Then and Now: Trans-Pacific Ethnic Chinese Migrants in Historical Context

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How are we to conceive of contemporary Pacific migrations, in the light of those that occurred a century ago, and conversely, how are we to conceive of historical migrations in the light of those we see now? The specific example I will use will be the flow of migrants from the southeastern coasts of what is now the People's Republic of China that moved outwards to, and often back, from the Pacific basin over the last three centuries. There are a series of questions that guide this comparison between historical and contemporary trans-Pacific migration, and each of them flow from current debates about whether global migration has recently taken on a more "transnational" turn than those which occurred a century ago. This question has been ongoing in social scientific and anthropological literature on migration ever since the the concept of "transnationalism" arose just over ten years ago.[1] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Christine Blanc-Szanton argued that there was an increasing tendency for migrants to have their feet in both home and receiving societies, and for a "unified social field" to be maintained that linked the two. Circular flows of migrants that created continual networks of travel between disparate places were the most obvious manifestation of what they labelled "transmigrants" who were not bounded to a single place, and who imagined themselves tied to multiple locations. Scholars followed with investigations of a myriad of other transnational processes such as economic remittances that went from receiving to home societies, the movement of intellectual resources back and forth, the proliferation of political ties in the form of long distance nationalist organizations that were based in receiving societies but actively sought political change in home societies.

Very quickly, arguments were made that these circular flows and border crossings were of an intensity and volume never before seen in human history, and theoretical explanations abounded that tried to explain the sudden appearance of such transnational processes, arguing for instance that they had occurred because of changes in transportation and communication

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[1] See Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, and Christine Blanc-Szanton, "Towards a Definition of 'Transnationalism': Introductory Remarks and Research Questions," in *Towards A Transnational Perspective On Migration*, eds., Glick-Schiller, N., Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (New York Academy of Science, 1992); Basch, Glick-Schiller, Szanton-Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-states* (Langhorne, Pa: Gordon and Breach, 1994) and *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration : Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (New York, N.Y. : New York Academy of Sciences, 1992); also see the special issue "Transnational Migration: International Perspectives," edited by Peggy Levitt, Josh DeWind, Steven Vertovec, *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003).

technology that had compressed for migrants the distances between home and receiving societies (jet travel and the internet became prominent examples), but also placing the rise of transnational linkages as a parallel to shifts in global capitalism that had faciliated networks of global production and capital flow that easily crossed national borders. Powerful nation-state governments (in particular those such as the United States and Great Britain that were committed to what were sometimes described as "neo-liberal" ideologies) had helped this process by facilitating easier flows across their borders for capital, goods, and certain classes of people. In some cases these flows of human bodies were to answer the need for cheap labor in exploiting resources or manufacturing goods in new sites, just as they had in the 19th century, but increasingly of interest to national policy makers were the flows of highly educated or wealthy migrants who were targetted as beneficial to the receiving society because they transferred not only financial capital but also intellectual capital in the forms of entrepreneurial skill and advanced education as well as social capital in the form of business networks that faciliated global trade connections. Advances in technology and communication, therefore, had compressed the distances in time and space that separated places, but according to these arguments, shifts in national policies towards migrants and the flows of goods and capital had triggered the growth of transnational linkages.

This quick sketch of some of the prominent issues in recent scholarly investigations of transnational migration provides the background to my two main questions for this essay: 1) what is the role of studying trans-Pacific Chinese migration in understanding both contemporary and historical periods of global migration, and 2) is there something so fundamentally new about recent migrations as to warrant claims that "transnational" migration networks are a recent development? My argument is that using the example of trans-Pacific Chinese migration illustrates one of the interesting developments in the historical scholarship on global migration—that what is new about the "transnational" has to do with what is new about nations. In other words, as striking as the differences between the waves of migrations at the end of the 19th century and those at the end of the 20th century are, we need to understand them as linked in historical continuity as the results of the rise of differing forms of nationalism on both sides of the Pacific during the 20th century, and that what might seem from a contemporary perspective as the increasing transcendence of national borders to facilitate cross border flows, needs to be understood in the historical context of the ever increasing rise of nation-states as organized attempts to control territories and borders, and that any perceptions of contemporary lessening of control is in fact illusory.

