

Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora

Edited by

Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Hu-Dehart



香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press
14/F Hing Wai Centre
7 Tin Wan Praya Road
Aberdeen
Hong Kong

© Hong Kong University Press 2006

ISBN 962 209 776 6

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Secure On-line Ordering
<http://www.hkupress.org>

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound by Liang Yu Printing Factory Ltd., in Hong Kong, China

The image shows the Chinese characters for '香港大學' (Hong Kong University) written in a highly stylized, square format. Each character is contained within a square frame, making the overall appearance resemble a grid of Chinese characters. The characters are '香', '港', '大', and '學', arranged vertically from top to bottom.

Hong Kong University Press is honoured that Xu Bing, whose art explores the complex themes of language across cultures, has written the Press's name in his Square Word Calligraphy. This signals our commitment to cross-cultural thinking and the distinctive nature of our English-language books published in China.

“At first glance, Square Word Calligraphy appears to be nothing more unusual than Chinese characters, but in fact it is a new way of rendering English words in the format of a square so they resemble Chinese characters. Chinese viewers expect to be able to read Square Word Calligraphy but cannot. Western viewers, however are surprised to find they can read it. Delight erupts when meaning is unexpectedly revealed.”

— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

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Introduction: The Chinese Diaspora and Voluntary Associations

Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Hu-Dehart

The Chinese Diaspora: The Concept and the Phenomenon

During the past decade or so, when speaking of Chinese outside China, the words “Chinese” and “diaspora” in Anglophone literature have been linked like conjoined twins, coexisting by necessity and hard to separate without risking injury to the other. Another way of looking at it is that the process of “Chinese immigration” has practically given way to a seemingly open-ended, circulatory movement called the “Chinese diaspora,” the “Chinese immigrant” and even the “ethnic Chinese” rendered as “diasporic Chinese” or as “Chinese in the diaspora,” while the well-worn term “overseas Chinese” seems hopelessly old-fashioned. When exactly the notion of the Chinese diaspora was first articulated and by whom is not clear, but it was used as early as 1960, when University of Chicago-trained Chinese American sociologist Rose Hum Lee described Chinatowns as “communities in diaspora” (Lee 1960). In that same decade, the eminent China scholar Maurice Freedman of the London School of Economics and Political Science, in his seminal piece on Chinese voluntary associations in nineteenth-century Singapore, also alluded to the Chinese diaspora (Freedman 1967).

At the same time, although this conceptual and terminological shift from immigration to diaspora may be patently obvious in English publications on the subject, it does not appear in Chinese-language publications, for the simple reason that there is no word or easy phrase for the idea of “diaspora,” suggesting that it does not yet exist as a well-formed concept in Chinese and for China-based scholars. To be sure, the familiar couplet “*luo-di-sen-gen, luo-ye-gui-gen*” (落地生根, 落葉歸根) captures the key essence of diaspora, in that, indeed, migrating Chinese do put down new roots where they land but prefer to return to the original roots when life ends, even if many do not do so in fact. But much of what happens between and afterwards is left unsaid. Even so, the China-centered perspective of global Chinese migration has had to take into consideration the diaspora phenomenon,

whether a term for it in Chinese exists or not. And concomitantly, the necessarily transnational approach to diaspora is played out against the background of China as perceived, experienced and imagined, and always, implicitly if not explicitly, as one of the nodes in the circuit of interaction.

We do not propose to explore and debate the validity of the Chinese diaspora as a phenomenon in this volume — we accept it as a given — so much as to contribute to the dynamic ongoing project of clarifying its boundaries, primary characteristics, changes and continuities *over time and space*. We recognize that, fundamentally, diaspora argues for a comparative perspective on the experiences of those who have left the homeland and settled elsewhere to work, live, build communities and even entire societies and new nations; to procreate and reproduce themselves as collectivities while forming and redefining relationships as well as confirming and re-articulating identities. In adopting the use of this concept and term, we are interested in exploring cultural commonalities and variations within and among the different and diffused Chinese communities, exploring common threads and variations of ideologies, cultural and religious practices, rites and rituals that bind them together and portray them as distinctively Chinese. We are also mindful that diasporas transcend national histories while always interacting with them.

In the Chinese case, over the course of three to four centuries of migration and resettlement across the globe that continues to this moment, for the most part migrants and their descendants have not abandoned attachment to some form of ethnic or subethnic Chinese identity. Equally impressive, many have maintained ties — emotional, financial, physical and otherwise — or seek to recreate those ties, with ancestral villages and regions (Sinn 1997; Louie 2004). At the same time, communities in the diaspora invent and express new varieties and variations of Chinese culture and identity as they interact with natives and other immigrant groups inhabiting and contesting for place and power in the same space. It is through such identities and identifications that we speak of the phenomenon of the Chinese diaspora. We can identify certain other distinctive features of the Chinese diaspora, especially in comparison with other great and enduring diasporas of human history.

Indeed, world history is replete with diasporas, starting with the ancient Greeks who gave us the name “diaspora” with their practice of intentionally planting colonies in other lands for cultural propagation and to advance trade relations. Diaspora has perhaps been most frequently associated with the traumatic forced expulsion of Jews from their ancient homeland of Israel and subsequent dispersal throughout the world. These dispersed communities in exile maintain a collective memory of and fierce loyalty to their original homeland, and pledge as their primary mission as a people and a culture to regain and return to that homeland and to restore it to its former security

and prosperity. In the Jewish Diaspora, many of these Jews might not have relationships at all with the homeland, nor can they all, as all evidence of their connection has long gone and the only thing that tied them to Israel is their sense of Jewishness. That desire of return has been further fueled by a troubled relationship with host societies that they feel cannot or will not fully accept and integrate them as social equals. Finally, this shared vision of themselves and their relationship to the homeland has created a unique “ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity” that links Jewish people everywhere and defines them as a diaspora (Safran 1991). This millennia-long Jewish experience can be seen as a prototype of diaspora that embodies key defining characteristics. At the same time, the fact that Jews have recaptured and re-established their homeland in modern Israel, and that troubled relationships with host societies and anti-Jewish discrimination and isolation have been significantly diminished throughout the world, does beg the question of whether the Jewish Diaspora, and has it ended? For, given this definition of diaspora, created in a specific historical moment of forced expulsion from their homeland and maintained for millennia by the drive to return, when that return movement attained its goals with the re-establishment of Israel after World War II and the Holocaust, then the diaspora should logically end with the return of all Jews, who had been yearning for a safe home of their own while in exile.

Of course, this is not happening, and Jews are not returning en masse to Israel, for too many have become, in fact, fully integrated in their respective societies and assimilated to different national cultures; nevertheless, despite some political differences with Israel, they support Israel financially and, most critically, lend the full weight of their political clout in the US and throughout the Western world to push for policies that ensure the survival of a beleaguered Israel surrounded by hostile neighbors. In this sense, the strong sense of co-ethnic identity and solidarity with each other and with Israel maintains the momentum behind the Jewish Diaspora.

