
**Tourism and the Chinese Diaspora**

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Henry Fok Ying Tung is a well known Hong Kong businessman who, in 1983, opened China’s first five star hotel, the White Swan in Guangzhou (Wong, 2000). He has become a folk hero in southern China, due in part to his humble origins among the region’s floating ‘boat people’, some of whom had migrated to Hong Kong to escape Communist China’s policy of forced resettlement from their boats onto land. Even in Hong Kong the ‘Dang’ ethnic group held very low social status, somewhat equivalent to Central European gypsies (Leng-Xia, 1997). Henry Fok overcame such disadvantages and today owns several major companies listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange.

As early as September 1964, when China’s relationship with the West was greatly strained by the Cultural Revolution, Henry Fok lead a group of overseas Chinese on a visit to Beijing to celebrate the 15th National Day of the Peoples’ Republic of China. Driven more by patriotism than politics, many years later Mr. Fok would be an ardent supporter of the open door policies initiated by Deng Xiaoping and among the earliest foreign investors in infrastructure development projects, particularly related to hospitality and tourism. He began construction of his first hotel in China in 1978, the first year of the
open door policy, in the southern city of Zhongshan which was famous as the birthplace of China’s first president, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen. Southern China, particularly Guangdong and Fujian Provinces, have historically served as China’s gateway to the world and this was especially true in the early years of the open door policy. The city of Zhongshan was chosen because of its historical significance in the modernization of China and because it is located in the core region from which many overseas Chinese originated.

A couple of years later Mr. Fok began planning the White Swan Hotel in Guangzhou. Based on his experience in Zhongshan, Mr. Fok insisted that the White Swan Hotel be designed, built and managed entirely by mainland Chinese, without any foreign input other than his own. Architects were commissioned from mainland China and the building contract was awarded to a Guangzhou construction company. All of the over 2000 employees on the project, including the general manager, were from mainland China. Few had much hotel experience and none had worked in a five star unit, as this was China’s first. This approach was notably different from than employed in most other international joint venture hotels in China, where overseas management companies were typically hired to fill top level positions. Of the three five star rated hotels built in China in the 1980s, only the White Swan was designed, constructed and managed entirely by mainland Chinese (Qu-qiong, 1993). Henry Fok believed that non-Chinese hotel companies and expatriate managers could not fully understand local operational and cultural conditions. In addition, his policies offered an opportunity to transfer technical know-how in land development and hospitality management to China.

The White Swan also broke new ground in China as the first hotel to offer room service for meals; the first five star hotel to offer its services to ordinary Chinese citizens; the first hotel to offer a free shuttle bus service to the airport and train station; the first hotel to offer luggage delivery from the reception desk to the guest rooms; and the first hotel to provide separate walkways for staff and customers. In addition, shortly after the hotel was built, Mr. Fok constructed a public garden around it for use by local people and hotel workers and he has provided a portion of the hotel’s profits for education, medical and other community services.

In many ways, Henry Fok epitomizes the model overseas Chinese. He has achieved wealth and success through his business enterprises, while at the same time he has maintained a strong personal and psychological attachment to his ancestral homeland, which in turn has provided him with personal connections (guanxi – or the bamboo connection) that have allowed him to expand his business activities.
to achieve both personal monetary and philanthropic objectives (Weidenbaum and Hughes, 1996; Hayter and Han 1998). He was driven by a cultural and ethnic self-identity to use his great wealth to do something good for “his country” and “his fellow Chinese” (Wong, 2000). His personal, patriotic and economic interests cannot be separated where China was concerned.

And Henry Fok is not alone in feeling this way and behaving in this way. Similar stories are common among overseas Chinese entrepreneurs (cf. Tracy and Lever-Tracey, 2000). Most are far less wealthy than Henry Fok, but together they have had an enormous impact on the general economic and social development success of China, and in tourism infrastructure development in particular, in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, in 1995, one of the authors of this chapter (Alan Wong), a Macau-born Chinese, was recruited by an Australian Chinese architect, to help an American Chinese investor develop a theme park in Shanghai. The American Chinese investor’s ultimate plan was to use the profits of his theme park to build a new university in his birthplace in Southern China.

