

PERSONAL DATA

Age: 30

Sex: Female

Education: Middle school graduate

Total Years Relevant Experience: 8

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1978      Year Left China: 1979

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Yunnan native/overseas ties unknown

Class Background/Political Designation: unknown

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OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held: 1) Worker, Plate Glass Factory, Kunming, 1971-78

Administrative Level of Work Unit/(No. of employees):

1) Province (transferred from Ministry in 1970)/(2000)

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APPOINTMENTS: 1

TOTAL HOURS: 3.5

PAGES TEXT: 5

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Occupational History (3/7/80, 3.5 hrs.)

The informant worked in a large plate glass (pingban boli) factory in Kunming from 1971 to 1978. It had just over 2000 workers and staff. The plant had been built in 1958, and was under the Central Construction Materials Ministry until 1970, when it was transferred to Yunnan Province leadership, to the Construction Materials Bureau. She was a production worker for the entire period.

Before working in the factory, she had spent three years in a rural village in Yunnan. Later she was sent to the city by the employment (zhaogong) committee of the county, which selected a fixed number of intellectual youths to return to Kunming to work every year. Factories sent requests to these committees for labor. She was sent in this way to be a worker. The criteria for selection were: 1) work attitudes and performance, 2) class background (which was not that important, only considered if all other things were equal), 3) political performance, determined by the local security offices. This meant whether or not you had run across the border to make money in Burma (which was common), stolen things, or go across the border to buy opium, which was also very common.

Wages

When she first came to the plant, she was an apprentice for 3 years. During the first year she made 15¥ basic wage plus 2¥ supplement for health (soap, etc.), and another 2¥ supplement for grain. Each year there was a 2¥ raise in the basic wage but supplements stayed the same. There were no tests at each stage, although these were reinstituted very recently. It was basically an automatic process until after the 3rd year when you automatically became a grade 1 worker. Grade 1 wages were 35¥. Kunming was a grade 6 area. She was sent to grade 1 in 1973, before the end of the 3 years because she had been given special training and because they were trying to build up their staff quickly in the new shop she was to work in. This was a glass fibres shop, used in some textile processes, and also in making fibreglass (boli gang). This technically was not a construction material, but it was still under the construction materials system.

She had been sent to Yaohua Glass factory in Shanghai for 1 year of training during this apprenticeship period, and worked in the glass fibres (boli quanwei) shop. This was a shop which was similar to the one in her own plant. The basic production process was to take glass, heat it up, pull it out into fibres, heat treat it, and then weave it into glass cloth. So there are three basic processes in production from glass (fibre pulling, heat treating, and weaving), and a section corresponding to each one.

In 1974, she was raised to grade 2. This was a fixed regulation. After reaching grade 1 you must be promoted to grade 2 in one year. After reaching grade 2, there is no way to get any higher unless there is a state regulation calling for wage raises.

Since this was a new shop, there were not many old workers, so there was no fixed master-apprentice relationship.

Supplementary wages (fujia gongzi) were given only to those workers who had entered before 1967. They were not given to newer workers.

Bonuses

There was no bonus system until 1979. But before that they had quarterly appraisals for "outstanding models" (youxiu biao) for 5% of the workers. They appraised according to politics, study activism, and work activism. This was done quarterly and yearly as well. The winners would get small token

awards--water mugs, pots, noodle plates, notebooks, fountain pens, Mao's selected works. They also selected a small number of groups for designation as advanced units. These were selected at the shop level. Shops were also assessed for this designation. She left in October 1979, and at that time they still had not instituted bonuses. But she hears that they did that in her plant since she left.

