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Globalising Chinese Migration: New Spaces, New Meanings[*]

SUMMARY

The paper reviews new trends in international migration from the People's Republic of China in the last decade, focusing on two aspects: 1) The geographic expansion and merger of formerly distinct translocal migration flows into a global migration system. It includes the opening up of new migration spaces in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia; increased mobility between destination countries; and increased interchange between different social strata of migrants, from students to illegal workers; 2) A shift in what the social and cultural meaning of migration is to the migrant, to non-migrants, and to elites, which can be described as "upgrading the migrant" (Wang,1998). Various discourses of migration have converged into a highly success-oriented discourse, which reduces the relevance of social background and path of migration. The People's Republic of China imbues this discourse with tropes of patriotism and development. Concerning the first aspect, the paper problematises the distinction of flows of legal and illegal migrants, students, tourists, and workers, and calls for a holistic approach in studying the configuration of current migration from the PRC. Concerning the second aspect, the paper questions the persistent theory that the PRC as an entity supports emigration, and points out the conflicting interests of various levels and organisations within the state apparatus. At the same time, it recognises that the PRC, like other states, is currently enjoying a honeymoon with state-sanctioned transnationalism, in which migrants are often being more engaged into nation-building and enfranchised as political citizens than are rural non-migrants.

KEY WORDS: overseas Chinese, international migration, transnationalism

Since 1978 and especially 1985, the year when a law liberalising travel abroad was adopted, millions of new migrants have left the Chinese mainland to study, join relatives, work, or trade abroad. Several sets circulate even of official figures on the number of migrants from the PRC who have settled abroad since 1978, ranging between several hundred thousand and 1.5 million (Nyíri, 2002).

Regardless of the actual growth of migration from China in this period – and on a *per capita* basis, it is still very low – both Chinese and Western governments and media have attributed it great importance. Whereas concerns in the West have focused on "illegal migration" (e.g. Smith, 1994), the Chinese view – exemplified by Cheng's paper –

has been more holistic and has included everyone assumed to have settled abroad, from illegal workers to students, as "new migrants". Ever since the publication of Cao Guilin's bestselling novel, *A Beijinger in New York*, in 1991, "new migrants" have captivated the imagination of soap-opera scriptwriters as much as that of government officials.

Two overarching features of migration from the PRC in the 1990s can be identified. The first is the geographic expansion and merger of formerly distinct trans-local migration flows into a global migration system. It includes the opening up of new migration spaces in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia; increased mobility between destination countries; and increased interchange between different social strata of migrants, from students to illegal workers. The second is a shift in what the social and cultural meaning of migration is to the migrant, to non-migrants, and to elites, which can be described as "upgrading the migrant" (Wang, 1998). Various discourses of migration have converged into a highly success-oriented discourse, which reduces the relevance of social background and path of migration. The People's Republic of China imbues this discourse with tropes of patriotism and development.

New Migration Spaces

The "normalisation" of Sino-Soviet relations, which closely followed the liberalisation of the PRC's rules governing travel abroad, made it possible for Chinese citizens to engage in trade across the Soviet border. Starting in 1987, Northern Chinese began to take advantage of the simplified procedure to obtain private passports to engage in "shuttle trade" between China and the Soviet Far East and Siberia. Many of the first shuttle traders were moonlighting Chinese contract labourers, increasing numbers of whom had been invited to Russia on contracts during the same period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and especially after the signing in 1992 of a Sino-Russian treaty waiving the visa requirement for overland group tourism in the bordering provinces, crossing the border became even easier (Ходаков, 1999). Russian news agencies reported a million border crossings by Chinese citizens into the Russian Far East in 1992, rising to 2.5 million in 1993 (de Tinguy, 1998: 302).

Informal "shuttle trade" had been a feature of the economies of scarcity in Eastern Europe since at least the 1960s, but Chinese traders brought it to an unprecedented scale, stepping in to fill a market vacuum created by nonexistent or broken-down retail networks of low-price clothing and shoes. Venturing farther and farther by train and spending more and more time at their destinations, they first reached European Russia and then Hungary, which in 1988 signed a treaty waiving the visa requirement for Chinese tourists. According to a Chinese source, nearly 10,000 Chinese traders were registered as Moscow residents in 1992 (*Huaren jingji nianjian* [Beijing], 1994: 410). According to the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior, the number of border crossings into Hungary by Chinese citizens entering Hungary jumped from nearly zero in the mid-eighties to 11,621 in 1990 and 27,330 in 1991. From Russia and Hungary, Chinese traders spread across Eastern Europe, with perhaps the next most important destination being Romania, which experienced 14,200 inbound border crossings by Chinese in 1991 (International Organization for Migration, 1998: 326, Table 14.5).

24

Data on the actual number of Chinese in the region is very unreliable for two reasons: widely contradictory official data and the high mobility of migrants. Thus, such data can be used as a rough indicator at best. That said, some apparently credible figures follow here. Based on a combination of various official data sets with field observations and indirect evidence such as the circulation of Chinese-language papers and the capacity of buildings where Chinese live (in Moscow, their residences are highly concentrated in relatively few housing estates) Gelbras estimates the number of Chinese in Moscow to be between 20 and 25 thousand, and between 200 and 400 thousand across Russia. Similar considerations have led me to put the number of Chinese in Hungary between 10 and 15 thousand (Nyíri, 1999). In Romania, Border Guard data in 1999 showed 14,200 Chinese residents.

