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# *Migration in a Socialist Transitional Economy: Heterogeneity, Socioeconomic and Spatial Characteristics of Migrants in China and Guangdong Province<sup>1</sup>*

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The peculiar features of China's socialist transitional economy, including the coexistence of "plan" and "nonplan" mechanisms, the *hukou* institution, uneven spatial development, and gendered constraints and opportunities, have brought about a high degree of heterogeneity among population movements. Using the 1990 Census data on reasons for migration, and an empirical analysis of both national patterns and migration in Guangdong, I document the socioeconomic characteristics and spatial patterns of major types of migration, focusing on migration for employment in industry and business, male migration due to job transfer, and female marriage migration. I argue that the multitude of migration types, and the contrasts among them, are products of the combination of state-planning and market mechanisms. The findings highlight institutional explanations for migration, and show that the "plan"- "nonplan" dichotomy is more meaningful than the economic-social dichotomy for understanding population movements in China.

The proliferation of research on migration in the last several decades has expanded considerably our understanding of why people move. Much of this research has identified the neoclassical and structural perspectives as two main approaches for explaining migration. The neoclassical perspective emphasizes the economic rationality of migrants and argues that migration is a calculated outcome of costs and returns, of investment in human capital and productivity, and of regional differentials in economic opportunities (e.g., Schultz, 1961; Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969). The structural perspective, on the other hand, emphasizes historical transformations of regional and national economies, spatial organization of production, and expansion of capitalism (e.g., Frank 1969: 145-150; Pearse, 1970; Sassen-Koob, 1983).

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Both the neoclassical and structural perspectives have yielded generalizations applicable in many regions of the world and at various scales. But both perspectives assume a high degree of uniformity of migration processes and tend to downplay institutional factors of migration. China, on the other hand, distinguishes itself from many countries by its unique "socialist transitional economy." Specifically, heavy state intervention in population movements, a system allowing state plans and market mechanisms to operate simultaneously, and an age-old sociocultural tradition defining varied mobility constraints and opportunities for men and women, are prominent factors of internal migration. They have brought about a multitude of migration types and processes, each associated with distinct socioeconomic characteristics and spatial movements and reflecting important aspects of the transitional economy.

Recent research on migration in China has focused primarily on volume and patterns of migration rather than explanations for migration. This is partly due to increasing scholarly and public attention on the dramatic surge of internal migrants since the 1980s, described as "peasant floods," "blind flows" (*mangliu*), "tidal waves" and "human avalanche" (Liu, 1991; Gong, 1994; Solinger, 1995; Wan, 1995; Tyson and Tyson, 1996; Roberts, 1997). On the other hand, a better understanding of migration processes demands some attention to the different reasons and types of migration.

This study aims at examining in detail the socioeconomic characteristics and spatial patterns associated with different reasons for migration. I argue that China's socialist transitional economy has brought about not one dominant type of migrants but a multitude of migration types. By employing a one percent sample<sup>2</sup> of China's 1990 Census, the empirical analysis first compares migrants for different reasons and describes the spatial characteristics of major types of migration. Then, I use tabulations from the Census' 100 percent data to examine leading reasons for migration to and within Guangdong, which is one of the most attractive migration destinations and whose population is the most mobile of all provinces.

### *MIGRATION IN THE SOCIALIST TRANSITIONAL ECONOMY*

"Socialist transition" and "socialist market economy" have become popular notions for describing China's economic transformation since the late 1970s.

<sup>2</sup> The one percent sample is a clustered sample containing information about every individual in all households of the sampled village-level units (villages, towns, or urban neighborhoods in cities), drawn from China's 1990 Census and made available by the National Information Center. It has a total of 11,835,947 records, among which 360,843 are duplicates and are not included in the empirical analysis of this paper.

In essence, they refer to the coexistence of the state apparatus and market mechanisms which exert control over investment, allocation of resources, and priorities of development. The state apparatus is often broadly defined, including not only the central state but also all other agencies and institutions authorized for "planning" (*jihua*) purposes, such as the nationwide household registration (*hukou*) institution. In fact, the "socialist" in "socialist market economy" refers less to ideology but more to the very planning function of the state. At the same time, market or "nonplan" (*jihuawai*) forces are increasingly shaping the economy and demanding adjustments from state planning agencies.

The socialist transitional economy has important implications for population movements and distinguishes migration in China from population movements in most other countries. Analyses of migration in China must address the institutional factor – the "plan" and "nonplan" components and their interactions – which is of less importance in most Western economies where internal migration is generally "free." In addition, socialist transition has brought about a spatial economy and sociocultural dynamics different from that of the Maoist period. The following outlines four features of the socialist transitional economy that have special relevance to population movements.

### "PLAN" MIGRATIONS

For decades, "plan" and forced migrations have been used by the Chinese government as instruments for achieving policy objectives (D. Li, 1995). The most vivid examples include the transfer of millions of people to inland "Third Front" locations during the 1950s and 1960s (Naughton, 1988) and the "rustication" (*xiafang*) of urban youths and intellectuals to the countryside and remote regions during the 1960s and 1970s (Cheng, 1991). Another example is the resettlement of Han Chinese to minority and border regions, such as Tibet and Xinjiang, during early periods of the communist regime. Although these programs are no longer as prevalent today, as late as the early 1990's the state continued to be responsible for job assignment (to school graduates) and job transfer of state employees for specific economic and/or political purposes. The continued role of the state in labor allocation partially explains the slow development of a labor market (Knight and Song, 1995; Maurer-Fazio, 1995).

Although former "plan" migrants and their family members have for a long time expressed the desire to return, state approvals are still required, and

various regulations continue to monitor their migration. A directive in 1989, for example, allowed children of former "plan" migrants under the age of 16 to return to Shanghai (Zhongguo Tongji Chubanshe, 1994a: 211). These migrants, together with demobilized military personnel, have accounted for a significant proportion of "plan" migration in the post-Mao period (Ding, 1994; W. Wang, 1994; Li and Li, 1995).

### *THE HUKOU INSTITUTION*

Since the 1950s, the Chinese government has used the hukou system to monitor and control population movements (Shen and Tong, 1992). The hukou is a record of an individual's registration classification and registration location and is usually passed from one generation to the next. Registration classification refers to the "nonagricultural" and "agricultural" categories, designated respectively to urban population entitled to state benefits and subsidies, and rural population who receive little state support other than the right to farm. Because it is extremely difficult for an "agricultural" person to obtain "nonagricultural" hukou, not only do the bulk of Chinese peasants have "agricultural" hukou, many who have moved to urban areas as "nonplan" migrants may continue to have "agricultural" hukou. In other words, "agricultural" and "nonagricultural" hukou are not only geographical labels, they also connote one's identity, opportunities and socioeconomic status (Christiansen, 1990; Cheng and Selden, 1994).

An individual's registration location records where he or she "belongs to." It is usually the birth place, but "plan" migrations likely involve changing the registration location to the destination (*i.e.*, obtaining a local hukou). Yet strict regulations have made it more difficult for "nonplan" migrants to do the same. Without a local hukou, a migrant is excluded from many jobs (especially in the state sector) and subsidized welfare benefits (*e.g.*, housing, education) necessary for their survival. For decades, therefore, the hukou system has functioned like an "internal passport system" (Chan, 1996), analogous to the green card for immigrants to the United States and Canada. Besides tying Chinese peasants to the countryside, the hukou system has also contributed to low levels of urbanization and mobility (Hsu, 1994).

A distinct feature of the socialist transitional economy is the constant adjustments of state agencies and institutions to new demands and circumstances (Solinger, 1999). As a result of the large and growing surplus agricultural labor, unleashed by rural reforms and productivity growth (Banister and Taylor, 1989; Lin, 1992), the State Council issued in 1984 a directive

allowing peasants to obtain "temporary residence permits" (*zhanzhuzheng*) (Renmin Ribao, 1984) to stay in urban areas. Subsequently, waves of migrants flocked to towns and cities to look for jobs in nonagricultural sectors. But many are not entitled to a local hukou at the destination (nonhukou migrants) and are distinguished in many ways from those who are (hukou migrants).

