Chinese Migration and Families-At-Risk

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Edited by

Ko Ling Chan

Cambridge
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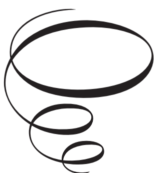

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This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-7249-0
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7249-2

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PREFACE

Reading the chapters of this book is like reading the life history of the Chinese who strive for a better living through migration, be it international or internal. The flux of migration has always been connected to the political or economic turbulence in the home country. In search of a better living, a better system, and a better shelter, the Chinese move from their homeland to other parts of the world.

However, migration has been well recognized as a life challenging process. It can have a significant impact on the whole family, in particular the children. I have encountered a lot of stories about migrants suffering from discrimination and separation, but I have also been moved by many of those who have survived the changing environment and reestablished their home. We have a lot to learn from their experiences.

I am privileged to work with a group of talented scholars and doctoral students. They are passionate about Chinese migrants and, in particular, their children and families. They have conducted some very comprehensive reviews of Chinese migrant history as well as some critical analyses of the migration policies in the host countries. The chapters in this book will provide an overview of the major themes that will serve as a good foundation for further examination of the issues related to the migration of the Chinese people. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for their efforts.

The discussions covered in the chapters shed light on the development of the country of origin: China. Migration does not necessarily imply separation. A lot of Chinese immigrants often have a feeling that, in one way or the other, they are making contributions to the development of their home country through different roles and positions. Their leaving may reflect the inadequacy of the systems in their homeland, but in the long run, it will turn into positive feedback and to the improvement of these systems. We do hope to have a better country with a promise of better living.

PART I:

MIGRATION OF CHINESE POPULATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

CHAPTER ONE

MIGRATION IN CHINA: CHANGING CHINA, CHANGING THE WORLD

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, the movements of the Chinese people, representing as they do a huge proportion of the global population, have attracted increasing attention both domestically and abroad. Whether it be internationally or internally, Chinese migrants generally move to seek a better life for themselves and their families.

Migration has played a significant role throughout Chinese history. Since the beginning of the 1980s, when the law was changed to make it no longer a crime to emigrate from the People's Republic of China (PRC), legal migration (that is, excluding human smuggling and trafficking) has accounted for more than two million migrants (Liu 2005).

The patterns and characteristics of Chinese migration have been shaped in various ways by globalization, global capitalism, and the nation's increasing economic significance (Thuno 2007). The movement of Chinese people may have great influences on both the development of the host countries and that of the PRC. Chinese migration is a complex phenomenon which has meant different things to different populations at different times (Wang 2006). As discussed in this book, it has shifted from being primarily about the export of male labor to mining or plantation areas to describing the movements of entrepreneurs, students, and professionals of both genders.

The following chapters in this book address different concerns related to Chinese migration in the modern world, including the patterns and impact of internal migration within the PRC; the issues related to migration from the Mainland to Hong Kong, a special administrative

region (SAR) of the PRC; and the history, features, and impact of Chinese migration to Western countries.

In this chapter, I shall examine various topics associated with Chinese migration, with a particular focus on the concepts of institutional and social discrimination, integration, assimilation, and multiculturalism.

Defining Chinese Migration

Let us begin with a definition of Chinese migration. I shall not attempt to narrow this concept down but rather will seek to address it from a broad perspective. The term can be used to refer to leaving any Chinese region (including the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau) to live and work elsewhere. In an even broader sense, such movement may count as migration regardless of whether or not the migrant's intention is to settle permanently in the host country (Wang 2006). However, students and tourists, as well as those who travel on specific short-term trips, should be excluded.

Traditionally, studies on Chinese migration have covered emigration from the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong to countries in the West, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. However, the scope of migration studies in the contemporary world should be expanded to include the phenomenon of internal migration, that is, the movement of Chinese people within or between provinces in the PRC. In fact, internal migration, which primarily denotes movement from rural to urban areas, has accounted for the movement of more than two hundred and thirty million Chinese people. This figure exceeds the total number of Chinese emigrants to other countries, which over recent decades has comprised about a couple of million. Such a vast amount of internal migration, and its effect on Chinese society, warrants a deep and thorough investigation. Both kinds of migration are addressed in this book. Specifically, chapters two to five introduce and discuss relevant issues with regard to internal migration, and chapters seven to eleven bring new insights to the traditional concepts of international migration.