The other great diaspora that most closely resembles the Jewish experience in its creation by a traumatic expulsion is the African diaspora, engendered by the forced removal of tens of millions of men and women of many ethnic groups out of Africa over four centuries, to be dispersed throughout the Americas as slaves. Unified initially by the dehumanizing regime of slavery and later reinforced by the demeaning regime of racism, descendants of slaves identify with each other through race as “black” people, and have created multiple expressions and meanings of blackness through culture — music, dance, art, literature — in their diaspora inspired by these common experiences. For the most part, they are not driven by a return-to-Africa movement but are more interested in dismantling anti-black racism and fighting for equal rights and civil rights in the multiracial societies they have engendered by their very presence.

In mapping the Chinese diaspora, we see that it shares some of the central characteristics of these large and persistent diasporas but also deviates from them in notable ways. If not among the oldest, certainly one of the longest, continuous and continuing mass migrations from one central location, the 25 million or so peoples of Chinese descent living outside China itself represent the Chinese diaspora. They and their ancestors cannot be said to have been forcefully expelled from China *en masse*, although severe hardships, violent conflicts and natural disasters have forced them to seek livelihoods and better economic opportunities beyond the confines of their own homelands. To be sure, when out-migration greatly accelerated around the mid-nineteenth century, the Opium Wars, the Taiping Rebellion and other local and regional peasant uprisings acted as push factors that drove many to leave China. These forces were probably secondary to floods, famines and the oft-cited demographic growth and subsequent pressure on the land that impelled so many to leave home; many others not necessarily in dire conditions left China in search of trade and business opportunities. Overall, it cannot be said that the Chinese were traumatically expelled from their homeland. Their reasons for leaving home were not materially different from those of the Irish, the Lebanese, the Japanese, the Italians, and South Asians of many ethnicities and religions (Cohen 1997). Undoubtedly, apart from disasters, the migrants suffered from traumas as a result of migration. The relationship between migration and traumas and disasters has been well documented (Van Hear 1998). In other words, the reasons for leaving home and staying away for long periods eventually extending into generations are many and varied; these global migrations have given rise to a “range of phenomena” that can be said to constitute diasporas (Clifford 1997).

The Chinese migrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries consisted overwhelmingly of single men, although not necessarily unmarried and without families, for wives and children were usually left behind initially (Qing policy actually prohibited out-migration of Chinese women and children) and then later beckoned to join the migrant; or migrants formed families with local women. The majority of the migrants during this period were from the two southern provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, primarily able-bodied men from rural villages ranging in age from sixteen to fifty; they went under the credit-ticket system or as contract laborers commonly called coolies, bound for five- to eight-year terms. These men were attracted to a variety of frontier and newly developing economic regions of Southeast Asia, California and the American West, to the borderlands between the US and Mexico, and to plantation societies of the Caribbean and Latin America. In all these environments, first labor and then business opportunities abounded.

Most of the destinations for Chinese migrants were still European colonies, or recently decolonized territories, where they were introduced as a deterritorialized intermediate sector between natives bound to their land

and villages, and colonial masters and administrators assigned to extract wealth and maintain control in the empire. Simply put, European and American capitalists needed large numbers of Chinese laborers and a small group of merchants and professionals as partners in their imperial enterprise. Although encouraged to feel superior by race and civilization to subjugate native populations, no matter how successful and prosperous they became, Chinese in the diaspora were never accepted as social equals and rarely accorded metropolitan citizenship by European colonial powers.

In European settler societies like the United States, Canada and Australia, which had long shed their colonized status and installed white supremacist social structures, Chinese and other Asian immigrants were denied the right to citizenship and other rights such as landownership, inter-racial marriage, access to education and high status, well-paid jobs and professions. In fact, Chinese and other Asian immigrants to the US were simply marked as “aliens ineligible for citizenship,” a legal status not lifted until after World War II. The sum of these difficult experiences sheds light on one of the most common characteristics of why some migrations become diasporas: a tense, troubled, tenuous and tortuous relationship with all elements of the receiving society with whom they have to interact — the other peoples who inhabit it, the working class and the local élite with whom they compete as workers and business people, and the governing political system. When faced with this situation, Chinese migrant communities have developed ways of overt resistance but also accommodationist practices, all for the purpose of self-defence, protection, and survival. This common experience of rejection, marginalization, discrimination and oppression by host societies encourages diasporic Chinese communities to forge a strong sense of identification and empathy for each other’s common plight, and develop mechanisms for quick mobilization in mutual support when one of them comes under vicious nativist attack (Cohen 1997; Clifford 1997).

For all of the nineteenth century and at least half of the twentieth, the inability to be fully accepted and integrated into host societies trumped whatever desire diasporic Chinese might have had to assimilate into another cultural and national identity, the only way that could have ended their sense of displacement and exile. For them, the final reference for home remains their home village and region, *qiaoxiang* (僑鄉) and eventually China itself, which was never occupied or destroyed. So, for diasporic Chinese, the return-to-China movement has had a very different meaning from the meaning for Jews, Africans, Palestinians, Armenians, who must first reconquer and re-establish a lost home to return to. Instead, Chinese return in order to compensate for their deterritorialization abroad by reterritorializing at home, strengthening their roots to *qiaoxiang* and nation.

Chinese migrants reconnect with China in another significant way. Shut out of political participation where they resettled, they became susceptible

to the siren calls of homeland politics in the twentieth century, beginning with the fiercely competitive factions of reformers and revolutionaries of the turn of the century, culminating with the long and bitter political rivalry between the KMT regime under Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan and the PRC regime in China. Such identification and involvement with homeland politics came at a high price for Chinese communities in the diaspora, for these practices clashed directly with rising new nationalisms in some cases and, in others, with the fear of losing control over national borders under late capitalist globalization. In both kinds of instance, even well-established Chinese communities are seen as disloyal, untrustworthy and undependable allies of the nationalist development project, and minimally suspected of harboring dual loyalties.

Chinese migrants, if they had the financial means, were always able to return home until the Communist regime closed the doors to movement of people and capital in and out of China for several decades after they took power in 1949, not to re-open until later in the twentieth century. At the same time, the fear of Communism has, to a certain extent, resulted in self-imposed exile for many have chosen not to visit the homeland. During this closed period, the world also changed dramatically, highlighted by further decolonization in the Western empires, the challenge of socialism in the Third World, the rise and fall of the Cold War, and the triumph of liberal democracies worldwide, including the dismantling of institutionalized racism and racially exclusive policies in white supremacist societies such as the US, Canada and Australia. This means that, for the first time in history, diasporic Chinese are accorded the rights of citizenship and belonging in societies of settlement.

