

MASTER'S THESIS

A sociological case study of migration in Xinjiang, China: motivation of immigrants to Xinjiang production and construction corps

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**A Sociological Case Study of Migration in Xinjiang, China:
Motivation of In-migrants to Xinjiang Production and
Construction Corps**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

After the foundation of People's Republic of China, there was a succession of large waves of migrants from other provinces in Central China moving to Xinjiang, including groups that went to the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XJPCC). This thesis seeks to understand this process both in the context of the political, military, economic, and social situation at the macro-level of the nation and at the personal and social micro-level of the individual migrants. The thesis aims to provide an understanding of why these people moved to settle in XJPCC and how the changing socio-economic contexts affected these migrants' lives.

Evidence shows that in different periods after 1950, the in-migrants to XJPCC included retired and demobilized soldiers, prisoners and other 'criminal' offenders, political exiles, *Zhibian* Youth and Intellectual Youth, hunger-driven migrants, money-seekers, marriage migrants and family dependents. These people were driven by a range of different motivations. Research into their life course experiences provides a clear example of the way in which different government policies affect individuals' lives, and of how certain individuals rationally respond to the changes in the socio-economic situation by choice of migration in search of survival or better lives.

As a consequence of this detailed analyses the author criticizes the arbitrary distinction between the categories of 'forced' and 'voluntary' migrations arguing that this does not reveal the real experiences of migrants to XJPCC. To better explain the situation, he re-examines the role of governmental policies and personal social capital as mechanisms affecting migration. Finally he reiterates the argument that migrants' own desire for economic benefits has been a significant incentive for migration.

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