

**MIGRANTS IN CHINA: LEAVING THE COMMUNES, ENTERING THE  
MARKET, STILL UNDER THE STATE**

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**By**

**Simon Hing Yan Wong**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper studies the impacts of the State's policies and laws on the lives of internal economic migrants in the Market of the PRC. It argues that the State, through its policies and law, has constituted an efficient, disciplined, subservient and disposable workforce out of migrants; this, in turn, that has facilitated the transformation of the labor regime from the tenure system to the labor contract system. It further argues the State has so far successfully suppressed the emergence of a civil society out of migrant communities. It suggests that migrants' careers in the host communities are truncated, short-lived, and insecure because of the State's policies and laws. It highlights the fact that law has only meant control and suppression, rather than protection and empowerment to migrants.

This paper therefore addresses the ongoing academic debate regarding the relationship between market transition and social, political and legal changes. This paper suggests that the supposed trajectory toward the meritocratic distribution of income, civil society and the rule of law under market reform turns out to be ambivalent in the case of China. While migrants are superficially gaining economic and personal freedoms by entering into the market, closer study reveals that their careers and lives remain within the matrix laid down by the State according to its developmental strategy and political schema. This paper thus emphasizes the continual influence of State in the process of market transition, in a manner that is a far cry from the liberal conception of the role of the state in the market.

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