Voluntary Associations in the Diaspora

Aiding and abetting Chinese migration and settlement abroad, in turn enabling the creation, expansion, maintenance and transformation of the diaspora, are a plethora of social organizations that the migrants brought with them as part of their individual and collective lived experience as men in the quite mobile, often volatile, frequently violent, and always competitive environment of south China, specifically the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. In this volume, we use the term “voluntary association” to refer generically to those associations that originate out of the migrant communities and are controlled by them, hence not official and non-governmental, even though many of these might have worked in collaboration with the colonial governments or the governments of the host country. Thus, we exclude such colonial institutions of direct social control as the *kapitan* in Dutch Indonesia or the *congregations* of French Indochina. As membership organizations open

to Chinese who meet the admission criteria, they are in principal non-coercive in that membership and participation is voluntary and optional.

Internal Chinese migrants from at least the fifteenth century who travelled to Beijing to take imperial exams, or to other big cities for trade and business, or when driven by natural or human-made forces to move and relocate elsewhere, gathered around voluntary associations, called *huiguan* (會館), there to seek hostel, credit, information, companionship, a piece of home away from home (Ma 1984; Ng 1992; Wickberg 1994; Cole 1996; Honig 1996). These self-help, mutual aid organizations were transplanted abroad as soon as enough *tongxiang* (同鄉) had arrived at any one location.

As numbers grew and destinations spread, variations of *huiguan* appeared, organized along clan (surname), lineage, district, region, or dialect lines, whichever appeared most logical and practical to serve the needs of new migrants making the transition to an alien and often hostile place and a new life (Hicks 1996). If necessary, several clans or contiguous districts could be combined to form one *huiguan*, which needed a certain size to be viable and competitive with other *huiguan*. As migrants are typically men arriving without kin or family, that is, wives and children, these *huiguan* become in effect their families away from home, their survival strategy (Lai 1987; Wickberg 1994). But because of this singular and consistent characteristic until late in the twentieth century when a few women finally became members and elected officers, *huiguan* historically have been patriarchal organizations in a very gendered space. *Huiguan* work because they bind members together into a “moral community” in which members share a sense of duty and obligations (Liu 2000: 106, citing Gary Hamilton). They are structurally hierarchical, controlled by wealthy merchants and governed in an authoritarian, top-down fashion. In this respect, *huiguan* also reflect class divisions and strive to contain class conflicts within the community. To minimize competition among them, which could become fierce and mutually destructive, the different *huiguan* might federate into one umbrella organization with an overarching governing board — rotating presidents among them for harmony and stability — typically functioning under the benign name of a benevolent society, such as San Francisco’s Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, CCBA, also known as the Six Companies (although it actually comprised seven *huiguan*), or Peru’s *Sociedad de Beneficiencia China* (Ng 1992; Lai 1987; Ma 1991). So, it can be seen that *huiguan* was an adaptive mechanism for Chinese migrants and an adaptable institution.

To local governments, these *huiguan* became the primary mechanism for internal social control of the Chinese community. The head of San Francisco’s CCBA, for example, was informally known as the “mayor of Chinatown,” expected to mediate conflicts among Chinese and resolve other political issues without having to resort to local authorities. Recognized thus as the unofficial government inside the Chinese community, *huiguan* federations became the

de facto ruling strategy of the colonial or national state (Chin 1996; Heidhues 1974; Lai 1987).

In time, *huiguan* activities expand and fall into six broad categories: (1) economic, to advance and protect members' commercial and financial interests; (2) political, administrative and judicial, to lobby local officials and settle disputes among members without outside interference and often with the blessing of the local authorities; (3) educational and cultural, to provide lodging, credit, and schools for the children; (4) social and entertainment, to organize performances, banquets and other large community social functions; (5) religious, to maintain temples and halls dedicated to the clan, lineage or native place deities and thus promote group solidarity; and (6) philanthropic, for charitable giving to burials, emergency aid for natural disasters, building roads and schools (Cole 1996). As these activities clearly indicate, as a diasporic community becomes more established and prosperous, the diverse and ubiquitous *huiguan* expand their roles beyond satisfying immediate migrant needs to identifying ways to help the clan, lineage or native place. In the present era, when most diasporic Chinese are no longer marginalized outsiders but active citizens and aggressive business people, *huiguan* networking has become global, as Hakka *huiguan* around the diaspora organize international reunions, Teochew *huiguan* hold international conventions, and, not to be outdone, Fujian *huiguan* support their own world conventions. Similarly, twenty-two clan/surname-based Guan *huiguan* have held their own World Guan Association meeting. These global *huiguan* networks in turn facilitate transnational practices of postcolonial, postmodern diasporic Chinese capitalists of the Asia-Pacific, once again demonstrating *huiguan* as an adaptive mechanism and its adaptability to changing environments (Liu 2000; Nonini 2001; Hu-DeHart 1999).

Another type of association that accompanied the Chinese migrants overseas is commonly known as Triads or secret societies, also identified historically by the terms *kongsi* (公司), *tong* (堂) and *hui* (會) (Ownby and Heidhues 1993; Ownby 1993a and 1993b; Ma 1991). Basically, these are fraternal organizations or sworn brotherhoods marked by open membership of unrelated individuals united by pursuit of a common goal. Members swear allegiance to the organization and to each other by a blood oath and pledge to adhere to strict rules and rituals. The *hui* and *kongsi* predated the *huiguan* among early migrants, in that they were simpler and more informal institutions catering to the needs of marginalized young men left adrift amid social turmoil in China itself, drawn overseas as laborers, particularly to work in pre-colonial frontier regions such as Taiwan or Southeast Asia. Without the protection of traditional lineage, village, clan or state, the *kongsi* form of *hui* mobilized these single men into a cooperative, egalitarian production system, non-élite and proto-democratic in structure and orientation. A good example is the early nineteenth-century *kongsi* on pepper and gambier and

tin plantations in Singapore (Ownby 1993a and 1993b; Heidhues 1993; Trocki 1993; Freedman 1960). In fact, the very first documented voluntary association formed by Chinese merchants in San Francisco in 1848 carried the name *kongsì* rather than *huiguan* (Lai 1987).

