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Rural-Urban Migration and Gender Division of Labor in Transitional China*

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Over the last two decades, the most prominent social and economic changes in the world have been observed in formerly socialist economies. The process, commonly understood as 'transition', has gendered consequences and differential implications for men and women. Though much of the research on transitional economies has overlooked the gender dimension, some recent studies on Russia and Central and East Europe have found that women's labor market positions have declined because of their great vulnerability in times of economic difficulties, the resurfacing of traditional gender stereotypes, the removal of central planning mechanisms that ensured wage equality, and segregation in the labor market (e.g. Grapard, 1997; Reilly, 1999; Pailhe, 2000). China economists have likewise focused on the issue of gender wage gap (e.g. Maurer-Fazio *et al*., 1999; Liu *et al*., 2000). In this article, I aim at highlighting some of the gendered outcomes of transition in relation to rural-urban migration in China.

More specifically, I focus on the relations between migration and gender division of labor. I argue that labor migration and the labor market must be understood in the context of social and economic changes during transition. The so-called 'socialist market economy' model, which juxtaposes market mechanisms with a planned economy, demands a reexamination of the role of the state. Unlike in the socialist period, the transitional state prioritizes economic goals and measures that can help boost economic growth, including increased labor mobility. But the state continues to be a planner of the economy and have at its disposal instruments of control, such as the household registration system, from the socialist period. At the same time, peasants are increasingly vulnerable and must embrace labor migration as a source of livelihood. What transpires is therefore a peculiar situation in which the state encourages and enables the development of a new capitalist-like labor regime, which in its pursuit of cost-minimization and profit-maximization fosters segmentation and division of labor. Moreover, socio-cultural traditions rooted in Confucianism, which were constrained during the Maoist period, are once again resurfacing and they further reinforce forces of stratification and division of labor. What all of these mean to men and women involved in rural-urban labor migration, I argue, is that they are channeled into gender-segregated jobs and that gender division of labor is increasingly becoming a dominant mode of household production in the countryside. Though gender segregation in the labor market is widely observed in western industrialized economies (e.g. McDowell, 1999: 124), in the Chinese case it must be understood in relation to institutional and socio-cultural changes during transition.

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Despite the proliferation of research on migration in China, the relationship between population movements and gender remains under-explored. Most of the studies up to the mid-1990s lump men and women together or attempt only simple comparisons of male and female migration (e.g. Ding, 1994; M. Li, 1994; Zhu, 1994; Wei, 1995). More recently, researchers have begun to examine the role of gender in migration (e.g. Cai, 1997; Davin, 1997; 1998; Fan and Huang, 1998; Chiang, 1999; Yang and Guo, 1999; Fan, 2000; 2003; Wang, 2000; Huang, 2001; Fan and Li, 2002). The theme that weaves together the different issues I raise in this article is that gender is central to understanding larger social and economic changes, including migration, the labor market and division of labor.

In the following two sections, I shall elaborate respectively the relations between transition and the state and the relations between transition and socio-cultural traditions. I shall also discuss how these relations affect migration and labor. Then I shall highlight evidence from multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data, including macro-level and field surveys, in order to further substantiate my arguments.

Transition, the state and a new labor regime

It is widely accepted that since 1978 China has entered a new phase of social and economic development. This is a phase most often noted as transition, or socialist transition. Specifically, China has moved away from the Maoist socialist model (1949–76) characterized by central planning to one where the market plays a more important role. This is how 'transition' is understood in China. What is the destination of this transition, and whether this transition will eventually lead to a capitalist economy, are very much subject to debate. The transitional process, nevertheless, has transformed China's economy, including the fostering of a new capitalist-like labor regime and new forces toward division of labor. This is the emphasis of the following paragraphs.

The transitional phase in China has a number of distinctive features that set it apart from the socialist period. For this article's purpose I focus on two aspects. First, economic goals are given very high priorities. From the outset, the post-1978 China led by Deng has desired rapid economic growth, and as such has developed a series of reform measures toward that goal. They include marketization, decollectivization, fiscal decentralization, an open-door policy that aims at attracting foreign investment and relaxation of mobility restrictions. Unlike the socialist period, political goals are given lower priorities than economic ones, and measures that might have been unacceptable during Maoist times are now embraced if they promise to bring about economic growth. As I shall elaborate later in this section, the mobilization of the immense human resources stored in the countryside for urban development, and a labor regime that enables maximum rates of capital accumulation, are two of the most prominent changes during transitional China.

Second, peasant households are increasingly vulnerable. Replacing the commune shelter by the household responsibility system, the state has rendered peasant households almost completely responsible for their own survival. In addition, the burden of local development increasingly falls on the shoulders of peasant households via taxes and fees, which in conjunction with the rent-seeking activities of cadres make rural life even more difficult. Wu's (2000) study of a village in Zhengzhou, Henan, for example, underscores the stratification between cadres and entrepreneurs on one hand and deprived villagers on the other. Unlike during the socialist period, peasant households today are on their own and must pursue their own strategies for economic mobility. Migrant work is the best, perhaps the only, option to make ends meet, and is widely perceived to be the key to improving peasant households' wellbeing (e.g. Tan, 1996; Croll and Huang, 1997). With only weak affiliations with the state and little access to institutional support (Solinger, 1999), peasant migrants tend to rely heavily on social networks for information and work opportunities. In a later section, I shall elaborate how social networks reinforce division of labor in migrant work.

At the same time, transitional China differs significantly from capitalist economies. First of all, the state remains prominent. The Chinese state, comprising not only the central government but also local governments and all other agencies and institutions authorized for 'planning' purposes, insists on its role as the paramount planner and regulator of the economy. Underlying this fascination with planning is a lingering concern over the uncertainty and risk of marketization. While 'within state plan' (*jihuanei*) developments are considered orderly, systematic and safe, forces 'outside of state plan' (*jihuawai*) are deemed disorderly, chaotic and dangerous.[1] The 'socialist' in 'socialist market economy', therefore, refers less to ideology and more to the very planning function of the state; and 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' has become a banner that justifies the coexistence of state control and market reform. There is increasing evidence that China is not simply following a template of global capitalism but is instead adopting only market practices that promise economic growth while clinging on to state control and planning (e.g. Smart, 2000). In this light, China is practicing neither socialism nor capitalism, but a new form that allows the state to legitimize its control over an increasingly diversified economy. Thus, transitional China inherits from socialist China and differs from capitalist economies by the continued prominence of state control.

Related to the above is the continued use of institutions and instruments of state control inherited from the socialist period. Not unlike other transitional economies in East Europe and Russia, socialist institutions and instruments remain strong and affiliations with the state are amply rewarded (e.g. Nee, 1991; Stark, 1992; Intriligator, 1994; Szelenyi and Kostello, 1996; Burawoy, 1997). One prominent instrument is the household registration (*hukou*) system, which enforces state control over the residence and mobility of the Chinese population. Given many recent studies of the history, components and recent changes of that system (e.g. Wang, 1997; Wong and Huen, 1998; Chan and Zhang, 1999), I shall not repeat such information in this article. Suffice it to say, however, the household registration system has fostered a deep divide between the city and the countryside (Christiansen, 1990; Cheng and Selden, 1994; Cao, 1995). While urbanites are given access to generous benefits and entitlements, rural Chinese are shut out from state support and were for a long time anchored to the countryside, resulting in a lingering dualism (Wong and Huen, 1998). The economic goals of transitional China, however, necessitate new inventions that facilitate the achievement of these goals as well as persistence of state control. Hence, the state revised the household registration system by permitting the 'temporary' migration of rural labor to urban areas. But these migrants, often referred to as the 'floating population',[2] are denied services and benefits urbanites are entitled to. Therefore, the state has managed to maintain its gate-keeping role of urban permanent residence while making the rural labor force available for the needs of urban economic growth (Fan, 2002).

