



International
Labour
Office

CONCEALED CHAINS

Labour Exploitation and Chinese Migrants in Europe

Edited by Gao Yun



D634.35

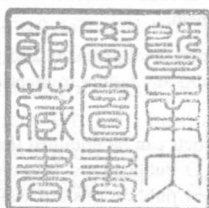
E 2011

141
T2

CONCEALED CHAINS

Labour exploitation and Chinese migrants in Europe

Edited by Gao Yun



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE • GENEVA

Copyright © International Labour Organization 2010

Cover illustration: © Gill Button - Cover photos: © Ronald Bedard - © Ooyoo - © Archana Bhartia - © Grafissimo

First published 2010

Publications of the International Labour Office enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to ILO Publications (Rights and Permissions), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: pubdroit@ilo.org. The International Labour Office welcomes such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered with reproduction rights organizations may make copies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose. Visit www.ifrro.org to find the reproduction rights organization in your country.

Gao, Yun (ed.)

Concealed chains: Labour exploitation and Chinese migrants in Europe

Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010

ISBN: 978-92-2-121993-4

forced labour / trafficking in persons / irregular migrant / migrant worker / Chinese / China / EU countries / France / Italy / UK

13.01.2

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the International Labour Office, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

ILO publications and electronic products can be obtained through major booksellers or ILO local offices in many countries, or direct from ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Catalogues or lists of new publications are available free of charge from the above address, or by email: pubvente@ilo.org

Visit our website: www.ilo.org/publns

PREFACE

There has been growing international concern that, unless adequate safeguards are taken, in a context of globalization, migrant workers can be subject to trafficking for labour exploitation and to forced labour in destination countries. One country that now places large numbers of its workers overseas, and to an increasing number of destination countries, is China. While many of its workers migrate through legal and regular channels, at least some of this movement is taking place through organized smuggling and trafficking syndicates.

The stereotype is that of a criminal “snakehead”,¹ the first link in the chain of an organized crime network, smuggling victims into a criminal Chinese underworld in a remote destination country where they work in slavery-like conditions in hidden sweatshops far removed from the rest of the national economy.

The reality is far more complex. In recent years, in Europe and throughout the world, some of the most serious cases of human trafficking and smuggling have indeed involved Chinese criminal networks exploiting their own fellow citizens. In other cases, Chinese workers are able to leave their country through legal channels, albeit often paying high charges to a myriad of recruiting agents and intermediaries, and nevertheless still find themselves enduring harsh working conditions and severe indebtedness in the destination country. In yet other cases the Chinese migrant workers, particularly those in an irregular situation, can be part of the underclass of migrants in the destination country who do casual work in a range of dangerous and poorly paid jobs in agriculture, food processing, construction and other sectors, without forming part of a specifically Chinese “ethnic niche”.

¹ Term used by migrants from Fujian to refer to people smugglers.

Are Chinese abroad particularly vulnerable to forced labour and trafficking, and, if so, why? When they work for long hours in difficult conditions that by most national standards would be tantamount to severe labour exploitation, by what criteria should this be judged? Should this be seen as consensual behaviour between the workers and their employers, because the workers can pay off their substantial debts only by enduring these conditions for a certain period of time? Or could this be seen as part of the trafficking for labour exploitation that many countries are now keen to prosecute and punish?

Ten years ago, in 1998, the ILO adopted its Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which requires its member States to respect and promote core labour standards, including the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour. In 2001, the ILO established the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL) as one of several measures taken to promote the 1998 Declaration. SAP-FL's mandate is to raise global awareness on forced labour and trafficking, to press for changes in policy and laws in cooperation with governments and social partners, as well as to increase the knowledge base on the scope and forms of forced labour throughout the world. Since then, it has directed a lot of attention to the forced labour outcomes of human trafficking and irregular migration. Research studies have focused on the root causes of trafficking, recruitment mechanisms, demand factors and forms of exploitation in major economic sectors. Guidance manuals on forced labour and trafficking have also been prepared for labour inspectors, employers and the business community, the legal profession and others.

