



1. Maritime Expansion and Chinese Migration

Chinese Diaspora in Modern World History



- 3 Key Concepts
- Dialect groups
- Kuhn's Theoretical model

- The year 1567

Chinese Diaspora

- The Chinese diaspora, comprising Overseas Chinese and their descendants that have been largely residing outside of China, is a part of the greater Overseas Chinese community.
- The term is usually used to refer to those living outside China up until 1949, during the time before the establishment of the People's Republic of China.
- For centuries, overseas migration has been a major factor in Chinese history.
- Some scholars even define this outflow as not just extremely large but an 'inseparable and indispensable aspect', natural (involuntary) and inevitable consequence).

1. Maritime Expansion and Chinese Migration

- **Political, socioeconomic, and cultural conditions in China**

- Opportunities or land shortage led to mass migration of millions of people – migration constant part of Chinese life by eighteenth century.
- People inland migrated to other parts of the country, while those of the southern coastal regions went overseas.
- Seafaring populations divided into different dialect groups
- Lack of government support set the Chinese apart from the European explorer-merchants

1. Maritime Expansion and Chinese Migration

1) Hokkien groups from Fujian province, 2) Cantonese from the Pearl River Delta, 3) Teochiu from the Chaozhou prefecture in Guangdong province, and 4) Hakka from frontier borderlands. People within each of these groups shared not only a common dialect but often also occupational specialization.

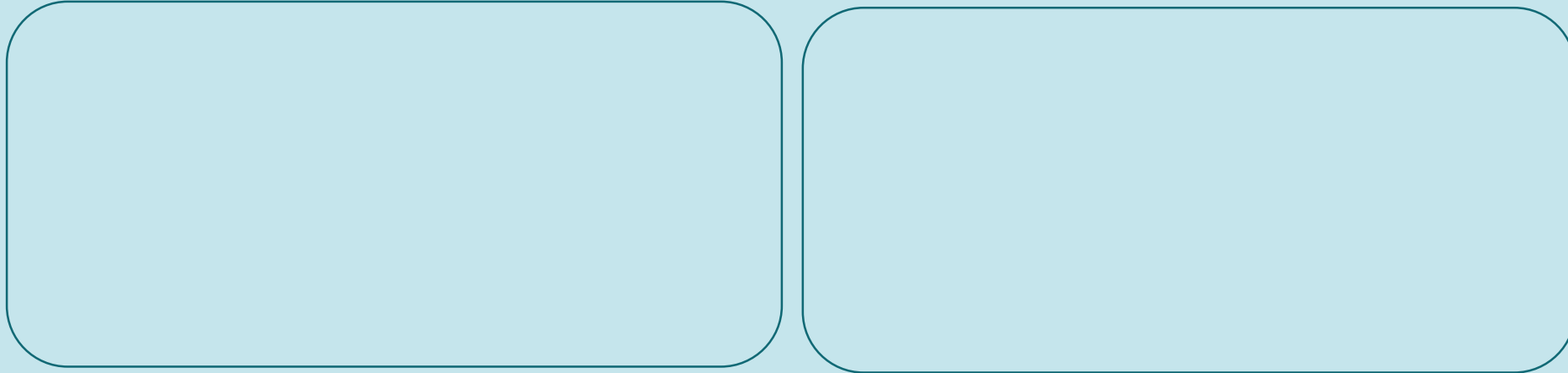


Hakka



- Lifting of imperial ban on private trade
 - Translocal flows of Chinese people (both domestic and transnational)
 - Networks of trade, remittance, and travel
 - Evolving ideas of state, nation, and Chinese identity
- Chinese emigrants and the state
 - Emigrants connected to China through their ties to Chinese soil and because it is useful in certain circumstances to claim multiple territorial or national identities

Kuhn's Theoretical model



Chinese emigration landscape

According to the author, is the model still visible and functioning well for the Chinese emigrants? Why?/Why not?

Kuhn's Theoretical Model

Corridor

cultural formation in which emigrants and their home communities participate jointly

Niche

the way migrants fit into the human ecology of the venue society while their kin-groups back in the original village fit into their own regional ecology

Chinese emigration landscape

- Chinese found “niches” to occupy in local societies,
- but “migration corridors” linked Chinese abroad to their home towns, or qiaoxiang.

