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［論文］

The Privatisation of Rural Industry and Retainment of Village Workers in China : The Case of Southern Jiangsu

Hong Park[1*] and Kent Deng[2]
[1] Hokkaido University, Japan,
[2] The London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

Abstract

Fei Xiaotong advocated a collective village and township enterprise-based rural industrialisation path for China, known as the 'Southern Jiangsu Model'. It has contributed greatly to the rise of rural income. The essence of such a rural industrialisation path is to allow the rural surplus labour force to leave farming but stay in villages instead of emigrating to large cities. Rural industrial enterprises are the key to absorbing surplus labour and raising rural income at the same time.

However, this model began to face serious challenges in the late 1990s due to problems with the business model of collective ownership. In contrast, a private enterprise-cum-path, known as the 'Wenzhou Model' has gained popularity. With this new approach, China's rural industrialisation has moved towards private ownership and private management.

Now, with the new trend of the 'Wenzhou Model', has the 'Southern Jiangsu Model' which favours village internal employment disappeared? To answer this question, this paper examines Kaixiangong Village, the very place where Fei's rural industrialisation path was originated, to see changes after privatisation of local collective enterprises. We argue that it is the village cadres-turned private managers that have inherited the legacy of prioritising village internal employment whereby the fruition of rural industrialisation regarding more rural job opportunities (and more rural income) continues.

Key words : Privatisation of Rural Industry, Retainment of Village Workers, Southern Jiangsu Model

* Corresponding author : park@agecon.agr.hokudai.ac.jp

1. Introduction

Of all the theories on rural industrialisation in China, the most prominent has been the 'Southern Jiangsu Model' (SJM) promoted by Fei Xiaotong (1910-2005). The centrality of Fei's model is to absorb rural surplus labour, increase peasant income, and reduce the rural-urban gap through industrialisation in rural regions. This is similar to the Japanese scholars Uno and Tsurumi's 'Endogenous Development Theory'[1]. These theories on rural industrialisation have been developed into general growth and development models from widely shared experiences in different regions, reflecting successful cases.[2]

Back in the 1980s, three main rural industrialisation models emerged in China to cater for regional conditions for grassroots industrial growth, i.e. the 'Southern Jiangsu Model', 'Wenzhou Model', and 'Zhujiang Model' (Yan[6]).[3] The model to which this article refers is the SJM, relevant to Suzhou, Wuxi and Changzhou, all located in the southern part of Jiangsu Province. Most effective in creating employment opportunities in rural regions, Fei's model is essentially one of township-owned enterprises that grew out of previous 'commune and brigade enterprises' during the People's Commune Era.

During the early 1990s, however, the 'Wenzhou Model' that was built on private enterprises gained growth momentum. In comparison, village and township enterprises under the SJM declined. More changes followed thanks to the '1999 Constitutional Amendment'. For the first time, private enterprises became legal. This ownership reform infiltrated village and township enterprises in southern Jiangsu in the name of privatisation of collective firms. As far as the ownership type is concerned, the SJM and the 'Wenzhou Model' converged. During the privatisation reform, changes in employing rural labour became a vital issue in southern Jiangsu, because it testified whether the previous rural employment preferential tradition and the previous contributionto villagers' income continued in newly privatised enterprises after the initial SJM petered off (Xin[5]).

This article takes one village in southern Jiangsu as a case to answer this question. We begin with the process of rural industrialisation in this village. We then analyse the main features and structure of rising number of private enterprises. We finally look into enterprise

1) Meanwhile, Japan began to debate on its domestic 'Endogenous Development Theory'. There was rare collaboration between Japan and China ; see Uno and Tsurumi[4].

2) Fei argued that 'A model means the pattern of development. This is because different patterns have been adopted in the pursuit for economic modernity due to regional differences in geographic, historical, social and cultural conditions.' See Fei[3], p.252.

3) The 'Wenzhou Model' refers to the development pattern in Wenzhou, south Zhejiang. Due to a high population density, the locals were traditionally engaged in handicrafts and trade outside agriculture. After the reforms, spontaneous economic activities often organised by private enterprises and grew fast in rural Wenzhou. It shared with the 'Southern Jiangsu Model' in the growth of village industry. In comparison, the 'Zhujiang Model' in the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong mainly resorted to foreign direct investment aiming at export processing. It refers to Shenzhen, Zhuhai and other special economic zones, as the window of China's export strategy.

performance and changes in the rural employment structure.