The coexistence of hukou migrants and nonhukou migrants connotes at least two related interpretations. Generally, "plan" migrations are associated with hukou migrants, and "nonplan" migrations with nonhukou migrants. On the other hand, certain nonplan or self-initiated migrations, such as marriage migration and migration to enter the university, are exceptions to this rule. Although these population movements do not directly reflect state plans, they are considered by the state permanent migrations, as opposed to temporary migrations, and therefore the migrants involved are eligible for obtaining a local hukou. In the view of the state, permanent migration implies not only a longer stay, but also legitimacy and right to stay. Conversely, temporary migrants do not "belong" to the destination and are expected to return to their place of registration eventually. Another interpretation involves the notion of formal and informal migrations. Because hukou migrants are legitimized by having a local hukou, they have access to an array of jobs closed to nonhukou migrants, including those in the formal sector such as state enterprises, and state protection in terms of housing, medical care and other necessities. Nonhukou migrants, on the other hand, find their existence outside of the formal sector, picking up jobs shunned by local residents and relying only upon themselves for subsistence.

In short, a two-track migration system seems to be operating in China, which owes its origin primarily to the country's institutional peculiarities. Different terminologies have been used to describe the various meanings associated with this system – permanent versus temporary migration, hukou versus nonhukou migration, "plan" versus "nonplan" or self-initiated migration, and formal versus informal migration (Goldstein and Goldstein, 1991; Goldstein and Guo, 1992; Chan, 1994: 114-122; Yang, 1994: 152; Yang and Guo, 1996). Because hukou and nonhukou migrations are most clear-cut in their empirical definitions, they are employed in this paper's empirical analysis.

### *TRANSFORMATION OF THE SPATIAL ECONOMY*

The socialist transitional economy distinguishes itself from the Maoist regime by adopting uneven regional development policies. Market reforms in rural and urban areas have opened up new economic and employment opportunities

everywhere in China, but it is in coastal provinces that these reforms have been most rapid and have had the most profound impacts on economic growth. Unlike Maoist policies, which made an effort to spread resources to inland provinces, post-Mao development policies have unequivocally favored coastal provinces, where disproportionate state investment has been allocated and where the first open zones for attracting foreign investment were established. The result is a widening gap between inland and coastal areas. In particular, a coastal corridor from Beijing and Tianjin in the north to Guangdong in the south has experienced the most rapid economic growth (Fan, 1995). Within coastal provinces, open zones set aside for industrialization accelerated by foreign investment, have become cores of economic growth. Not surprisingly, population movements in response to employment opportunities have been predominantly from inland areas toward the east (Zhang, 1992) and from rural areas toward urban areas and open zones. This is especially the case for non-hukou migrants who are particularly sensitive to the emerging labor market rather than to jobs controlled and assigned by the state.

### *GENDER AND MIGRATION*

The transitional economy has important implications for varied mobility opportunities for men and women. On the one hand, it inherits a high labor force participation of women, thanks to the Maoist regime which actively engaged women in production. On the other hand, it permits forces undermining women's status to revive. Many women have been responsive to regional differentials in economic growth by migrating to areas with increasing employment opportunities in industries and services (Zhongguo Tongji Chubanshe, 1994b: 253). Their sheer volume and presence prompted the invention of the term *dagongmei*,<sup>3</sup> which challenges the notion that women migrate primarily for social motives and as tied movers. Many *dagongmei* migrated from inland poor provinces to coastal open zones, contradicting a popular notion that women move primarily short distances. On the other hand, *dagongmei* reflects an availability of large numbers of poor, uneducated, peasant women and the widely held perception that women are suited to engage in unskilled, monotonous work. In areas with rapid industrialization, opportunities and income for men have improved more rapidly, while new employment opportunities for women (e.g., export processing) track them into low-skilled, labor-intensive, lowest-paying and least secure jobs (Gao, 1994).

<sup>3</sup>*Dagongmei* is literally translated as "working girls," but refers mostly to young women who migrated from the countryside to work in industries and services in urban areas.

Despite Mao's propaganda aimed at raising women's status, gender continues to be a major source of inequalities in China (Park, 1992; Maurer-Fazio *et al.*, 1999). The patriarchal and patrilocal<sup>4</sup> traditions both discourage investment in daughters and their human capital (Li, 1994a; Lu, 1997), resulting in women's lower education and competitiveness in the labor market. While female labor was highly valued during the Maoist regime, women are increasingly marginalized in the workplace because of their expected roles in the family.<sup>5</sup> The dagongmei in industries and services are primarily young, single and have had some education. The poorest and least educated peasant women, on the other hand, have little chance for physical or social mobility. Faced with few other alternatives, women in poor areas may resort to marriage for achieving social mobility (Honig and Hershatter, 1988; Bossen, 1994; Xiong and Day, 1994; Wang and Hu, 1996: 287), and some use it as a means for moving to areas where more economic opportunities are available. Although the state continues to limit marriage migration to cities, such migration to rural areas is generally permitted. Furthermore, the state considers marriage migration permanent migration and allows marriage migrants to obtain local hukou. A recent study by Fan and Huang (1998) has documented well-defined streams of female marriage migration from the poorer southwestern provinces to the more developed eastern region and has shown that such long-distance moves reflected poor and peasant women's responses to widening gaps in regional opportunities since the reforms.

The above has sought to establish that explanations of migration in China must be grounded in the context of socialist transition – coexistence of plan and nonplan migrations, a hukou system defining constraints and opportunities for migration, a spatial economy fostering new directions of migration, and gender differences in migration opportunities. They, as a whole, have brought about the heterogeneity of migration types, each characterized by different spatial patterns and migrants of very different socioeconomic characteristics.

## *EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS*

### *Data and Migration Reasons*

The empirical analysis aims at documenting the socioeconomic characteristics and spatial patterns of major types of migration in China. Data for the

<sup>4</sup>Under the patrilocal tradition, daughters will eventually move out and join the husbands' families, adding to the latter's labor resources.

<sup>5</sup>There is plenty of anecdotal evidence for the increasing discrimination Chinese women face in the work place, including risks of being fired for maternity reasons (*e.g.*, Washington Post, 1993).



empirical analysis are drawn from China's 1990 Census, which is more updated than two other popular sources of migration data – the 1987 One-Percent Sample Survey (SSB, 1988) and the 1986 Survey of 74 Cities and Towns (Day and Ma, 1994). The 1990 Census is also the only census, of the four undertaken under the communist government, that contains two direct questions on migration (SSB, 1993: 512-514). The first question asks respondents their 1985 (July 1) place of residence, a basis for distinguishing migrants from nonmigrants. Specifically, a migrant is defined as a person aged five or above who moved to another city or county between 1985 and 1990 and 1) whose hukou was in the 1990 place of residence or 2) who had stayed in the survey location without local hukou for more than one year or had left the hukou location for more than one year.

The first type of migrants are hukou migrants, whose moves were accompanied by a change of their registration location to the destination. The second type of migrants are nonhukou migrants, whose moves had not resulted in a change of their registration location. For nonhukou migrants, the "more than one year" requirement screened out short-term migrants such as transients and visitors, but also omitted migrants who had stayed in the destination for less than a year. This attribute of the data is desirable for this study, which is less concerned with estimating the volume of all nonhukou migrants, but focuses on the comparability of migrants. Surveys that include more short-term migrants (*e.g.*, Goldstein and Guo, 1992) have documented that migrants with longer durations of stay exhibited characteristics quite different from those who had just recently arrived. Therefore, a duration of stay criterion seems appropriate to ensure some degree of comparability among the subjects.

By definition, the Census does not account for moves within a city or county, migrants younger than five years old, migrants who died between 1985 and 1990, multiple moves between 1985 and 1990, and migrants who moved since 1985 and subsequently returned by 1990. In addition, the respondents were not asked the exact location of their 1985 place of residence, other than what province it was in, making analyses of migrants' origins difficult. Despite these limitations, the 1990 Census remains by far the most comprehensive source of migration data covering the entire nation and provides more breadth than most migrant surveys that address specific locations within China.

