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**Wolfgang Taubmann**

**Migration to Rural Towns (zhen) -  
Some Results of a Research Project on Rural Urbanisation in China**

**Zusammenfassung:** Der vorliegende Aufsatz bietet eine quantitative Analyse von Daten aus dem Zeitraum 1982-90 zu zwei Aspekten der Land-Stadt-Migration in China: der jeweilige Anteil der Migration in Klein- oder Großstädte; die Beiträge von natürlichem Zuwachs, Netto-Migration und Verwaltungsänderungen zum Kleinstadtwachstum. Er untersucht dabei auch definitorische Probleme wie sie durch den Wechsel von Kleinstadt- und Gemeindezuordnungen, die Unterscheidung von landwirtschaftlichem und nicht-landwirtschaftlichem Meldestatus sowie den Gegensatz von Migranten mit einer Änderung des ständigen Wohnsitzes und Wanderbevölkerung mit provisorischem Meldestatus entstehen. Anhand von Feldforschungen in 6 Kleinstädten und 5 Provinzen im Zeitraum 1993-94 werden sodann sowohl besondere Migrantenmerkmale als auch die Motivationsstrukturen und Entscheidungsspielräume von Migranten, Arbeitgebern und Kleinstadtregierungen erörtert.

**Schlagworte:** Land-Stadt-Migration, Klein- und Großstädte, Selektivität, Alter, Geschlecht, Berufsgruppen, Bildungsstand, Migrationsgründe, Meldepolitik

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**Abstract:** This article offers a quantitative analysis of data from the 1982-90 period on two aspects of rural-urban migration in China: the respective shares of migration to towns and cities; the contributions of natural increase, net-migration and administrative changes to town population growth. In this context it also scrutinizes definitional problems as posed by change of town and township designations, the distinction between agricultural and non-agricultural registration status, and the differences between migrants with permanent change of household registration as opposed to floating population with provisional registration. Basing itself on field work in 6 towns in 5 provinces during 1993 and 1994, the analysis then discusses migrant characteristics, as well as the motivational patterns and decision leeway of both migrants, employers and town administrations.

**Key words:** Rural-urban migration, towns and cities, selectivity, age, sex, occupation, educational attainment, migration reasons, household registration policies

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## 1 Introduction

The social and spatial mobilisation of rural society as a result of economic reforms is a favoured paradigm of present research in social sciences, as far as China is concerned. Therefore, we do not intend to describe once more the reasons and general setting of the processes of migration. This paper primarily concentrates on the following questions:

1. At the macro-level: Can rural-urban migration be differentiated between those streams heading towards towns (*zhen*) and those towards cities (*shi*)? Can the share of net-migration in the towns' total population increase be quantified?
2. At the meso- and micro-level: How far do net-migration and natural population increase contribute to the growth of towns? Has the attitude towards migration changed during the years, and what might be the motivational pattern of migrants? How do town governments and rural enterprises react on in-migrants in general and on migrant workers?

## 2 Migration Flows into Towns and Cities

Important sources that give hints on inter- and intra-provincial migration flows between the rural area (counties, townships) and cities or towns are the 1% Population Sample Survey of 1987 and the 1990 Population Census. According to the Sample Survey of 1987, in the five-year period between 1982 and 1987, migration involved 30.53 million people, including roughly 51% who moved from rural areas into towns and cities.<sup>1</sup> Within this group 55% moved into towns and 45% into cities. The results of the 1990 Census seem to verify the mentioned volume of migration, though the two data sets are not strictly comparable.<sup>2</sup> According to the Census, a total of 34.1 million people moved from one place to another between July 1, 1985 and July 1, 1990.<sup>3</sup> Of those relocated, about 49% migrated from rural townships into towns or cities. But then the share of rural-urban migrants who had chosen towns as their destination, decreased from 55% during the 1982-1987 period to 24% during 1985-1990. Several scientists (including myself) interpreted this shift from towns to cities, now being the main destination for rural migrants, as a marked turn-around of the rural-urban migration flows.

As a matter of fact, however, this alteration is mainly the result of a changed definition of migration. From 1985 to 1990, different from the period 1982-1987, only those migrants were registered that crossed county borders. Intra-county migration was not recorded. As the majority of in-migrants into towns originated from a relatively small hinterland, migration into towns was certainly underreported. For instance, according to a sample survey carried out in 36 towns of China's best developed provinces in 1988, 59% of all

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<sup>1</sup> See Taubmann, W., 'Socio-Economic Development and Rural-Urban Migration in China since the Beginning of the 1980s', in: Kok Chiang Tan, W. Taubmann, Ye Shunzhan (eds.): *Urban Development in China and South-East Asia*, Bremen 1993, pp. 165f.

<sup>2</sup> The 1990 Census defines migrants in a slightly different way from the 1% Population Survey. The Census included beside the migrants with a change of *hukou* only those who had left their registration place more than one year before the census date (July 1), while the Sample Survey included those migrants who have either changed their *hukou* or have left their place of permanent registration half a year before the survey date.

<sup>3</sup> Guowuyuan renkou pucha bangongshi; Guojia tongjiju renkou tongjisi (eds.), *Zhongguo 1990 nian renkou pucha ziliao (Tabulation on the 1990 Population Census)*, Beijing 1993, Vol.4, p. 152.

in-migrants came from places less than 20 km distant from their destinations.<sup>4</sup> This meant that a considerable number of in-migrants into towns were intra-county migrants not registered in the Census. As far as rural-urban migration in recent years is concerned, some comprehensive surveys have been carried out whose validity is difficult to judge, as almost no information on the methodical background is given. The so-called Green Report refers to a sample survey from December 1993 to January 1994 including more than 14,000 rural households.<sup>5</sup> According to this survey, about 11% of the rural labour force left their home place at least once during the year to work somewhere else. That might add up to an estimated total figure of 50 million migrant workers, ca. 79% of whom worked in cities and towns. Unfortunately, no distinction is made between cities and towns as migrant destinations. Another sample survey of 1994 calculates a share of 13% migrant workers among the rural labour force, who during their migration at least crossed one county border.<sup>6</sup> Extrapolating this figure, in 1994 there were about 60 million rural migrant workers. According to this sample survey, 8 out of 10 migrant workers headed towards cities and towns, nearly half of them (about 47%) into small cities and towns (including county seats and below).

In detail, this survey gives the following distribution of migrants from rural areas:

Table 1: Destination of Rural Migrants 1994 (%)

Big cities	33.5
Medium-sized cities	9.3
Small cities (including county seats and towns subordinated to counties)	37.8
Other rural areas	19.4
Total	100.0

Source: Research Group on the Project 'Migration of Rural Labour Force and Labour Markets' 1995, pp. 19 - 28.