Somewhat similarly to Chinese and Indian shops in colonial Southeast Asia and Africa in the early 20th century, "Chinese markets" and "Chinese shops" have emerged as the main suppliers of certain consumer goods, including clothing, to large segments of the rural and low-income urban populations in Eastern Europe whose needs less flexible retailers working with higher costs were unable or did not care to meet. According to Nagy, 15 to 20 per cent of Budapest families made some purchase at a "Chinese market" in 1997 (see Nyíri, 1999: 50), and by 2001, "Chinese shops" reached practically all towns and villages with populations over 2 thousand.

A similar trend occurred somewhat later across China's southwestern border. Cambodia, after the UN-supervised election, and Burma, led by a cash-strapped junta, began to selectively open the market to foreign businesses. Both were transitional economies of scarcity with poor populations. Burma signed a border-trade treaty with the PRC in 1988 and, Lintner writes, the cross-border trade in various commodities was estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Edwards observes that in Phnom Penh, Chinese clothes and consumer goods sold at the market were "the most chic and 'modern' commodities available" in 1991. "From 1995–1997, visitors from China topped Cambodian airport statistics, with Chinese visitors totalling 22,886 in 1995 alone, or 62 per day. A similar pattern prevails in telecommunications: Monitoring of telephone traffic in Cambodia by the Australian corporation Telstra for 1995–1997 shows that the overwhelming majority of calls from Cambodia were directed to Southern China" (Edwards, 2002). Less lucrative markets, like Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Laos, have seen their share of Chinese traders as well.

Mobility and Transnationalism

Shuttle trade created complicated, circular trajectories of migration. As shuttle traders accumulated capital and developed business infrastructure, they registered businesses and turned into more "proper", sedentary importers, wholesalers and retailers. But frequent (ranging from several times a year to once in a couple of years) travel to China to scout for merchandise and other business opportunities remained a necessity for some and a practice for nearly all Chinese in Eastern Europe (Nyíri, 1999).

In addition, business growth, changes in business climate and immigration policies generated a number of migration flows within the region. After the collapse of the

Soviet Union, the drop in purchasing power, and the violent standoff between Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet (1991–93) many Chinese moved on from Moscow to look for better business opportunities and increased safety. The main destination was first Hungary, then, after the re-introduction of the visa requirement in the beginning of 1992, Romania and the Czech Republic. At the same time, migration brokers known as "snakeheads" set up operation in Moscow and helped people to get to their countries of destination and beyond, to Western Europe.

The crackdown on Chinese immigration by Hungarian authorities in 1992 and, subsequently, increasing competition, lower profits, and increasing overhead costs of market trading made Chinese in Hungary move to other Eastern European countries. Most of those re-migrants who had spent years in Hungary maintained their businesses there, usually in the care of a more recently arrived relative or friend, and continue to visit Hungary regularly, seeking to maintain a residence permit or to obtain a fresh one. Others initially obtained a residence permit in a neighbouring country as "insurance" and remained in Hungary as long as they could (Nyíri, 1999: 47).

Some migrants who had obtained Hungarian or Czech residence permits moved on legally (with tourist or visitor visas) to Western Europe to work in workshops or restaurants. Some of those who couldn't get visas moved on clandestinely. Some were motivated by a preference for low-risk wage labour compared to doing business; others moved because they had lost the money they invested in starting their businesses.[1]

Individual stories of Chinese in Eastern Europe reveal an extraordinary degree of mobility. I have interviewed people who started trading in Hungary, were unsuccessful or lost their money at the casino, and went to Italy or Germany to work in leather workshops or restaurants for three or five years; now they consider investing the money earned in Hungary or Romania once again as they want to develop their own businesses. Others, whose applications for political asylum in Germany were turned

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[1] The issue of illegal migration of Chinese to Europe is considerably more complex than the image of helpless "human cargo" controlled by ruthless criminal syndicates conveyed by media reporting. Our interviews with Fujianese in Europe suggest that Chinese travel legally part or whole of the way, and frequently seek the assistance of professional migration brokers en route to overcome specific bottlenecks such as crossing a border, securing a visa or a residence permit. Most migrants remain very much in control of their own destiny, an issue often obscured by the publicity on trafficking, kidnapping and debt bondage. While some aspects of migration brokering – such as securing forged passports – no doubt involve criminal organisations, and others – such as debt enforcement – involve street gangs, most migration brokers are loosely connected individual entrepreneurs who peddle their local knowledge, connections to officials or lawyers, and knowledge of languages. Criminologist Ko-lin Chin, the foremost specialist on Chinese "human smugglers" known as "snakeheads", has failed to find a connection between them and organised crime (Zhang and Chin, 2001). For many of them, helping others migrate is merely a handy source of additional income. A typical migration broker is not a mafioso but a former student, like Guo Ying, sentenced for a six-year gaol term in connection with the death of 58 Chinese in a container at Dover in Britain. She had come to England in 1996 legally to study English, accounting and computing. A Chinese author describes a Chinese student in Austria who moved to Hungary to become a trader in 1988, first only issued invitation letters to Hungary to acquaintances for $1000. His acquaintances sold them on to their acquaintances for $2500 to 3,000. By June 1989, Wang Jun was issuing 100 invitations a month, with a pricing system based on the customer's place of residence. Clients from provinces where going abroad was most strictly controlled, paid the most, $6 to 10 thousand (Mao Chun,1992: 4–5).

