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*Chinese in Papua New Guinea: Strategic Practices in Sojourning*¹

TETSU ICHIKAWA

This is a study of the Chinese migrants in Papua New Guinea, especially those who have arrived since 1975. While the earlier Chinese migrants were from Guangdong, the recent Chinese newcomers have hailed not only from Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, but also Hong Kong, Taiwan and various parts of mainland China. The article analyses the strategic practices of these recent migrants in deciding whether to settle down or to re-migrate, especially to Australia. It discusses why some decide to settle, including acquiring PNG nationality to help them avoid the restrictions on foreigners doing business, while others decide to re-migrate. In both cases, the choice is based on strategic decisions and influenced by domestic conditions and transnational considerations.

Introduction

MANY PUBLICATIONS HAVE DISCUSSED THE APPROPRIATE TERMS for addressing Chinese overseas (cf. Suryadinata 1997; Tan 2004; Wang Gungwu 2001). These include *hua-qiao* (华侨 overseas Chinese), *huaren* (华人 ethnic Chinese), *huayi* (华裔 Chinese descendants), *huashang* (华商 Chinese merchants), *huagong* (华工 coolies), *huazu* (华族 Chinese people), *huamin* (华民 Chinese folks) and so on. In particular, *huaqiao* and *huaren* are often used to describe the degree of localization of Chinese people outside China. *Huaqiao* literally means Chinese (*hua*) sojourners (*qiao*). Usually this term is used to denote Chinese who hold Chinese citizenship while living abroad. On the other hand, *huaren* means Chinese (*hua*) people (*ren*), and indicates Chinese who have acquired local citizenship and do not intend to return to China. Many Chinese people, especially those in Southeast Asia, tend to avoid calling themselves *huaqiao*. Because the word *qiao* connotes temporary residence, calling themselves *huaqiao* would arouse the suspicion by others that they do not consider the host country as their own, and as such are still attached to China. Therefore most of the locally born generations

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who do not intend to return to China prefer to call themselves *huaren* because *huaren* is more neutral in the political sense than *huaqiao*. This preference reflects a change in the status of the ethnic Chinese from sojourners to settlers.

Wang Ling-chi (1998) proposes two Chinese phrases to describe the changing nature of Chinese migrants from sojourners to settlers: from “*luoye guigen*” (落叶归根) to “*luodi shenggen*” 落地生根. Literally “*luoye guigen*” means “falling leaves returning to their roots” and refers to Chinese immigrants abroad returning to China after making enough money. On the other hand, “*luodi shenggen*” means putting down roots in the soil of countries other than China (Wang Ling-chi 1998), or Chinese immigrants and their descendants looking upon their host country as a place of permanent residence, without thinking of repatriating to China. This framework is based on a presupposition that the Chinese people outside China will localize gradually. Used in a neutral sense, it can avoid the premise that Chinese society outside China is the same as the one in mainland China. Rather, it suggests that ethnic Chinese societies can be understood in the context of the host countries. Therefore this framework is adopted by many scholars to avoid seeing ethnic Chinese societies abroad as extensions of mainland China, and instead to recognize the diversity within ethnic Chinese in the world (e.g. Dai 1980; Zhuang 1985; Suryadinata 1997; Tan 1998).

However, there are other patterns of Chinese migration and settlement besides the “from sojourners to settlers” one. Some Chinese migrants are born outside China and migrate to other countries. These Chinese do not follow the “from sojourners to settlers” pattern because their transnational activities and social spaces are not confined to their places of birth. There is another type of Chinese who are born in mainland China, leave for a foreign country, and re-migrate to other countries. Such successive and frequent mobility illustrates some contemporary features of the international movement of the Chinese. It has been noticed that Chinese society outside China becomes localized gradually, at the same time that the Chinese are migrating internationally.

Wang Gungwu has examined Chinese international migration from the 18th to 20th centuries and suggests four migration patterns. First, there is the *huashang* 华商 (traders) pattern, referring to merchants and artisans. This was the dominant pattern from early times in various parts of Southeast Asia. It was first established within China, extended abroad, and became dominant from the 18th century to the 1850s. The second is the *huagong* 华工 (coolies) pattern which was not significant until the 1850s. The migrants of this pattern consisted of normally men of peasant origin, landless laborers, and the urban poor. This pattern of migration gained tremendous impetus from the gold rush in North America and Australia; it was also significant, without the gold rush, in Southeast Asia. The third one is the *huaqiao* 华侨 (sojourners) pattern which included not only *huashang* and *huagong* but also teachers, journalists and other professionals who

went abroad. This pattern developed at the end of the 19th century and was dominant up to the 1950s. It is not marked by the occupational character of the migrants but is indicative of the political, legal and ideological level of nationalist development in mainland China. The fourth one is the *huayi* 华裔 (descendants of re-migration) pattern. According to Wang, this is a relatively new phenomenon and includes foreign nationals of Chinese descent. Those who are categorized in this pattern are born and naturalized in foreign countries. Often they re-migrate to another foreign country. Wang points out that the *huayi* pattern is worth keeping in view and its future is still evolving and uncertain (Wang 1991).

As Wang has pointed out, there are several reasons for the migration of ethnic Chinese. Chinese immigrants who have become localized in host societies and re-migrated after generations do so for different reasons arising from different situations in different host societies.

