

A Comparative Study of Permanent and Temporary Migration in China: the Case of Dongguan and Meizhou, Guangdong Province

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ABSTRACT

China has been undergoing profound social and economic changes. Accompanying these is an increase in the rate of population mobility. The household registration system is still in force, however, and acts as an important regulator of population movement, but this basically applies to a segment of population which is formally attached to the state sector. Against this is the country's growing floating population, which is guided in the main by the availability of economic opportunities. We may term migrants in the *de jure* sense 'permanent migrants' and migrants only in the *de facto* sense 'temporary migrants'. The constraints they face and the opportunities open to them are very much different from each other. While the latter are found mostly in the more prosperous regions of the country, the former tend to have a more even geographical spread. Lagging areas, as well as the more economically advanced regions, can be important destinations. This paper reports the findings of a field survey conducted in Dongguan and Meizhou, two cities in Guangdong Province with contrasting economic characteristics. The data clearly demonstrate that the permanent migrants and the temporary migrants belong to two very

different segments of the population. Striking similarities are revealed for the permanent migrants in very different settings. However, there are signs that even in this tightly controlled sector, economics will soon take precedence over politics as the main driving force underlying migration. © 1997 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Received 16 January 1996; revised June 1996; accepted 5 August 1996

Int. J. Popul. Geogr. 3, 63–82 (1997)

No. of Figures: 2 No. of Tables: 9 No. of Refs: 48

Keywords: temporary and permanent migration; hukou; Dongguan; Meizhou; labour markets

INTRODUCTION

Migration is closely associated with the level of modernisation in a society (Zelinsky, 1971). The volume of migration, especially from rural to urban areas, generally increases with the progress of development. With more population movement between rural and urban areas, circular migration has become an important issue in developing countries (Prothero and Chapman, 1985; Parnwell, 1993). Compounding permanent migration, temporary migration, which can be viewed as a component of circular migration, has a major influence on population distribution, and could become a major concern of development policies.

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Contract Grant Sponsor: Hong Kong Baptist University Contract Grant Number: FRG/90–91/II–19

The importance of such an issue is demonstrated by the Program of Action issued by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, urging governments to 'assess on a regular basis how the consequences of their economic and environmental policies, sectoral priorities, infra-structure investment and balance of resources among regional, central, provincial and local authorities influence population distribution and internal migration, both permanent and temporary' (United Nations, 1994).

The magnitude and varieties of migration increase with the progress of economic reforms and development in China (Ma, 1988; Goldstein and Goldstein, 1991, 1993; Solinger, 1991; Chan, 1992; Siu and Li, 1993; Zhou, 1993). According to the 1990 population census, a total of 34 million or roughly 3% of the population had experienced a move in the five years preceding 30 June 1990 (Zhongguo Guowuyuan Renkou Pucha Bangongshi, 1993, vol. 4, p. 152). This figure, large as it is, nevertheless grossly underestimates the population mobility rate as it does not include intra-county moves; nor does it include moves which had taken place within one year prior to the census and which did not involve a corresponding change in *hukou* or the place of household registration. Adding the latter category alone could easily double the number of migrants reported (Siu and Li, 1993).

Since China is a country with a vast area, one would expect that a large regional variation will be present in any social phenomenon. Xie and Hannum (1996), for example, confirm that there is a substantial variation in earnings in urban China. Most studies on migration in China, however, deal with the issue at a national level; few are done on a provincial or regional level. Some exceptions are Yang (1992) on Zhejiang and Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Renkou Yanjiusuo (1988), which includes some analyses of the results of the 1986 Seventy-Four Cities Migration Study at a local level.

Guangdong started attracting thousands of migrants after the launch of the economic reforms. Within the province, more developed regions attract more migrants than the less developed regions (Li and Siu, 1995). The Pearl River Delta, benefiting from the favourable political environment and its proximity to Hong Kong, has become one of the most developed

areas (Cheung, 1993; Fitzgerald, 1996; Li, 1993) and hence a major centre for migration. This paper attempts to compare temporary and permanent migration between two economically different areas in Guangdong: Dongguan, an economically developed area in the Pearl River Delta, and Meizhou, a relatively economically backward area in the northeastern hilly region. The results are based on a questionnaire survey we conducted in 1992 in collaboration with the Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences.

TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT MIGRATION IN CHINA: DEFINITIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Due to differences in the definitions of migration adopted, studies using different data sets may have inconsistent results. Before proceeding further, it is necessary for us to describe and compare the definitions and measurements of temporary and permanent migration used in censuses and major surveys in China. The definition of migration is a complex issue. Usually it is defined as a change in residence over a significant distance. Two dimensions are included in this definition. The first one is a spatial dimension. How far is a significant distance? Using the census criterion, this distance means crossing a county/city boundary. Surveys, including ours, however, usually use the boundaries of smaller administrative units, which are townships within a county or city, resulting in a larger volume of migration when compared with the census results.

The second one is a temporal dimension which is involved in the definition of residence. In China, where a household registration (*hukou*) system has been implemented for years, the change in residence can be classified as *de jure*, with official approval in the household registration, or *de facto*, without official approval. The 1958 Household Registration Law divides the population into two distinct categories, agricultural and non-agricultural, the former without exception being rural residents and the latter mostly urban dwellers. Only households with the non-agricultural status are entitled to grain rations and taken care of by the various state organs. In China, the household registration not only defines the residence status of a person but also grants him permission to have jobs,

food, housing and other social services such as medical care (Kirkby, 1985; Shi, 1993; Cheng and Selden, 1994; Luk, 1995). Each person has an official place of residence. To have a permanent change in residence, official permission must be granted by both the places of origin and destination. Therefore household registration officially defines and also serves to control migration. Using household registration as a criterion, we can classify migrants into two groups: permanent and temporary. A migrant is considered permanent if the move involves an official change in the household registration, which means that he is a permanent resident there. This is migration *de jure*. A temporary migrant is a person who has been living in a locality which is not his official place of residence for longer than a specified period of time or, although having lived there for less than the specified time period, has left his official place of residence for longer than that time. Both the 1982 and 1990 censuses used one year as the specified period, but the 1987 and 1995 1% population surveys

used six months. In a sense, the 1987 and 1995 1% population surveys yield 'inflated' statistics on migration when compared with the 1982 and 1990 censuses. Regardless of the exact definition of the migrant population, these statistical sources give migration *de facto*.

In this study we apply a definition that is close to the 1% population surveys. The spatial dimension is defined as crossing the boundary of a township, which is similar to that used in the 1% population surveys. The attainment of official household registration status delineates permanent from temporary migration. For the temporary dimension, three days is used as the lower limit and ten years the upper limit. Figure 1 summarises the definition and classification of migrations used in censuses, major surveys and this study.

