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MAP OF CHINA

Source: University of Texas. 2001.
GLOSSARY

floaters
  rural migrants residing in urban areas with no *hukou* registration

*hukou leibie*
  socio-economic status of hukou registration (urban-rural)

*hukou suozaidi*
  place of *hukou* registration

HRS
  Household Registration System (*hukou* system)

RIC
  Resident Identity Card

MPS
  Ministry of Public Security

*nongzhuanfei*
  process of converting a *hukou* (from rural to urban)

PSB
  Public Security Bureau

Zanzhu Zheng
  Temporary Residence Certificate (TRC)
1. INTRODUCTION

This Issue Paper provides an overview of the household registration system (HRS), or hukou, in the People’s Republic of China, with a particular focus on the Chinese authorities’ efforts to reform the system since 1998. It also provides information on the hukou identification document, including a description of the document, general issuance procedures and information on fraudulent use.

This Issue Paper updates and supplements other Research Directorate publications, including the September 1998 Question and Answer Series Paper, China: Internal Migration and the Floating Population, which is available at IRB Regional Documentation Centres and on the IRB Website at <www.irb-cisr.gc.ca>, and provides information on the history of China’s internal migration policies since the 1950s, as well as the reforms that these policies underwent between the late 1970s and 1998. This Issue Paper describes the continuing relaxation of the HRS between 1998 and 2004 as a result of increased economic and social pressures on Chinese authorities at national, provincial and municipal levels. However, it does not aim to be a comprehensive account of all the changes that are continuously happening in China, particularly at the provincial and municipal levels, but rather an overview of the main reforms as reported by the Chinese and international press and analyzed by various scholars and human rights activists.

2. THE HUKOU SYSTEM


Under the HRS, every Chinese household is issued one hukou booklet containing the names of every family member, and each individual must be registered at birth with the local hukou authorities (Wang Jan. 2005, 23; Wu and Treiman Oct. 2002, 6; Rogerson and Wu Nov. 2002; Anh Sept. 2003, 29). According to Fei-Ling Wang, “[o]ne citizen can have only one permanent hukou, at only one hukou zone” (Jan. 2005, 65). Each town and city issues its own hukou, which entitles only its registered residents to complete access to the social benefits associated with that particular hukou (Wu and Treiman Oct. 2002, 5; Young 2002, 6; Anh Sept. 2003, 29; EIU 23 Aug. 2004). A person’s hukou registration record usually includes residential address, religion and employment information (Rogerson and Wu Nov. 2002; HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 9), as well as birth, death and migration details (ibid.). In some areas, “nationality, ‘native place’, educational level, class status … and military record [are] also recorded” (ibid.).

Administration of the household registration system and issuance of hukou documents are the exclusive responsibility of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) (Carrillo 8 Dec. 2004; Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004; Wang 9 Jan. 2005). Until the 1978 reforms, the system strictly prohibited population movement (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 819; Fang July 2003; see also Wu and Treiman Oct. 2002, 5), and people could not change residence unless the changes were part of the State’s socio-economic plan (Anh Sept. 2003, 29; see also Wang Jan. 2005, 23). Today, the PSB’s authorization is still required in order to change one’s hukou, particularly from agricultural (rural) to non-agricultural (urban) (Fang July 2003; Wang Jan. 2005, 23; see also Wu and Treiman Oct. 2002, 5). Prior to 1998, an individual’s hukou status was inherited from the mother (HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 9; Wang Jan. 2005, 23; Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 822), and cases of spouses and family members separated by the different classifications in their hukou status were common (ibid., 827).

The status of a person’s hukou is categorized as agricultural (rural) or non-agricultural (urban) (Wang Jan. 2005, 48; HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 9; Hou 4 Mar. 2002; Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 821). In addition, an individual’s personal hukou status is classified by two related parts: residential location (hukou suozaidi) and socio-economic eligibility (hukou leibie) (ibid.; Zhang 2000, 3). It is the latter, hukou leibie, that determines the holder’s entitlement to social benefits
Because residential location does not determine socio-economic eligibility, an urban resident may hold a rural hukou and, similarly, a person residing in the countryside may hold an urban hukou (ibid.; Wu and Treiman Oct. 2002).