Wang also mentions the concept of sojourning. Sojourning is *qiaoju* 侨居 in Chinese and the term usually means temporary residence in a foreign country, usually referring to longer visits and extended periods of stay which sometime lead to the decision not to return home, but to be naturalized in the country of residence. In this situation Chinese migrants do not necessarily make a conscious decision on whether to settle down in the host country or return to their homeland. According to Wang, sojourning is a prelude to eventual migration (Wang 1996). Investigating the concept of sojourning provides us with a useful premise in studying the history of Chinese migration in Southeast Asia before the 1940s and global migration today, because it is important to look into an ambiguous status of Chinese migrants, instead of assuming that they are either moving or settling.

The rest of this article will look at the ethnic Chinese in Papua New Guinea (PNG) as a case study in an examination of the nature of Chinese migration. Researching on the Chinese immigration in and emigration from PNG will enable us to understand the nature of Chinese migration and settlement. Some scholars researching on ethnic Chinese society in PNG have pointed out its sojourning and diasporic character. David Wu who has studied the PNG Chinese community before independence reports that the Chinese in PNG had not assimilated into native New Guinean society but maintained their Chinese identity despite having resided there for generations (Wu 1982). He observes that in spite of acculturation and intermarriage with the local people, the Chinese in PNG did not lose their ethnic identity. He also notices their emigration to Australia: "In short, the Chinese of PNG have remained sojourners — or eternal diaspora — despite 100 years of presence" (Wu 1998: 213). Although his main concern is with the Chinese old comers who have resided in New Guinea since the colonial period, his view throws light on the peculiarity of the Chinese new comers in contemporary PNG.

Christine Inglis who also researches on the PNG Chinese takes note of both the locally born Chinese and the new arrivals. She advocates the need to re-examine the nature of Chinese identities, and suggests that the Chinese population of PNG is transforming from settlers to sojourners (Inglis 1997). The aim of this paper is to analyze the sojourning and diasporic character of the ethnic Chinese in PNG. It will focus on the processes of their migration and settlement as strategic practices in coping with the surroundings, not as innate and unchangeable peculiarities.

Beginning of the Chinese Community in New Guinea, 1884–1942

The early history of the Chinese migrants in the South Pacific is not well known. Chinese pioneers in this part of the world could be engaged in the trading of sandalwood and collection of marine products; they were primarily traders. But they tended not to settle in the South Pacific. The beginning of Chinese settlement in the South Pacific coincided with the Western colonization of the area when Chinese were engaged in various occupations such as plantation workers, traders and artisans. The Chinese migrants in New Guinea also started in the colonial era. Before the Europeans colonized New Guinea, Chinese traders might have visited New Guinea Island and hunted birds of paradise for their trade. But these early Chinese arrivals did not stay for long and did not establish permanent settlement. Like in the other countries in Oceania, Chinese settlement in New Guinea started during the colonial period (Wu 1982; Willmott 1995; Pan 1998).

After Germany colonized the northeastern part of New Guinea Island in 1884, it entrusted Neuguinea Kompagnie with the administration and economic development of the New Guinea area. The company started plantations for tobacco and copra in mainland New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago by recruiting Chinese laborers (Willson, Moore and Munro 1990). Those Chinese who came during this period were indentured laborers mostly from Singapore and Sumatra (Biskup 1970). Working conditions on the plantations were harsh. In 1895, 28 percent of those laborers died and were buried in Mainland New Guinea (Firth 1989). After the indentured period, most of the laborers left New Guinea Island to return home.

Beginning in 1898 when the German colonial government took over the administration from Neuguinea Kompagnie, Chinese free immigration, instead of indentured labor, was promoted. Chinese workers were engaged as carpenters, ship builders, engineers, tailors, shopkeepers and managers of plantations. Some of them began to settle and establish communities in towns, such as Rabaul, Kokopo, Kavieng, Lae and Madang. Rabaul, which became the capital of German New

Guinea in 1910, received an especially large number of Chinese settlers. The number of Chinese in the New Guinea area in 1890 was estimated at around 200, and the Chinese population grew to 1,427 in 1913 (Cahill 1996). In Rabaul and Lae, where the residence of Chinese was restricted to certain areas, Chinese immigrants established Chinatowns (Cahill 1996: 73; Willis 1974: 93). During this period, Chinese immigrated not only from Singapore and Sumatra, but also from Hong Kong and mainland China. These Chinese came from particular areas in Guangdong province, such as Siyi 四邑 and Huiyang 惠阳. Siyi (See Yap in Cantonese) literally means four counties. The Siyi area consists of the four counties of Kaiping 开平, Taishan 台山, Enping 恩平 and Xinhui 新会. These counties have sent Chinese emigrants to various foreign countries since the 19th century (Mei and Zhang 2001). Besides these Cantonese, there are some Hakka people in the Chinese community of PNG, most of them mainly from the Huiyang area in Guangdong (Wu 1982: 11). They used to speak Cantonese or Hakka as their common languages. This period of German New Guinea colonization was the time when the Chinese community changed its character from a society of temporary immigrants to one of permanent residents.

In 1914, when World War I began, Australia acquired the New Guinea region after a battle with Germany. Beginning in 1920, New Guinea fell under the control of Australia as a Mandated Territory of the League of Nations. Australia adopted the “White Australian Policy” and restricted Chinese immigration into New Guinea. New immigrants had to take a dictation test conducted in European languages which was actually impossible for Asians to pass (e.g. Radi 1971; Rowley 1971). Those Chinese who stayed in New Guinea, therefore, could not easily invite their relatives in China to join them freely. All Chinese who had settled in New Guinea before 1922 were acknowledged as permanent alien residents, and those who came after that date were considered temporary residents and were allowed to stay only for certain periods (Cahill 1996). Travel within the New Guinea area and abroad to the Papuan area was restricted. As a result, Chinese communities developed only in the New Guinea area, and not in the Papuan area (Inglis 1972).