The present research was undertaken as part of a cooperation programme between the ILO and the Government of China on forced labour and trafficking and the role of labour institutions in law enforcement and international cooperation in China. The four main objectives of this project were to: strengthen the law and policy framework on forced labour and trafficking for labour exploitation; address source areas of migration through the implementation of pilot programmes to prevent forced labour and trafficking; improve the transparency of the migration process and reduce the risk of potential migrants being trapped into forced labour and trafficking; and promote communication between the governments of China and destination countries to combat forced labour and trafficking for labour exploitation. Over a period of several years this project has involved a rich experience in China itself. Activities have included national and provincial seminars on trafficking, with participation by officials from a range of different government agencies; a successful pilot awareness-raising programme in the provinces of Fujian, Jilin and Zhejiang; the distribution of training materials for private employment agencies; extensive research on the recruitment mechanisms in source areas; and inputs to the five-year National Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Women and Children (2008–12).

The research studies in European countries have proved to be an invaluable resource input to the activities in China, generating the necessary knowledge base for the awareness-raising and training activities to prevent trafficking. Since early 2007, the ILO and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have been jointly implementing a follow-up project, financed by the European Union (EU), to promote cooperation between China and EU Member States to stem irregular migration and trafficking by building the capacity of government and local authorities to manage migration. Further studies are now being undertaken in other European countries to complement those in the present volume.

We very much hope that this book will contribute to enhanced cooperation between China and Europe on this important subject and that it will also improve the general understanding of the patterns of labour exploitation that must now be firmly confronted in European and other labour markets.

Roger Plant
Head, Special Action Programme to
Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL)
International Labour Office, Geneva

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|--|
| ASLC | <i>Association franco-chinoise de soutien linguistique et culturel</i> (Franco-Chinese Association for Linguistic and Cultural Support) |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| DÎLTI | <i>Délégation interministérielle à la lutte contre le travail illégal</i> (French Inter-Ministerial Delegation for the Prevention of Illegal Labour) |
| DPM | <i>Direction de la population et des migrations</i> (French Population and Migration Department) |
| DVD | Digital Video Disc |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |
| ECtHR | European Court of Human Rights |
| EU | European Union |
| GLA | Gangmasters Licensing Authority |
| HM | Her Majesty's |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| MIRE | Department in charge of migration within the Ministry of Labour |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| OCRIEST | <i>Office central pour la répression de l'immigration irrégulière et de l'emploi d'étrangers sans titre</i> (French Central Agency for the Suppression of Illegal Immigration and of the Employment of Foreigners without Permits) |
| OCRTEH | <i>Office central pour la répression de la traite des êtres humains</i> (French Central Agency for the Suppression of Human Trafficking) |

| | |
|--------|--|
| ODIHR | Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights |
| OFPPRA | <i>Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides</i> (French Agency for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons) |
| OMI | <i>Office des migrations internationales</i> (International Migration Agency in France), known since April 2009 as the <i>Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration</i> or OFII |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe |
| SAP-FL | Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour |
| SDSED | <i>Sous-Direction de la statistique, des études et de la documentation</i> (Division for Statistics, Surveys and Documentation in France) |
| SSLEI | <i>Section spécialisée de lutte contre l'emploi illégal</i> (special section for the prevention of illegal employment in France) |
| UK | United Kingdom |

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GAO Yun is Legal Officer of the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour at the International Labour Office in Geneva. She received her LLM in International and European law from the University of Geneva, and LLB from the Political Science and Law University in China. Ms. Gao worked as a lawyer in China for five years before joining the ILO in 2004. She is the author of various publications related to ILO core labour standards, including the protection of Chinese migrant workers overseas.

Véronique POISSON has a doctorate in social sciences from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (HESS, Paris) on contemporary Chinese migration. Her field work began in the 1990s, when she founded a Franco-Chinese association in a Chinese community in Paris. After obtaining a degree in Mandarin from INALCO (Paris) she collected over 10 years of ethnographic data from Chinese migrants in Paris and set up a project focusing on their integration. She also regularly visited the village of Zhejiang, a major source of Chinese migrants, to continue her field research.