Migration *de jure* is 'permanent' in the sense that changing a registration status may take a lot of time and effort and may be irreversible. Such moves are state-sanctioned and regulated, and involve a transfer of welfare entitlements and

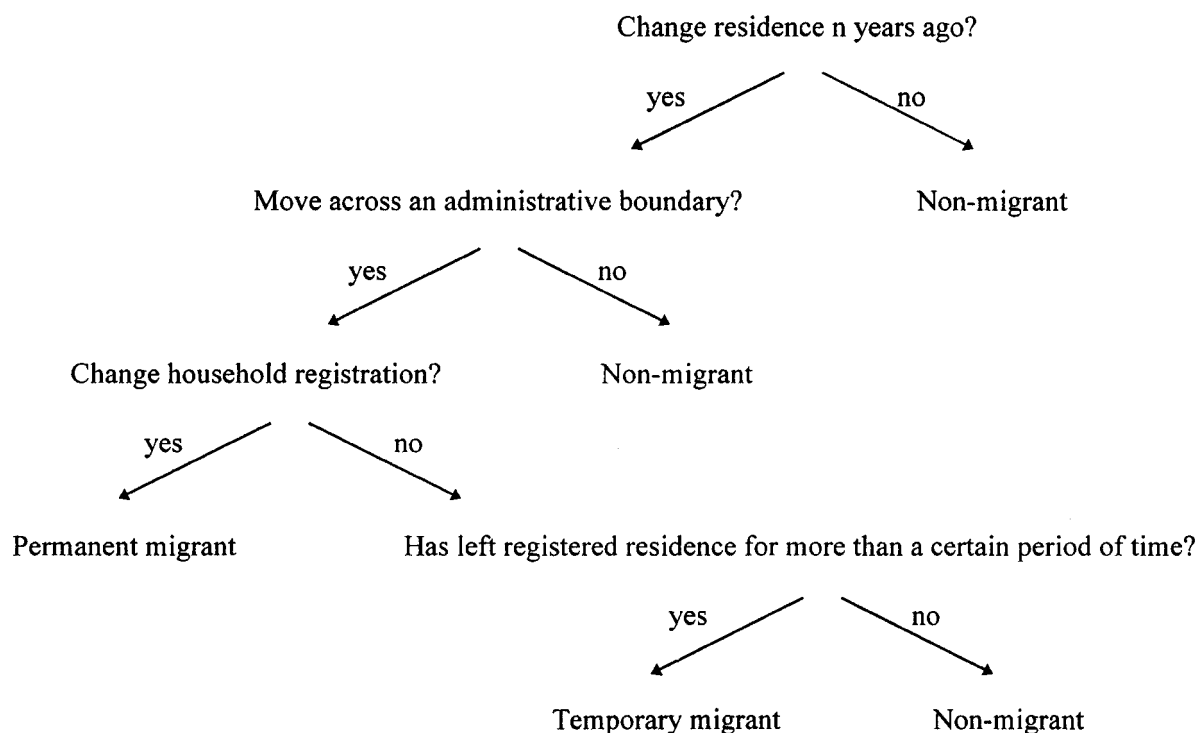


Figure 1. Definition and typology of migrant used in China's censuses and surveys and this study. In censuses and surveys, $n=5$, but for this study $n=10$. Also for this study, the administrative boundary used is the township (within a county or city), and the period of time to define a temporary migrant is three days.

local and even central government obligations. Some of these moves, especially the family-related ones, are voluntary and self-initiated. However, approval might be difficult to obtain. In a socialist economy in which the state plays a key role in the allocation of labour, it may be expected that a large number of permanent moves such as those resulting from job assignments and job transfers are state-directed. In a sense such transfers are conducted within an internal labour market (Green, 1992; Gordon, 1995), although in the case of China it is the entire state bureaucracy including the various state enterprises, rather than a single individual firm, that defines the structure of this market. Also, until recently there has not been an external labour market to which the individual worker can exit. Under such a circumstance, geographical mobility in the permanent sense to a large extent mirrors the state's spatial development policy and ideological predisposition. As a case in point, movements up the urban hierarchy are strictly under control. Horizontal movements and movements down the urban hierarchy would be much more feasible and at times even encouraged.

On the other hand, moving without a change in registered residence or migration *de facto* means that return migration is readily possible, and thus the movement is 'temporary'. Many of these temporary migrants may undertake further moves in response to changing economic opportunities. Still others may be forcefully 'deported' by the relevant city authorities during economic downturns or when their numbers have become unmanageable (Solinger, 1991). Temporary moves tend to be voluntary and economically oriented, and are much less directed by state policies. They may even run counter to the state's developmental goals. For example, to 'control strictly the size of large cities' has been an enshrined state policy since 1980 (Siu and Li, 1993). Yet, not surprisingly, the temporary migration flows tend to concentrate in the largest cities (Li and Hu, 1991).

In summary, household registration defines whether a migrant is permanent or temporary. The forces underlying the two types of migration, although not unrelated to each other, are nonetheless quite different. A study of population migration in China, therefore, has to take account of both the temporary and permanent

flows.

The 1990 Census put the number of temporary migrants defined according to the household registration status at 21.35 million. This represents an increase of roughly 3.25 times over the 1982 Census (Siu and Li, 1993). In comparison, there were 13.97 million migrants in the *de jure* or permanent sense in 1990. A study using the Public Security Department's *hukou* records, which also include intra-city and intra-county moves, shows that the migration rate in the permanent sense has been fluctuating within the 1.5–1.8% per annum range ever since the early 1960s. No discernible difference can be observed for the pre- and post-1978 reform periods (Siu and Li, 1993).

Our definitions of permanent and temporary migration are slightly different from some other studies, notably Goldstein and Goldstein (1991). Instead of using *hukou* as a criterion to distinguish permanent from temporary migrants, they used time of residence. According to their definitions, migrants, no matter whether official or unofficial, are classified as 'permanent' if they have stayed at that place for a year or more, and as 'temporary' if they have arrived within a year. In other words, one can substitute the temporary versus permanent classification by a 'short-term versus long-term' one. This is clearly different from the usual definition used by the Chinese census and Chinese scholars (e.g. one used by Gu, 1991). It may be pointed out that Goldstein and Goldstein also noted this difference, and in another study on temporary migration in Shanghai, they conformed to the Chinese definition and defined temporary migrants as '[p]ersons who move without a change in registration' (Goldstein *et al.*, 1991). They further point out that '[t]emporary migration in China therefore is defined somewhat differently from that in other countries, where length of residence and intention to stay or to return are more usually the criteria employed for distinguishing temporary migrants from permanent residents' (Goldstein *et al.*, 1991).

It is evident from the above that the main reason why a different definition is used in China is the unique and important influence of the household registration system. Although the importance of the household registration system has declined somewhat since the economic reforms (Mallee, 1995), it still preserves restric-

tions barring temporary migrants from obtaining some important resources, such as a job at a state-owned enterprise, housing, medical care, and so on, and channels different types of migrants to specific sectors of the economy. It is our intention to use this definition to examine the effect of an institution which is somewhat unique to Chinese society.

A major difference between temporary and permanent migration as defined in this paper lies in the direction of movement. We have noted the difference in terms of the movement within the urban or settlement hierarchy. There is also a difference with respect to the movement along the regional development gradient. Whereas temporary migration mostly flows from the less developed to the more economically advanced areas (Gu, 1991; Chan, 1992), in the case of permanent migration the direction of movement is less clear-cut. In particular, depending on the prevailing state economic and regional policies, both the lagging and the more prosperous areas can be of the same importance as the choice of destination. A study of temporary migration, especially from the point of view of the place of destination, may focus on the more prosperous regions, but the same cannot be said of permanent migration. Both the less and the more developed places should be included in order to give a complete picture.

The rest of this paper is organised as follows. The next section gives a brief account of the two cities under study and the sampling design. The main survey findings are then presented. We further explore the differences between the two types of migrants and between cities with varying growth rates by examining their respective labour market performances. A dual or even multi-sector labour market is revealed. We conclude with a discussion of some recent policy changes and their possible implications for migration in the future.

