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MIGRATION, INDIGENIZATION and INTERACTION

Chinese Overseas and Globalization

LEO SURYADINATA
editor

 World Scientific

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Chinese Heritage Centre, Singapore

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Introduction

Leo Suryadinata

Chinese Heritage Center

The seventh international conference of ISSCO (International Society for the Study of the Chinese Overseas) held in Singapore in 2010 on “Migration, Indigenization and Exchange: Chinese Overseas from Global Perspectives,” a theme which is close to the hearts of many people in Singapore, the only “migrant state” in Southeast Asia. The Chinese have settled in this part of the world and developed it together with other ethnic groups. They have made Singapore their home and have indigenized or localized, and in turn, they have also enriched the other populations in the country and beyond. The cross-cultural fertilization has been going on for hundreds of years. They are becoming Southeast Asian Chinese in general and Singapore Chinese in particular.

Nevertheless, with globalization and the rise of China as an economic giant, new migrants are coming in, and Singapore society is in the process of becoming a migrant society again. In fact with the new wave of Chinese migration, all nation-states especially the migrant states are faced with new challenges. It is therefore important to re-look the history of Chinese migration, the interaction between the Chinese and non-Chinese communities and the problems faced by these Chinese communities during the era of globalization, to ascertain what have happened in the world and what countries in the world can learn from each other.

There were more than 200 paper presenters in this conference coming from more than 20 countries and areas including USA, Canada, France, UK, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and ASEAN states. Their papers, approximately 120 in English and 90 in Chinese, cover many sub-themes ranging from indigenization, politics, economy, religion, language, literature, to China-Chinese overseas relations and *qiaoxi-ang* (overseas Chinese homeland). Nevertheless, only approximately 40 papers in English and 40 in Chinese were submitted to the ISSCO VII Conference Committee for possible publication. After being reviewed, only 12 English and 13 Chinese papers are recommended for publication.

The present book is made up of 12 selected English papers submitted to the conference committee, including two key note addresses by Philip Kuhn and Tan Chee Beng. Tan's paper was originally in Chinese but translated into English for the benefit of the English-speaking readers. The book is divided into four sections, beginning with the general theme of Chinese migration and globalization, followed by the Chinese in North America, South and Southeast Asia, and ends with the section on China and the Chinese Overseas.

1. Migration and Globalization

The first section includes three papers. The first one by Tan Chee Beng addresses the theme of the conference: "Migration, Indigenization and Exchange: Chinese Overseas from Global Perspectives". The author focuses on Chinese migration in the era of globalization and argues that the history of mankind, in fact, is the history of migration. He also notes that "globalization" took place in the past but was different in its scale and substance when compared to globalization in the present day. Nevertheless, since the 15th century, with the expeditions of Admiral Zheng He and the discovery of the new world by Columbus, followed by the colonization of large parts of the world, the face of the world has been changed. Globalization and interactions between various ethnic

groups have intensified. In fact, migration, indigenization and exchange (interactions) have been closely connected.

Chinese migration has a long history; this took place not only within China's own boundaries, but also beyond its boundaries. Within and outside the boundaries of China, Chinese migrants often stayed on and became the "natives" of the areas; this was especially so in cases within the Chinese boundaries. Most of the earlier Chinese migrants overseas, due to the difficulties of transportation and their intermarriage with the locals, underwent either acculturation or assimilation. Many descendants of these migrants, in the view of Tan, should not be considered as "diasporic" community overtime.

Tan also notes that where there was migration, indigenization, *jiaoliu* (exchange) or interactions also took place. A new or "hybrid" culture emerged, the new culture consisting of elements of the two cultures. Nevertheless, with the rise of globalization in the modern world, Chinese migration has changed in its form and substance. Many Chinese are no longer confined to one region. Even the concept of citizenship is no longer fixed but much more relaxed than before. The so-called "multicultural citizenship" and "transnational citizenship" have emerged. Even the concept of homeland has also been changing. Tan argues that many modern migrants have more than one homeland; some have two and more, and all of those places where they have lived for a certain period of time have become their "homelands". These new developments have applied not only to the Chinese overseas communities but to non-Chinese as well.