Migration from the Mainland to Hong Kong is a type of migration unique to the PRC that also deserves detailed discussion. Hong Kong, a former British colony and now a SAR of the PRC, is different from the Mainland in many ways, including its political, legal, social, and educational systems. Under the "one-country-two-systems" policy, the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Hong Kong has attracted numerous Chinese migrants, especially since the return of sovereignty to the PRC in 1997. Official statistics in Hong Kong report an average of 45,000

migrants from the Mainland every year (Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department 2013). On top of this, more than 20,000 babies are born in Hong Kong every year to women from the Mainland (Census and Statistics Department 2011). Such migrants comprise a large proportion of the Hong Kong population (around seven million as of 2014). Given this unique situation, specific problems have arisen, including discrimination in terms of cultural and class differences. These problems will be addressed in more detail in chapter six.

Reasons for Migration

In the second part of this chapter, I shall focus on the reasons why Chinese migrants leave their homeland, taking into account the differences between international and internal migration.

International migration

The most obvious reasons for international migration from the PRC have primarily been associated with economic and political issues. The pattern of international migration has always been a product of the interaction between the socioeconomic and political situation in the PRC and the immigration policies of host countries. In the earliest stages of Chinese migration in the eighteenth century, the main driver was economic. Chinese men were hired to be workers in gold mines or railway construction sites in Western countries. Hoping to earn more money and improve the quality of life for their families, thousands of Chinese men moved to countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. At that stage, most did not intend to settle in these countries permanently. Instead, they treated the host countries as workplaces and expected to bring back money to their homeland.

After the Second World War, a new Chinese government was established. During the first few decades of its establishment, the new PRC was governed by Chairman Mao and was both politically and economically unstable. Such instability was a catalyst for many to leave their homeland. Nearly a century after the first wave of migration, the host countries were more open to Chinese immigrants and had formally outlawed discrimination against them.

Another wave of Chinese migration followed the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese people from Hong Kong moved to the West in fear of the imminent handover of the region to the PRC in 1997. Lacking confidence in the PRC's Communist government,

numerous highly educated Hong Kong people opted to leave. This wave of migrants was primarily made up of professionals with a good command of English who were well qualified to meet the occupational requirements of host countries.

The migration of Hong Kong people has been slowing down in the last decade, with the majority of Chinese migrants being replaced by people from the mainland. There are three main types of reasons for such migration: (a) family reunification; (b) university study, with graduates often employed in the host countries; and (c) economic development, which involves the export of skilled staff from the PRC.

Internal migration

The reasons behind internal migration are often more straightforward. Most internal migrants move between provinces or cities in order to get jobs that pay better than those accessible to them in their home areas. In order to support their left-behind families living in poor and remote areas of the country and improve the quality of their lives, such migrants regularly send money home. While internal migration may help to relieve a family's economic burden, it may at the same time create other difficulties. One major problem is the separation or "pseudobreaking" of the family, a situation similar to that of the so-called "astronaut family" which occurs in international migration.

Migration from the Mainland to Hong Kong

As pointed out above, Hong Kong has had a continuous population inflow from the mainland. In recent years, the most frequently stated reason for such migration has been family reunification (Pong and Tsang 2010). This phenomenon has emerged from the increasing number of middle-aged male Hong Kong residents who are married to women from the mainland. These women, as well as children who qualify as Hong Kong citizens, can apply for a One Way Permit enabling them to move to Hong Kong in order to reunite their family.

Discrimination against Chinese Migrants

Like other migrant populations around the globe, the Chinese face various difficulties. Discrimination is one of the most frequently reported problems and one which has a profound influence on migrants. Discrimination can be based on race and ethnicity, social class, and even

language proficiency. Even for the second generation of migrant families, discrimination may still exist in other forms. Immigrants may also suffer from adjustment problems and education or employment inequalities. In the following section, I will introduce the topic of discrimination against Chinese migrants and discuss its various forms in relation to different modes of migration.

International migration

Historically, discrimination against Chinese migrants was rooted in the laws and policies related to immigration in host countries. For example, in the early twentieth century, the Canadian government passed the Exclusion Act, which allowed only a restricted number of Chinese people to stay in Canada. This Act was essentially functional in nature. The need for workers from China had been dropping, and the government wanted to reduce the number of Chinese immigrants with poor education or skills. Sadly, the implementation of the Exclusion Act resulted in the forced separation of many Chinese families (for more details, see chapter seven).