THE STUDY AREAS AND THE SAMPLING DESIGN

The Study Areas

Dongguan is an emerging metropolis in Guangdong Province about 50 km to the north of Hong Kong (Fig. 2), with the Guangzhou-Shenzhen Highway and the Guangzhou-Kowloon Railway

passing through the centre of the city. Because of its strategic geographical position, Dongguan has benefited substantially from the open policy launched since 1978. It is a major recipient of foreign capital, mainly from Hong Kong, and a natural base of export processing industries. The combined industrial and agricultural output value, a commonly used yardstick for gauging economic well-being in China, increased nearly nine-fold in constant price terms, from RMB889.08 million yuan in 1980 to RMB7104.29 million yuan in 1990 (Guangdong Shen Tongji Ju, 1991). As a consequence of this rapid growth, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers have come to seek work in the city. The 1990 population census put the number of migrants at 437,846, which may be compared with a resident population of 1,303,885. According to the census, all in-migration to Dongguan should be of the temporary type, as the number of temporary migrants reported, being 439,777, exceeds the total number of migrants recorded! Of the migrant population, 49.68% were from within the province, and the rest from other provinces (computed from Guangdong Shen Renkou Pucha Bangongshi, 1993).

Meizhou is much less favourably located. It lies in the remote hilly region in the northeastern part of the Province. The city, incorporated in 1987, is the administrative centre of a vast municipal region comprising seven counties. The city proper, also known as Meijiang Qu (Meijiang District), used to be part of Meixian County before 1987. Because of this historical link, our discussion below will include Meixian. The city's remoteness notwithstanding, Meizhou is the centre of China's Kejia (Hakka) ethnic group of tens of millions of people. As with the rest of the country, the economy of Meizhou (including Meijiang Qu and Meixian) manages to register rather impressive growth. The combined industrial and agricultural output value increased from 352 million yuan in 1980 to 1484 yuan in 1990, but obviously the rate of growth lagged far behind that for Dongguan and other Pearl River Delta localities. Not surprisingly, Meizhou is much less popular a choice of destination for the migrant workers. In fact, the 1990 census shows that Meizhou, including the seven counties under its jurisdiction, is a net 'donor' of migrants (Li and Siu, 1994). But the census data also indicate that, as far as permanent in-migration is

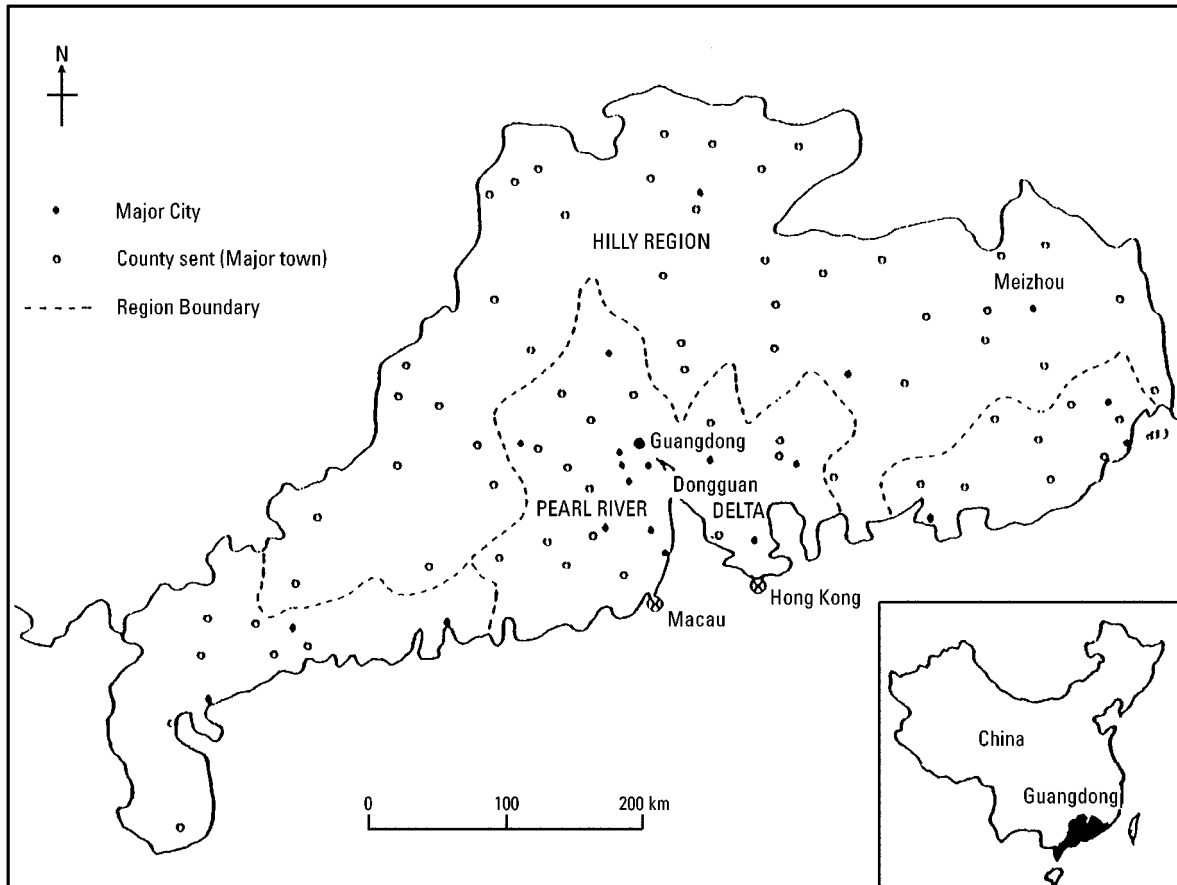


Figure 2. Major urban centres in Guangdong, and the location of Dongguan and Meizhou.

concerned, Meizhou assumes a more important position than Dongguan. In the five years preceding the census, a total of 10,355 people permanently settled in Meijiang Qu and Meixian County combined (computed from Guangdong Shen Renkou Pucha Bangongshi, 1993). This may be compared with a resident population of 779,313 and a temporary migrant population of 30,154.

The Sampling Design

In China, the term city or *shi* at times refers to the city proper itself, and at times to a vast region comprising several counties under the city's jurisdiction (Kirkby, 1985). In the case of Dongguan the problem of definition may be simpler since the city does not administer any rural counties, but Dongguan was only accorded city

status in 1984. Despite the rapid rate of urbanisation, many parts of Dongguan today still maintain a largely rural character. In fact, as recently as 1990, only 23.41% of its 1.3 million resident population was registered as non-agricultural (Guangdong Shen Tongji Ju, 1991), although many with the agricultural label actually engaged in non-agricultural activities. In light of the above, there is a need to differentiate first of all between Guancheng, the seat of the municipal government, and the various townships within the city's boundary; and secondly, within a given township, between the town seat and its rural hinterlands. Stratification of the sample according to community type would thus give a more adequate coverage of the different community settings. We made use of the *hukou ce* or book of household registry to interview a total of 804 households in Guancheng and in the townships of Zhongtang and

Table 1. Distribution of the sampled households by place of survey and by type of sample.

| | Main | Supplementary |
|-----------------|------|---------------|
| <i>Dongguan</i> | | |
| Guangcheng | 251 | 129 |
| Zhongtang Town | 75 | 38 |
| Zhongtang Rural | 201 | 100 |
| Houjie Town | 75 | 36 |
| Houjie Rural | 202 | 102 |
| <i>Meizhou</i> | | |
| Meijiang Qu | 250 | |
| Chengdong Town | 74 | |
| Chengdong Rural | 203 | |
| Shishan Town | 76 | |
| Shishan Rural | 202 | |

Houjie. The distribution of respondents according to the place of survey is given in Table 1. The choice of Guancheng, the political and economical centre of Dongguan, was obvious. Zhongtang and Houjie are townships with varying levels of economic development.

