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Mobile Patriarchy: Changes in the Mobile Rural Family

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持续规模化的流动已成为中国农民家庭变迁的重要结构性力量。流动带来的去地域化，侵蚀和破坏着血缘和地缘关系高度重合的中国父权制家庭，但其所致的家庭制度变迁不仅具有解传统作用，同时也是一个传统重构的过程。父权制家庭在解构中延续和重建，是体制约束、市场主导和父系父权自身延续的需要三重力量交互作用的结果。这一流变的家庭形态不仅为“身在城市，根在农村”的流动农民提供了低成本生存发展的基础，也以其特有的弹性适应能力，成为应对农村社会因变迁而生的矛盾冲突的缓冲带，在特定历史条件下起到了消解社会紧张的作用。

关键词：父权制家庭　解传统　传统重构　去地域化

Sustained large-scale migration has been an important structural force bringing about change in the Chinese peasant family. The de-localization resulting from population movement has eroded and undermined the patriarchal family system, with its high degree of overlap between kin-based and place-based ties. The resultant changes in the family institution, however, represent not just a de-traditionalization, but also at the same time a process of reconstructing tradition. The continuation and reconstruction of the patriarchal family in the midst of deconstruction is a result of the interplay of institutional constraints, market dominance and the patrilineal and patriarchal system's own need for continued authority. This changing family pattern not only provides a low-cost basis for the survival and development of migrant workers "working in the city but rooted in the countryside," but also, through its peculiarly flexible adaptability, serves as a buffer for dealing with contradictions and conflicts arising from changes in rural society and plays a role in relieving social tensions under specific historical conditions.

Keywords: patriarchal family, de-traditionalization, reconstruction of tradition, delocalization

I. Introduction

Nine hundred million Chinese peasants "are standing at the entrance to industrial civilization"

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and more than a hundred million have left their native villages as part of the flood of migrant workers.[1] This unprecedented large-scale migration has broken down not only the geographical boundaries of everyday life, but also the old locally based organizations and the relationships based on them. In the course of this process, change inevitably occurs in the family as an important social organization.

In modernization theory, tradition exists as an obstacle to modernization and modernity is therefore bound to involve de-traditionalization. If we apply this hypothesis to change in the family, we would conclude that the traditional family cannot escape the fate of deconstruction in the course of modernization.[2] According to this theory, the isolation of the family resulting from de-traditionalization frees family members from the shackles of the coercive kinship ties of the traditional extended family and thus meets the need of industrial society for professional mobility.[3] Although the family modernization theory has been criticized for its structural functionalist tendencies and the fact that it ignores the differences between one change and another, the idea that modernization deconstructs the traditional family is still influential in research on family change.

The system of patrilineal and patriarchal authority has prevailed in rural Chinese families for thousands of years. Although it has grown weaker since the beginning of the twentieth century under the impact of different revolutionary movements and waves of modernization, the patriarchal family still exists as a common family pattern in rural China today. The patriarchal family is undoubtedly rooted in tradition; as Max Weber said, the legitimacy of patriarchal authority comes from tradition.[4] Therefore, researchers both at home and abroad generally share the view that a process of modernization characterized by de-traditionalization will inevitably weaken and even break up the Chinese patriarchal family. The overall trend is for rural households to follow in the footsteps of urban households, with the final result being the destruction of the patrilineal and patriarchal family system.[5]

In sum, previous studies have all emphasized that migration will fatally erode the basis of this system,[6] presenting a unitary picture of modernization in which tradition is deconstructed. However, the theory of de-traditionalization is a simplistic narrative. The author's many years of field surveys show that the patriarchal family has experienced reconstruction as well as

1 According to the results of the latest survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in early 2009, at the end of 2008 the total number of migrant workers in China was 225.42 million, of whom 140 million were working away from home. Shen Jianli and Geng Yanbing, "The National Bureau of Statistics of China Launches a Survey and Monitoring System for 220 Million Migrant Workers."

2 W. J. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns*, pp.18-22.

3 Talcott Parsons, "The Kinship System of the Contemporary United States," pp. 30-34.

4 Malcolm Waters, *Modern Sociological Theory*, p. 269.

5 Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family and Peasant Revolution in China*; Yang Shanhua and Shen Chonglin, *Urban and Rural Families—Changes against the Background of the Market Economy and De-agriculturalization*, pp. 232, 236-237 and 252.

6 Yang Shanhua, "Thirty Years of the Chinese Rural Family since the Launching of Reform and Opening Up: From the Sociological Perspective."