Traditionally, there were numerous social benefits and privileges associated with an urban hukou, including the provision of basic food, better employment, higher incomes, subsidized housing, the right to free education, medical care, social security and pensions (Zhang 2000, 5; Wu and Treiman Oct. 2002; China Daily 30 July 2004; HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 8; Solinger 20 Oct. 2004, 15). Although the benefits associated with an urban hukou have been significantly reduced in the last decade, there are still important opportunities reserved for urban hukou holders, particularly in relation to better housing, education and employment (Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003, 8; see also Chan, Kam Wing 2004). This situation has led academics and human rights activists to describe the HRS system as being discriminatory in nature (Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003, 8; Hou 4 Mar. 2002; Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 830; see also Solinger 20 Oct. 2004, 15). Some have compared it to the apartheid pass system in South Africa (Alexander and Chan, Anita 1 July 2004; HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 4; Hou 4 Mar. 2002) because it restricts the movement of rural hukou holders by requiring them to obtain temporary permits to reside in cities (Alexander and Chan, Anita 1 July 2004; Anh Sept. 2003, 29-30).

These temporary permits, however, do not entitle their holders to the benefits and rights enjoyed by regular urban hukou holders, and until 2003, migrants who did not possess these permits (these migrants are also called “floaters”) were considered illegal, could be detained, fined and sent back to their permanent resident location (Alexander and Chan, Anita 1 July 2004; Anh Sept. 2003, 30). Rural migrant workers, with or without residency permits, and their family members residing in urban areas generally remain “outsiders” (ibid.; Fang July 2003, 13; Solinger 20 Oct. 2004, 15), and enjoy few legal rights and minimal protection (HRIC 6 Nov. 2002; Hou 4 Mar. 2002; Fang July 2003, 13, 15), making them vulnerable to extortion and illicit schemes by officials, employers and even private individuals (HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 3; see also Chan, Anita 9 Dec. 2004).

Furthermore, internal migrants, particularly from rural areas, constituted the “vast majority” of detainees under the Custody and Repatriation system (HRIC 6 Nov. 2002; see also AFAR 15 Apr. 2004), until the system was abolished in 2003 (ibid.; Alexander and Chan, Anita 1 July 2004; see also Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003, 4). An October 2002 paper entitled The Household Registration System and Social Stratification in China: 1955-1996 states that “the urban-rural gap has been likened to the distance between heaven (tian) and earth (di). Changing from rural hukou to urban hukou was more difficult than ‘climbing to heaven’” (Wu and Treiman, Oct. 2002, 12). Wenzhuo Hou, director of the Internal Migrants Legal Aid and Research Centre, a Beijing-based NGO, wrote that the two types of hukous “have divided Chinese citizens into two worlds: the urban first world and the rural third world” (4 Mar. 2002).

NOTES

[1] Fei-Ling Wang, a professor at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology, explains in his book entitled Organizing Through Division and Exclusion: China’s Hukou System that “household” is the unit of hukou registration (Wang Jan. 2005, 65). The majority of units are families (nuclear or extended), but a single individual, a collective household such as a work unit, a dormitory, a military unit, or a religious temple or shrine can also constitute units of registration (ibid.).


[3] Kam Wing Chan, a professor at the Department of Geography, University of Washington, and Li Zhang, a professor at the Department of Geography and Resource Management, Chinese University of Hong Kong, wrote in 1999 that under the hukou system, “[s]eparation of spouses and other dependents for years, if not decades, is common when only one of the family members is recruited by the state from the rural areas” (1999, 827).
[4] In 2002, the number of peasants and rural migrant workers in China was estimated at over 1 billion, more than 70 per cent of China’s population (Hou 4 Mar. 2002).


[7] According to Human Rights in China, “[t]he C&R system, a little-known form of administrative detention ... was initially set up to target vagrants and beggars in the cities. It was extended in the 1980s and 1990s to include all those who lack proper identification, residency or work permits... . In reality, the categories of people that can be detained are much broader, and a major proportion are migrant workers, essentially because they can’t afford to pay for their release, and the C&R facilities rely on such payments to cover their basic costs” (23 Feb. 2003).

3. HUKOU CONVERSION (NONGZHUANFEI)

The process of hukou conversion (nongzhuanfei) usually refers to the conversion of one’s hukou from rural to urban (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 823; see also HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 10). Although the requirements to obtain nongzhuanfei may vary among regions, generally a person’s success in obtaining one depends on regional policy and quota controls, which determine who is entitled to an urban hukou and how many can get one (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 823; Zhang 2000, 6; see also Wang Jan. 2005, 50). A person may acquire nongzhuanfei through “regular” (institutionalized) or “special” (non-institutionalized) channels (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 823; see also Wu and Treiman Oct. 2002, note 3; Zhang 2000, 7).

