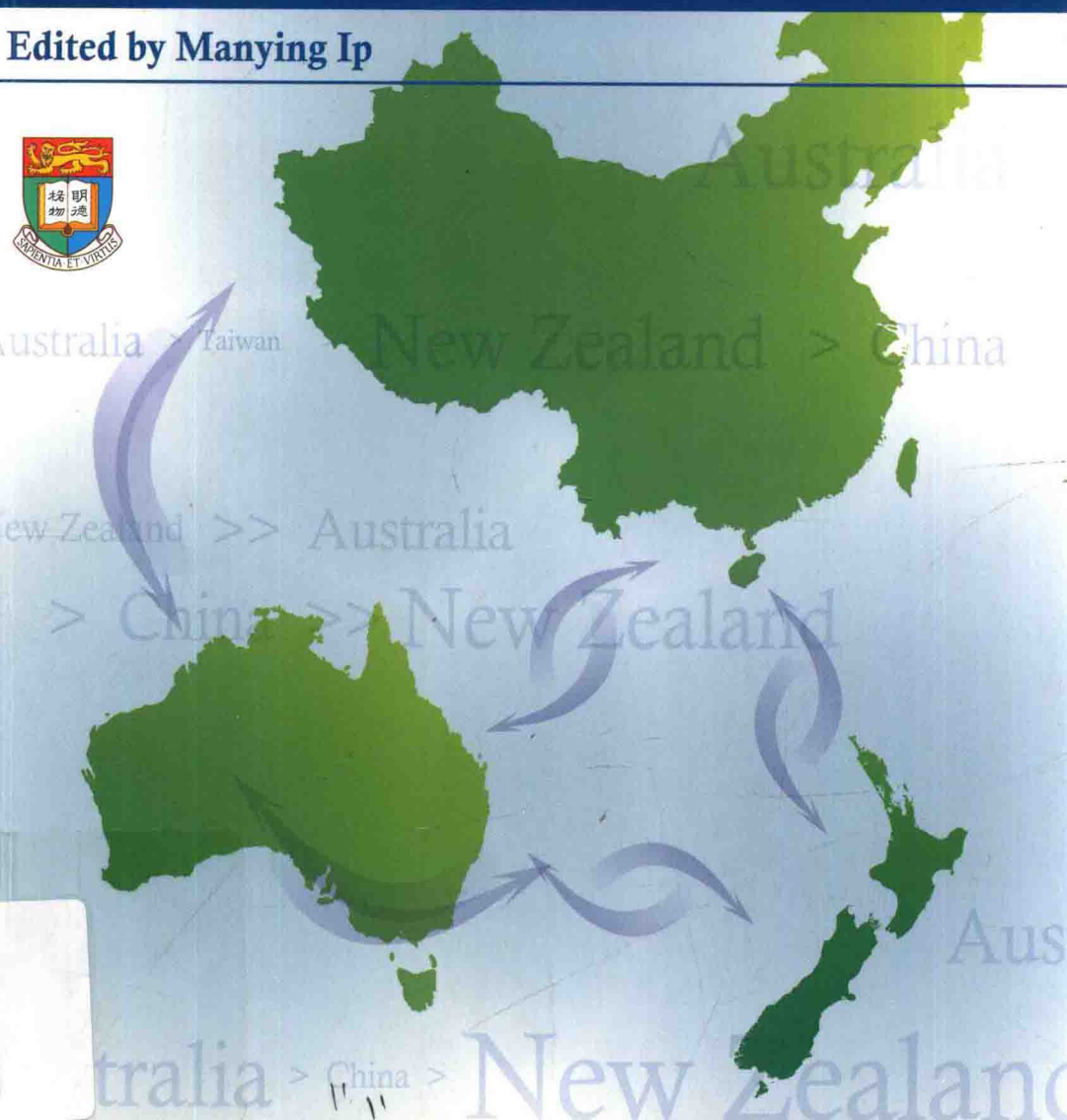


Transmigration and the New Chinese

Theories and Practices from the New Zealand Experience

Edited by Manying Ip



Transmigration and the New Chinese



Australia > China

Theories and Practices from
the New Zealand Experience

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藏书章

Edited by Manying Ip

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The Centre of Asian Studies of the University of Hong Kong was established in 1967 to provide a focal point for the activities of The University of Hong Kong in the areas of East, South and Southeast Asia; research assistance to scholars in these fields and with special reference to Hong Kong; and physical and administrative facilities for research, seminars and conferences dealing with both traditional and modern aspects of Asian studies. With effect from 1 July 2009, CAS has become part of the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The enhanced Institute will provide a robust platform for Asian and China studies.