1 There are plenty of examples to illustrate the distinction between what is considered 'within state plan' and what is considered 'outside of state plan'. In social arenas, anything 'outside of state plan' can be regarded as 'illegal' and a cause for punitive actions. For example, religious practices outside the five state-recognized religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism) are generally not permitted; lottery is illegal unless it is run by the state; and the well-known one-child policy and its variants acknowledge births that are 'within state plan' and render the rest 'outside of state plan' and to be penalized. In economic affairs, however, the distinction between 'within state plan' and 'outside of state plan' matters is not as clear-cut, as the state is eager to boost economic growth via marketization and non-state enterprises.

2 The term 'floating population' is widely used to refer to the rural Chinese who left their home villages to look for work elsewhere, including transients that stay in the destination for only a short period of time. The bulk of the floating population finds work in urban areas and their outskirts. These migrants do not have permanent residence (*hukou*) at the destination, and are sometimes referred to as 'temporary migrants', as opposed to 'permanent migrants' that are granted permanent residence at the destination (e.g. Goldstein and Goldstein, 1991; Goldstein and Guo, 1992; Woon, 1993; Yang, 1993; Yang and Guo, 1996; Fan, 2001). Scholars and journalists estimate that the size of the floating population in the late 1990s was up to 110 million (Solinger, 1999: 18).

The state's dual goals of economic growth and continued state control, the availability of control instruments, and the appeal of migrant work to peasants, have facilitated a labor regime quite different from that of the socialist period. During the socialist period, labor was centrally allocated by the state. In the transitional phase, however, capitalist-style management is promoted and foreign investment is brought in to create jobs. Employers desire a labor regime that minimizes cost and maximizes efficiency, and as such promotes strict regulations and compartmentalization of skills, resulting in sharp segmentation in the labor market and division of labor in the workplace. At the same time, peasants' lack of urban residence rights means that they are permitted in urban areas only because of their membership of a labor force that is hardworking, tolerant, cheap and disposable (Zhou, 1998). The urban labor market is open to rural migrants only to the extent that targeted groups are channeled to low-paying jobs and jobs not desired by urbanites. Therefore, the urban labor market is by nature a segmented one, and migrants are expected to be directed to specific jobs rather than having open access to the entire array of jobs.

The urban labor market is not only segmented but also gender-segregated. Migrant men are largely channeled to manual work such as construction, and most migrant women are directed to factory and domestic work. The persistence of a socialist paternalistic ideology inherited from the socialist era facilitates such a labor regime. Tam's (2000) study of a factory in Shenzhen, where 99% of the assembly-line workers are women, shows that women migrant workers are subject to strict disciplines and continue to play the role of 'socialist' labor. This example illustrates that as marketization is superimposed onto a formerly planned economy, social control remains prevalent and is, in fact, conducive to a capitalist and exploitative mode of accumulation. Whereas the Maoist socialist model sought to mitigate social stratifications by class and gender,[3] during the course of pursuing economic growth the transitional state advances processes of segmentation and segregation instead. Furthermore, peasants' lack of urban residence rights leaves them few alternatives but to eventually return to the village. To young rural women, their lack of urban residence renders them among the least desirable in the urban marriage market (Chen, 1999; Chiang, 1999),[4] so that most would return to the home village when they reach 'marriageable age'. As for migrant men, they must cling on to the farmland and maintain strong ties with the home village as a safety valve. As I shall elaborate in the next section, these constraints have encouraged gender division of labor within the peasant household.

In short, during the transitional phase, the Chinese state aims at promoting economic growth and maintaining its control over instruments such as household registration. The combination of an emerging labor market and the availability of instruments of state control, makes it possible for a new labor regime, driven by cost-minimization and profit-maximization, to thrive. Peasant migrants are channeled into this labor market that is not only segmented between urbanites and peasants but also segregated by gender. Though labor market segmentation is observed in many other parts of the world, in the Chinese case such a phenomenon is directly attributable to the role of the state and its institutional control. I shall now turn to understanding division of labor in relation to socio-cultural traditions.

3 Scholars that examine Mao's personal life question the extent to which he was genuinely concerned with gender equality (e.g. Smith, 1991: 195).

4 Until recently, a child born in cities had to inherit the mother's *hukou*, which discourages urban men from marrying rural women since their children's survival and education in the city would be extremely difficult. In 1998, new regulations were approved that allowed children to inherit their father's *hukou* (Davin, 1998; Chan and Zhang, 1999; Chen, 1999). But it is unclear how prevalent this policy change is and whether it can offset the inertia in the urban marriage market that disadvantages rural women.

Transition, socio-cultural traditions and division of labor

During the socialist period, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) went to great lengths to counter age-old socio-cultural traditions, including Confucian ideology, which had governed social and gender roles and relations in China. Whereas Confucianism prescribes individuals' roles based on their positions relative to others and as such endorses the superiority of the elite over the working class and men over women, the CCP championed the proletariats and mobilized women to engage in economic production. A remarkable achievement during the socialist period was the increase in women's labor force participation (Bauer *et al*., 1992; Riley, 1996). Nevertheless, socio-cultural traditions are deeply ingrained into the social fabric of China, and during the transitional phase the emphasis on economic growth rather than political ideology has enabled these traditions to reproduce themselves in many ways. The state no longer concerns itself with attacking Confucian ideology. In fact, in both urban and rural areas, Confucian ideology appears to facilitate the state's goal toward economic growth.

First of all, migrants from rural areas constitute the bulk of the labor necessary for urban development and export-oriented industrialization. The Confucian philosophy that everyone should act according to their social positions endorses, if not promotes, the hierarchy in which rural migrants occupy the lowest rung. A submissive and 'knowing one's place' ideology promotes the channeling process which sorts male and female migrants into gender-segregated occupations in urban areas and reinforces the proletarianization of their labor. Despite rising unemployment in cities, urbanites are unwilling to enter certain sectors highly represented by migrants, in part because of poor remuneration but also because these jobs are considered debasing. Migrant women, in particular, are expected to docilely submit to the management authority, mostly held by men (e.g. Tam, 2000). This is an expected code that embodies patriarchal, paternalistic and stratification processes that are believed, at least by the capitalist management, to enhance productivity.

