Migration and Transformation of Rural China*

(Preliminary Draft)

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Abstract (150 words)

This paper examines the impact of migration on non-farm employment opportunities. We draw on data from the 2003 China Rural Household Survey (for Anhui province in central China). Our theoretical focuses on migration experience as a human capital that is capable of leading to more non-farm employment opportunities. The discussion is also informed by recent scholarly efforts that deal with changes in China's rural political economy, especially the role of local cadres. Preliminary findings suggest that return migrants are more likely to participate in non-farm employment as well as employment in township and village enterprises (TVEs) than non-migrants. For individuals who are from households with active migrants out, the chance of non-farm work is reduced probably because of increased household demand for farm-work. The study also highlights the importance of skill training as a way to transform the labor force from farm work oriented to non-farm employment.

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Introduction

Since the early 1980s, a new demographic reality in China has attracted increasing attention in academic journals, newspapers, and magazines. The "floating population" *(liudong renkou*), refers to the massive number of migrants without local household registration (*hukou*) status. Estimates from national survey/census data suggest that cross-county floating population was below 10 million in 1982 and has risen to 80 million by 2000 (Liang and Ma, 2004). The size of this population was about 144 million if intra-county floating population is included, clearly the largest of migrants in human history (NBS, 2002).[1] With the rise of migrant population in China, a large social science literature is also quickly emerging. So far researchers from disciplines of sociology, demography, economics, geography, and anthropology have studied many aspects of this migration process: migration and earnings (Zhao, 1999); major patterns and characteristics of the floating population (Liang, 2001, Liang and Ma, 2004; Poston and Mao, 1998), gender and migration (Gaetarno and Jackson, 2004; Fan, 2000; Huang, 2000; Roberts at al. 2000; Wang et al., 2003); the role of *hukou* in migration process (Chan and Zhang, 1999; Wu and Treiman, 2004); migration and health consequences (Smith and Yang, 2005; Yang, 2002); comparative studies of migration in China with undocumented Mexican migrants to the United States (Roberts, 1997), and migration and educational consequences for children (Liang and Chen, 2007; Ye and Murray, 2005). To date, these studies have significantly improved our understanding of the causes and consequences of China's massive migration population. One common characteristic of these earlier studies is that they focus primarily on migrants themselves and how they fare in places of destinations and how migrants contributed to the transformation of destination communities, particularly urban China. Given the fact that migration involves both places of destination and origin, it is equally important to examine how migration has changed migrant-sending communities, i.e. rural communities in China. With few exceptions (Ma, 1999; Murphy, 2002; and Taylor et al., 2003), social science knowledge of how China's massive migrant flow has affected rural migrant-sending communities is rather limited. This lack of sufficient attention from scholarly community is surprising in light of China's large rural population. According to the result from the 2005 China 1% Population Sample Survey, 57% of the Chinese population (about 741 million people) still reside in the countryside. How the lives of **741 million** rural Chinese residents are affected by migration and return migration is of an enormous level of importance for the future of Chinese society. In this paper, using the 2003 China Rural Household Survey (Anhui Province), we explore how migration and return migration affect rural communities in the migrant-sending areas.

Background

Much of the recent scholarships on the impact of migration on origin communities has been centered on return migration, remittances, and entrepreneurship. In a series of paper, Ma (2001a and 2001b) made strong statements about the important role played by return migrants in China's rural transformation. Using data from 1997 survey of return migrants in 9 provinces in China, Ma's work revealed that return migrants may actually act as catalysts for rural development.

[1] The number rose to 147 million in 2005 (NBS, 2006).

Using household survey data from migrant-sending areas in China, Zhao (2001) analyzed the determinants and consequences of return migration. One of her main findings is that the return migration decision is mainly motivated by prolonged separation from families and the ensuing desire to reunite, rather than failure at landing a well-paying job. Somewhat surprisingly, Zhao (2001) also showed that return migrants and non-migrants at the origins have equal chances of engaging in non-farm work once relevant characteristics are taken into account. Mainly based on ethnographic work in Jiangxi province in Southwestern China, Murphy (1999, 2002) calls our attention to the role of local policies (i.e. tax incentives) in attracting migrants to return.