LI Minghuan is Professor of Sociology Department, Xiamen University, China, and works as a consultant to the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of State Council, China. Prof. Li majored in Migration Studies at the Institute of Population Studies, School of Public Affairs, Xiamen University, and continued her graduate studies in universities in China and the Netherlands, receiving her Ph.D from the University of Amsterdam. She is the author of many articles and books. Recent publications include *A fieldwork report of Fujian qiaoxiang* [in Chinese] (Xiamen University Press, 2005), *A history of Chinese immigrants in Europe* [in Chinese] (Zhongguo Huaqiao Chubanshe, 2002) and *We need two worlds: Chinese immigrant associations in a Western society* (Amsterdam University Press, 1999).

Antonella CECCAGNO is Associate Professor of Chinese Language and Culture at the University of Bologna, Italy, where she also teaches Modern Society of China. She was Director of Research at the Centre for Immigration Research and Services in Prato, Italy, until 2007. She has acted as a consultant on businesses operated by Chinese immigrants and on the formulation of immigration policies. Her recent publications include *Shuobuchulai: La formulazione delle parole in cinese* [Shuobuchulai: Word formation in Chinese] (Serendipità 2009, with Bianca Basciano) and *Ombre cinesi?* [Chinese shadows?] (Carocci, 2008).

Renzo RASTRELLI is founder and Director of the Centre for Immigration Research and Services in Prato, Italy, and Professor of International Relations at the University of Florence, Italy. His research focuses mainly on deviancy, illegality and criminal activities of the Chinese in Italy. He advises Italian institutions active in crime prevention, namely the National Anti-Mafia Unit (DNA), the division of the Italian Carabinieri in charge of labour inspections, the Prato and Florence Financial Police, and Florence's Anti-Mafia Investigation Department (DIA). His most recent publication, together with Antonella Ceccagno, is *Ombre cinesi?* [Chinese shadows?] (Carocci, 2008).

Alessandra SALVATI worked as junior researcher at the Centre for Immigration Research and Services in Prato, Italy, from 2002 to 2007. She has authored a chapter on Italian legislation on migrants included in the book by Ceccagno and Rastrelli *Ombre cinesi?* [Chinese shadows?] (Carocci, 2008). She works with the Network Migration in Europe, the University of Venice and the Municipality of Prato on policies aiming at the integration of migrant students in state-owned schools.