Second, the Chinese woman is defined in relation to, and subordinate to, other males in the family. Under the patrilocal tradition, daughters would eventually move out and join the husbands' families, adding to their labor resources. Parents of sons, especially in rural areas, are eager to recruit the labor of daughters-in-law, and this partly accounts for the prevalence of early marriages (Croll, 1987). The eventual loss of the daughters' labor discourages the natal families from investing in the education of girls (L. Li, 1994; Lu, 1997). According to the 1995 One-Percent Population Survey, 23.2% of the female population aged six or older have never gone to school, compared with only 8.5% of their male counterparts (SSB, 1997: 82–3). Migrant women are disadvantaged in the urban labor market because of their inferior status and lack of education. Furthermore, the pressure on rural women to get married escalates once they reach their early 20s. As discussed earlier, even if rural women managed to pursue migrant work when they were single, getting married almost always translates into returning to the village and the termination of urban work. Hence, the migrant women labor force is highly homogeneous, comprising mostly young and single peasant women, and is especially attractive to a labor regime that pursues profit maximization at the expense of workers' benefits and career development. Lee (1995) argues that the youth and short tenure of migrant women have given rise to the 'maiden worker' construction which perpetuates their inferiority and vulnerability to exploitation at the urban workplace. The homogeneity of the labor force is also conducive to their segregation in the labor market.

Finally, the Confucian prescriptions of social positions popularize the notion that women's place is 'inside' the family whereas men are responsible for the 'outside', including making the earnings to support the family. In China, as in the West, women are stereotyped as the nurturing family members and are expected to be the primary care-givers (Yu and Chau, 1997; McDowell, 1999: 126). Upon marriage, therefore, rural women are expected to stay in the village while their husbands have the option of pursuing migrant work and economic mobility. In this light, marriage enables the rural-urban division of labor between the wife and the husband. At the same time, it relegates

rural women back to the 'inside' and to agriculture, aborting their urban, wage-earning and potentially empowering experience. Jacka (1997) has shown that the boundary between the inside/private and outside/public domains has shifted as women become the primary labor in agriculture. Her work illustrates the notion that jobs are socially constructed and that the low value associated with women's work reflects gender hierarchy rather than the characteristics of the jobs themselves (McDowell, 1999: 127).

Despite efforts during the socialist period to reverse certain socio-cultural traditions, during the transitional phase age-old practices that promote stratifications and constrain women's social and economic mobility are being reproduced. The transitional state pursues a development path of economic growth by importing the capitalist mode of production, which promotes and thrives on a migrant labor regime characterized by segmentation, segregation and homogeneity. The combination of this development path and the reproduction of socio-cultural traditions reinforces gender segregation in the urban labor market and gender division of labor in rural households. In the following sections, I shall elaborate these arguments further by examining data from a variety of aggregate and field sources.

Data and methodology

Understanding the patterns and processes of gender division of labor necessitates the use of multiple data sources and multiple analytical techniques. A multiple-source approach facilitates the triangulation of observations, especially since the data on migration in China are scattered, unstandardized and varied in scale. If certain observations are consistent across different sources, then it is likely that they reflect prominent phenomena in society. Unlike single-source studies that address only the origin or destination of migrants, in this study I examine migrants' experiences at both ends and in multiple locations in China. Furthermore, these multiple sources permit both quantitative and qualitative analyses of patterns and processes. Macro-level data such as the census and national-level surveys facilitate the quantitative documentation and description of general patterns. Field data, on the other hand, may not be representative but are valuable for explaining the patterns observed from macro-level data. Qualitative materials such as narratives, in particular, add richness and depth to the examination of processes. Villagers' voices and experiences, through their first-hand accounts, are central to the formulation of this article's arguments. A limitation of a multiple-source approach is that the data may not be comparable. Rather than comparing data from different sources, however, my strategy is to use macro-level quantitative data to describe overall patterns and field and qualitative information to identify some of the processes underlying these patterns. In this way, I combine the strengths of different forms of data.

Specifically, I use two macro-level aggregate data sets and three field surveys. The first macro-level data source is a one-percent sample of the 1990 Census.[5] I examine rural-urban temporary labor migrants — migrants who move from villages to cities, who do not have urban residence (*hukou*) at the destination, and whose reason for migration is to work in urban sectors.[6] They constitute, in essence, the reserve rural

5 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. It has a total of 11,475,104 records.

6 By rural-urban migrants, I refer to individuals who originate from 'townships' and migrate to 'cities'. The 1990 Census recorded three origin types in 1985 – cities (streets), towns and townships. Among them, I consider townships as rural origins and towns and cities as urban origins. 'Cities' and 'counties' are the two types of destinations documented in the census. Cities refers to the city proper (*shiqu*) of provincial- and prefecture-level cities as well as county-level cities, and are considered urban destinations in this article. The definitions of urban areas and urban population are a constant subject of debate and confusion and have occupied much of China scholars' energy

labor force unleashed and tapped during the transitional phase for economic growth. The 1990 Census recorded a total of 35.3 million migrants between 1985 and 1990, of whom 16.2 million, or 45.9%, are temporary migrants. Though the 1990 Census underestimates the size of temporary migrants, which is in part due to its one-year residence criterion and to the large number of migrants who did not register with local authorities, it remains by far the most comprehensive national-level source of migration data in China.[7] Rural-urban migrants account for 7.1 million, or 43.9%, of the temporary migrants recorded in that Census. Among them, 4.2 million, or 69.5%, are labor migrants aged 15 or older. It is this group that this article focuses on.

The 1997 Temporary Population Survey conducted by the Public Security Bureau (1997) constitutes the second macro-level data set in this article. It is a national-level survey of all individuals who registered with local Public Security Bureaus as temporary migrants, and includes also migrants who had stayed in the destination for less than one year. I focus specifically on the temporary migrants in cities that are in the labor force.[8] The vast majority of these migrants are from rural origins.[9]

The first source of field data is a 1995 survey of the provinces of Sichuan and Anhui conducted by the Research Center for the Rural Economy of the Ministry of Agriculture (Du, 2000). Sichuan in western China and Anhui in central China are two major origins of rural-urban migrants, especially to provinces in eastern and southern China. Though Anhui is geographically closer to eastern China, it shares with Sichuan lagged economic growth and large surplus rural labor. I focus specifically on the first part of the survey, which involved three villages each from two counties in Sichuan and two counties in Anhui. In each of the 12 anonymous villages, 15 migrant households (where one or more household members have had migrant work experience) and 10 non-migrant households were randomly selected and interviewed during the 1995 Spring Festival (a time of year when many migrants return to the home village). The result is a valuable volume of transcribed qualitative material (1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records), consisting of accounts of migration, labor market process, farming, evaluation of migrant life, and other household and family issues (NNJYZ, 1995). In particular, I draw from the narratives of migrant interviewees,[10] all of whom migrated to urban areas or their outskirts to work and are therefore considered rural-urban labor migrants. The second part of the survey consists of systematic data of 2,820 households in Sichuan and Anhui

(e.g. Chan, 1994; Zhang and Zhao, 1998). In this article I employ rather restrictive definitions for both 'rural' and 'urban', because my objective is not to estimate the size but to examine the most distinct characters of rural-urban migrants. By temporary migrants, I refer to migrants who do not have permanent residence (*hukou*) in cities (see also footnote 2). The lack of local *hukou* signifies that their participation in the urban labor market is not rewarded by urban membership. By labor migrants, I refer to migrants who select 'seeking work in industry or business' as their reason for migration. This is the reason most identifiable with temporary labor migrants. Among other reasons related to employment, 'job transfer' and 'job assignment' are primarily associated with permanent migrants (Fan, 1999) and are therefore excluded from the analysis in this article.