It is likely that the greater part of rural in-migration into 'small cities' is headed towards smaller *shi*-cities. This impression is at least supported by a sample survey, cited by Gu Shengzu, according to which only 12.1 % of seasonal and long-term rural migrants moved into towns and county seats, whereas 29.4% took small and medium-sized cities

<sup>4</sup> Liu Zheng, *Woguo yanhai diqu xiao chengzhen jingji fazhan he renkou qianyi (Economic Development and Population Migration in Small Towns of Coastal Area in China)*, Beijing 1990, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> Research Group on Annual Analysis of Rural Economy (ed.), *Green Report, Annual Report on Economic Development of Rural China in 1993 and Development Trends in 1994*, Beijing 1994, p.110. 14,343 households in 600 counties from 26 provinces were interviewed. The sampling survey was carried out by the Agricultural Bank of China and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Rural Development Institute). Strangely enough one publication, also referring to this sample, only cites 12,673 households in 442 counties of 26 provinces. See Li Fan; Han Xiaoyun, 'Waichu laodongli de nianling jiegou he jiaoyu shui-ping' (Age Structure and Educational Level of Out-migrated Labour Force), in: *Zhongguo nongcun jingji (Rural Economy of China)*, No.8, 1994, p. 10-14.

<sup>6</sup> Nongcun shengyu laodongli liudong he laodongli shichang xiangmu yanjiuzu (Research Group of the Project 'Migration of Surplus Rural Labor Force and Labor Markets') (ed.), '28 ge shi xian nongcun laodongli de diqu liudong' (On Regional Migration of Rural Labour Force in 28 Cities/Counties), in: *Zhongguo nongcun jingji (Rural Economy of China)*, No.4, 1995, pp. 19-28. This sample survey was initiated by the Economic Commission of the National Political Consultative Conference, the Development Research Center under the State Council, and the Chinese Society for Research and Opening of Rural Labor Resources. The sample was surveyed in 28 counties/towns. However, there is no exact information on the sample size.

as their destination of migration.<sup>7</sup> To sum up, the data on the quantity and share of migration into towns are incomplete. A rough estimate might come to the following result: About 60-80% of the ca. 50 to 60 million rural migrant workers leave for urban areas, 40-50% of whom decide for small cities and towns as their permanent or provisional abode.

### 3 Share of Net Migration in Total Population Growth of Towns, 1984 and 1992

Between 1984 and 1993 the number of towns (*zhen*) rose from 7,320 (612 subordinated to cities, 6,708 to counties) to 15,062 (4,590 subordinated to cities, 10,472 to counties). For the past, there are only population figures available for towns administered by counties, a fact rather often neglected in the literature.<sup>8</sup> In the following we therefore have to concentrate on towns subordinated to counties. The total population of the county-led towns increased by 150% (1984: 134.47 million; 1992: 336.60 million), while the non-agricultural population only grew by 29.5% (1984: 52.28 million; 1992: 67.70 million).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the percentage of the non-agricultural population in the county-supervised towns decreased from 38.9 to 20.1% within the same period.

A closer look at this development reveals that the following factors are important for the population growth of towns:

- change of designation of townships (*xiang*) to towns (*zhen*);
- administrative changes in existing towns;
- natural population growth;
- net positive migration.

As table 2 indicates, since 1992 the rapid population increase in county-led towns is stagnating, because during the last years numerous counties were elevated to cities and thus county-administered *zhen* were transferred to city-administered ones. For instance, between 1990 and 1994 134 counties were raised to county-level cities. At the same time townships (*xiang*) became designated towns. Mostly they were smaller townships with a high percentage of farm inhabitants, while some bigger towns with a considerable number of non-agricultural residents got the status of a city and thus were no longer registered as *zhen*. As a result *zhen* were more and more ruralised.

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<sup>7</sup> Obviously these are sample data of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences on migration between 1978 and 1986. These data, published by Gu, are almost identical with the data on tab. 2 presented by Shi Ruohuan in 1990. Shi refers to a sample survey by CASS in 222 villages, 84 townships, and 59 counties in 11 provinces. See Gu Shengzu; Jian Xinhua (ed.), *Dangdai Zhongguo de renkou liudong he chengshihua (Population Movement and Urbanisation in Present China)*, Wuhan 1994 and Shi, Ruohan, *Nongcun shengyu laodongli de liudong wenti (The Problem of Migration of Rural Surplus Labourers)*, Beijing 1990.

<sup>8</sup> In 1993 161.9 million inhabitants (of them 33 million non-agricultural inhabitants) lived in towns administered by cities and 326.5 million inhabitants (of them 66.83 million non-agricultural) subordinated to counties. Source: unpublished data by the Ministry of Construction.

<sup>9</sup> According to Hu Zhaoliang (1995) the number of towns in 1994 was 16,210 and the total non-agricultural population 106.7 million (supposedly of all towns), see Hu Zhaoliang, *Prosperity, Policy Reform and Town Development in China*, paper presented to the Beijing Workshop 'China: Town Development Program', Nov.13-17, 1995.

Table 2: Number of Towns (*zhen*) and Town Population, 1949-1994

Year	Number of Towns ( <i>zhen</i> )		Total Population* in Million	Non-Agricultural Population*	
	Total Number	Administered by Cities      Counties			
1952			h)5402		
1953				33.72	
1954			i)5400		
1956	k)*3672				
1958			h)3621		
1961			a)4429		
1962			b)4219		
1963			a)4032		
1964	l)3148			36.33	29.41
1965	a)*3146			37.93	30.83
1966				40.19	31.37
1967				40.04	33.88
1968				42.51	32.58
1969				45.87	33.43
1970				45.50	34.12
1971				44.46	33.78
1972				45.64	35.34
1973	f)*2863			47.30	36.59
1974				48.20	37.10
1975				49.51	37.57
1976	k)*3261			50.41	38.36
1977				51.33	39.01
1978	a)*2850			53.16	40.39
1979	d)*2851			55.56	42.75
1980	a)*2874			56.93	44.15
1981	d)*2843			58.40	44.92
1982	g)*2687			62.16	45.79
1983	d)*2781			62.28	44.83
1984	e)7320	612	6708	134.47	52.28
1985	a)7511			166.33	57.21
1986	d)9755	1291	k)8464	203.69	59.63
1987	a)g)11103	1982	9121	236.66	61.43
1988	d)11481	2867	h)8614	238.45	60.33
1989	a)11873	2785	h)9088	254.93	62.36
1990	c)11935	2614	9321	266.76	72.39
1991	g)12152	2844	9308	271.71	65.36
1992	g)14191	3604	10587	336.60	67.70
1993	h)15062	4590	10472	326.54	66.83
1994	m)16210			316.12	64.88

\* No information whether total number or only county-led towns.