Regular channels include “recruitment by a state-owned enterprise, enrolment in an institution of higher education, promotion to a senior administrative job, and migration for personal reasons,” such as family reunification for reasons of sickness or care of children (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 823-827). Wu and Treiman list education, Communist Party membership and military service among the main factors in determining one’s eligibility for nongzhuanfei (Oct. 2002, footnote 3). Special channels, on the other hand, include temporary policies designed to deal with unanticipated situations, such as “the return of rusticated youths in the early reform era” (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 827). According to a 1999 paper by Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang, a non-agricultural hukou could be granted “as a reward for those who had made significant contributions to the country as interpreted by the state or who had borne special hardships” and conversely, one could lose one’s non-agricultural status by committing a serious crime (1999, 827-828). However, in an updated version of this paper, Kam Wing Chan noted that in 2003, “this type of punishment no longer appeared in documents issued by the Ministry of Public Security” (2004).


The socio-economic reforms initiated by the Chinese authorities in the late 1970s, including the relaxation of the hukou system, are well documented (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang, 1999, 831-841; Solinger 1999, 44-55; Zhang 2000, 9-27; Carrillo 2002, 6-11; Wang Jan. 2005, 49-53). During the 1980s, the drastic increase in population mobility, which resulted from the dismantling of the commune system and other economic reforms, prompted the Ministry of Public Security to adopt new policies on internal migration and introduce measures aimed at improving the population registration system (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 831; HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 7-11; Solinger 1999, 50; see also Young 2002, 6 and Anh Sept. 2003, 30). The policy reforms focused on allowing rural migrants to move to urban areas and register legally as urban residents (Young 2002, 6; HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 7; Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 841).

4.1 Temporary Resident Certificate (TRC)
The reforms included the introduction in 1985 of the Temporary Residence Certificate (TRC), or *Zanzhu Zheng*, also referred to as the "temporary resident permit," to allow internal migrants wishing to reside in urban areas for more than three months to register legally with the local *hukou* authorities (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 832; Wang Jan. 2005, 50; Zhang 2000, 10; Carrillo 2002, 10). The new stipulation was important in that it tacitly allowed "spontaneous" migration into urban areas, whereas previously, temporary work had to be "arranged between the recruiting urban work units and the supplying communes" (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 832; see also Solinger 1999, 50). TRCs were usually valid for one year and could be renewed (Carrillo 2002, 16; Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 823). They, however, did not entitle their holders to the urban benefits associated with the regular urban *hukous*, and often, in addition to the TRC, migrants were required to obtain additional documents, such as work permits and family planning permits, and to pay administration and application fees in order to work in urban areas.\(^8\) (Chan, Kam Wing 2004; see also Young 2002).

In 2005, the temporary resident permit (*Zanzhu Zheng*) is still used in China (Wang 20 Jan. 2005; Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 20 Jan. 2005). It is issued to temporary workers, students, foreigners and their family members (ibid.). It may also be issued to foreign expatriates working in the mainland (ibid.). Temporary residence permits are issued by the local PSB and their period of validity may range from one to several years (ibid.). According to one source, in the last six years, the process of obtaining *Zanzhu Zheng* has become considerably easier and simpler (Wang 20 Jan. 2005).

4.2 Resident Identity Card (RIC)

Other reforms included the adoption in 1985 of the photo-equipped Resident Identity Card (RIC), also referred to as the Citizen Identity Card (IDC) (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 833; Wang Jan. 2005, 51; *Beijing Review* Jan. 2004; Rogerson and Wu Nov. 2002). According to one author, the personal identity card has a national serial number, carries personal information as well as the *hukou* location of its holder, but does not carry "the discriminatory, insulting reference to *hukou* categorization" (Wang Jan. 2005, 52). The RIC shifted the focus of population registration from the household to the individual (Carrillo 8 Dec. 2004; Zhang 2000, 10) from one book per household to one card per person (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 833). Recently, Beatriz Carrillo, a PhD candidate at the Institute for International Studies, University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, whose research interests are migration, citizenship, social policy and social change in China, stated that in the last two to four years, the personal identity card has become the most important identification document in China\(^9\) (8 Dec. 2004).

NOTES

[8] A 20 June 2002 article in The Straits Times indicates that, in order to avoid this complicated process, many migrants resorted to illegal human smugglers who were charging 100 yuan (approximately CDN $15) for each forged entry permit.

[9] For information on other earlier reforms not covered in this section, including the sales of various types of urban *hukous* in the 1990’s by local governments, see Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang, 1999, 834-841.


