



# **Social Ties, Resources, and Migrant Labor Contention in Contemporary China: From Peasants to Protesters**

*Jeffrey Becker*

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The growth of China's internal migrant labor population is one of the most important issues emerging from the Hu Jintao regime. As China continues to undergo an urbanization process as profound as any in modern history, there is little doubt migrant workers are affecting economic and political decision making at the central and local levels. Relying on interviews with over 250 Chinese migrant workers—peasant farmers who have moved to the cities in search of work—as well as interviews with Chinese labor activists, this book explores the evolution of migrant labor protest in China over the past three decades. It examines how migrant workers engage in protest today, and how they choose from available protest strategies.

While past studies of Chinese rural to urban migration have long acknowledged the importance of traditional rural ties between family members, this book demonstrates how new urban ties:

- help migrant workers learn of new protest options,
- navigate the legal system,
- connect with others sharing similar disputes,
- and identify additional resources.

The book also examines the growth and importance of Chinese migrant labor rights organizations and the role of information communication technology in migrant labor protest activity.

The findings presented here shed new light on Chinese state-society relations and economic development. Moreover, the findings from this book, which demonstrate how economic reforms create opportunities for protest, and how migrant workers take advantages of these opportunities, have implications for our understanding of contentious politics in other authoritarian states undergoing similar economic and demographic transition.

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