Frank PIEKE is University Lecturer in the Modern Politics and Society of China at the University of Oxford and Fellow of St Cross College. He is also the Director of Oxford's China Centre and the new British Inter-University China Centre. Between 2003 and 2006 he was adjunct Director of the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), where he was also head of the research programme on sending contexts of migration. His recent publications include *The good communist* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming) and *Transnational Chinese: Fujianese migrants in Europe* (Stanford University Press, 2004, with Pál Nyíri, Mette Thunø and Antonella Ceccagno).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Preface | v |
| Abbreviations | xiii |
| About the authors | xv |
| Introduction (Gao) | 1 |
| Focus of research | 4 |
| Structure and methodology | 5 |
| Overview of content | 6 |
| <i>Migration costs and debt</i> | 6 |
| <i>The journey</i> | 7 |
| <i>Vulnerability in destination countries</i> | 8 |
| <i>Working conditions</i> | 9 |
| <i>Amnesties</i> | 11 |
| <i>Exploitation as abuse of vulnerability</i> | 12 |
| The international legal framework | 13 |
| <i>Forced labour</i> | 13 |
| <i>Human trafficking and smuggling of migrants</i> | 15 |
| 1. An overview of the migration mechanism between China and Europe (Li Minghuan) | 19 |
| Introduction | 19 |
| The re-emergence of the brokerage market: A historical review | 20 |
| From snakehead to tail: The emigration brokerage hierarchy | 23 |
| A highly profitable business: Debt and repayment | 27 |
| Playing edge ball: Operating between regular and irregular approaches | 31 |
| 2. Exploitation of Chinese immigrants' vulnerabilities in France (Gao and Poisson) | 33 |
| Introduction | 33 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Methodology | 34 |
| The legal and policy framework | 36 |
| <i>Human trafficking</i> | 37 |
| <i>Forced labour</i> | 37 |
| <i>Illegal labour</i> | 38 |
| Conditions of departure: The main triggers | 39 |
| <i>The socio-economic situation in China</i> | 39 |
| <i>Main source areas of migration</i> | 40 |
| The journey | 43 |
| <i>Arranging and financing the journey</i> | 43 |
| <i>Profile and typology of people smugglers/traffickers</i> | 45 |
| <i>Risks and logistics of the clandestine journey</i> | 46 |
| The vulnerability of Chinese immigrants in the destination country | 50 |
| <i>Isolation</i> | 51 |
| <i>The burden of debt</i> | 51 |
| <i>Violence and racketeering</i> | 56 |
| Integration into the economy of the diaspora | 57 |
| <i>Concentration in certain economic sectors</i> | 58 |
| <i>The ethnic Chinese niche</i> | 59 |
| <i>Bringing workers into France legally</i> | 59 |
| <i>Working conditions by sector of activity</i> | 61 |
| Legislation, policies and enforcement challenges | 70 |
| <i>Immigration policy and legislation</i> | 70 |
| <i>The criminalization of human trafficking</i> | 74 |
| <i>Measures to combat organized crime</i> | 75 |
| <i>Efforts to combat employers using illegal labour</i> | 76 |
| <i>The Labour Inspectorate</i> | 78 |
| <i>The police</i> | 80 |
| Conclusions and recommendations | 82 |
| <i>Training individuals to prevent forced labour and trafficking</i> | 84 |
| <i>Compensation for victims</i> | 84 |
| <i>Targeted sanctions</i> | 85 |
| <i>Opening up the ethnic niche</i> | 86 |
| <i>Broadening access to legal work opportunities</i> | 86 |
| <i>Training Chinese entrepreneurs</i> | 87 |
| <i>An information campaign to prevent illegal emigration</i> | 88 |
| 3. Exploitation of Chinese immigrants in Italy (Ceccagno, Rastrelli and Salvati) | 89 |
| Introduction | 89 |
| Methodology | 90 |
| The legal and policy framework | 91 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Regulating migration flows | 91 |
| <i>The fight against trafficking</i> | 95 |
| Immigration and public opinion | 97 |
| Understanding the irregular aspects of Chinese migration | 98 |
| <i>Legal investigations into trafficking and smuggling</i> | 99 |
| <i>Smuggling as a service</i> | 101 |
| <i>Illegal activities and risks of the journey</i> | 102 |
| The evolution of Chinese immigrants' activities | 105 |
| <i>Manufacturing activities</i> | 109 |
| <i>Commercial activities</i> | 109 |
| Working arrangements in the Chinese ethnic niche | 112 |
| <i>Chinese workshops and pronto moda</i> | 112 |
| <i>The organization of work in ethnic workshops</i> | 113 |
| <i>The effect of regional origins on opportunity</i> | 114 |
| <i>Flexibility: The compression of personal and family life</i> | 115 |
| <i>Competition and conflict management</i> | 116 |
| <i>Exclusion of zagong</i> | 118 |
| The adverse effects of amnesties | 120 |
| <i>Irregular workers</i> | 120 |
| <i>The costs of legalization</i> | 121 |
| <i>Amnesties and irregularities</i> | 123 |
| <i>Links with local society</i> | 126 |
| Irregularities, self-exploitation and forced labour | 129 |
| <i>Irregularities in Chinese workshops</i> | 129 |
| <i>The "Marco Polo" operation</i> | 130 |
| <i>The spectrum of labour practices and worker vulnerability</i> | 131 |
| Between business and exploitation | 132 |
| <i>The disconnection between the journey and the workplace</i> | 132 |
| Conclusions and recommendations | 134 |
| <i>Forced labour or "extreme flexibility" in an era of globalization?</i> | 135 |
| <i>Recommendations</i> | 137 |
| 4. Migration journeys and working conditions of Chinese irregular immigrants in the United Kingdom (Pieke) | 139 |
| Introduction | 139 |
| Methodology | 140 |
| The legal and policy framework | 141 |
| Recent irregular Chinese immigration to the UK | 144 |
| <i>Pattern of immigration and background in China</i> | 144 |
| <i>Methods of immigration</i> | 148 |
| <i>Trafficking, abuse and deception</i> | 149 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Sectoral demand for irregular Chinese labour | 152 |
| <i>Insertion into the labour market</i> | 152 |
| <i>Exploitation and working conditions</i> | 157 |
| Media reports | 163 |
| Conclusions and recommendations | 166 |
| 5. Conclusion (Gao) | 169 |
| Bibliography | 177 |
| Annex: Glossary of Chinese terms | 185 |
| Index | 189 |
| List of tables | |
| ✓ Table 1 Chinese workers overseas, 2004–06 (%) | 2 |
| ✓ Table 2 Transnational brokerage fees, 2008 | 28 |
| ✓ Table 3 Chinese migrants region of origin <i>in France</i> | 42 |
| ✓ Table 4 Debt incurred by Chinese migrants <i>in France</i> | 53 |
| ✓ Table 5 Permanent workers of Chinese nationality entering France by legal channels, 1990 and 1999 | 60 |
| ✓ Table 6 Convictions for assisting the legal entry or residence of a foreigner, France, 1997–2003 | 76 |
| ✓ Table 7 Residence permits granted to Chinese citizens, Italy, 1996–2006 | 106 |
| Table 8 Chinese operated businesses in Italy in 2005 | 107 |
| ✓ Table 9 Chinese manufacturing activities in selected Italian regions, 2005 | 110 |
| ✓ Table 10 Chinese non-manufacturing activities in selected Italian regions, 2005 | 111 |
| List of figures | |
| Figure 1 Principle centres of migration | 42 |
| ✓ Figure 2 Nationalities of employers utilizing illegal labour in the textile and garment industry, France, 2002 | 61 |
| ✓ Figure 3 Nationalities of employers utilizing illegal labour in the hotel and restaurant industry, France, 2002 | 67 |
| ✗ Figure 4 Sectors employing illegal labour in France, 2002 | 77 |
| ✓ Figure 5 Regional operation of Chinese-operated businesses, Italy | 108 |
| Figure 6 Distribution of selected media reports | 164 |