**Sources for data on towns (*zhen*):**

- a) Pan, Xiuling, *Zhongguo xiaochengzhen jianshe (Construction of Small Towns in the PR of China)*, Beijing 1995.
- b) *Zhongguo xingheng shouce (Administration Manual of China)*, Beijing 1986.
- c) *Di si ci quanguo renkou pucha zhuyao shuju (Major Figures of the Fourth National Population Census)*, Beijing 1991.
- d) Kirkby, Richard, 'Dilemmas of Urbanization: Review and Prospects', in: Denis Dwyer (ed.), *China: The Next Decades*, Harlow 1994, p.131

- e) *Gongan bu, chengzhen renkou ziliao shouce, 1985* (Ministry of Public Security 1985), Beijing, p.1, lists 6211 towns, however 612 towns administered by cities and 497 towns administered by counties not included because of lack of data.
- f) *Xiao chengzhen fazhan shouce* (Manual on Development of Small Towns), Beijing n.d., p.42.
- g) *Gongan bu, fen xian shi renkou tongji ziliao 1988, 1991, 1992* (Ministry of Public Security(ed.), Stat. Pop.-Mat. According to Counties and Cities 1988, 1991, 1992), Beijing.
- h) *Zhongguo chengshi jianshe guanli gailun* (Manual for Urban Construction and Administration in China), Beijing 1987, p.888
- i) Diao Tian-ding a.o.: *Difang xingzheng guanli gailun* (Overview over Local Administration), Beijing 1989, p.344.
- k) Chan, Kam Wing, *Cities With Invisible Walls: Reinterpreting Urbanization in Post-1949 China*, Hongkong, Oxford, New York 1994, p.27.
- l) Kojima, Reetsu, *Urbanization and Urban Problems in China*, Tokyo 1987, p.9.
- m) Hu Zhaoliang, *Prosperity, Policy Reform and Town Development in China*, paper presented to the Beijing Workshop 'China: Town Development Program', Nov.13-17, 1995, p.5.

#### Sources for data on town population:

- Rows 8-11, 1964-1977: *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian 1990* (China Population Statistics Yearbook 1990), Tab.7-8.  
Rows 8-11, 1978-1989: Kirkby, op.cit., Tab.8.2
- Rows 2, 8-11, 1990: *Di si ci quanguo renkou pucha zhuyao shuju 1991* (Major Figures of The Fourth Population Census 1991), Tab.13-15.
- Rows 10-11, 1991-1994: *Gonganbu, renkou tongji ziliao 1991, 1994* (Ministry of Public Security, Stat. Mat. 1991,1994).
- Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian 1994* (China Population Statistics Yearbook 1994), Tab.4-6 and 4-7.

To exclude administrative influences, a cohort of 5,439 towns was set up that existed in 1984 as well as in 1992 (see table 3).<sup>10</sup> The total population of this town cohort grew by 61.8% (1984: 119.64 million; 1992: 193.62 million); the non-agrarian inhabitants increased by 44.3% (1984:44.23 million; 1992: 63.80 million). Analysing the growth of towns according to size classes, we come to the following results:

Especially small towns with less than 5,000 inhabitants and - to a lesser extent - 5,000 to 15,000 inhabitants show an extremely high increase of their population (see fig. 1). Reasons seem to be administrative changes. Until 1984 *zhen*- and *xiang*-governments existed side by side. The *zhen*-government was responsible for the *zhen* proper, while the township governments were in charge of the villages within the surrounding administrative area. After 1984 *xiang*- and *zhen*-governments were frequently merged. Thus the farm inhabitants of the surrounding villages came under the administration of the *zhen*-government. Statistically, this unification led to a considerable increase in agricultural population, though in fact nearly nothing had changed. For bigger *zhen* - as a rule over 20,000 inhabitants - this process came to an end already in 1984 or such a division in two administrative units had never taken place.

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<sup>10</sup> From a total of 6,211, for which exist data from 1984. The data for 1992 were taken from unpublished material provided by the Ministry of Public Security.



Table 3: **Town-Population in 1984 and 1992 According to Size-Classes in 1984 (Cohort 1984)**

Size-Classes	No. of <i>Zhen</i>	TP 1984	TP 1992	Growth 84/92 (%)	NAP 84	NAP 92	Growth 84/92 (%)
<5000	483	1562394	13011348	732.78	993026	1711949	72.40
5000-10000	826	6183847	19957191	222.73	2771960	4195568	51.36
10000-15000	866	10919244	21478093	96.70	3953031	5838139	47.69
15000-20000	746	13036463	21552876	65.33	4397001	6361919	44.69
20000-25000	711	15899828	23746278	49.35	4976465	7317363	47.04
25000-30000	534	14605258	20950344	43.44	4890319	7307272	49.42
30000-35000	352	11395986	15665337	37.46	3896167	5950234	52.72
35000-40000	266	9902730	12775013	29.00	3566118	5086443	42.63
40000-45000	194	8214546	10484295	27.63	3169498	4433958	39.89
45000-50000	119	5627047	7115988	26.46	2348278	3220803	37.16
50000-60000	157	8523348	10973989	28.75	3688693	5203890	41.08
60000-70000	89	5751853	6988934	21.51	2245386	3013220	34.20
70000-80000	58	4327161	4656012	7.60	1574163	1930071	22.61
80000-90000	18	1528182	1843778	20.65	725072	970493	33.85
90000-100000	11	1046861	1333346	27.37	370081	556790	50.45
>100000	10	1113270	1082637	-2.73	668125	706762	5.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>5439</b>	<b>119638018</b>	<b>193615459</b>	<b>61.83</b>	<b>44233383</b>	<b>63804874</b>	<b>44.25</b>

TP: Total population; NAP: Non-agricultural population

Source: Gonggan bu (Ministry of Public Security), unpublished material.; own calculation

We can conclude that those towns with unchanged administrative conditions grew between 1984 and 1992 by about 30% (see table 3). The population growth caused by natural increase and net migration must have been about 36 million for the cohort or, according to projection, about 44 million people for all county-administered towns in 1984. Only one information for 1992 could be found, referring to the share of natural increase and net migration in the total population growth. It gave the relation between these two components as 69 to 31.<sup>11</sup> Taking constant conditions for the whole period between 1984 and 1992, permanent in-migration added up to 14 million and natural increase to about 30 million people.

According to this estimation, between 1984 and 1992, the relative importance of factors contributing to population growth of county-led *zhen* could be the following:<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> According to unpublished data by the Ministry of Public Security the population growth due to natural population increase and net migration in 1992 was 4.11 million, of which 31 % where due to net migration.

<sup>12</sup> The population figure in 1984 was 134.47 million living in 6,211 towns. As there were no figures for 497 towns, the number of inhabitants was proportionally projected to the total of 6,708 towns. The result, an estimated figure of 145 million inhabitants, was used as a base for calculation.