Nation-states have more control than ever of borders and what cross them, and it is their selectivity as to what and who should find easy passage which has changed. This is also to say that we must understand the large differences between contemporary and historical global migrations in the last three centuries not as radical ruptures and breaks but as ways of periodizing the shifts in a larger continuity. The nature of those continuities lie in three historical processes: 1) migration as a process with its own internal dynamics of family strategies and networks that build translocal connections which move ideas, goods, and bodies

between specific sites, 2) nationalist movements that politicize identity in the effort to create affective imagined ties that legitimate the creation of state policies that heretofore had not existed, and 3) as the result of such policies, the expansion of state power to control with ever more effectiveness the social and economic activities within the territories claimed by the state. Unsurprisingly, numbers 2) and 3) have drawn the most attention from scholars interested in public policy, and they show a long continuity in the expansion of nationalist ideologies as a way to create and legitimate technologies for state control. The best example might be the rise of border control regimes as one of the major expressions of expanding state power over the last 150 years.[2] In terms of continuity in both the 19th and 20th century, the nature of migration has essentially been a family oriented, translocal process that links two local sites rather than linking something as abstract as two societies or cultures or nations. The shift that has occurred because of the development of 2) and 3) has been that the strategic family considerations of migrants must now take into account the laws and policies of nations in ways that they were unnecessary 150 years ago.

Following Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton's use of Puerto Rican migrants to New York city, many studies in transnational scholarship in the 1990s used migration from the Caribbean and Latin American to the United States as the prime focus of study, but there was also a great deal of attention given to the wealthy entrepreneurs who were leaving Southeast Asia and establishing footholds in Australia, Canada, and the United States. In all three receiving coutnries, specific immigration policies had begun to target wealthy and educated migrants, most famously the Canadian government's pursuit in the 1990s of Hong Kong Chinese entrepreneurs and investors who might be wary of the handover of Hong Kong by Great Britain to the Peoples Republic of China in 1997. The creation of new programs that fast tracked the immigration process for business and entrepreneur migrants created a high visibility for flows of "ethnic Chinese" business and professional elites from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other parts of Southeast Asia to North America, Australia and New Zealand, attracting the attention of scholars looking for a trans-Pacific example of the new transnationalism.[3]

A number of social science studies over the last two decades have focused on the impact of Chinese migrant entrepreneurs on urban economies and so we have a surprising amount of quantitative statistical and survey research, with lesser amounts of ethnographic and in-depth qualitative research, but altogether still a relative abundance of research activity for the

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[2] See John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Erika Lee's work on the creation of state bureaucracies for the surveillance of migrants in the United States, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration and American Exclusion, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mae Ngai's on the rise of the legal regimes that defined illegal immigration, Ngai, "The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien: Immigration Restriction and Deportation Policy in the United States, 1921–1965," *Law and History Review* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2003) and Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

relatively small proportion of overall global migrants that these Chinese migrants compose.[4]
The clear justification from a policy perspective for such a large focus is the inordinate
economic and social impact that these migrants have made and it is hoped will continue to
make, both in receiving societies and to the proliferation of global linkages across the Pacific.
The visibility of these new Chinese migrants was particulary high because the vast majority
tended to go to major urban areas such as Vancouver and Toronto in Canada, to Los Angeles,
San Francisco, New York city, Seattle and Washington, D.C. in the United States, and Sydney
in Australia and Wellington in New Zealand. Some quick figures for these migrations to Canada
and the United States illustrate the strikingly limited geographic spaces to which they have
confined themselves, but also the overwhelming impact they have had in these delimited urban
spaces. In Vancouver, the percentage of the city's population of Chinese ancestry nearly
doubled to almost 20%, with the suburb of Richmond becoming almost 40% Chinese. In the
same decade in Los Angeles, the Chinese population grew by 36 percent to 330,000, with
concentrations in some suburbs such as Monterey Park and Alhambra at 42% and 34% of the

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[3] For example, Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Katharyne Mitchell, *Crossing the Neoliberal Line: Pacific Rim Migration and the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Johanna Waters, "Flexible Citizens? Transnationalism and Citizenship amongst Economic Immigrants in Vancouver," *The Canadian Geographer/ Le Geographe canadien* 47, no. 3 (2003). Also see the extensive work of geographers Daniel Hiebert, David Ley and the findings of the Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM) project at http://riim.metropolis.net.