5.1 National Reforms

Reforms of the *hukou* system in China have intensified in the last few years (Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003, 5; EIU 23 Aug. 2004; *The Straits Times* 20 June 2002; Solinger 20 Oct. 2004, 31). In 1998, the State Council approved a Ministry of Public Security (MPS) proposal removing some restrictions on internal migration (Zhang 2000, 14; Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 847; Fang July 2003, 17). The new measures included allowing those less than 18 years of age to choose to inherit their *hukou* status from either parent, facilitating *hukou* conversions for spouses previously separated by *hukou* restrictions, prioritizing *hukou* conversions for aged people who depend on
their children for care, as well as facilitating the hukou conversion of investors and professionals and their family members (Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang 1999, 848; Zhang 2000, 14; Solinger 20 Oct. 2004; HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 9).

In 2000, the government began to eliminate quotas limiting hukou registrations in small cities and towns (Solinger 20 Oct. 2004). In March 2001, a State Council circular ordered small cities of less than 100,000 inhabitants to grant hukou to residents with fixed jobs and homes beginning in October 2001 (Young 2002; Beijing Review Jan. 2004; EIU 23 Aug. 2004; Solinger 20 Oct. 2004). In August 2003, the MPS approved additional measures aimed at easing travel restrictions, particularly in western areas of China (People’s Daily 8 Aug. 2003). These measures included allowing educated people wishing to work in these regions the option of changing their permanent hukou registration to their area of work (ibid.). The measures also included allowing parents to register their newborn’s birth in either parent’s place of permanent residence (ibid.).

According to Kam Wing Chan, the elimination of the Custody and Repatriation system in 2003 had a significant impact on the HRS although it did not constitute a reform of the latter (2004, 10). For example, many provincial and municipal governments throughout China sped up their HRS reforms (Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003; AFAR 15 Apr. 2004). The State Council’s regulation ordered that migrant workers no longer be arrested for not possessing the right papers, and ordered police to provide urban residency documents to any migrant who finds employment (Alexander and Chan, Anita 1 July 2004; Solinger 20 Oct. 2004, 32).

5.1.1 Computerization of the Hukou System

By early 2000, China began the computerization of hukou data (Wang 20 Jan. 2005). In 2001, a household registration information database was created as part of China’s “Golden Shield” project aimed at improving communication and information sharing among the national police (Rogerson and Wu Nov. 2002). According to one source, “[b]y the end of 2001, more than thirty thousand police stations had computerized their hukou files; 1, 180 cities and counties had joined regional computer networks for sharing hukou information, and 250 cities had joined a single hukou computer network” aiming at instant verification of hukou files (Wang Jan. 2005, 83). However, a national computer link-up had not yet been completed throughout China as of 2004 (ibid. 20 Jan. 2005).

5.2 Regional Reforms

The application of HRS reform policies promulgated at the national level varies widely among the different provinces and cities (Young 2002; Carrillo 8 Dec. 2004), making generalizations impossible (ibid.). According to Beatriz Carrillo, “liberalization” of the HRS is more likely in smaller urban areas, whereas the larger urban centres tightly manage their HRS (28 Jan. 2005; see also Chan, Kam Wing 2004). For example, in Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai, having an urban registration remains essential to secure social security, welfare, education, accommodations and employment prospects (Carrillo 8 Dec. 2004).

Despite the regional variations, the qualifications required to obtain urban registration tend to be similar and often consist of having fixed residence and stable employment (usually one year on the job) in an urban area (Young 2002). According to Cai Fang, director of the Institute of Population and Labour Economics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), state regulations introduced in 2001 made the hukou reform more of a local government responsibility than a national government-based one (July 2003, 16). According to Kam Wing Chan, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, local governments had almost complete control over population management within their jurisdictions (2004, 10). Municipal governments in several large cities did not immediately implement the reform policies introduced by the national government in 1998, and their refusal to do so was tolerated by the national authorities (Fang July 2003, 17; see also Young 2002). The high fees associated with obtaining an urban hukou in large cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, which are the most attractive to migrants, made access to these cities out of reach for most (Wang Jan. 2005, 188; HRIC 6 Nov. 2002, 17; China Labour Bulletin 26 Feb. 2002; see also Chan, Kam Wing 2004).
The reforms introduced by the national government in March 2001 covered “all towns and small cities in Anhui, Guangdong, Hebei, Jiangsu, Shandong, Sichuan, and Zhejiang provinces” (Young 2002; see also China Labour Bulletin 26 Feb. 2002 and People’s Daily 1 Nov. 2001). Although these reforms also extended to some parts of larger cities (the peripheries), including Beijing, Chongqing and Shanghai, these cities had placed “significant limits” on eligibility for urban registration (Young 2002; see also South China Morning Post 8 July 2003 and Fang July 2003, 19). Fuzhou, for example, the capital city of Fujian, relaxed its hukou system in 2002 by eliminating the rural/urban distinction among its local residents and doing away with quotas on the number of people allowed to enter the city (China 19 Mar. 2002). However, the city imposed “access conditions” for obtaining a hukou, consisting of “a lawful residence, occupation and source of income and so on” (ibid.). On 24 February 2003, Xinhua News Agency reported on reforms taking place in Beijing, where a new policy would allow children of rural mothers born in Beijing after 1 January 2003 to be registered as urban residents. Reforms were also introduced which would allow rural students in the city’s higher vocational and specialized training schools to obtain Beijing hukous (Xinhua 24 Feb. 2003).

Nevertheless, during 2003, several provinces and major cities began to speed up local hukou reforms (Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003, 4, 6; see also South China Morning Post 8 July 2003). Some sources are of the opinion that the reforms that took place in several provinces and cities across China during 2003 were prompted by the outcry resulting from the March 2003 death of Sun Zhigang, a 27-year old university graduate, in the custody of Guangzhou policemen, after he was arrested for not carrying identity documents (Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003, 4; Wang Jan. 2005, 191; Carrillo 2002, 16; see also China Daily 10 June 2003). Beijing, for example, introduced further reforms in the summer of 2003, by issuing a new type of hukou registration called the Beijing Employment and Residence Permit, which would give its holders “rights to housing, education, investment, social and medical insurance and a driver’s licence” (South China Morning Post 8 July 2003). In order to be issued such a permit, however, a person must be a residing in Beijing, be employed, have a bachelor’s degree and two years of employment experience (ibid.). This, according to the South China Morning Post, means that only “a select few will qualify” (ibid.).

5.3 The Case of Guangdong

Although the province of Guangdong had enacted, as early as April 2002, a ban on the detention of undocumented migrants who had regular jobs and fixed homes (Solinger 20 Oct. 2004; Chan, Anita 9 Dec. 2004), the March 2003 incident involving the death of Sun Zhigang has resulted in additional reforms being undertaken at the provincial level (Chen 12-13 Dec. 2003). In March 2004, it was reported that the province of Guangdong was taking measures to protect the legal rights of its 23 million migrant workers and their families, including the rights to education and medical insurance (Business Daily Update 11 Mar. 2004). These measures included setting up offices across the province, at the provincial and local levels, to offer better services to migrants (ibid.). A 22 September 2004 article in the Shenzhen Daily also discusses the reforms taking place in the city of Guangzhou, where rural hukou holders with regular jobs and fixed residences would become eligible for Guangzhou hukous. A 28 December 2004 China Daily article discusses additional reforms planned by Guangdong Province, which, according to an official at the PSB, would lead to the total elimination of the agricultural hukou in the province in the years ahead.

According to a recent report by the Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong, starting April 2004, Guangzhou began allowing brides from outside the city to obtain permanent residence upon their return; investors from overseas, including investors from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau can obtain Guangzhou resident permits, and inland residents can obtain a Guangzhou hukou if they purchase a house or a property (9 Dec. 2004).

NOTE
6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF THE HUKOU REFORMS (THE “URBAN UNDERCLASS”)

According to Fei-Ling Wang, in today’s China, people can travel relatively freely (9 Jan. 2005). Generally, “the worst punishment that an illegal migrant (floater) faces is forcible return to his/her hometown or village” (Wang 20 Jan. 2005; see also Carrillo 28 Jan. 2005). Wang adds that this is “often a losing battle” as the floaters simply return to the area from which they were removed (20 Jan. 2005). In addition, the reforms introduced in 2003 have greatly limited repatriation to “paupers and criminals,” while making it relatively easy for ordinary migrant workers to get legal, albeit temporary, urban registration (Wang 20 Jan. 2005; see also Carrillo 28 Jan. 2005 and Chan, Kam Wing 2004).