With a second question on migration, the 1990 Census is superior to the 1995 One-Percent Population Sample Survey, though the latter has more

detailed information about migrants' origins (SSB, 1997: 641-653). This question asks respondents to choose their primary reasons for migration from nine options. By not permitting multiple responses, this question aims at identifying the most important reasons why people moved. A closer scrutiny of the options and their definitions (Table 1) shows that these reasons not only depict the motives, but also the means of migration, what migrants plan to do after migration and, above all, the major types of migration in China. For example, "industry/business" refers to migrants who wished to engage in commercial or trade sectors after migration, and "marriage" refers to those who moved to join their spouses after marriage.

TABLE 1  
THE 1990 CENSUS DEFINITIONS OF MIGRATION REASONS

Reason	Age	Definition
Job Transfer	15 and above	Migration due to job change, including demobilization from the military
Job Assignment	15 and above	Migration due to assignment of jobs by the government and recruitment of graduates from different schools
Industry/Business	15 and above	Migration to seek work as laborers or in commercial or trade sectors
Study/Training	6 and above	Migration to attend schools or to enter training or apprentice programs organized by local work units
Friends/Relatives	5 and above	Migration to seek the support of relatives or friends
Retirement	5 and above	Cadres or workers leaving work due to retirement or resignation, including retired peasants in rural areas with retirement benefits
Joining Family	5 and above	Family members following the job transfer of cadres and workers
Marriage	15 and above	Migration to live with spouse after marriage
Other	5 and above	All other reasons

Sources: SSB (1993: 513-514, 558)

There are two popular categorization schemes for migration reasons, outlined in Table 2 which samples several recent migration studies. Figure 1 allocates each of the reasons with respect to the two categorization schemes.<sup>6</sup> The first scheme distinguishes mainly economic reasons from social reasons, serving as an umbrella for similar dichotomies such as work-related versus non-work-related (Chan, 1994: 115) and economic versus life cycle/family (Rowland, 1994) reasons. Based on this approach, "job transfer," "job assignment," and "industry/business" are generally considered economic reasons and "friends/relatives," "retirement," "joining family," and "marriage" are social reasons. In essence, whether employment is involved in the migration process is a key factor distinguishing the two categories. However, the boundary between

<sup>6</sup>Because "other" is a miscellaneous option, including all reasons not already covered by the first eight options, it cannot be allocated to the categorization scheme.

Figure 1 Categories of Reasons for Migration.

	<b>Economic</b>		
<b>Plan</b>	Job Transfer 1	3	<b>Self-Initiated</b>
	Job Assignment Study/	Industry/Business	
	<b>Social</b>		
	Training 2	4	
	Retirement Joining Family	Friend/Relatives Marriage	

social and economic reasons is often not clear. For example, study/training is considered an economic reason by Li (1994b), reflecting its likely correlation with future economic gains, but a noneconomic reason by others, hence its arbitrary position between the economic and social categories in Figure 1. Although marriage is traditionally considered a social reason for migration, it can also reflect a strong economic rationale (Fan and Huang, 1998).

Another categorization scheme shown in Table 2 distinguishes plan reasons from market or self-initiated reasons. All three works cited consider "job transfer," "job assignment," "study/training," and "joining family" plan reasons and "industry/business," "friends/relatives," and "marriage" market or self-initiated reasons. Both Shen and Tong (1992: 202) and Tang (1993) also include "retirement" as a plan reason.

The coexistence of and differentials between plan and self-initiated migrations mark the peculiarity of the socialist transitional economy. For example, both "job transfer" and "job assignment" are important means by which the state directly intervenes in the allocation of human resources by assigning school graduates and transferring workers to particular sectors and regions. Legacies of state intervention, such as the return of demobilized military personnel, cadres and workers from previous assignments or plan migrations, are also grouped under "job transfer" (Ding, 1994). Although the desire of migrants is indeed a factor in these moves, it is ultimately the state, via local governments and work units, that decides whether and how such migration can take place. "Joining family" is by definition a direct consequence of "job transfer" (Table 1), and it is therefore strongly related to plan moves. "Retirement" is considered plan migration, probably because a large proportion of the Chinese elderly were retiring from the state sector and from jobs assigned by the

TABLE 2  
A SAMPLE OF RESEARCH CATEGORIZING REASONS FOR MIGRATION

		Job Transfer	Job Assign- ment	Industry/ Business	Study/ Training	Friends/ Relatives	Retire- ment	Joining Family	Marriage
Economic versus social									
Chan 1994: 115)	1. Work-related	1	1	1					
	2. Non-work related				2	2	2	2	2
Li 1994 <sup>b</sup>	1. Economic	1	1	1	1				
	2. Social					2	2	2	2
Rowland 1994 <sup>a</sup>	1. Economic	1							
	2. Life cycle/family				2	2	2	2	2
Zhai and Ma 1994	1. Economic	1	1	1					
	2. Noneconomic				2	2	2	2	2
Yang 1994: 121	1. Economic	1	1	1					
	2. Social					2	2	2	2
Plan versus self-initiated									
Shen and Tong <sup>b</sup> 1992:202 <sup>b</sup>	1. Plan	1	1		1		1	1	
	2. Self-initiated			2		2			2
Tang 1993	1. Plan	1	1		1		1	1	
	2. Market			2		2			2
Yang 1994: 122, 173 -176	1. Plan	1	1		1			1	
	2. Self-initiated			2		2			2

Note: <sup>a</sup>Rowland 1994, analyzed reasons for migration based on the 1986 Survey of Cities and Towns.

He stated that 8 of the 13 response codes referred to economic reasons and 6 referred to life cycle or family considerations. While he specified the 6 life cycle or family considerations, 5 of which matched with 5 reason options in the 1990 Census (exception: "recruitment of workers or take up retired parent's post"), he did not indicate specifically what the 8 economic reasons were, except "employment" and "employment transfer," the latter matching the "job transfer" option in the 1990 Census.

<sup>b</sup>Shen and Tong's, 1992:202 classification was based on the 1987 One-Percent Sample Survey.

state. On the other hand, "study/training" seems to represent individual desire rather than state plans. It is probably the possibility of obtaining local hukou that underlies scholars' inclusion of "study/training" as plan migration.

Self-initiated migrations are essentially nonplan migrations. In contrast with "job transfer" and "job assignment," "industry/business" involves primarily employment in nonstate sectors and migration of peasants to urban areas, which underscores new economic opportunities made possible by the socialist transition (Shen and Tong, 1992: 202-203; Chan, 1994: 120; Li and Siu, 1994). Although it is the state's relaxation of migration restriction which has made this type of migration possible, the decision to migrate and the migration process are largely initiated by the migrants themselves. Both "friends/relatives" and "marriage" also reflect the desire of individuals rather than state plans. Despite the limitations and arbitrariness of the economic-social and plan-self-initiated dichotomies, they are a convenient tool for interpreting the Census reasons of migration.

Table 3 shows the proportions of migrants for each of the migration reasons. For China as a whole, "industry/business" accounted for the largest proportion of migrants, followed by "marriage," "study/training," "job transfer," "joining family," "friends/relatives," "other," "job assignment," and "retirement." But these ranks mask important differences between men and women. The top three migration reasons for Chinese men were "industry/business," "job transfer" and "study/training," all belonging to the first or third quadrant of Figure 1, depicting the dominance of economic reasons in male migration. The three leading reasons for female migration were "marriage," "industry/business" and "joining family." Both "marriage" and "joining family" seem to support the conventional wisdom that women are more likely to move for social reasons (Figure 1). In Guangdong, however, both men and women overwhelmingly selected "industry/business" as their leading reason of in-migration, reflecting the perceived and actual abundance of economic opportunities in that province. Nevertheless, "job transfer" and "marriage" were still prominent in Guangdong as the second leading reasons for male and female immigrations respectively.

### LEADING REASONS FOR MIGRATION IN CHINA

In order to highlight the most prominent types of migration in China, the following analyses focus on the two leading reasons for migration for men and women. Table 4 compares the characteristics of male "industry/business" migrants, male "job transfer" migrants, female "marriage" migrants, and female "industry/business" migrants. In terms of the categories outlined in Figure 1, they represent two economic reasons – one plan (job transfer) and one self-initiated (industry/business) – and one social and self-initiated reason (marriage).

