

Chapter 11

The Overseas Chinese Communities in Southeast Asia and the Pacific



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Abstract In this chapter we present historical overviews and analyses of current data on the overseas Chinese populations in the three Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines and in the three Pacific countries of the United States, Canada, and Australia. We also present and discuss current data on the numbers of overseas Chinese throughout the world and its major regions, and we note how these distributions have changed over the past decades. We also present a discussion of the different types of emigrations from China and show how they figured into the immigrations of Chinese into the six Southeast Asian and Pacific countries just noted. In our chapter, we define an overseas Chinese person as a Chinese individual who resides outside the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macau. We discuss and justify this definition in more detail in our chapter. We show that in around 2018, there were nearly 48.7 million overseas Chinese residing in over 149 countries. Also, of the three Southeast Asian countries receiving the major focus in our chapter, Indonesia has the most Chinese of all the countries in the world, almost 8.4 million. The other two Southeast Asian countries, Malaysia and the Philippines, have, respectively, the third largest number of overseas Chinese (6.6 million) and the seventh largest number (1.5 million). The United States has the fourth largest number of Chinese of all the countries in the world (4.6 million). The other two Pacific countries of Canada and Australia have, respectively, the sixth largest number of Chinese (1.6 million) and the eleventh largest number (0.95 million).

Keywords Overseas Chinese · Diaspora · Immigration · Emigration · Ming · Qing · Trader · Coolie · Sojourner · Descent

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Introduction

The overseas Chinese are spread all over the world. They live in almost every country of the world, with most in Asia (Poston Jr. and Wong 2016). A famous Chinese poem states that “wherever the ocean waves touch, there are overseas Chinese” (Poston Jr. and Yu 1990; Mung 1998; Zhou 2009). In this chapter we present historical overviews and analyses of current data on the overseas Chinese populations in the Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines and in the Pacific countries of the United States, Canada, and Australia. We also discuss data on the numbers of overseas Chinese throughout the world and its major regions, and we note how these distributions have changed over the past several decades.

We define an overseas Chinese person as a Chinese individual who resides outside the People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macau. We discuss this definition in more detail later. We show that in around 2018, there were nearly 48.7 million overseas Chinese residing in over 149 countries.

We use the term “overseas Chinese” in our chapter not because we believe that the label represents a symbolic meaning signifying a foreign presence by virtue of race. Instead we use the term principally because of its continued and accepted use in the international arena (Fitzgerald 1972; von Brevern 1988; Wang 1991; Poston Jr. et al. 1994; Mung 1998; Poston Jr. and Wong 2016) and because there is really no convenient and short alternative phrase to refer to Chinese people who live abroad.

Major Types of Emigrations from China

The first emigrations of note of Chinese people from China began in the 1400s during the early years of the Ming Dynasty under the direction of Zheng He (1371–1433), an explorer, diplomat, and fleet admiral in China. Between 1403 and his death in 1433, he conducted numerous expeditionary voyages to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Eastern Africa. And Chinese voyages continued for several years after his death. Some of the first emigrations from China occurred in conjunction with Zheng’s expeditions (Dreyer 2007; Levathes 1996). The magnitude of Zheng’s fleet and his command deserve mention. At any one time, he commanded over 200 ships with a combined crew of over 20,000. One of his ships was purported to be over 400 feet long. Compare Zheng’s fleet with that of Christopher Columbus and his three ships and crew of 90. The Santa Maria, the largest of Columbus’s three ships, was but 85 feet long. Zheng’s fleet and resources greatly exceeded those of Columbus and other early European explorers such as Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand Magellan.

Zheng’s voyages extended beyond Southeast Asia. Indeed, the naval historian Gavin Menzies goes as far as to argue that Zheng and his ships from China likely reached America in around 1421, some 70 years before Columbus (Menzies 2008) and that Zheng’s fleet – although not Zheng himself – reached Venice in 1434 and had a hand in igniting the European Renaissance (Menzies 2009).

Emigrations from China continued after the Ming Dynasty and began in earnest during the Qing Dynasty. The major emigration waves from China started in the later part of the nineteenth century with more than two million Chinese departing the country for destinations in Southeast Asia, Hawaii, the West Indies, California, and Australia (Wang 1978). Prior to these times, the population of all of China would seldom exceed 80 million people. But after the establishment of the Qing Dynasty in 1644, there were reductions in mortality, and the population kept growing well past the 80 million limit. By 1850, there were 420 million people living in China, six to eight times the traditional level of 60–80 million that was the demographic norm 200 years or so previously. The Qing Dynasty was the first dynasty to bring about and to maintain a population size above 100 million. Indeed it was the only dynasty to live up to the perpetual Chinese ideal of “numerous descendants” (Poston Jr. and Wong 2016).