Although the hukou reforms have facilitated population movement and created opportunities for rural migrants, academics and human rights activists who have analyzed the effects of these reforms on contemporary Chinese society generally agree that the reforms have failed in eliminating the social gap between urban and rural residents (see Solinger 20 Oct. 2004, 2; Wang Jan. 2005, xii; Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003, 7; Chan, Kam Wing 2004). The movement of rural migrants to urban areas saw the emergence of a new socio-economic divide within China, that of “urban underclass” (Solinger 20 Oct. 2004, 2; see also Wu and Treiman Oct. 2002, 10; Cheng 12-13 Dec. 2003, 7; Carrillo 2002). In a 20 October 2004 paper entitled “The Creation of a New Underclass in China and its Implications,” Dorothy Solinger, a professor of political science at the School of Social Sciences, University of California, argues that it was in fact the “fundamentally altered agenda put forward by the ruling party after 1978 that, over a couple of decades, has succeeded in producing a poverty-stricken mass among the urban populace” (1). Beatriz Carrillo, in her 2002 paper entitled “Rural-Urban Migration in China: Temporary Migrants in Search of Permanent Settlement,” explains that one of the problems with the hukou reforms is that, even though the government can no longer restrict migrants’ entrance to the cities, it still can, through the hukou system, establish who is and who is not an “urban citizen” (20).


7.1 Description

The hukou document is a booklet resembling a passport (Wang 16 Feb. 2005). Its cover is plastic or laminated (ibid.), of a reddish brown colour, bearing the China national emblem printed in gold (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 18 Feb. 2005). Some booklets, issued mainly prior to 1990, may be larger and have a manila paper cover (Wang 16 Feb. 2005). The inside pages are not numbered, and are of a “bluish colour,” although the blue may vary slightly depending on the age of the booklet (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 22 Feb. 2005).

In a report received on 18 February 2005, the Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong described the hukou booklet as follows:

The first page of the hukou booklet contains “Noted Items” stating the following:

1. [The] Household Register (Hukou) is an identification document which indicate[s] the citizen’s identity and the relationship between family members. It is used by the registration authority for household inquiries. The household holder or members of the household have to present this register to the registration authority for investigation and verification.
2. [The] Household holder has to keep the register in proper condition and not to alter, transfer or borrow the register privately and report immediately to the registration authority when the household register is lost.
3. [The] Household Register belongs to the registration issuing authority, any other units or individual are not allowed to add anything onto the register.
4. [The] Household holder has to report to the registration authority if there is any change in the number of household members or registered items.
5. If the whole household move[s] out of the registered district, [it] should report for cancellation of the household.

The second page of the *hukou* is the “Address Page” and contains the following items:

- Type of Household
- No. of Household
- Name of Household
- Address
- Household Special Seal from the Provincial Public Security Department
- Household Special Seal from the local issuing authority (right seal)
- Handling Person’s signature/seal
- Date of Issue

The third page of the *hukou* booklet is the “Principal Holder Page” and contains the following items:

- Name
- Householder or relationship with householder
- Former Name
- Sex
- Place of Birth
- Ethnic Group
- Place of Origin
- Date of Birth
- Other address in the city
- Religion
- Identity card number
- Height
- Blood Type
- Education Level
- Marital Status
- Work Place
- Position
- When and from where moved in to this city
- When and from where moved in to this address
- Handling person’s signature/seal
- Registration Date

The subsequent pages of the booklet contain the same information, but for other members of the household; the only difference is that the top right hand corner indicates the relationship between the individual named on this page and the principal householder (Canadian
Consulate General in Hong Kong 18 Feb. 2005). All altered or deleted items on the hukou must be stamped by the issuing authority (ibid.).

Although hukou booklets are normally printed, hand-written booklets still exist, either because they had to be issued urgently, or because the PSB office does not have computers (ibid. 6 Jan. 2005). Manual entries remain common (ibid.; Wang 16 Feb. 2005), but not in urban or fairly developed rural areas (ibid.).

7.2 Issuance Procedures

Hukou issuance is the responsibility of the PSB (Carrillo 8 Dec. 2004; Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004; Wang 9 Jan. 2005). While people can travel relatively freely within China, in order to legally change permanent residence, one still needs approval from the PSB (ibid.). Except for persons who are performing their military service, household registration is issued by the PSB office in the place of permanent hukou registration (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 9 Dec. 2004), which is sometimes not the place of residence (Wang 9 Jan. 2005).

7.2.1 Changing hukous

If a request to change a person’s permanent hukou residence is approved, the individual must notify the PSB office in the original hukou zone to have his/her name deleted, as well as notify the PSB in the new hukou zone, where his/her name would be registered (Wang 9 Jan. 2005). This notification should be done within 30 days (ibid.). According to Beatriz Carrillo, in practice, migrants tend to seek prior approval only when travelling between provinces or to larger urban areas (8 Dec. 2004). Intra-provincial migrants, on the other hand, are less likely to register with the hukou authorities, since they can blend more easily with the local population (Carrillo 8 Dec. 2004).

7.2.1 Applying for a hukou

Generally, with the exception of minors or the medically disabled, one must apply in person to the PSB office to obtain a hukou or a personal identity card (Wang 9 Jan. 2005). According to Wang, with the right connections and possibly a power of attorney, duplicate documents may be issued to a person via a relative or a friend (ibid.). With a valid reason, and a small fee paid to the local police station, a person may obtain a duplicate hukou booklet (ibid.).

7.2.3 Who can obtain a hukou

The hukou is mandatory for all PRC citizens aged one month and over (Wang 9 Jan. 2005; Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 20 Jan. 2005), including convicts and individuals wanted by the authorities (Wang 9 Jan. 2005). Although there is only one public security department in China, the various police stations all have sections which deal with household registration; therefore, if one is wanted by the authorities, it will be registered in his/her hukou record held by the hukou police (Carrillo 28 Jan. 2005). When a convict is sent to prison, his/her hukou is automatically cancelled by the hukou police, and transferred to the area of incarceration (Wang Jan. 2005, 66). Fugitives who do not want to reveal their identity may claim not to have a hukou document, and some children born outside of the family planning quota (mainly in the countryside) may not have been registered with the hukou authorities (ibid. 9 Jan. 2005). Those who travel overseas “for more than a year must cancel their hukou when applying for their passports and may restore their previous hukou upon returning” to China (ibid. Jan. 2005, 66).

7.2.4 Number of hukous per household

A household cannot have two non-identical hukous, just like a person cannot have two non-identical identity cards, unless one is fake (Wang 9 Jan. 2005). Generally, minors living with their parents cannot be listed as the heads of their household, except by some “illegal manipulation” where there may be some benefits involved, such as housing allocation (ibid.).
According to Wang, while there are many types of fraudulent activity with regard to the hukou system, this one would be considered minor, and is relatively rare (ibid.).

Adult children, married or unmarried, who live on the family land but in a different dwelling from that of the parents, may obtain separate hukous as heads of their own households (ibid.). However, the PSB would approve the issuance of a new hukou only if the child in this case is “financially separated” from his parents prior to the division of the household (ibid.).

7.2.5 Documents required for hukou registration

According to Fei-Ling Wang, in order to acquire hukou registration, one must produce birth papers; however, to acquire a duplicate or a replacement hukou booklet, a personal identity card, some other identification papers or even local officials’ approval, are usually sufficient (9 Jan. 2005).

7.2.6 Issuance time

The processing of first-time registration ranges from a few hours to a few days (Wang 9 Jan. 2005). Obtaining a duplicate hukou booklet is usually “speedy” as well, and can even be done on the spot (ibid.). When a person moves, however, it may take longer to re-register, depending on whether there is a quota on how many can enter each year in the new locale (ibid.).

7.2.7 Changes that must be reported to the hukou police

Although the hukou police often keep track of a person’s employment information, there is no legal requirement to update the job status of a resident (ibid.). Changes which require a new registration, on the other hand, such as marriage, change in family status and relocation, must be reported to the hukou authorities (ibid.).

7.2.8 Uses of the hukou booklet

The hukou booklet is usually required for school registration in local public schools, and when applying for an original or a replacement personal identity card (ibid.). Although it is not required for medical care, it can be used for identification purposes anywhere that an identity document is required (ibid.). According to Wang, if a member of a household travels abroad with the original hukou in his/her possession, the family back home would have no difficulty obtaining a duplicate hukou booklet (ibid.). According to Beatriz Carrillo, individuals in China do not need to use their hukou on a regular basis (8 Dec. 2004). They can use their national identity card at the bank and at most government departments, even while travelling within China (Carrillo 8 Dec. 2004).

7.3 Fraudulent Hukou Documents

The use of fraudulent hukou documents remains common in China (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 20 Jan. 2005; Wang 20 Jan. 2005; Carrillo 28 Jan. 2005). Fake hukou booklets and other identity documents can be purchased on the black market, and even semi-open market (Wang 20 Jan. 2005). Those caught selling or purchasing fake identity documents can be charged with criminal offences (Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 20 Jan. 2005). According to Wang, persons caught with a fake hukou in their possession are punishable by fines only, but those caught producing and selling fake documents may be prosecuted (9 Jan. 2005).

The hukou remains a key identity document in China (Wang 9 Jan. 2005; Canadian Consulate General in Hong Kong 20 Jan. 2005) and those who acquire fake hukous are usually rural migrants attempting to improve their access to social benefits by acquiring urban hukous (ibid.; Carrillo 28 Jan. 2005).

According to two sources, violation of regulations is also common in the application of the hukou system (Chan, Anita 9 Dec. 2004, 5; Wang Jan. 2005, 56). For example, a Guangdong survey found that 80 per cent of overseas owned companies in China were not concerned about
whether or not the documents used by job applicants were forged because it had no effect on productivity (Chan, Anita 9 Dec. 2004, 5). According to Fei-Ling Wang, “[b]ribery and connections have become natural companions of the seemingly rigid hukou system,” providing a few with an “easy way out short of damaging the whole system” (Jan. 2005, 56).

NOTE

[11] Given the difficulty in obtaining information on Chinese identity documents and administrative procedures in China, much of the following information is uncorroborated and no cooperation could be obtained from the Chinese Embassy in Canada.

8. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Most academics agree that the Chinese government has no intention of abolishing the HRS in the near future (Carrillo 28 Jan. 2005; see also Chan, Kam Wing 2004 and Wang Jan. 2005, 52-53). While the government recognizes that the HRS is no longer compatible with the needs of a modern market economy, it still values it as a means of tracking social growth and ensuring social order (EIU 23 Aug. 2004; see also Alexander and Chan, Anita 1 July 2004 and Chan, Kam Wing 2004). In 2002, the Security Minister was quoted as having said that the HRS could not be eliminated because it was an important component of China’s administration system, and consequently “the hukou will not be abolished - not now and not in the future” (EIU 23 Aug. 2004; see also China Labour Bulletin 26 Feb. 2002). According to Fei-Ling Wang, the system remains in place because it performs important political functions, such as social control and crime fighting, as well as economic functions, such as economic planning (Wang 20 Jan. 2005). According to Beatriz Carrillo, the HRS helps the government limit the number of people it is obligated to include in the social security and welfare schemes, both of which function in urban areas only (Carrillo 28 Jan. 2005). The system also helps the government prevent massive population flows to the East (ibid.). Carrillo believes, however, that the general reform process of the hukou system is being directed towards more liberalization, not social coercion (ibid.).

NOTE

[12] A detailed discussion of these political and economic functions can be found in Chapters 4-5 of Wang’s Jan. 2005 book, Organizing Through Division and Exclusion: China’s Hukou System.

NOTES ON SELECTED SOURCES

Carrillo Garcia, Beatriz
Beatriz Carrillo Garcia is a PhD student at the Institute for International Studies, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia (University of Technology 5 Aug. 2004). Her research interests are migration, citizenship, social policy and social change in China (ibid.). The working title of her doctoral research is “New Urban Spaces: Chinese Rural Society in Reform. Migrants, Social Inclusion and Welfare Provision” (ibid.).

Chan, Kam Wing
Kam Wing Chan is a professor at the Department of Geography, University of Washington, Seattle, USA (University of Washington 1 Jan. 2005). His research focuses mainly on the issues of migration, labor market and urban finance in China (ibid.). He has published extensively on the hukou system and internal migration in China in both English and Chinese (ibid.).

Human Rights in China (HRIC)
HRIC is a non-governmental organization founded in March 1989 to campaign on behalf of human rights and democracy in China (Chinese Human Rights Web 29 Oct. 2003). It publishes the quarterly China Rights Forum, an online journal in Chinese called Ren Yu Renquan (Humanity and Human Rights), as well as reports on human rights conditions in China (ibid.).
**Solinger, Dorothy**
Dorothy Solinger is a professor of political science, School of Social Sciences, University of California (University of California 25 July 2003). Her research interests are Chinese domestic politics and political economy, comparative politics and East Asian politics (ibid.).

**Wang, Fei-Ling**
Fei-Ling Wang is an associate professor at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology, specializing in international relations and Asian politics (China Research Center n.d.). He has published books and articles in both Chinese and English (ibid.). His research on China's hukou system led to his arrest by the Chinese authorities in Shanghai on 25 July 2004 (Wang Jan. 2005, xiv). He was accused of seeking "state secrets," held for two weeks before being deported for "bad attitude" and "non-cooperation" (ibid.).

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