The effect of the hukou institution is readily observable, since the bulk of male "job transfer" migrants and female "marriage" migrants were hukou

TABLE 3  
MIGRATION REASONS IN CHINA AND GUANGDONG

	Job								
	Job Transfer	Assign-ment	Industry/ Business	Study/ Training	Friends/ Relatives	Retire-ment	Joining Family	Marriage	Other
China (%)									
All Migrants	12.0	6.7	23.6	12.9	9.7	1.6	11.0	13.8	8.7
Male	15.1	8.7	29.9	14.8	7.5	2.4	7.8	2.4	11.4
Female	8.1	4.2	15.4	10.4	12.5	0.6	15.0	28.3	5.3
Guangdong (%)									
All In-Migrants	7.9	2.9	58.7	5.1	3.6	2.4	7.7	7.3	6.3
Male	10.4	4.2	60.8	6.7	2.5	1.0	6.6	0.4	7.4
Female	5.3	1.5	56.4	3.4	4.7	0.4	8.8	14.5	5.1

Sources: SSB, 1993: 452-491; 1990 Census One-Percent Sample.

TABLE 4  
SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANTS BY LEADING REASONS

	Male		Female	
	Industry/ Business	Job Transfer	Marriage	Industry/ Business
Hukou migrants (%)	3.7	79.6	62.9	4.8
Age				
Mean (years)	28.7	33.6	25.6	25.2
15-29 (%)	66.4	44.1	87.6	79.4
Hukou Classification (%)				
Agricultural	92.5	10.6	89.9	91.4
Education Level (15-29) (%)				
Junior High or above	75.6	97.2	49.3	68.8
Labor Force Participation (15+) (%)				
% in labor force	99.8	98.4	81.3	98.1
Occupation (15+) (%)				
Professional	1.5	17.9	1.7	2.0
Government	1.4	11.3	0.0	0.2
Administrative/Clerical	1.3	17.0	0.3	0.5
Commerce	11.6	4.4	2.7	15.9
Services	8.2	3.3	2.2	17.7
Agricultural	8.7	5.2	85.3	9.4
Industrial	67.2	40.6	7.9	54.3

Source: 1990 Census one-percent sample.

migrants, depicting on the one hand the continued prominence of state planning in monitoring migration and on the other the peculiar hukou regulation linking marriage with change of hukou. The vast majority of "industry/business" migrants, however, were nonhukou migrants, a strong testimony of how economic transformation has demanded incremental changes in the socialist institution, which responded by expanding a large number of nonplan migrants, but not giving them full legitimacy nor local hukou rights.

The socioeconomic characteristics of these four types of migrants are varied. While most migrants were young and concentrated in the 15-29 age range, male "job transfer" migrants were relatively older and more spread out in their age distribution. They again stood out in terms of hukou classification and education - they had the smallest proportion with agricultural hukou and the highest proportion of 15-29 years olds with junior high or above education<sup>7</sup> - suggesting a more urban and educated group compared with the other three types of migrants. On the contrary, the vast majority of female "marriage" migrants had agricultural hukou, and less than half of the 15-29 year-olds have had junior high or above education, representing poorly educated peasant women. These extremes reflect not only the more privileged institutional position of "job

<sup>7</sup>Comparison of education level requires controlling for age because the former varies considerably with age. I selected ages between 15 and 29 because this range accounted for the vast majority of Chinese migrants.

transfer" migrants as part of state planning, but also the disadvantaged socio-economic status of Chinese women in general and female "marriage" migrants in particular.

Contrasts among migrants are again reflected by their occupations. All four types of migrants were active participants in the labor market, as indicated by their very high labor force participation rates. But male "job transfer" migrants were the only group having significant proportions in the more prestigious professional, government and administrative/clerical occupations (46.2% in total). None of the three self-initiated groups had more than 5 percent in these three occupations combined, again indicating the informal and "outsider" status of nonplan migrants. Both male and female "industry/business" migrants were highly represented in industrial, commerce and services work, while the bulk of female "marriage" migrants engaged in agricultural work.

Table 5 compares migrants' residence types at the origins (cities, towns and townships) and destinations (cities and counties). Although the 1990 Census does not standardize residence types of origins and destinations, it is commonly accepted that cities and towns represent more urban areas, and townships and counties more rural areas. The origin residence types confirm an earlier observation that male "job transfer" migrants were mostly from urban areas, while the other three types of migrants were largely from rural areas. In conjunction with destination residence types statistics, the data suggest that "industry/business" migrants (both male and female) involved primarily rural-to-urban moves, male "job transfer" migrants urban-to-urban moves, and female "marriage" migrants rural-to-rural moves.

TABLE 5  
SPATIAL PATTERN OF MIGRATION BY LEADING REASONS

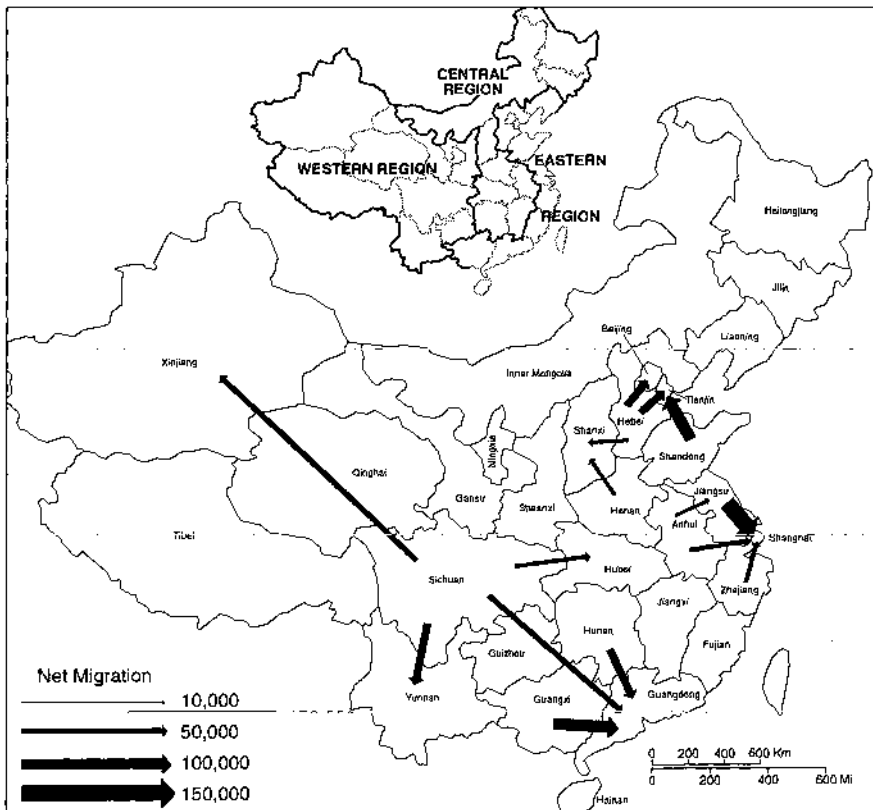
	Male		Female	
	Industry/ Business	Job Transfer	Marriage	Industry/ Business
Origin Residence Type (%)				
Cities	4.6	47.8	4.5	3.2
Towns	10.2	28.0	12.8	10.1
Townships	85.2	24.1	82.8	86.8
Destination Residence Type (%)				
Cities	61.5	52.8	39.4	61.1
Counties	38.5	47.2	60.6	38.9
Regional Patterns (%)				
Interprovincial moves	43.7	42.0	31.5	33.0
Interregional moves <sup>a</sup>	48.2	53.5	63.1	51.2

Source: 1990 Census one-percent sample.

Note: <sup>a</sup>Interregional moves refer to migrations across the eastern, central or western regions, as defined by the Seventh Five-Year Plan (see *also* Figure 2).