In the modern era, Chinese migrants may still face institutional discrimination. Immigration policies such as the Head Tax, mandatory language tests, and the refusal to recognize education certificates obtained in the PRC are just some examples of such discrimination. These requirements often serve as barriers to equal employment opportunities for Chinese migrants, resulting in a reduction in their social status.

Difficulties may persist even when migrants are equipped with a high level of skills and human capital. The lack of a social network and support may create problems of social exclusion and isolation. A recent global phenomenon has been recognized, namely that migrants from Mainland China tend to have a higher education, better qualifications, and more human capital than their predecessors; however, they lack the social support enjoyed by earlier incomers. Another problem is the residential segregation of migrants. In Western countries, it is not unusual to see Chinese immigrants, especially those who are not proficient in the host country's language, being confined in Chinatowns. Such language barriers may make it difficult for them to leave their comfort zone. Chapters eight and ten address these phenomena in more detail.

Internal migration

Institutional discrimination against internal migrants stems mainly from the *hukou* system that operates in the PRC. This is a system for

household registration which imposes restrictions on where a Chinese citizen can live, study, and work. Broadly speaking, a citizen in the Mainland can be categorized as either a rural or urban worker, and this status will be recorded on their hukou. Without official permission, those who live and work outside their authorized area may not qualify for health care, housing, social security, or education in a new location. The strictness of the hukou system has excluded internal migrants from social and legal protection in their host cities or areas. Even when such migrants have attained higher levels of education and become more skilled, they may not be as competitive as their counterparts who are authorized to work in an area by their hukou. The differences in opportunities and social benefits between local and migrant citizens create a basis for discrimination against internal migrants in the Mainland (for more details, see chapter four).

Migration from the Mainland to Hong Kong

In a similar way, social discrimination occurs in Hong Kong when limits are imposed on access to services by immigrants from the mainland. This is most obvious in the cases of migrant families with Mainland Chinese mothers. If there is a delay in the mother obtaining a One Way Permit to enter Hong Kong, the children may experience this as a structural barrier to receiving maternal care, resulting in unequal access to education and social services. The allocation of places in primary schools, for instance, is one of the most common administrative arrangements in which children from migrant families lose out. These children are often regarded as a barrier to the rights of other (that is, Hong Kong native) children to be admitted to good schools. Some people have urged the government to limit the choice of schools available to children from migrant families, and others have even advocated returning them to Mainland China. Even when such children do obtain a school place in Hong Kong, it is common for them to have to travel a long way from their homes, which can be extremely challenging for young people. Such a situation obviously ignores the basic right of children from migrant families to receive an education.

Impact of Migration on Children

This section focuses on the impact of migration on children, both those who go with their family and those who are left behind.

Children who migrate with their family

Children migrating with their family is the most common scenario in modern international migration. Such children may move with their parents or may be born after arrival. The former group may experience adjustment and assimilation difficulties due to language barriers and cultural differences. Such difficulties are similar to those suffered by their parents and have often been found to be associated with poor educational attainment, low employment rates, and poor mental health (see chapter ten for more discussion of this issue). On the other hand, the situation of the latter group can be more complicated. There may be a discrepancy in acculturation levels between them and their parents. Such a divergence has been considered as a risk factor for poor academic performance, depression, and social-emotional problems among these children as well as a risk factor for more intergenerational conflicts and greater parental stress in migrant families (see chapter nine).

Another issue is often referred to as the astronaut family phenomenon. To cope with unemployment in host countries, parents often opt to go back to their homeland to make a living in order to support other family members who have migrated. This creates the common phenomenon of pseudobroken or pseudosingle families, in which children are unable to live and grow up with both their parents. A similar situation can be found among families who have migrated from the Mainland to Hong Kong but the mother has not obtained permission to move. Research indicates various negative consequences for these "satellite children," including poor mental health, poor parent-child relationships, and a high risk of addictive behaviors. Chapters seven and eleven provide a more in-depth discussion of these impacts.

Left-behind children

Sometimes migrant parents may not be able, for various reasons, to bring their children with them. This often occurs in internal migration when the hukou system restricts the children's educational opportunities in the host cities. In such situations, it is highly likely that the children will be left behind to be taken care of by their grandparents or even to live on their own. The major problems suffered by such left-behind children are poorer health, lower levels of supervision, higher risk of injury, and poorer academic performance. A more detailed discussion of the impact of being left behind on physical and mental health, as well as an analysis of

parenting and grandparenting issues, can be found in chapter three, and chapter five examines the impact on school performance.