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deconstruction in the course of migration. On the basis of data from this research, the author will tell "a different story" about how the Chinese patriarchal family has been reconstructed and carried on in the midst of deconstruction during its encounter with modernization.[7]

II. The Current Situation of Migrant Worker Families and Their De-traditionalization

1. Dispersal, fragmentation, and the splitting of reproduction: the current situation of migrant worker families

At the individual level, continuous large-scale migration has brought about atomization and individualization. At the level of social organization and human relations, it has led to the separation of families, fragmentation of kinship networks and the splitting of production and reproduction.

For most of the migrant workforce, migration means splitting up family members[8] and dispersing the family.[9] Of course, spatial separation does not mean family break-up, for in spite of geographical separation, family members manage to maintain marital ties and basic family functions. They have no choice but to construct a flexible mode of production and life that spans urban and rural areas.[10]

Coexistent with the separation of peasant families is the fragmentation of their kinship networks. Migration has destroyed the basic family form of traditional agricultural society in which the whole clan lived together, thereby sundering the kinship networks established on this basis.

Another feature of today's migrant worker families is that their reproduction activities are divided between urban and rural areas.

At present, separation from their families is a choice forced on the peasants. China's participation in the global division of labor and adoption of an export-oriented processing strategy mean that migrant workers are deeply enmeshed in this global production process, a process in which they are drawn into a "race to the bottom." Their wages have long been held down, so they have to adopt a pattern of economic and population reproduction involving working in the cities while they support their parents and children in their native villages.[11] Separating production and reproduction is an important strategy the peasants adopt to cope

7 The empirical data in this article come mainly from the author's surveys from 2002 to the present of migrant workers in enterprises in Guangdong, Shandong, Shanghai and Jiangsu; surveys of the mobile population and their families in Jiangsu, Anhui, Henan, Hubei and Guangdong; and observation of two villages-within-the-city in Nanjing and Wuxi for two and eighteen months respectively.

8 According to data supplied by the relevant authorities, only twenty percent of migrant workers take their families with them. See the Department of Rural Social and Economic Surveys of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, "The Migrant Labor Force Was Still Increasing Nationwide in 2006."

9 According to estimates by Tang Jun, the total number of separated families in which the husband has left to seek work and the wife stays behind is fifty to sixty million. See Tang Jun, "What Is the Actual Number of 'Left-behind Families' in Rural China?"

10 Jin Yihong, "Reunion after Long Separation: A Study of Migrant Worker Families," pp. 98-102.

11 The model of dividing production and reproduction was first put forward by Burawoy. See M. Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, pp. 102-105.

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with their present plight.

2. Delocalization, breaking away from the old order and individualization: the de-traditionalization of migrant families

There can be no doubt that migration has the effect of de-traditionalization. Three factors associated with migration help bring this about: delocalization, breaking away from the old order and individualization.

Cross-regional movement is a process of delocalization. The daily life of Chinese peasants is highly localized, as are their social relations; even their family system is based on specific places where they have put down roots for generation after generation. One of the important consequences of sustained large-scale migration is the dissolution of regional identity and the sense of local belonging; at the same time, it also weakens the binding force of place-based traditional customs embodying clan seniority, age and gender together with associated normative knowledge. Therefore, delocalization will inevitably lead to breaking away from the old order—even a temporary and partial deviation from the old order will have a significant effect in freeing individuals from the control of the male head of the household and the coercive norms of traditional customs.

With the children away from home, their parents "are not in a position to decide for them" —clearly, delocalization as a result of migration has sapped the ability of the older generation to control individual family members, especially the young people. Migration serves both as a process whereby the younger generation of peasants is stripped away from their families and a process of atomization in which independent individuals are born.

On the one hand, the huge gap between the economic income from temporary jobs in the cities and income from farming has accelerated the shift of economic power within the family from the older to the younger generation. On the other, the individualistic value orientation of young migrant workers has exacerbated the decline of the older generation's familial power. The younger generation of peasants has shown their superiority not only in the economic field but also in other spheres of social activity. As Berger said in *The Homeless Mind*, modernity has brought with it new bodies of knowledge and the young plausibly present themselves as privileged owners and interpreters of such knowledge. Their possession of new knowledge gives them greater power.[12]

The new living conditions provide another important precondition for the young generation to free itself of parental control.

Since the advent of the twenty-first century, the proportion of couples migrating has been on the increase.[13] Husband-and-wife migrant families mostly adopt a new independent mode

12 Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, pp. 79 and 146.

13 The Fifth Population Census conducted in 2000 showed that households where dependents accompanied the migrant worker to the city accounted only for 13.9% of the total, but data from the Survey of Mobile Population Family Households in Beijing in 2006 indicated that the percentage of whole family migration was as high as 41.2%. Data cited from Zhang Junliang and Zhang Qinglang, "Flow Characteristics of Migrant Workers in the Non-agricultural Employment Phase."