While largely anecdotal, due a lack of empirical data, what these stories suggest is that there is a high level of transnationalism behind the phenomenal economic transformation of China in recent decades, created by mass migrations (both past and present) and enhanced by advances in travel and telecommunications. China is one of the world’s oldest continuous civilization and many of the overseas Chinese who are leading its investment charge are of an older generation and from developing countries of Southeast Asia. However, the overall impact of the overseas Chinese on China, along with subsequent influences on the global economy, has been made all the more pronounced due to the hypermodernity of economic and cultural globalisation in a world of rapid time-space convergence (Appaduri, 1996). The added element of culture and ethnicity has made the Chinese situation a model for a new world economic order in which dispersed networks of ‘global tribes’ (sharing common cultural and economic world views) come to dominate the traditional nation-state as a arbiter of economic activity (Drucker 1993; Kotkin 1993). Migration, travel and tourism are key elements in these processes.

The Diaspora of Overseas Chinese

Although some migration from China to Southeast Asia occurred in earlier years, the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) was a period of relatively large Chinese settlement in the Philippines, the Malacca Straits area, and the islands of Indonesia (Lew 1995). Wang Gungwu (1991) has referred to this as the
Huashang, or ‘Chinese Trader’, pattern of Chinese emigration (one of four that he has identified). This pattern comprised merchants who sailed or traveled overland to distant countries to seek goods to trade with China. Over time and after several trips, some of these merchants would settle in distant lands. They were almost entirely male and typically married local, non-Chinese females. The cultures they created were often a hybrid of traditional Chinese and local cultures, such as the Peranakan culture found in Malaysia and Indonesia. Ethnic Chinese, however, predominated and the more wealthy merchants maintained "their Chinese characteristics, if not all their connections with China" (Wang 1991: 5). This form of migration was recorded as early as the 3rd century B.C. and was found in most Asian countries prior to European arrival (Poston, et al. 1994). Thus, by the mid-16th century, when European traders first came in significant numbers to the Far East, ethnic Chinese merchants and communities had already been well established throughout the region.

The fall of the Ming to the non-Chinese Manchurian Qing Dynasty in 1644 resulted in yet a larger wave of emigration to Taiwan and Southeast Asia. Migration from China during most of the Qing period was illegal and migrants were not allowed to return to China after they left (Pan 1990). It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that treaties forced on China by European powers during the Opium Wars changed Qing Dynasty policy to legally allow mass emigration. The colonial powers desired Chinese laborers to work on agricultural plantations in Southeast Asia and the Americas. This was Wang’s (1991) second form of Chinese emigration, the Huagong (Chinese Coolie) pattern, and it occurred from the mid-1840s to the 1920s. This was the first significant migration of Chinese out of Asia to North America and Australia, where they worked in gold mining and railway construction. Most of the Chinese emigrants under the Huagong pattern were men of rural peasant origin. In addition to the flood of laborers, the European colonial territories in Asia also experienced a rapid growth in Chinese merchants (Huashang migrants) at this time, and by 1879 the British Consul to Thailand bemoaned that “It is impossible, under the conditions prevailing in the East, for Europeans to compete with the astute Chinaman” (cited in The Economist 1993).

Starting with the demise of Imperial Qing China (completed in 1911), and continuing until the 1950s, another pattern of outmigration emerged, which Wang (1991) refers to as the Huaqiao, or ‘Chinese Sojourner’ pattern. This pattern overlaps significantly in form with the Coolie pattern, except that the migrants were often educated professionals with strong feelings of nationalism. They were driven by a deep commitment to promote Chinese culture and national salvation among oversea Chinese populations (Fitzgerald 1972: 41), particularly in Southeast Asia (Pan 1990: 206). They were often enrolled in, or
associated with, universities in Europe and some became leaders of both Republican and Communist China. One characteristic that Sojourners shared in common with the Huagong Coolie Chinese was an intention to return to China following their stay abroad. This pattern declined precipitously, following the economic and political problems that Communist China began to experience beginning in the mid-1950s.

The vast majority of Chinese who have emigrated from China over the centuries have come from the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian (Lyman 1974; Pan 1990). The emigrant waves from southern China in the late 19th century were the original settlers in most of the Chinatowns found throughout the world today. It has been the traditional culture of these emigrants that has shaped the form and structure of the relationship between overseas Chinese and mainland China for much of the 20th century.

A more recent wave of Chinese emigration began with the open door policies of mainland China in the late 1970s. While southern Chinese emigrants have still predominated, this new group of overseas Chinese comprises a broader mix of people from different parts of China than had previous periods of emigration. Economic motivations, however, remain the dominant force in their decision to emigrate to their preferred destinations of the US, Canada, and Australia. This could be considered is a modern form of Huashang (trader), and perhaps Huagong (laborer), migration.