[4] Peter S. Li, "Understanding Economic Performance of Immigrants," in *Canadian Issues: Immigration, Opportunities, and Challenges* (Toronto: Metropolis Institute, 2003); Ivan Light, Min Zhou, and R. Kim, "Transnationalism and American Exports in an English Speaking World," *Internationa Migration Review* 36, no. 3 (2002); Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "Entrepreneurship and Economic Progress in the 1990s: A Comparative Analysis of Immigrants and African Americans," in *Immigration and Opportunity*, ed., F. Bearn and S. Bell-Rose (New York: Russell Sage, 1999); Alejandro Portes, L. Guarnizo, and P. Ladolt, "The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 2, 1999; Alejandro Portes, W. Haller and L. Guarnizo, "Transnational Entrepreneurs: An Alternative Form of Immigrant Economic Adaptation," *American Sociological Review* 67 (2002). Wei Li, "Spatial Transformation of an Urban Ethnic Community: Chinatown to Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1997); Laurence J.C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier, *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman Littlefield, 2003); Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim, "A Tale of Two Metropolises: Immigrant Chinese Communities in New York and Los Angeles," in *Los Angeles and New York in the New Millennium*, ed., David Halle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Zhou, "The Role of the Enclave Economy in Immigrant Adaptation and Community Building: The Case of New York's Chinatown," in *Immigrant and Minority Entrepreneurship: Building American Communities*, eds., John Sibley Butler and George Kozmetsky (Westport: Praeger, 2004); Zhou and Mingang Lin, "A Study on Ethnic Capital and the Transformation of Chinese Migrant Communities in the United States," *Sociological Research* 111, no. 3 (2004); see also the plethora of planning studies defining and then questioning the conception of "cosmopolitanism" in cities, for example, Leonie Sandercock, *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Mulitucultural Cities* (New York: John Wiley, 1998) and *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century* (New York: Continuum, 2003).

[5] Population figures from work on Canadian and U.S. census by Andrew Yan.

population.[5] In both Canada and Australia, the largest proportion of new migrants in 2001 were from Asia, and in the United States, Asians were close behind Latin American migrants.

The wealth of the new migrants is also striking. Between 1983 and 2003, over 320,000 migrants entered Canada as business and entrepreneurial class migrants, with the vast majority of Asian origin. The numbers peaked at around 32,500 in 1994, just before the handover of Hong Kong to China, and it was estimated that Hong Kong Chinese migrants to Vancouver in the 1990s brought $15 billion in new capital.[6]

The sense that this is a new world, with new kinds of migrants moving, is pervasive, both among scholars and among the populations they study. Descendents of earlier waves of trans-Pacific Chinese migrants to Australia, Canada, and the United States, for instance, often see little connection between themselves and the new arrivals, and that lack of identification is often even stronger, if possible, going in the other direction. A detailed listing of all the reasons for this sense of distance between old and new waves of migrants is a story in itself and would take too much space, but the main underlying reasons for this divide are 1) the roughly half-century between the 1920s and the 1970s when very little trans-Pacific migration occurred, and 2) the various national policies of incorporation that occurred during the 20th century throughout almost every region in question, both in places of origin and various sites of migration. Generations of developed differences with little communication or renewed population flows meant that by the end of the 20th century, there was little in common between the descendents of a man who left China in 1890 and those of his brother who stayed behind. The historical interpretation of a radical disruption and break between the old and the new would seem obvious.

However, we must understand that there has been a continuity in family-oriented Chinese migration that extends back for nearly four centuries, and that what seem like radical breaks can be understood as variations on a common theme.[7] The key is to link 150 years of trans-Pacific migration to the Americas to the five centuries of migration of Chinese to Southeast Asia. If we connect these geographic regions, we discover that there are rhythms to the migrations that reveal the ways in which they are affected by interconnected forces. Family

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[6] Figure for business migrant class compiled in 2003 by Lloyd Wong, "Chinese Business Immigration to Australia, Canada, and the United States: A Global Immigration Market" Department of Sociology, University of Calgary, from figures released by Canada Immigration and Citizenship in 2002. Figures for capital flows from Thomas Hutton, "The Transformation of Canada's Pacific Metrpolis: A Study of Vancouver," with Institute for Research on Public Policy, Montreal, 1998).