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of habitation. Whether they adopt the new living arrangements by choice or because they have to, these arrangements shake the foundations of the patriarchal family, which is based on "virilocal residence," and create conditions for individualism to flourish.

Migration has also had an extensive impact on the family system with regard to gender relations. It directly affects gender-based roles and norms in the family. This deconstructive force comes mainly from rural women's acquisition of subjectivity in the course of migration and from the break with the old order resulting from delocalization.

Research on working girls from the countryside shows that since the market separated them from their father's family, these young women have increased their individual subjectivity and made considerable progress in terms of freedom of movement, independent decision-making, acquisition of economic and non-economic resources and increased skills. They have also strengthened their position in consultations with, and even resistance to, their parents.[14] The personal subjectivity of these factory girls is also demonstrated in such aspects of love and marriage as free love, changing boy friends, cohabitation and freedom of marriage—in all these respects they take a position that challenges the authority of the older generation.[15]

In the course of migration, women have not only improved their capacity for independent job-seeking and marital autonomy but also acquired the consciousness and ability to contend with gender discrimination and oppression. For example, for girls whose parents reject them because of the traditional preference for boys over girls, finding casual work in the cities becomes a vital means of proving their worth. Not only do unmarried young women find the courage to challenge the patriarchy; married women do likewise. Research shows that leaving home to work serves as an important option enabling some women to escape domestic violence and unhappy marriages. If "running away from home" is only a relatively passive form of resistance, then the attempt on the part of married women to partially change gender norms by redefining gender roles is more positive.

For instance, after going to the city, A Zhu became more and more unhappy about women having to do all the household chores. So she cleverly set up a new gender-based division of labor:

> "He did not do (any household chores) and I had my way of dealing with it. I washed only my own clothes, not his. At the beginning my husband was very unhappy. But later when he saw the local men all shared the housework he began to do it together with me and gradually got used to it. My approach also influenced my two older sisters-in-law. My mother-in-law got mad when she found out. (A Zhu from Lai'an, Anwei Province)

14 Pun Ngai, *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*, p. 11; Tan Shen, "Family Strategy or Their Own Initiative?—A Gender Analysis of a Decision-making Model for Rural Labor Migration."

15 Zheng Zhenzhen, Zhou Yun *et al*., "Sexual Behavior and Birth Control Knowledge and Practice of Young Non-native Unmarried Women Workers in the Cities: Based on Investigations in Five Cities," p. 3.

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A Zhu's story confirms the thesis that migration is always accompanied by renegotiation of gender-related matters.[16] The reason virilocal residence was a cornerstone of patriarchy was that the degrees of relationship it set up on the basis of patrilineal blood ties ensured the absolute dominance of the father and males in the family. A change in the virilocal residence pattern opens a breach in the patriarchal structure, one that deprives, for instance, A Zhu's husband of the support of patrilineal force and creates a one-on-one context for A Zhu, thus opening up a space for dialogue and consultation for the women and creating the possibility of changing the old gender norms. Another interesting finding comes from Ma Chunhua's survey of a village in Sichuan province. According to her report, the local people have to a certain extent accepted another type of gender-based division of labor: the wife goes out to work while the husband stays at home taking care of the children.[17] Although these changes are still partial and temporary, they show at least that the traditional gender order can be changed.

In addition, in the wake of "fragmentation" of kinship ties as a result of delocalization, migrant workers have reorganized their fragmented kinship and geographical ties according to the principle of practicality. This often changes the differential mode of association of rural society, in which blood relatives are more important than relatives by marriage and kinship ties more valuable than ties based on locality.[18] More significantly, the reconstruction of migrant worker families' network of ties is likely to undermine the unilinear patriarchal system at the same time as it attacks the old differential pattern of association. For example, Ma Chunhua's research reveals that some female migrant workers send money to their own parents after they get married and even support their parents at the same time as their parents-in-law.[19] The author's many observations also confirm this tendency to give equal importance to a woman's parents and her parents-in-law. Minor and partial changes of this kind are producing slight but extensive and consistent erosion of the patrilineal system.

III. The Patriarchal Family System: Reconstruction in the Midst of Decline

Taken in isolation, this analysis might lead to the conclusion that under the impact of delocalization, breaking with the old order and individualization, the patriarchal family system has been mauled and shaken, with its foundations rocked by repeated assaults. However, the

16 Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*, p. 3.