Also prevalent in the contemporary Chinese migration is what Wang (1991) refers to as the Huayi (Chinese Descent) pattern of migration. This involves ethnic Chinese who reside outside of China and who migrate to other places. Thus, the large number of Chinese refugees from Vietnam in the 1970s who migrated to North America and Australia would by Huayi.

Wang suggests that with few exceptions, future Chinese migration "will be based on the Huashang pattern and supplemented by the new Huayi pattern, with some features of the Huaqiao pattern surviving here and there" (1991: 12). Indeed, the economic nature of the Chinese diaspora has cause some to question whether it should be called a ‘diaspora’ at all. Unlike the Jewish Disapora, there has been “no loss of country; no mass enslavement and transportation; no sustained persecutions” (Chan 1999: 81). Chan (1999) points to the great diversity in the overseas Chinese population in terms of different generations (cover a century of migrants), different origins (Fujian, Guangdong, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam and others), different destination (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, USA and elsewhere), a range of social classes (from educated elite to street level gangsters), and a range of interactions with Chinese
communities in the new land and in the homeland. Instead, he argues that what we see today as the overseas Chinese community has been created by a series of smaller ‘geographical diasporas’, each of which has its own distinct causal structure and social organization. The only thing that ties them all together is the centrality of ‘Chineseness’, which, is essentially a racial category that cannot be escaped, but which carries powerful cultural significances, as well.

**Compatriots and Patriots**

We have been using the term ‘overseas Chinese’ to refer to ethnic Chinese who reside outside of the direct political control of the People’s Republic of China. This definition of overseas Chinese includes ethnic Chinese living in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, as well as those in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world, even though Hong Kong (since 1997) and Macau (since 1999) are at least nominally under mainland Chinese control. Most of these overseas Chinese are either migrants or descendents of migrants, the major exception being the ethnic Taiwanese.

The term, ‘compatriot Chinese’ is used by the People’s Republic of China to refer to residents in the Chinese territories of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. With a population of about 27 million, the compatriot Chinese make up a little less than half of all the overseas ethnic Chinese in the world (Table 1) (Poston, et al. 1994; Kao 1993). Chang (1995) refers to the economic region that comprises these three compatriot territories, along with the adjacent Chinese provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, as “Greater China I.” This is where the core focus of overseas Chinese-driven economic development has taking place. It is where most of the overseas Chinese have originated from; it is the destination of most of their trips to Chin; and it is where they have re-established their familial and economic relationships. It is no exaggerations to say that Greater China I is a driving force behind much of China’s phenomenal economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s.
Table 1. Distribution of Ethnic Chinese outside of direct control of the People’s Republic of China, 1991.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of ethnic Chinese (in millions)</th>
<th>% of Total Population in Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southeast Asia Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.26</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Americas Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.23</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Asia</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Pacific</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERSEAS CHINESE TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>30.66</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>97.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macau</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>21.23*</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPATRIOT CHINESE TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.34</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORLD TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>58.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Taiwan data for 1995; all others for 1991.

Chang’s (1995) “Greater China II” is a more difficult concept, both economically and politically. It consists of all of the rest of China, including autonomous regions that are predominantly not ethnically Chinese, and the overseas Chinese population scattered over the rest of the world (though most notably in Southeast Asia where the concept is treated with particular caution). This is an enormous population with significant capital resources. What ties them together is the race-based notion of Chineseness (Chan 1999). The question is whether this is enough to create a ‘global tribe.’ From a tourism perspective, Greater China II is brought together in two concrete ways: through overseas Chinese travel to China and through their investment in travel and tourism activities in China.

Overseas Chinese Tourist Travel to China

Compatriot visitations to China are published on an annual basis and have, by far, comprised the dominant source of the country’s foreign arrivals, reaching 64.25 million in 1999 (or 88% of China’s official total arrivals of 72.8 million)(CNTA 1999). (Note that CNTA includes day excursionists in its total visitor counts.) Most of the compatriot visitors (about 60 million) were Hong Kong nationals and most were to on trips to see friends and relatives and for leisure travel (Chow 1988). During family-oriented holidays, especially Chinese New Year, large numbers of Hong Kong Chinese cross into China. Business trips also make up a substantial (and probably growing part) of China’s overseas Chinese arrivals. This has been especially so for visitors from Taiwan, who made up 2.6 million of the mainland’s compatriot arrivals in 1999.