In China itself, triads and secret societies became controversial social organizations when they became heavily involved in anti-Manchu revolutionary activities, thereby incurring the wrath of the Qing state and all-out efforts to suppress them (Chesneaux 1971), although the extent of their devotion to revolution has probably been exaggerated (Ownby and Heidhues 1993). Although such anti-Manchu activism was transplanted overseas, it did not for the most part consume the energies of members in the diaspora, until the turn of the twentieth century, when that ardor was rekindled by reformers and revolutionaries such as Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen, who set out to generate revolutionary fervor and raise funds in the migrant communities, instilling early stirrings of Chinese nationalism among the migrants. For the most part, however, secret societies in the diaspora performed many of the same functions as *huiguan* in providing mutual aid, protection and companionship, but were perceived as less authoritarian, less hierarchical and more working-class oriented (Chong 1998). In colonial Southeast Asia, secret societies were generally permitted to exist as “legal voluntary associations’ that assisted in the control of the Chinese population” (Ownby 1993a: 19). Most importantly, *huiguan* and brotherhoods constituted enormous, far-reaching migrant networks that linked the many nodes of the diaspora, facilitating transnational interactions, relationships and practices while simultaneously providing the connective tissue with home village, region and eventually nation (McKeown 2001).

Triads proliferated along with *huiguan* all over the diaspora, and by the end of the nineteenth century began to compete fiercely and violently with each other and various *huiguan* for membership, even though membership in one type of organization did not preclude participation in the other type. But it was their involvement with criminal activities associated with opium, gambling and prostitution that invited the unwanted attention of the state authorities, particularly in the US, which had made these profitable activities illegal. Triads probably engaged in such activities not just because they were profitable but as an extension of recreational services they attempted to provide their humble, working-class members, devoid of families, female companionship with some outlet for their misery, boredom and loneliness. Competition for these lucrative criminal activities pitted lodges against each other, resulting in internecine violence within Chinese communities ominously dubbed “tong wars” in the US and other parts of the Americas (Ma 1991). Of all these faces of secret societies and triads, what remains in Chinatowns today appear to be the criminal elements, source of violence, extortion and embarrassment for Chinese communities (Chin 1996).

Political parties also appeared and flourished in diasporic communities. Indeed, Sun Yat-sen practically gave birth to the Kuomintang in the Chinese diaspora (Tsai 1983; Lai 1991). Quasi-political associations oriented not towards homeland politics but rather to the host society political system and values, which could be broadly described as civil rights organizations, were organized in the US as early as the 1880s, in direct response to the *Chinese Exclusion Act* which provoked early and vigorous organized protest by the Six Companies and other community associations. The Chinese Equal Rights League was formed in 1884 in New York City by Wong Chin Foo “to obtain representation and recognition in American politics,” specifically to protect the right to vote on the part of the handful of Chinese who, like him, had become naturalized US citizens before the *Exclusion Act* foreclosed such possibilities. Wong was also co-founder of the Chinese Cigarmakers’ Union, another kind of association representing specific interests of the community (Zhang 1998). A contemporaneous competing civil rights organization, the Native Sons of the Golden States, soon renamed the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, was founded to defend the citizenship rights of the 4,767 American-born Chinese, hence citizens, recorded in the 1900 census. Leaders of these organizations became involved with Chinese reform and revolutionary groups wooing support in America as well as with triad lodges such as the Chee Kung Tong (Zhigongtang), also called Chinese Freemasons (Chong 1998).

Transition from Diasporic to Post-Diasporic Communities

One of the key issues during the early waves of migration concerned the status of these Chinese migrants. They were regarded as sojourners whose stay in the host country was seen as temporary. As such, they went to work in the hope of making a fortune and dreamed of retiring to their native village. A few married local women and formed families, but those who had made a fortune returned to the village to find a Chinese wife. After marriage, they went back to the diaspora and eventually sent for their families to join them. The least fortunate were those who failed to amass wealth or were considered failures; embarrassed to return home empty-handed, they simply eked out a living overseas and lost contact with their village kin.

During these early years, be it in colonial Southeast Asia or white American or Australian society, Chinese migrants were bound by the immigration laws of those countries that coveted their labor but denied them citizenship. Facing intense and widespread systematic discrimination, Chinese migrants continued to hold on to their identity as Chinese nationals, aided and abetted by their voluntary organizations that filled the vacuum created by host society exclusion.

A second issue concerns the ghettoization of the Chinese migrants both in spatial and social terms. Under British colonialism in Malaya and Singapore, the British employed a divide-and-rule policy favoring the Malay élite. They also created a system of ethnic headmen among the migrant population, among whom their respective headmen would control their own people. Thus, the British created the system of *ting-chu* (亭主) and later, the *Kapitan China*, who were responsible for the internal functioning of the Chinese community. Under such a system, the British colonial administration communicated only with the *Kapitan China* (Yen 1986: 42–3; 49–51). At the same time, each ethnic group was physically confined within a special district, thereby creating spatial segregation among them; the colonial legacy can still be seen today in Singapore. Thus, one of the key roles of Chinese voluntary organizations was to provide them with a social structure so that they could network with Chinese from the same native hometown and who spoke the same dialect. Furthermore, these associations organized numerous social and religious activities that enabled disparate communities in the diaspora to reconnect with each other, while simultaneously facilitating their mental journey back to their cultural roots and hometowns.

A third issue concerns the extent to which racialized politics was played out in the host countries. Hirschman postulates the “Middlemen” theory that Chinese élites in Western countries were co-opted into the local administration while the masses were suppressed through denial of social status and privileges (Hirshman 1988: 23–32). Within Western countries, as already noted, Chinese were considered non-citizens, or at best secondary citizens subordinated under white superiority. As segregated and racialized minorities, Chinese immigrants looked to their voluntary organizations to take on an additional role as cultural and political broker. By contrast, in colonial Southeast Asia, where Chinese superiority over natives and other immigrant groups in regards to labor and organizational skill earned them higher status earlier, Chinese voluntary organizations in Southeast Asia took on a large role to preserve their position. Ironically, however, they also confined the Chinese within the Chinese world, thereby establishing an *imperium in imperio*, a city within a city.

This brings us to the next issue that concerns the identities of Chinese migrants in the diaspora. In the discourse on the study of these migrants, various terms have crept into use. They include overseas Chinese, *huaqiao* (華僑), Chinese people, *huaren* (華人), and people of Chinese descent, *huayi* (華裔); the changes in preference reflect social, economic and political transformations of Chinese within the wider society, specifically when a large majority changed their initial desire of being sojourners to becoming full-fledged citizens of their adopted home (Wang 1988: 1–12). Faced with this critical decision as Southeast Asia decolonized and became independent nation-states (Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia), Chinese migrants were

confronted with a choice of either becoming citizens in a new homeland or remaining Chinese nationals outside the nation-state. In the immediate years after decolonization, almost all of the Chinese migrants opted to remain and become citizens of their adopted country. Likewise, in post-World War II America and Australia, as exclusionary policies were dismantled, Chinese immigrants took their place as citizens on crowded multicultural stages. As these profound political changes take place, so, too, are changes adopted in identities and terminologies.