“Corridor +niche” culture, shows that the essence of Chinese emigration is “not the separation but the connection”;

and that the Chinese long-practiced strategy of migration should be seen as “a system of labor distribution that assumes a continuous connection between migrants and their home communities . . .” (p. 4).

- Kuhn incorporates vivid quotations from primary sources, and he develops fresh ideas on migration and Chinese societies at home and abroad.
- He found strong continuities between social organizations of Chinese at home and Chinese in Southeast Asia and North America. Invoking the term “ecology” to describe “the way a population copes with its environment,” he described how the different social and environments of Southeast Asia affected Chinese migrant life.

- Rejecting both simplistic views of Chinese as mere “sojourners” unconnected to their overseas home, or as “overseas” Chinese who had a radically different temperament from those who stayed home, Kuhn discovered strong links in social institutions, economic channels, and personal connections between Chinese abroad and Chinese at home.

Transnational history, with its stress on cross-border linkages, had begun to gain support in the 1990s in western history circles, but it was still very new in Asian history in the 2000s, and even now it has rather few, but enthusiastic practitioners.

We still have a long way to go to connect the provincial fields of overseas Chinese studies, Asian-American studies, and Qing and modern history, but new research projects and students are paving this road, a road in which, once again, Philip Kuhn was a pioneer.

Name :

Discuss: Factors that have led to the persistence of the corridor and those for its erosion.

Persistence or Erosion of the 'Corridor' ?

- (1) Guilds and lodges, branch temples, and regional brotherhoods both at home and abroad

Two-way passage of people, money and culture

- (2) Modified by treatments of the “others” and Chinese migrants’ responses
 - characterized by self-sufficiency
 - Modern technology and ease of travel are making the ‘corridor’ more profitable and sustainable
 - Damaged by political barriers to trade and migration put up by home or destination states, the full acculturation of local-born generations, etc.

- Chinese found “niches” to occupy in local societies, but “migration corridors” linked Chinese abroad to their home towns, or qiaoxiang.
- Nevertheless, the author stresses that the model of “corridor + niche” is now still visible and functioning well for the Chinese emigrants.
- It not only constituted an adaptive device for the early migrants, but can be discerned in the migrant life of later generations.
- More to the point, it seems that the “corridor + niche” culture is rather flexible and has kept evolving in different times and circumstances, producing a complex, long-term pattern in the history of Chinese emigration.
- The “corridor + niche” model, therefore, is not simply a zone of spatial transition from one place to another,
- but a zone of ongoing cultural transactions.
- It is a collective symbol of “Chinese transnationalism,” and a salient feature of cultural China protruding into the world.

What do you think?

(1) Is the sojourner mentality among Chinese emigrants inseparable from Chinese culture??

- No Chinese equivalent for English word 'emigrant'
- Has such a mentality also prevailed among non-Chinese immigrants in other contexts in the modern world??

Notes: Metaphorical language

- of "corridors," niches, and a shape-shifting but traceable "cultural palette"

(p. 161) of associational forms that morph as they move from the domestic arena to the sojourners' transnational locations.

- The "corridors" of emigration, linked by native-place ties, stretch from hometowns to sojourner settlements beyond China's borders. Emigrant-sending homeland areas (qiaoxiang) are within Chinese borders but are often more closely linked to overseas emigrant communities than to "China".
- These communities are simultaneously transnational and particularistic, existing "in a special zone that is neither fully part of the homeland nor fully part of the adopted land of the émigrés" (p. 50). They are not free-floating zones of diasporic identity but "social and economic organisms" (p. 49), anchored in time, place, and niche businesses that provide access to economic opportunity. The opportunities they offer are brokered by inclusive but hierarchically affiliated organizations that direct intersecting flows of capital and labour

- Notes

- Intersecting international trade in commodities and slaves and the expansion of western capitalism, its creation and development have been an integral part of the accelerated globalization that created the world we know today.
- Besides being an important part of the development of the “host” societies, it also been intimately related to developments in modern China, including the continuous efforts to build a strong China since the early 20th century.
- Scholars of the Chinese diaspora have tended to focus on individual, national or regional settings. Kuhn’s global perspectives and comparative insights will help bridge their often disconnected scholarships that are often written in different languages.

Why is it important?