For all four types of migration, interprovincial moves accounted for less than 50 percent of all migrants, suggesting that they involved more severe intervening obstacles than intraprovincial moves. Besides longer distances, interprovincial migration entails higher economic and sociopsychological costs, and greater social and political barriers than intraprovincial migration (Yang and Goldstein, 1990). The interprovincial proportions for the two types of female migrants were even smaller, supporting the conventional wisdom that women move shorter distances. However, the regional patterns of interprovincial moves seem to contradict this view. The majority of female interprovincial migrants for "marriage" and "industry/business," were interregional migrants. In particular, 63.1 percent of female interprovincial

**Figure 2** Male Net Interprovincial "Industry Business" Migration.



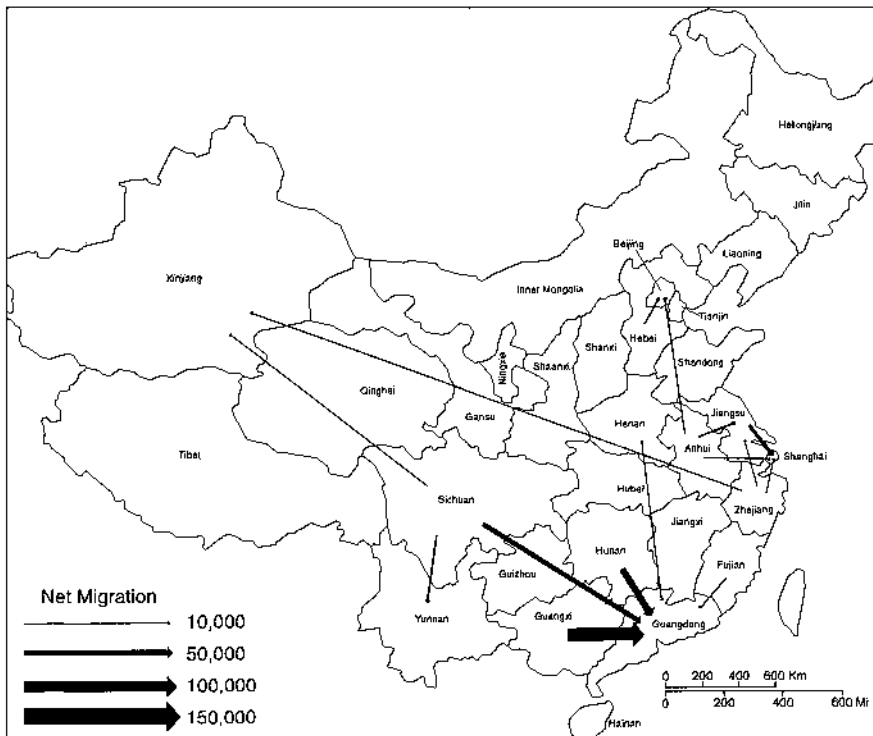
Source: 1990 Census One-Percent Sample.  
Note: only the 15 largest net flows are shown.



“marriage” migrants moved across regions, a proportion higher than that of male “industry/business” and “job transfer” migrants.

Although available data do not permit identifying the exact location of migrants’ origins at the subprovincial level, it is possible to examine interprovincial migration flows. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the fifteen largest net interprovincial flows for male and female “industry/business” migrations respectively. Their spatial patterns were generally similar. Male net flows were larger in size than female net flows, a result not only of men’s higher propensity for interprovincial moves, but also of the dominance of the “industry/business” reason among male migrants. Nevertheless, the fifteen largest female net flows as a whole covered longer distances than their male counterparts. Eleven male net flows, compared with nine female net flows, were between adjacent provinces; none of the male net flows crossed more

**Figure 3** Female Net Interprovincial “Industry Business” Migration.



Source: 1990 Census One-Percent Sample.  
Note: only the 15 largest net flows are shown.

than one intervening province, compared with two female net flows crossing two provinces and one crossing five provinces (Zhejiang-Xinjiang).

Guangdong and the three municipalities of Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai were major magnets of "industry/business" migrants, reflecting the effect of state policy boosting foreign investment and industrial and services sector opportunities in these coastal locations. Guangdong, in particular, has undergone rapid industrialization accelerated by foreign investment and migrant workers. Prominent origin provinces such as Sichuan, Anhui, Hunan and Guangxi, were relatively poorer and more rural provinces. The generally eastward net flows support the argument that migration responds to regional differentials in economic opportunities. Although net flows to Xinjiang and Yunnan appear to contradict this notion, both border provinces have witnessed expansion of cross-border trade opportunities since the reforms, attracting migrants from distant origins to take advantage of such opportunities (Pannell and Ma, 1997). These flows differed from the plan westward migrations of the 1950s and 1960s by their self- rather than state-initiated processes and a strong economic rather than political rationale.

Unlike most other eastern coastal provinces that attracted "industry/business" migrants, Zhejiang actively sent out "industry/business" migrants to other provinces. In the female case, the long-distance Zhejiang-Xinjiang flow was among the fifteen largest net flows (Figure 3). The age-old tradition of Zhejiang people doing business away from home has been well documented in the literature (*e.g.*, Ma and Xiang, 1998). In fact, "Zhejiang Villages" have emerged in many large Chinese cities. The economic reforms and relaxation of migration control have permitted such native-place-based entrepreneurship to materialize through migration, including long-distance interprovincial migration.

Figure 4 illustrates the fifteen largest male net interprovincial "job transfer" migration flows. A general eastward movement characterizes this type of migration, with the eastern region accounting for eleven of the fifteen destinations and Shanghai and Guangdong as coastal magnets attracting migrants from neighboring and western provinces. Although regional differentials in economic opportunities seemed to underlie the spatial pattern, many flows had probably resulted from return migration of former plan migrants and their family members. Shanghai was a major origin of plan migration between the 1950s and 1976, including labor movements to "Third Front" regions and rustication of intellectuals and youths (Zhongguo Tongji Chubanshe, 1994a: 208). Many early outmigrants and their family members



four types of migration examined in this paper. Nine of the fifteen largest female net flows were from western to eastern regions, and two were from western to central regions.<sup>8</sup> The rest were flows among eastern regions. A clustering of origins in Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan and Guangxi, all relatively poor southwestern provinces, and the dominance of eastern coastal destinations suggest strong neoclassical reasoning underlying these moves, namely, migrants respond to regional differentials in economic opportunities by moving from less developed areas to more developed areas.

Nevertheless, female "marriage" migrants are distinguished from their "industry/business" counterparts by moving from rural areas to rural areas and by continuing to engage in agriculture after migration (Tables 4 and 5). Their relatively low education renders them less competitive in the urban labor market. On the other hand, marrying "into" eastern coastal provinces makes it possible for women to obtain local hukou and accompanied benefits in areas with more economic opportunities. The institutional factor that permits marriage migration in rural areas and restricts it in urban areas explains the prominence of rural-to-rural moves. Meanwhile, social network and marriage brokers provide the intermediaries between peasant women and potential grooms (Fan and Huang, 1998).

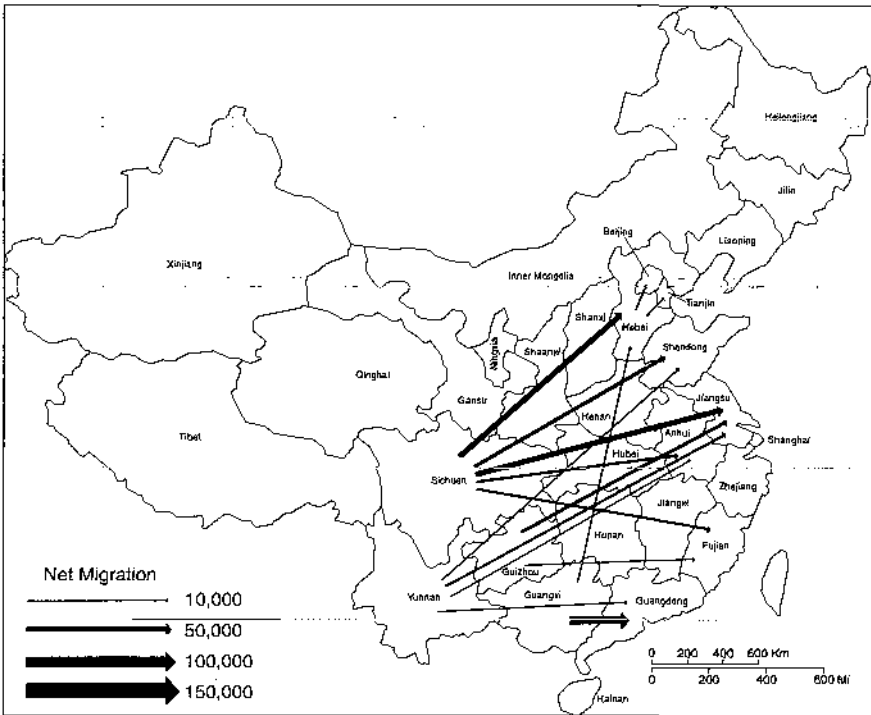
The above analyses show that different types of migration, and in particular plan and nonplan migrations, have distinctly different spatial patterns and involve migrants of very different socioeconomic profiles. The next section examines if these differences are observable at the subprovincial level by analyzing migration in Guangdong.