7 The 1995 One-Percent Population Sample Survey has significantly less information about migration. Though it provides a national coverage, it does not inquire about the reason for migration, which is crucial for distinguishing between labor migration and other types of migration. In addition, published reports from that survey do not distinguish migrants by resident status, making it largely unusable for analyzing temporary migrants. By the middle of 2002, disaggregated data from China's 2000 Census are still not available.

8 Among the 28.4 million temporary population in cities recorded by the 1997 Temporary Population Survey, 22.3 million engage in industrial work, commerce, services and domestic services. The other categories — agricultural work, work-related travel, study or training, seeking medical care, seeking help from relatives or friends, visiting relatives or friends, travel and other — are not considered part of the urban labor force.

9 Migration data from the 1997 Temporary Population Survey categorized by urban and rural origins do not permit analyses by gender. Therefore, the analysis does not distinguish rural migrants from urban migrants, though the vast majority of labor migrants are from rural origins.

10 The qualitative material also includes selective accounts of interviewees' household members, but these accounts are too sketchy for detailed examination.

(1995 Sichuan and Anhui Household Survey) (Du, 2000) and is used in this article to provide supplementary information about labor migrants from the two provinces.

Fieldwork I conducted in Guangdong constitutes the second and third sources of field data, which are used in this article to supplement observations made from the above sources. In May and June of 1998, I conducted a questionnaire survey in Guangzhou, the largest city of Guangdong and a major destination of rural-urban migrants (see Fan, 2002). The survey includes 911 temporary migrants.[11] Then, in January and December of 1999, I conducted a survey and interviews in two villages in Gaozhou, western Guangdong[12] (see Fan and Li, 2002). Many villagers have migrated from these two villages to find work in the Pearl River Delta. I shall use selected information from the 1998 Guangzhou Survey and the 1999 Gaozhou Survey to complement the other data sources described earlier.

Gender and the migrant labor force

The various data sources I examined all point to two prominent differentials between male and female rural-urban labor migrants (Table 1). First, men are more highly represented than women; and second, female rural-urban labor migrants are overwhelmingly and more likely than their male counterparts to be young and single. Among the 4.2 million rural-urban temporary labor migrants documented in the 1990 Census, 71.9% are men and 28.1% are women. The average age of male and female rural-urban labor migrants is respectively 28.3 and 25.4, and the 15–24 age range accounts for 64.0% of female migrants but only 47.1% of male migrants. Respectively 48.4% and 58.5% of male and female rural-urban migrants are single. According to the 1997 Temporary Population Survey, men account for 59.8% of the 22.3 million temporary population that are in the urban labor force (see also footnote 8). More than two-thirds (68.4%) of the migrants documented in the 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Household Survey are men, and more women (75.7%) than men are under 25 years old. Of the 191 migrant interviewees[13] included in the 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records, 160 or 83.8% are men. In that survey, the average age is 24.7 for female migrants and 31.7 for male migrants; the age group 15–24 accounts for 75.9% of female migrants but only 25.0% of male migrants; and 77.4% of female migrants and only 20.6% of male migrants are single. Similarly, the 1998 Guangzhou Survey, which controls the sample's gender distribution, documents that female rural-urban migrants are younger and more likely to be single than their male counterparts.

These gender discrepancies underscore the differential effects of age and marriage on men and women, and most importantly the roles of socio-cultural traditions and the

11 The sample was arrived at using stratified quota sampling, with stratification both across major occupational categories and geographic districts in Guangzhou. The sampling framework aims at including a wide variety of occupations and at adjusting for the expansion of commerce and services in the city in recent years. Specifically, using the Guangzhou sample from the 1990 Census as a reference, I increased the proportions of survey respondents in commerce and services and accordingly adjusted downward the proportions of professional and industrial occupations in the survey. I wish to thank Kam Wing Chan, Ling Li and Yunyan Yang for their input in designing the questionnaire, and especially to Ling Li for coordinating the survey.

12 The two villages are in a mountainous and poorer part of Guangdong, and are an approximately eight-hour bus ride from Guangzhou. The fieldwork I conducted consisted of two parts – a questionnaire survey of 76 households in January and February of 1999; and taped in-depth interviews with selected villagers during December of the same year. I wish to acknowledge Ling Li for her assistance in coordinating the fieldwork.

13 In the vast majority of migrant households, only one migrant was interviewed. Among households where more than one migrant were interviewed, only two had detailed accounts of all those interviewed. In both cases two migrants were interviewed. The 191 migrants analyzed in this article represent therefore a total of 189 households.

Table 1 Gender differences among temporary labor migrants

	Volume (%)		Age				% Single	
			Mean		% 15–24			
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1990 Census (rural-urban)	3,019,600 (71.9)	1,181,900 (28.1)	28.3	25.4	47.1	64.0	48.4	58.5
1997 Temporary Population Survey	13,923,330 (59.8)	9,380,841 (40.3)	–	–	–	–	–	–
1995 Sichuan and Anhui Household Survey[a]	417 (68.4)	193 (31.6)	–	–	48.7	75.7	–	–
1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records[b]	160 (83.8)	31 (16.2)	31.7	24.7	25.0	75.9	20.6	77.4
1998 Guangzhou Survey[c]	511	400	28.8	25.9	35.0	56.0	51.9	64.7

[a] The age group 15–24 for the 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Household Survey refers to those aged 25 or under (Du, 2000)
[b] Only interviewees are included
[c] The number of men and women in the 1998 Guangzhou Survey was determined by the sampling framework (see footnote 11)

Sources: 1990 Census one-percent sample, Du (2000), Public Security Bureau (1997), NNJYZ (1995), survey conducted by author

capitalist labor regime. First, the age concentration of migrant women reflects the socio-cultural traditions that govern the lifecycle of rural women. In rural China, most young women do not pursue education beyond junior high and many quit school after the junior level. During the several years between school and getting married, they are in essence surplus labor waiting to be tapped. For example, this 16-year-old Anhui woman with only two years of primary school education decided to work in a restaurant in Wuxi, Jiangsu:

> After I quit school I helped my mother with house chores. Seeing that other young women came back from migrant work with fashionable clothes and some money to spend, I was envious. I plan to return to the restaurant after the Spring Festival — I am still young and I am not needed for farm work since we have only limited farmland to begin with (NNJYZ, 1995: 296–8).

In most cases, the family's financial need is the main reason for villagers to pursue migrant work. Young women, however, are often the ones having to cut short their education while their brothers continue on. A 21-year-old Anhui woman stopped school before graduating from junior high:

> My mother has been sick for three years. Our farmland is barely adequate for fulfilling the grain contract and feeding the family. My father is a teacher and his income cannot even cover my mother's medical expenses. Three years ago, when my older brother was admitted to the university, it became clear that I had to quit school and go to work. So I decided to work in a garment factory in Shanghai (NNJYZ, 1995: 298–9).

This is a classic example of the socio-cultural traditions that undermine women's status. Here, women discontinuing their education is not only a cost-saving strategy but is also an effective means of increasing household income and creating opportunities for male siblings. Women migrants have indeed made important economic contributions to their families, which I have also discussed elsewhere (Fan, 2003).