Table 4: Contributing Factors to Population Growth in Small Towns

Reasons of Population Growth	N (in Mio.)	%
Net migration	14	7
Natural increase	30	16
Administrative extension of existing towns	49	26
Newly designated towns	98	51
<b>Total increase</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: own calculation

With a certain probability we can assume that the increase in *zhen* population during the last 8 years was mainly brought about by administrative measures (77%), whereas permanent in-migration only played a minor role and was just responsible for 7% of the total population increase.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the share of migration in the total growth varies considerably from province to province. For instance, the data for 1992 show that the coastal provinces usually have a higher percentage of migrants in the total population increase than interior provinces. Even migration losses could be observed in Guizhou, Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning. A considerable number of labourers is leaving Guizhou, China's poorest province, searching for jobs outside the province. In the Northeastern provinces many towns are characterised by out-migration. Numerous migrants who in-migrated twenty or thirty years ago, now return to their original home places.

#### 4 Migration and Migrants - Selected Case Studies

In the following, some results of our field studies in seven towns will be presented. The survey took place in 1993 and 1994.<sup>14</sup> If only the effect of permanent net-migration (i.e. migration connected with transfer or change of household registration or *hukou*) are considered, in-migration is of limited importance compared with the effect of natural population increase. Only Dongting *zhen* in the county of Wuxi (now city of Xishan), which during the last years rapidly increased in population and which was selected as the future seat of the county (now city) government, showed a considerable net-migration. There it made up 53% of the total population increase (see figure 2).<sup>15</sup> Only in this case we have found a marked correlation between net migration and the pace of economic development. In the other towns surveyed, the birth surplus was mainly responsible for population increase. For instance, in Jinji, Ningxia Province, between 1980 and 1992 the share of natural increase came up to almost 84% of total population

<sup>13</sup> In 1992 there were only 0.4% of the entire registered population of county-administered towns without a permanent household registration (*hukou*). Unpublished data by the Ministry of Public Security.

<sup>14</sup> The research project 'Rural Urbanization in China', carried out by Thomas Heberer and me, was funded by the Volkswagen-Foundation. We have to thank very much for the generous financial support. The selected towns were Jinji/City of Wuzhong (Ningxia), Dongting/County of Wuxi (Jiangsu), Zongshizhuang/ City of Jinzhou (Hebei), Yuquan/City of Acheng (Heilongjiang), Xiangyang/City of Guanghan (Sichuan), Pingluo/ City of Qionglai (Sichuan), Xinzhou/ County of Zunyi (Guizhou).

<sup>15</sup> In 1978 Dongting had 32,900 inhabitants, in 1992 39,700.

growth, in Zongshizhuang, Hebei Province, to 86% (between 1985 and 1992) and in Xinzhou (between 1970 and 1993) to even 92% (see figure 3).<sup>16</sup>

We assumed that the different level of economic development also had a considerable influence upon the migrants' attitude towards migration. Therefore, we tried to collect information on migration for each town for three different years in order to analyse age, occupation and distance of migration flows. Because of different reasons the original hypothesis could not be confirmed. In the case of three towns for which such data were available (Zongshizhuang, Dongting, Jinji), there were no significant changes among the different years (1976 to 1982, 1985 and 1992). For the four other towns the data from former years were incomplete. Finally, we decided to analyse the migration data as a whole.<sup>17</sup> In the years under examination, net positive migration for all the seven towns was minimal.

Regarding the age structure of in- and out-migrants, first of all it was significant that the out-migrants in the youngest age group (20 years and younger) made up one third of all out-migrants. In-migrants were also mostly young, though they did not belong to the lowest age group to such an extent. Sex-differences were not significant, even though there were slightly more female than male migrants (in-migrants 54.1% female, out-migrants 55.1% female).

Table 5: Age Composition of Migrants

Age Structure	In-Migrants	Out-Migrants
20 and below	18.1	33.2
21 to 25	20.2	20.6
26 to 30	13.8	14.8
31 to 35	12.5	9.2
36 to 40	8.9	7.2
41 to 45	6.2	4.5
46 and above	20.3	10.5
<b>Total 100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>N=</b>	<b>3030</b>	<b>3003</b>
<i>Missing cases</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>202</i>

Source: Fieldwork 1993 and 1994 (files of the resp. police stations)

The different age structure of in- and out-migrants can partly be explained by occupation, educational level and reasons for migration.

Among in-migrants peasants dominate (47%), followed by students (13.1%) and workers (13.0%). Among out-migrants peasants also dominate (36%), however, students make up a relatively high share (27%), followed by workers (13.1%). Almost half of the in-migrants (50.2%) decided for the town proper (*zhenqu*), the rest moved to

<sup>16</sup> The population of Jinji increased from 18,400 (1980) to 21,830 (1992); of Zongshizhuang from 25,200 (1985) to 30,450 (1992), of Xinzhou from 41,800 (1970) to 64,770 (1993). All data were given by the local police stations.

<sup>17</sup> The local police stations were willing (sometimes after longer discussions) to let us use their internal files. In some cases former files were not kept or were incomplete. We have to thank Mr. Fan Gongzen for his careful analysis of the migration data.

the surrounding villages within the administrative area of the *zhen* (49.8%). It is quite natural that peasant in-migrants preferred villages as migration destination (87%), whereas workers (77%), employees (83%) and persons with other non-farm jobs (74%) decided for the *zhen* proper as their new home.

Migration is also determined by the educational level: The percentage of senior high school graduates was much higher among the out-migrants (20.3%) than among the in-migrants (13.5%). 6.5% of the in-migrants were graduates from special secondary schools and 7.6% from universities, while among the out-migrations these shares were only 1.7 and 0.8% respectively. This structure indicates that the officially registered in- and out-migration into or out of towns keeps to tradition. Young people leave the *zhen* for taking up their studies in cities. Older technicians and cadres with a relatively high qualification move into *zhen* and take up leading positions mainly in rural enterprises. Considering migration on the whole, peasants and workers represent the dominant group.

The files of the local police stations give detailed information of the reasons for migration.<sup>18</sup> The five most important categories (out of a total of 24 concerning in-migration and of 22 concerning out-migration) are listed in table 6. Main reasons for in-migration are marriage, work allocation or job transfer. Out-migration is more or less determined by the same reasons, though on the whole there is a somewhat greater variety of reasons compared to in-migration into a *zhen*.

**Table 6: Migration Reasons**

In-Migrants		Out-Migrants	
1) Marriage	24.3%	1) Transfer of job, work allocation	17.8%
2) Transfer of job, work allocation	23.2%	2) Attending university	16.5%
3) Family reunion	11.8%	3) Marriage	16.1%
4) Preferential treatment*	11.3%	4) Family reunion	12.5%
5) Staying with relatives, friends	5.4%	5) Staying with relatives, friends	9.7%

\*) *Hukou* transfers due to political reasons

Source: Fieldwork 1993 and 1994 (files of the resp. police stations)

If we take a closer look at in-migrants into towns, there are clear motivational distinctions according to occupation, age or sex as well as to the purpose of in-migration. Considering all migration reasons, in-migration of men is mostly determined by job opportunities (45%); women are mainly guided by social reasons (65%), marriage with 40% being the foremost stimulus. Women between 21 and 25 years of age primarily in-migrate in order to get married (58%). Villages within a town's administrative area are preferred mainly because of social reasons, the *zhen* proper because of job opportunities. That is to say that peasants, specially females, primarily migrate due to social reasons (61% of the in-migrants and 53% of the out-migrants due to marriage ), while workers and cadres first of all migrate because of jobs (71% and 73% resp.). The reasons for migration in our samples are similar to those found in the Census data of

<sup>18</sup> Information concerning occupation has to be taken cum grano salis, as there were only data for 72% of the in-migrants and 58% of the out-migrants.