[7] On family strategies, see Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home* (Stanford, 2000); Adam McKeown, "From Opium Farmer to Astronaut: A Global History of Diasporic Chinese Business," *Diaspora* 9 (2000); "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842–1949," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (May, 1999): 306–337; and "Transnational Chinese families and Chinese exclusion, 1875–1943," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1999); Johanna Waters, "Transnational Family Strategies and Education in the Contemporary Chinese Diaspora," *Global Networks* 5, no. 4 (2005), and Waters, "Migration strategies and Transnational Families: Vancouver's Satellite Kids" Vancouver Centre of Excellence, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper Series: No. 01–10, 2001.

considerations mark how migrant communities have maintained translocal links between their places of origin and their places of migration, exhibited for instance in split families where wives and children are kept in China and remittances are sent back, with new family members being brought as a deliberate investment strategy weighing the cost of travel against the value of their added labor. Family considerations have also been behind decisions by the mostly male migrants to marry local women and create local ties in migrant areas. These largely strategic marriage alliances for improving business ties and cementing relations with prominent native families could exist side by side with the translocal split families that at the same time tied migrants to places of origin. In other words, we should 1) understand strategic family considerations as foundational whether migrant communities integrated with "host" societies or whether they remained separate and segregated, and that 2) local marriage ties and translocal marriage ties were not necessarily at odds, but could be two facets of a coherent strategy of family improvement and investment.

Much of the literature on the so-called Overseas Chinese "diaspora" (following the term commonly used to describe the global dispersion of Jews from the Holy Lands) has focused on the question of integration versus separation, and whether the Chinese have tended to remain separate from "host" societies and for what reasons have they integrated. Anthony Reid interpreted the history of Chinese in Southeast Asia through this lens of integration versus separation, arguing that beginning with the first movements of people from the southeast coast of China to the Spanish Philippines in the early 16th century, there has been no consistent pattern of either incorporation or remaining separate from host societies. There were trends towards integration or towards staying relatively separate that were the result of a range of factors, but no trend lasted more than a century, and "long term effects have been extraordinarily diverse and fruitful, as migrants experimented with new ways to survive and flourish."[8] However, the very lens of "integration versus separation" might not be the most useful perspective on understanding this long history, since the richness of strategies belies such a simple dichotomy, and indeed from the point of view of a coherent family strategy, there was no contradiction between both increasing local ties and maintaining separate translocal linkages to places of origin.

Indeed, one of the argument of this essay is that for the last 150 years, the external demands for integration of Chinese migrants into local "host" societies, as well as external attempts to expel them or keep them segregated, have largely been the product of burgeoning nationalist movements on both sides of the Pacific, and that the scholarly examination of incorporation versus separation has been the product of what Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller labelled "methodological nationalism," the tendency of social science to analyze migration from the point of view of the needs and political interests of nation-states.[9] We can see this most clearly if we examine in parallel the development of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian

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[8] Anthony Reid, "Flows and Seepages in the Long-term Chinese Interaction with Southeast Asia," in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed., Reid (Allen and Unwin, 1996), 49.

policies in Southeast Asia and in North America since the late 19th century, breaking it down into three general periods—1880–1930, 1930–1990, and the recent developments since 1990.

Reid, in surveying the literature on Chinese migrant communities in what are now the nations of Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam, noted that in Southeast Asia from 1880–1930, "millions of Chinese migrated temporarily into essentially dualistic societies that imposed very low demands for assimilation."[10] These societies in Southeast Asia during the 19th century were often those most greatly affected by European colonial expansion, which encouraged the development of Chinese "middleman" minorities as shopkeepers and trade merchants. The seemingly "dualistic" nature of what were market enclaves for trade such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Manila, Cholon (Saigon), Bangkok, and Jakarta were the result of the concentration of Chinese migrants at the local nexi of their trade networks. Each nexus was a spatial point of intersection in the web of routes for migration and trade. The ability of Chinese merchants to develop extensive seaborne networks for the movement of goods and labor paralleled their creation of strategic translocal and local family networks that facilitated the trust and credit relations that smoothed trade.