In addition to family visits, many leisure travelers from Hong Kong visit resorts in the neighboring Shenzhen and Zhuhai Special Economic Zones (SEZ), where some even own second homes. These SEZ areas border Hong Kong and Macau, respectively, and have adopted liberal economic policies (similar to those in Hong Kong). Hotels and full-featured resorts have been built in these SEZs, making for an easily accessible vacation destination for urban Hong Kong compatriots (Chow 1988; Lew 1987). Visits to these destinations have also been organized by schools, workplaces, and other organizations in Hong Kong. Such groups also organize longer tours of China.

Taiwanese visits to the mainland have increased dramatically since the Taiwan government relaxed its restrictions on such visits in November 1987 (Andrews 1992). Illegal visits had been taking place through Hong Kong since the mid-1980s, when China began admitting Taiwanese without stamping their
passports. A rapid increase in Taiwanese visitors occurred just in time to partially help compensate for the decline in tourism to China that resulted from the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989 (Chang 1992; He 1991; Zhang 1990).

Ethnic Chinese from other part of the world are not distinguished from other ‘foreign visitors’ by the People’s Republic of China, so their visitation patterns are more difficult to discern. Prior to 1990 the China Travel Service (CTS) was primarily responsible for visits by foreign overseas Chinese, and thereby served as an indicator of their total number (Table 2). Their numbers were estimated to have ranged between 12 and 18 percent of China’s total foreign visitor arrivals, with lower percentages occurring in earlier years when travel to Chinese was more restricted and higher percentages occurring after the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, which happened at about the same time as new laws were being adopted by Southeast Asian countries making travel to China more accessible (Zhang 1990). As in Taiwan, mainland China had become the new place to go for the more wealthy of Southeast Asia. Starting with leisure travel to trace familial roots, Southeast Asian Chinese soon began to develop economic relationships with the mainland.

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**Table 2. Compatriot and Other Overseas Ethnic Chinese Tourists to China, 1987-1999.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Compatriots</th>
<th>Other Ethnic Chinese</th>
<th>% of all Foreign Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hong Kong &amp; Macao</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>25.09 million</td>
<td>&lt;2,500</td>
<td>202,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>24.68 million</td>
<td>947,600</td>
<td>277,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>35.18 million</td>
<td>1,526,969</td>
<td>684,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>47.94 mil</td>
<td>2,117,600</td>
<td>1,114,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>54.08 mil</td>
<td>2,174,600</td>
<td>1,066,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>61.67 mil</td>
<td>2,584,600</td>
<td>1,264,845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The percent of foreign visitors that are ethnic overseas Chinese is from Lew (1995) for 1987 and 1990. Other years are conservative estimates extrapolated from Lew (1995).


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Because of diversification, CTS numbers can no longer be used to estimate overseas Chinese arrivals. However, the strong economic ties between overseas Chinese and China that were established in the 1990s appears to be an important force behind China’s continuing high rates of visitation from Southeast Asian countries. In 1999, visitors to China from Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines each numbered about 300,000, ranking them 5th, 7th and 8th in country arrivals to China (CNTA 2000). Those from Thailand and Indonesia were each in the 200,000 arrivals range. All of these countries have significant ethnic Chinese populations (Table 1) who comprise a large percentage of their visitors to China. These arrival numbers would be much higher if it were not for the stultifying effect of the Asian economic crisis of 1997 and 1998.

While low in comparison to compatriot visitors, the number of ethnic Chinese from the rest of the world is a good proportion of the total foreign visitor count. In addition, since the majority of overseas Chinese come from localized areas in Guangdong and Fujian provinces, they frequently include these provinces on their itinerary. Their concentration in these areas is a major source of income and economic development for rural southern China.

The per capita expenditures of Hong Kong Chinese, Taiwanese, and Southeast Asian Chinese are generally lower than that of other international visitors, including American Chinese and overseas Chinese from elsewhere in the world. Compatriot and Southeast Asian Chinese are more likely to stay with relatives or in inexpensive Chinese hotels rather than in international hotels, while Taiwanese have received special incentive prices that have cut into profits. Thus the rise in tourists from among these groups has provided a beneficial new market for the older Chinese hotels in the PRC (Zhang 1990). It has also resulted in an increase in the production of rosewood furniture, screens, and calligraphic art, which are popular among these groups.