1990 (see figure 4). However, only migration cases involving a transfer of household registration can be compared.

There is a certain correlation between occupation, age and sex on the one hand and distance of migration on the other. If we first regard in- and out-migration together, we come to the following result: Migration in connection with a transfer of *hukou* primarily takes place inside the county. More out-migrants than in-migrants move to other counties within the province. However, on the whole there is no great difference. Mainly older in-migrants (46 years and older) came to a higher percentage from other counties (34.7%) within the province or from other provinces (21.8%). Probably, they are technicians and cadres who move into *zhen* in order to obtain leading positions in rural enterprises. On the other hand, young age groups (20 years and younger) prefer to migrate inside their own county (72.3%). The same tendency can be observed in regard to out-migrants. Only persons with work allocations, school or college enrolment, work assignments for parental positions or recruitment into the army migrate to more distant places..

Table 7: **Origin/Destination of In- and Out-migrants (%)**

Origin/Destination	Same County	Another County within Province	Outside Province	Total Percentage	Total Number
In-Migrants	56.6	28.6	14.8	100.0	3030
Out-Migrants	53.1	32.1	14.8	100.0	3003

Source: Fieldwork 1993 and 1994 (files of the resp. police stations)

## 5 Migrants with Provisional Registration

The migration data analysed so far do not include the so-called provisional residents in counties or towns, since they are specially recorded by the local police. They have to be registered within 3 days, and if they intend to stay more than 3 months in one place and if they are older than 16 years, they have to apply to the local station of public security for a certificate of provisional registration (*zanzhu zheng*).<sup>19</sup> Especially in places with a high pressure of in-migration (as e.g. in South Jiangsu), rural factories and construction firms are very reluctant in getting their migrant workers registered. Unregistered workers can easily be sacked, and frequently they work and live under shocking conditions. There is an obvious correlation between the percentage of permanent in-migrants and the number of 'provisional' inhabitants. With the exception of Dongting and Yuquan, provisionally registered inhabitants played a less important, if not marginal role. Their share was only about 0.5 to 1.5% of the total population (Jinji, Zongshizhuang, Xinzhou, Pingluo).

We will take Dongting as an example to demonstrate the origin and structure of the 'provisional' population, as the number of the provisional inhabitants in this booming

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Public Security, Interim Regulation for the Administration of Urban Temporary Residents, July 13, 1985.

place has more than doubled within two years (1991 about 3,800; 1993 about 8,900).<sup>20</sup> In June 1993, the whole county of Wuxi (now city of Xishan), which belongs to the economically leading counties of China, had 103,300 inhabitants with a provisional *hukou* (*zanzhu hukou* or *linshi hukou*), making up about 9.5% of the registered permanent population. The percentage in Dongting (22%) was more than double the county's average.

The migration pattern and the living conditions of migrants with provisional registration are very different from the situation of permanent in-migrants. For example, in 1992 75.6% of the in-migrants in Dongting with a transfer of *hukou* came from inside the county of Wuxi whereas almost all provisional in-migrants originated from places outside the county. 47% came from other counties in Jiangsu, especially from North-Jiangsu (*Subei*), and 53% came even from outside the province.<sup>21</sup> The occupational structure of provisional in-migrants in Dongting was similar to that in all other surveyed towns.

Table 8: Occupation of Provisional Residents in Dongting *Zhen* and in Wuxi County June 1993 (%)

Occupation	Wuxi County	Dongting
Workers in rural enterprises	63.3	52.9
Construction workers	26.0	36.3
Collecting garbage	1.3	5.2
Transportation	1.5	1.9
Agriculture, sideline	3.3	0.1
Others	4.6	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>Total number</i>	<i>103,322</i>	<i>8,797</i>

Source: Public Security Bureau Dongting, 9/1993; Public Security Bureau Wuxi, 8/1993

Almost 90% of the provisional inhabitants in Dongting work in rural enterprises or on construction sites. In some textile enterprises up to 50% of the workers stem from other places. Beside migrant factory hands, construction workers or building artisans, peddlers or traders, in-migrated peasants play an important role, too. In the county, agriculture is mainly run by in-migrated peasants: 49% of the employees and tenants of so-called village-farms, who cultivate a great part of the so-called responsibility land, originate from other regions.<sup>22</sup> Looking at the occupational structure, it is not astonishing that the majority of the provisional residents is living either in dormitories belonging to the local factories (43.5%) or in huts (37.6%) on the construction sites. Not even one fifth has rented a room, a flat or a house from local people. These provisional and partly very poor dwellings of provisional residents and their occupational situation are quite common in many other towns.

In the towns of Zunyi county in Guizhou, China's poorest province, 53% of the provisional inhabitants were workers, though the percentage of traders and self-

<sup>20</sup> Public Security, Dongting; interview Sept. 4, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> See footnote 20.

<sup>22</sup> See *Wuxi Xinbao*, Sept. 6, 1993.

employed artisans (22%) was higher than in Dongting.<sup>23</sup> As there is less pressure on the housing market than in the booming regions of the East, more provisional migrants find flats outside dormitories and huts on construction sites. In the towns of Zunyi county, one fourth of this migrant group lived in dormitories of local factories and 22% in huts on building sites. However, one third resided in rented houses or in houses of their own.

## 6 In-Migrated and Local Employees in Rural Collective Enterprises - A Comparison

The results presented above have been based on internal files of local offices of public security or on numerous interviews with local officials. In contrast the following data on migrants are the result of interviews with 2,203 employees in 38 enterprises in the above-mentioned 7 towns. 1,707 of the respondents were local people, 288 had in-migrated without a *hukou* transfer, 205 had obtained such an official change of household registration. The following analysis is based on a comparison between the three groups: The comparison of the age structure already shows that in-migrated employees with and without transfer of *hukou* differ from each other. The group of migrant workers without *hukou* transfer (henceforth migrant workers) is much younger than that of the in-migrants with a *hukou* transfer (henceforth in-migrants).