17 Ma Chunhua, "Marketization and Gender Relations in Rural Households in China: Changes in Household Gender Relations in Zhucun Village, Western Sichuan, in the Course of Social Change," pp. 146, 157 and 159.

18 Yang Shanhua and Hou Hongrui, "Blood Ties, Relations by Marriage, Family Feeling and Interests: The 'Rational' Trend in the 'Pattern of Differences' in Present-Day Rural China"; Diao Tongju, "An Alternative Approach to the Study of the Kinship System: A Survey of Research on Relations by Marriage."

19 Ma Chunhua, "Marketization and Gender Relations in Rural Households in China: Changes in Household Gender Relations in Zhucun Village, Western Sichuan, in the Course of Social Change," p. 169.

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reality shows that under attack, the patriarchal family has doggedly carried on and rebuilt itself in terms of both relational model and ideology; it still constantly controls and affects migrant workers and their families.

1. The breaking-up effects of marriage and returning home

Xiao Han, from Heze in Shandong, works in a large foreign-funded enterprise. She became a team leader through her own efforts, something she is proud of. But she is not so confident about the future. She says she is adopting a wait-and-see attitude. If she is able to find a marriage partner there, she will go on working in the enterprise and settle down in the city. If not, she will let her family find a husband for her and then "go home and let my husband's family support me."

It seems that, for many migrant worker girls, marriage brings an end to their independent struggle. These girls work and struggle confidently as independent subjects and their jobs give them a feeling of liberation. Why, then, does this come to an end with their marriage?

"These girls leave the village at sixteen or seventeen, are betrothed at about twenty and get married about at twenty-two. By that age almost all of them will have returned home," a village head described the life course of the young women in his village this way. "It would be impossible for me to get out after I get married. Once I'm married, all my hopes will come to an end," twenty-one year old Xiao Gao said. Although many of them try to resist this fate by postponing marriage, the vast majority cannot escape it. They may still feel a lingering reluctance. "The rural areas are at least fifteen to twenty years behind the cities," said a young woman surnamed Zhang, who was forced to return home but still yearned for city life. "I feel a pang in my heart whenever I think about this. But I can only keep it at the bottom of my heart and not say it out loud."

The research of Tan Shen and others confirms that unmarried working girls have to adjust their original expectations and plans for personal development in line with their partner's situation when they are about to get married. This generally involves a downward adjustment. This does not apply to their male counterparts.[20]

One of the important achievements of studies on the influence of mobility on working girls from rural areas is that they challenge what is known as the "family strategy" explanatory model. These studies prove that one of women's goals in leaving home is to shed their family burden and parental demands[21] and that the process by which they become independent wage-earners is a process of individualization in which individualism and autonomy replace group orientation and achievement orientation replaces orientation toward belonging.[22] But in reality, we see that when these individualized young women are re-embedded in the family and family relations through marriage, they revert from an individual to a family orientation

20 Tan Shen and Ma Chunhua, "Working Away from Home and Gender Relations in Rural Households in China," p. 681.

21 Yu Keping *et al.*, eds., *Overseas Scholars on Special Economic Zones in China*, pp. 164-189.

22 Tan Shen and Ma Chunhua, "Working Away from Home and Gender Relations in Rural Households in China," pp. 648-649.

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and from independence to being male-centered. In important choices after marriage, the primacy of the family once again becomes the dominant value. A study of migrant women in Sichuan and Anhui shows that 68 percent to 79 percent of migrant women returning to their home villages do so because of family needs, in some cases because of their husbands' needs for masculine self-esteem.[23]

How can one explain the breaking-up effect of marriage for women and the two types of reversion among married women?

The large-scale migration of the rural population has not changed the pattern of marital living arrangements in rural China today; virilocal residence remains the main form. A survey in 2000 of the status of Chinese women suggests that the migration experience produced no significant effect on marital arrangements, with as many as seventy percent of peasant women still adopting virilocal residence and only about a quarter living separately after marriage.[24] Until a fundamental change takes place in the three pillars of the rural household—virilocal residence, patrilineal descent and patriarchal authority—marriage means that these women will once again be embedded in family power relations of domination and subordination and will thereafter be subject to the norms and constraints of patriarchal ideology. They drift away from the old family relations and become atomic individuals, then are re-embedded into the old model—this is a process of reconstruction of patriarchal family relations, not a simple reproduction of the original relations. It maintains in a modified form the gender hierarchy and sexual role norms of the family.