Liang and Wu (2004) analyzed data from the 1995 China 1% Population Sample Survey. They provided the first systematic study of return migration using large-scale national sample data. Their results show that return migration rate varies depending on place of destination. The longer the history of migration to a particular destination, the more likely that we are to observe return migration. In general, interprovincial return migration rate ranges from 8% to 23%. Liang and Wu (2004) also find that there is no significant difference between return migrants and non-migrants (in migrant origin) in terms of non-farm employment. However, the data are from 1995, it is possible that increasing pattern of migration and changes in migrant-sending communities may bring new changes in the 21st century.

We focus on how migration affects non-farm employment using the most recent available data from China Rural Household Survey. Below we summarize major theoretical arguments linking non-farm employment opportunities with political capital (cadre status) and migration experiences of household members.

1. Non-farm Employment and Rural Political Economy

We suggest that migration is likely to bring multi-faceted changes, not only in terms of income distribution and investment behavior due to flow of remittances, but also the order of social stratification in rural China. Below we invoke relevant scholarly literature to discuss implications of migration for non-farm employment and entrepreneurship.

Non-farm employment has been a central concern of recent scholarship on rural China (Keister and Nee, 2000; Guang and Zheng, 2005; Parish et al., 1995). The transformation from farm work to non-farm work characterizes the experiences of the urbanization process across all societies; China is no exception. Indeed, rural China's experience in the 1980s (to a less extent in the late 1990s) exemplifies this process of labor transformation as increasing numbers of peasants find work in township and village enterprises (Bryd and Lin, 1990). In the Chinese case, Parish et al. (1995) show that peasant men and women received more income and satisfaction from off-farm employment than from farming. Thus, scholars have reached a consensus that in rural China non-farm work is more desirable than farm employment. However, there has been a significant debate about the extent to which political capital (measured by cadre status) plays a role in obtaining non-farm employment. In his seminal work on market transition theory relying on data from a survey in Fujian province, Nee (1989) did not find advantages of cadre status for income, which led Nee to argue that market transition leads to a decline of political power. Later work by Nee and his colleague (Keister and Nee, 2000), using

more representative data of rural China, revised the earlier findings and instead concluded that political connections did improve one's chance of securing non-farm work, but not that of launching into private entrepreneurship. Using rural survey data in 1993, Parish et al. (1995) find that the effect of cadre family connections vary by region. While political connections (such as cadres in the household) improve one's chances of securing non-farm work in less developed regions, they did not seem to matter much in well developed areas where opportunity of non-farm employment is abundant (Parish et al., 1995). Recent analysis of the 1996 national survey data by Walder and Zhao (2006) highlight the continuing advantage of cadre status in household income, and in most cases the income of people with political connections is equal to that of private entrepreneurs.

2. Migration and Non-farm Employment Opportunities

The proposed project will advance this line of inquiry in several aspects. One is that we argue that migration is so widespread and important in rural China, discussion of social stratification in rural China must consider the new reality of high rates of migration. In some migrant-sending provinces in Anhui and Sichuan, as high as 30 percent of households in villages have members that have migrated (Bai and Song, 1997). We argue that the role of migration and the migration experience can manifest in several ways. First, we consider the value of the migration experience. For peasants, migration often means going to city destinations and working in joint-venture enterprises in the coastal regions, the construction business, or being small peddlers. In some factories, migrants undergo a training program. Some migrants gain skills and others learn ideas of starting up one's own business. This is also true in the case of international migration as reflected in the high rate of self-employment among immigrants in the U.S. (Levitt, 2001; Zhou, 2004). So once peasants return to villages, it is likely that they will be engaged in non-farm work either in local industries, private enterprises or other businesses. Anthropologist Rachel Murphy reported that over 70% of her sample in Jiangxi province said that they had some gain from migration in terms of refinement of existing skills, acquisition of new skills, or exposure to management skills (Murphy, 2002, p. 160). In this case, migration experience can be viewed as a kind of human capital that makes them more marketable for a wide variety of jobs instead of simply going back to farming

Unlike previous studies which focus mainly on changes in return migrants themselves (as reflected in non-farm work, entrepreneurship, consumption ((Liu and Huang, 2008)), we also pursue this line of research in new directions. One new direction is that active migrants (defined as migrants who are still out in the destinations) may also affect non-farm employment opportunities for those household members left behind. Migration away from the farm household will result in reduction of household labor supply. Thus as long as households continue to own farm land, households will be more likely to designate other household members to agricultural production. Therefore, we hypothesize that individuals from households with active migrants are less likely to be engaged in non-farm work than otherwise.