Earlier it was pointed out that temporary migrants make up the bulk of the total migrant population in Dongguan. By definition, these temporary migrants would not show up in the *hukou ce*. In order to have an adequate representation of the temporary migrants, we also made use of the *zanzhu hukou dengji ce* or registry of temporary residents to interview another 405 households in Dongguan, most of them being single persons. We may label this sample of temporary migrants as the supplementary sample, as distinct from the main or original sample. Again, their distribution is given in Table 1.

In Meizhou (which may mean the entire seven-county municipal region or the seat of the municipal government), a unit of area comparable to that of Dongguan is Meijiang Qu or Meizhou city proper, plus Meixian County. The two, as noted before, together constituted a single county before 1987. Again, a stratified sample consisting of Meijiang Qu and two townships in Meixian, namely Chengdong and Shishan, was adopted. A total of 805 households were interviewed using the *hukou ce* as the basis of selection. Table 1 also presents the distribution of respondent households by place of survey in Meizhou. Temporary migration is not unim-

portant in Meizhou, but a more interesting question to be asked is why Meizhou has more permanent migrants than Dongguan, and what kind of people would like to move to Meizhou on a permanent basis? Because of this and because of resource constraints, we did not undertake a supplementary sample for Meizhou: only the main sample applies.

THE EXTENT OF MIGRATION

The 1990 Census provides estimates of the size of the migration population in both Dongguan and Meizhou. The illogical result that the number of temporary migrants reported is larger than the size of the entire migrant population for Dongguan shows that there are enumeration errors, although such errors are likely to cancel out to give more or less reliable aggregate figures. Also, the Census reports do not provide data below the city or county level. In the case of both Dongguan and Meizhou, which exhibit major variations in terms of the degree of urbanity (and conversely of rurality) within their respective boundaries, the migration process is likely to have highly localised impact. The survey data obtained allow us to assess the extent of the migration incidence in the different types of communities in both cities. As the respondents in the main sample were randomly selected from the *hukou ce* of the respective communities, the ratio of the number of migrants counted to the number of individuals surveyed will give an estimate of the relative size of in-migration in these places. But this procedure is only valid for permanent migration; as for temporary migration, these ratios will represent gross underestimates, since temporary migrants are not included in the *hukou ce*. Only those who happened to be living with their relatives or friends who held permanent residence in the respective study areas may have been included in the sample.

Table 2 gives the migrant counts by place of survey and by type of migration. Note that the definition of the migration incidence in the present study differs slightly from the one used in the Census. Firstly, moves between townships but within a given city or county were included in the present enumeration. Secondly, all moves which had taken place since 1 January 1980 were

Table 2. In-migrant counts by place of survey and by migration type.

| | Main | | Supplementary |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---------|---------------|
| | Dongguan | Meizhou | Dongguan |
| Permanent move in to: | 215 | 255 | 6 |
| City centre | 166 | 104 | 0 |
| Two town seats | 16 | 92 | 6 |
| Rural areas in two townships | 33 | 59 | 0 |
| Temporary move in to: | 15 | 25 | 402 |
| City centre | 11 | 14 | 117 |
| Two town seats | 1 | 6 | 75 |
| Rural areas in two townships | 3 | 5 | 210 |
| Total move in | 230 | 280 | 408 |
| Total number of individuals in sample | 3230 | 3327 | 405 |

counted. In the main sample, out of the 3230 individuals surveyed in Dongguan, a total of 215 permanent migrants were found, giving a proportion of 6.07%. Approximately 45% of these moves were from within Dongguan, while 55% were from the rest of the country. Moves within the five-year period prior to the survey accounted for 52.6% of the total. These together mean that, had the Census definitions been adopted, about 1.76% of those counted would be considered as permanent migrants. In the case of Meizhou, the corresponding figures were 254 out of 3327, giving a proportion of 7.63%. Some 70% of the Meizhou permanent migrants were from within the city. Also, 37.8% of these moves took place within the five years prior to the survey. Together they imply that the proportion of permanent in-migrants would be 2.03%, had the Census definitions been used.

The survey findings indicate that the relative extent of permanent in-migration is roughly the same for Dongguan and Meizhou. This is a rather surprising result given the Census information. But in fact the result is not so surprising if we consider the growing need for high calibre personnel to manage Dongguan's rapidly expanding and increasingly complex economy. The recruitment of such workers, especially from afar, tends to go through more formal channels and involve a change in official residence. A closer examination of the data shows that the permanent migration streams in Dongguan and Meizhou differ in certain important respects. Firstly, the Dongguan case has a much more

extensive migration field than that of Meizhou. In fact, quite a substantial number of the Dongguan migrants in the sample came from distant provinces. Secondly, in the case of Dongguan, most moves took place in recent years, whereas in the case of Meizhou, the earlier period was of greater importance. Thirdly, as revealed by Table 2, the great majority of the Dongguan permanent migrants settled in Guancheng, the city centre. In the case of Meizhou, the townships seem to be of much greater importance as a destination, hinting at a greater likelihood of horizontal movement and movement down the urban hierarchy. These findings are reasonable, and likely to reflect the changing ranking of the two cities in Guangdong's urban hierarchy. They suggest that, even within the tightly regulated sector, the migration process is location-specific and varies systematically with the level of economic development. We will come back to this again when we compare the characteristics of migrants in the two cities under study.

The discussion so far only pertains to permanent migration. An assessment of the extent of temporary migration using the survey data is precluded almost by design, but the data do indicate that temporary migration is a rather recent phenomenon, with the bulk of such migrants in Dongguan arriving in or after 1988. Also as discussed in greater detail elsewhere (Li and Siu, 1996), as far as Dongguan is concerned, temporary migration is largely explained by reference to distance and level of economic development. Intra-provincial moves were

mainly from the less developed northeastern and northwestern regions of Guangdong, and inter-provincial moves were from the nearby provinces. This is consistent with the largely voluntary and economically-oriented nature of such moves.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIGRANTS

As the numbers of temporary migrants in both the Dongguan and Meizhou main samples are very small, and as these migrants are unlikely to be representative of the temporary migrants in these two cities, in the discussion of the main samples below we shall restrict ourselves to the permanent migrants. The supplementary Dongguan sample will be used for a comparative analysis of the temporary migrants.

Age and Sex Composition

Table 3 presents the age-sex composition of the permanent migrants in the Dongguan and Meiz-

hou main samples, and the temporary migrants in the Dongguan supplementary sample. It can be seen that, as far as permanent migration is concerned, very similar age-sex compositions were revealed for Dongguan and Meizhou. In both cases, there were slightly more females than males. Also, consistent with most studies on the age selectivity of migration (for example, Nam *et al.*, 1990), in both the Dongguan and Meizhou main samples there was a concentration of the migrants in the 15-30 years age groups; that is, youths and young adults were most inclined to move. But other age groups were also represented in the sample, and the distribution with respect to age was rather spread out in both instances.