#### Wage Readjustments

They had one in 1977, but she doesn't remember any in the early 70s. They also had one before 1966. The methods for deciding on who would get a raise in 1977: 1) If you had begun work before 1966 (including 1966), and were still a grade 2 worker, you would be raised to grade 3. 2) If you had entered the plant from 1967-71, you had a 2 out of 10 chance of being raised to level 3 if you were still grade 2 (they raised 20%). There were also readjustments for higher grades, but she doesn't remember that. The conditions for appraisals in the small group--work contribution, abilities, attitude. This was difficult. First there was 2 days of political study, then they discussed the raises because this was a difficult matter. People were very tense about the appraisals and many arguments broke out fairly easily at this time.

The process of nominations in the small groups took about one week. It took one hour to meet after work every day. There were some problems. Of course, those people who were unsuccessful were unhappy, and also there were some reversals of nominations by the upper levels that were unexplained. Politics was one of the three criteria in the selections.

#### Discipline and Motivation

Generally speaking, people were unsatisfied with their wages. They felt they were too low, but could not go to another factory to get higher wages. It was all the same and there was not much you could do. Did this influence people's work? Yes, workers would often look for ways to get sick leave, especially on the night shift where people weren't satisfied with the small night shift supplement.

The sick leave policy made sick leave a favorite device for getting out of work. If you had worked 1-5 years, you got 30% pay for sick leave, 6-8 years, you got 70% pay, and for over 8, you got 100%. You need a doctor's certificate which specifies the number of days of rest. She had a doctor friend so it was relatively easy for her to get one of these. But this was only because she had good relations (guanxi) with him. Other workers would have just a slight illness and go to the doctor for this.

How did this dissatisfaction come out on the job? Some would leave early, come late. Others wouldn't pay very close attention to the instruments they were supposed to check, so quality fell, and this led to a waste of materials. This was for regular production work. There were other kinds of workers, like repair and maintenance workers, who would just take their time in repairing things, they would use 2 hours when 1 hour was all that was necessary, and then wouldn't fix things very well. Generally people slowed down and didn't pay that close attention to what they were doing.

This repair work was very important, because the machinery always needed some sort of repairs and often there were production halts or slowdowns because of these. So when repair workers came late and worked slowly, the damage to production can be great. These are the key workers in this kind of shop, so they need to be prompt and hard working.

During 1976, the plant could not get raw materials for the shop, because the supplying factory also had production problems. So the shop she worked in (about 500 workers) shut down for one year. They just came in to

work and did political study for an hour or so--criticize Deng Xiaoping, etc. The plant as a whole as a result lost money--they would not fire the workers. The plant's wage bill was borrowed from the bank during that year. She says that this plant chronically lost money anyway, and it wasted labor, fuel, materials, so even when they were working at full capacity they lost money. The 1976 stoppage in the one shop only made things worse.

In 1975 there was a serious problem of stealing glass from the plant by workers for use in the home. They always had this, but it became more serious in 1975. Management knew about this but didn't know what to do. Later they set up new rules for offenders, so this slackened off after 1976. The idea of the workers was to supplement their wages with things taken from the plant, since their wages were low. A saying for this is "if you lose inside the system, make up for it outside the system" (tinei sunshi, tiwai bu). In homes people did not have much furniture, and they could use the glass to make tables and desk tops. It was very useful. They also had fire-resistant glass which was very useful for cooking around the home.

In 1977 they finally set up a system of punishment linked to bonuses. They would dock individual workers' and groups as a whole for missing materials. They had a regular system of inspection by the security department. Before, they couldn't do anything to the workers. They couldn't dock wages, couldn't fire, couldn't demote. They just did education with those who were caught, but there was no regular system of inspection to catch them.

Although the stealing problem improved, the problem of low work efficiency did not get much better up until the time she left. Basically people just did not meet their quotas, and there was no punishment for this in wages or otherwise. Rhythms of work--at the beginning of the year, things were pretty relaxed, and work was not arranged very carefully. At times management would run a production campaign, and cadres would come down to the shops and do ideological and mobilizational work. When this occurred workers worked harder. They were not willing to be lax at work when cadres were right there. But when the cadres were not there to watch, things got more relaxed. These movements came especially frequently near the end of the year.