In the period from 1930–1990, the Global Depression, the Pacific War, the Cold War, and most importantly, the rise of independent post-colonial nation states greatly affected the viability of the trade and migration networks. The logistical challenges of economic uncertainty and warfare, however, were less of a problem for Chinese migrants and their descendents than the widespread use by burgeoning post-colonial nation-states of nativist politics to create and expand political hegemony. Being "too Chinese" became a political calculus, and politicized issues of identity as being of national concern. "Mixed" descendents of Chinese men and local women who had lived for generations in local enclaves, along with those more recently arrived Chinese migrants, both increasingly faced policies aimed at creating an imagined national racial purity. Such policies ranged from incorporation by linguistic and cultural assimilation to the extreme measures of outright expusion. Chinese language schooling for the descendents of Chinese migrants were shuttered, and various countries adopted policies by which Chinese adopted names in vernacular languages. For the descendents of Chinese in Indonesia and Malaysia, religious conversion to Islam was now a measure of fidelity to the new nation (earlier conversions might have had their own strategic function, but now the nationalist meaning was explicit).

In contrast, during each of these periods Chinese migrants to what are sometimes termed the white settler societies—Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States—began to

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[9] Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology" in special issue on "Transnational Migration: International Perspectives," edited by Peggy Levitt, Josh DeWind, Steven Vertovec, *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003); also, Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere?: Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999).

[10] Reid, ibid. See the work of William Skinner on the Chinese in Thailand and Indonesia, Edgar Wickberg on the Chinese in the Philippines, Tan Chee Beng on the Chinese in Malaysia.

encounter a very different reception. Earlier, in the period from 1850–1880, migrants from roughly the same areas of southeastern China went to Southeast Asia and North America in very similar ways (this is in contrast to much of the Chinese labor migration to the Caribbean and Latin America, which was usually less voluntary and involved mass indentured labor). Migrants from Guangdong province in particular considered a range of choices in this period between 1850–1880 that involved both Southeast Asia, Australia, Hawai'i and North America, with strategic family considerations being remarkably similar. They created migrant communities that paralleled the kinds of communities that they had created in other local sites in the Pacific basin, with each as an individual nexus in a larger network of migration and trade routes. Between 1880 and 1930, however, all four white settler colonies began to organize nationalism around white supremacy. On the west coast of North America, the incorporation of new territories into the territorially expanding nations of Canada and the United States involved mass political movements that labelled Chinese migrants (many of whom predated the European migrants in time of arrival) as being less worthy of inclusion in the nation. Chinese migrants were the main target of these attempts to organize around white supremacy, and the Australian colonies and New Zealand saw a similar wave of nation-building around anti-Chinese white supremacy. In each of the four European settler colonies mentioned there existed a mass migration from Asia during the late 19th century that supplied labor for the development of industry and agriculture. In all four, anti-Asian immigration policy attempted to cut off such labor migration by the 1920s, with varying degrees of success. An initial round of anti-Chinese legislation in the 1880s followed anti-Chinese movements in the 1870s. In the early 1900s, the English language was used in Australia and New Zealand (both former British colonies recently founded as nations) as a means of insuring that the British nature of settlement would be protected from Chinese settlement.[11]

The rise of anti-Chinese white supremacy as a major tool of nation building in this period was strongly associated with the expansion of political rights and privileges to the working classes, and thus for much of the 20th century has been heralded in the nationalist myths of Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand as triumphs of democracy. The acquisition of new means of political participation in the nation for workers was one of the main rallying points for the working class white supremacy of these movements, and to this day the national historiographies of all four nations has had difficulty in reconciling this narrative of the triumphant spread of democracy and freedom with the ugliness of policies that deprived

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[11] It is interesting to note how this marked a turning point for northwest Australia, which had initially formed a pattern of Chinese migration that had mirrored very closely that of Southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific Basin in general, with a largely male migration 1) forming into an urban market enclave (Darwin on the northwest coast of Australia was thus akin in this earlier period to majority Chinese urban enclaves such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, etc., and in fact was tied into the same networks of migration and trade) and 2) with marriage alliances with local Aboriginal women being common. However, as the various Australian colonies and the newly unifed Australian nation adopted a "White Australia" policy, Australia began to resemble Canada, the United States, and New Zealand.

political rights from others. Exclusion and the demonization of the Chinese, and eventually other Asian migrants, as essentially foreign and outside the imagined national community, were historical legacies of this period of nation building.