Even though Chinese immigration was restricted in New Guinea under Australian control, the Chinese kept contact with relatives in their home villages in China. Most of the early Chinese immigrants were unmarried men, and some of them married local women. The children of mixed blood Chinese were brought up in the Chinese community and educated as Chinese. Later on the Chinese in New Guinea tried to bring their relatives from China who were allowed to enter New Guinea temporarily. Before the Pacific War began, the Chinese population in New Guinea was over 2,000 (Wu 1982:167). Business with the Australians in this area was mainly conducted by Chinese tailors and owners of a variety of trade stores.

Localizing in New Guinea and Acquiring Australian Nationality, 1942–75

World War II and the consequent Japanese military administration in this region had a serious impact on Chinese society in New Guinea. In 1942, Japanese military forces attacked New Guinea and occupied parts of it. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Australian government evacuated their women and children from New Guinea. However, Chinese women and children were not included as they were “regarded as being in the same category as locals” (Cahill 1996).² Under the Japanese military administration the Chinese in New Guinea provided forced labor for the Japanese army and resided in concentration camps. During the war, most of the Chinese in New Guinea were not protected by the Australian colonial administration because of their nationality.

After the war New Guinea was returned to Australian rule by which time the Chinese community was transformed. First, Chinese in New Guinea ceased to have contact with China. Prior to the outbreak of war, Chinese had kept contact in many ways with Hong Kong and mainland China, especially Canton. Many Chinese used to send their children to China for their education. This is because in New Guinea, Chinese students attended primary schools operated by missionary organizations which provided only basic education; one needed to go abroad for higher education. Those China-educated students brought back to New Guinea what is known as “Chinese culture,” which included Chinese language, poem, calligraphy, martial art, traditional beliefs and religions etc. Those returned students used to play an important role in maintaining Chinese ethnic identity among the Chinese communities in New Guinea.

This contact with China weakened dramatically after the onset of war which made it impossible for Chinese in New Guinea to contact their relatives in China. The situation did not improve during the civil war between the Chinese Nationalists and the Chinese Communists which started almost immediately after World War II. It was not until the Communists established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 that Chinese in New Guinea could make contact with relatives in China again. But it was not easy to visit or send their children to China. Australia did not establish diplomatic relations with PRC until 1971. Some New Guinean Chinese continued to maintain contact with Chinese societies in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, but not China.

The second change, which was the result of the first, was that the relationship with Australia became strong. After Japan surrendered in 1945, the Australian army stayed on in Rabaul. Some Chinese began to do business with the Australians. Also, many Chinese started to send their children to Australia in the 1950s when the Australian government began subsidizing the education of New Guinean Chinese students in Australia. The number of the Chinese students going to Australia for higher education gradually increased. In the late 1950s, Australia

began allowing Chinese to obtain Australian citizenship. After this, most of the Chinese in New Guinea acquired Australian citizenship and the number of those who spoke English increased. As a result, Chinese society in New Guinea began to have a closer relationship with Australia.

This Australia-oriented tendency was accelerated by the independence of PNG in 1975. As independence became imminent, Chinese in New Guinea had to decide whether to stay in PNG as foreigners, or to apply for PNG citizenship. It also became clear that after independence, their business would be restricted in several respects, arising from the issue of the right of land-ownership and eligibility to obtain license for running stores (Willson 1989:101; Wu 1982:156). At the same time, they had fears of persecution by the local people. They knew that Asians were being oppressed in some newly independent nations, such as Indonesia and some African states, and they were afraid the same might happen in PNG. Although such ethnic conflict or racial riots did not happen during the period of independence, many Chinese chose to leave PNG, mostly for Australia. The number of Chinese migrating to Australia began to increase even before PNG became independent.

During the colonial period, most of the Chinese had established their business as storekeepers or wholesalers and some were doing business in shipping, trading, running plantations and so on. Those Chinese who had finished their education came back to New Guinea to do their business. But as the independence of PNG was getting close, some of them decided to stay on in Australia even after they had finished their education. As such, the children remained in Australia, while their parents resided in PNG. As the business situation in PNG worsened with the weakening of the kina, the currency of PNG (King and Sugden 1997), and the rising crime rate in PNG (e.g. Levantis 1997, Levantis and Gani 1998), these Chinese children in Australia persuaded their aging parents to join them in Australia. While considering that possibility, these members of the older generation invested in properties in Australia and prepared for migration. They became Australia-oriented in making plans for their old age.

The Arrival of Chinese New Comers in the Global Context since 1975

While Chinese migration to Australia has continued after independence, there are other kinds of Chinese immigrants who come to contemporary PNG. These Chinese new comers have increased in number since independence, especially in the 1980s.³ They have also changed the character of Chinese society in PNG. Both the arrival of the new immigrants and the consequent change in the PNG Chinese community have been influenced by the transnational Chinese migration in the Asia-Pacific region. The contemporary transformation of the Chinese

community in PNG should thus be examined in the global context of Chinese migration.

Unlike the old comers, the new comers are from diverse places of origin. While the former came mainly from China, especially the Siyi area in Guangdong province, the new comers consist of ethnic Chinese from East and Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the territories of Hong Kong, Taiwan and PRC. Even the mainland Chinese immigrants come not only from Guangdong but also various parts of China like Beijing, Shanghai, Fujian etc. The diversity of the new comers has made the structure of the PNG Chinese population more complex.⁴

The pattern of immigration has also changed. There are many ethnic Chinese employees of East and Southeast Asian companies operating in PNG. The old comers' immigration to New Guinea was characterized by chain migration based on kinship and locality. During the colonial period most of the old comers were single male laborers. After establishing their livelihood, they brought their families or other villagers to New Guinea. The family was the main economic unit in that period. On the other hand, many new comers arrive in PNG as company workers and after their contracts run out, they may return home or stay and start their business in PNG. These new comers' migration movements are affected more by the transnational activities of the companies than kinship and locality.