Data and Methods

The 2003 China Rural Household Survey (CRHHS) was conducted by China National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and is the rural portion of the NBS' annual household survey (NBS, 2002b). It is a multi-stage probability sample survey of rural households. Data from rural and urban household surveys have been used in several important studies of household income in China (Khan et al., 1992; Khan et al., 1998; Riskin et al., 2001). For this paper, we use rural household survey data for Anhui province in central China (see Map 1). Anhui, with a population of around 65 million, used to be the main supplier of primary products (foods and coal) for the rapid industrialization in Shanghai and Jiangsu and now the major sending province of temporary labor migrants, ranked as the number 2 followed Sichuan with seven million migrants out of the province mainly destined in Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang or the rapidly developed Yangzi River Delta regions. The sample size for each province in household survey is 10,000 households (our paper is based on 10% sample of this survey). In 2001, rural household income in Anhui province was 1255 Yuan[2], moderately lower than China's mean rural household income of 1641 Yuan.

Aside from rich information on income and its sources, the 2003 CRHHS added a module of the rural labor force. Some scholars have remarked that large national studies based on massive samples gathered by official state agencies such as the Chinese Household Income Project (by NBS) permit detailed analysis of income of rural households, but have limited information for other characteristics (Walder and Zhao, 2006). This changed in 2002 with the addition of the labor force module. Three parts of the survey are particularly relevant. Basic socio-demographic information is collected for each member of the household. Then, the labor force population (contained in the Labor Force Module) is divided into two groups: one group is the labor force population who remain in the village and the other group refers to the labor force population who are currently working outside of township or town. For the first group, questions asked include: current and last year's occupation, whether employed through town enterprises and duration of work, and whether individual migrated out during the survey year or the previous year. For the second group, 14 questions were asked about their migration experience: if migration was arranged by the local government (or relatives and friends), type of migrant destination, duration of migration, total earnings, and the amount of remittances (either sent or brought back). Also important to our analysis is the information on whether a household contains a cadre.

During CRHHS, NBS also collected rich information at the village level. There are a total of 31 questions at the village level. The most relevant questions for our purposes are access to paved road, distance to the nearest elementary/middle school, distance to nearest medical clinic, distance to post office, and number of TVEs. For each province, roughly about 27 to 30 counties were selected and within each county about 5 to10 villages were surveyed. This survey design generated about 135 to 300 villages for each province, which will allow us to conduct multi-level modeling. This paper will use only household survey data.

Our analysis precedes in two steps. First, we examine the impact of return migration on propensity to be engaged in township and village enterprises (TVE, a kind of non-farm work). The idea here is to examine the extent to which return migrants are more likely to be in TVEs than individuals with no migratory experience. Return migrants are defined as someone who

[2] In 2008, $1=6.7 yuan.

has been a migrant at least for three months and are present at the time of household survey. Since the dependent variable is a dichotomy variable, we use logistic regression models. We use two dependent variables: whether or not one is working in TVE jobs and the other is whether or not one is working on non-farm job. The variable non-farm jobs includes TVE jobs, but contains other jobs as well such as jobs offered by other entrepreneurs in the migrant-sending areas. In some cases, return migrants also form their own businesses which provide non-farm employment for local people.

The second step is to assess the extent to which having active migrants (i.e. migrants who are still working and residing in migrant destinations) affects the opportunity for non-farm employment for family members left behind. To do so, we need to crate a household level variable to identify households with active migrants. Two kinds of active migrants are considered. One refers to individuals who made first move in the year of the survey. The second category refers to individuals who are repeat migrants and not residing in surveyed households at the time of survey. Besides using migration information (active migrants and return migrants) in our statistical models, we also consider other important variables such as skill training and household with cadres. Here again we consider both TVE employment and non-farm employment.