When rural women reach their early 20s, however, there is increasing pressure for them to get married. As discussed earlier, marriage signals a termination of migrant work for rural women, as illustrated by the sharp drop in mobility among rural women in their late 20s and early 30s and the small proportion of married migrant women in the urban labor force. The marriage market of migrant women is largely limited to rural

areas, due in part to the household registration system; and married women, and even single women who are engaged, are expected to be content with village life and are discouraged from pursuing migrant work. The following testimonies illustrate these observations. A 23-year-old Sichuan woman working in an electronics factory in Huizhou, Guangdong, remarks:

> My parents think that I am not young anymore and should be getting married (NNJYZ, 1995: 26–8).

An Anhui woman, also 23 years old, who is engaged to a man also from her native place comments:

> I have never considered finding a mate in Shanghai (where I work as a nanny). Among Shanghai natives, only those who are twice our age, widowed, or disabled, would marry rural women (NNJYZ, 1995: 509–11).

Also working in Shanghai, a 24-year-old Anhui woman explains:

> In our village, most women my age are already married. After they get married most will not pursue migrant work anymore … After you are engaged, your fiancé and his family would discourage you from migrant work because they believe that migrant women are more loose (NNJYZ, 1995: 505–7).

Besides socio-cultural traditions, the capitalist labor regime that continues to expand also contributes to the homogeneity of women migrants. Employers in urban areas target young, single migrant women, who are perceived to be meticulous to detail, efficient, easy to control and capable of handling delicate work (e.g. Lee, 1995; Chiang, 1999). Labor recruitment is often driven by the widely accepted correlation between youth and productivity. For example, the Shenzhen electronics factory Tam (2000) studied does not renew workers' contracts because the management believes that by age 20 most workers' eyesight has deteriorated. Young women are considered more appealing than older women, especially in services that emphasize youth and physical appearance, such as restaurant and hotel service. Age and gender requirements are almost always explicit in recruitment and job advertisements (e.g. Tan, 1996). It is relatively difficult for middle-aged migrant women to find urban work. A 41-year-old Sichuan woman has no other options but to work in a vegetable farm in Guangzhou's outskirts:

> Vegetable farming is hard and low-paying work. Most migrants don't want to work there. But I have no choice. I am too old for factory work. They took a look at my identity card and refused to hire me (NNJYZ, 1995: 124–6).

Most importantly, employers are driven by cost and productivity considerations. The young, single 'maiden workers' who are less costly and have no family to take care of are clearly more desirable than married women who expect higher wages and time off (Lee, 1995). A local informant in Gaozhou, Guangdong comments:

> It's difficult for married women to find work. Employers prefer young and single workers. When women have a family they need days off and employers don't like that (author's interview, December 1999).

Indeed, employers go to great lengths to prevent disruption of work. One popular strategy is to deduct or withhold workers' wages. A Sichuan woman working in an eyeglass factory in Shenzhen laments:

> We get a one-and-a-half month's wage as bonus if we don't take time off at all during the year. If we return home for the Spring Festival then we'll lose the bulk of that bonus (NNJYZ, 1995: 59–61).

Another Sichuan woman working in a plastics factory in Xiamen, Guangdong, describes her employer's strategy:

> We are required to eat and sleep at the factory. We only get paid at the end of the year. If we quit before that we don't get paid at all (NNJYZ, 1995: 127–9).

Age and marriage, on the other hand, are less limiting on rural men. What most urban employers look for in migrant men is their manual labor (see also the next section). Men in their 20s, 30s and even 40s are all deemed suitable so long as they have a good stature and are healthy. Their marital status is not critical, as marriage is not as disruptive to work to men as it is to women. In fact, marriage facilitates rural men's pursuit of migrant work, which I shall elaborate further in the next section. The result is that the male migrant labor force is more heterogeneous, comprising men of a range of ages and marital statuses.

The restrictions placed on women workers' age and marital status, and the disciplinary regulations migrants are subject to, are hallmarks of a labor regime that emphasizes productivity at the expense of labor interests. This is a regime tolerated, and even encouraged, by the transitional state during its quest for economic growth. Two important outcomes are gender segregation in the urban labor market and gender division of labor in the peasant household, which I shall elaborate on in the next two sections.

Gender segregation in the urban labor market

Both the macro-level and field sources used in this article show that the urban labor market is highly segmented and that rural-urban labor migrants are segregated by gender. The 1990 Census, the 1997 Temporary Population Survey, and the 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records all document that the industrial sector is the most important employer for both male and female rural-urban labor migrants (Table 2). Commerce is the second leading sector for male migrants and services is the second leading sector for female migrants. A closer examination of disaggregated occupational categories reveals a high degree of segmentation in the urban labor market. Table 3 lists the top 10 non-agricultural occupations by gender for both rural-urban temporary labor migrants and urban non-migrants, [14] based on the 1990 Census. I define the niche index as the ratio between the proportion of a subpopulation engaged in a specific occupation to the proportion of the cities' population engaged in that occupation. The niche indices of rural-urban temporary labor migrants are generally high, and much higher than those of non-migrants. In addition, the top 10 occupations account for more than half of rural-urban temporary labor migrants but only about 20% of urban non-migrants, further indicating that migrants are highly concentrated in a few types of jobs. Both male and female migrants are highly represented in industrial, commerce and services occupations. None of the professional occupations, however, is among their top occupations, again underscoring the migrants' concentration in less prestigious jobs.

Table 2 Major occupational categories of temporary labor migrants

	1990 Census (rural-urban)		1997 Temporary Population Survey		1995 Sichuan & Anhui Interview Records*	
%	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Professional	3.7	2.1	–	–	9.4	0.0
Commerce	12.6	18.9	18.4	14.8	17.5	0.0
Services	10.2	22.4	6.6	15.6	5.0	29.0
Industry	66.1	47.2	70.7	65.2	66.3	61.3
Agriculture	7.4	9.3	4.4	4.4	1.9	6.5

* Only interviewees are included

Sources: 1990 Census one-percent sample, Public Security Bureau (1997), NNJYZ (1995)

14 Urban non-migrants refers to non-migrants in cities (see also footnote 6).

Non-migrants, on the other hand, have a more balanced occupational distribution, and a generally lower representation in services employment.

Furthermore, Table 3 depicts a high degree of segregation between male and female migrants. All five industrial occupations for male migrants — masons and plasterers, loaders and porters, carpenters, miners and manual laborers — are highly ranked, have high niche indices and gender proportions above 92%, and are physically demanding manual work. Except mining, all constitute 'construction' work, a popular occupation among male rural-urban migrants (see below). Among female migrants, the top industrial occupations are garment workers, seamstresses and knitters, all constituting labor-intensive and assembly-line type of work. The gender proportions of garment workers and knitters are very high. In short, male and female migrants in industrial work concentrate in different and gender-segregated occupations. Among services occupations, such as kitchen workers and custodians, the gender proportions are more balanced. One major exception is domestic work, however, with a very high gender proportion (99.1% female) and an exceptionally high niche index (32.4). Clearly, domestic work is an occupation specifically targeting female rural-urban temporary migrants. To a lesser extent, female migrants are also highly represented in hotel service. Finally, the gender proportions among commercial occupations, mostly sales-related, are more balanced.