For a consideration of the feature of the new arrivals, this paper examines the migration of Malaysian Chinese in this area.⁵ The transnational activities of Malaysian companies have played a crucial role in drawing Malaysian Chinese to PNG. Malaysia has long established its timber industries in developing the resources of its tropical rainforest. In particular in Sabah and Sarawak, the two Malaysian states in Borneo, forestry is a major industry.

However, the activities of the timber industries have brought environmental problems. Deforestation has practically destroyed the rainforest while the demand for timber in the international market has increased. Especially after the 1990s, the price of wood has risen as the amount of log export from Sabah and Sarawak has decreased. As the environmental problem worsens and the costs of operation rise, it has become difficult for the timber industries to rely only on Malaysia; there is the need to seek alternative logging sites. Some Malaysian logging companies have started operating abroad. After the 1990s, the number of timber companies operating in other Southeast Asian countries and Oceania has risen noticeably (Connell 1997: 110). The problem of environmental protection and the need for alternate timber resources have become transnational issues spilling over the borders of Malaysia.

As about 80 percent of PNG is covered in rain forest, and forestry is one of the country's main industries, it is the prime destination for Malaysian timber

companies. Other foreign companies from Japan, South Korea and Australia are also engaged in logging and sawing in PNG, but Malaysian companies have played a crucial role. One of the Malaysian logging companies, Rimbunan Hijau, is estimated to be in control of over 60 percent of PNG's log export in the 1990s (Filer 1997). The arrival of Malaysian timber companies in PNG has boosted the immigration of Malaysian Chinese in this country. Most of the Malaysian Chinese workers in the timber industries were already engaged in logging in Malaysia and most of the Malaysian companies are owned by ethnic Chinese.

Other Malaysian companies, besides the timber companies, have also brought Chinese workers to PNG, such as those in the print media industry. *National* is a daily newspaper which has been published since 1993; its owner is the same as that of Rimbunan Hijau. Although the readership of *National* is smaller than that of *Post Courier*, another daily newspaper in PNG, it is obvious that Malaysian capital has significant influence in the print media (Robie 1995: 28; Wood 1999: 181). As the number of Malaysian companies in PNG increases, the Malaysian Business Council was established in 1992 by about 500 Malaysian companies at the capital city, Port Moresby. Maybank, one of the Malaysian banks, also has a branch in Port Moresby to cater to the financial demands of Malaysian companies operating in PNG (Inglis 1997: 334; Hara 1998: 57). Just like the Malaysian timber companies, they bring Chinese workers who make up the biggest component of the Malaysian Chinese community there.

Because these Malaysian Chinese have arrived in PNG recently, they have different characteristics from other Chinese in PNG, especially the local born Chinese. One of the Malaysian Chinese characteristics is in relation to where they live. The local born Chinese have mainly lived in cities, towns or plantations since the colonial period, mostly in the northern part of New Guinea, such as Rabaul and Kavieng where they have established their own communities, and Chinatowns in some cities. Malaysian Chinese, on the other hand, live not only in cities and towns, but also in remote areas such as the rainforest. Whereas the old comers have not resided in some provinces, such as Western and Sandaun, there are Malaysian Chinese who live and engage in logging or other businesses there (Ichikawa n.d.).

Besides the Malaysian Chinese whose main business is timber, there are ethnic Chinese from other countries who run other kinds of business. The mainland Chinese, for example, have come to PNG as employees or workers of the agents of the PRC government which has various aid projects in PNG (Inglis 1997: 330). Most of the new arrivals from PRC do not have kinship ties with the local born Chinese, and do not have relations with the emigrant villages from where the old comers originate. After immigrating to PNG as employees of foreign companies, some of them begin their own businesses. There are some Chinese entrepreneurs who bring their relatives or friends from their own countries to assist

in their new businesses. Thus there is also chain migration from the East and Southeast Asian countries to PNG. Those new Chinese entrepreneurs have to acquire business visas to start their own businesses, when their original contracts run out. Some Chinese arrive in PNG on tourist visas. Most, though not all, of the Chinese new arrivals have legal status. Thus, with the arrival of the new Chinese from various Asian countries, the population of the ethnic Chinese in post-independence PNG has not seen a decrease in spite of the emigration of the Chinese old comers to Australia.

Chinese Practices of Settling in Papua New Guinea

Unlike the cities of ex-German New Guinea, Port Moresby does not have a Chinatown or traditional Chinese associations, such as regional and clan associations. There are several reasons for this. The history of the ethnic Chinese in Port Moresby is relatively short and the size of the community is also small. It may also be difficult for the Chinese to establish an association because there is much diversity among the recent Chinese immigrants and they are dispersed in their localities. There are no traditional Chinese associations in the other cities either. As I will mention below, after the independence of PNG, many Chinese left for Australia and their traditional associations disappeared as the number of the Chinese old comers decreased.

On the other hand, recent Chinese immigrants in PNG have established other kinds of associations and groups, and led their community activities. Those Chinese gather, for instance, in clubs, religious institutions and restaurants owned by Chinese. They gather in these places instead of traditional associations, make contacts and network with each other. For instance, some Chinese in PNG now join the Lions Club or other kinds of clubs for socialization purposes. It is common to see Chinese get together in Chinese restaurants in particular on weekends and exchange information relating to their interests such as business opportunities in PNG. Chinese restaurants are important not only as places to do business in but also venues for socialization and communication purposes.