Effective Integration into the Host Countries: Assimilation versus Multiculturalism

Having presented a brief overview of the reasons for and consequences of Chinese migration, the following section focuses on the concepts of assimilation, absorption, and multiculturalism. Traditionally, studies of Chinese migration have taken a Western-oriented perspective, assuming that immigrants can improve their quality of life through assimilation into the mainstream culture and society of the host nation. Nevertheless, I shall propose here the concept of multiculturalism, which is believed to facilitate integration by maintaining multiple mainstreams. Such an approach has been proposed as a more effective one for Chinese migrants, coming as they do from a robust and distinct culture. In the following sections, I discuss the traditional concept of assimilation and its problems and then introduce the concept of multiculturalism.

Assimilation into the mainstream of the host countries

Most of the host countries discussed in this book formulated their basic immigration policies after the Second World War. Most are now regarded as less hostile and friendlier than ever before in terms of receiving and supporting immigrants to assimilate into mainstream society. For instance, in the United States, the 1965 Immigrant and Nationality Act supported family reunification and reinforced employment preferences by enabling more skilled or professional immigrants to be recruited. Indeed, large numbers of wives and children were allowed to reunite with their families as a result. However, the major assumption of assimilation remains a passive one, with immigrants expected to act and live in accordance with the mainstream in their host countries. Even in countries which claim to be multicultural, mainstream values are dominated by White culture and values.

Chapter nine sets out a critical examination of the concepts of assimilation or segmented assimilation. It may be noted here that one major assumption is that the success of integration is marked by the degree of assimilation into the mainstream society of the host country. Immigrants are encouraged to view themselves as more successful if they learn to speak fluent English, obtain a university degree, make friends with local people, adopt a mainstream lifestyle, and even become part of the

mainstream themselves. However, the validity of these assumptions is doubtful. Firstly, they are basically Anglocentric and set standards for successful assimilation rather than accommodating multiple means of integration. Even when services are established to help immigrants in host countries, the underlying presumption is that to be successful, immigrants need to become more like the Whites. Assimilation into White culture can indeed be the key to successful integration for some migrants, but there is no reason to think that this is the *only* way to integrate into a new society. Rather, the choice to assimilate or to maintain both traditional and new cultures should be kept available to enable Chinese migrants to integrate into the host societies as effectively as possible.

Full integration by maintaining multiple mainstreams

In recent decades, a policy of multiculturalism has been adopted in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. According to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) and the Multiculturalism Act (1988), immigrants have the right to grow up equal to everyone else, and the concept of multiculturalism has been incorporated into Canada's immigration policies since 1973. Australia shifted from the exclusion of non-White cultures to support for integration over assimilation, and in doing so, it began the transition from "White Australia" to "multicultural Australia" (Richards 2008). Multiculturalism is described as central to the national interest, which directly counters previous legislation such as the Immigration Restriction Act. More recently, in 2013, the multicultural Australia policy was introduced. Multiculturalism emphasizes the coexistence of various cultures within a country. Immigrants are encouraged to maintain their own heritage and connections with their home country. In this way, they will not be forced to give up their original cultures and languages and may find the adjustment process less stressful while maintaining more lifestyle options. The multicultural Australia policy values and treasures the diversity between cultures. Immigrants to Australia are more able to preserve their traditional cultures and to maintain links to their homelands. In fact, this policy is promising and beneficial not just to the individual but also in terms of the development of an international relationship. In November 2014, Xi Jinping, President of the PRC, visited Australia and New Zealand to strengthen strategic relationships. During this state visit, the countries reached a trade agreement which emphasized "a shared future of mining, technology, education and marine commerce" (Dumas 2014). Later, in a joint statement issued by the PRC and New Zealand, the two countries agreed

that their relationship "shows that countries with different political systems, history and cultural traditions and at different stages of development can constructively cooperate together" (AFP 2014). Indeed, respect for multiculturalism in these countries may help establish a friendlier environment for the integration of Chinese migrants as well as better collaboration between countries.

Multiculturalism, which emphasizes respect for diversity, coexistence, and equal cultural opportunities in both the host and the home countries, implies more choices and less discrimination. There are many ways to achieve assimilation within the concept of multiculturalism. Some successfully integrated parents who have achieved a high level of education and human capital may maintain exposure to both the host country's mainstream culture and Chinese culture. This could help create opportunities for the next generation to understand and benefit from both cultures. Growing up in more than one culture may equip children with the knowledge and language skills required to navigate globally in the future.