White Settler Nations (Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand) and List of Legislation by Period

Anti-Chinese Legislation as Tool of White Nationalism
1880–1900

- 1881 Chinese Immigrants Act (restriction of numbers and poll tax)
- 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (no new laborers), United States
- 1885 Chinese Head Tax (tax on new migrants), Canada
- 1880- Various Australian colonies enact anti-Chinese legislation
- 1900

Broad Extension of Anti-Chinese Exclusion to Anti-Asian
1900–1930

- 1899 Immigration Act (Immigrant Application in English), New Zealand
- 1901 Immigration Restriction Act (Dictation Test), Australia
- 1907 Chinese Immigrants Amendment (English language reading test and poll tax), New Zealand
- 1908 Gentlemans Agreement curbs Japanese migration, United States
- 1908 Hayashi-Lemieux Agreement curbs Japanese migration, Canada
- 1914 Continuous Passage Act curbs South Asian migration, Canada
- 1924 National Origins Act blocks all new Asian migration except from the Philippines, United States

Initial Relaxation of Exclusion and Right to Naturalize as Citizens
1940–1960

- 1943 Overturning of 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, United States
- 1947 Citizenship Act, Canada
- 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, United States
- 1957 Fifteen Year Residency for Citizenry and Relaxation of Dictation Test for Non-Europeans, Australia

Reform of Immigration to Allow Renewed Mass Migration of Asians
1960–1990

- 1965 Immigration Act, United States

1966 Abolishment of "White Australia" Policy, Australia

1967 Immigration Act, Canada

1987 New Immigration Act, New Zealand

If we compare the period 1880–1930 between Southeast Asia and North America, we see that the first mode of nationalism was built around white supremacy, and it marked the northwest Pacific regions of North America and the two white settler colonies in the southwest Pacific. The other sites of Chinese migration in the southwest Pacific were still dominated by colonial European rule. In the next period, however, roughly from 1930–1990, a second mode of nationalism becomes ascendent in these areas, a post-colonial form of nationalism that borrowed from the first mode an emphasis on homogenous racial purity. This national purity ranged from a nativist emphasis on the primacy of aboriginal ancestry to one that allows for "mestizo" (the Spanish Philippine term) elements that blend Chinese, European, and native, yet still excorcizes the essentially foreign nature of Chinese ancestry. Anti-Chinese rhetoric, and eventually political legislation and national policy in newly formed nations such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma, the Philippines, and Indonesia, thus echoed the functions for nation-building of the earlier wave of white supremacy nationalism. Elites of mixed Chinese migrant and local ancestry, ironically, were often at the heart of these proto-nationalist political movements, and many remained at the highest reaches of the politic order in the newly found post-colonial nation-states. Other groups of more recently arrived Chinese migrants, especially those that chose to migrate to Southeast Asia rather than to North America in the early 20th century, were often the specific target of anti-Chinese campaigns. Small shopkeepers and petty business entrepreneurs also invited the wrath of local native populations because they were the face of economic exploitation and representative of the separation between those with and without wealth and power.

By the end of the 20th century, something rather odd had occurred. The long break in trans-Pacific migration created by global depression and warfare had ended, and the four white settler nations began to loosen their anti-Asian immigration policies. At the same time that nationalism in Southeast Asia increasingly used anti-Chinese agitation, the nationalism of the settler colonies abandoned it. The resumption of mass migration from Asia to the Americas has usually been attributed to the liberalization of immigration policy in Canada and the United States in the late 1960s (enacted in 1965 for the U.S. and 1967 for Canada). But trans-Pacific migration of Chinese, albeit in limited numbers, had resumed almost immediately at the end of World War II in the form of war brides and then refugees. What began as a small trickle of Chinese migrants to the United States and Canada after World War II, by the end of the 20th century had become a torrent.[12] Australia and New Zealand eventually followed suit, and by

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[12] Indeed, in the United States and Canada, the ratio of the present population of residents who have been in North America for two generations or less is well over 80%, leaving a small minority who trace ancestry back to the older migrant waves of the late 19th and early 20th century. In New Zealand, of the 105,000 Chinese who made up 2% of the nation's population in 2001, almost 70% had arrived only in the previous decade.

the 1970s and 1980s larger numbers of Asian migrants than ever before crossed the Pacific. This reversal in policy away from white supremacy, ironically also signalled the increasing importance of trans-Pacific trade and business networks in the policy considerations of these four nations. Inexorably, it was the historical dominance of Chinese migrants in the economic networks of the southwest Pacific that became a virtue in migration policy.