To understand the characteristics of the ethnic Chinese community in PNG, this paper takes a look at the only Buddhist temple in PNG, the PNG Manjusri Buddhist Centre 曼珠精舍, hereafter, the Buddhist Centre. It is a branch of a Taiwanese Buddhist group, Fo Guang Shan 佛光山 (Buddha's Light International Association). The Buddhist Centre is located in the Gordon area in Port Moresby. Although it is a Buddhist temple, its appearance is not typically Buddhist. It has a hall and adjacent buildings which look like ordinary residential buildings. So it is not easy to recognize it as a Chinese religious building at a glance. This is an industrial area and there are foreign companies, including the Malaysian and other ethnic Chinese ones. The Buddhist Centre was established in 1994 by

Malaysian Chinese who were increasing in number in PNG; they collected the donations for the Centre. In 1996, they asked a Buddhist association in Taiwan to send a Buddhist priest. A Malaysian Chinese nun who once studied Buddhism in Taiwan⁶ was sent instead, to officiate regularly at Buddhist ceremonies and activities for the Malaysian Chinese community. She and some volunteers also take up the administrative duties at the Buddhist Centre which is sustained by donations from Chinese followers. The nun and the followers hold Buddhist rituals every Sunday, and every first and fifteenth of the month of the lunar calendar when the nun conducts sutra reciting and gives sermons. Bigger and more comprehensive ceremonies are held on special days. Special rituals are held on special days of the Chinese lunar calendar 农历, such as *chunjie* 春节 (Chinese New Year) on the first day of the first month, *guanyin shengdan* 观音圣诞 (birthday of the goddess of mercy) on the nineteenth day of the second month, *fodan ji* 佛诞祭 (birthday of the Buddha) on the eighth day of the fourth month, *guanyin chujia jinian ri* 观音出家纪念日 (day of the goddess of mercy's going into religion) on the nineteenth day of the sixth month, *dizang fahui* 地藏法会 (ceremony for Dizang Bodhisattva) on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, *guanyin chengdao ri* 观音成道日 (the day of goddess of mercy's attaining Buddhahood) on the nineteenth day of the ninth month, and *fuotuo chengdao ri* 佛陀成道日 (day of Shakyamuni's attaining Buddhahood) on the eighth day of the twelfth month. In those special days the Centre invites guests who include not only Chinese but also people from other ethnic groups such as Papua New Guineans and Australians. These non-ethnic Chinese participants are invited by the Chinese followers of the Centre. For example, there were about 50 participants in a special rite of *dizang* Bodhisattva 地藏法会 in the eighth month of 1999. Ancestor tablets were placed in front of the statue of Buddha and the participants prayed to them. The peoples whose names were written on the tablets did not die in PNG, and participants prayed to their souls from a foreign land. On these special days, some companies owned by Malaysian Chinese in Port Moresby donate to the Buddhist Centre. Although the owners and workers of these Malaysian companies do not participate in the activities regularly, they keep in touch with the Buddhist Centre on these special occasions.

The character of the gathering in the Buddhist Centre is influenced by the language used by the participants. The Centre does not impose any restrictions on followers' participation, but as chanting and sermons are conducted in Mandarin, it is hard for those who do not understand Mandarin to join in the activities. Other than that, there are no barriers to participation in the activities. The Buddhist Centre plays an important role as a center for Mandarin speakers in Port Moresby. As a branch of a Buddhist association in Taiwan, it often makes contact with the headquarters in Taiwan and its branches in Australia; the officials also pay visits to one another. However the participants of the Centre are not

necessarily regular believers of this Buddhist association and it doesn't eagerly propagate Buddhism. Rather the participants are enthusiastic about the volunteer activities and the parties held on the premises. It also provides Chinese-language classes for the children while their parents participate in Buddhist ceremonies. Some of the participants in fact do not visit the Centre for religious reasons. One Malaysian Chinese woman says that she does not have anything to do on Sundays because PNG is a Christian country and all the shops and facilities are closed. So she comes to the Buddhist Centre to socialize with her friends. Some other Chinese from Malaysia and mainland China say that they did not visit temples regularly when they were in their mother countries but started visiting the Centre after arriving in PNG (cf. Ichikawa n.d.).

It is reasonable to regard the establishment of the Buddhist Centre as evidence of progress in the Chinese effort to settle in PNG. The Chinese make use of the non-religious activities held at the Centre to construct their networks and educate their children. The fact that some Chinese start participating in the Centre activities after arriving in PNG means the Centre has modified its religious nature and acquired new significance for the immigrant community, in a different context and environment.

There is another Chinese association in contemporary Port Moresby. The Cathay Club plays the role of a node for many Chinese settlers in that city. The Cathay Club was established by the local born Chinese in the 1960s. It has some buildings for organizing activities for the community, and as such is a place for socialization and amusement for the Chinese in Port Moresby. Although the Cathay Club was set up by the local Chinese, the members now include Chinese new comers and native Papua New Guineans. The main activities are sport and games, such as snookers, ball games, swimming and hiking. Besides these activities, the lion dance is practiced and performed on the premises of the Cathay Club by the Chinese new comers.