INTRODUCTION

Gao Yun

As China's booming economy has continued to record huge growth over the past two decades, the world's attention has increasingly focused on protecting the labour rights of the Chinese workers who are creating and contributing to its economic power. Compared with China's spectacular scale of development, economies boosted by the labour of expatriate Chinese may only account for a relatively minor place in the global market. The role and position of Chinese workers overseas in the global production chain also appears to be a subject neglected by the public and by labour rights researchers. In many countries little is known about the goods that are produced locally, but by Chinese workers. Even less is known about the working conditions under which these goods and services are produced and provided.

Chinese migration is now becoming global in scale and is reaching an increasing range of destination countries. It is a complex and diverse process, involving many different types of migration and channels of recruitment. Some are recruited through organized group contractors, others migrate individually. In some cases the migration is lawful through officially recognized recruiters, in other cases it is irregular. As of 2005, China was the top migrant-sending country in the world, with an estimated diaspora of 35 million people (IOM, 2005). Certain countries, such as Israel and Jordan, are the new destination points for Chinese migrants. Others, such as Argentina and Panama, which have recorded a steady pattern of Chinese migration over the past century, are now experiencing a significant new influx of Chinese migrants.

As table 1 shows, the majority of Chinese working abroad still remain concentrated in Asia (primarily Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore).

Table 1
Chinese workers overseas, 2004–06 (%)

| Year | Asia | Africa | Europe | North America | South America | Oceania | Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan |
|------|------|--------|--------|---------------|---------------|---------|--------------------------|
| 2004 | 73 | 15 | 5 | 2 | 0.7 | 3 | 1.3 |
| 2005 | 78.6 | 6.9 | 6.5 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 0.6 | 2.3 |
| 2006 | 76 | 4.4 | 9.6 | 3.2 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 3.9 |

Source: Li Mingfu, forthcoming.

However, in recent years the number of Chinese working in Europe has grown faster than other areas.