down, chose to re-enter Hungary illegally, because they thought it was easier to re-legalise their status there. Several more who started trading in Russia in the early nineties went on to Hungary, but as residence permit policies were tightened in 1992, went back to Russia. In other words, migration, even illegal migration, is happening not just from East to West, but also in the opposite direction. Many Chinese, especially those from Zhejiang and Fujian Provinces, have family members working in garment or leather workshops in Italy or in restaurants in Spain, Germany, or England, most of whom made their way there from Hungary. A number of entrepreneurs have expanded their import or restaurant businesses to neighboring Eastern European countries and now circulate between them. Others have legally immigrated to Canada or the United States, but they, too, maintain businesses in Eastern Europe. Most Chinese parents wish to send their children to college in the United States or the United Kingdom, and a number have already done so. A few of these children have already graduated and joined American companies, some of which sent them back to Europe.

My research among migrants from Jiangyin Township, Fujian, in the Hungarian city of Szeged shows how much various locations are linked in the logic of transnationalism – concurrent participation in the discourses and institutionalised practices of multiple localities (see Basch et al., 1994) – and how necessary it is to apply multi-sited optics to comprehend that logic. There are several hundred Chinese in Szeged, in southern Hungary, nearly all of whom are from Jiangyin. As a result of that and the fact that Chinese in Hungary associate Fujianese, particularly those from Fuqing County, with violence, Szeged has a reputation of being dangerous terrain for a Chinese outsider, and it is somewhat cut off from the rest of the Chinese in Hungary. At the same time, nearly everyone has ties to relatives and friends from Jiangyin in Eastern or Western Europe or the United States. Such contacts, as well as contacts with non-Chinese locals, are often more important in determining migration strategies and transnational practices, as this excerpt from my field notes illustrates:

> "When he was in Jiangxi Province, his fellow townsmen asked him to partner with them in a paper factory, but when it was up and running well, they tried to push each other out. After this happened he wanted to go to Argentina, where he had a cousin, and applied for a private passport. Meanwhile, however, another cousin, who was in Szeged, Hungary, was threatened by some Fujianese 'gangsters' and asked him to come urgently to help him. As the matter was urgent, he obtained a service passport, with which he did not need a visa to Hungary, through the local Public Security Bureau and Party secretary ('they all liked me'), and went to Szeged. After a few years of trading at the market there, he married an ethnic Hungarian woman from Yugoslavia who worked at the same market. He got a permanent residence permit, and both applied for and got a tourist visa to the US, where he now illegally works at a garment workshop owned by a relative of his first wife. Once he has made enough money, he plans to return to Hungary with his wife and open a business importing building materials from China." [2]

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[2] Interview in New York, March 2001.

Note that this story is one of a non-elite migrant, while wealthy or well-connected individuals often live in a denser, more branched-out transnational space. They move in a geographically even more complex transnational social space: they are often in constant motion not between two or three but many more countries in which they do business, engage in labour, study, get residence permits, educate children, and network with officials. For example, a couple, former employees of state-owned companies, live respectively in Warsaw and Budapest, running imports and restaurant businesses; they visit each other once every two weeks. They have companies in Peking and Fujian in charge of arranging the supply of merchandise from China and one in Hong Kong to take care of financial arrangements, and visit them several times a year. They are completing immigration procedures for Canada, where they have opened a business, employing more than ten people, and bought a house in Vancouver. The focus of the business in Vancouver is the same as in Warsaw in Budapest: they supply supermarkets and discounters with low-end clothes, shoes, photographic film, and other consumer items, and a German-based furniture maker with plants across Eastern Europe with raw materials. As the wife said, "It doesn't matter where I do my business: I can do the same whether I am in Budapest or in Canada. It's not so much a matter of where you live as of what passport you carry." [3]

In sum, the Chinese presence in Eastern Europe is in a constant flux, with individuals coming and going not conducive to the development of locally adapted, "rooted" institutions. Instead, transnational institutions (Basch et al., 1994) – organisations and media linked to counterparts in China and elsewhere around the world – thrive. Further, as both Toyota and Chin remind us, not only entrepreneurial migration but also tourism by Chinese into and out of China can contribute to the creation of such institutions.

Permeable Class Boundaries

Not only are previously discreet migration flows from China to particular countries thus merging into a global system of mobility: boundaries between the migration of the highly skilled (students and professionals), entrepreneurs, family members joining their relatives, and stowaways using the services of commercial migration brokers are dissolving too. Those who left the PRC to study abroad during the eighties were practically all postgraduate (graduate) students, mainly in natural sciences, mathematics, or engineering, and typically with a background at one of China's elite universities. Most worked part-time to support their studies, but their unequivocal goal was to graduate and find a professional or academic job in America, Japan, Australia, or Europe. Their employment in their main destination country, the United States, was limited to the campus. The so-called CSS (Chinese Students and Scholars) associations had little to no contact with other Chinese associations, and, especially in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, were critical of the PRC government.