Such a status transformation has great implications on the question of how to identify and address former migrants turned citizens. As noted earlier, the commonly used term “Overseas Chinese” was no longer regarded as appropriate, given their newfound status. In its place, scholars argue for the use of terms such as “Chinese overseas” and “ethnic Chinese” (as in *huaren*; see note on page 11). Many Chinese have adopted multiple identities by adding on various layers of identities that have accumulated through the years. For example, a Chinese in Singapore would call himself or herself thus: “a Singaporean, Fujianese, Anxi Chinese,” implying a Singapore national identity, a Fujianese-speaking regional identity and the hometown/home village where he or she was from. This layering of additional identities is a flexible structure that enables one to continue to add or subtract, according to one’s sense of identity at any given time and space (Kuah 2000: 43).

In the United States, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s galvanized the small number (under 1 million) of Americans of Asian descent at the time. Mostly of Chinese and Japanese descent, they created a broad-based and inclusive political movement and coined the flexible and inclusive term “Asian American.” This collective term did not preclude the possibility of different communities from claiming their specific ethnic identity, such as Chinese American. The United States government soon recognized Asian American as a racial category, alongside White, Black, and Native American. Indeed, politicized Asian Americans, in solidarity with other racialized minorities and peoples of color, claim their place at the civic table of a multiracial democracy.

At the societal level, such a transformation also forces us to re-examine the identity of the Chinese communities in the host countries. Traditionally, they were called “overseas Chinese communities,” which now seems anachronistic. Today, there is a variety of terms that scholars would use, ranging from Chinese Diaspora to Chinese Transnationalism to country-based Chinese identities, such as American Chinese, Singapore Chinese, Canadian and Australian Chinese. For reasons already discussed, we have adopted the term Chinese Diaspora.

Just as globalization is taking root in late modernity within the Chinese communities, so are Chinese ideology, culture and rituals that are being localized in the adopted countries as the Chinese re-seeded their cultural roots (*luo-di-sen-gen*). Chinese are also adopting, synthesizing and integrating

elements from other cultures into their own and bringing their cultures to other social and ethnic groups. Everywhere in the world, Chinese communities have attempted to reach out not only to their co-ethnics but at the same time crossing ethnic boundaries to other ethnic groups as well. Some have done so more successfully than others. By localizing themselves in the adopted country, they have assumed a new identity; with the passing of the first generation, the local born Chinese see themselves as part of the wider society.

Diasporic Chinese in the present day toggle between a renascent and reborn China of strength, prosperity and vitality, whose leaders are delighted with the capital investment of *tongbao* (comrades, 同胞) and *tongxiang* (co-ethnics) overseas, but not particularly keen to facilitate their permanent return to a crowded home. If anything, China is once again sending out migrants in large numbers and to places where they had not been prominent before, such as Eastern Europe. Not only China but parts of the original diaspora itself, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, as well as Cuba and Peru, have been leaking ethnic Chinese migrants to other parts of the world, complicating the pattern of migration and disrupting a common association of place of origin with ethnicity. For example, a new immigrant to the United States self-identified as “Chinese” may originate from a multiplicity of places, and not necessarily China itself, speaking primarily English or Spanish rather than Mandarin, Cantonese, or Fujianese. For their part, much as in the case of many Jews who choose not to return to the re-invented Israel, long-time imagined homeland of diasporic desire, most Chinese are happy only to visit China from many points in the diaspora, but not to stay. To be a diasporic Chinese today is to be self-identified as such ethnically and culturally, but not nationalistically. And the Chinese identities and cultures they have imagined and practiced in the diaspora are as varied and diverse as the places they have settled. Multiple, creolized, flexible, contingent, situational, adaptable, changeable, malleable, diasporic Chinese identities have been the subject of numerous studies (Ang 2001; Ho 1989; and Ong 1999 are just three good examples among many).

In addition, most diasporic Chinese today, especially those in officially recognized multicultural, pluralistic liberal democracies, assert and exercise their co-equal citizenship statuses and political rights alongside other groups, including privileged whites in the US, Canada and Australia, countries in which whites constitute the majority population; and certainly in places where Chinese themselves are now the majority in numbers and power, as in the unique case of Singapore. At least in these places can we speak of the Chinese as entering the post-diasporic moment, in which they can avail themselves of social capital accumulated during the diaspora to strengthen *guanxi* (關係) and *xinyong* (信用) in order to gain business advantages under globalization (Nonini 2001), or to reinforce a distinctive Chinese ethnic

identity in avowedly multicultural and pluralistic societies that no longer, at least officially, demand assimilation to a dominant majority culture. At the same time, in these postcolonial, postmodern environments, are post-diasporic Chinese also engaged in a larger dialogue about building civil society along with other ethnic groups?

From *Huiguan* to *Shetuan*

In the twenty-first century, traditional voluntary social organizations are being challenged by new forms of voluntary organizations that are established to cater to the new needs of both the existing migrant population and the new migrants. As Chinese communities in the diaspora mature, the changing needs of the migrants and their descendants have witnessed the gradual decline in the popularity of traditional voluntary organizations. Increasingly, other forms of leisure and recreational, religious and professional institutions have been established to replace traditional voluntary organizations. These new forms of voluntary associations, *shetuan* (社團), are also important to the newly arrived Chinese migrants, as they provide them with a sense of communalism and identity. Likewise, the *guanxi* networks that are established within these voluntary associations are important to help Chinese in overseas communities to further their own social, economic and political interests. Whereas in some Western countries, *shetuan* have replaced traditional Chinese voluntary organizations, in Southeast Asia, traditional Chinese voluntary organizations continue to function side by side with the new *shetuans*. Furthermore, many of the voluntary associations have invented a new image and roles to compete with the new *shetuans* as well as to cater to the new needs of a new generation of Chinese who were born in the diaspora.

One key characteristic of the *shetuan* is to go beyond the parochial Chinese community and reach out to non co-ethnics. Thus, an important present-day function is to serve as ethnic and cultural brokers between the Chinese community and the wider society. A second feature is to go beyond being an organization that merely provides mutual aid and protection for its members to one that actively promotes commercial, cultural, education and related interests to members and the wider communities. A third new orientation of the *shetuan* is to recast its role to cater to the emerging civil society and help with the localization and relocalization processes of the Chinese within the adopted country, so that they become part of the mainstream society.

To understand its role in the localization process, it is imperative for us to explore the traditional Chinese voluntary organizations and the *shetuan's* relationship with the home government as local and host government. As already noted, in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries,

traditional Chinese voluntary organizations were considered the champions of Chinese migrants, Chinese ideology and Chinese culture. They were regarded as the supporters of Chinese nationalism and courted by the imperial and Republican governments in backing various nationalist causes. During World War II, traditional voluntary associations across the diaspora became actively involved in China's war efforts against enemy forces; they not only collected funds for the war chest but also mobilized Chinese migrants to fight against a common enemy. In education, the focus was then on developing a sense of Chinese nationalism and identity towards mainland China. This continued right up to the eve of independence in the colonies in Southeast Asia. Even after independence, their strong sense of Chinese nationalism had propelled the post-independence governments of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia to act against it. Singapore has restructured its education system and intensified its nation-building program (Yen 1986). In Indonesia, the government adopted an anti-Chinese stance in the 1960s, resulting in a decade of intense, often violent anti-Chinese programs. Furthermore, sinicization was discouraged, and in its place assimilation into the wider Indonesian society was encouraged through requirements such as adopting Indonesian names (Tan 1995). Chinese social institutions and cultures were not permitted in the public sphere. In Malaysia, although purging of Chinese communist partisans took place, on the whole, the Chinese and their social and voluntary organizations continued to function freely and independently until the present.