The business practice of the ethnic Chinese can also be seen as a strategy to settle in PNG. Doing business is the main aim of the newly arrived Chinese immigrants. To protect the PNG national economy, the government has established the Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) with a view to promoting and controlling foreign investment. While the IPA gives license to foreign companies to do business, it at the same time prohibits foreign participation in certain businesses which are instituted as "reserved business."⁷ Only PNG nationals can engage in the reserved business which also keeps out Chinese workers (Inglis 1997: 331).

Chinese who wish to go into "reserved business" often have to resort to strategic practices to circumvent the regulations. Such practices include registering the name of a PNG national as a company director, while the management is in Chinese hands, and starting a new business by transferring the business license to another person to avoid the difficult procedure of acquiring a new license etc.

By using these strategies, some Chinese have established their business and community in PNG. Chinese businesses in PNG do not confine themselves to the Chinese community. They build good relations with the Papua New Guineans; customers of Chinese supermarkets, retail shops and restaurants are mostly members of the local society.

There are other kinds of businesses which are conducted within the Chinese community. Some shops sell Chinese religious goods, like paper money, incense and statues of Chinese deities and Buddha, and Chinese medicines. There are also video rental shops providing video tapes and VCD of Hong Kong and Taiwanese TV programs and movies. Some shops sell Chinese food and ingredients and deliver them to restaurants, supermarkets and individual Chinese homes. These businesses do not necessarily exclude non-Chinese customers as anyone can buy the commodities and use the services. Nevertheless, as these goods and services are closely related to the Chinese way of life, there are few non-Chinese customers, and such ethnic businesses are mainly done within the Chinese community. Also those Chinese who engage in ethnic businesses import the commodities from overseas, for example, religious goods from Malaysia and foodstuff from PRC and Malaysia. The development of Chinese ethnic businesses in PNG is accompanied by the building of transnational networks with other ethnic Chinese societies overseas. Running such ethnic businesses for Chinese residents also means that the Chinese immigrants are gradually establishing a permanent community in present day PNG.

The most significant evidence of progress in the settlement process of the Chinese may be seen in the acquisition of PNG nationality. The reasons for acquiring nationality will differ from person to person. But the most common one is to avoid the restrictions on doing business so that one does not have to do business as a foreigner in PNG. This is especially so for Chinese who have plans to do business in the longer term in the country.

There are other Chinese who wish to become naturalized and settle permanently in PNG. One Chinese man from Indonesia says he got PNG nationality after he had lived in Port Moresby for over 10 years. He is now operating a trade store in Port Moresby and doesn't want to return to Indonesia because he is afraid of the frequent occurrence of persecution of the ethnic Chinese there. Although Chinese immigrants in PNG with similar thinking are still in the minority,⁸ it is possible to say that more Chinese now look upon settling permanently in PNG as an acceptable option.⁹

Some Chinese also mention the lifestyle in PNG as the main reason for staying, especially in small towns like Kokopo and Rabaul. One Malaysian Chinese man tells me that life in PNG is "easy going" and gives him less pressure, unlike in Malaysia. Another man from PRC living in Kokopo says that he enjoys his life there because there is less competition and the working hours are shorter.

The Australian influence in doing business in PNG can be felt in the way PNG companies and government offices observe certain rules governing the working conditions. Chinese immigrants can enjoy the relatively short working hours and the assured holidays.

However, it has been found in many countries that acquiring local nationality does not always lead to permanent settlement. It is possible that some Chinese holding PNG nationality may re-migrate to other countries. Those Chinese who already have, or wish to have PNG nationality may want to live in PNG permanently. But because of unavoidable or unforeseen circumstances, some of them will leave. There are not only practices of settlement, but also practices of migration in the PNG Chinese community. Together, the two constitute the dynamics of the survival strategy of the Chinese in PNG.

Immigration and Emigration of the Chinese in Papua New Guinea

There are two directions in the movement of the Chinese in PNG: one from East and Southeast Asian countries to PNG, and the other from PNG to other countries in Oceania, such as Australia, New Zealand, Guam etc. Also, Chinese immigrants in PNG frequently return to their countries of origin and come back to PNG again. This type of circular migration characterizes the Chinese strategy and practice in this region.

One attraction for the Chinese immigrants to PNG is that there are economic opportunities for foreigners. Before contact was established with Westerners who imposed colonial rule, New Guinea had not developed a market economy. New Guinean people had conducted trade based on traditional exchange networks, but not commercial activities based on a modern money economy. Throughout the colonial period, the commercial sector of the economy in New Guinea was dominated by Westerners like German and Australian merchants and firms. The Chinese pioneers in New Guinea were plantation workers and artisans, who became small traders and managers of plantations, and played a role as middlemen in transactions between articulate locals and Europeans (cf. Epstein 1992: 39; Salisbury 1970: 175, 188; Willis 1974: 111).

The economical niches for foreigners still exist in the post-colonial era. Even after independence, there are still areas in the economy which are not well-developed. Australian merchants, firms and capital have left PNG since independence. Their departure has left open the economic niches once dominated by them. Independence has also brought about a shortage of talent and administrative personnel such as officers and clerks. These are some of the reasons why immigrants are drawn from Asia including Chinese newcomers (Connell 1997: 157; Inglis 1997: 328).

As a matter of fact, some of the Chinese entrepreneurs say that PNG offers a lot of opportunities for business and that it is easier to start new businesses in

PNG than in their countries of origin. One Chinese man from PRC says starting new businesses in China is harder because the competition is fierce there. He agrees that doing business in PNG is not so easy because of the existence of certain barriers such as “reserved business” and the lack of a safe environment, but he can start his own business and does not have to work under others. Indeed, some of the Chinese entrepreneurs who have succeeded in establishing their own businesses in PNG would agree with him.