With the adoption of multiculturalism, it is hoped that Chinese migrants will be able to settle in their host countries. Acknowledging multiple mainstreams can be a crucial step for host countries to accommodate the coexistence of various cultures. By treasuring and being respectful to multiple cultures, people can respect and learn from each other, appreciating cultural diversity and the possibilities of switching between different cultures and adventures.

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PART II:

INTERNAL MIGRATION IN MAINLAND CHINA

CHAPTER TWO

THE PHENOMENON OF INTERNAL MIGRATION IN CHINA

CHENGRONG DUAN,
RENMIN UNIVERSITY OF CHINA
SHU LING GAO
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
AND YUHONG ZHU
RENMIN UNIVERSITY OF CHINA

Economic Globalization and Global Migration

Global migration flows are a defining characteristic of late twentieth and early twenty-first century economic globalization (Tilly 2011). Over the last several decades, transnational migration has grown rapidly, mainly driven by the globalization of economic activities and its ensuing effect on labor migration (UNPF 2006). According to estimates of the United Nations (2006), seventy-five million migrants lived abroad in 1960; in 2005, the stock of international migrants reached 191 million—a 155 percent increase in forty-five years (UN 2006). In 2013, the number of international migrants reached 232 million, representing 3.2 percent of the total world population:[1] among them, around 9.34 million were Chinese migrants. China was the fourth largest country of emigration in 2013. The other four top-five emigration countries were India with 14.17 million emigrants, Mexico with 13.21 million emigrants, the Russian Federation with 10.83 million emigrants, and Bangladesh with 7.76 million emigrants (UN 2013).

1. 232 million international migrants living abroad worldwide–new UN global migration statistics reveal, http://esa.un.org/unmigration/wallchart2013.htm

Migrating across international boundaries can be empowering for some as they pursue, for example, higher levels of education or better job opportunities, while others flee political conflicts or environmental disasters (UN 2013). In 2013, the top five destinations for Chinese migrants were Hong Kong, the United States, Korea, Japan, and Canada, with total migrant stocks of 2.28 million, 2.25 million, 0.66 million, 0.66 million, and 0.64 million respectively at midyear (UN 2013). Chinese migrants in these five countries accounted for more than 69 percent of total Chinese international migrants in 2013. These figures show that Chinese international migrants mainly migrate to East Asia and North America.

It is important to note that global migration occurs both across countries and within countries. It is conspicuous that the largest and most momentous migration in the world today is not migration across borders but migration within China. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, China's internal migration involves roughly 262.6 million rural-to-urban migrants. These migrants form the core of China's urban working class, but they lack permanent residence rights in urban areas (Nie 2013).

The Phenomenon of Internal Migration in China

History and scale of internal migration in contemporary China

When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, the level of urbanization was very low. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (1958), in 1949, China had 542 million people, including 484 million people in rural areas, accounting for 89 percent of the total population, and 58 million people in urban areas, accounting for 11 percent of the total population. This urban-rural population structure laid the foundation for China's later internal migration phenomenon. Internal migration in China is intertwined with the country's development goals and remains state controlled, especially through the instrument of the *hukou* system.

Lu (2004) stated that on the basis of China's economic reform, China's internal migration could be roughly divided into two stages and five periods. The first stage was before economic reform and lasted from 1949 to 1977. This stage can be divided into three different historical periods: the land reform and cooperative period from 1949 to 1957; the people's commune movement and the Great Leap Forward movement from 1958 to 1965; and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1977. The second stage

encompasses the period after economic reform from 1978 to the present day and consists of two periods: the institution of economic reform from 1978 to 1991 and the establishment of the socialist market economic system since 1992.

1949–1957: Land reform and cooperative period

The period from 1949 to 1952 was a period of national economic recovery. The land reform started in 1950 enabled farmers to launch forth with unprecedented enthusiasm, promoted the rapid recovery and development of agricultural production, and generated a large surplus rural labor force (X. H. Chen and Zhang 2005). Opting for the traditional Stalinist growth strategy of rapid industrialization centered on heavy industry in cities, in 1953, China started its first five-year plan. To support the industrialization in cities, there was a huge need of labor. And the surplus rural labor force did offer a great help for that. During that time, an average of 1.65 million rural laborers entered cities for employment each year (T. X. Chen 1999).