In North America, Australia and Europe, Chinese nationalism was also manifested in their support of Chinese causes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During the war, the Japanese in the US, Canada and even the few in Australia were unceremoniously rounded up and interned in concentration camps without due process of the law, for merely being suspected of possible sedition against their adopted countries. The Chinese remained ineligible for citizenship.

After World War II, because of the global dismantling of empire states, the moral dictates of the prevailing years ensured that these Chinese migrants became bona fide naturalized citizens of the country that they were in, if they so chose. All across the world, a large majority of Chinese became citizens of their respective adopted country. By becoming citizens, the dynamics of their relationship changed. Instead of a guest and host relationship, it became citizen and government relationship. Such a relationship set a different tone, one that meant they could now demand equal treatments, rights and various types of facilities that were previously denied to them. For the first time, Chinese were given voting rights, and many had to learn the politics of universal suffrage and the art of voting. Traditional Chinese voluntary organizations and *shetuan* took on the role of para-political organizations and organized and mobilized their members to demand better treatment, non-

discrimination and rights of access to Chinese culture, schools, public facilities and even to government offices. In North America, the active *shetuan* have been able to mobilize their members to support their leaders in mayoral offices. Other Chinese voluntary organizations and *shetuan* were less active and took a low profile. The same could be said of their counterparts in Asia. In Malaysia, the Malaysian Chinese Association has been the launching pad for aspiring Chinese politicians into Malaysian politics. In Singapore, the Singapore Federation of the Clan Associations and other Chinese voluntary organizations adopted a close working relationship with the government and supported many of its programs. In the Philippines, Chinese voluntary organizations and the Chinese Heritage Centre have been instrumental in raising the high profile of the Chinese in the Filipino society and have been the most successful politically.

Their success with the local government and becoming part of the government has been much attributed to their leadership and organizational skills. In the early migration years, Chinese were known for their strong organizational and leadership skills. Often, leaders held several positions in the various social organizations. Thus, it became common in the early years that the colonial and local government dealt with only one set of leaders. Such interlocking leadership roles had produced a group of very powerful Chinese, who, with political connections, were given *comprador* or *taipan* positions, resulting in their owning lucrative excise farms. Such privileged positions in turn allowed them to amass great wealth, which in turn led them to powerful political positions (Yong 1995). Today, many of the Chinese leaders, former *compradors* or *taipans* in Southeast Asia, are now powerful businesspeople. They have strong political connections or are themselves politicians. Elsewhere in the diaspora, these older leaders may not wish, but are often unable to represent the newer Chinese immigrants from different backgrounds. For these new Chinese migrants, a newer group of younger leaders who could articulate their needs are required in modern-day Chinese communities, such as in Canada. Increasingly, we are seeing Chinese church leaders who are prominent in speaking out for the Chinese in the parish under their responsibility.

A fourth characteristic is the traditional Chinese voluntary organizations and the *shetuan's* globalizing efforts in creating transnational linkages and social networks as well as serving as social capital for the Chinese. In recent decades, especially the traditional Chinese voluntary organizations have been actively establishing transnational linkages. It is common for *huiguan* of the same hometowns or same dialects to establish a global network for the purpose of social and economic networking among their members. Thus, presently, there are international hometown associations such as the International Anxi Association and International Jingjiang Association as well as the international dialect associations such as the International Fujian

Association, the International Hakka Association and the International Chaozhou Association. Contemporary *shetuan* include the International Chinese Entrepreneur Associations and the various Chinese chambers of commerce, some of which are based on dialect and hometown affiliations. For example, there is the Hong Kong Chaozhou Chamber of Commerce, Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Malaysian Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Others are based on their local identity such as the Johore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Johor being a state in Malaysia (Kuah and Wong 2001; Liu 2000).

By organizing transnational linkages, these organizations played two key roles. The first is that they provide social and increasingly economic networks for their members to tap into. Socially, such linkages and their global connections have allowed members to re-establish social ties with lost kin and reconnect with those with similar background. Furthermore, in recent years, the desire to reconnect to the ancestral village has also been facilitated by their ties with these organizations, which continued to have strong links with the Mainland and the home villages. Thus, Chinese voluntary associations have facilitated in the search for roots in mainland China (Kuah and Wong 2001).

Traditional voluntary associations played an extremely important role in the life of the migrants; now, their roles have been taken over by *shetuan* and other non-ethnic based voluntary organizations such as the church, social and recreational organizations. As a result, the last few decades have witnessed a gradual decline in the membership of some traditional associations. By reinventing their image, engaging in modern activities and establishing global linkages, increasingly, traditional voluntary associations and new *shetuan* are reversing the tide and bringing in new and young members to join them. They succeed by portraying themselves as important sources of social and network capital for the members to tap into. Some traditional associations provide sociability and networks so members can connect with other members in the diaspora as well as people in their hometowns and villages (Kuah and Wong 2001).

Chambers of commerce provide opportunities for business and economic networks to form and thrive. Such networks are becoming increasingly significant as China opens its door to businesses and investments from diasporic Chinese. Indeed, Chinese chambers of commerce in the diaspora had traditionally maintained important *guanxi* networks with Mainland government officials at central, provincial, regional and local levels. Since the Open Door Policy of 1978, Chinese chambers of commerce in the diaspora have intensified their *guanxi* relationship with Mainland government officials. Businesspeople in the diaspora, as members and participants in the activities of Chinese chambers of commerce, would be inducted into the *guanxi* network, *guanxi wang* (關係網), which in turn could open doors to the otherwise difficult-to-access Chinese markets.¹

Localizing Identities in Multiethnic Societies

The study of voluntary organizations today requires us to go beyond the notion that the migrants as just mere sojourners who were interested only in their own little world without making attempts to integrate into the wider polity. Yen (1988) argued that the Chinese migrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were able to create a self-contained Chinese community and thus functioned independently without much interaction with the wider societies. This was possible because of the extensive roles of traditional Chinese voluntary associations that catered to all the needs of the community. It was probably due to the fact that Chinese migrants were self-contained and functioned within their own community with very little cross-ethnic interaction that they were often labelled “inscrutable,” because other ethnic groups and the dominant culture failed to understand the Chinese culture and Chinese migrants’ way of life.