Table 9: Age Structure of Employees in Rural Enterprises 1993/1994

Age Structure in %	Migration with <i>Hukou</i> Transfer	Migration without <i>Hukou</i> Transfer	Local Workers and Staff
20 and younger	14.1	32.6	25.9
21 to 25	27.8	39.3	22.7
26 to 30	19.5	11.6	19.8
31 to 35	11.7	6.7	10.5
36 to 40	11.7	3.2	9.0
41 to 45	9.3	1.8	6.3
46 and older	5.9	4.9	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>N</i>	205	285	1704
<i>Missing cases</i>	0	6	4

Source: Interviews in 1993 and 1994

The first group has a lower educational level than the other two. Among migrant workers, the highest percentage of employees with the lowest level of school education can be found. On the other hand, the percentage of graduates from colleges and universities among in-migrants is conspicuously higher than among of the other two groups. There are obviously two very different groups of migrants among the employees in rural enterprises. One of them are in-migrated cadres and technicians who are of great importance for establishing rural factories, the other are young and unqualified employees migrating into towns to find a job. While the first group more often comes from the closer surroundings (52% from the county town or other townships within the county, only 16.5% from other provinces), the latter originates to a high percentage from other provinces (38%).

<sup>23</sup> Information by Zunyi County Government, Sept. 28, 1994.

**Tab. 10: Educational Level of Employees in Rural Enterprises 1993/1994**

<b>Educational Level in %</b>	<b>Migrants with <i>Hukou</i> Transfer</b>	<b>Migrants without <i>Hukou</i> Transfer</b>	<b>Local Workers and Staff</b>
Illiterate, semi-illiterate, primary school	14.1	20.8	14.8
Junior High school	53.7	60.6	63.7
Senior high school, senior techn. school	25.9	16.3	21.0
College, university	6.3	2.4	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>Total number</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>1701</i>
<i>Missing cases</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>

Source: Interviews in 1993 and 1994

This result can be further differentiated: More in-migrants have a non-agricultural *hukou* (47.5%) in comparison to migrant workers (23%) and local employees (17%). Furthermore, the in-migrants have been staying for a relatively long time in their present place of living: 66% of them already for 3 years or even longer. In contrast 76% of the migrant workers have been living less than two years in the surveyed towns. Also, the housing situation of migrant workers is very different from the dwelling conditions of the other two groups. 80.3% (versus 7% of the local inhabitants) stay in a dormitory belonging to an enterprise, whereas 28% of the in-migrants live in flats belonging to the enterprise (not in dormitories).

As shown in the following table, the different job position of the three groups can also be clearly seen in the occupational structure: while the percentage of labourers among in-migrated employees is lower than among the two other groups, the percentage of technicians or administrative staff members among them is higher. In contrast four fifths of the migrant workers are labourers, while locals have a position somewhere in between migrants with and without hukou transfer. In other words, the group of in-migrated employees shows a clearly marked dual structure: Those with a *hukou* transfer stand for the transfer of qualified employees, partly from cities; the migrant workers without a *hukou*-transfer are the industrial 'reserve army', having come into towns to search for a job.

**Table 11: Occupational Structure of Employees in Rural Enterprises 1993/1994**

<b>Occupation in %</b>	<b>Migrants with <i>Hukou</i> Transfer</b>	<b>Migrants without <i>Hukou</i> Transfer</b>	<b>Local Workers and Staff</b>
Workers (mostly unskilled)	58.0	79.6	67.4
Technicians	11.7	5.9	8.1
Administration	18.5	7.2	12.2
Supply and marketing	3.4	1.4	2.7
Others	8.4	5.9	9.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>N</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>1688</i>
<i>Missing cases</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>52</i>

Source: Interviews in 1993 and 1994



Table 12: Job Placement of Employees 1993/1994

Placement of Jobs in %	Migrants with <i>Hukou</i> Transfer	Migrants without <i>Hukou</i> Transfer	Local Workers and Staff
Job change (without further information)	10.0	4.2	5.1
Placement by departments	15.0	8.8	4.5
Own job application	41.5	27.7	47.2
Recommendation by friends/relatives	29.0	57.2	41.1
Other	4.0	0.7	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>N</i>	200	285	1666
<i>Missing cases</i>	5	6	41

Source: Interviews in 1993 and 1994

Though most employees of both groups applied for a job themselves or were recommended by relatives or friends, job allocation by labour bureaus was of greater importance for in-migrated workers. On the other hand, between 80 and 90% of the locals and migrant workers applied for their job themselves or got it with the help of relatives and friends. In particular, this can be seen among migrant workers, 57% of whom got employment with the help of family connections or friends. This indicates that primarily among migrant workers the social net is of great importance. In places of destination, many migrant workers come from the same township or even the same village. As soon as a small group of in-migrants has settled down, other family members or friends follow. No doubt, the kinship net is of vital importance for migrant workers.

There are further differences between in-migrants, migrant workers and locals as far as employment conditions and social security benefits of enterprises are concerned. About 44% of the migrant workers are temporary workers, a percentage much higher than in the other two groups. As the analysis has shown so far, it is not astonishing that permanent workers and staff represent the biggest group among in-migrants with a *hukou*-transfer.

Table 13: Categories of Employees 1993/1994

Employment Status	Migrants with <i>Hukou</i> Transfer	Migrants without <i>Hukou</i> Transfer	Local Workers and Staff
Permanent workers/staff	43.1	18.9	37.4
Temporary workers	25.2	43.9	26.4
Contract workers	29.2	35.8	31.2
Other	2.5	1.4	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>N</i>	202	285	1637
<i>Missing cases</i>	3	6	70

Source: Interviews in 1993 and 1994

In contrast to other differences, there is no marked discrepancy with regard to social security benefits provided by rural enterprises. In-migrants can be divided into two

groups: More than one third does not get any social benefits, however almost one fourth (obviously technicians and administrative employees) gets three or even more subsidies. More than one fifth of the migrant workers without transfer of *hukou* can stay free in enterprise dormitories. For all three groups a pension scheme, paid by the rural enterprise, is still an exception.

Overall, it can be noted that migrant workers are considerably younger than the two other groups, that their educational level is lower, and that they mostly work as unskilled labourers under conditions of temporary employment. For them the informal net of relationships based on the kinship system is of particular importance to getting a job.

Table 14: Social Security Benefits Offered by Rural Enterprises

Social Security Benefits	Migrants with <i>Hukou</i> Transfer	Migrants without <i>Hukou</i> Transfer	Local Workers and Staff
None	37.2	28.3	30.3
Free housing	4.0	21.0	2.6
Free medical care	8.0	12.7	15.9
Pension scheme	1.5	0.7	2.2
Family planning support	4.0	0.0	0.9
Health/washing subsidy	8.5	2.9	11.1
Other subsidies	2.0	2.9	3.3
Two kinds of benefit	11.6	18.5	17.3
Three and more kinds of social benefits	23.2	13.0	16.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>N</i>	199	276	1637
<i>Missing cases</i>	6	15	70

Source: Interviews in 1993 and 1994

## 7 Migration Policy, Household Registration and the Attitude of Town Governments

In-migration into towns, especially permanent in-migration, can to some extent be directed by the town governments, mostly in line with general politics. As a rule there are three measures:

- Firstly, in-migrants are offered to settle down and to transfer their household registration in case they are able to buy a plot of land or property.
- Secondly, they can change an agricultural (*nongye hukou*) to a non-agricultural (*fei nongye*) one. This change can be realised in connection with in-migration or it can be granted to certain resident inhabitants. As a matter of fact, *zhen* governments do not have much influence on such decisions.