The situation changed when, after Tiananmen, Chinese students in the US and most other destination countries obtained permanent resident status. In most cases, the

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[3] Interview in Budapest, April 2001.

policy extended to students present in the country before a certain deadline, usually several years past 4 June 1989. In addition, in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, students had been allowed to work legally off-campus. This dramatically increased the value of a student's status, resulting in an exodus of Chinese wishing to study abroad. These were no longer only graduate students who received financial aid from the university, but increasingly children of newly affluent entrepreneurs who went abroad as self-financed students at language schools, undergraduate institutions (often in business administration), or even primary and secondary schools. Migration brokers availed themselves of this opportunity and offered the safe and simple student route to their clients, simply acting as agents for schools or offering counterfeit diplomas, Test of English as a Foreign Language certificates and university admission documents if necessary. My interviews in London and China suggest that several migrants from Fujian – later incriminated as the homeland of "illegal migrants" – ranging from secondary-school students to government officials came to England in this way in the early 1990s.[4] Delegates from Australia to the Fujianese World Conference in Quanzhou, China, in 1999 told similar stories.[5]

Around 1990, when a number of Australian schools that existed only on paper were closed down, and in 2000, after the Dover deaths, "bogus students" attracted media attention.[6] Yet such practices cannot simply be branded as an abuse of the student visa regime, as many applicants both wanted and did study upon arrival. Indeed, Liu Ningrong (1998: 68–69) writes about two migrants from Fujian who reached the US with counterfeit university admission certificates, but ended up, in fact, getting master's degrees in Asian studies. Conversely, a number of young entrepreneurial migrants made enough money in Hungary in two or three years in the early nineties to finance a subsequent course of study in the US; one woman took an MBA degree from the Open University, commuting once a month to Vienna. In the 1990s, some Chinese students began applying to branches of American colleges set up in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. These, such as Ohio University in Malaysia or Western Maryland College in Budapest, offered students the chance to spend the last year or two of their study in the United States. The instrumental use of student status, then, should be seen not as fraud but as a new mindset with regard to study overseas as another commercialised strategy of migration. The fact that in 2000, a Chinese entrepreneur asked me to find a British university to set up a centre in Budapest that would provide thousands of Chinese students with British degrees indicates the extent to which education has come to be seen as part of the migration business.

In the early nineties, student visas were a popular way to go to Eastern Europe as well, sometimes with the aid of fictitious language schools (Nyíri, 1995: 198); such "packages" were offered, among others, by Hong Kong-based migration brokers.[7] Ear-

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[4] Interviews in London in November 2000–January 2001.

[5] Interview with the vice-president of the Australia Hokkien Association in Quanzhou, August 1999.

[6] E.g. "Mei shoujin Zhongguo liuxuesheng shenpi" [US tightens approval of Chinese students], *Ouzhou Daobao*, Budapest, 20–26 July 2000, 5.

[7] Interview with a migrant in Budapest, December 2000.

ly students "converted" to trade when they discovered the brisk business plied by migrant entrepreneurs.

> "Wang Jun, from a suburb of a certain Chinese city, went to Austria as a self-financed student in 1987. … In 1988, since he could not afford an air ticket, Wang Jun decided to go to Budapest by train and return home from there. …
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> Wang Jun took some gifts he had not given away – such as herbal oils, silk blouses, and pearl necklaces – to the free market to sell. Remembering that year, Wang Jun smiles: 'I had never done business before. I didn't know how much my family members had spent on these things when they bought them for me, either. Oh, let's just sell them! The herbal oils fetched a dollar a bottle, each string of pearls went for 15 dollars, the silk blouses sold for 60 dollars. I sold everything in a day and made a total of $860 on just a small bag of stuff" (Mao Chun, 1992: 2–3).

Later Wang Jun became a regular shuttle trader plying the rail route between China and Budapest. As Chinese business in Eastern Europe picked up, students increasingly turned to trading as soon as they arrived, and often abandoned their studies or had no intention to study at all. This has, apparently, been the case in the former Soviet Union in particular, which has a host of provincial universities and colleges that are starved for cash. According to a Chinese source, 1,340 of 10,000 Chinese traders in Moscow in 1992 were students (*Huaren jingji nianjian*, 1994: 410). In Irkutsk in Eastern Siberia there were 774 Chinese students in institutions of higher education and language schools in 1994 and more than 1,500 in 1998. [8] In Belarus, China was the top country of origin of new foreign students in 1996 (Zagorets, 1997). A Chinese businesswoman who moved from Belarus to Hungary in 1999 reported that Chinese students there "spent their whole day at the casino"; the migration broker who had arranged her Hungarian visa for her at the cost of several thousand dollars also had student status. University faculty in Moscow, Khabarovsk, and Irkutsk believe that half of the Chinese students actually study, while the rest only trade. Of those who study, 20% "are intent on getting an education", while the rest only want to learn Russian. About 10% get a degree. [9]

At the same time, growing business opportunities in mainland China and an improving infrastructure for foreign investors attracted more overseas students to entrepreneurship, often while still at school. Their connections to the elite provided them with a competitive advantage in obtaining goods, capital, and business information, and their elite status as PhDs or doctoral candidates made them the preferred contacts of managers in China wishing to find business partners abroad. In Western Europe,

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[8] Data provided by Yekaterina Motrich, Institute of Economic Research, Russian Academy of Sciences (Khabarovsk), at the roundtable "Perspectives of the Far Eastern Region [of Russia]: The Chinese Factor", Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography, Far Eastern Division, Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladivostok, 28–29 June 1999.