1958–1965: The people's commune movement and the Great Leap Forward period

In 1958, the Great Leap Forward began. China's leaders called for the recruitment of whatever labor was needed to promote industry in the service of accelerated growth. Accelerated capital construction everywhere produced an acute shortage of labor in urban industries. Rural people flocked into cities at unprecedented rates. In the autumn of 1958, thirty-eight million people were reportedly mobilized to leave their villages and join the campaign for indigenous iron and steel production (Cheng and Selden 1994). Statistics show that from 1958 to 1960, China's urban labor force increased to 29.14 million and in 1960 national urban labor increased to 61.19 million, an increase of 90.9 percent from 1957 (T. X. Chen 1999). However, because of the lack of hands, in 1958, large amounts of grain and cotton were left to rot in the fields. Moreover, the huge increase in the urban population meant that grain supplies quickly fell short of demand. Tens of millions of people died of famine-related causes during two years of the Great Leap Forward. In 1960, the country made adjustments and reduced the sea of city workers by having some return to rural areas. During the period from 1961 to 1963, the number of urban workers was reduced by 19.4 million in total, of which more than thirteen million returned to the countryside (T. X. Chen 1999).

1966–1977: Cultural Revolution

In 1966, along with the launch of the Cultural Revolution, China's political and economic life fell into a nonnormal period. Migration in this period was called the "Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement" and it mainly involved youth intellectuals. Communist Party cadres were reduced to organizing exercises and reform campaigns. According to not-quite-complete statistics, during the Cultural Revolution, more than fourteen million young intellectuals were moved to the countryside. If we add those who went before the Cultural Revolution, the number is closer to eighteen million (A. Li 2006). In this period, political movements caused abnormal increases and decreases in the agricultural labor force as well as abnormal "mechanical dynamic mobility" among urban and rural residents.

1978–1991: Institution of economic reform

After the convening of the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CPC Central Committee in 1978, economic reform began in China. Between 1979 and 1988, reform of the rural economic system—especially the household contract responsibility system—was implemented. This reform increased farmers' enthusiasm, production, development, and agricultural labor productivity. A large surplus labor force emerged and was transferred to nonagricultural sectors and cities.

During this time, the Chinese government reformed the unified grain purchase and supply system, relaxed restrictions on farmers' migration, and allowed farmers to settle down in towns or cities. Thus, farmers gained the freedom to transfer among industries and regions, and they started to find employment in cities. Meanwhile, there was a great demand for rural labor in some industries in the cities, such as construction, mining, textile, and sanitation. Consequently, during these ten years, the labor force in cities increased by 47.53 million (T. X. Chen 1999).

Another large-scale movement of surplus rural labor to nonagricultural sectors started in 1988. The migration in this period promoted the development of rural economies and even the whole national economy, improved the life of people in both rural areas and cities, and accelerated urbanization. In the period 1989–1991, being affected by a fluctuation in the economic cycle, the migration of surplus rural labor to cities grew slowly and was basically in a stage of stagnation.

1992–the present: Establishment of the socialist market economic system

In 1992, after Deng Xiaoping's delivery of an important speech during his southern tour to Shenzhen, the socialist market economic system was established. Subsequently, the large-scale migration of surplus rural labor entered a new stage (X. Y. Lu 2004). Since 1992, sustained economic growth has dramatically pulled surplus rural labor into nonagricultural industries and cities. Since the late 1980s, increasingly imbalanced economic development between cities and rural areas—and among different regions—has accelerated rural-to-urban migration across different regions. There was a sharp increase in migration from 97.65 million in 1992 to 233.91 million in 2008 (Tong 2010).

Since the economic reform in 1979, the causes for migration have changed from social flow to economic flow. Specifically, in 1987, the main cause of migration was social flow, such as taking refuge with friends and family, retirement, marriage, and relocation (Duan et al. 2013); this type of migration accounted for 56.3 percent of the total migrant population. Other people migrated for economic reasons such as job transfers, distribution of work, doing business, and training; this type of migration accounted for only 35.9 percent of the total migrant population. However, since 1990, economic migration has predominated. The percentage of economic migration increased to 60.2 percent in 1990, 66.4 percent in 2000, and 65.7 percent in 2010. Meanwhile, the percentage of social migration decreased to 33.5 percent in 1990, 28.8 percent in 2000, and 29.7 percent in 2010.