2. Growth in Village and Township Enterprises and Creation of Employment Opportunities

The case study cited in this article is Kaixiangong Village of Wujiang Municipality in Jiangsu Province, 120 kilometres from Shanghai. A case study of this village by the prominent social anthropologist Fei Xiaotong in the 1930s has made it well known in China and beyond.[4)]

In as early as 1968 during the Cultural Revolution, Kaixiangong Village stood out for its silk reeling in Jin Feng Filature. This factory was established jointly by several production brigades (i.e. villages), and was in 1972 transferred to the Miaogang People's Commune as its new owner. In 1977 and 1978, the village opened two synthetic textile mills with two production brigades. After the post-Mao de-collectivisation, a new administrative system combined the two production brigades into a single Kaixiangong Village. As a result, the two synthetic textile mills joined together with the new name of Kaixiangong Textiles in 1982. With it, the village set up an industrial park for a food-processing factory (1983) and a brewery (1987).

In the 1980s, the township-run filature, village-run textile mill and food-processing factory became the industrial core of the village. In 1984, the outputs of these three enterprises were worth 1.56 million, 2.66 million and 140,000 yuan,

Table 1 Industrial Employment and Wages in KXG Village

In persons, 1,000 Yuan RMB, %

Year	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1982	1,376	100	223	0	323	23.5	554	-	-	0	0	0	—
1984	1,411	141	437	0	578	41.0	1,311	57	195	0	0	252	19.2
1985	1,472	161	446	0	607	41.2	1,914	128	264	0	0	392	20.5
1988	1,578	185	444	0	629	39.9	2,658	277	530	0	0	807	30.4
1990	1,792	212	512	0	724	40.4	2,728	487	680	0	0	1,167	42.8
1992	1,552	346	536	0	882	56.8	4,550	865	1,190	0	0	2,055	45.2
1995	1,550	297	100	0	397	25.6	9,852	1,188	—	0	0	—	—
1996	1,526	312	90	51	453	29.7	11,690	1,968	277	0	615	2,860	24.5
1997	1,414	279	34	189	502	35.5	11,779	1,390	75	0	1,134	2,599	22.1
2000	1,332	210	0	270	480	36.0	11,872	1,890	0	0	1,800	3,690	31.1
2001	1,693	242	0	343	585	34.6	16,141	1,920	0	2,550	2,400	6,870	42.6
2002	1,546	0	0	392	392	25.4	16,502	1,500	0	1,320	5,410	8,230	49.9
2005	1,510	0	0	450	450	29.8	23,066	0	0	6,590	6,222	12,812	55.5
2008	1,636	0	0	884	884	54.0	34,824	0	0	-	-	-	-
2010	1,507	0	0	912	912	60.5	48,574	0	0	-	-	-	-

Source: Statistical data from KXG Villagers' Committee.

Note: A = Number of employees; B = Workers hired by township firms; C = Workers hired by village-owned firms; D = Workers hired by private firms; E = Total hired workers; F = % of industrial employees in the village's total workforce; G = Household income per year; H = Total wages for township workers; I = Total wages for workers in village-owned firms; J = Total wages for workers in private firms;
K= Total wages for workers in household enterprise and family handicraft; L = Wage total; M = % income from industrial wages in the household's total income.

respectively. They became 4.15 million, 3.42 million and 80,000 yuan in 1988. Reeling and textiles grew fast; food-processing declined.[5]

Table 1 shows changes in labour employment and wages in the village from 1982 to 2010 across nearly 30 years. In 1984, township-run Jin Feng Filature hired 280 workers, of whom 141 were local villagers. It hired 542 workers in 1988; 185 were villagers. The numbers became 780 and 346, respectively in 1992.[6] The share of villagers peaked at 50 percent. The reason lies in the fact that this factory began in the village and stayed in the village until the end. Villagers were offered jobs first: village-run enterprises hired about 200 workers in the early 1980s. The number of workers increased to 400-500 from the mid-1980s to 1992. In the beginning, each household supplied one industrial worker. Later, each supplied two (Zhu[7], p.235). Apart from village's own textile mills (later the amalgamated Jiangcun Textiles), a subsidiary factory was established inside the village in 1986 by an outside business Xinmin Textiles whose headquarters were in Shengze Town where most synthetic production was concentrated. These two village-run textile factories alone accounted for 40 percent of all employees of the village in the late 1980s; and 50 percent in 1992-4.