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Preface

— *Manying Ip*

The Research Project: Circulatory Transmigration

This volume grows out of a Chiang Ching-kuo (CCK) Foundation funded research project 2007-2010, with me as Principal Director, and Lan-hung Nora Chiang (National Taiwan University) and Elsie Ho (formerly Waikato University, now Auckland University) as Co-Directors. The scholarly roots and connections that link us could be dated back much longer. The three of us have known and admired the works of each other, and started exchanging ideas and sharing data on migration studies for more than 15 years. We are deeply grateful that the CCK Foundation has supported us in this venture of a three-way international co-operation which has born fruit in such a satisfactory way.

Nora Chiang is a geographer who often incorporates a gender viewpoint in her research on Taiwanese migration to Canada, Argentina, Guam, and Australasia. In Taiwan, she is a leading figure in population studies and gender studies, and has a longstanding interest in Australasian Studies since 1997. Elsie Ho is a psychologist and demographer who has conducted extensive research on international migration to New Zealand and Australia. She studies immigrant settlement patterns and onward migration movements, including Trans-Tasman mobility. I am a social historian who examines the lived experiences of Chinese New Zealanders past and present, their changing sense of identity, their inter-group relations with other races — notably Chinese relationship with Maori, New Zealand's indigenous people. New Zealand is a bicultural country¹, and the position of the Chinese, as an immigrant group, is still to be worked at. Each of us has separately brought to this volume our particular academic disciplinary approach and research focus. More importantly, all three of

us share a conviction that migration studies should be inter-disciplinary, and we also believe firmly that empirical data is best generated by a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. Our common research interest has brought us together, and our dedication to similar theories and research methodologies means that we can work together fruitfully as a team.

The subject area that we have chosen to study, 'circulatory transmigration' was what we considered to be one of the most salient features of new Chinese migration. For over two decades, the constant mobility of the new Chinese migrants, their apparent inability or refusal to settle down in either the host country or their locality of origin 'permanently', has attracted much academic attention. We believed that, given our individual expertise and long experiences in migration research in the major sending regions, i.e. People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan and Hong Kong, we might be able to conduct in-depth family-based interviews and longitudinal surveys which will shed light on the why and wherefores of what Graeme Hugo calls 'The Momentum Factor', which has 'a self-perpetuating dynamism engendering flows of populations so powerful that the mobility is well beyond policy intervention.' (Hugo 1997)

Our research findings suggest that this circulatory flow phenomenon is a long-term mobility pattern of the current cohort of mainly middle-class skilled professional Chinese migrants. They have formed part of a global circulatory current, where they are assured of their citizenship and nationality, but not quite sure of (or not yet totally at ease with) their true cultural identity. Their allegiance to their host country and their homeland is at once ambiguous and flexible. Out of necessity and/or out of choice, they would employ a multi-local strategy to suit the different stages of their life-cycle, as well as the particular needs of their family members. We therefore propose that 'return migration' (new Chinese going back to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China) and 'step-migration' (new Chinese moving to New Zealand and then going onto Australia and Canada) are actually the manifestation of the multi-faceted phenomenon of what we shall call 'Circulatory Transmigration'.

The three directors of the project agreed on the above general hypothesis when we embarked on the first stage of our research, and in 2007 we met in Taiwan to work out a questionnaire (see Appendix D) which we agreed that we shall all use in our multi-site fieldwork. In our questionnaire design, we attempted to complement current migration surveys, most of which are narrowly focussed on the aspirations and intentions of the 'Principal Applicants', asking them their intentions, their commitment, and their degree of satisfaction with their new environment, etc. While factors involving family members are raised, e.g. 'children's education', these are often

put as auxiliary questions, and the children themselves are often not directly surveyed. We wanted their parents' and children's generations to be given equal weight in our research project. It is through the study of these three cohorts (both in the localities of origin and settlement countries) that we hope to arrive at a comprehensive and holistic understanding of issues pertaining to transnational mobility, globalisation, and identity. The proposed shift of approach is to look at the family as a 'unit of investigation' instead of looking at individual migrants as a unit or research subject.

This project was designed to be conducted at multiple sites (Australia, New Zealand, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) charting the multi-local movements of multi-generational members of selected new Chinese transmigrant families.