The supplementary sample showed that the temporary migrants belonged to a very different group. They were younger, and their distribution showed a very sharp concentration in the 15-24 age groups. In the case of the females, more than 90% of the respondents were in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups. In the case of the males, the distribution was a little more spread out, and quite a substantial number were found in the

Table 3. Age-sex distribution of migrants in Dongguan and Meizhou (%).

| Age group | Main sample (permanent migrants) | | | | Supplementary (temporary migrants) | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| | Dongguan | | Meizhou | | Dongguan | |
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 0-4 | 4.2 | 0.8 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 0.8 |
| 5-9 | 6.3 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 3.6 | 0.6 | 0.0 |
| 10-14 | 9.5 | 4.2 | 12.3 | 5.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 15-19 | 15.8 | 10.8 | 15.8 | 7.9 | 25.0 | 43.9 |
| 20-24 | 13.7 | 16.7 | 12.3 | 17.1 | 39.7 | 46.3 |
| 25-29 | 13.7 | 21.7 | 10.5 | 26.4 | 21.2 | 5.7 |
| 30-34 | 5.3 | 8.3 | 7.0 | 10.7 | 5.8 | 0.8 |
| 35-39 | 9.5 | 9.2 | 7.0 | 8.6 | 1.9 | 2.0 |
| 40-44 | 2.1 | 9.2 | 7.0 | 6.4 | 2.6 | 0.0 |
| 45-49 | 7.4 | 5.0 | 7.0 | 5.0 | 0.6 | 0.0 |
| 50-54 | 2.1 | 5.0 | 9.6 | 3.6 | 0.6 | 0.0 |
| 55-59 | 5.3 | 3.3 | 2.6 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.4 |
| 60-64 | 3.2 | 1.7 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 65+ | 2.1 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Median (years) | 24.7 | 28.0 | 27.0 | 27.4 | 22.3 | 20.2 |
| Total (n) | 95 | 120 | 114 | 140 | 156 | 246 |

25–29 age cohort, but the concentration was still pronounced.

Household Registration and Marital Status

By definition, the permanent migrants are those that have established official residence in the place of destination, and the temporary migrants are those that have not done so. Given this difference in legal status and the associated benefits and rights that the host community provides, and given the difference in the age composition, it can be expected that most of the permanent migrants either come with or to join their families, but that most of the temporary migrants come as single individuals. The survey data bear this out. In Dongguan, 67.9% of the sampled permanent migrants came with family members, and 43.7% already had family members in the destination site. In Meizhou, the corresponding numbers were 70.9% and 62.6%, respectively. Further, as Table 4 indicates, more than half (55.3% and 58.3%, respectively) of the permanent migrants in both places were married and living with their spouse. The patterns revealed for Dongguan and Meizhou are in general quite similar to each other, but there is one major difference. Family-related reasons appear to be of greater importance for permanent migration to Meizhou, as suggested by the larger percentage of migrants having family members in Meizhou prior to the move.

As regards temporary migration, only 11.7% of the Dongguan supplementary sample respondents reported that they came with family members, but up to 48.9% came with friends. Those who had family members in Dongguan

prior to the move only accounted for 5.2% of the sample. The great majority (78.9%) of the respondents were unmarried. As for the married migrants, 9.5% of the temporary migrants in the Dongguan supplementary sample did not live with their spouse; in contrast, only 4.2% and 4.7%, respectively, of the permanent migrants in the Dongguan and Meizhou main samples did not do so.

The *hukou* or household registration status in China has immense implications for a person's life chances. In Dongguan, 78.1% of the permanent migrants interviewed belonged to the category of 'non-agricultural household' at the time of survey; in Meizhou the corresponding figure was 72.4%. Conversely, the proportions holding 'agricultural household' status for the two cities were 21.9% and 27.6%, respectively. An examination of the migrants' place of origin reveals a major difference between the two subsamples. Of the Dongguan and Meizhou permanent migrants, 25.6% and 48.8%, respectively, were from the rural areas. Thus, inter-urban moves focusing on Guancheng appear to dominate permanent migration to Dongguan, whereas rural-to-urban and rural-to-rural moves are of greater importance in Meizhou. The data also suggest that a change in the household registration status (with respect to being agricultural or non-agricultural) is more likely in Meizhou.

As for the temporary migrants, the majority (60.7%) of the respondents held 'agricultural household' status, confirming the expectation that temporary migration is the main contributor to rural-to-urban migration in China today. The fact that 39.3% of the temporary migrants held

Table 4. Marital status at time of survey (%).

| Marital status | Main sample (permanent migrants) | | Supplementary sample (temporary migrants) |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|--|
| | Dongguan | Meizhou | Dongguan |
| Unmarried | 38.6 | 35.8 | 78.9 |
| Married: | | | |
| living with spouse | 55.3 | 58.3 | 11.7 |
| not living with spouse | 4.2 | 4.7 | 9.5 |
| spouse deceased | 1.9 | 1.2 | 0.0 |
| Total (n) | 215 | 254 | 402 |

‘non-agricultural household’ status clearly indicates, however, that the young people in minor cities and towns are as prone to undertaking migration to places with economic opportunities as those from rural areas. This is despite the fact that moving would mean a cessation of the privileges and rights associated with their ‘non-agricultural’ status, including food rations at subsidised prices, education, job placement, and housing and medical benefits at their place of origin.

Educational Attainment

Previous studies on China’s migration, such as the 1986 survey of 74 cities cited above, had established that migrants on average have a better education than non-migrants (Sha, 1988). This is consistent with the regulated nature of the migratory behaviour in the past which was dominated by permanent flows. Such a pattern is also likely to apply to the permanent migrants in the Dongguan and Meizhou main samples. Table 5 shows the sampled migrants by level of educational attainment and type of migration. Also included in the table is the distribution of educational attainment for the populations of the two cities as given by the 1990 Census. Despite Meizhou’s relative economic backwardness, the Census data reveal that its population is quite well educated. The majority of people there (54.9%) had received junior secondary schooling or above in 1990. In fact the percentages who had received senior secondary and post-secondary

education, being 17.5% and 2.2% respectively, are quite respectable especially given the city’s relatively small size and remoteness. The survey data show, however, that the permanent in-migrants on average are even better educated than the population as a whole: 8.7% in the sample had post-secondary education or above, and a further 33.5% had senior secondary education.