[9] Data provided by Yekaterina Motrich, Institute of Economic Research, Russian Academy of Sciences (Khabarovsk), and Vilya Gelbras at the roundtable "Perspectives of the Far Eastern Region [of Russia]: The Chinese Factor", Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography, Far Eastern Division, Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladivostok, 28–29 June 1999; also Дятлов (1999: 86–87).

Chinese (ex-) students have filled similar economic niches to those of entrepreneurial migrants in Eastern Europe: they run imports firms and travel agencies, act as middlemen between businesses in China and Europe, and set up associations that maintain close contacts with Chinese authorities. In both the United Kingdom and Germany, associations of Chinese from Fujian Province, for example, were founded by ex-students in the second half of the 1990s. The German association's charter specifically proposes to Fujian Province services in import-export business, joint ventures, organising trade delegations and visits to fairs, registering companies in Germany, organising tours, studying in Germany, scholarly and cultural exchange, as well as translation.[10] Starting with *A Chinese Woman in New York*, this new breed of entrepreneurial students have been the heroes of a number of pulp novels and soap operas.

The boundaries of the elite status of "CSS" have thus been eroded by their own entrepreneurial élan, their turn to "menial" jobs, such as in restaurants and shops, to make money (Liu Xin, 1997: 104–09), and the "dilution" of their "class ranks" by students who had not come from elite schools – indeed, some had barely more than a secondary school diploma being either financed by their parents or in the process of looking for opportunities to make money. This experience has often been traumatic for the students and has frequently been discussed in the Chinese-language press. A typical example is a piece entitled "Making a living in a strange land", signed "A Zhu" ("Piglet", referring to the early-twentieth-century trade in Chinese contract labourers for the colonies, known in Chinese as the "piglet trade"), reprinted in a Chinese newspaper in Hungary. The writer describes himself as a "new migrant" from China, and obviously is from the intelligentsia. The article chronicles, in an ironic style, his sequence of jobs: dishwasher; "janitor for three days"; "failed real estate agent"; volunteer teacher of English to adult new immigrants; "first-year student".

"Among new migrants here, there has been a fashionable idea: if you can't find a job go study. As a student, you can apply for financial aid, plus get a student loan. If you've found a job you can withdraw any time. If your [English] language is not good study English; if it's OK study a major. If the husband graduates the wife can study, all the way until there is no way to get any more financial aid and loans".[11]

After three days at school, the writer found a job through the university placement office. Migrants to Southern and Eastern Europe have straddled another class boundary, the one between entrepreneur and wage worker. The idolisation of business in contemporary mainland Chinese society makes this boundary a very important one: a new, pejorative word, *dagong*, has even been invented to denote any kind of wage or salary work. Chinese who have lived or travelled in both Eastern and Western Europe invariably note that in Eastern Europe, Chinese are "bosses" (*laoban*) who have cars, flats, and local employees, while in Western Europe, they *dagong* and often share lodgings with co-workers at a restaurant or workshop. Still, as discussed above, many migrants move from East to West, and more discuss that possibility. The "spatial hierarchy" (Liu Xin) is such that as much "success" can be associated with being in Bri-

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[10] A Zhu, "Yi yu mousheng", *Zhonghua Shibao*, Budapest, 21 December 2000–3 January 2001, 10.

[11] A Zhu, "Yi yu mousheng", *Zhonghua Shibao*, Budapest, 21 December 2000–3 January 2001, 10.

tain or, especially, in the US, as with owning a business in Hungary. I have interviewed a former calligrapher and painter who has, apart from a small imports business, mainly relied on decorating restaurants in Budapest for a living: he repeatedly considered giving up his white-collar occupation and joining his daughter in England to work there at a restaurant. Another entrepreneur in Hungary proudly talked about his wife who had gone to England to study English and promptly landed a restaurant job. [12] The Chinese female police and army officers working as dancers in Indonesia mentioned by Chin are another startling example of such revaluation.

Family ties also contribute to the blurring of historical class boundaries between migrations flows. A Chinese organisation leader in Italy came to the country with a forged passport via Bolivia after failing to get to Japan and started by working in garment workshops. His niece, by contrast, entered Peking University at 16, went on to study overseas and now, he says, is a professor at New York University. [13]

Thus, students rub shoulders with Fujian fishermen working in Chinese restaurants, and PhDs in computer science clink glasses with community leaders of the generation before in Chinese organisations. In a study conducted by the Budapest city government in 1997, 45% of 135 Chinese market traders claimed to have upper secondary education and 39%, higher education. In the same database, 342 persons gave their professional qualification as engineers, 275 as teachers, 223 as cadres, 183 as doctors, 171 as economists; 235 as "intellectuals", and 125 as university or college students. By far the largest group (27%) gave no other profession or qualification than businessman or businesswoman. [14] Another indication of the relatively high level of education among Chinese in Hungary is that in a sample of 135 market traders, 45% claimed to have upper secondary education and 39%, higher education (Nyíri, 1999: 33). Gelbras' (Гельбрас, 1999) study of more substantial samples Chinese traders in Moscow and the Russian Far East found even higher proportions of university graduates.