As was mentioned already in the essay, this new wave of wealthy and educated migrants would seem to be a radical break from the earlier periods. But in fact the history of anti-Chinese post-colonial nation building in Southeast Asia provides one explanation for the timing of their arrival in white settler nations. The prominence of so called "ethnic Chinese" in recent migrant waves to North America has often been noted. The "ethnic" label refers to the fact that they were descendents of earlier migrant waves from southeast China to Southeast Asia, and even though the degree of retention of Chinese language use and other social practices varied, the identity politics of post-colonial nation building had marked them. A telling example is the "Sino-Vietnamese" (or Viet Hoa) in the waves of "Boat People" in the 1980s—the predominance of the ethnic Chinese is usually blurred because of their categorization as "Vietnamese refugees." Even their self-professed identity is highly fluid, and many will identify as Vietnamese or as Chinese according to situation. Such fluidity in identification is partially a result of the strategic rewards of being identified as Chinese or Vietnamese in their new local sites, but they are also a legacy of the decades of nationalist identity politics in Vietnam. They were migrants because they were fleeing the anti-Chinese policies of the recently re-unified post-colonial nation-state of Vietnam. These policies of forcing those with Chinese ancestry to decrease or eliminate any perceived linkages to their places of origin, at the pain sometimes of incarceration or outright expulsion, were in fact a continuation of policies of integration and incorporation of Chinese migrants that had existed in the post-colonial national government of South Vietnam.

The striking heterogenous nature of new Chinese migrants to Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand—that they come from so many places in Southeast Asia as well as China—is in stark contrast to the origins of 19th century waves that had left the southeastern coasts of Guangdong and Fujian. However, in placing the history of migrations to Southeast Asia in conjunction with the migrations to the white settler colonies, we see that they are in fact a direct legacy of those original migrations from the same places, a secondary wave that is on the move because of the rhythm and timing of anti-Chinese nationalist movements on both sides of the Pacific. I have focused on the inclusions and exclusions of anti-Chinese rhetoric in nation-building as one way to chart such rhythms, hoping to show it's effects on the migrations that have flowed from the southeast coast of China for the last three centuries.

In conclusion, a rough timeline connects Southeast Asia and North America.

1850–1880– migrants coming out of southeastern China travel to either Southeast Asia or North America in an extension of centuries old migration networks to the southwest Pacific region

1880–1930 there is relatively open migration to colonial societies in the southwest Pacific marked by a relative lack of European settlement, with increasing restriction of Asian migrants to the four white settler nations in North America and the southewest Pacific being organized around white supremacy

1930–1990 global economic depression, World War II, and the Cold War restrict mass migration flows; newly forming post-colonial nations organize against anti-European colonialism, but also use anti-Chinese rhetoric to nation-build; this splits descendents of Chinese migrants into those who belong in the new nation (erasing or downplaying their Chinese past) and the "Chinese" who do not; at the same time, white settler nations begin dismantling racial ideologies of white supremecy because of the importance during WWII and the Cold War of anti-racism rhetoric; anti-Chinese nation-building in Southeast Asia combined with wholesale changes to immigration laws in white settler nations leads to waves of migration of "ethnic Chinese" both from mainland China and from Southeast Asia to Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.

This schematic does not, of course, encapsulate all of the varieties of trans-Pacific Chinese migrations—it does not mention the migrations from the Republic of China (Taiwan) to North America, as well as the significant volumes of secondary migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean that left emerging post-colonial nations and came to North America in the latter half of the 20th century. However, what I hope it does show is that the Pacific region is best understood as a singular region whose ebbs and flows of migration are tied into a coherent rhythm, and that the appearance of new Chinese migrants in North America from Southeast Asia is the result of the re-extension of earlier networks of migration. What we are seeing in the last thirty years is a re-intergration and extension of Pacific-wide networks of migration that existed in the late 19th century, and the visibility of the wealth of the new migrants is the result of policies in the white settler colonies aimed at capturing the wealth of migrant Chinese entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia that developed during the decades of lessened migration across the Pacific. The irony is that even in the late 19th century and early 20th century, both Canada and the United States explicity tried to maintain the business connections of Chinese merchants and entrepreneurs in North America that tied them to global trade networks, making exceptions in the 1882 Exclusion Act in the U.S. and the 1923 Chinese Exclusion of 1923 in Canada for merchants. It was not the failure of policy, therefore, but the vehemence of white supremacist nationalism and the impact of depression and war on trans-Pacific trade that disintegrated these cross Pacific networks.