2. Reconstruction of inter-generational order and filial piety

In the patriarchal family, paternal authority based on the order of seniority in the family is the weakest link and the first to be damaged. But, surprisingly, our studies reveal that family heads whose power is in decline try to institute new rules in their favor, such as reestablishment of filial piety, even when they have neither economic advantages nor traditional power and authority. The reestablishment of filial piety produces little effect on sons (who may even want to reap more advantage from unequal intergenerational exchanges), but is very effective with daughters. It is very common now for young women to send money back home,[25] something that daughters internalize as a duty.

"Women migrant workers have to send the money they earn back home to support their

23 Zheng Zhenzhen and Xie Zhenming, eds. *Population Flows and the Development of Rural Women*, pp. 72-73, 60.

24 Tan Shen and Ma Chunhua, "Working Away from Home and Gender Relations in Rural Households in China," p. 659.

25 According to Ma Chunhua's research, almost all the daughters who go to the cities as migrant workers send money to their parents in support of their brothers' schooling or house building. When they get married later, however, their parents only return forty percent of the total amount they sent home and some parents don't give back even a cent. Ma Chunhua, "Marketization and Gender Relations in Rural Households in China: Changes in Household Gender Relations in Zhucun Village, Western Sichuan, during Social Change," pp. 98 and 117.

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> brothers at school and help build new houses. That is the rule, otherwise people will say you are not filial." (Lili from Huaian, Jiangsu Province)

This new rule, developed over the last thirty years of anomie and reconstruction of rural family ethics, is built on the improved instrumental "utility" of young women as they earn an income through the migrant economy. But the rule itself reflects the tendency to safeguard the interests of the male line at the expense of women.

The reconstruction of an ethical standard characterized mainly by daughters' display of filial piety is a thought-provoking phenomenon.

In their fieldwork on inter-generational relations in rural households in eastern Zhejiang, Tang Can and others have also noticed the growth of a new custom whereby daughters give more and more support to their own parents, a custom based on inequality between sons and daughters.[26] The parents usually use the statement "Girls are more filial than boys" to explain their different behaviors. Actually, the ethical basis of the different behavior of sons and daughters is deeply rooted in the patrilineal system under which male heirs continue the family line. The new ethical rules impose new obligations on the girls in relation to their parental family but do not increase their rights accordingly. In order to ensure that their brothers can go to school, build a new house and get married, these girls are forced to discontinue their studies and work away from home. Therefore, raising their utility as much as possible before they get married turns out to be a new strategy to continue patrilineal authority.

IV. How the Patriarchal Tradition Continues and Is Reconstructed as Seen from the Two Types of Migrant Families

Mobile peasant families show a high degree of structural diversity and changebility. For research convenience, the author divides them into two types based on the living arrangmenets of husband and wife: one is the "rooted" migrant family in which the husband leaves home to work and the wife stays behind, the other is the "leaving home" migrant family in which both husband and wife leave their home village to live in the city.

1. The "rooted" migrant family

Quite a number of peasant families become separated in the course of migration, dividing into two parts: one goes to the city and the other stays behind. Who goes and who stays behind? – this is an important decision for the family. Why is it usually the wife rather than the husband who stays behind? The economic rationality of maximizing family interests (taking into consideration the different market returns for men and women, different cost of living, etc.) can only give a partial answer to the question because it is possible for women

26 Tang Can, Ma Chunhua and Shi Jinqun, "Ethics and Equity in Daughters' Support for Parents: Gender Studies of Intergenerational Relationships in Rural Households in Eastern Zhejiang."

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to get jobs more easily and earn more money than men in the labor market. The decision to have the wife stay behind to cultivate the land and take care of the home is often dictated by traditional sex role conventions: "the man goes out to work while the woman looks after the house." Marriage has completely different meanings for a man and a woman: it is considered right and proper for a married woman to take care of the house and for a married man to go out to earn a living. Moreover, in the patriarchal family system, heavy household chores and services performed by women are unpaid and therefore not included in cost accounting. Accordingly, it is a "natural" choice for the migrant family to use women's unpaid work to maintain low-cost inter-generational population reproduction.

Will power relations in the family change because the wife stays at home? Some people hold the view that her remaining behind makes the value created by women more overt, thus to some extent enhancing their status in the family.[27] However, other studies yield just the opposite conclusion: the gender division of labor in which the husband goes out and the wife stays at home has led in many areas to female-dominated agriculture, in which "left-behind" wives are the main labor force. This form of agriculture adopts a small-peasant mode of management aimed at making a living, with economic returns far lower than the income from migrant jobs.[28] On the other hand, just because agriculture has become a female-dominated industry, agricultural labor undertaken to earn a livelihood has been, in a sense, incorporated into the category of domestic work. Consequently, although, in the absence of men, women undertake virtually all the work of agricultural production and household duties and although their work in the fields also brings in some household income, the gap in economic power between the sexes is not narrowed but widened and their actual contributions to the family are also underestimated, so much so that "whoever has the opportunity to be a migrant worker has a greater say in family matters."[29]