- Thirdly, in the middle of the 80s the central government granted so-called self-providers of grain a permission of residence in towns (*zili kouliang hukou*). This type of *hukou* was differently dealt with by *zhen* governments during the last few years.

In some cases different instruments were used at the same time. In some towns surveyed, local governments pushed forward a very active recruitment policy to gain migrants wealthy enough to buy a home for themselves. Real-estate buyers were allowed to purchase a non-agrarian *hukou* or to transfer their rural *hukou* to their new home. For instance, in 1992 the town of Xiangyang/Guanghan (Sichuan) increased the number of non-agricultural inhabitants from almost 300 to over 1,400 by selling a non-agricultural *hukou* at a price from 2,500 to 5,000 RMB per person to about 1,170 peasants who came mostly from outside.<sup>24</sup> At the same time it demanded that immigrants had to document a permanent residence by buying a house.<sup>25</sup> This policy was permitted by the provincial government due to a specific program of *hukou* change. In case the local development corporation built the home, peasants from outside had to pay at least 250 RMB per m<sup>2</sup> of floor space and about 80 to 90 RMB per m<sup>2</sup> of land. It was also permitted that several families could cooperate to construct terrace-houses according to certain planning regulations. Thus, a peasant family of four persons could easily spend about 70,000 RMB for obtaining a *hukou* and a flat of 100 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space including 300 m<sup>2</sup> of land.

In such cases, the local development corporation acted as the unit responsible for the peasants willing to move into the town and applied for their urban household registration. According to a 10% sample survey drawn from the application documents in Xiangyang, all applicants came from outside: 19% from other townships of the city of Guanghan, 78% from other counties in Sichuan Province, 3% from other provinces. Not including family members, the applicants were all peasants. 80% of them had found a job in Xiangyang and 20% had started their own business.

In Dongting, Jinji and Xinzhou the development policy was similar to that described for Xiangyang. However, here the emphasis was on a transfer of local enterprises or incentives for peasants from surrounding villages, rather than on a sale of *hukou* and the purchase of real estate. Peasants buying a house in the town proper were allowed to transfer their rural *hukou* to their new home place.

The change of agricultural to non-agricultural household registration (*hukou*) is not a matter of independent decision made by the *zhen*-government but rather has to be permitted by superior offices. At the local level there is very limited room to manoeuvre. As a rule, a *hukou*-change needs the approval of the responsible office at the provincial or at least the prefectural government level. A county government has no right to allow a

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<sup>24</sup> For this *hukou* change 1992 peasants of surrounding villages inside the administrative area of Xiangyang had to pay 2,500 RMB, from outside 5,000 RMB, managers of rural collective enterprises had only to pay 2,000 RMB. The sale of a non-agricultural *hukou* had been permitted by the superior city of Guanghan in line with 2,000 granted changes of *hukou*. This permit was based on a document issued by the provincial government, making thus an exception possible for so-called experimental counties.

<sup>25</sup> Office of Public Security, Xiangyang, discussion on Sept. 6, 1994. The superior city of Guanghan in an official document of July 20, 1994, even advertised Xiangyang by pointing out the town's good infrastructure and by stressing that peasants, when fulfilling the conditions, 'can receive the same treatment as urban residents regarding medical care, education and services'. Peasants were even allowed to transfer the acquired *hukou* to other towns/townships.

*hukou*-change.<sup>26</sup> It is official policy to handle a change of *hukou* very selectively. As a rule, such changes are possible with regard to skilled workers, technicians and their family members, whereas unqualified migrant workers and floating population should be excluded from a *hukou*-transfer. At best, they can receive a provisional resident card.<sup>27</sup> Our survey shows, that usually this policy is enforced at the town level

The total annual quota of *hukou*-transfer for persons changing from agricultural to non-agricultural status is set by the State Planning Commission and the Ministry of Public Security. It is distributed among the provinces which again pass it on to subordinate administrative units. For instance, in 1992 the province of Jiangsu set the quota at 100,000 (0.14% of the population).<sup>28</sup> Frequently, however, the quotas are obviously surpassed without leading to sanctions. In Dongting for instance, 718 *hukou*-transfers were permitted in 1992. This had only marginal influence on the population development, as 600 peasants, whose fields were occupied by state enterprises or other institutions, received a non-agrarian *hukou*. 178 *hukou*-transfers were granted to students who mostly left home to attend colleges or universities in cities.

In Hebei, the quota of *hukou*-transfers in 1992 amounted to 180,000 persons or 0.29% of the total population. The town of Zongshizhuang, where we did field work, had only 76 *hukou*-transfers in 1992, often in connection with the in-migration of technicians, who took up jobs in rural enterprises. In spite of the limited number of *hukou*-transfers it can be observed in townships and towns that at certain times higher numbers of agricultural *hukous* are changed to non-agricultural ones, when peasant land is turned into non-agricultural use and the peasants receive some kind of compensation by their change of *hukou*-status. This observation could be confirmed in all surveyed towns.

In the province of Ningxia the quota is similar to that in the other two provinces. It is about 0.2% per year, though since 1986 it is considerably going down (1986: 71,800 *hukou*-transfers, 1992: 13,200). In either counties or cities and towns the development is more or less parallel. The town of Jinji, for instance, saw a peak of 605 *hukou*-transfers in 1986, while in 1992 there were only 110 such cases. During the period 1980 to 1992, an annual average of 272 *hukou*-transfers were granted. Table 15 shows the reasons for *hukou*-changes during that period. As could be expected, the greatest number of *hukou*-transfers was permitted for qualified workers and their family members. In many cases the necessary qualifications and conditions for such transfers are further specified by internal documents.

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<sup>26</sup> Compare: *Guowuyuan: Guanyu yange kongzhi guode zengzhang nong zhuan fei renkou de tongzhi Oct.31, 1989* (State Council: Circular for the Strict Control of Excessive Increase in the Transformation of Agricultural Population to Non-Agricultural Population. Oct. 31, 1989). In the appendix is quoted a planning quota for all China for the year 1989 of 3.5 million, for 1990 of 2.3 million people.

<sup>27</sup> Information by the Ministry of Public Security, Beijing, July 21, 1993.

<sup>28</sup> The following data are based on information we received by the appropriate authorities during our field work in 1993 and 1994.