The value of the kina, the PNG currency, was at one time the other attractive factor for the Chinese to come to work in this country. Many Chinese I have interviewed who live or once lived in PNG mention that profit can be made from the exchange rate of the currency. The PNG government set a high exchange rate for the kina to protect the national economy (Asafu-Adjaye 1998; Duncan and Xu 2000). Until the early 1990s, one kina was worth about US one dollar. One Malaysian Chinese, who has returned to Malaysia, told me that he could get a higher income when he worked in PNG because he was paid in kina. Not only were the wages in PNG higher than those in Malaysia, he also profited by exchanging the kina for foreign currencies.

Some of the Chinese immigrants, especially new comers, have succeeded in persuading their acquaintances and relatives to join them in PNG on the strength of the economic opportunities. As mentioned above, recent Chinese immigrants consist not only of individual immigrants but also employees of East and Southeast Asian companies some of whom have resigned from their companies to start their own businesses. The entrepreneurship of the Chinese is one of the main reasons contributing to the Chinese immigration and settlement in PNG.

But not every Chinese immigrant is inclined to live in PNG permanently. Some seek opportunities to leave and re-migrate to other countries. There are push factors, as well as pull factors. Social instability is one of the most serious problems in the cities, not only for the Chinese but all the inhabitants. The influx of people into cities like Port Moresby is quite common and the population of city dwellers is rising. People from rural areas come to seek jobs and economic opportunities. But economic development in PNG is still sluggish and there is the problem of unemployment. Although unemployment does not necessarily result in the breakdown of law and order, some unemployed city dwellers do get involved in crime and become “rascals,” the term used in PNG for those committing serious offenses like robbery and murder, and the disturbance of public order (Levantis 1997; Dinnen and Ley 2000). Chinese residents and their properties are also attacked by the rascals. An unstable environment is a deterrent to foreign investment, leading to further unemployment and a rise in the crime rate. It is a vicious circle (cf. Levantis 1997; Levantis and Azmat 1998; Levantis 2000). Such a situation has caused many Chinese living in the cities to leave PNG for other countries.

Besides the problem of security, the devaluation of the kina and subsequently a depressed economy is another important push factor. In 1994, the kina was devalued when the high exchange rate of the currency became unsustainable, leading to the fall of the kina against most foreign currencies (King and Sugden 1997). In 2003, one kina fell to the level of roughly US 30 cents. It was no longer possible to profit on the exchange rates.

These socio-economic changes have dampened the Chinese motivation to stay in PNG. Before that, Chinese migrants had been willing to put up with the restrictions on foreigners and problems of security. But the economic recession is a big blow to business. The lack of a safe environment has also adversely affected the Chinese in particular. Some Chinese residents are anxious about their status as members of an ethnic minority which may attract attacks or other forms of violence from rascals and political rioters. One local born Chinese man in Port Moresby describes his life as just like “doing business in jail.” Because of the frequency of robbery, most of the houses and shops in the cities are surrounded by fences or barbed wire. Some shops in Port Moresby hire security guards or keep watch dogs for protection. The man was born in PNG and had run his own business in Port Moresby for a few decades. He decided to sell his shops after they were broken into. He also sold two of his properties and prepared to migrate to Australia. The concern at the deterioration of socio-economic conditions is shared by Chinese new comers as well. One woman from PRC working in Port Moresby is worried not only about her business, but also the possible fallout on the Chinese as an ethnic minority in the country. She is afraid that anti-Chinese movements like those in Indonesia may take place targeting the Chinese as a minority group engaged in business at a time when the PNG economy is depressed. She could continue running her business in PNG, but says she cannot draw out a long-term plan because of those problems. The instability of the PNG economy and society have affected the Chinese life style. Some Chinese are looking for alternative places to live. They have become reluctant exiles in a sense (cf. Skeldon 1997).

The Chinese in PNG have thus put both settlement and emigration strategies into practice.¹⁰ In the late 1950s, Chinese old comers were allowed to acquire Australian citizenship which enabled them to go and stay in Australia. They had also tended to go to Australia for higher education in the colonial period, largely because PNG did not have enough higher educational institutions.¹¹ Education was hence an important issue affecting their decisions relating to migration. In the colonial era, Chinese students would return to and work in PNG after their graduation. But this changed after PNG attained independence. Increasing numbers of Chinese students began to stay on in Australia even after graduation. The other members of their families in PNG would go to Australia to join them. Citizenship in Australia led to the decision to migrate as a strategic practice, thus creating the transnational social space.

Like the old comers, some of the new comers also have strategies of migration. The recent Chinese immigrants often go back and forth between PNG and their countries of origin. Many Chinese new comers arrive in PNG as employees of companies, and do not necessarily come to stay permanently. They will leave the country according to the terms of their contracts, or as a result of their own decisions. The improvement in international transport also facilitates their frequent traveling out of and back to PNG. Their status as transmigrant characterizes the Chinese new comers in contemporary PNG, and enhances the mobility of the Chinese community (cf. Glick Schiller and Basch 1995).

There are also many new comers who want to re-migrate to third countries in particular Australia, instead of going back to their countries of origin. Some of them had intended to migrate to Australia in the first place, but came to PNG only because of its proximity to Australia; it was difficult for them to migrate to Australia directly. Others want to re-migrate to other oceanic countries such as New Zealand and Guam. For them, PNG is both a destination and a stepping stone for further migration.

This type of transnational re-migration is not easy to put into practice. It involves high costs and the need for a visa. Most of the Chinese new comers cannot go to other countries as immigrants and they have to resort to strategies of settlement, if they do not wish to return to their countries of origin. Settlement and remigration are two strategies open to them; the choice of either one is dependent on the conditions faced by the individual.