2. The "leaving home" migrant family

The "leaving home" or displaced migrant family is one in which all family members have left their home village or the family's center of gravity has shifted away. These families generally adopt a new mode of habitation. Theoretically speaking, this poses a direct challenge to the traditional patriarchal family system. However, field observations show that even where virilocal residence disappears, power relations of male domination and female subordination and patriarchal ideology may evolve. Even if female family members earn more economic income than their male counterparts, "the boss of a family" remains the husband and the gender division of labor in these migrant families also follows the old practice: "the man goes out to work while the woman looks after the house." The disappearance of virilocal

27 Li Xiaoyun, "Gender Disequilibrium between Staying at Home and Leaving for the City."

28 According to surveys in Sichuan and Anhui, the average individual income of women staying behind is only 27.8% of the average annual family income. A village head estimates that "a migrant worker's income is equivalent to what twenty *mu* farmland can produce." Data are from Zheng Zhenzhen and Xie Zhenming, eds. *Population Flows and the Development of Rural Women*, p. 204.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 125 and 204.

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residence does not necessarily bring about the natural disappearance of male chauvinist culture. In other words, patriarchy is not necessarily closely related to virilocal residence. The ideas and norms inherent in the patriarchal system follow these families like their shadow.

The underlying reason for this phenomenon is that the new mode of habitation of these migrant peasant families differs from that of independent couples in the modern sense. Migrant workers rarely uproot themselves from their home villages; even if young people from the countryside get jobs and fall in love in the city, they will have their new house built on the site of the old one in the countryside and hold the wedding ceremony in their native village. Some migrant workers make up their minds not to return to their home villages, but they buy a commercial apartment in a small city or town near their home village. Conscious of their rural roots, all migrant worker will retain close links with their plots of land, their old homes and even old family acquaintances even if the center of gravity of their lives has shifted to the city. This cannot be explained merely by peasant parochialism. Institutional constraints are an important reason: as long as their household registration *(hukou)* remains in their hometown, a series of policies and systems based on the household registration system will tie them to their homeland as a thread pulls a kite. Proof of identity, marriage registration, registration of permament residence for births and rewards or punishments – all these have to be done at one's place of permanent residence. Their children's right to compulsory education, their share in state compensation for the expropriation of farmland and for returning farmland to forestry and rural social insurance: all their social welfare rights are in their home villages and they are deeply rooted there.

The reproduction of traditional relations is also expressed in the tendency to generate new extended families on the basis of the new mode of habitation. In places where migrant workers are concentrated, one frequently sees the fragmented ties of kinship reorganized around husband-and-wife families into a new network according to necessity and possibility in a selective way. This new mode of habitation involves a sort of chain migration where workers bring their kith and kin with them, whenever possible. Most of them tend to organize their living and economic activities on the model of the extended family. If conditions permit, they will form an occupational cluster of fellow countrymen in the same trade and of extended relatives on the city fringe because, in their own words, "it will be easier for us to take care of one another if we live nearby."

Moreover, the mobile population almost all live in rented rooms with limited space, but wherever possible their sons and daughters will set up their own homes near the husband's parents, following the pattern of "quasi-virilocal residence," in order to reduce their cost of living. They never live near the wife's parents becaust it does not accord with the old rules.

In this way, migrant peasants reestablish in the peripheral areas of the city a network of personal connections based on a pattern of living together and mutual help. They end up forming a hybrid of "a new mode of habitation" and "virilocal residence," a quasi-extended family.

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3. An urban subcultural circle: a local territory for preserving traditional culture and customs

Surrounded by modern urban culture, most of the migrant worker families in the cities still maintain their traditional cultural practices—this is what struck us the most during our observations. For example, domestic violence continues to be the means by which males maintain their authority and control females. Another example is that some women are not willing to work any more after they get married and have children. "She won't go to work even if I get a job for her,' one man said.

Our observation shows that migrant workers living in the cities generally live in a subculture characterized by strong local features. A place implies not only a geographical space, but also "a locality of relationships." The dual urban-rural structure of Chinese society not only divides people into urban or rural residents but also results in the separation of their social spaces. Occupants of the same geographical space may live in very different spaces of relationships. In order to overcome the fracturing of social connections, delocalized migrants will re-implant themselves in a particular "place" and rebuild their social relations. Thus we can see that the delocalization resulting from migration is relative: while their sense of local belonging dissolves, their parochialism is steadily reinforced, including the revival of dialects and local customs. The "relocalization" of these relationships not only provides an important network of social connections for migrant workers in the cities but also builds a subcultural group favorable to their survival and helps them use their own cultural norms to resist rejection and pressure from urban culture.