Table 15: **Reasons for the Change of Agricultural to Non-Agricultural *Hukou* in Jinji Town, Ningxia, 1980-1992**

Hiring of cadres, technicians and workers	11.4
Family members of cadres and technicians	8.7
Family members of workers	41.4
Family members of soldiers	24.4
Changes in politics	11.5
Discharged soldiers	2.0
Released criminals	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Public Security Station Jinji, 1993

Jinji and the other townships and towns under the city of Wuzhong after examples for such special policies: Teachers in rural areas can get a non-agricultural *hukou* in case they have been at least once honoured for their work by the city or province government and have worked for 15 years. Workers or staff can be entitled a non-agricultural *hukou*, if they have been decorated as model-workers by provincial or central offices. In that case, their spouses and children can also receive an urban *hukou*. Engineers and managers of rural collective enterprises can apply for an urban *hukou* in case the enterprises have fixed assets of 400,000 RMB and paid annual taxes of at least 30,000 RMB during the last three years.<sup>29</sup> Individual enterprises (*getihu*) and larger private companies (*siying qiye*), with a fixed capital of 300,000 RMB and at least three years of tax payments exceeding 30,000 RMB, can apply for three *hukou* transfers. Should their fixed capital and their tax-payments exceed 500,000 RMB and 50,000 RMB respectively, a non-agricultural *hukou* can be granted to five persons.

Though it is claimed officially that in such cases no fees have to be paid, internal documents show that in fact often considerable sums are charged. For instance, employees in rural collective enterprises pay 3,000 RMB for a *hukou* transfer and so do individual and private businessmen. Obviously in many towns and cities the sale of non-agricultural household registrations has become a more or less illegal source of income. Newspapers complain about the fact that many persons bought a *hukou* who did not meet the official criteria at all.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that only in exceptional cases the change of an agricultural into a non-agricultural *hukou* accelerates the population increase of towns. Mostly, a non-agricultural *hukou* is granted as a compensation or a stimulus to inhabitants already staying in the place.

In 1984 a special type of *hukou* was introduced to facilitate permanent in-migration into towns for peasants who had already found permanent employment there.<sup>31</sup> As a rule, peasants who could take care of their own grain needs and housing were allowed to reside in the towns of their county and were entitled a 'hukou for self-providers of grain' (*zili kouliang hukou*). Though they were counted as rural inhabitants, they could more or less permanently settle in towns. In the statistics of the Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of Public Security, this specific group of 4.6 million persons was mentioned for

<sup>29</sup> In the document no. 21 of 1993, issued by the city of Wuzhong, further cases are described in detail.

<sup>30</sup> See e. g. *Zunyi Wanbao*, Oct. 7, 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Document 141, issued by the State Council in 1984.

the first time in 1988. Since then the number has not much changed; in 1993 it included 4.7 million people.<sup>32</sup>

Our studies, however, show that in fact this category of in-migrants plays a subordinate or even marginal role, since grain can be bought on free markets without any restrictions. Therefore, this *hukou* category was more or less unknown to many local authorities. A considerable number of local governments simply call all agricultural inhabitants with provisional registration status 'self-providers of grain'. Consequently, the number of *zili kouliang hu* for China cited above is rather dubious.

Within the administrative area of the city of Harbin, Heilongjiang province, there are only two counties in which this kind of *hukou* still is of any importance. One of these counties, in this special case a county-level city, is Acheng which administers Yuquan town, where we did field work. In Acheng the percentage of inhabitants with *zili kouliang hukou* in 1993 was only 0.3%. In Yuquan itself only 449 persons had this kind of *hukou* (1.2% of the inhabitants). *Zili kouliang hukou* here is considered as some kind of relict from the mid-eighties, having nowadays lost its importance. It should be mentioned that in some towns administered by Acheng city, a special form of *hukou* was introduced in 1994 for those peasants who had already been staying in town for a long period, but who had been disadvantaged due to their agricultural *hukou* as far as jobs, kindergarten or school opportunities for their children were concerned. These peasants were put on a par with urban inhabitants by 'household registration for peasants in urban business' (*nongmin jincheng jingshang hukou*).

In the other towns under investigation the situation of household registration in 1993/94 was largely similar: In the county of Zunyi, Guizhou province, the *hukou* for self-providers of grain could be bought since 1984/85. Today it is of no relevance in the towns of the county and is held by 0.1% of the inhabitants only. In the town of Xinzhou, one of our research places, this type of *hukou* was unknown. In the city of Guanghan, Sichuan province, only 0.3% of the residents had a *hukou* of that type. In the *zhen* of Xiangyang in 1984 the *hukou* for self-providers of grain could still be bought for 2,000 RMB, though today it is without significance. During 1992, in the whole province of Ningxia there were only 512 households with *hukou* for self-providers of grain among 4.8 mio inhabitants. In Jiangsu province only 0.2% of all inhabitants possessed such a *hukou*, compared to 0.4% at the time of its introduction. In the county of Wuxi (now city of Xishan) the respective figures were 0.3% or 3,178 persons. In Hebei province this type of *hukou* was of some importance at its time of introduction (1986: 130,680 *zili kouliang hu* or 0.2% of the inhabitants), but in 1992 just 30,100 cases were left. In the towns surveyed by us this *hukou* was of no relevance at all. The reasons why the *hukou* for self-providers of grain was so unpopular, was its very limited advantage compared to the big disadvantage, the requirement for the peasants to give up their cultivated land in turn. During our research work we did not come across one case, where this specific type of household registration had influenced in-migration into towns to any significant extent. In our opinion, the optimistic attitude of Chinese scientists towards population increase in rural towns facilitated by this form of *hukou* has to be revised.

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<sup>32</sup> According to unpublished material by the Ministry of Construction, 4.697 million in 1993.

## 8 Conclusion

Overall, the potential of towns to attract population from the closer or more distant hinterland seems to be limited. For the total number of Chinese towns under county administration, the contribution of in-migration to the total increase in population was less than 10%. In our case studies for the 80s and early 90s, it stood at 8% to 16%. The only exception was the economically far advanced town of Dongting. Facts were similar with regard to inhabitants with provisional registration: During 1992/93, their percentage in the permanent population of Pingluo and Xinzhou was below 1%, in Xiangyang, Yuquan and Jinji it amounted to between 2% and 5%. Only Dongting had 22% of inhabitants with provisional registration. Our interviews of about 2,200 employees led to the same results: With the exception of Dongting, the percentage of in-migrants among the employees in rural enterprises was rather low. On the average, the share of migrant workers was 13%, while that of in-migrated employees with a change of permanent *hukou* amounted to 9%.

Looking at the administrative resources of town governments described above, we see that at local level there is almost no chance to influence permanent migration decisively. Only in case a town has become part of a special program by the provincial or central government and has been granted extra conditions, proper effects can be observed. As a rule, however, a town is only included in a promotion program, if it has already reached the phase of an exceptionally prosperous development. But in that case it has become more attractive for peasant in-migration than the vast majority of rural towns anyway. In spite of the relatively small contribution of in-migrants to the total population increase, they play an important role in the economic development of the towns. As shown by the example of migrants with *hukou* transfer, the percentage of skilled workers among them is relatively high. They are thus an important factor in the development of rural industry. Migrant workers relieve shortages on the local labour market and are willing to take up jobs disliked by the local people.