Preliminary Findings

Descriptive Results.

Table 1 shows the basic socio-demographic characteristics for three groups of individuals: non-migrants, active migrants, and return migrants. Migrant selectivity on basic socio-demographic characteristics is well established, we focus our discussion on the differences between active migrants and return migrants. As we discussed earlier, Anhui is one of the major migrant-sending provinces in China. Not surprisingly that there are 802 active migrants out of total sample of 2634 individuals. With so many individuals have access to migration opportunities (and perhaps remittances) , it is conceivable that migration is likely to play a big role in local economy. There are 42 return migrants (i.e. migrants who have had migration experience in the past and are in households at the time of the survey). Nearly three quarters of return migrants are male as compared to 62% for active migrants. In addition, return migrants tend to be older than active migrants: 34% of return migrants are in the age group of 40+ and only 15% of active migrants are in that age group. Return migrants are also heavily represented in the lower education group with more than 31% with elementary school education or no schooling at all. Despite relatively unfavorable socioeconomic characteristics after this comparison, we should make it clear that return migrants do have more favorable socioeconomic characteristics as compared with non-migrants.

Results from Regression Models

We begin with models of TVE employment as shown in Table 2. In Model A, we use variable "return migrant" to indicate if individual is a return migrant (the comparison group is non-migrant). Results show that return migrants are indeed more likely to be engaged in TVE employment. In Model B we further identify the nature of migration experience by distinguishing interprovincial vs. intraprovincial migration. In fact intraprovincial return migrants are more likely to be engaged in TVE employment (than non-migrants). To understand this, we plan to further explore the kinds of jobs migrants took in cities. In Table 3, we use a broader concept of non-farm employment (which includes TVE employment). But the results are almost identical to the ones when we use TVE employment as dependent variable.

Another important finding is that skill training is very important for TVE employment. These training sessions often are offered by local labor bureaus with the hope that individuals who received skill training will be more marketable. Some skill training program target employment in cloth factories (training of operation of sewing machine) and assembly work in the coastal regions. In other words, some of the skill training is geared toward training local peasants so that they can migrate. Surprisingly education is not important but skill is. Unlike earlier studies using data from the 1980s and the 1990s, having a cadre in the household decreases the chance of TVE employment and non-farm employment. In separate analysis, we studied entrepreneurship and findings suggest that individuals with cadre in the household are more likely to be engaged in entrepreneurship. The hierarchy of employment opportunities may have changed: households with cadres are more likely to start their own business and return migrants are more likely to be engaged in non-farm work and TVE employment. Studies also show that township and village enterprises encountered bottleneck and are not as profitable as them used to be. We also find that individuals with entrepreneur households are more likely to be engaged in non-farm work. This is not surprising when household run some businesses operations (non-farm work), the first hiring priority will be household members.

We note that gender has a very strong impact on both TVE and non-farm employment in that men continue to dominate these types of employment, as documented by many previous studies. It seems disadvantaged position facing women in terms of non-farm employment has not improved. In further analysis, we plan to introduce an interaction term between gender and migration status of household head. We hypothesize that if household head (often men) migrate, the chances of non-farm employment may improve for women left behind.

To examine how active migrants affect the opportunities of TVE employment and non-farm employment, we estimated additional statistical models as shown in Tables 4 and 5. Recall that we have two categories of active migrants, one is first time migrants in the survey year and the other is repeat migrants. The most important findings from Tables 4 and 5 is that individuals from households with active migrants are less likely to be engaged in either TVEs or non-farm work (thus more likely to be in farm work). Migration certainly has reduced the supply of labor for agricultural work, so when people migrate, the left behind family members have to take care of farm land.