In post-modern society, the profile of Chinese communities throughout the diaspora has changed in response to a rapidly changing social and political environment. To begin with, we are witnessing an increased diversity within the Chinese population. First, there are the old migrants from the first wave of migration. Second, there are the new migrants who have migrated in the last few decades. Third, there are migrants who migrated out of mainland China into the diaspora. Fourth, there are migrants who migrated from one community into another within the diaspora. Fifth, there are the descendants of the early migrants in the diaspora. Sixth, there are also returned migrants from the diaspora to mainland China, as we witnessed a steady, albeit small, stream of these migrants making their way back to the Mainland. Such a diversity of Chinese within the diaspora necessitated that we examine how they construct their own identity as well as their attempts to enmesh themselves within the wider society.

In Southeast Asian countries, post-independent governments have required their citizens to declare their racial affiliation. In Singapore and Malaysia, there is only one official racial category for the Chinese, irrespective of their dialect and hometown differences. This is also the case in America and Australia, where the Chinese are recognized as a homogenous category. Thus, the ethnic group “Chinese” is the official category constructed by the state (Benjamin 1979; Purushotam 1995).

However, Chinese in the diaspora constantly construct and reconstruct their identity. From the early years of migration until today, the Chinese have assumed multiple identities that are determined by their interaction with other social groups (Wang 1988). For example, in relationship with other ethnic groups, the Chinese would assume a broad identity of being “Chinese.” However, among co-ethnics, other criteria such as region, native village and linguistic affiliation have become standard yardsticks to measure

their differences, thereby creating a boundary of insiders and outsiders among the co-ethnics. It is thus common to hear co-ethnics referring to themselves as Anxi Fujianese or Shantou Chaozhouese or Hong Kong Shanghaiese (Kuah 2000: 55–6).

Other forms of identities include the country where these Chinese are citizens, in addition to the above identities. It is also very common among co-ethnics in the diaspora to differentiate themselves as Hong Kong Chinese or Singapore Chinese or American Chinese. Such intra-ethnic identification often underlies the emphasis on status differentiation in which one group assumes a higher status than the rest. Thus, among the Chinese, American and European Chinese have the highest status, followed by Hong Kong Chinese and Southeast Asian Chinese, the mainland Chinese having the lowest status. To a large degree, this status differentiation is measured by the economic and political development of the country and the language spoken. As such, the most desirable place as a destination of migration for the Chinese migrants tends to be the English-speaking Western countries, the United States as a first choice for the mainland Chinese as well as the Chinese in the developing countries in the diaspora. Next in popularity are Canada, Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom. Next are Western European countries, followed by developed Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. Last are Eastern European countries. This is despite of the fact that many of these migrants continued to face difficulties in these countries (Pieke 1998 and 2004).

Living in a multiethnic country, Chinese also have to adjust to the demands of the new polity. Voluntary organizations provide them with a social space for interaction among co-ethnics. For the new immigrants, voluntary organizations also serve as a form of social capital whereby they can tap into the existing network structure to help them to adapt to a new social and political environment. They also help to provide these new immigrants with a sense of Chinese cohesiveness and ethno-social identity. To meet the demands of the new migrants and the Chinese descendants, traditional voluntary associations and *shetuan*s found a need to invent new images that are in tune with more needs and aspirations of modern-day Chinese communities and their members in the diaspora.

One of the changing roles of the Chinese voluntary organizations and *shetuan* is the heightened visibility of Chinese women and their participation in the organizations. Traditionally, in voluntary organizations, Chinese men often assumed leadership roles, and very few women participated in them. However in recent years, women are beginning to hold leadership positions within these voluntary associations. There are several reasons that account for this changing position of the Chinese women. Foremost is the education level of these women that have made them confident, articulate and administratively competent. Furthermore, in the new environment in the

West, where female visibility is high and gender discrimination, although it still exists, is highly frowned upon, Chinese women have found an expanded space to become socially and economically involved in various pursuits, including leadership within the voluntary organizations. Another reason lies with the availability of time and energy for voluntary work. Many women, not active in the workforce, have found *shetuans* an important avenue to occupy their leisure time, and indeed, some of them spent substantial time in the churches, temples or other social and leisure organizations.

Although Southeast Asia, North America and Australia have long been favorite destinations for Chinese immigration, in recent years, Chinese immigration to former Communist East European countries have become popular (Pal Nyiri 1999; Benton and Pieke 1998). Although there is general consensus that Chinese voluntary organization are imperative in providing social networks and identity for the immigrants, there is some deviation, as in the Czech Republic where the recent Chinese migrants have consciously avoided these social institutions for a variety of reasons.

Future and Prospects: Maintaining Diasporic Harmony and Tensions

In late modernity, Chinese communities in the diaspora have different expectations and needs from those of the earlier migrants. While newspaper and media reported on the arrival of illegal Chinese and of poverty associated to this group, there were many others who arrived because of their professional skills and wealth and constitute the upper and middle strata of the society. This latter group thus has a different orientation, different expectation and demands. Many preferred to join professional and leisure organizations that would provide them with opportunities to interact and network with people from wider communities and other ethnic groups. Such kinds of affiliation with modern types of voluntary organizations are also prevalent among college and university students, for whom affiliation creates a strong sense of ethnic identity. This is particularly so on campus, when Chinese students scattered throughout the diaspora and the mainland meet in a common campus ground. At such meeting points, the multiplicity and diversity of identities can be readily seen. Thus, with a Western parlance in which individualism is the norm, these voluntary organizations created social visibility and communitarianism. Likewise, in the workplace, a certain level of communitarianism among co-ethnics can be seen.

At the same time, voluntary associations continue to cater to the increasing number of guest workers and illegal immigrants who continue to form an invisible stratum within the Chinese diaspora. In many countries, many voluntary associations function legitimately within the framework of the

rule of law of the country. However, there are exceptions, as in the Czech Republic, where one of the voluntary associations became involved in helping with the importation of illegal immigrants into the country. Such associations dealing with illegal immigrants would tarnish the generally favorable image of the overseas Chinese voluntary associations, particularly in Western countries.

Another consideration for the voluntary associations is its contemporary role in a multiethnic nation-state. Will voluntary associations be able to go beyond their own parochial ethnic boundary and interact with other ethnic-based or national associations, and will the members be able to socialize with people of other ethnicities? These are questions that confront the relevance of voluntary associations as useful to the needs of the people as well as the nation-state. Unlike in the nineteenth century, migrant groups no longer live in isolation and, in fact, nation-states today want their migrant population to integrate wholly into the wider polity. Voluntary associations can therefore play a significant role in brokering social relationships, both between the Chinese and other ethnic groups, and the state. At the same time, they can also become cultural brokers and help to transmit Chinese cultural practices to the wider communities.