Apart from class, gender boundaries are also being transgressed in the current migration flows. While female migration has largely been described from the standpoints of exploitation and resistance, the subject of female agency in migration needs attention. In the current entrepreneurial migration from the PRC, the proportion of women is much larger than in previous waves of migration from China, where women typically followed men after the men had established a stable livelihood. In Hungary (May 2000), 35% of Chinese citizens in the Interior Ministry database were women. In Russia (Гельбрас, 1999) 34% were women. These migrants are not forced into the rigid gender roles that characterize traditional Chinese chain migration. Instead of largely being subjects of

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[12] Interviews in Budapest, 1999.

[13] Interview with Guan Guorong, Vice-President of the Chinese Business Federation in Campania, Terzigno, Italy, 1999.

[14] The Ministry of the Interior database contains two variables that provide an indication of occupation. One is a term that can mean both "education" and "profession", and the other is "occupation". From the responses, it is clear that some respondents give their original profession as the response to one question and their current occupation as the response to the other, or their profession and job title, or their occupation in China and occupation in Hungary. There are therefore many overlaps and difficulties in evaluating these variables, and one can only use them as a rough indicator.

migration systems, these women are also their agents and shapers. For women as well as for men, maintenance of a complex "mobility portfolio" between their countries of residence, China, and third countries serves both to optimise their strategies of economic accumulation and to maximise options of evading the grip of social systems of power.

"Upgrading the Migrant" (Wang Gungwu)

The meaning of migration from China has changed repeatedly both in China and overseas. When at the end of the nineteenth century the Chinese government realised the economic usefulness of revenues from migrants, it "upgraded" them from "miscellaneous terms referring to merchants, labourers and southern provincials … to the powerful label that clearly marked official recognition, the *Huaqiao*, or Chinese sojourners" (Wang, 1998: 18). Given that Qing imperial law had regarded emigration as a capital offence, the significance of this shift was enormous, and it awakened a pan-Chinese ethnic or "racial" consciousness among overseas Chinese and created organisations eager to pay their loyalty to various Chinese governments and possibly to benefit from the connections. Overseas Chinese were praised as patriots for their contributions to Sun Yat-sen's republican movement and to the anti-Japanese war. Such relations lasted roughly until the late fifties, when assets owned by overseas Chinese in China were nationalised, relations with them downgraded, and people with overseas Chinese connections subjected to a witch hunt as spies and "capitalist roaders".

Since Mao Zedong's death and the beginning of reforms, a new shift from traitors to patriots in the official view of overseas Chinese has taken place in several steps. Relations with the wealthy (or so perceived) Chinese diaspora were restored and their investments and donations solicited and acknowledged as patriotic. Going the second step – removing the stigma from leaving China and remaining abroad – was trickier. The next step of "upgrading the migrant" was the creation of a new category that included everyone who had left China since 1978, regardless of the purpose or legality of their departure and of their status abroad as foreign citizen, permanent resident, undocumented labourer, or student (Nyíri, 2002). All these are now referred to in official parlance as " migrants" or "new emigrants" (*xin yimin*).

Accompanying the official discourse, a particular kind of popular media narrative of "new migrants" also emerged, distancing them from traditional overseas Chinese. When asked how his project was different from old Chinatowns, Song Wuqiang, a migrant from Northeast China to Budapest who is in charge of Asia Center, a complex he promises to be Europe's largest shopping center, answered characteristically:

> "The old generation of migrants was, in some ways, passive… The Asia Center's site has been selected after having studied the investment and market environment of various countries … [It is] based on large-scale modern trade … The Asia Center is an active initiative, not a bigger or smaller market that serves the livelihood of strangers in a foreign land." [15]

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[15] "Yazhou Zhongxin Asia Center" (advertorial), *Zhonghua Shibao* [Budapest], 20–26 July 2000, I.

On another occasion, the Asia Center's own newspaper called *Shijie Qiaobao* (*World Overseas Chinese News* in Chinese although the English title is *The World Press*) claimed no less than that "the Asia Center will increase the reputation of Hungarian enterprises and the country; at the same time, it will help Hungary's Olympic bid"![16]

In sum, both official and lowbrow publications present a view of "new migrants" as people who remain part of the Chinese economy and polity, strengthen the ties of overseas Chinese to China, and, as highly skilled professionals and successful businesspeople who improve the standing of Chinese in their host societies.

This discourse of new migrants is amplified by an organisational network and the media. As I show elsewhere (Nyíri, 2002), Chinese state agencies encourage formation of migrant organisations and organise or endorse meetings to bring together leaders of such organisations. These meetings structure the transnational social space of the "new migrant" community, creating a critical density of encounters at which the officially supported discourse is recycled to significant numbers of people. An even more important channel for that are the satellite broadcasts of China Central Television (CCTV), begun in the second half of the nineties, which appear to have achieved very high penetration and occasionally – such as after the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 – a strong nationalistic mobilising effect.