Further Analysis plan

In future analysis, we want to go into several directions. One is to consider interaction term between gender and active migrants in the household and we expect women are more likely to participate in non-farm work if household head is a migrant. Second is to consider other variables such as duration of migration for active migrants. We also plan to explore similar issues for another province, Guizhou province in Western China (not shown on Map 1). The Guizhou case is important because it is one of the poorest provinces in China today. By brining the case of Guizhou into our study, we hope to understand how migration has helped alleviate rural poverty because of flow of remittances and enhanced entrepreneurship opportunities.

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Map 1. Location of Anhui Province in China

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics by Migration Status*

Variables		Non-Migrant (%)	Active Migrant (%)	Return Migrant (%)
Sex				
	Male	45.14	62.84	71.43
	Female	54.86	37.16	28.57
Age				
	15-19	3.58	15.59	7.14
	20-29	11.51	42.14	28.57
	30-39	27.78	27.68	30.95
	40-49	25.04	10.47	16.67
	50 +	32.08	4.11	16.67
Education				
	No formal education	17.09	2.37	4.76
	Elementary school	34.02	14.34	26.19
	Junior high school	40.67	73.44	59.52
	Senior or vocational high school	7.60	8.98	9.52
	College or above	0.61	0.87	0.00
Had skill training				
	Yes	8.10	22.07	11.90
	No	91.90	77.93	88.10
Cadre household				
	Yes	8.04	3.74	2.38
	No	91.96	96.26	97.62
Entrepreneur household				
	Yes	3.91	1.75	0.00
	No	96.09	98.25	100.00
Total	**2,634**	**1,790**	**802**	**42**

Source: The 2003 China Rural Household Survey (Anhui province).

Table 2. Coefficients of Logistic Regression Predicting TVE Employment

	Model A		Model B	
Independent Variables	***B***	**SE**	***B***	**SE**
Intercept	-6.3261 **	1.0417	-6.2673 **	1.0414
Male	1.0509 **	0.3372	1.0327 **	0.3402
Age				
15-19	0.7264	0.8309	0.8029	0.8344
20-29	1.1205 *	0.5044	1.2530 *	0.5019
30-39	0.9012 *	0.4300	0.8677 *	0.4329
40-49	0.6836	0.4356	0.5590	0.4426
50+ (reference)	----	----	----	----
Education				
No formal education (reference)	----	----	----	----
Elementary school	1.6675	1.0370	1.6226	1.0381
Junior high school	1.3073	1.0533	1.2494	1.0548
Senior or vocational high school	0.6827	1.1460	0.5415	1.1491
College or above	1.6139	1.4969	1.4853	1.4982
Had skill training	2.0528 **	0.3052	2.1198 **	0.3094
Cadre household	-2.0807 *	1.0310	-2.0721 *	1.0326
Return migrant	1.2057 *	0.5167	----	----
Return migrant's prior destination				
No prior migration (reference)	----	----	----	----
Interprovincial	----	----	-0.0248	0.8107
Intraprovincial	----	----	3.3670 **	0.7981
-2 Log Likelihood	441.342		432.452	
Chi-Square	90.6659 **		99.9031 **	
df	12		13	
Number of cases	1788		1793	

Note: * P < 0.05 and * P < 0.01

Source: the 2003 China Rural Household Survey (Anhui Province).

Table 3. Coefficients of Logistic Regression Predicting Non-Agricultural Occupation

	Model A		Model B	
Independent Variables	***B***	**SE**	***B***	**SE**
Intercept	-3.9563 **	0.3598	-3.9532 **	0.3605
Male	0.9635 **	0.1793	0.9745 **	0.1800
Age				
15-19	0.4759	0.4285	0.5174	0.4316
20-29	0.8529 **	0.2762	0.9137 **	0.2775
30-39	0.8284 **	0.2294	0.8397 **	0.2307
40-49	0.4827 *	0.2316	0.4515	0.2332
50+ (reference)	----	----	----	----
Education				
No formal education (reference)	----	----	----	----
Elementary school	0.4123	0.3682	0.3820	0.3691
Junior high school	0.8632 *	0.3677	0.8454 *	0.3683
Senior or vocational high school	1.1477 **	0.4168	1.0886 **	0.4190
College or above	1.4084	0.7979	1.3414	0.8006
Had skill training	2.1789 **	0.2075	2.2372 **	0.2099
Cadre household	-0.4328	0.2731	-0.4505	0.2741
Entrepreneur household	2.5105 **	0.3056	2.5510 **	0.3042
Return migrant	-0.2580	0.4755	----	----
Return migrant's prior destination				
No prior migration (reference)	----	----	----	----
Interprovincial	----	----	-1.7174 *	0.7978
Intraprovincial	----	----	2.1192 **	0.7823
-2 Log Likelihood	1154.410		1142.460	
Chi-Square	336.4685 **		357.0492 **	
df	13		14	
Number of cases	1791		1796	