Philip Kuhn, on the other hand, addresses the cultures of migration, which are required for the migrant group in order to survive and develop. He argues that "A migrating human group develops a frontier culture: that culture may distinguish two or more populations from one another; or, in the case of an empty frontier, it simply defines the area of human habitation. A frontier culture is constantly tested against existential challenges: how well does it serve the survival of its population? How well equipped is it to generate solutions to unforeseen problems? The mainstream cultures of sedentary groups are not tested as stringently, and migrants often

find themselves experimenting beyond mainstream cultural limits. Migration stretches imaginations, sometimes leading to novel social practices that might otherwise seem far-fetched or even dangerous.”

To illustrate his points, Kuhn selects three examples of cultural innovations by Chinese migrants. “Each drew upon aspects of mainstream culture but went well beyond them. Number one involves migrants from Fujian and Guangdong to Sarawak, where they experimented with unorthodox uses of the symbolism of patrilineal descent. Number two concerns Chinese popular religion among migrants to Singapore. It stretched the boundaries of a Daoist exorcism procedure — spirit possession — to extravagant limits. And number three is the story of a group of internal migrants (Wenzhou people in Beijing) who stretched the old culture of family household production to dangerous extremes”.

Through these examples, from the historical to the present-day, Kuhn has shown the dynamics of the cultures of migration, their diversities and their continuity and change. These cultures in fact have been used by the migrants as their valuable social capital in the new land.

The third paper in this section is on *huashang* (Chinese traders) and *huagong* (Chinese laborers) in the Diaspora by Emmanuel Ma Mung. Ma Mung maintains that during the recent wave of Chinese migration, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of migrants moving from China to Europe, Africa and the Americas. His paper describes the revival of Chinese migrations, focussing on the labor and entrepreneurial classes, and looks at two representative figures of Chinese migrations — the proletarian and the merchant — in an attempt to understand the circumstances which have produced them.

Ma Mung argues that “overseas Chinese” workers and merchants are often blurred in boundaries as many workers desire to be and actually become entrepreneurs. This will continue for some time leading to a curious entrepreneurial combination. “The Chinese diaspora thus exposes a series of paradoxes: proletarian *and* merchant, autonomous *and* related to the settling countries *and* countries of origin, autocentric *and* dispersed. The revival of migrations reinforces

the diaspora at the demographical level (doubling in the last 30 years), and enlarges its entrepreneurial organization with the arrival of proletarians and merchants in its multiple economic clusters. On the other hand, the arrival of these immigrants directly originating from China reinforces ties with this country.”

2. North America

In the second section there are also three papers dealing with Canada and the United States. Peter Li’s paper is on the Chinese migration to Canada with special reference to recent developments, addressing the issues of supply and demand of human capital. Li argues that the recent Chinese migrants differ from those in the past not only in terms of origins but also educational qualifications. Noting that in the past the Chinese migrants were mainly from Hong Kong rather than Mainland China, the recent migrants, starting in the mid-1990s, have come from Mainland China and they have formed the majority of the Chinese migrants. Unlike the earlier migrants, these new Chinese migrants have high educational qualifications. Nevertheless, they have not been well integrated into the labor markets as the qualifications were not well assessed. Li argues that Canadian authorities have not taken the full opportunity to utilize this human capital, as a result, Canada may suffer in the competition for human capital in the global market; it may also lose a good opportunity to improve its trade links with the PRC.

Similar to Li’s paper, Yan Guo also examines Chinese migrants to Canada, but unlike Li, Yan Guo focuses on the parental involvement of the Chinese in the Canadian school, showing the tension, if not conflict, between the migrant cultural values and host-country cultural values. Using the English as Second Language (ESL) schools in Calgary, Alberta in Canada as an example, Yan Guo notes that there is a big gap between the parents and the teachers. The teachers are not prepared for the new migrant population (read: Chinese) as the former consists of “predominantly monolingual, white, female, and middle class, were perceived by immigrant parents as inadequately addressing the learning needs of their

children.” Yan Guo maintains that “teachers often have their own assumption about parent involvement. The unique ways that immigrant parents are involved in their children’s education are often unrecognized.”

