

PERSONAL DATA

Age: 32

Sex: Male

Education: Primary school graduate

Total Years Relevant Experience: 16

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1979

Year Left China: 1979

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Guangdong native/OS ties unknown

Class Background/Political Designation: unknown

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held: 1) Painter, Arts and Crafts collective, Xinhui, Guangdong, 1964-71
2) Worker, Soy Sauce and Vinegar Factory, Xinhui, 1971
3) Itinerant painter, Xinhui, 1972
4) Painter, Arts and Crafts collective, Xinhui, 1972-79

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

- 1) Village (zhen), collective/(grew from 10 to 90)
- 2) Village/(200)
- 4) Village, collective/(100)

APPOINTMENTS: 1

TOTAL HOURS: 2

PAGES TEXT: 3

Occupational History (3/27/80, 2 hrs.)

The informant graduated from primary school and started work at the age of 14. He lived in the town of Xinhui, Guangdong province, which was a county seat. After graduation from primary school in 1962, he decided he would like to study art, so he was apprenticed to a painter, a friend of his father's, who worked for a construction company but was a painter in the past. This man taught the informant how to paint in his spare time for three months. He refers to this man as his 'master' (shifu). It was very hard to get into middle school. They had tests and also political criteria. The informant was of overseas background, and his class background was not black, but it was not 'red' either. Anyway only 20% of the primary school graduates in the town got into middle school, and he didn't make it. Most of the youths in the town did odd jobs (san gong), and tried to learn a few skills. Most of the industry in town was handicraft, and the main product was traditional fans for export.

So he lived in his master's home, and learned painting in his spare time. This was during the 3 difficult years, in the early 60s, and his parents sent him to live in this man's house, who also had a wife and daughter. This was arranged on the basis of personal sympathies (siren gan). After these 3 months, he returned to his father's house to study painting on his own. He became good enough to be certified by the village (zhen) labor service station. He was then given a license to be an independent (geti) portrait painter. He hung his work on the street, and sold it. He did this for 2 years. They took a tax from his income, and a management fee of 2¥ per month. He forgets how much the tax was. He made about 45¥ per month.

Before the cultural revolution, in late 1964 or 1965, this kind of individual work was declared against the law, was the capitalist road, so they were forced to organize into a comprehensive cooperative of all the individual peddlers in the town--sewing, keymaking, painting, hawking. They were organized by the labor service station. The people in each type of business organized into groups (zu), and each group did different work in different locations. He was in the fine arts group. This was a small collective. They also had large collectives and state-run collectives.

This began his factory experience in China. His collective later grew into a factory, was later disbanded, and he moved around for brief stints in a variety of small plants for the next 15 years in Xinhui. He came to Hong Kong legally in 1979, September, and now has a small portrait gallery in Hong Kong.

Work Units and Experience in Xinhui, 1975-79

His small collective in Xinhui established a work point system for deciding how much to pay each member. Each person was rated on a 1-10 scale, and the highest possible wages was 50¥, the lowest possible 10-15¥. Each point was worth about 5¥. They decided by discussing at a meeting, and differences were based on technical ability, and also on the amount of work done. They have from 5-6 people in their group at any given time.

They continued like this for about a year, then his group was changed into a factory at the beginning of the cultural revolution. They changed from a service to a production unit. They started out with 20, and gradually grew to about 90 employees. The village sent in a factory director, under the direction of the zhen. They made oil paintings, statues, and medals. In his group, the salary was not stable, but in this factory the salary was fixed, based on what it had been before. The lowest was 18¥, highest 50¥.

But the salary was stable and did not fluctuate from month to month, like it did in the earlier collective.

He worked in this collective factory until 1971, and then the plant dispersed because the items they made--Mao quotation badges, plaster busts and statues of Mao--were no longer in demand. So he was sent to a soy sauce factory in 1971.

During the Cultural Revolution they did have problems with factionalism and organizations among the workers, but there was no fighting or armed struggle. Production slowed, and sometimes even stopped. At that time they had 90 or so workers and staff. One party secretary, 2 plant directors, 2 shop directors. Also group leaders, and a few political cadres and some business staff.

The leadership was split into two factions, and they aligned with the two different factions of workers. Each mobilized its own faction. They had mass criticism, they put hats on leading cadres, and put them on a stage and criticized them. All the cadres stood aside at that time. Then production became very lax (suibian), kind of took its own course. Then central policies changed, and the leaders were said to be not capitalist roaders afterwards. A document came down and things changed. The cadres who had the biggest contradictions with the workers were transferred elsewhere, and others who didn't have great problems were put back in their old jobs. New leading cadres were transferred in from other units, and other new cadres were promoted from among the most active faction leaders. After the situation stabilized, though, these faction leaders were sent back to production work.

There were in fact 3 factions among the workers, if you count those in the middle who didn't have much interest. This was the 'unattached' faction (xiaoyao pai), and there were many with bad class backgrounds among them. The other two factions claimed to be the only leftists. He could not tell who was really left. The younger workers tended to be more willing to criticize leaders and seize power. The ones with the best class background tended to be faction leaders. Old workers generally ignored the whole thing.

The informant claims that having workers run the collective was better because they understood the business better, and the collective developed faster when they had workers running things before the state declared it a factory and sent in cadres. Later when it became a factory they had all these cadres and party secretaries sent in who didn't understand anything about the work they were doing there.

He worked in the Soy Sauce and Vinegar Factory for about half a year, then applied to resign, because this was only manual labor. This factory was also under the village. They were paid by grades here, a five grade scale, and were considered a large collective (da jiti)--were not state-owned at that time. There were about 200+ workers.

Then he worked in a yeast factory for half a year, after that he left after another half year, and went back to working on his own, painting. He did illegal private painting of portraits, and taught people how to paint for a fee. After one year of this he established another painting group. After about 9 months they developed fairly well, so finally in 1976 they once again turned it into a collective factory to produce these kinds of art objects. This collective had about 100 workers, had a plant director and party secretary. He was in a leadership position, and handled production. He was in effect in charge of operations because the 2 leaders sent in by the village government didn't understand art production.

They went through several party secretaries in this collective, in part because they had differences with the director, and also because they had

no experience in the arts and just weren't interested. So production didn't develop too well.

The wages were not on an 8 grade scale here either. This was only for county level factories and above. They had about 6 grades, the lowest was 22¥, the highest 45¥. They did not really have fixed, formal grades, but they were just paid different wages, based on when they entered the plant and what kind of work they did.