In sum, internal migration in China is characterized by a form of government-sponsored rural-to-urban migration under the Chinese socialist regime that was put in place long before the emergence of large-scale (informal) migration driven by market reform (X. G. Wu and Treiman 2004). These two migration regimes coexist and interact with each other, and each must be understood with reference to the other (X. G. Wu and Treiman 2004).

Migrant workers' return

Along with their migration from rural areas to urban areas, migrant workers' return from urban areas to rural areas is also a salient phenomenon. However, there are no official statistics on the national scale of migrant workers' return. Some estimates of the scale of return are scattered in several academic papers and websites. Zhang and Xiao (2006),

for example, reported that in the 1990s, more than 70 percent of the labor force in rural areas found employment in urban areas, while a third of them returned to rural areas temporarily or permanently. Zhang (2012) reported that the first larger-scale return of migrant workers occurred in 1989 and persisted to the beginning of 1991. Since then, there have been two tides of returning migrant workers, one during the period 1998–1999 and one at the end of 2008. After the eastern region (except in Guangxi), the western region has seen the largest net increase in population (Y. Zhao 2011). As another example, according to the data from the municipal bureau of Beijing, in 2011, the city had 8.26 million migrants, which was a decrease of 0.60 million compared to 2010 (Xie 2012). There are many causes of the return of migrant workers. In Wang's (2013) analysis, there are four causes: restrictions of the household registration system, the implementation of favorable policies for farmers, the urban economic recession, and the high cost of living in cities.

In sum, during the one hundred years from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century, China's modernization was just in its infancy and the speed of modern development was very slow. The flow of farmers to cities was also very slow. During the period from 1949 to 1978, from the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the reform and opening policy, the path of modernization was twisted and slow and the flow of farmers sped up and slowed down along with political movements. Since 1978, modernization has accelerated rapidly and the flow of migrants has seen linear growth, gradually entering a period of healthy development.

In the process of industrialization and modernization, population flow is inevitable. Moreover, it is this migrant population that makes modernization progress. The contemporary flow of farmers to urban areas in China is an inevitable phenomenon in the process of social modernization as well as an inevitable trend of historical development. It also complies with the requirements of the development of productivity.

The Household Registration System and Migration

China's household registration system is an administrative management system by which state authorities collect, identify, and register the basic condition of citizens in accordance with the law (Duan, Wang, and Wang 2008). The household registration system includes a population registration system and a management system. The household registration system in China has a long history. The earliest hukou system originated in the ancient tax and recruitment systems. Its content and

features have changed significantly. After the founding of modern China, the household registration system and the population management system were gradually formed.

Formation of the household registration system

During the early years following the establishment of the PRC, from around 1949 to 1955, rural population transfer in China was not restricted. But in the mid-1950s, with the increase of migrants from rural to urban areas, food supplies in the cities became tight. The Chinese government then began to strengthen its control of the migrant population (Sheng 2008). On January 9, 1958, the first household registration system was promulgated, and thereafter a series of city-oriented policies and regulations were issued. These linked the registration system with the housing, labor/personnel, and social welfare systems and fundamentally limited farmers' ability to move to urban areas (Qian and Huang 2007). Subsequently, China began to implement an urban and rural management system. People's communes became management tools for implementing this system and stopping the rural population from migrating to the cities (X. Y. Lu 2004).

The household registration system divided the national population into those with agricultural registered permanent residence and those with nonagricultural registered permanent residence. It also strictly restricted the transfer of agricultural registered permanent residence to nonagricultural registered permanent residence. Children's household registration depends on their mother's household registration. If a mother holds nonagricultural registered permanent residence status, her children are given this kind of registration when they are born and thus share the same social welfare conditions, such as education, medical insurance, and job security programs.

If a mother holds agricultural registered permanent residence status, there are very few channels through which her children can obtain nonagricultural registered permanent residence. Since the implementation of the household registration system, it has been very difficult to transfer from agricultural to nonagricultural registered permanent residence; only about 1.5–2.0 percent of people obtain nonagricultural registered permanent residence each year, even in the reform and opening period (Y. L. Lu 2003). However, according to State Council of the PRC (1958/1986), students who are enrolled in secondary specialized schools, technical schools, or colleges can convert to nonagricultural registered permanent residence. In a 1996 national probability study, it was reported