**Tourism Investment and Knowledge Transfer**

Even more significant than travel to China, from an overall economic development view, are the economic investments that overseas Chinese have made in China. The story of Henry Fok is typical of this phenomenon, which has been repeated thousands of times with varying level money and degrees of impact. At the opposite end of the spectrum from Mr. Fok’s investments are the millions of dollars that have been sent to China as remittances for family members and as donations to schools, hospitals and small infrastructure development.
While visiting an ancestral village in 1996, one of the authors of this chapter (Alan Lew), a US born half-Chinese, was invited to a meeting with a district governor (at the sub county-level). The governor had learned from others that the author’s sibling was in high position in a US toy company and was seeking investment by the toy company in the district where their forefathers originated. A few years earlier, the same author’s father, who was born in rural southern China but migrated to the US in the 1930s, had donated US$2,000 to build a small bridge over an irrigation canal. This bridge allowed construction of the first road to connect his family village to the larger towns in the area so that the young men of the village would find it easier to attract wives. Since then (in 1999) the village has used overseas remittances, as well as personal savings, to build a wall around the village pond (used for aquaculture and clothes washing), which would enable to water to stay cleaner during heavy rains.

Many of the districts in rural Guangzhou and Fujian publish periodicals chronicling visits by overseas Chinese and following the progress of major projects that overseas Chinese have supported through donations or direct investments. Along with the Henry Fok story, these examples show the diversity of ways that the Bamboo Network works to strengthen ties between overseas Chinese and their homeland, and the impact that these ties can have.

In terms of personal wealth the combined compatriot and overseas Chinese community form a potential economic power greater than that of Japan (Lew 1995). Their liquid assets have been estimated at close to US$2 billion (The Economist 1992). Together, overseas Chinese and compatriot Chinese are estimated to account for close to 80 percent of China’s total foreign direct investment (FDI) (Tefft 1994). Compatriot Chinese are responsible for about two-thirds of Chinese FDI, while other overseas Chinese (primarily from Southeast Asia) comprise the second largest leading source of FDI in China at about 15 percent.

Most Hong Kong compatriots speak the same language as in neighboring Guangdong Province where they have placed 80 percent of their investments in China. Hong Kong accounts for approximately two-thirds of all foreign investments in Guangdong Province (Thoburn, et al. 1990: 1). Hong Kong developers are also leading the way in real estate investment in China, and in particular in the development of resorts and golf courses (Karp 1992; PB 1993; Ross and Rosen 1992). On the other hand, Hong Kong Chinese have also been involved in criminal activity, such as prostitution, in Guangdong Province (Mosher 1992).
With approximately US$3 billion in two-way trade, Singapore accounts for 44 percent of all trade between the PRC and Southeast Asia (Stoltenberg 1990). (Some 77% of Singapore’s 3 million people are ethnic Chinese.) Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia each traded close to US$1 billion with China in 1989. Singaporeans and Thais (mostly ethnic Chinese businessmen) have invested the most in China among Southeast Asians.

The cultural advantage that overseas and compatriot Chinese hold has provided them with access to relatively safer investments than other foreign investors, including the Japanese. It has also been argued that they are more accustomed to the lax regulatory environment and relative informality of business ventures in China. Investments by American Chinese and ethnic Chinese from other parts of the world have occurred to a much lesser degree. These overseas Chinese are more likely to limit their financial contribution to remittances for building schools, hospitals, roads, and other public facilities in their home village areas.

Tourism and travel has been a particularly popular area of investment for overseas Chinese. When the PRC first opened its doors to tourism in 1978, accommodations were woefully lacking in both number and quality. Through joint ventures, the quality of hotel services in China gradually approached international standards. Although the precise figures for ethnic Chinese investments are not available, between 35 percent and 40 percent of all direct foreign joint venture investments in China have been in property development, including hotels, luxury resorts, golf courses, apartments and condominiums for foreigners and office space (Leung 1990: 407; Asiaweek 1990; Associated Press 1993). An additional 5 percent has been in transportation, restaurants, and related services. The economic experience, managerial knowledge, and financial resources of compatriot and overseas Chinese have clearly been important factors in modernizing (and internationalizing) tourism in China (Hayter and Han 1998).