Although it is difficult to measure irregular migration, according to estimates published by the World Bank (Mansoor and Quillin, 2006), there were over 3 million undocumented migrants in the European Union² as of 2004. Other statistics for slightly earlier periods suggest numbers between 2.6 and 6.4 million (Jandl, 2003). It has been estimated that around 1.9 million Chinese residents and workers and 134,000 irregular migrants were living in Europe in 2005.³

Many Chinese immigrants, especially those that are highly qualified, are quickly absorbed into the local labour market, integrated into the host society and recognized for their contribution to the development of destination countries. Others, working overseas on temporary contracts, will return home with their savings after perhaps two years of hard work in sectors with harsh working conditions, such as construction or domestic service. In addition to the registered Chinese workers, who enjoy a degree of social protection, there is a special category of clandestine Chinese migrants whose exact numbers are unknown and whose plight periodically makes the media headlines. These include the Chinese victims on the Golden Venture boat which was wrecked in New York in 1993, the 58 Chinese who suffocated in a lorry in Dover in 2000, the victims of the biggest human trafficking case ever to be prosecuted in the history of the United States, and the approximately 23 Chinese cockle pickers who drowned at Morecambe Bay in the United Kingdom in 2004.

These tragedies bring to mind the trafficking of the Chinese “coolies” in the nineteenth century. At that time, hundreds of thousands of Chinese indentured workers were kidnapped or tricked into bondage to work in the sugar and cotton plantations in Cuba and Peru, if they survived journeys

² These estimates are the result of combining estimates from the Pew Hispanic Center, IOM, ILO, the World Bank, the UK Home Office, and others.

³ Based on research conducted in 2006 by Dr Pierre Picquart and Dr Li Minghuan for *Impact Assessment and Monitoring Mechanism for the EU–CHINA Tourism Agreement (ADS)*, a report to the European Commission (unpublished).

of several months across the Pacific Ocean where as many as 14 per cent of their kinsmen died. Although today's Chinese migrants make a choice to emigrate rather than being forced to depart, they can still end up in exploitative conditions, which in the severest cases amount to forced labour. In China itself, the Government has taken a range of measures to dissuade people from migrating through irregular channels. Passport formats have been changed no less than 11 times over the past two decades in an effort to combat the use of fraudulent passports in irregular migration. Nevertheless, people continue to leave. In 2004 alone China stopped around 6,000 people intending to leave China illegally and readmitted 25,241 irregular migrants returned by various countries.⁴

Serious research has been done in the United States to examine both the human trafficking and smuggling that occurs alongside the Chinese migration. Peter Kwong's provocative and alarming book (Kwong, 1999) is one of the most important, as its pioneering research explores the labour dimension of modern Chinese migration. The author suggests that the problem of illegal immigration must be viewed and understood as a labour issue within the context of the underlying principle of supply and demand.

Another in-depth study, carried out in the United States by Ko-Lin Chin (1999), describes a flourishing industry in which smugglers command exorbitant fees to move desperate but hopeful men and women around the world. The study employs several noteworthy research strategies, including a survey of 300 smuggled Chinese in New York City, interviews with key informants familiar with the lifestyle and social problems of illegal Chinese immigrants, a field study in the Chinese immigrant community of New York City, two research trips to sending communities in China, and a systematic collection of media reports.

In comparison, few serious studies have been carried out on these subjects in Europe. From the small amount of existing literature, a striking similarity can be noted between the situation of Chinese migrants in the United States and in Europe. This similarity is no accident. There are a number of scattered indications that serious exploitation exists in the Chinese "silent communities" in Europe, which are seen as hard to penetrate and as having their own "mysterious" way of doing things in niches largely separate from the rest of the economy. In France, owners of Chinese restaurants and textile workshops have been brought before criminal courts for the serious exploitation of their compatriots in irregular situations.⁵ In Belgium, an organization designated by the Government to assist victims of human

⁴ From a speech note from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security on the National Workshop on the Labour Exploitation Outcome of Trafficking held in April 2005 in Beijing, organized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the ILO.

⁵ Cour de Cassation, Chambre criminelle, *Hul/Chang*, Decision No. 97-85762; Cour de Cassation, Chambre criminelle, *Touang*, Decision No. 95-82746.