4) The authors began a field work since 2004 to systematically investigate the village business history, rural industry, villagers' employment structure, demography and families; see Sakashita [8], Park [9], [10], [11], Sakashita [12], Park [13], [14] and Park [15].

5) Unless stated, all the data come from the Kaixiangong Villagers' Committee.

6) For the total number of workers, see China's Political Consultative Conference [1], p.147.

In terms of workers' income, the total wage bill of Jin Feng Textiles and Kaixiangong Textiles (including Jiangcun Textiles) was 800,000 yuan in the late 1980s. It increased to two million yuan in the 1990s. It peaked at 2.8 million yuan. Industrial wages accounted for 20-30 percent of household income in the village in the later 1980s. They peaked in 1992 at 45 percent. In short, during the decade from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the share of workers in the village's total labour force and the share of industrial wages in village households' income maintained at the level of 40-50 percent and 20-45 percent, respectively. The mission of rural enterprises to absorb rural labour force to industrial sector was accomplished. It is worth noting that Jin Feng factory used silk produced by villagers and hence maintained a close tie to silkworm keepers in the village. The village synthetic factory, however, used materials imported from outside, it thus no longer had the same tie to the village's agriculture.

3. Transition from Collective Ownership to Private Ownership and Labour Supply

1) Enterprise structure and labour employment

Village-owned enterprises reached a golden age in the early 1990s. But they soon ran business in the red after 1995 and suffered from *de facto* bankruptcy. Workers were laid off. Bankruptcy was considered a problem stemmed from bad management. Changes followed. Firstly, 500 villager-workers losing their factory jobs, which in turn increased labour supply to family handicraft business in the village. As nearby Hengshan Town developed a wholesale sector for knitted goods, many Kaixiangong households became sub-contractors of the knitting industry. Later, these knitting families directly supplied products to the Hengshanmarket (Park [9]). Secondly, with the 1997 nation-wide privatisation scheme, managers of village-owned enterprises began to run factories as privatefirms. By 2002, collective firms in the village had all been privatised. New private textiles were also set up inside the village industrial park. Private firms and private households prevailed the industrial output of the village.

We now use data from the Village Committee to elaborate the change in the village industry. The period before 2001 can be regarded as that of transit in which family/household firms increased from 30 to 120. On average these firms were tiny. Their aggregate business revenue grew from 4.1 million yuan (140,000 yuan per firm) to 12 million yuan (100,000 yuan per firm). Business profit increased from a total of 1.6 million yuan (50,000 per firm) to 3.6 million yuan (30,000 per firm). The total workers also increased significantly from 51 to 240. As the total wage bill accounted for 15 percent of the total business income, the wage income from these family/household firms was 2.6 to 3.7 million yuan, at the same level of 2.8-million-yuan wage bill for all village-run textile firms. This shows how strong mini-firms grew during the privatisation reform.

From 2001 on, a dozen private enterprises emerged. Their aggregate business revenue rose fourfold from 20 million yuan in 2001 to 88 million yuan in 2008. Their profit also increased from 2.6 million to 16 million yuan. Household firms on the other hand numbered 210 in 2001. In 2002, they were made of 80 household enterprises and 70 family handicrafts producers. After that, their total number remained stable. Household firms mainly engaged in wool knitting. Data show that their total income increased from 16 million to 35 million yuan; and their total profit, from 2 million to 7.4 million. A significant change occurred in 2001 due to business amalgamation between more advanced Xicaotian Village and Kaixiangong Village.

On the labour employment front, the number of workers hired by private enterprises increased from 343 to 450. The number employed by household firms and handicrafts families grew from 800 in 2001 to 1,070 in 2002. But the number dropped to 390 in 2003 and then gradually recovered to 560 in 2005. Such fluctuations were largely caused by immigrants in 2001 and 2002. A large share of these immigrants was absorbed by household firms. In 2005, the total number of industrial employees was 1,010 in the village. Even so, about 500 local villagers were employed by private enterprises. This number was lower than the 1992 level (882, see Table 1), but exceeded the rural industrial employment capacity during the transition period. In any case, these private enterprises still provided local villagers with jobs.