These forums suggest to migrants that if they are "successful" in achieving legal residence, prosperity, or high social and political status abroad they are "achieving glory for the motherland" (*wei jiaxiang zheng guang*). Regardless of education and social background, they have the chance to prove themselves as good citizens by being "successful" abroad. This chance at respect and status is one that rural and uneducated Chinese may well feel impossible to obtain if they stay in China. Migration becomes all the more tempting in that both official attitudes and fiction suggest that having been an illegal migrant crammed into the hold of a ship or washing dishes at a restaurant kitchen will not detract from their glory once they strike it rich.

(Naturally, the view of new migrants as modernising patriots does not go uncontested in the Chinese-speaking world. Previous generations of overseas Chinese, whether as Hong Kong Chinese in Britain, long-term Chinese residents of Cambodia or local-born Chinese Filipinos, are the loudest to protest against "illegal immigration" from China. They partly echo the views of local opponents of immigration, associating mainland Chinese with crime, illegal and dishonest business and labour practices, and unwillingness to adapt to local customs (see e.g. Go, 2002). Leaders of established ethnic Chinese communities, whose positions are weakened by new migrants, question the authenticity of their "Chineseness" and suggest that they damage the reputation not only of ethnic Chinese but of China itself. Although new migrants from China initially supply old Chinese businesses, such as restaurants, with labour that second-generation local Chinese are unwilling to undertake, the workers soon become their erstwhile employers' lower-cost competitors.)

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[16] "Shijie Jingji" ribao jizhe caifang Yazhou Zhongxin [*Világgazdaság* daily reporter visits Asia Center], *Shijie Qiaobao*, Budapest, 15 July 2001, 1.

While Chinese officials and media upgraded new migrants to patriots, Western business schools and media have done their own upgrading. As McKeown (2000) has suggested, the Western (American) image of the overseas Chinese has by the turn of the millennium shifted from coolie to middleman minority to global entrepreneur. The 1990s produced a spate of books from the scholarly to the journalistic attempting to offer cultural explanations for the economic successes of Asian "tiger" economies. Much of this writing – with characteristic titles like *The Bamboo Network* and *Lords of the Rim* – credited overseas Chinese and their supposedly "Confucian" values with being the motor of economic growth. McKeown quotes Eric Liu, an American-born speechwriter for Bill Clinton, describing how the ideology of the Chinese businessman has impinged on his life:

> "Sometimes I think I will go to China to make my fortune. I am not alone in harboring this dream, of course: for a time, hardly a week went by without a reminder that China is the business opportunity of the century. But the siren song that beckons me is not just the ring of a thousand cash registers opening; it is also the call of my Chinese ancestors. *Come back*, they cry, like spirits from an Amy Tan novel. *It is your destiny*. All right, 'destiny' is a bit melodramatic – and I don't really hear those voices. Yet, as a Mandarin-speaking Chinese American, I am made to feel about not doing business in China the way Ken Griffy, Jr., might have felt had he never gone into baseball: like someone who squandered an inheritance, who failed to capitalize on a rare alignment of circumstance and skill" (McKeown, 2000).

The existence of multiple bonds with the country of origin and that of residence, or even the idea of going abroad as a way of boosting one's status at the locality of origin – a kind of spatial strategy of social mobility – are hardly new phenomena. But McKeown's quote and earlier quotes from Chinese sources demonstrate that what may be distinctive today is the institutionalisation and discursive legitimation, sometimes even *expectation*, of transnationalism, where expatriation can become patriotic and the cultivation of ancestral ties a matter of common sense.

This experience is not unique to China. Philippine ex-President Joseph Estrada and Mexican President Vicente Fox have been champions of transnational political and economic arrangements. Fox, who has called Mexicans in the US heroes or VIPs, praising them for sending home remittances of about $6 to $7 billion a year, has established a toll-free phone number for Mexicans in the US to call to search for jobs in Mexico, and created a fund to raise money from Mexicans in the US to create jobs in Mexico. El Salvador's government has dispatched agents to help migrants to the United States apply for political asylum on the grounds of being persecuted by that very government. In the Philippines, a debate has emerged on granting undocumented Filipinos abroad voting rights. In each case, the ratio of migrants to the total population is much higher than in China.

Yet the emergence of institutionalised Chinese transnationalism into the open causes a much greater– negative or positive – thrill, in part due to the myth of the "Lords of the Rim", in part due to the population size, military and economic potential, and nationalist posturing of the PRC.

Whereas in federal systems with elected governments, such as Mexico, the multiplicity of state agency is taken for granted, it is customary to treat the PRC as a single agent and to overlook the agency of local and provincial administrations pursuing their interests. But as Chin, Shurkin and myself show, the phenomenon of migration is manipulated differently by central and local authorities as well as by different government departments not only in the receiving countries but in China as well. In Russia, harping on fears of a Chinese "demographic expansion" and suggesting hugely exaggerated figures for migration is a tool local governments in the Far East use to press the centre for more money. At the same time, economic planners see integration with China and Japan as their only hope for development and are in inherent conflict with border enforcers.