Related to this, the voluntary organizations also played an extremely important role in protecting the Chinese against racial attacks and combating stereotypes. Right up until today, it was common to hear disparaging remarks piled upon the Chinese. Likewise, derogatory terms and racist slurs were often heard in the public when the majority group attacked the Chinese. The fact that the Chinese as a social group are extremely successful socially and economically has led some scholars to term them the “model minority” (Kitano and Stanley 1973). Such status has bred resentment across the board in Western societies. The Chinese were seen as taking away the choicest jobs, school and university places from the mainstream groups. And in recent years, they have edged out the majority groups from middle- and upper-class residential suburbs. Furthermore, they were seen as flaunting their wealth by purchasing houses in expensive suburbs and driving expensive cars. Such a manifestation of wealth did not go down well with the white majority. As a result, Chinese were given stereotype of being self-centered, greedy, antisocial and were generally disliked for their success. To a certain degree, by reaching out to other ethnic groups, the Chinese voluntary organizations are attempting to construct a positive image to counteract the stereotype that has circulated in the community for a long time. The success of this image reconstruction remains to be seen.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Chinese voluntary organizations have also undergone various processes of change to cater for the existing Chinese population in the diaspora as well as for the newly arrived migrants. Chinese voluntary organizations have therefore embarked on a localization

process in order to help the existing Chinese population and the new migrants to integrate fully into the host country. Thus, it is not surprising to see a variety of organizational structures, different roles and membership composition within these voluntary organizations.

Furthermore, as these communities mature and as China becomes economically powerful, there is the desire to create links between the Mainland and overseas Chinese communities. These voluntary organizations play an important bridging role between the overseas and mainland Chinese. Particularly important are the territorial-based, dialect-based and lineage-based voluntary associations. They have in recent years embarked on a globalization process of becoming very active in establishing global linkages among their own members throughout the world. They formed international associations based on territorial, dialect and surname groupings. Some of the key roles that they played include organizing international conventions for their members, organizing economic and leisure trips to China as well as linking individual members to their home villages and towns. To a large extent, they served as important cultural brokers in a global Chinese diaspora.

Outline of the Book

Traditional Chinese voluntary associations and their modern counterparts, the *shetuan*, reflect a series of tensions that characterize the Chinese diaspora in its formation and dynamic persistence: (1) Tradition and Modernity, (2) Localization and Globalization, (3) Territorialization and Deterritorialization, (4) Belonging and Leaving, (5) Integration and Separation (6) Exile and Return, (7) Sojourner and Citizen, (8) Nation-bound and Transnational, (9) Purity and Hybridity, (10) Ethnicization and Assimilation, (11) Localism and Nationalism, (12) Displacement and Integration, and (13) Cooperation and Competition. In addition, there are class tensions, gender and generational tensions; there are competing loyalties and nationalisms. Finally, to borrow from Donna Gabaccia, who asked the same question of the worldwide migration and resettlement of Italians, is there just one Chinese diaspora, or many diasporas (Gabaccia 2000)? Is there one narrative, or competing narratives? The essays in this volume will not answer these questions, but it is hoped that they can advance the conversation.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of these issues outlined above and how the Chinese communities in the diaspora in the earlier years and today attempt to answer these questions. It discusses broad issues concerning Chinese migration from the early years to the present day. It looks at the transition from diasporic to post-diasporic communities, from sojourners to citizens and the politics behind this transition. It also explores the effects of localization and globalization on the Chinese communities and the roles of

the traditional Chinese voluntary organizations and *shetuan*s within the diaspora. Chapter 2 explores the roles of traditional clan associations in Malaysia, of how they represent the Chinese community at the local, state and federal levels. At the same time, it explores how these associations network among themselves and attempt to define Chinese identity in a multicultural Malaysian society. Chapter 3 explores the cultural politics of clan associations in contemporary Singapore, their relationship with the Singapore State, how the clan associations attempt to work within the Chinese, Malay, Indians and others (CMIO) multicultural framework established by the Singapore State and how the clan associations established a new niche for themselves in contemporary society by serving as cultural brokers between the Chinese and the wider society. Chapter 4 charts the development of the active roles of Chinese voluntary organizations in nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries and the tensions that emerged between the Peranakan and Totok. It also explores the end of these organizations from 1965 to 1998, when they were consciously abolished under Suharto's rule. These traditional voluntary organizations were replaced with an informal structure that allowed Chinese businesspeople to network and keep track of the Chinese community in Indonesia. The end of Suharto's rule brought about a revival in various Chinese voluntary organizations, and they have become very active in recent years. Chapter 5 looks at the emergence of religious organizations as important Chinese-based charity organizations among the Vietnamese Chinese and how these organizations not only served the needs of the Chinese but defined their social status within the Vietnamese society. Chapter 6 explores the roles of the voluntary associations between the Fujian and Chaozhou-speaking Chinese in Hong Kong, the interlocking networks and the intra-clan divisions as a result of class, linguistic and regional differences. Chapter 7 explores the formation and the roles of the voluntary associations in Mexico from a historical perspective, and how these associations served as important institutions for changes to occur within the Chinese society. This chapter also explores the failure of these traditionalist voluntary associations to become an important political group during the revolutionary years, because of internal divisions, which resulted in their collapse. Chapter 8 examines the formation of a variety of community organizations among the Chinese in contemporary Australia. It explores the development of Chinese temples, churches, community clubs, community centers and aged care organizations to cater to the diverging and emerging needs of the new and old Chinese migrants in Sydney. Chapter 9 explores the participation of Chinese women entrepreneurs in community organizations and how Chinese women balance their work needs with their social commitments to contribute to both the Chinese community and the wider Australian society. Chapters 10 and 11 explore Chinese voluntary organizations in North America. Chapter 10 examines the development of ethnic organizations *shetuan*s in the Chinese

community in the United States and the roles played by these organizations in helping with identity formation on the one hand and assimilation into the host country on the other hand. Chapter 11 explores the ethnic church as an important ethnic organization and its role in assisting the Chinese migrants in social participation. Chapter 12 studies the newly established Chinese voluntary associations in the Czech Republic. It argues that voluntary Chinese organizations were not popular or well patronized by the Chinese migrants. As a result of their perceived association with criminal and social vices, the Chinese migrants shunned these Chinese voluntary associations.

Note

- 1 A recent example is “<http://www.huaren.org>”, which came into existence during the intense anti-Chinese persecution in Indonesia in the waning years of the twentieth century. It exists today as the mouthpiece of the World Huaren Federation, a self-described “voice for Huaren around the world,” and publishes an e-magazine; the “old issues” that engendered its creation can be found on the website. *Huaren* means ethnic Chinese; hence “World Huaren” conveys the idea of the “Chinese diaspora.”

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