The 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records echoes the above observations (Table 4). Because of the relatively small number of observations in that survey (see Table 1), and because the information extracted from the qualitative accounts does not always fit squarely the census' occupational definitions, broader occupational categories are used. Again, migrants in that survey are highly concentrated in a few occupations, namely, construction workers and other manufacturing for male migrants, and other manufacturing, garment workers and domestic work for female migrants.

Qualitative information from the field sources suggests that two processes, simultaneously at work, have brought about the segmentation described above. The first process is structural, and has to do with the household registration system and rural migrants' low institutional and social status. Without local *hukou*, they are 'outsiders' who are brought in to the urban labor market only to satisfy the demand for low-paying and less prestigious jobs. An Anhui man who has been a migrant for 10 years concludes:

> Rural migrants are all in manual jobs — jobs that nobody else wants to do (NNJYZ, 1995: 355–7).

Selling manual labor is especially expected of male migrants. A construction worker from Sichuan who works in Shenzhen remarks:

> There isn't really a market for choosing jobs. Enterprises always prioritize recruiting employees with local *hukou*. We migrants don't have options. Most of the jobs we [male migrants] know of through friends and relatives are in construction. It is as if there are no jobs other than construction. In 1994 I changed job twice. The only thing that hasn't changed is that wherever I went I did construction work (NNJYZ, 1995: 264–7).

A Sichuan woman also working in Shenzhen observes:

> We [peasant migrants] are always the frontline production workers. Better jobs like office secretaries are reserved for the locals (NNJYZ, 1995: 59–61).

The second process is a gendered one. While male migrants are channeled to manual work, most migrant women are directed to factory work. The targeted sorting of migrants by gender is widely known among migrants. A Sichuan woman working in an electronics factory in Huzhou, Guangdong comments:

> Most men [migrants] from our village work in construction in Jiangsu, and most women [migrants] work in Guangdong factories (NNJYZ, 1995: 26–8).

Furthermore, the sorting process is reinforced by social network, which is migrants' most important source of information about the urban labor market. Both the 1995

Table 3 Top 10 non-agricultural occupations of rural-urban temporary labor migrants and non-migrants, 1990 Census

Rural-Urban Temporary Labor Migrants				Urban Non-Migrants			
	Rank	Niche index	Gender %		Rank	Niche index	Gender %
Men				**Men**			
Professional				*Professional*			
				Managers (county level)	4	1.0	85.1
				Electrical engineers	5	1.0	82.2
				Managers (below county)	9	1.0	86.4
Commerce				*Commerce*			
Other sales persons	5	6.2	60.1	Purchasers and sales	3	1.0	80.6
Sales persons	7	2.3	55.2				
Purchasers and sales	10	0.7	88.9				
Services				*Services*			
Custodians	8	1.6	73.5	Custodians	7	1.0	54.5
Kitchen workers	9	3.1	64.8				
Industry				*Industry*			
Masons and plasterers	1	5.3	97.2	Drivers	1	1.0	95.6
Loaders and porters	2	6.4	98.7	Mechanics, repair workers	2	1.0	89.4
Carpenters	3	4.8	97.8	Masons and plasterers	6	0.8	93.4
Miners	4	4.1	99.3	Miners	8	0.9	91.4
Manual laborers	6	8.0	92.9	Metal workers	10	1.0	57.3
% of all nonagricultural occupations		55.5		*% of all nonagricultural occupations*	19.9		

Women				Women			
Professional				*Professional*			
				Finance officers	2	1.0	72.1
				Teachers (primary school)	8	1.0	64.5
Commerce				*Commerce*			
Other sales persons	1	8.9	39.9	Sales persons	1	1.0	73.2
Sales persons	3	1.5	44.8	Other sales persons	10	0.8	49.9
Services				*Services*			
Restaurant servers	5	6.2	67.9	Custodians	4	1.0	45.5
Domestic workers	6	32.4	99.1				
Kitchen workers	8	3.5	35.2				
Custodians	9	1.4	26.5				
Hotel service	10	2.6	84.4				
Industry				*Industry*			
Garment workers	2	4.8	96.3	Storage workers	3	1.0	58.8
Seamstresses	4	4.2	63.5	Garment workers	5	0.9	90.0
Knitters	7	8.1	88.3	Seamstresses	6	0.9	88.4
				Metal workers	7	1.0	42.7
				Inspectors	9	1.0	64.1
% of all non-agricultural occupations		54.5		*% of all non-agricultural occupations*	20.2		

Source: 1990 Census one-percent sample

Table 4 Top five occupations of rural-urban temporary labor migrants, 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records*

Rank	Men	% of all non-agricultural occupations	Women	% of all non-agricultural occupations
1	Construction workers	36.3	Other manufacturing	31.0
2	Other manufacturing	21.0	Garment workers	20.7
3	Construction contractors	7.6	Domestic work	13.8
4	Craftsmen	7.0	Service workers	10.3
5	Managers of enterprises	7.0	Sales persons	6.9
Total		79.0		82.7

* Only interviewees are included

Source: NNJYZ (1995)

Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records and the 1998 Guangzhou Survey document that the vast majority of migrants rely on relatives and fellow villagers (*tongxiang* or *laoxiang*) to find work (Table 5). Only a small proportion found work via government and employment agencies or were recruited by employers. State and urban agencies are institutionally distant from rural migrants and are not their preferred source of information. This Sichuan man working as a custodian in Fuzhou, Fujian explains why:

> There are several employment agencies in Fuzhou. They all require a fee, but the jobs they get you are low-paying, too demanding, or from dishonest employers. Most people prefer to find work via their relatives and friends. You give them a gift or owe them a favor, that's all. Relatives and friends can tell you everything about the workplace, wage etc. Then you can decide whether you want to take the job or not (NNJYZ, 1995: 132–5).

Fellow villagers constitute a multiplying network in the migration and labor market processes. After the Spring Festival, in particular, inexperienced migrants follow fellow villagers to find work. Often, these informal groups coagulate by gender. Leaving the village as a group is especially attractive because the long trip to the migration destination connotes uncertainty and risk. For example, a 22-year-old Anhui woman who has worked as a nanny for five years recalls:

> In the past several years, I have brought more than 20 young women to Beijing to work as nannies … This time [during the Spring Festival] another 10 or so women have asked me to take them to Beijing (NNJYZ, 1995: 339–41).

Social network reinforces the sorting mechanism that matches employers with workers, and further deepens segmentation and gender segregation of work when new migrants

Table 5 Sources of information for migrant work (%)

	1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records*	1998 Guangzhou Survey
Relatives and fellow villagers	83.5	78.1
Government and employment agencies	6.8	5.8
Recruitment by employers	3.1	7.6
Other	6.6	8.5
Number	295	911

* All interviewees and household members they described are included

Sources: Du (2000), survey conducted by author

replicate the work of earlier migrants. This is a process that homogenizes rather than diversifies migrants' experience.