The difference in educational attainment between the Dongguan permanent in-migrants and the population as a whole was even more pronounced. In comparison with Meizhou, the Dongguan resident population is much less well educated. This probably reflects the largely rural character of this recently emerging city. The Census found only 7.9% of Dongguan’s population to have senior secondary education, and a meagre 0.6% with post-secondary education. However, in the sample of permanent migrants, the corresponding figures were 27.0% and 15.7%, respectively. The very high percentage with higher education is particularly striking, and is indicative of the demand for high-calibre labour in this rapidly growing industrial city. A comparison of the permanent migrants with the temporary ones reveals the existence of a highly segmented labour market with respect to the *hukou* or household registration status of migrants. While the former belonged to an extremely well-educated group, the great majority of the latter received only junior secondary education (60.0%) or below (33.3%). Yet still in comparison with the local population, the tem-

Table 5. Level of educational attainment by place of survey and migration type, with 1990 Census population data in parentheses (%).

| Educational attainment | Main sample (permanent migrants) | | Supplementary sample (temporary migrants) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|--|
| | Dongguan | Meizhou | Dongguan |
| Post-secondary or above | 15.7 (0.61) | 8.7 (2.24) | 0.5 |
| Senior secondary | 27.0 (7.89) | 33.5 (17.48) | 6.2 |
| Junior secondary | 30.7 (37.05) | 38.2 (35.21) | 60.0 |
| Primary | 19.1 (44.68) | 14.6 (34.39) | 27.9 |
| Semi-illiterate | 2.0 (9.75) | 1.2 (10.67) | 1.3 |
| Illiterate | 5.1 | 3.9 | 4.2 |
| Total (n) | 215 | 254 | 402 |

Sources: Survey data, and Guangdong Sheng Renkou Pucha Bangongshi (1993).

porary migrants on average were a little better educated.

Motives Underlying the Move

Table 6 presents a systematic comparison of the migration motives across study sites and migrant types. As would be expected, the data show that migration in the permanent sense is closely regulated. Job assignment and job transfer accounted for quite large proportions of the permanent moves in both the Dongguan and Meizhou samples. In both instances, very few moves involved a corresponding search for a job. The data reveal that the migrants, even the permanent ones, are not at all passive; 15.8% of the job-transfer moves to Dongguan and 16.5% to Meizhou were described as ‘voluntary’ by the respondents. ‘Involuntary’ job transfer moves accounted for only 3.7% and 4.3% respectively. Hence, even in the state-regulated sector, a dialogue has to be maintained between the state and its subjects. With the continued liberalisation of the economy, such a dialogue, as far as migration is concerned, will probably be strengthened in the future.

In addition to the job-related motives, family-related reasons were also important for both the Dongguan and Meizhou respondents, but much more so for the latter. In particular, there was a higher percentage of marriage moves in Meiz-

hou than in Dongguan. Also, whereas moves to join relatives and friends seemed to be of some importance in Meizhou, it was not the case for Dongguan. For the latter, even for the permanent moves, economic motives tend to dominate the scene.

This domination by economic motives is much more pronounced for the temporary migrants. The data show that the great majority (93.3%) of the temporary moves involved job search. These migrants in the main came by themselves and with a very simple reason: to find a job. Perhaps in the future they will bring members of their families to join them, thus instigating family-related moves. However, so far such moves have been few in number.

LABOUR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS

Earlier it was argued that a segmented labour market exists for the different types of migrants. In a sense the permanent migrant workers, whose movements are closely regulated by the state, belong to the formal sector whereas the temporary migrants, who by nature are much more mobile, can be said to belong to the informal sector. But there are obvious limits to which such a formal-informal dichotomy can find relevance in China. The socialist economy of China, which is undergoing a rapid transformation, is apparently too complex to be

Table 6. Reasons for migration by place of survey and by migration type (%).

| | Main sample (permanent migrants) | | Supplementary sample (temporary migrants) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|--|
| | Dongguan | Meizhou | Dongguan |
| Job assignment | 6.5 | 4.3 | 0.2 |
| Job transfer (voluntary) | 15.8 | 16.5 | 0.0 |
| Job transfer (involuntary) | 3.7 | 4.3 | 0.2 |
| Study and training | 2.3 | 3.5 | 0.0 |
| Job search | 0.5 | 1.2 | 93.3 |
| Trade | 0.9 | 0.4 | 3.5 |
| Marriage | 16.7 | 22.7 | 0.0 |
| Dependents | 28.8 | 28.7 | 2.0 |
| Live with relatives/friends | 1.9 | 8.7 | 0.5 |
| Retirement | 5.6 | 1.6 | 0.0 |
| Others | 17.2 | 8.3 | 0.2 |
| Total (n) | 215 | 254 | 402 |

represented adequately by a two-sector model. Traditionally, the state-owned enterprises which were heavily capitalised had dominated the urban economy. In a sense this is the formal sector in the Chinese context. In the past, most workers in the cities worked in these enterprises and enjoyed life-long tenure and a host of welfare entitlements. There is evidence that the job entitlement is even hereditary, allowing the children to take up their parents' jobs as the latter retire (Luk, 1995). Lately, however, there has been a change in the employment pattern. Recruitment of temporary workers has assumed a much greater importance. The state-owned enterprises have thus become less formal than before. In addition, the state today allows or even encourages the enterprises to employ workers on a contract basis, with a view to increasing productivity.

The state-owned enterprises themselves in the reform era have declined in importance. The so-called collective-owned enterprises have been expanding at a much faster pace (Luk, 1995). These enterprises have had their origin either as neighbourhood workshops in cities (Sit, 1980) or workshops set up by the former communes and brigades in the rural areas (Byrd and Lin, 1990), and thus may be said to constitute China's informal sector. The rural-based firms, which have been renamed township enterprises after the dissolution of the people's communes in 1983, have exhibited particularly rapid growth. By 1993, the township enterprises employed a total of 123.45 million workers, as compared with the 109.20 million employed by the state-owned enterprises. (State Statistical Bureau, 1994). There are many factors that underlie the rapid growth of the township enterprises; one is the fiscal reforms implemented since the early 1980s which have given much greater power to local government in the organisation of production (Ferdinand, 1989; Ho, 1993). In Dongguan the collective-owned enterprises have benefited from the injection of foreign capital and are particularly flourishing. There is a tendency to consider the township enterprises as small, backward and environmentally unfriendly (Mao and Teng, 1989). However, some of the township enterprises in the Pearl River Delta have evolved to become large and sophisticated conglomerates, and are no less formal than the state-owned enterprises. Not surprisingly, the collective-

owned enterprises, including the township enterprises, given their greater autonomy, have taken an even more liberal view than the state-owned enterprises in designing their recruitment strategies.

To help solve the urban unemployment problem, since 1980 the state has given tacit approval to individuals setting up petty trades. The term *getihu* or owner-operator is employed to denote such businesses (Luk, 1995). These are informal sector activities in the traditional sense of the term. At first there was strict control over the number of workers employed, but this restriction has been relaxed. This allows the emergence of somewhat larger private businesses, or 'private enterprises' as officially defined. The relative size of these two employment sectors is still small. In 1993, there were 29.40 million *getihus*, and 3.73 million workers employed in the private enterprises (State Statistical Bureau, 1994).

A fourth and emerging category of firms in China are the so-called *sanzi qiyes*, or firms with foreign funds. In 1993 they employed a total of 2.88 million workers, with Guangdong alone accounting for 641,000 of these (State Statistical Bureau, 1994). One may incline to associate these firms with the multinationals, but in the case of Guangdong many of these *sanzi qiyes* are set up by small industries with limited capital from Hong Kong and lately from Taiwan (Sit, 1989; Li *et al.*, 1995).