Regarding wages, as shown in Table 1, the total wage bill paid to the local villager workers by the private enterprises increased from 2.6 million yuan in 2001 to 6.6 million in 2005. If the wage bill of Jin Feng Filature was included, the amount was 4.5 million and 6.6 million yuan, respectively. Jin Feng stopped operating in 2004. Its wage loss was compensated by a fast growth in the total wage bill in the private enterprises in 2005. The total wage bill of the household firms increased from 2.4 million yuan in 2001 to 6.2 million in 2005. Meanwhile, a large proportion of the wage earnings drained from the village, thanks to immigrant workers hired by these firms. The total wage bill of the village reached 12.8 million yuan in 2005, surpassing the 1996 level of 2.8 million yuan (counting the nominal value) by a large margin. In the early 2000s, a recession in textile industry had negative impact on the private business growth. In 2002, the total wage bill declined sharply (1.3 million yuan). So, there was a degree of instability. Even so, both the level of peasant employment and the degree of peasant income increase remained the same levels in the pre-privatisation era.

2) Changes in rural industrial structure and labour employment

We now use long-term employment statistics to elaborate labour employment trend after privatisation (see Table 1). Under the collective ownership, the highest number of villagers employed by industrial enterprises was 854 in 1995. After village-run enterprises hired fewer, private enterprises stepped in employing more workers from 1997 on. For example, by 2000, the township-run textile firm Jin Feng had reduced its workers by 30 percent from its 1996 level. The firm was finally contracted out in 2001. As a result, its data were no longer available. Among the private firms, due to the 2001 amalgamation between Kaixiangong and the neighbouring Xicaotian, labour employment data discontinued. But it is certain that the employees from Xicaotian remained at about 100 people, which makes the number of Kaixiangong villager-employees around 450. The industrial employees reached a peak of 55 percent of the workforce. Since then the share declined to 25 percent in 2002 before recovering. In particular, after 2006 there was a sudden increase of villagers hired by industrial enterprises. The number exceeded 900 in 2010, for 61 percent of the village internal workforce. Meanwhile, wool knitting experienced continuous technological upgrading from manual to semi-automatic and full automatic. Family operations were replaced by large-scale modern factories. Some factories left the village for better locations where the whole sale market was. All these factors caused the decline in the number of workers employed by the knitting sector. Needless to say, most knitters were immigrants anyway.

4. Production Management

1) Composition of the private enterprises

What did the composition of the private sector look like? Table 2 highlights the situation of the private sector in 2004. Of the 16 enterprises, 10 were run by villagers privately (No.2 to No.7 and No.11 to No.14), and 6 by external businessmen (No.1, No.8 to No.10, No.15 and No.16). Among all enterprises, 10 were engaged in textiles, Jin Feng Filature (with a silk cloth weaving workshop) being the largest factory in the village with its 200 or so workers. At the end of 2004, the firm suffered from losses in investment in the stock exchange, which in turn forced the factory to close down. It eventually declared bankruptcy in 2006. In 2007, three enterprises - O Tailors, T Textiles and J Sweaters - moved in. All these changed the enterprise composition in Kaixiangong Village.

Of the ten synthetic factories, seven were

Table 2 Villagers-run Private Enterprises in KXG Village (2004)