### *MIGRATION IN GUANGDONG*

Most studies of migration reasons in China focus on interprovincial migration (Ding, 1994; G. Wang, 1994), although intraprovincial migration is in fact larger in size (two times that of interprovincial migration according to the 1990 Census), and subprovincial data allow more detailed observations of spatial patterns. The following analyses document migration patterns in Guangdong by employing county-level observations (comprising cities and counties, and referred to as county(ies) unless otherwise specified).

<sup>8</sup>If Guangxi was considered a central-region province, which in fact is a more accurate description of its level of economic development, there would have been two additional central-eastern net flows (Guangxi-Guangdong and Guangxi-Hebei). Since the Guangdong-Guangxi net flow (79,600) was the largest, allocating Guangxi to the central region would have strengthened even more the argument that female interprovincial marriage migration involved overwhelmingly west-to-east moves.

**Figure 5** Female Net Interprovincial "Marriage" Migration.



Source: 1990 Census One-Percent Sample.  
 Note: only the 15 largest net flows are shown.

Guangdong is one of the most attractive destinations of interprovincial migrants and exhibits the highest level of intraprovincial mobility among all provinces. According to the 1990 Census, Guangdong had the largest net interprovincial migration (1.0 million) and one of the highest net interprovincial migration rates (1.8%); it also had the largest intraprovincial migration (2.7 million) and the highest intraprovincial migration rate (4.8%) among all provinces. Guangdong's net interprovincial migration was fifty times the average of all provinces, and its intraprovincial migration accounted for almost 12 percent of the total in China. The province's attractiveness to migrants is attributable to its rapid economic growth, high rates of state and foreign investment, employment growth, and thriving industrial and commercial sectors. High mobility within the province is primarily due to uneven regional growth and strong pull forces exerted by the economic core

<sup>9</sup>Migration rates are computed percentages of the 1990 population aged five and above.

in and near the Pearl River Delta (Fan, 1995; *see* Figure 6). These patterns reflect Guangdong's unique geopolitical advantage – it is in the vicinity of Hong Kong, which is a major source of foreign investment<sup>10</sup> and employment growth in the province. As Hong Kong transforms itself from a primarily industrial economy to one dominated by services and trade, many manufacturing jobs have “migrated” across the border to Guangdong. Kinship and social ties between Guangdong and Hong Kong have facilitated such interactions (Leung, 1993). Despite Guangdong's apparent uniqueness, its experience may throw some light on processes of and reasons for migration in other parts of China, especially in regions that are increasingly attracting foreign investment and experiencing rapid economic growth.

Migrants to and within Guangdong had a much lower sex ratio (104) than Chinese migrants as a whole (127); there were, in fact, more women than men among interprovincial migrants to Guangdong (sex ratio is 87). This deviation from national statistics may be explained by the demand pull for female labor by the booming labor-intensive industries (*e.g.*, textiles, clothing and electronics) in Guangdong (Li, L.1994a). Studies based on the 1987 One-Percent Sample Survey also suggested that a large number of women came to Guangdong to work in agriculture, replacing local labor that had shifted to industrial and services sectors (Li and Siu, 1994).

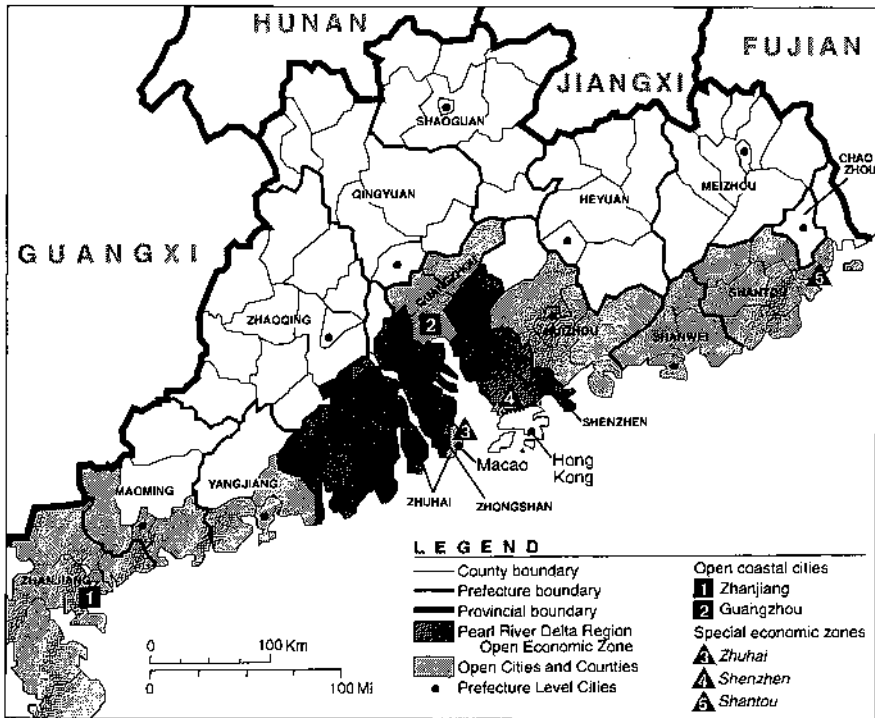
Compared with the national pattern, reasons for migration to and within Guangdong were more concentrated (Table 3). The majority of male and female migrants chose “industry/business,” which represented considerable increases over the 1982–1987 period,<sup>11</sup> when only 26.2 percent of male and 22.3 percent of female immigrants in Guangdong chose this reason (GDPPCO, 1988: 546–553). The statistics underscore the increasing importance of economic explanations for both male and female migrants to and within Guangdong, reflecting the rapidly growing economy and nonstate employment opportunities, as well as spatial polarization of these opportunities within the province (Fan, 1995).

The second most important reason was “job transfer” for male migrants

<sup>10</sup>Prior to Hong Kong's return to China in July 1, 1997, its investment to China was considered foreign investment. After that date, Hong Kong has become a Special Administrative Region of China.

<sup>11</sup>There is a small difference in the definition of migrants between the 1987 One-Percent Sample Survey and the 1990 Census. The former includes hukou migrants who moved to the 1987 place of residence from another city, county or village within the last 5 years and non-hukou migrants who moved to the 1987 place of residence within the last 5 years and who have lived there for more than 6 months. The 1990 Census restricts nonhukou migrants to those who have lived in the 1990 place of residence for at least one year or have left their hukou locations for more than one year.

Figure 6 Guangdong.