Most of the five-star hotels and many four-star hotels in China have been built as equity joint ventures funded primarily by foreign direct investments with in-kind contributions from mainland China partners (Pearson 1991). Alternatively, these could be set up as wholly foreign-owned enterprises, foreign investment companies or foreign investment companies limited by shares (Sutton 1996). China's open door policy since 1978 has been driven by a quest for both foreign capital and foreign technological know-how (Ho 1984). Joint-venture hotels achieved both of these goals by providing employment-generating and income-generating foreign investments, as well as transferring managerial knowledge and technological skills. Expatriate (foreign) hotel managers are most needed in the initial stages of tourism
and hotel development (Pine 1991). The necessary skills they bring can include hotel construction, hotel operations, and product and service improvements. Many highly experienced ethnic Chinese hotel managers from Hong Kong have been recruited to work in mainland China specifically to transfer their skills and knowledge (Wong 1998). Knowledge and skills transferred to the foreign joint ventures are subsequently transferred further ‘inward’ through wholly Chinese joint ventures (Hayter and Han 1998).

The Global Tribe

The nation state of China does not, and is not capable of, containing the extended ‘family’ of ethnic Chinese. This is true for all countries in the new global economy as widespread migration and travel have scattered native sons and daughters to all corners of the globe. The fall of communism and the rise of an ideologically bankrupt capitalism has weakened the role of the state as new forms of transnational and borderless economic regions emerge (Drucker 1993). Kotkin (1993) argues that one of these new borderless forms is ‘global tribe’, which he defines as a geographically dispersed cultural group that maintains a strong sense of common origin and a network of business and cultural ties that are increasingly based on new information technologies. The five global tribes that he identifies are the Jews, the Japanese, the English and English-speaking nations, Asian Indians and the Chinese.

There are, of course, some significant differences among Kotkin’s five tribes. In particular, the Chinese stand out for the close economic relationship that they maintain with their homeland. This is tinged with a strong sense of patriotism, whether or not they agree with the political ideologies emanating from Beijing. Important in this relationship is the attitude that China holds towards Chinese residing overseas. Prior to the 1950s (and after the Qing Dynasty), all Chinese, no matter where they resided, were considered citizens of China. This absolutism was modernized to reflect international standards in the 1950s, but the sense that Chineseness was an all or nothing proposition still resides within the Chinese psyche.

Some of the reasons for this have to do with traditional Chinese values, the most important of which is that of the extended family, which includes deceased ancestors (Woon 1983). A Chinese proverb says that ‘Being away from home only one li [about one-third mile] is not as good as being home.’ And in southern China, being home means being with the extended family. Most rural villages in southern China are patrilocal clan communities where everyone in the village is related by male lineage and marriage (Pan 1990; Woon 1983). Surname-based class association in other countries offered both initial settling-in
support and assistance in maintaining relationships with the home village. Responsibility for the home village was further marked by a strong value in filial piety.

In addition, social class in southern China was flexible and allowed upward socioeconomic mobility, particularly for males who were always welcome to return to China with the wealth they accumulated overseas. In fact, many overseas Chinese from the south used their overseas incomes to build new houses in their home villages where they intended to retire. The difficult time that China experienced in the 1950s and 1960s, however, changed most of their minds and today there is a huge oversupply of housing in some communities of Guangdong and Fujian.

While away from home, the overseas Chinese sojourner gained prestige among fellow ‘sojourners’ based upon these same values that they shared in the homeland (Pan 1990). More trips home before retirement increased one’s prestige. So did the amount of money sent home to relatives, and the amount donated for public works projects for the villages. Saving a large amount of money to bring back to China also increased the sojourner’s prestige. Today, overseas Chinese sentiments both pull them to China as a place where they feel a sense of belonging, and push them toward their adopted lands as a place where they prefer to physically live and work.

Few other developing countries in the world have the resource potential that China has in its external compatriot and overseas Chinese populations. China has, thus far, been very successful in using that resource to bring about economic growth and rising living standards for its domestic population. The continuing flow of emigrants from different parts China will diversify the Global Chinese Tribe and could dilute it to some degree. However, the high adoption rates of new technologies, combined with growing opportunities for travel will be forces to strengthen the Tribe, or at least maintain it for a long a time to come. What is certain is that the emigrant Chinese community has been a major force in China’s economic expansion in recent decades. Not only China, but also ‘Greater China’ needs to be contended with in any significant understanding of Asian development in general, and the development of tourism in Asia, in particular.
References


