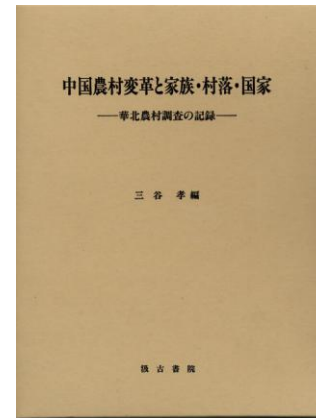


Houxiashai (Pingyuan, Shandong)

-  In 1980s one of 200 poorest counties in China (Yellow River basin, poor)
-  1990s most “rural” of the villages
-  Downward spiral after Great Leap Forward and famine
-  Water control and village fate: 1960s and 1980s
-  Handicraft and petty trade

Publications in Japanese

[Chinese fieldnotes in press]



Villages in the 21st Century

- 2000: joint volume (each writing a chapter on our special interests)
- Assumptions about what would happen in the future:
 - Shajing would urbanize
 - Fengjiacun would also urbanize, but at a slower pace
 - Sibeichai would have a mixed economy
 - Houxiazhai would remain rural farming village

Villages in the 21st Century

- Shajing: High rise apartments
- Fengjiacun: Village factories and vegetable specialization
- Sibeichai: Small-scale commerce
- Houxiazhai: migrant labor; 合村并住

Villages in the 21st Century

- Shajing, 2007



Villages in the 21st Century

Fengjiacun factory, 1994



Fengjiacun factory, 2010



Villages in the 21st Century

Houxizhai after summer rain



Notice to move summer 2010



The Challenge Ahead

- How to put 100 years of rural change in four villages into one book, while keeping the richness of the data and the individual voices
- Periodization
 - 1900~1937:
 - State building efforts, gradual diminishing of village autonomy (taxation, modern schools, etc)
 - Development of modern infrastructure (roads, railroads, etc.)
 - Incorporation into global markets
 - 1937~1945
 - Anti-Japanese war of resistance

1945/49~ early 1980s

– “Liberation”

– **Key Words:**

- **Class Status** 阶级身份
- **户口system** and restrictions on mobility
- Militarization of Daily Life
- Reorganization : Commune 公社, Brigade生产队, Team 小队
- Mass Movements
- Leadership

Being a Team Leader

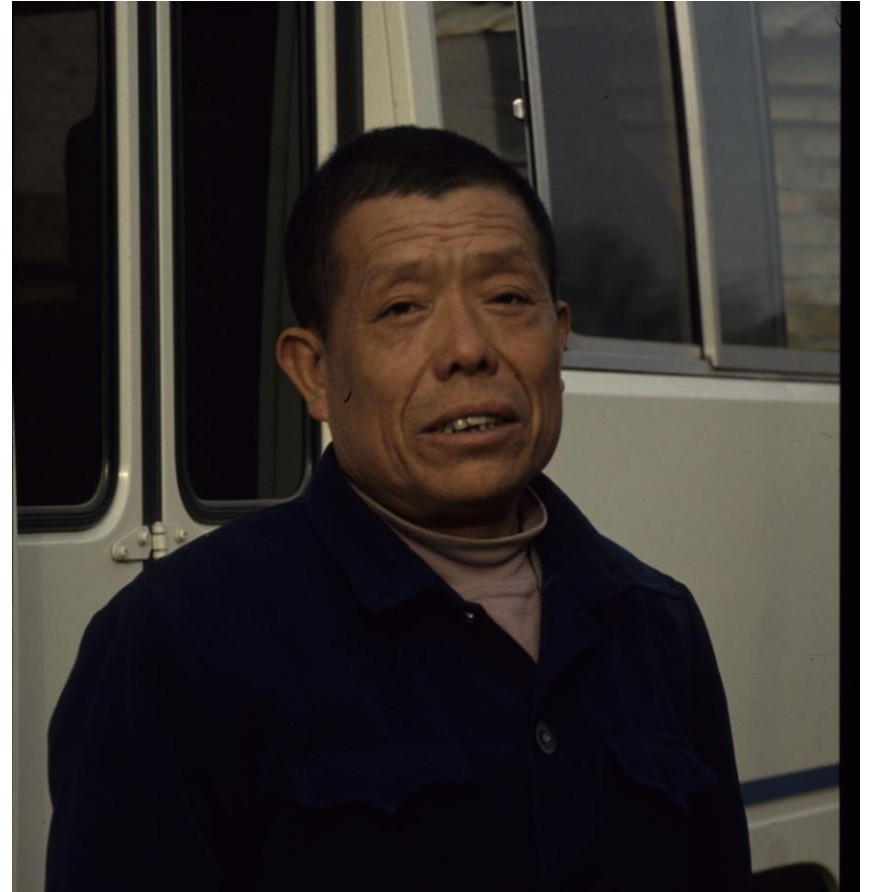
"A brigade head had to watch out for every aspect of the lives of more than 200 people. You had to be sure they had food to eat, water to drink -- and in those days it was often hard to find time to sleep. If some family's house was not well built, when the rainy season came you also had to take time out to be sure the houses would still stand up. There were very few to assist, and not much power to do things, but lots of work to do." (Brigade head, Shajing)

Making Sense of Contemporary China: Reform Era China

- Economic Development Issues
- Changing patterns of community
- From Collective to Individual and Family Strategies
- New Styles of Leadership

Personal Profiles

- Wang Weibao—village head at beginning of reforms



Personal Profiles



- Li Zhixiang
- Overcoming obstacles of “bad class status”
- Entrepreneurial activities
 - Apple orchards
 - Furniture factory
 - Restaurant

Personal Profiles

- Ma Dechang, Village Party Secretary



Difficulties of Explaining The Socialist Decades



The photo taken on Feb 28, 2011 shows a bronze Confucius statue at the north square of China's National Museum in Beijing. [Photo/Asianewsphoto]

Whither Rural China

- Convergence or a Distinctive Chinese model?
- Is the Chinese model sustainable?
- How do different generations of North China rural people talk about their own experiences?