In the main sample, of the 137 permanent migrants who were employed in Dongguan, 47.4% were employed in the state-owned sector (including the government administration), 30.7% in the collective-owned enterprises, 5.9% were working as *getihus* or in private enterprises, 8.8% in *sanzi qiyes*, and the rest (8.8%) remained unclassified. In Meizhou, the corresponding percentages were 47.0%, 37.8%, 8.5% and 4.9% respectively (with 1.8% remained unclassified). A rather similar distribution pattern is thus revealed for both cities, although in relative terms the *sanzi qiyes* are apparently more important in Dongguan, and the collective-owned enterprises are more important in Meizhou as a source of employment. With respect to the form of employment terms, in the Dongguan sample 65.0% had fixed employment, 23.9% were temporary workers and 7.3% were contract workers. In the Meizhou sample, the corresponding

figures were 72.6%, 7.9% and 17.1%. The larger percentages of the more formal categories, i.e. fixed and contract employment, in Meizhou may indicate the city's greater adherence to traditional practices. Conversely, a higher degree of labour mobility is implied for the more economically advanced Dongguan, even for the closely monitored permanent migrants.

As regards the temporary migrants in the Dongguan supplementary sample, the employment pattern differed significantly from those observed for the permanent migrants. The *sanzi qiyes* were of much greater importance; of the 395 persons employed, 55.9% worked in these enterprises. Also of a greater degree of importance were the *getihus* and private enterprises. Together they employed 16.4% of the employed workers. The collective-owned enterprises employed 26.1% of the workers sampled. The least important sector is the state-owned sector. For the permanent migrants this sector dominated the employment scene; for the temporary migrants it accounted for a meagre 2.3% of the sampled workers. With respect to the form of employment terms, the temporary migrants also differed significantly from the permanent ones.

In particular, there is a much larger percentage of temporary jobs and employment on a contract basis (49.4% and 47.6%, respectively). Only 3 out of the 395 workers surveyed had fixed employment.

Clearly the data show that different types of enterprises are operating under different sets of constraints and have adopted variable employment strategies. The township enterprises, for example, have to serve a variety of community development objectives, including the provision of employment to the local population (Byrd and Lin, 1990). The *sanzi qiyes*, on the other hand, are more profit-driven, and therefore are likely to take a more liberal attitude in recruiting outside workers. It is evident that the organisation of the production sphere is a strong institutional factor in structuring migration flows in China today.

Migration of the workforce often results in a change in occupation structure. This is especially the case if it is dominated by rural-to-urban flows. Table 7 presents the survey results on occupation structure before and after the move, by place of survey and by migration type. Invariably there was a decline in the percentage of agricultural workers and a corresponding

Table 7. Occupation structure before and after move by place of survey and by migration type (%).

| | Main sample (permanent migrants) | | | | Supplementary sample (temporary migrants) | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|--|-------|
| | Dongguan | | Meizhou | | Dongguan | |
| | Before | After | Before | After | Before | After |
| Factory workers | 14.9 | 20.0 | 7.9 | 11.8 | 14.4 | 85.5 |
| Transport workers | 0.5 | 0.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Construction workers | 0.0 | 1.4 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 2.5 | 1.5 |
| Agricultural workers | 19.1 | 8.8 | 29.9 | 19.3 | 48.8 | 0.5 |
| Petty merchants (<i>getihu</i>) | 0.9 | 1.9 | 0.8 | 1.6 | 3.0 | 2.0 |
| Administrative workers | 10.7 | 13.0 | 13.8 | 15.7 | 0.0 | 1.0 |
| Clerical workers | 2.8 | 4.2 | 0.0 | 1.6 | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| Sales & restaurant workers | 0.0 | 1.4 | 3.5 | 8.3 | 1.0 | 4.2 |
| Technical workers | 6.5 | 6.0 | 3.5 | 2.8 | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| Students | 31.6 | 20.0 | 30.7 | 22.8 | 9.7 | 0.0 |
| Homemakers | 0.9 | 6.0 | 2.8 | 4.7 | 2.2 | 0.5 |
| Waiting to be employed | 0.5 | 0.5 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 10.4 | 0.0 |
| Other employed | 3.7 | 6.0 | 2.8 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 2.7 |
| Other unemployed | 7.9 | 9.8 | 3.1 | 5.9 | 3.0 | 1.2 |
| Total (n) | 215 | 215 | 254 | 254 | 402 | 402 |

increase in industrial workers after a move, but the change was much more pronounced for the temporary migrants than for the permanent ones. As an illustration, 48.8% of the temporary migrants in the sample were agricultural workers before the move; but only 0.5% of them engaged in agriculture afterwards. The percentages of factory workers before and after moving were 14.4% and 85.5% respectively. As for the permanent migrants, administrative workers constituted quite a large portion of those in work for both Dongguan and Meizhou. This is especially the case after the move. In both cities the percentage in the student category declined substantially after the move. A closer examination of the data reveals that the majority of the former students took up employment in the tertiary sector, mostly as administrative and clerical workers. Despite the similarities in the patterns, the Dongguan and Meizhou samples differed in some important respects. Firstly, the percentages in the agricultural worker category, whether before or after the move, were smaller for Dongguan. Secondly, there were proportionately more technical and clerical workers in Dongguan than Meizhou. These findings are consistent with the difference in the level of economic development between the two cities.

Given the difference in organisations involved in providing employment, and given the difference in the nature and form of the employment terms, one would expect a very different pattern of job search for the permanent and the tempo-

rary migrants. Table 8 shows that this is indeed the case. Whereas 'job transfer and assignment', and 'direct recruitment by the labour bureau' were quoted by the majority of the permanent migrant workers in both the Dongguan and Meizhou main samples as the method of locating the first job at the time of the move, they accounted for only 3.5% of the workers in the Dongguan supplementary sample. 'Referrals by relatives and friends' and 'knocking at the employer's door' were by far the most commonly quoted methods of locating the first job for the temporary migrants, but the data also show that 9.4% of the temporary migrants located their first job through 'referrals by private agents'. There is surely a need to disseminate information about job opportunities to the potential migrants in order to maintain a certain degree of order and to minimise the cost of migration and job search. These private agents would play a significant role. To date very little is known about such private agents, however. Clearly there is a need for research in this area.

The difference in the nature and type of employment and in the kind of organisations involved in employment provision also mean that the incomes earned by the migrant workers will differ significantly between study sites and between migration types. Table 9 presents the data on the income distributions. It can be seen that migration almost as a rule resulted in a substantial increase in income. As can be expected, the income levels in Dongguan were

Table 8. Method of locating the first job at time of move, by place of survey and by migration type (%).

| | Main sample (permanent migrants) | | Supplementary sample (temporary migrants) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|--|
| | Dongguan | Meizhou | Dongguan |
| Transfer and assignment | 38.0 | 43.0 | 0.5 |
| Recruitment by labour bureau | 15.3 | 25.0 | 3.0 |
| Referrals by private agents | 0.7 | 3.1 | 9.4 |
| Referrals by relatives and friends | 16.1 | 7.0 | 53.9 |
| Newspaper advertisement | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.8 |
| Street posters | 0.7 | 1.6 | 3.0 |
| Knocking at the employer's door | 5.8 | 4.7 | 27.1 |
| Others | 23.4 | 15.6 | 27.1 |
| Total (n) | 137 | 128 | 395 |

Table 9. Distribution of average monthly personal income one year before and one year after move, by place of survey and migration type (%).