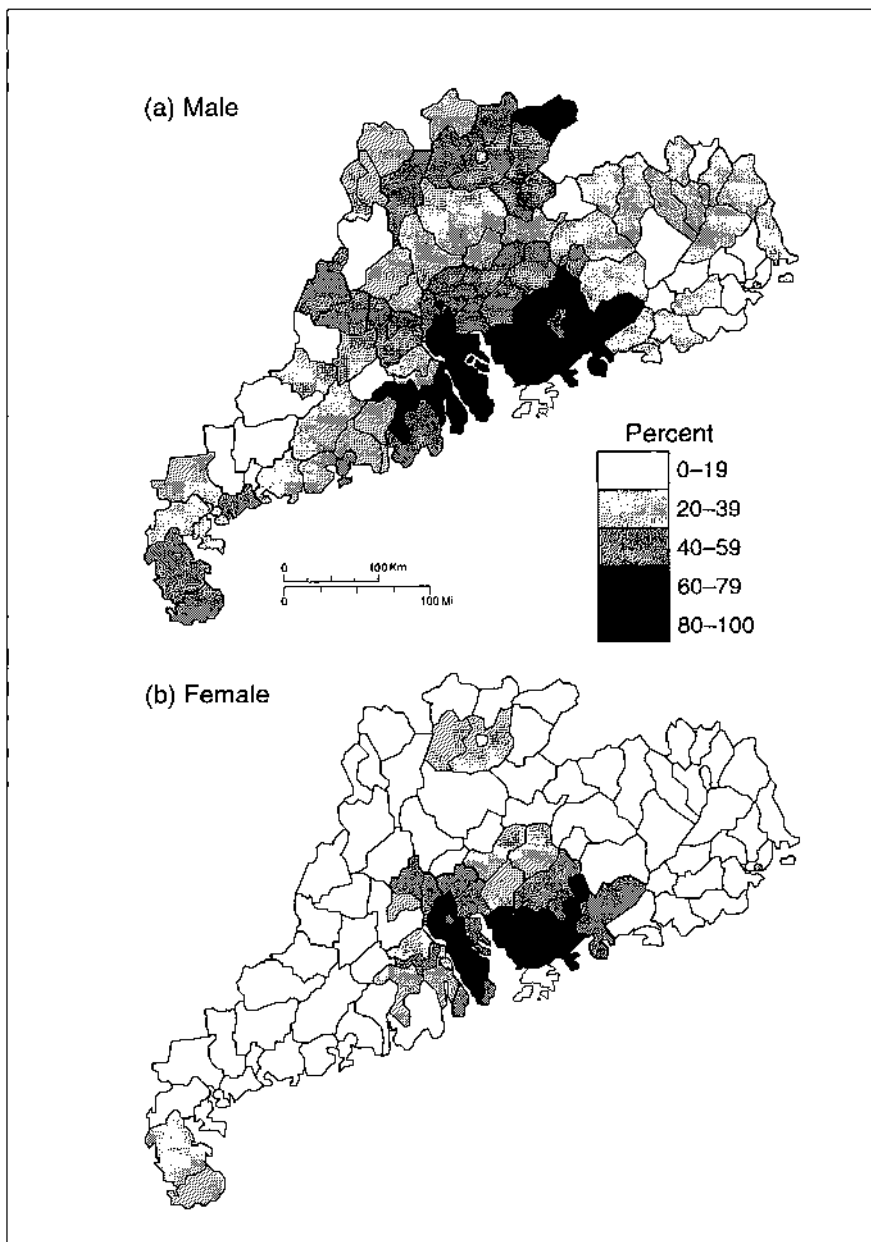


Source: Chen and Wang, 1992; 55B, 1991; Renmin Ribao, 1992.

and "marriage" for female migrants. None of the other reasons accounted for more than 10 percent of male or female migrants. "Marriage" was a more important reason for female interprovincial migrants than intraprovincial migrants, suggesting that distance and the provincial boundary were not significant obstacles for women to marry "into" Guangdong, to the contrary of the conventional view that female "marriage" migrations are primarily short-distance moves (Zhang, 1990).

Figure 6 shows the county-level units, prefecture-level cities, prefectures, and various open zones in Guangdong. Research has documented that the Pearl River Delta area and neighboring open zones had the highest inter- and intraprovincial immigration rates and volumes (Li and Siu, 1994; Zhai and Ma, 1994). According to the 1990 Census, Shenzhen special economic zone (SEZ) and its northward neighbor, Baoan, received respectively 538,616 and 518,615 immigrants between 1985 and 1990, which translated into intraprovincial immigration rates above 40 percent and interprovincial rates above 15 percent

Figure 7 Proportions of "Industry/Business" Inmigrants in Guangdong.



Source: GDPPCO, 1992.



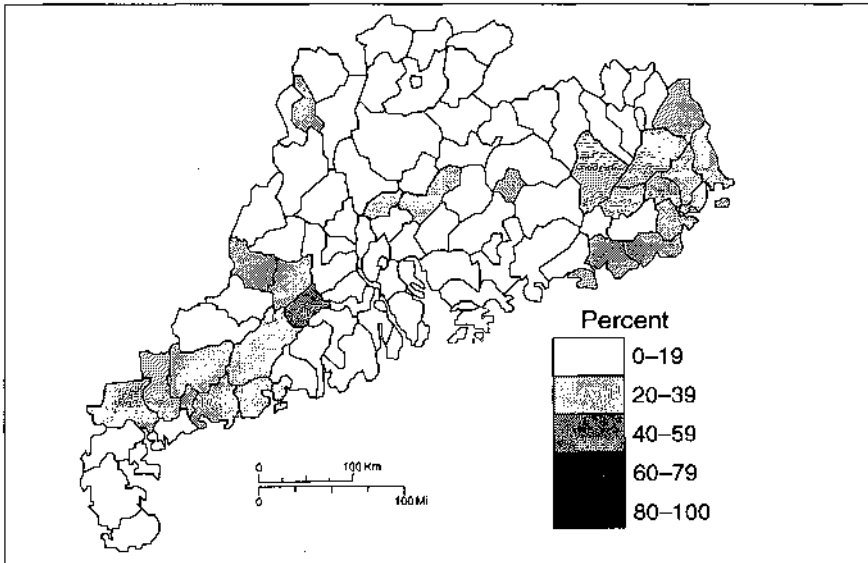
(Fan, 1996). Shantou SEZ in the east and Zhanjiang open coastal city (OCC) in the west also had relatively high intraprovincial immigration rates. This pattern suggests that migrants were overwhelmingly attracted to Guangdong's open zones, where the government has poured in large investments and actively pursued foreign investment, generating a demand pull for labor and creating a geographic core of economic growth, whose gap with the rest of the province has enlarged considerably (Li, R. 1993; Zhai and Ma, 1994).

Using county-level data (GDPPCO, 1992), the following series of maps shows proportions of in-migrants and seeks to reveal if migrants who moved for specific reasons were attracted to specific locations within Guangdong. The 100 percent tabulations of the 1990 Census provides a complete geographical coverage and is therefore more appropriate than the one percent sample data for analyzing spatial patterns of migration at subprovincial levels.<sup>12</sup> However, the 100 percent data on migration reasons do not distinguish sources of in-migrants, so it is impossible to specify how many of a county's in-migrants (due to a specific reason) are from other provinces and how many are from other Guangdong counties. Figures 7 through 9 illustrate the proportions of in-migrants due to specific reasons, which do not necessarily correspond to migration rates or volumes. Figure 7 shows the proportions of each county's male and female in-migrants whose primary reason of migration was "industry/business." It depicts, for male migrants, a concentration of very-high-proportion counties in and near the Pearl River Delta area. "Industry/business" accounted for respectively 92.0 and 86.6 percent of all male in-migrants in Dongguan and Baoan, two counties directly north of Shenzhen SEZ. SEZs, OCCs and open zones in general had relatively high proportions, so did several counties near the northern border of Guangdong. The latter, which are near neighboring donor provinces, had high proportions but smaller numbers. This spatial pattern confirms once again that Guangdong's open zones in general and the Pearl River Delta area in particular attracted migrants primarily because of employment opportunities in industrial, commerce and trade sectors, an outcome of favorable government policies and foreign investment (Fan, 1995).

Figure 7b shows an even more distinct concentration of female "industry/business" in-migrants in the Pearl River Delta area. Most counties outside this cluster had less than 20 percent of their female in-migrants moving there because of this reason, compared with 92.8 and 88.2 percent respectively in Dongguan and Baoan. The very focused destinations in the Pearl River Delta

<sup>12</sup>Since the one-percent sample of the 1990 Census provides information only for the sampled village-level units, it is less appropriate for analyses of spatial patterns at the county level.