Generally speaking, older workers worked harder than younger workers, who didn't have much motivation. One of the reasons is that these older workers make 70-80%, while younger workers doing virtually the same work would get about half of that. They felt the difference in pay was too large, and unfair.

#### Shop Floor Organization

She was a gangwei gongren, which means that she had a fixed production post on the shop floor. It was relatively simple work. They had a fixed area on the floor to walk around in, and she was to watch over the glass cloth weaving to make sure there were no defects. If she saw a problem, she stopped the machine and mend the cloth quickly. She was not allowed to touch the dials or make any adjustment to the machinery, however.

They had 3 shifts, and each shift in each section comprised a small group. Groups rotated around the 3 different shifts each week. Each section of her shop had 3 small groups corresponding to the shift, and there were three sections in all in her shop (so 1 shop, 3 sections, and nine small groups spread out over 3 shifts).

Small Group Management: Her small group had 21 workers. Meetings--they had two sessions of political study per week where they read documents, and political news. They had fixed meetings for appraisals at the end of each month, quarter, and year. They met at the end of the shift for 30 minutes to one hour. They also had various meetings depending on whether or not management was stressing quality at that time.

Participation in small groups: For political study they just did what they were supposed to do and finished with it. Workers at other kinds of meetings would often raise suggestions about problems which the group leader brings up. Many didn't both with this. Suggestions were just stated, and the leaders listened. They never had a situation where people would oppose one another's suggestions and argue about it. Unless there were special problems, like with quality control or with accidents, the group leader would lead meetings and there would be no outside representatives. Otherwise the shop cadre might come down and lead the meeting.

The group leader was just an ordinary worker, he had fixed production responsibilities like everybody else. But he was very busy and had a tough life because he also had a lot of leadership work to do. He had to handle everyday problems, and also attend meetings of the group leaders in the shop. The group leader was appointed by higher level cadres. Later in 1978, they had elections which were basically the same. The workers nominated 2 or 3 people from the group, and handed these names to the upper levels who would decide. The group leader would convene meetings for elections, and would discuss qualifications the leader is to have, etc. But they usually re-elect the same group leader, since the position didn't have that much power anyway and was difficult. Very few groups selected new group leaders at this time. They would raise names other than those of the incumbents, would have to go over the qualifications of each. But in the end they would send up only one name for each position.

They had both a group leader and a vice-leader. The group leaders were responsible for organizing production and political study. Outside of these two, the other workers did not participate in any management work. There were no 'yuan' among the workers.

There were changes in the section and shop leadership in 1978 also about the same time as the group elections. (She refers to these elections not as xuanju but timing, kind of a nomination process, closely guided, rather than an election). But these changes in section and shop leadership were determined by the leadership and not by the workers.

Other than that, one person she remembers was criticized and removed at that time. A vice plant director who was accused of doing a number of bad things. He was accused of having relations with a faction in the bureau above, and of having designs to shuffle people around, opening up the back door for his own people. There was also a repair worker in the shop criticized for having connections with the vice-director, and both were demoted to be ordinary shop workers.

### Factions

There were some left over from the cultural revolution. Most cadres were from one faction, and were pulling up their followers. There was another faction left out of power, and during the cultural revolution had sabotaged production. But during the 1970s these kinds of factions among workers were not too strong. But still there were strong feelings of factionalism among the leaders, in competition for leadership positions. The factions lost political content, and the lines of cleavage were not clearly defined.

### Contract Workers

They had some contract workers in the 1960s. They earned grade 1 wages, and in 1970 were turned into regular workers at grade 1. Then as set by law were automatically promoted to grade 2 after one year. After this, there were no more contract workers. They did have temporary workers throughout the period, however. They came from among those youth in the cities who for

a variety of reasons did not have work assignments, and among them were returned youths from the countryside. They did jobs like moving articles. They were paid a piece rate in moving work. They did jobs other workers could not do or were unwilling to do. The number of temporary workers hired at any time was limited by the bureau.