In short, evidence from both macro-level data and field surveys show that rural-urban temporary labor migrants are channeled into a narrow selection of gender-segregated jobs. The gendered sorting of migrants reflects structural constraints on migrants' access to the urban labor market and to information about jobs. Operating through only a small opening in the urban labor market, migrants do not select jobs but are selected by jobs. They constitute the cheap labor pursued by a capitalist labor regime to fill low-skilled, low-paying jobs. Institutionally distant from state and urban agencies, migrants choose to rely heavily on social network, which further reinforces gender segregation of their work.

Marriage and gender division of labor

The urban work opportunities for women migrants are further narrowed by marriage. Field evidence, in particular, underscores the notion that marriage constrains rural women's social mobility and binds them to the village through household division of labor. It is important to note, first of all, that migrant work can indeed empower rural women. Traditionally, especially prior to the socialist period, rural women's labor in house chores and farming was not rewarded by wage, their lives revolved around the village, and they had few opportunities other than marriage for social and economic mobility. Migrant work, on the other hand, is accompanied by a new rewarding system, increases rural women's exposure and opportunities and enables them to make a significant economic contribution to the family (Fan, 2003). Many migrant women, like this 21-year-old Sichuan woman, find the migration experience rewarding:

> Though I haven't saved up much money in these two years [working in an electronics factory in Guangzhou], I still find migration rewarding. I earn my own living. I was ignorant when I was staying home. Now I have more exposure (NNJYZ, 1995: 174–6).

The more adventurous women are even able to become entrepreneurs. This 24-year-old woman from Anhui has only had primary-level education, but she managed to start a tailoring business in a large city:

> I started to do migrant work since 1988. In 1994 a fellow villager helped me and my sister to get jobs in a clothing factory in Changzhou. But the employer did not pay us for eight months. In the end we decided to leave the factory, rent a place and start our own tailoring business. We recruited six young women from our village to help us. In four months my sister and I each made 3,000 yuan, and together we were able to bring home 4,000 yuan (NNJYZ, 1995: 497–500).

Despite the constraints imposed by their institutional and social status, the most competent rural women migrants are indeed able to make use of their network, experience and skills to achieve economic mobility.

However, the opportunities for rural women to pursue migrant work are short-lived and temporary. As I have discussed earlier, the capitalist labor regime targets young, single women and disadvantages older or married women. Furthermore, rural women's low institutional and social status limits their marriage market to rural areas, and upon marriage they are pressured by socio-cultural expectations to stay in the village. Therefore, urban work represents only an episode in their lives (Lee, 1995). For the most part, marriage denotes the end of their migration experience and possibilities of social and economic mobility through urban work.

Marriage, on the other hand, is less disruptive of the labor migration of rural men, as illustrated by a lower proportion of single men than single women among migrants, and the more balanced age distribution of male migrants than female migrants, described earlier in this article. In the 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records, 78.1% of all

Table 6 Division of labor within marriage, 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records[a]

	Married Migrant Households[b]
Number and %	
Male married migrants	125
(% of all male migrants)	78.1
Female married migrants	7
(% of all female migrants)	22.6
Types of migration arrangement (%)	
Husband is migrant; wife in village	69.1
Both husband and wife are migrants	26.2
Wife is migrant; husband in village	4.8
Person(s) taking care of farmland (%)	
Spouse	59.7
Parent(s)	22.5
Farmland subcontracted	11.6
Other	5.4
Person(s) taking care of children (%)	
Spouse in village	69.4
Parent(s) in village	13.5
Children are grown	9.0
Children are also migrants	8.1

[a] Only interviewees are included
[b] Households in which one or both of the spouses are migrants

Source: NNJYZ (1995)

male migrants and only 22.6% of all female migrants are married (Table 6). Split households, in which the husband does migrant work and the wife stays in the village, account for 69.1% of married migrant households. In only 26.2% of married migrant households do both spouses migrate to work together, and less than 5% are split households where the wife migrates and the husband stays in the village. Designating the spouse to take care of the farmland (59.7%) and children (69.4%) is the most popular arrangement. Only 11.6% of married migrant households subcontract their land to other farmers; and only 8.1% take their children along during migrant work. Since it is not known how many migrant households did not return to the home village during the Spring Festival, it is possible that the survey had underestimated the proportion of married couples migrating to work together. Nevertheless, the large proportion of split households supports the notion that a rural (wife)-urban (husband) division of labor is a popular strategy. Such division of labor is also prominent in the 1999 Gaozhou Survey, accounting for about half of the married couples surveyed.

Both structural and socio-cultural explanations underlie the pursuit of this strategy. First of all, institutionally and socially, rural migrants are outsiders in the city. Despite economic opportunities offered by the city, the village is where rural migrants' roots are. Most peasant migrants consider farmland and the village their long-term security, largely because they are denied permanent residence and benefits in urban areas. Designating a spouse to take care of the farmland, therefore, facilitates the strategy to augment household income through migrant work while clinging on to the farmland to which migrants will eventually return. The comment by this Sichuan man, a custodian in a textile factory in Guangdong, illustrates this sentiment:

> I like migrant work … Migration increases peasants' income … But this is not a long-term strategy. I have a wife, children and a house in the home village. I will eventually return to do farm work (NNJYZ, 1995: 34–6).

It is not uncommon for migrants to return to the home village during the busy farming season, underscoring the importance of farmland in their long-term plan. This plasterer working in Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu, again stresses the security provided by the home village:

> For the past 10 years, I returned home twice a year, once during harvest around August, and once during the Spring Festival … My wife is happy that I am doing migrant work, for the income I bring home. She takes care of our farmland … But migrant work is not a long-term strategy. After a few years I'll return home to farm and perhaps start a business (NNJYZ, 1995: 6–9).

The marginal existence of rural migrants, and their lack of access to urban benefits and services such as education and health care, discourage them to bring children[15] and the elderly to the city. While this Sichuan man, who works in an automobile shop in Guangzhou, migrated there with his wife, he plans to return soon to the home village:

> Will I be staying in Guangzhou for good? Absolutely not. We don't have [local] *hukou* there, which makes life very difficult … My parents are taking care of my children [in the village] … My children will be going to school soon. Without a *hukou* in Guangzhou we cannot afford sending them to school there … I plan to start an automobile repair business after I return. We won't stay in Guangzhou for good (NNJYZ, 1995: 30–4).

Similarly, in the 1999 Gaozhou Survey a woman decides to return to the home village from Shenzhen where her husband continues to do migrant work:

> I cannot continue migrant work anymore. My children are starting school. Schools in Shenzhen are very expensive … you need (local) *hukou* to go to school there … it's better that the children return to the village to go to school (author's interview, December 1999).

Second, the socio-cultural traditions of marriage actually encourage the labor migration of married men. The arrival of a wife not only represents an augmentation of labor resources to the husband's household, but she also becomes the designated person to take care of farmland, house chores and children, making it possible for the husband to pursue migrant work. This construction worker in Beijing agrees that it is important that his wife can look after the farmland:

> I had had several girl friends … I hoped to find someone who was capable and could take care of the farmland while I worked as a migrant. My wife is indeed very capable. She can take care of all the farm work by herself (NNJYZ, 1995: 164–7).