Note: * P < 0.05 and * P < 0.01

Source: The 2003 China Rural Household Survey (Anhui Province).

Table 4. Coefficients of Logistic Regression Predicting Impact of Active Migration on TVE Employment of Other Household Members

	Model A		Model B	
Independent Variables	***B***	**SE**	***B***	**SE**
Intercept	-6.3261 **	1.0417	-5.7456 **	1.0525
Male	1.0509 **	0.3372	0.9390 **	0.3406
Age				
15-19	0.7264	0.8309	0.6466	0.8349
20-29	1.1205 *	0.5044	0.9730	0.5103
30-39	0.9012 *	0.4300	0.6084	0.4381
40-49	0.6836	0.4356	0.6041	0.4444
50+ (reference)	----	----	----	----
Education				
No formal education (reference)	----	----	----	----
Elementary school	1.6675	1.0370	1.6530	1.0382
Junior high school	1.3073	1.0533	1.2749	1.0556
Senior or vocational high school	0.6827	1.1460	0.6009	1.1503
College or above	1.6139	1.4969	1.5820	1.5082
Had skill training	2.0528 **	0.3052	2.0011 **	0.3070
Cadre household	-2.0807 *	1.0310	-2.1265 *	1.0312
Return migrant	1.2057 *	0.5167	1.1746 *	0.5268
Other Active Migrants in Household				
None (reference)	----	----	----	----
Repeat active migrant	----	----	-1.1520 **	0.4055
1st time active migrant	----	----	-0.3780	0.4249
-2 Log Likelihood	441.342		431.610	
Chi-Square	90.6659 **		100.3987 **	
df	12		14	
Number of cases	1788		1788	

Note: * P < 0.05 and * P < 0.01

Source: the 2003 China Rural Household Survey (Anhui Province).

Table 5. Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Impact of Active Migration on Non-Agricultural Occupation of Other Household Members

	Model A		Model B	
Independent Variables	***B***	**SE**	***B***	**SE**
Intercept	-3.9563 **	0.3598	-3.3987 **	0.3696
Male	0.9635 **	0.1793	0.8751 **	0.1816
Age				
15-19	0.4759	0.4285	0.3447	0.4330
20-29	0.8529 **	0.2762	0.6725 *	0.2809
30-39	0.8284 **	0.2294	0.5256 *	0.2362
40-49	0.4827 *	0.2316	0.4325	0.2361
50+ (reference)	----	----	----	----
Education				
No formal education (reference)	----	----	----	----
Elementary school	0.4123	0.3682	0.4234	0.3702
Junior high school	0.8632 *	0.3677	0.8424 *	0.3702
Senior or vocational high school	1.1477 **	0.4168	1.0810 *	0.4219
College or above	1.4084	0.7979	1.4257	0.7941
Had skill training	2.1789 **	0.2075	2.2036 **	0.2112
Cadre household	-0.4328	0.2731	-0.4713	0.2721
Entrepreneur household	2.5105 **	0.3056	2.3840 **	0.3103
Return migrant	-0.2580	0.4755	-0.2814	0.4884
Other Active Migrants in Household				
None (reference)	----	----	----	----
Repeat active migrant	----	----	-1.0132 **	0.2014
1st time active migrant	----	----	-0.5640 *	0.2534
-2 Log Likelihood	1154.410		1125.637	
Chi-Square	336.4685 **		365.2420 **	
df	13		15	
Number of cases	1791		1791	

Note: * P < 0.05 and * P < 0.01

Source: The 2003 China Rural Household Survey (Anhui Province).