		No.	Age of entrepreneurs	Date to establish	Looms	Employees: Persons	Employees: Villagers in total(%)	Wage (Yuan)	Entrepreneurs' Resumes	Note	Current status
Textiles	Township-run	1		2002 (1968)						Privatised in 2002	Business terminated in 2004
Textiles	Villagers-run	2	43	2003 (1997)	36 new machines	16	100	1,200～1,500	Ex-manager of the village factory, current party secretary		Continues
Textiles	Villagers-run	3	40	2002	48 new machines	80	50	1,300	Technician of KXG Textile Mill		Continues
Textiles	Villagers-run	4	59	2002	84 old machines	90	100	1,000～1,200	Ex-manager of the village factory, current party secretary		Continues
Textiles	Villagers-run	5	41	1998		8	30	1,000	Technician of No.1	Taking over Wujiang Jinfeng Silk Weaving Facrory from the Jinfeng Group, joint ownership by two partners	Bankcrupt, land leased to 4 other businesses
Textiles	Villagers-run	6	41	1998	50 manual machines	160	5	1,300	Technician	Household knitting	Continues
Textiles	Villagers-run	7			42 old machines	50				Moved out in 2004	Moved in to the Industrial Park
Textiles	External enterprises	8	46	2000	36 old machines	40	50		Employee of local shop	Starting with a 3-men partnership; becoming independent in 2003, leasing machines from No.1	Purchased by No.2
Textiles	External enterprises	9	41	2003	48 new machines	15	20	1,300	Employee of local shop	Lease machine from No.1	Moved in to the Industrial Park
Textiles	External enterprises	10	35	2002	24 new machines 40 old machines	20	50	1,700～1,800	Driver from outside	Taking over XCT factory	Continues
Other	Villagers-run	11	43	1984		25	5	800～1,000	Ex-manager of the village factory, current party secretary	Electronic components	Continues
Other	Villagers-run	12	52	2004 (1997)		8		700～800	Ex-mamanger of village mill, 1990-96	Production and sales of spirit	Continues
Other	Villagers-run	13	59	1998		8	100		Township-run food-processing factory salesman	Originally dry-fruit processing, later out-sourcing processing	Bankcrupt in 2006
Other	Villagers-run	14	40	2003		6		1,000	Township-run metal factory salesman		Continues
Other	External investment	15		1996						Mainly pickles-making, Taiwanese	Continues
Other	External investment	16		1998						Takking over township-run metal workshop, Taiwanese	Continues

Source: Statistical data from KXG Villagers' Committee, as well as interviews.

Note: No.8 purchased looms from No.2 and rented land for factory from No.2. No. 9 rented both looms and land from No.2.

weavers; No.2 to No.4 and No.7 were run by Kaixiangong villagers; No.8 to No.10 were run by external owners. Also, No.8 and No.9 were related to No.2, regarding looms and factory site. Both were purchased by No.2. The owners of No.2 and No.3 were ex-managers of Kaixiangong Textiles. No.10 came from Xicaotian after the privatisation reform (owner being a non-villager). These weavers formed the core of the private enterprises. But, due to their small scale, their growth was not stable. Two went bankrupt. Two moved out to a township industrial park. Of the other weavers, No.5 produced cotton cloth; No.6 produced sweaters. The former went bankrupt in 2004, and the later grew out of a family business.

Of all the rest factories, the longest-lasting private firm was No.11. It produced electronic components. No.12, No.13 and No.15 were food-processors. No.14 and No.16 were metal workshops. No.15 and No.16 were owned by the Taiwanese as a result of the FDI policy of the township government.

In addition, apart from No.1, all the firms depended on external supply of materials and cheap labour. Excluding Jin Feng and Taiwanese firms, in 2004 textile firms hired 509 workers, and other firms hired 47, totalling 556. No.2, No.4 and No.13 hired exclusively villagers, over 200 in total. The wage rates were 1,300 yuan per month for textile workers; other workers were paid 700-1,000 yuan each per month.

2) Management of private enterprises and employment of workers

We selected five textile factories and three other firms to elaborate business management

Table 3 Business condition of the Private Enterprises in KXG Village(2006)

In persons, 10,000 Yuan RMB, Yuan RMB, %

Product	Enterprise (No.)	Workers	Annual sales turnover	Yuan/metre	Total Wages	Monthly wage per worker	Profit	Wage rate	Profit rate
	2	65	1,913	2.6	97	1,275	151	5.0	7.9
	3	80	2,668	3.9	128	1,302	217	4.8	8.1
	4	50	1,440	2.7	81	1,208	114	5.6	7.9
	9	28	653	1.3	35	1,188	51	5.4	7.8
	10	50	926	2.9	65	1,218	73	7.0	7.9
	Sub-total	273	7,600	2.7	406	1,252	606	5.3	8.0
Cotton cloth	5	12	151		12	975	12	7.9	7.9
Wollen sweaters	6	260	1,872		244	1,175	146	13.1	7.8
Electronic components	11	12	152		17	873	12	11.3	7.9
	Total	557	9,775		679	1,204	776	6.9	7.9

Source: The same as Table 1.

(Table 3). First, in terms of employment scale, all textiles firms hired over 50 workers each in 2006, apart from No.9. Firm No.6, a sweater maker, hired 260 workers and hence topped the list. No.5 (a producer of cotton cloth) and No.11 (a producer of electronics) were both small and hired about 10 workers each.

Second, regarding investment in fixed capital, textile factories differed from any other factories. Insider the textile sector, there is investment difference between shuttle looms and water jet looms. By 2004, three factories had been upgraded with jet looms (No.2, No.3 and No.9). At the time, the distribution between shuttle and water jet looms was 124 versus 156. By 2006, all looms have been upgraded to water jet.

In terms of output value, Factory No.3 topped the industry (27 million yuan). This was attributed to its adoption of the double jet loom technology which enabled the factory to produce blended velvet and silk cloth at the price of 3.9 yuan per metre. Products of other producers - No.2, No.4 and No.10 - were sold at a narrow band of 2.6-2.9 yuan per metre. What determined the piecemeal price was the type of looms. Factory No.9 produced 1.3 yuan per metre, the lowest of all, which matched its advanced looms and its economies of scale.

Factory No.6 grew out of a family business. Its production was semi-automatic, which was still labour intensive and needed many workers. But its output value was not too inferior to its counterparts, only slightly lower than factories No.2 and No.3. Output value of cotton cloth and electronic component factories was around one million yuan each and hence on a smaller scale.

In terms of monthly income, it was above 1,100 yuan in textile and sweater factories. Factory No.3 offered the highest wage of 1,302 yuan a month. The monthly wage for workers in cotton cloth factories was under 1,000 yuan. Such pay difference was determined by labour skills, working hours, and the hourly rate. The wage rate for factories producing electronic components was the second lowest. This was because of the labour intensive nature of welding. The total wage bill for the eight electronic component factories was 4.7-6.8 million yuan in

2004-6. Villagers of Kaixiangong accounted for 50 percent in the textile factories but only 5 percent in the sweater firms. This means that the total wage income of the local villagers was about two million yuan.

Finally, there is the issue of seasonality. The number of workers in the textile sector decreased in February and March surrounding the Chinese New Year holiday. But the output of the sector remained largely unchanged. The production in the sweater sector was concentrated in five months from September to the Chinese New Year and then stopped production during June to August. This seasonality was the main reason for the village firms to hire immigrant workers rather than local villagers. Sweater production began in the mid-1990s, coinciding with the influx of immigrant workers.

5. Conclusions

As Fei Xiaotong advocated, to establish rural enterprises was to industrialise the rural economy. Fei's final objective was to create employment opportunities including part-time jobs for peasants, which in turn increased peasant income whereby the urban-rural gap was to be reduced. This is what the SJM was all about. Kaixiangong cited in this article is a typical case. Rural industrialisation prevented city-bound emigration of the rural population and materialised the endogenous development theory by allowing villagers to leave farming but stay in villages of a dual economy.

In terms of a backward-linkage growth pattern, there was the case of Jin Feng which grew from a village joint venture to a township enterprise. It depended on cocoons supplied internally by villagers and hence maintained a close tie to agriculture. Later, the village-run synthetic textiles and family/household-run knitting business received their materials from external sources. The ending of Jin Feng meant that rural industry lost its growth endogeneity apart from its rural labour supply. Village's silk-farming declined as a result, too.

Nevertheless, absorbing rural labour maintained even after the industrial enterprise ownership reforms. During the 1996 ownership transition, it was household firms that absorbed unemployed peasants. After 2001, private enterprises – mainly synthetic textiles' – rose and then overcame the recession of the textiles. These firms hired more workers with better pays than the era of the collective ownership. This point is supported by the fact that 61 percent of the village workforce was hired by the private enterprises in Kaixiangong in 2010. It means that the SJM still hold on its place in rural growth and development.

On the other hand, it is also true that, apart from private firms owned by villagers, the desire to hire villagers declined while employing immigrants increased. Family firms that were subject to seasonality depended on immigrants. These issues are beyond the scope of this study.

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