| Average monthly income (yuan) | Main sample (permanent migrants) | | | | Supplementary sample (temporary migrants) | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|--|-------|
| | Dongguan | | Meizhou | | Dongguan | |
| | Before | After | Before | After | Before | After |
| No income | 3.6 | 2.2 | 14.3 | 9.2 | 0.4 | 0.0 |
| 1–100 | 35.7 | 17.4 | 53.2 | 36.6 | 61.3 | 2.5 |
| 101–200 | 38.4 | 17.4 | 23.8 | 32.4 | 27.3 | 30.1 |
| 201–300 | 11.6 | 24.6 | 6.3 | 16.9 | 7.6 | 44.2 |
| 301–400 | 8.0 | 18.8 | 1.6 | 2.8 | 1.7 | 17.7 |
| 401–500 | 0.9 | 13.8 | 0.8 | 1.4 | 0.4 | 4.5 |
| 501–600 | 0.0 | 3.6 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| 601–700 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| 701–800 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 801–900 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 901–100 | 0.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| > 1001 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Median (yuan) | 137.9 | 224.1 | 53.2 | 131.9 | 61.3 | 243.7 |
| Total (n) | 112 | 138 | 126 | 142 | 238 | 396 |

substantially higher than those in Meizhou. An interesting result, however, is that the income levels before the move were also substantially higher for the in-migrants in Dongguan than those in Meizhou. In a relatively open market economy in which migration is largely a response to the difference in economic opportunities this would not have been a surprise, but in the case of China in which migration in the permanent sense is subject to such policies as fostering growth in the lagging areas, the result has a certain significance. It indicates that the higher income workers in the regulated sectors also seek moves to improve their lot, and have some success in achieving this. The result also indicates that the Dongguan authority has been quite selective in its intake of permanent migrants. This finding is consistent with those reported earlier on occupation mix and on educational attainment. Another interesting result is that the temporary migrants in Dongguan had a median income that was somewhat higher than that of the permanent migrants there. This is quite unexpected, given the generally higher educational attainment and occupational status of the latter group. Such an

anomaly may be attributed to the fact that the income levels reported did not take into account the difference in the associated benefits and job security. Also, the permanent migrants had a much wider income spread. A more detailed study is needed to identify the major determinants of income for China's migrants.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of the Dongguan and Meizhou survey data have produced some interesting results. Far from being negligible as implied by the Census data, permanent in-migration to Dongguan has been gaining importance along with temporary in-migration. Similar in-migration rates for permanent migration were reported for Dongguan and Meizhou. In general the permanent migrants in the two cities have quite similar characteristics, whether in terms of the age-sex composition or in terms of marital status. This can be explained by the regulatory nature of the permanent moves. Certain subtle and yet significant differences exist between the permanent migrants in the two cities, never-

theless. In particular, the data show that in the case of Dongguan the permanent in-migrants belong to an extremely well-educated group, coming from urban places afar. They were relatively well-off even before the move. A substantial proportion have taken up high-status employment. Most moves to Dongguan took place quite recently, reflecting the city's growing affluence and hinting at the gradual relaxation of employment controls, even for the high status jobs.

In the case of Meizhou, family reasons tend to be of greater importance. The moves in general are much shorter in distance, with many from rural origins. Also the townships assume a greater importance as a choice of destination. While proportionately there are more administrative workers in Meizhou than in Dongguan, reflecting the former being the centre of a seven-county municipal region, there are fewer technical and clerical workers in the former. Furthermore, farming remains an important employment category after moving. All these suggest that migration, even in the permanent sense, has to take account of the difference in the social and economic conditions of the individual localities. An increase in the responsiveness to the difference in economic opportunities is evident from the data.

The data also depict a very different set of characteristics for the temporary migrants in Dongguan. These migrants belong to a highly selective group, whether in terms of demographic or economic attributes. They are young and unmarried, mostly with junior secondary education. Most of them come alone, with the single-minded purpose of finding a job. Informal and not very traditional methods especially in the Chinese context, such as 'referrals by friends' and 'knocking at the employer's door' are the main methods used to locate a job. The majority of them work in *sanzi qiyes* and collective-owned enterprises. Very few find jobs in the state-owned sector. Also, temporary employment and employment on a contract basis, instead of fixed employment, appear to be the rule. Thus, the temporary and permanent migrants work in very different settings. They fill different niches in China's workplace.

With the continued relaxation of state controls over the economy, migration theories developed in the West, including both the choice-based

models characterising migration flows of surplus agricultural labour in developing countries of the Lewis-Fei-Ranis type (Lewis, 1954; Fei and Ranis, 1964; Todaro, 1969), and models describing the differential geographical mobility of labour in internal and external labour markets in advanced capitalistic economies (Nam *et al.*, 1990; Green, 1992; Gordon, 1995), appear to find increasing applicability in China. But China's unique household registration system still performs an important regulatory function. The established models of population migration have to be substantially modified to take account of the specific circumstances of a socialist developing economy under market transition.

There are signs that permanent and temporary migration in China may become less distinct in future. In recent years, *rencai shichangs* or placement centres have been set up in major cities to facilitate the flow of high-skill labour. In addition, from 1993 the state officially gave approval for university graduates to find jobs of their own choice. The state will only assign jobs to university graduates if they have not been successful in locating one (Ching, 1995). In addition, major administrative reforms were introduced in 1992 to dissociate the state-owned enterprises formally from the various ministries. Full management responsibilities are given to the enterprises. They are asked to operate as business corporations in a market economy, and are free to design their own recruitment strategies and stipulate the associated conditions of service (Cheng and Ting, 1993). Many former government officials have become managers of these newly transformed enterprises. *Xiahai*, or down to the sea, which means taking up the challenges of and benefiting from the boundless opportunities in the business world, is a recently used term to describe this change of employment status. All these suggest that this segment of the labour market, which is dominant by managerial and technical personnel, will become more mobile and be more responsive to regional differences in opportunities. A repeat of the Dongguan and Meizhou survey today is likely to show much greater differences between the permanent migrants of the two cities.

As regards the temporary migrants, there are indications that the state is taking a more serious look at them. There have been talks about giving residence rights to some of these migrants on a

gradual basis. For instance, the Shenzhen authority is introducing an intermediate residential status category, the so-called *lanyin* (blue chop) *hukou*, which is accorded partial residence rights (Nanfang Ribao, 16 March 1995). From now on, every newly-arrived migrant to Shenzhen has to first register as a *zanzhu* (temporary) *hukou*. A points system based on years of residence, occupational status, education and skills will be implemented to determine whether his/her status can be upgraded to *lanyin hukou*. Finally, after a minimum residence of 7–8 years, the individual concerned can apply for the *changzhu* (permanent) *hukou* status. Again, preference is given to those with higher education and skills in demand. Apparently other cities are considering similar policies to regulate the migration flows. For certain segments of the floating population, formal channels will be established to facilitate the temporary to permanent transition, but such channels may not be open to the vast majority of the temporary migrants with low skills. Their marginal status may very well be further strengthened. The introduction of the *lanyin hukou* category will make the situation even more complicated. Moreover, despite the repeated call for the separation of enterprise from the state administration, local government still plays a decisive role in China's regional economy. A policy of giving preferential treatment to the local residents is likely to be in place for the industrial undertakings under the local authority's control. Segmentation of the labour market according to migratory status and company ownership type will probably remain for a long time to come.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research is supported by Hong Kong Baptist University, Research Grant No. FRG/90-91/-II-19. The fieldwork was undertaken in collaboration with the Population Research Institute, Guangdong Academy of Social Science. We are indebted to both institutions for their support. The authors would like to thank also two anonymous referees for their constructive comments and to Miss Yin-Ha Tang for cartographic works.

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