Conclusion

Since the colonial period, the migration pattern of Chinese in PNG has changed continuously. Chinese society in PNG has changed from being a community of male sojourners with hopes of going back to China, to one made up of men and women with intentions to stay for various lengths of time in the country. Inter-marriage with local people, reunification with members of the family from China, and the increase of local born children made the Chinese community more settled. However, since the eve of the independence, new socio-economic changes in PNG have made the Chinese more mobile, and once again, into sojourners (Inglis 1997). This process as discussed by Inglis has departed from the conventional framework of “from ‘*luoye guigen*’ 落叶归根 to ‘*luodi shenggen*’ 落地生根.”

This change of the Chinese in PNG is similar to the *huayi* 华裔 pattern of migration in Wang Gungwu’s classification. The Chinese in PNG adopt practices of settlement without assimilating into local society, and also practices of frequent return to their original countries or re-migration to third countries. In view of the fact that they consist of several sub-groups from various countries of origin, the contemporary PNG Chinese are made up of plural *huayi* from East and

Southeast Asian countries who have different reasons to migrate. The sojourning character of the PNG Chinese population is a consequence of these huayi's strategic practices of settlement and migration.

It is often suggested that immigrant communities have a different character from people in the homeland because of their interactions with host societies. Although the influence of the host society is crucial, the migrants' experiences of the immigration and emigration processes also play an important part. The strategic practices in selecting settlement or migration based on the individual's circumstances have brought about the sojourning nature of the Chinese population in PNG.

One should not assume that the sojourning status of the ethnic Chinese in contemporary PNG is inherent and static. Their hybrid and diasporic nature is molded by the environment in which they live. The sojourning status of the ethnic Chinese of PNG should be seen as a consequence of their strategic practices. As Wang has pointed out, considering the sojourning status of the ethnic Chinese enables us to seize their ambiguous status (Wang 1996). To understand the dynamic nature of the sojourning status of the ethnic Chinese, it is necessary to look at the Chinese in PNG who react to domestic and transnational conditions in adopting strategic practices.

Notes

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- ² The Australian administration did not help the Chinese women and children in the Rabaul area to evacuate. Only those on the mainland were evacuated. This group has been in Australia since 1942 and has constituted a link to Australia and Australian settlement.
- ³ The exact number of the Chinese in contemporary PNG is not known. Wu (1982) estimates that there were about 3,000 Chinese on the eve of Papua New Guinean independence. Inglis (1997) estimates that the present number of Chinese is about 1,500 by using the PNG population census. On the other hand, Zhou (1993) states there are about 5,000 Chinese in PNG. According to his recent research, Wu (2004) indicates there were about 700 Chinese in the early 1990s. Ma (2003) thinks that the number is about 7,500. The Malaysian Embassy in Port Moresby estimates that there are about 5,000 Malaysians in PNG and that most of them are ethnic Chinese. One of my interviewees, who is from the PRC and residing in Port Moresby, believes there must currently be as many mainland Chinese as Malaysian Chinese in PNG. From these figures, we can make an estimate that as many as 10,000 Chinese are currently residing in the country.
- ⁴ Usually the Chinese residing in PNG do not use the term "ethnic Chinese." The old comers usually call themselves "Chinese" or "Niunigi Chinese" in English, and "*tong yan*" 唐人 in Cantonese. Mandarin speaking new comers use the term "*huaren*" 华人, but some of them just call themselves "*zhongguo ren*" 中国人. Although the term "ethnic Chinese" is not a

common word among the Chinese communities in contemporary PNG, this paper uses this term to avoid the confusion of terminology.

- 5 Before the Malaysian Chinese companies arrived in PNG, there were some Malaysian Chinese there. There is one local Chinese family which has Malaysian Chinese kinsmen. This local Chinese family brought other Malaysian Chinese to PNG and follows a chain migration pattern based on kinship, unlike the Malaysian Chinese new comers brought by the Malaysian companies.
- 6 PNG does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The Taiwan government does not control the activities of the Buddhist Centre.
- 7 The reserved business includes small-scale growing of crops and raising animals; collecting, hunting, or sale of wildlife or forest materials, except for the sale of rattan and the sale of crocodile skins in conjunction with a crocodile farm; coastal or inland fishing; making handicrafts; small trade stores and fast-food shops; small guest houses; transport by PMVs (Public Motor Vehicle) and small boats; petrol stations; second-hand clothing stores; silk-screen printing; news agencies; independent repair shops for footwear, electrical goods, and watches; rental shops; child-care centers; labor recruitment; security firms; janitorial services (Rannells 1995).
- 8 The precise number of the Chinese who have become naturalized is unknown.
- 9 The wish to acquire PNG nationality may be affected by changing circumstances, such as the deterioration of social and economical problems. One Chinese man told me that he needed PNG nationality because he intended to live and work in the country for the long term. But a few weeks after the interview, his shop was robbed by local criminals. He then told me that he could not decide whether to acquire PNG nationality or not.
- 10 There are substantial legal barriers inhibiting one from proceeding with legal immigration and emigration.
- 11 Until the 1960s the Australian colonial administration did not provide higher education in PNG. There were a number of administrative and missionary schools but those who wanted to have higher education had to study abroad. At the time of preparation for independence, the Australian colonial administration established the University of Papua New Guinea in 1966 and the Papua New Guinea University of Technology in 1967. But higher education in PNG is still inadequate and some PNG nationals are still sending their children overseas.

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