**Figure 8** Proportions of Male “Job Transfer” Immigrants in Guangdong.



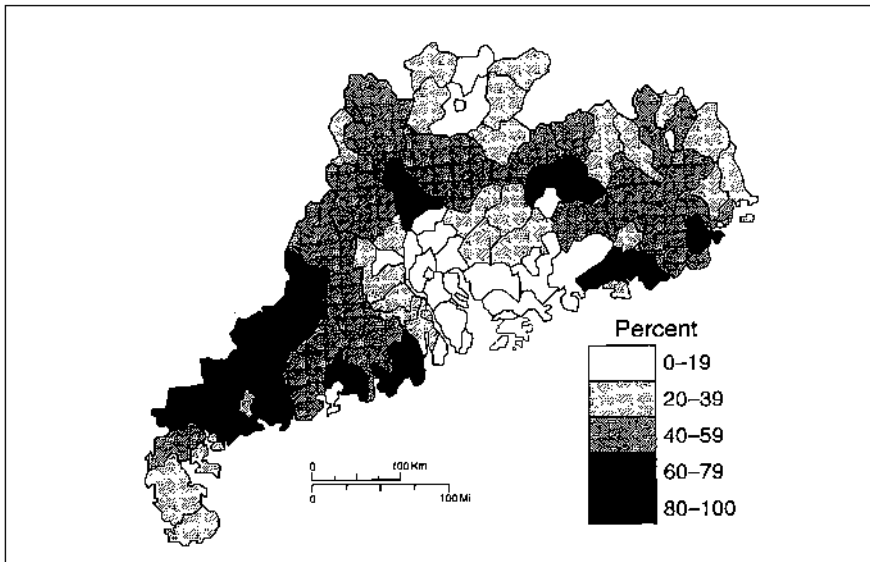
Source: GDPPCO, 1992.

and adjacent open zones suggest that the labor-intensive production system there has actively recruited women from more rural locations and from other provinces (Yang, 1995).

Proportions of male migrants due to “job transfer” (Figure 8) show a spatial pattern to the contrary of male “industry/business” migrants (Figure 7a). The overall proportions are much lower, and the relatively higher-proportion counties are in the eastern and western peripheries of the province, overlapping with some open zones but also including mountainous and very poor counties. There are three possible explanations for this pattern. First, these are counties with relatively little foreign investment and fewer employment opportunities in nonstate sectors; institutional factors such as “job transfer” therefore take on greater importance. Second, the pattern may reflect migrants returning to home towns in less developed or rural areas from earlier plan or forced migrations. Third, “job transfer” may be associated with more peripheral open zones that have a demand for labor in the state sector.

Figure 9 illustrates proportions of female “marriage” migrants – an almost exact reversal of Figure 7b. Except for the Pearl River Delta area and a handful of other counties, marriage accounted for large proportions of female migrants to and within Guangdong. This is particularly noticeable in a cluster of coun-

Figure 9 Proportions of Female "Marriage" Immigrants in Guangdong.



Source: GDPPCO, 1992.

ties in the southwestern part of the province, including all but one county (the prefecture-level city of Maoming) in Maoming prefecture and two neighboring counties in Zhanjiang and Zhaoqing prefectures, where the proportions of female immigrants due to marriage were above 80 percent. In absolute terms, counties in this "marriage cluster" had relatively small numbers of total immigrants (11,774 to 22,432), but the numbers of female immigrants due to "marriage" (7,882 to 14,592) were larger than all but two other counties in Guangdong. More than 70 percent of the total immigrants in these "marriage cluster" counties were women, compared with 49.2 percent for the province as a whole. The majority of the immigrants to these counties were from other provinces (59.6 to 76.6%), compared with 32.1 percent for Guangdong as a whole. This "marriage cluster" is therefore quite unique in having high proportions of migrants from other provinces, female migrants, and female "marriage" migrants.

Marriage was also a major reason for outmigration from the southwestern provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou (more than 50% of all outmigrants), and Guangxi and Sichuan (more than 20% of all outmigrants) (Ding, 1994). These provinces are relatively near to, and are among the major donors of migrants to, Guangdong. Guangxi and Sichuan, in particular, accounted for respectively

38.2 and 11.7 percent of all female interprovincial immigrants to Guangdong (SSB, 1993, 152-331). These statistics, combined with the fact that Guangdong's "marriage cluster" was located near an interprovincial railroad line linking Guangdong and these southwestern provinces (Vogel, 1989:233), suggest that female migrants from neighboring provinces have created a "marriage stream" into Guangdong's western counties.

But proximity does not explain why the "marriage stream" did not follow the railroad line all the way to the Pearl River Delta. The answer seems to lie in the differing opportunities and institutional controls in the Pearl River Delta versus the "marriage cluster." The former consists of a multiplicity of urban centers, with job opportunities in industrial, commercial and trade sectors, drawing male and female labor from other provinces and from other parts of Guangdong (Figure 7; Fan, 1996). But "marriage" migration is generally more strictly controlled in urban areas. The "marriage cluster," on the other hand, is located in a part of Guangdong associated with relative poverty (Liang, 1992; Situ, 1993) and where government control on "marriage" migration is more relaxed. The Pearl River Delta has attracted women from within Guangdong or from other provinces, who had the necessary skills and wished to work in the thriving open zones and economic sectors, while the "marriage cluster" appealed to women, mostly from neighboring provinces, who had less education or skills but whose marriage "into" Guangdong represented an improvement in economic well-being (*see* Table 4). In addition, uneven regional development in the province has probably prompted many young women in the western periphery to migrate to the Pearl River Delta, thus generating a mismatch between men and women of marriageable age and a demand for agricultural labor in their home towns. The "marriage cluster" may therefore be a result of men seeking and bringing in wives from neighboring, poorer provinces to fulfill these demands, a rather common practice in China (Ji *et al.*, 1985; Fan and Huang, 1998).

### CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to show that a multitude of migration types and processes, characterized by distinct spatial patterns and migrants with differing socioeconomic profiles, have emerged in post-Mao China. I have argued that the existence of these migration types, and the contrasts among them, are products of the socialist transitional economy, where the combination of state-planned and market forces and their outcomes have brought about specific population movements. The coexistence of plan and nonplan mechanisms, in particular, distinguishes migration in China from migration in most other countries.

The empirical analysis has focused on the leading reasons of migration for Chinese men and women. The sharp contrasts between "industry/business" and "job transfer" migrations are especially revealing of the two-track migration system in China. While "industry/business" is the most prominent representative of nonplan migrations, and involves primarily nonhukou migrants, "job transfer" depicts state intervention in population movements and the legacy of plan migrations, and largely comprises hukou migrants. Not only were "job transfer" migrants more educated and urbanized, they were also highly represented in more prestigious occupations. "Industry/business" migrants, on the other hand, were younger, less well-educated, mainly from rural origins, and primarily drawn to less prestigious industrial, commercial and services work. Their migrations reflect strong attraction by coastal provinces that were the first to implement the open-door policy and attract foreign investment and by open zones where a labor-intensive production system has actively recruited migrant workers. The latter was especially the case for Guangdong, a first beneficiary of open-door, and for female "industry/business" migrants in Guangdong. Although "job transfer" migrants were also attracted to these centers of economic growth, their spatial movements reflect a continued role of the state in allocating human resources and significant return flows from earlier decades of politically-driven "plan" migrations.

Female "marriage" migration exhibited very focused spatial flows, from the less developed southwestern provinces to the more developed eastern coastal provinces, which suggests a strong economic rationale behind such moves and supports the neoclassical explanation that migration responds to regional differentials in economic opportunities. On the other hand, these apparently non-plan or self-initiated moves also reflect strong institutional influences. First, the provision of a local hukou to marriage migrants has provided poor peasant women an attractive incentive to move to desired locations through marriage. Second, government restrictions on marriage migration to urban areas rendered rural areas in more developed provinces (such as the western periphery of Guangdong) main targets of female marriage migration.

Besides plan mechanisms such as specific hukou and migration regulations, other features of the socialist transitional economy have played important roles in explaining the spatial patterns of "industry/business" and "marriage" migrations. Specifically, uneven regional development policies are a critical factor for the economic and employment growth in eastern provinces and coastal open zones, which attracted both "industry/business" and "marriage" migrants. Continued, if not accelerated, gender inequalities have rendered many women poorly educated and less competitive in the urban labor market. Female migrants are predominantly dogongmei in low-paying

industrial or services sectors, or have resorted to marrying into rural areas and continuing to engage in agricultural work.

The above analyses have also shown that the plan – nonplan dichotomy is more meaningful than the economic-social dichotomy for understanding population movements in China. In fact, female “marriage” migration reflects a strong economic rationale and should no longer be described as simply a social reason of migration. The long distances traveled by female “industry/business” and “marriage” migrants also refute the conventional wisdom that women migrate mainly for social reasons and over short distances. In short, the analyses in this paper support the plan – nonplan dichotomy of migration reasons and types and have shown that examination of the socialist transition economy is necessary for understanding the complexities and heterogeneity of internal migration in China.

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