Similarly, in China, higher-level organs are more concerned with the negative effects of migration, such as the flight of assets and the damage done by illegal migration and, in some cases, the impact low-quality goods sold by Chinese in Eastern Europe have on the reputation of China and Chinese products abroad. Foreign affairs organs (which have to fend off diplomatic problems arising from illegal migration and accusations of "demographic expansionism" in Russia) are at odds with overseas Chinese affairs organs (whose influence grows with the growth of the diaspora), while foreign economic relations organs may take an in-between stand.

In the West, law enforcers preoccupied with "illegal immigration" and "human smuggling" are eager to pick up exaggerated figures reported from regions they have little knowledge of, and such figures not infrequently make their way into briefing documents, giving them a clout of trustworthiness. Figures of "millions" of Chinese in the Russian Far East are absurd to anyone who has recently set foot in the region. Similarly, during their campaign against Milošević in 2000, Serbian opposition media claimed that there were "more than a hundred thousand" Chinese in the country. Western European press, especially after the path of 58 dead Chinese found in a container at Dover had been traced back to Yugoslavia, was eager to pick up the figure. Interviews with Chinese in Belgrade in December 2000 suggested, however, that while Yugoslavia was indeed a route for irregular transit migration, the resident population of Chinese was likely in the thousands.

More empirical studies of new migrant flows in new places and in new roles are needed to piece together the complex yet closely connected picture of Chinese migration in different parts of Eurasia.

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Pál Nyíri

GLOBALIZACIJA KINESKE MIGRACIJE: NOVI PROSTORI, NOVA ZNAČENJA

SAŽETAK

Članak daje prikaz novih trendova u vanjskoj migraciji iz Narodne Republike Kine u zadnjem desetljeću, usredotočujući se na dva aspekta. Prvi je geografska ekspanzija i fuzioniranje (udruživanje) prijašnjih različitih translokalnih migracijskih tokova u globalni migracijski sustav. On uključuje otvaranje novih migracijskih prostora u istočnoj i jugoistočnoj Aziji, povećanu pokretljivost među zemaljama destinacije i među različitim društvenim slojevima migranata, od studenata do ilegalnih radnika. Drugi aspekt je pomak u shvaćanju što je društveno i kulturno značenje migracije za migranta, nemigranta i za elite. Taj se pomak može opisati kao »uspon migranta« (*upgrading the migrant*) (Wang, 1998). Različiti diskursi migracije stopili su se u jedan diskurs koji je izrazito orijentiran na uspjeh. On umanjuje važnost društvene pozadine migranta i sam put migracije. NR Kina podržava taj diskurs retorikom patriotizma i razvoja. Što se tiče prvog aspekta, rad se bavi problemom razlikovanja tokova legalnih i ilegalnih migranata, studenata, turista i radnika te se zalaže za holistički pristup u proučavanju konfiguracije sadašnje migracije iz Kine. S obzirom na drugi aspekt, u članku se propituje (podvrgava sumnji) raširena teorija da NR Kina kao cjelina podupire iseljavanje te se ukazuje na suprotstavljene interese različitih slojeva i organizacija u državnom aparatu. Istodobno se uočava da Kina, kao i druge zemlje, trenutno živi u skladu s transnacionalizmom sankcioniranim od države, u kojemu su migranti češće angažirani u izgradnji nacije i dobivanju izbornih prava kao politički građani, nego što su to ruralni nemigranti.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: kineski iseljenici, vanjska migracija, transnacionalizam

Пал Нири

ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЯ КИТАЙСКОЙ МИГРАЦИИ: НОВЫЕ ПРОСТРАНСТВА, НОВЫЕ ЗНАЧЕНИЯ

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье обсуждаются новые тенденции в международной миграции из Китайской Народной Республики (КНР) за последние десять лет. Автор при этом останавливается на двух аспектах: 1) Географическое распространение и слияние ранее различных транс- локальных миграционных потоков в глобальную миграционную систему. Это включает в себя открытие новых миграционных пространств в Восточной Европе и Юго-Восточной Азии, рост пространственной подвижности между принимающими странами и повышение социальной мобильности между разными социальными слоями мигрантов, от студентов до нелегальных рабочих; 2) Сдвиг социального и культурного значения миграции для мигрантов, немигрирующего (т.е. «остающегося дома» населения) и элит. Этот сдвиг может быть описан как повышение статуса мигранта (*upgrading the migrant*) (Wang, 1998). Различные дискурсы миграции сошлись в один дискурс ориентированности на успех. В пределах этого дискурса социальное происхождение мигранта и пути (траектории) миграции становятся менее значительными. КНР питает этот дискурс официальными штампами патриотизма и развития. Что касается первого аспекта, в статье обсуждается проблематичность выделения четких различий между потоками легальных и нелегальных мигрантов, студентов, туристов и рабочих и обосновывается необходимость целостного подхода при изучении особенностей современной миграции из КНР. Что касается второго аспекта, статья ставит под вопрос гипотезу о поддерживании эмиграции со стороны Китайской Народной Республики и указывает на противоречивые интересы различных уровней и различных организаций внутри государственного аппарата. В то же время в статье подтверждается, что в КНР, подобно другим государствам, в настоящее время ярко выражен санкционированный государством транс-национализм, вследствие которого мигранты могут быть более реально вовлечены в проект построения нации и политически представлены, чем стационарное сельское население.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: хуацяо, международная миграция, транс-национализм