As women are socially and culturally expected to be the primary care-givers in the household, they have few options other than staying in the village. The division of labor that ensues is in fact consistent with the age-old tradition whereby the husband is concerned with the 'outside' while the wife looks after the 'inside'. In the case of rural migrant households, the 'outside' refers not only to what is beyond the household but also to the labor market outside the village; whereas the 'inside' refers not only to the home but also to the village and agricultural work (Jacka, 1997). This division of labor ties women to agricultural labor and reinforces the feminization of agriculture that is well documented in recent studies (e.g. Davin, 1998; Zhang, 1999). In this regard, to women migrants, marriage is disempowering because it cuts short their wage work and disrupts their economic mobility through urban work. Men have once again become the designated breadwinner through urban wage work, on which their wives rely for

15 Despite the one-child policy, many rural villagers have two or more children. In some cases the second child is permitted because of local provisions that relax the one-child policy. The typical case, according to the 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records, is that the villagers are willing to pay the fine for violating the policy.

improving the household's well being. The dependence of the wife defines a new power dynamics within the household, as illustrated by a local informant in Gaozhou:

> Wives want their husbands to stay in the village, but they'll remain poor if the husbands give up migrant work. The wives have to stay in the village because of their children. Some men don't want to return at all. Most women's mentality is, 'So long as the husband sends home money I am content' (author's interview, December 1999).

Of the 93 split households in the 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records, only six have a reversed division of labor — the wife is doing migrant work and the husband stays in the village (Table 7). A close examination of these six women's experiences reveals important power dynamics in the household. First, older women with older children (D-F) are able to sustain a longer period of migrant work. Second, economic hardship and the desire to build a house are common motivating reasons for migrant work. Third, all six women consider their husbands' poor or potentially poor performance in off-farm work a reason for their decision to pursue migrant work. They are, therefore, replacement or alternate migrants. Men remain the preferred candidates for migrant work, and it is only under circumstances where the husband's migration is not likely to yield satisfactory economic returns that the wife has the opportunity to pursue migrant work. Finally, all six women have managed to improve their households' financial well being through migrant work.

Despite their economic success, the three younger migrants (A-C) are under pressure by their husbands to stay in the village. Migrant C comments:

> In one year I brought home 3,000 yuan. This money helped us to pay back our debt, purchase fertilizers and pesticides, pay the children's school fees, and buy a TV set for them … I still want to return to work after the Spring Festival, but my husband doesn't want me to go … he wants me to help him raise some pigs … we have been fighting about this matter (NNJYZ, 1995: 85–6).

Likewise, the husbands of migrants A and B pressure their wives to stay in the village. The tension in these three households is vivid evidence that a reversed division of labor is considered deviant and is hotly contested. In this regard, the wife's economic power is being pitted against her expected village and care-giving roles. In contrast, the older group of migrants (D-F) are more relaxed about their arrangements. In all three cases the children are older, and the husbands appear to be more at ease with their wives' migrant work.

The above observations show that whereas migrant work is empowering to young rural women, marriage aborts their social and economic mobility through urban work and relegates them back to the village. To rural men, on the other hand, marriage facilitates their continued labor migration. Both institutional and socio-cultural explanations underlie the resultant division of labor in the peasant household. Though reversed division of labor exists, it is rare and hotly contested. The dominant arrangement, where the husband pursues migrant work and the wife stays in the village, is a gendered outcome of larger social and economic changes during transition, and is likely to undermine the status of women in the countryside.

Conclusions

In this article, I have highlighted some of the gendered changes in the urban labor market and in the peasant household during China's transition. I have argued that the transitional phase in China differs from the socialist period by prioritizing economic goals and by making peasants more vulnerable, and that it differs from capitalist economies by the continued prominence of the state and its control instruments. This combination has made possible a capitalist-like labor regime that fosters segmentation. Moreover, the transitional phase has made room for socio-cultural traditions rooted in

Table 7 Reversed division of labor, 1995 Sichuan and Anhui Interview Records*

Province	A Sichuan	B Sichuan	C Sichuan	D Sichuan	E Anhui	F Anhui
Age	32	30	29	41	47	46
Children	two children in primary school	two children in primary school	two children ages < 6	two children ages 20 and 13	two children ages 18 and 15	three children
Migrant work	one year of factory work in Wujiang, Jiangsu	one year of factory work in Dongguan, Guangdong	less than one year of factory work in Dongguan, Guangdong	three years of work in vegetable farm in Guangzhou, Guangdong	three years of domestic work in Beijing; took both children to do migrant work	five years of domestic work in Beijing; took one daughter to do migrant work
Reason for migration	husband's income too low; debt from building a house	husband's income too low; poverty	husband's income too low; poverty; saving for a house and children's education	husband's income too low; poverty; saving for a house	1991 flood; husband is a contented farmer	floods; poverty; husband is a contented farmer
Husband's migrant work experience	several years of construction and manual labor work	two months of construction work	several years of various types of work	mining work, returns home once a week	none	none
Plan for next year	fighting with husband	negotiating with husband	fighting with husband	continue migrant work	continue migrant work	stay in village to help with farm-land and young-est son

* Only interviewees are included

Source: NNJYZ (1995: 2–4, 65–8, 85–6, 124–6, 349–50, 352–4)

Confucianism to resurface. Such traditions, which endorse the subordination of peasants and women, further reinforce segregation and division of labor.

Using multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data from macro-level and field surveys, and focusing on rural-urban migration, I have examined the gender composition of the labor force, gender segregation of the urban labor market and gender division of labor in peasant households. This approach has two advantages. First, findings can be triangulated across different sources; and second, qualitative information, mostly from the field, gives insights to and offers explanations for broad observations made from quantitative data.

The data overwhelmingly point to a homogeneous female migrant labor force, whose youth and single status reflect socio-cultural pressure and expectations of marriage as well as a labor regime that targets the most vulnerable segment of the labor force, namely, young and single peasant women. The constraints of age and marriage on men, on the other hand, are much less severe. Evidence on the urban labor market shows a high degree of segmentation between rural migrants and urban natives, as well as a high degree of gender segregation between male and female rural migrants. Male migrants concentrate in manual work such as construction, while female migrants are most highly represented in factory and domestic work. These observations reflect institutional controls such as the household registration system that render peasant migrants outsiders to cities, a labor regime that channels migrant workers into segregated low-skilled and low-paying jobs, and the reliance of migrants on social network that further reinforces labor sorting and segregation. In the peasant household, migrant work can be empowering to women, but these opportunities are usually short-lived because of institutional and socio-cultural constraints upon rural women to return to the village upon marriage. Institutional and socio-cultural reasons again underlie the popularity of division of labor within marriage, whereby the husband pursues migrant work and the wife takes up all village responsibilities. Specifically, division of labor helps peasants deal with the awkwardness of pursuit of migrant work without the security of urban residence, and it also reflects the age-old patriarchal ideology emphasizing men's 'outside' role and women's 'inside' responsibilities.

This article's findings underscore the notion that transition is not gender-neutral and that macro social and economic changes have gendered outcomes. In China, the transitional state has shied away from Maoist policies that aimed at mitigating stratifications by class and gender. On the contrary, in its pursuit of economic growth, the state has used social control instruments to facilitate a labor regime marked by segmentation and gender segregation, and by lifting communal protection in rural areas it has motivated peasant households to pursue gender division of labor and indirectly reinforced gender-based socio-cultural traditions. The net effect is likely to be a further undermining of the status of women in the countryside.

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