Organisation of This Volume

This present volume is organised into two parts. Part I consists of theory issues and our regional studies, which have generated rich empirical data that either challenged or supported the diverse theories of transnationalism and migration. It starts with an introductory essay by Josephine Smart, University of Calgary, entitled 'Circulatory Migration: A Brief Methodological and Theoretical Discussion'. She investigates the merits and limitations of using 'circulatory migration' as a concept, and cautions against the idea of ever conjuring up one 'grand theory in migration studies'. A comprehensive theory encompassing the many aspects of migration will have to be general and rather abstract, and it will be too nebulous to capture the specifics of the concrete migration process. Smart's insightful chapter has succeeded to show that 'within each thematic focus in migration research, there is an order within the seeming chaos.'

This short introductory chapter is followed by my chapter 'Rethinking Contemporary Chinese Circulatory Transmigration: The New Zealand Case'. It posits that New Zealand is very much an ideal social laboratory where inter-racial dynamics can play out in largely uncontaminated conditions, and highlights why we should reconsider the hitherto accepted concepts like 'migration', 'settlement', 'returnee', and 'step-migration'. The past expectations that migrants should behave in certain modes have beclouded researchers' proper recognition of transmigration and constant border crossings as a significant norm, not a mere aberration. After examining empirical data generated from multi-generational and multi-site interviews, I posit that when

migrant families are examined as a unit of study, any one of them could be labelled 'fully integrated' or 'transnational'.

Chapter 3 by Sally Liangni Liu is entitled 'New Zealand Case Study of PRC Transnational Migration: Returnees and Trans-Tasman Migrants'. Based on quantitative analysis of census data and migration statistics, and supplemented by in-depth interviews of 27 PRC families, she came to the conclusion of this particular cohort's sense of a 'homeland on the move'. Of particular value is her highlighting how PRC nationals perceive international migration and the way that it differs from those of other ethnic Chinese groups.

Chapter 4 by Nora Chiang entitled 'Staying or Leaving: Taiwanese-Chinese Making Their Homes in New Zealand' draws on comparisons with the author's previous and ongoing research on the Taiwanese diaspora in Canada, Guam, and Argentina. The chapter highlights internal Taiwanese factors which propel migrants overseas. Among these are the ever-present fear of Communist China, and the lesser-known factor of internal socio-political tensions between the pro-Nationalist and Pro-DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) camps. She concludes that there is a need to move away from a spatially rigid conception of citizenship and move towards a new flexible definition that allows citizens to retain a geographically hybrid identity as well as a physically mobile existence.

Chapter 5 by Elsie Ho et al. is entitled 'On the Move: Subsequent Migration Trajectories of Hong Kong Chinese Families to New Zealand'. The main point raised in this chapter is that in all transnational families, during the various stages of special arrangements of temporary split, dispersal and translocality, and then re-convergence (albeit in different dynamics and formation), it is often the woman who holds the fort and serves as anchor. Fulfilling the multi-generational 'three-level entry points' envisaged in our original proposal, the chapter devotes particular sections to the discussion of the separation and reunion of astronaut spouses, the onward migration of the 1.5 generation, and the meaning of 'home' for retired parents.

Chapter 6 is by David Ip (formerly University of Queensland and now Hong Kong Polytechnic University) entitled 'Simultaneity and Liminality: Identity Anxieties of 1.5 Generation Chinese Migrants in Australia'. He gives an in-depth study of the 1.5 generation of Chinese youths and their sense of identity and belonging. While the empirical data is Australian, the theory is universal; he believes that 'a borderless identity and belonging among migrants, especially among migrant children, should replace the old concept of expecting them to assimilate. "Simultaneity" is living

lives that are at once grounded and transnational, while “liminality” refers to the psychological space of undecided personal identity and belonging.’ David Ip calls for such tensions of identity to be properly recognised so that the continuous motions in life can be faced up to more effectively.

Part II consists of eight personal narratives written by migrants from different sending regions, each giving their lived experiences of how their families coped in the lengthy migration process, how mobility decisions were made, how compromises were arrived at, and the cost it inflicted on the families. Each personal narrative is preceded by a ‘migration trajectory’ chart showing how the narrator and his or her family members are dispersed. There is a separate introduction to this part of the volume outlining how these stories could be best read. Here, I would just say that Part II is intended to stand as qualitative evidence to the theories and discussion findings put forward in Part I. Negotiating migration trajectories is a delicate balancing act, especially when the needs of different generations of family members are changing and can no longer be accommodated within the same geographical space of abode.