This kind of subcultural group is not only local in nature, but also traditional. In spite of great differences between subcultures, their gender norms basically embody patriarchal ideology.

Z's wife from HN works as a domestic helper and has an income "more than double" that of her husband, a security guard. However, her husband, who likes to gamble, still often beats her. Z's wife tearfully complained to her employers, a couple of intellectuals, who advised her to go to the Women's Federation for legal help and divorce him if he did not mend his ways, but she thought their suggestion was too "extravagant" for her. As for a divorce, she dared not even think of it. She said, "I cannot divorce him. We people from HN, especially the women, are not allowed to propose a divorce. If I divorced him, I would not be able to stay in the circle of HN people."

Why does an economically independent woman feel it would be hard to survive if she left the circle of her fellow villagers? Because, while she is subject to the oppression of traditional customs and cultural norms, this circle provides a psychological community that gives her a sense of belonging and security. All the norms and consciousness inherent in the patriarchal family, including the male line of succession, a strong preference for sons and women's consciousness of subordination, float along with this local cultural group and take

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root where the migrants now live. A geographically-based subculture is therefore, in a sense, both a shackle and a safety net for individual migrants and becomes a domain that preserves traditional culture and customs.

V. Who Needs the Patriarchal Family?

After our discussion of various representations of the continuation and reconstruction of the patriarchal family, we cannot help asking "What is the force that drives atomized individuals and miniaturized migrant families to reorganize themselves along the lines of an extended family whenever they get the chance? Why does the patriarchal family continue to exist and to be rebuilt in a new form in this highly mobile peasant group in market-driven Chinese cities? What are the dynamics of the reorganization of the patriarchal family?

The reasons for the continued existence of the extended family in a market-oriented China are, Song Shaopeng incisively points out, the absence of a system of social security for individuals and peasants' twofold deprivation by the market, in production and in consumption. The joint action of the state and the market constitutes the structural cause of the evolution and reconstruction of the patriarchal family.[30]

The continuation and reconstruction of patriarchy is indeed a product of the interaction of the market and the state. The market has never refused to use traditional patriarchal resources. For example, the convention by which, sooner or later, girls go back home to marry provides an excuse for the world factory to rationalize its extensive use of young unmarried women while defininining them as temporary workers who can be dismissed at any time. And the traditional sexual division of labor by which "the man goes out to work while the woman looks after the house" and women's unpaid labor in taking care of the household prop up the divided-space model of "taking temporary jobs in the cities and supporting one's parents and children in the village.".

Since China instituted the policy of opening to the outside world and entered into the global division of labor, great changes have taken place in its labor requirements and use, together with new demands on its system of production and population reproduction. It could be said that the continuation and reconstruction of the patriarchal family simply meets the demands of global industrial society for a freely mobile and elastic labor force that does not impose the cost of population reproduction on society. This is one of the main reasons the patriarchal family is still flourishing, vital and capable of reproduction in the powerful context of modernization.

Besides the interaction of the two external structural forces of the market and the state, we need to point out a third force that helps maintain and reconstruct the patriarchy. This comes from the self-continuation needs of the patriarchal family and the survival and development needs of migrant workers who "work in the city but have their household registration in the

30 Song Shaopeng, "Return to 'Warm Family Feelings': Why a Marketizing China Needs 'Patriarchy'."

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countryside." It should be recognized that the present patriarchal family, with its flexible adaptability, represents the most efficient household model for migrant workers moving between the city and the village and eking out a living in the outlying urban areas. In other words, the extended family is a survival strategy of the migrant worker family.

Our research shows that change of virilocal residence does not necessarily inflict severe damage on the patriarchal family system and that a nuclear family structure does not necessarily mean equal gender relations. Of the three cornerstones of patrilineal succession, patriarchal authority and virilocal residence, it is patrilineal succession that is the core of the patriarchal system. Therefore, reconstruction of patriarchy in the migrant family centers on how to accomplish the reproduction of the patrilineal system.

Farmland and housing sites are peasants' basic survival resources. The administration of rural China still adopts the male-dominated *ding-kou* system, in which the household is the basic administrative unit. *Ding* refers to males, who are the principal members, and *kou* to females, the subordinate members. The basic welfare of the latter depends on the former – a woman is an unmarried daughter of her father or wife of her husband, not an independent individual.[31] For example, women do not enjoy an independent right to a housing site. This institutional arrangement of resources and social security based on the male line explains why most rural women cannot escape the fate of "returning home" and why "individual development ends with marriage" even if they acquire a high degree of independence through their migrant jobs.