Yan Guo notes that parental involvement is basically an American/Canadian concept as Chinese parents usually expect the teachers to take full responsibility for their children’s education at school. Nevertheless, after becoming involved in the school, the parents have begun to realize that the school welcomes only their involvement in support of the existing policies and practises and does not welcome different views. However, the parents who are well educated began to self-teach their children’s school curricula and then assisted their children in their study using both their first language and English. Although the Chinese parents did not fully “volunteer at school functions or attend the school council meetings, they supported their children’s learning at home in the form of passing on cultural and linguistic values. Their engagement in their children’s education expands traditional parent involvement, which tend to serve the White middle class.” Yan Guo argues that “thus, an effective model of parental participation would need to recognize a full range of socio-educational norms, values, and cultural knowledge and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of Chinese immigrant parents in their children’s education.”

Lim Tai Wei’s paper examines migration, ethnicity and citizenry of Chinese Americans in selected regions of the United States. But unlike the two papers on Canada, Lim is more interested in the conceptual issues on Chinese migrations. He “examines the historiography of the Chinese American community in selected areas of the US, including Hawaii and the West Coast. (The paper) does not pretend to be comprehensive in coverage but attempts to discuss some of the concepts in debates surrounding this topic.”

Lim surveys some detectable features of Chinese American migration and discusses the gender, economic, religious, institutional, community-building, culturalist, functional, linguistic and demographic perspectives before going into more recent concepts such as post-ethnicity, pan-ethnicity and flexible citizenry. He highlights the

contrast between traditional assimilationist perspectives and the newer concepts which “indicate the constant evolution of migration debate in the United States as well as the highly contextually-based features and debates of Chinese American migration.”

Lim also cites one scholar’s view that the economic success in East Asia has created a new niche for Chinese Americans that lies outside post-ethnic or pan-ethnic arguments. In fact, the ethnicity, culture and language skills of Chinese Americans have become assets that compel them to retain and leverage their ethnic ties to their ancestral homelands to maximize economic opportunity. The creation of a transnational, flexible ethnicity allows Chinese migrants to play a considerable role in creating economic prosperity in both the US and China.

3. South and Southeast Asia

This section includes four papers, dealing with India, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore. The paper on Kolkata by Catherine Gueguen is particularly interesting as not many scholars pay attention to the Indian Chinese in the past.

Gueguen states that the largest number of the Chinese in India live in the Kolkata (Calcutta) city, numbering around 8000. Initially they lived and worked in the district of Bowbazaar, and in the 1970s many Chinese moved to the district of Tangra in the eastern part of the city. The repulsive marshy area has since the 1980s undergone the process of renewal and become a viable Chinese district. Gueguen as a Geographer in her paper explores “the notion of territory occupied by the Chinese community, and that of social and cultural ties between the population and its district. It also looks at the relations between Tangra and the other districts of the city.” Using the spatial approach, she argues that “the territorial approach put forward the notion of centrality, a traditional Chinese thought on spatial practice. To the Chinese, Tangra remains as the “center” of the city. She also notes that the Hindu practices and the new waves of Chinese migrants from the Mainland enable the Chinese to preserve the Chinese overseas culture.

Ramses Amer focuses his study on the Chinese population in Vietnam, showing the links between the number of Chinese in Vietnam which have closely links with domestic politics and Sino-Vietnamese relations. Amer argues that the pattern of the Chinese demographic change took place beginning in 1954 when the Vietnamese government began to make the Chinese Vietnamese citizens, nevertheless, apart from the status, the actual number of the Chinese in Vietnam did not decline as many continued to stay in Vietnam. Nevertheless, the unification of Vietnam in 1975 and the Sino-Vietnamese tension and war in 1979 resulted in the Chinese exodus, significantly reduced the number of the Chinese. Those who remained in Vietnam were suspected and suffered a lot. The anti-Chinese policy continued until 1995 when the Communist Party of Vietnam revised the policy of expulsion to the re-integration, which was confirmed by the Government policy in 1996. The Chinese were welcome again in Vietnam although this did not result in the sudden increase of the Vietnamese Chinese population. It may take a while for the Chinese in Vietnam to grow in number.