I would like to draw readers’ attention to the Appendices which are provided as handy references. Appendix A is a pie-chart giving the details of the number and percentage of the different groups of ethnic Chinese residing in New Zealand during the 2006 Census. Appendix B is a short essay listing and explaining the New Zealand Government’s Immigration Legislation affecting the Chinese from 1987 to the present day. Appendix C is a line graph showing the fluctuation of incoming Chinese migrants to New Zealand. Appendix D is a copy of the questionnaire used for the research project. The appendices are provided with an aim of giving factual background information, and should be referred to while reading Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5.

We propose that the new Chinese migrants are astute, and wish to keep all options open. Their mobility pattern is dictated by the needs of various family members at different stages of their life-cycle. For example, the children may find studying in New Zealand and Australia more stimulating and more liberal, but once they complete their education, they may wish to start their professional career where the pay is higher, the market is bigger, or where the economy is booming, i.e. in Asia where their original homelands are located. The parents often find job opportunities more abundant in the homeland, where they have accumulated considerable social networks and cultural capital, but they might prefer to pursue a less high-pressure lifestyle and opt for a slower pace of life in Australia and New Zealand towards the latter part of their professional career. Then there is the older generation, the grandparents who might be asked to go to the migrant host countries to look after the grandchildren while the parents work

(either in the home country or in the host country). The needs and desires of the elderly Chinese await serious and specially designed in-depth study.

Our research recognises the complexity of the migration and re-location processes. We believe that the intricate web of family relationship governs decision-making. Onward movements are often cultural-capital accumulation processes whereby younger adult family members are dispersed strategically at various crucial locations. Return homeward movements are often necessitated by the fact that aging parents require long-term care in their declining health.

We recognise that the family unit might be geographically split or extended over different continents and yet remain 'a family' in essence. Furthermore, where individual members of the family are located might have strong impact on the circulatory mobility of other members. Most significantly, where the parents are located might affect the children's or the grandparents' 'sense of home'. It often impacts on their decision of re-location or ultimate 'settlement'.

Research Implications

On a policy level, this volume should be of interest because of the increasingly large number of 'global citizens' in the modern world. Large numbers of Chinese have multiple citizenship and permanent residency in various countries. They are entitled to social support and welfare benefits in several countries all at once. Where they intend to settle down in their final years will pose challenging issues to both migrant-receiving and migrant-sending countries. Policy makers responsible for planning education provision, labour-supply, human resources management, and welfare and health provision should all find this volume informative. Administrators whose portfolios include citizen obligations, including taxation and military services, for example, should also find the discussions and findings in this volume highly significant.

Acknowledgements

Lastly, on behalf of the team, I wish to thank various people and organisations which have made the research project and the compilation of this volume possible.

New Zealand's diplomatic representatives and trade officials in various cities have been very helpful to us in terms of assisting the setting up research networks, facilitating focus group meetings and creating opportunities for us to approach interviewees. These include Clare Fearnly and Michelle Slade in Taipei, Pam Dunn, Wen Powles, and Alexandra Grace in Shanghai, Guergana Guermanoff in Beijing, and Adele Bryant in Hong Kong. They created opportunities for us by hosting dinners and gatherings of expatriate Chinese New Zealanders, and facilitated our research meetings with local scholars.

I thank KEA (Kiwi Export Association) and the Kiwi Clubs in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong for welcoming us to their meetings. Various individuals have been extremely helpful in helping us organise focus groups and introducing potential interviewees. These include Max Zhou, and Joy Ding of Beijing, Calvin Pei of Shanghai, Sylvia Chu of Hong Kong, and Greg Mah of Sydney. Bobbie and Jamie Cornell of Nuzi Studio, Shanghai very ably organised and facilitated focus groups and welcomed us to their regular Friday 'expat Kiwi gatherings'. Nicky Smith of New Zealand Central, Shanghai kindly hosted us at the premises for several focus group meetings.

Professor Wong Siu-lun of the Centre of Asian Studies, the University of Hong Kong graciously hosted the two-day workshop for us in December 2009 and enabled us to meet and present our research papers. Teresa Tsai ably assisted the running of the workshop and symposium, and was instrumental in overseeing the process of the copy-editing of the manuscript.

Finally, we thank our anonymous reviewer for the critical comments and helpful feedback, and the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (incorporating the Centre of Asian Studies), the University of Hong Kong for undertaking the publication of this volume.

Manying Ip

Project Director and Editor

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- 1 *'Bicultural' refers to the cultures of Maori — the indigenous people, and that of the Pakeha — the British settlers and their descendents.*

Reference

Hugo, Graeme (1997). 'Migration and Mobilization in Asia: An Overview', in E. Laquian, A. Laquian, and Terry McGee (eds.), *The Silent Debate: Asian Immigration and Racism in Canada*. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia.