

PEOPLE FIRST

Report on Relocation for South-to-North Water Diversion Project of China



Zhao Xueru Du Bingzhao Zhao Yang



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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If you want to know about human rights in China,

Please go to the country to have a look.

If you have never been to China,

Please read this book.

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Introduction
I Am the Descendent of Migrants

In the autumn of 2007, I learned for the first time that I am the descendant of migrants.

On that clear day, I was working in Beijing when I got a phone call from my home in Yi County, Hebei Province. I was told that since I am the descendent of migrants, I qualified for a subsidy of a few dozen yuan each month, part of the national support policies for reservoir region migrants and their descendants.

When Angezhuang Reservoir was built in Hebei Province in 1958, my great grandfather brought my grandfather and father to move a few dozen kilometers to the mountains in the northwest of Yi County. For decades, I had been living as the descendant of migrants without any knowledge of my identity; now, the mention of the term “migrants” brought back memories that were obscure yet somehow familiar. An uncle of mine had stayed in the reservoir area. He shipped corn straw by boat from one side of the reservoir to the other. When his boat was caught in a storm, it sank and he was drowned. Elderly people told me that our original home had been submerged in the reservoir.

On the Qingming Festival each year (the traditional tomb-sweeping day in China that falls on 4, 5 or 6 in April), I would go back to my present home town to pay tribute to the graves of my ancestors dating from the generation of my great grandfather. The graves of my ancestors preceding my great grandfather had been submerged in the reservoir, so my great grandfather, my grandfather and my father used to go to the side of the reservoir to pay tribute to remote ancestors when I was a small boy.

After the phone call, I hurried to Xiguxian Village. Migration work should strictly follow official policy and procedures, so I had

to assist officials from the County Migration Office in conducting an investigation of my family background in order that we would be eligible for the subsidy. With more than 50 years having passed since the construction of the reservoir, the people who had lived in the region at the time had either migrated themselves or passed away. The only person who had knowledge of the time was a remote relative of mine, a 75-year-old man. When we met, he smiled at me and told me the names of my great grandfather, my grandfather, and my father as well as something of their families. Soon after this field trip, this elderly man passed away.

We produced a register of all the emigrants and their descendants in my family and submitted it to the government. Each of the members of my family, including my uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, were now eligible to receive a monthly allowance of 50 yuan as a subsidy for emigrants. This is the story of how I became aware that I am a descendant of the people who emigrated from the region when Angezhuang Reservoir was built in 1958.

Going back further into history, my distant ancestors came from the Grand Pagoda Tree area in Hongtong County, Shanxi Province. When I was a small boy, my grandfather told me that all the members of the clan had a small toenail beside the little toe. According to local legend, this toenail grew overnight when the clan were about to leave their original home town. It would help the members of the clan to recognize one another if they were separated and lost touch. The truth behind this part of the legend was proved when I took off my shoes to check.

However, it cannot be confirmed that my clan did come originally from the Grand Pagoda Tree area in Hongtong County.

In the north of China, tens of thousands of genealogies, pedigrees and steles record the large-scale migration from the Grand Pagoda Tree area in Hongtong County. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people go to the place to pay tribute to their ancestors. They have their names registered and worship before the ancestral tablets, because they are descendants of the original migrants from the Grand Pagoda Tree area.

I have noticed that many of the people have small toenails beside their little toes. Does that mean these people all originated from the place?

The history of China is actually a history of migrant populations, a history of human survival and development. If we delve further back through enough generations of genealogy, will we reach a couple who were our remote common ancestors?

Since 1949, there have been thousands of water conservancy projects of various sizes. Twenty million people have emigrated from the regions of those projects, making China the country with the largest number of reservoir emigrants. For example, Sanmenxia Reservoir, on which work started in 1958, inundated an area of 56,000 square kilometers and displaced 318,900 people. Danjiangkou Reservoir, also started in 1958, inundated an area of 30,100 square kilometers in three counties and two cities in Hubei and Henan provinces, displacing 382,000 people. Gezhouba Project, started in 1970, inundated 792 square kilometers of farmland in Yichang, Zigui and Badong counties as well as the urban area of Yichang, displacing 28,535 people. Xiaolangdi Water Conservancy Project on the Yellow River, built in 1994, inundated an area of 278 square kilometers, displacing 200,000 people. The Three Gorges Reservoir on the Yangtze River inundated 31,300 square kilometers of farmland and forests in Yichang, Zigui, Xingshan and Badong counties

in Hubei Province and the 16 counties (cities or districts) along the river from Wushan to Jiangjin in Chongqing Municipality, displacing a total of 1.13 million people...

The South-to-North Water Diversion Project started in 2002, once again posing the difficult problem of migration. The heightening of the Danjiangkou Dam on the central route alone displaced 345,000 people, including 181,000 in Hubei Province and 164,000 in Henan Province. Relocation in Henan Province from the region of Danjiangkou Reservoir involved 1,276 villager groups in 11 townships of Xichuan County, Nanyang City. By December 20, 2011, the large-scale relocation in both Hubei and Henan provinces had been completed.

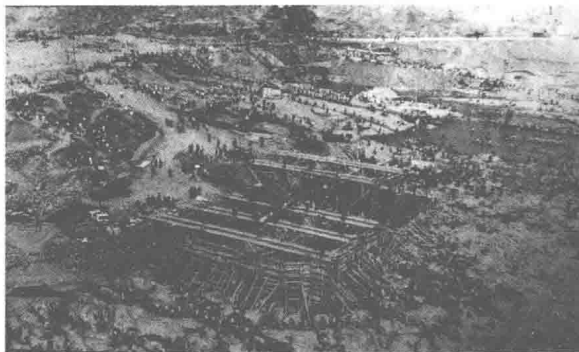
Relocation is a key issue for the construction of the Central Route of the South-to-North Water Diversion Project.

As a descendant of migrants, I have been to Henan and Hubei several times to conduct field research. This has given me an understanding of the advantages enjoyed by socialist countries in mobilizing national resources for large projects, and also of the stories behind the grand migration projects involved, and the thoughtful relocation of hundreds of thousands of displaced residents by the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government.

In reading my interview notes, a series of moving scenes and smiling faces flash back to my mind, which often bring tears to my eyes...

This book is dedicated to those who respect and support the South-to-North Water Diversion Project in China, and to my fellow migrants from reservoir regions.

Part I



The Country of Rivers

Chapter 1

River Disasters

Rivers in My Home

My home town is in Yi County, Hebei Province, about two hours' drive from Beijing.

Along the Beijing-Hong Kong-Macao Highway, the county town of Yi lies about 70 to 80 kilometers southwest of Beijing. Heading further northwest from the county town by Mengjin Hill, the Eighteen Twists, and Zijingguan Bridge, one will enter a narrow and winding valley between two hills that leads ultimately to Xiqingyuan Village where I was born and brought up.