Teresita Ang See brings us to the Philippines where the Chinese population experienced rather rapid indigenization. Ang See notes that in the era of globalization and the rise of China as an economic power, indigenization of "Chinese overseas" has often been relegated, if not forgotten. She cited the Chinese Maori of New Zealand, the recent work by Manying Ip, Ang See also argues that many Chinese in Southeast Asia, especially the Chinese in the Philippines have been indigenized at varying degrees. Many Chinese Filipinos have successfully identified themselves with the Philippine population, especially the Chinese Mestizos, who have been fully accepted as Filipinos, who was estimated constituting 10–12% of the Philippine population, while the Chinese Filipino only form one percent. Ang See has given detailed examples of the role of the Chinese Mestizo and Tsinnoys in the political, social and cultural fields, reflecting their degree of indigenization.

In the end of her paper, Ang See notes that "(as Chinese all over the world continue to be transformed, indigenized and localized,

the development of the ethnic Chinese and their identification with their adopted countries will differ in degree and depth. It is mainly because the Chinese are scattered all over the globe that they have become global and not because ethnic Chinese all over the world, with their different backgrounds and origins, have become homogeneously sinicized or identified as being descended from one race that we can now lump them together as global Chinese overseas. The heterogeneity, localization, in the globe is what comprises the “globalization of the ethnic Chinese” (华人的全球化); it is not the sinicization of the ethnic Chinese that make up the globalized Chinese (全球的华人化).”

The last paper in this section is jointly written by Jenny Lin and Chin-Ming Lin on a comparison of different management styles in Asian brewery companies. The authors selected two well known beers which originated in Southeast Asia, the Chang Beer (Elephant) a product by ThaiBev in Thailand (subsidiary of the Charoen Corp, TCC) and Tiger Beer, produced by Asia Pacific Brewery Limited (APB) in Singapore. The TCC is a Chinese Family own company with Chinese management while the APB is a joint venture between a Singapore Brewery (Fraser and Neave) and Heineken from the Netherlands with mix of both Chinese and Europeans as board of directors. Not surprisingly they have different management styles which eventually affected the performance of their company and their joint venture. While the joint venture between APB and the Netherlands is still on, the joint venture between TCC and Carlsberg (a Danish Brewing Company) only lasted for ten years. The authors conclude that “Both conglomerates of the Elephant and the Tiger had numerous affiliates and partly owned subsidiaries. These separate units did not possess financial or structural autonomy. If delegation and decentralization remained limited, then with the rigid traditions of patriarchal decision-making it could finally brought about collapse. It is again the Elephant which is at a riskier situation. As adjustments in industrial and organizational structures are not often accompanied by the introduction of flexible ownership and delegated decision making, the Tiger could be more enduring with this viewpoint in mind.”

4. China and Chinese Overseas

This section consists of only two papers: One on China and the Chinese overseas and the other on the “returned Overseas Chinese”, focused respectively on history and the contemporary scene.

Glen Peterson’s paper deals with migration and China’s urban reading public. Peterson examines the contents of *Dongfang Zazhi* (1904–1948), the well-established Shanghai-based news and current affairs periodical, focusing on its articles on the Overseas Chinese over almost half of the 20th century. The objective is to gauge the influence of the Chinese literate elites over the Overseas Chinese and the degree of consciousness among the mainland Chinese population of Overseas Chinese issues.

In his careful analysis Peterson comes to the conclusion that the articles in *Dongfang Zazhi* are far from being sophisticated and do not present the complexity of the Overseas Chinese problem. They do not project the heterogeneity of the Overseas Chinese community, ignoring the issues of indigenization and identity while lumping them together under the category of “Overseas Chinese.” Furthermore, Peterson points out that the periodical was not read beyond the urban literate and emigrant counties, and had only limited effect in arousing the public consciousness of the Overseas Chinese. Nevertheless, the author points out that the situation at the time was different from the contemporary scene. During the era of globalization the mainland Chinese, through the mass media and popular TV programs, have become much better informed and more aware of the Overseas Chinese and their experiences.

Shibao Guo’s paper, on the other hand, explores the experiences of “Chinese Canadians” in mainland China. Many mainland Chinese migrated to Canada in recent times and some have returned to China. Guo examines the Canadian Chinese who have returned to Beijing, the reasons for their going to Canada and returning to China (i.e., Beijing), their experience in Canada and their re-integration into Chinese society. Guo does not define “Canadian Chinese” in terms of Canadian citizenship but refers to Canadian Citizens and Permanent Residents of Canada as one group which