It needs to be specially emphasized that under the constraints of patriarchy, women have accepted and internalized these rules and norms, for even if they accompany their husbands to the city, they have to rely more on the family when they encounter difficulties in the labor market or with social welfare. This is why some young migrant women are quite happy to "live off their husbands" or "live off their husband's family" after they get married and have a child. They are placed in a subordinate position, but at the same time they are sheltered by the patriarchal family. It is true that migrant men can continue to enjoy a superior position and benefit from their wives' unpaid labor thanks to the rules of the patriarchal family, but some migrant women also benefit from the shelter offered by the patriarchal family amid the vicissitudes of urban life. In a sense, they also take part in the maintenance and reproduction of patriarchal ideology.

VI. Discussion

To sum up, migration has become an important structural force bringing about changes in the peasant family. In particular, the "de-localization" it brings has severely eroded and undermined China's patriarchal family system, a system marked by the strong congruence

31 For the male-dominated household registration system (*dingkou zhidu*), see Guo Zhenglin, "Rural Women's Land Rights and Institutional Guarantees."

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of kinship and geographical ties. However, changes in the family system have a two-way dimension, involving both de-traditionalization and reconstruction of tradition. So far, such changes as individualization, changes in mode of habitation and freedom from the shackles of kinship ties have partially altered family power relations and gender norms, but the paternal lineage system and male dominance, the essential characteristics of the patriarchal family system, have not seen any fundamental change. The patriarchal family system continues, reconstructing itself in the midst of migration and change.

Why is this so, given the extensive impact of the various de-traditionalizing elements of modernization? How does this occur? What is the mechnism that makes it possible? Our field studies show that the family is not an object that passively accepts the impact of social change, but an organization that can actively adapt to and resist change. Through marital relations it re-implants atomized individuals into the patriarchal family, reestablishes the ethical order along the patriarchal axis of the male line of succession, copes with marketization through the quasi-extended family when forced to adopt a new mode of habitation, rebuilds "ties based on locality" after delocalization, and makes use of subcultures to preserve traditional customs and local identity in order to carry on and reconstruct the patriarchal family system. The continuation and reconstruction of patriarchy reflect the need of the patriarchal family structure and patriarchal ideology for continuation and, more importantly, represent the family system that migrant workers have chosen under the interaction of institutional constraints and market dominance as being the most economical and practical and the best able to adapt to harsh environments. It needs to be stressed that this reconstruction is not a simple replication of the traditional patriarchal structure. If we say that today's migrant worker families have not extricated themselves from the form of patriarchy centered on patrilineal descent, we are speaking of a patrilineal and patriarchal system that is in constant flux, a mobile patriarchy.

From the interaction between tradition and modernity expressed in delocalization and rebuilding locally-based ties, de-traditionalization and reconstruction of tradition, individualization and individuals re-attaching themselves to the family and family head in order to seek shelter, we can see that industrial society and the market are not naturally "anti-feudal" and anti-hierarchical, since the contradictions that appear to be between tradition and modernity are actually bred within modernity itself, as suggested by Beck's argument that "industrial society is a modern feudal society;" and that, with the ascribed factors of gender, class, race, etc., "an industrial society hierarchy of status is established in modernity."[32] In fact, industrial society needs to build not only a hierarchical labor market based on social status, gender and age, but also hierarchical relations that are able to control population reproduction—this is the logic of the modern industrial system itself.

Previous studies have generally regarded the land as a pressure valve that ensures that the large-scale migration of hundreds of millions of peasants between the cities and the countryside has not led to social unrest in the course of China's modernization. However,

32 Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, p. 129.

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they have ignored the fact that the migrant family, through its peculiarly flexible adaptability, serves as a buffer for dealing with the structural stress arising from these changes. The strongest members of the rural labor force are absorbed by the urban industrial system, but the cost of intergenerational population reproduction is borne disproportionately by rural households, with the result that contradictions in the public domain are resolved in the private sphere. This suggests that under specific social and historical conditions, the patriarchal family can effectively relieve social tensions. It should be emphasized that the adaptability shown by patriarchal family is at the expense of more vulnerable family members: the old, women and children. However, the family's capacity to absorb and resolve the stresses arising from social change is limited; social space is being fragmented and contradictions and conflicts arising from unbalanced distribution of resources and risks between different generations and genders are accumulating. As the new generation of migrant workers takes the stage and constantly displays awareness of their individual rights, will they tolerate a fragmented social space and lengthy separation from family members?

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