Pan has written that these phenomenal increases in the Chinese population occurred in a country “where there had appeared no new kinds of material, technical or political improvement to absorb the proliferation of people ... (the large increases in population thus resulted in) destitution, corruption, apathy, and the breakdown of public order and personal morality” (Pan 1990: 43). Overcrowding, political upheavals, and the desires for personal and family improvements led to large numbers of persons leaving China.

What have been the main kinds of emigration from China? According to Wang Gungwu (1991), there have been four principal patterns over the past two centuries. The first is the *Huashang* (华裔) (Chinese trader) pattern; it is characterized by merchants and traders and eventually their families leaving China and going abroad to establish businesses in the host countries. Typically comprised at first mainly of males, after one or two generations, many of these merchants “settle down and bring up local families” (Wang 1991: 5). The more prosperous their businesses, the more likely they maintained “their Chinese characteristics, if not all their connections with China” (Wang 1991: 5). *Huashang* migration has been the prominent model of Chinese emigration to many Asian countries, particularly to Southeast Asia (Legge 1886; Fitzgerald 1965).

The *Huashang* pattern of Chinese emigration has predominated throughout history. Indeed the first recorded emigration from China followed the *Huashang* pattern (Zhu 1991) and occurred during the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BC). It was to either Japan or the Philippines. Whereas the other three patterns we discuss in the paragraphs below have occurred during particular time periods, the *Huashang* pattern has always occurred and continues to this very day (Wang 1991; Redding 1990; Poston Jr. et al. 1994; Poston Jr. and Wong 2016).

According to Wang (1991), the second pattern is the *Huagong* (华工(苦力)) (Chinese coolie) pattern, which occurred from the 1840s through the 1920s, when Chinese migrated to North America and Australia. This migration involved “coolie trade” in low-level occupations that were concentrated in gold mining and railway building (Campbell 1923; McKenzie 1925; Stewart 1951; Kung 1962; Mei 1979). Pan (1990: 61) has written that the Chinese coolie migrants “went to work in virgin territory across the world ... [and] most lived by the sweat of their brow.” It was the coolie trade which “took the bulk of the Chinese to the New World, with shipload

after shipload reaching Cuba, Peru and ... British Guiana in the years between the 1840s and 1870s” (Pan 1990: 67). In the late 1870s and 1880s, many Chinese went to Hawaii and to California. Pan has observed that “by 1870, one out of every four workers in California was Chinese” (Pan 1990: 94).

The third emigration type is the *Huaqiao* (华侨) (Chinese sojourner) pattern, one strongly comprised of well-educated professionals. This pattern was dominant for several decades after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 and was strongly tied to feelings of nationalism. Education was largely recognized as a deep commitment to promote Chinese culture and national salvation among the overseas Chinese. Fitzgerald has written that the common belief then was that “without Chinese education, there can be no overseas Chinese” (Fitzgerald 1972: 41). Beginning in the 1920s, many teachers went to countries of Southeast Asia to instruct the children of Chinese immigrants (Pan 1990: 206), and this trend continued until the 1950s (Poston Jr. and Luo 2007).

According to Wang, the fourth pattern is the *Huayi* (华裔) (Chinese descent) pattern, which is a more recent phenomenon, mainly prevalent since the 1950s. It involves persons of Chinese descent living in one foreign country migrating to another foreign country. A good example is the Chinese in Southeast Asia, many of whom have migrated to countries in Western Europe in recent decades, “especially since the 1950s when some Southeast Asian nations made those of Chinese descent feel unwanted” (Wang 1991: 9). The Chinese are disproportionately overrepresented in the commercial classes of most every Southeast Asian country, and in some of these countries, they “are big players in the national economies” (Pan 1990: 226). Their economic successes are all the more remarkable when one remembers that “the Chinese in Southeast Asia have always been disliked for having profited from the indigenous reluctance to make money” (Pan 1990: 226). So when Thailand, and then the Philippines, followed by Indonesia and later Malaysia, began to explicitly lock the Chinese out of various sectors of their economies to promote the prosperity of their indigenous peoples, many Chinese simply left those countries and moved elsewhere.

Of the four major patterns, the *Huashang* is the most elementary and has been occurring for the longest period of time. Indeed, much of today’s global migration of Chinese follows the *Huashang* pattern. Wang has speculated that with few exceptions, future Chinese migrations “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” (Wang 1991: 12).

The Chinese in Southeast Asia and the Pacific

We now present brief historical sketches of the overseas Chinese communities in the three Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines and in the three Pacific countries of the United States, Canada, and Australia. Later, we present quantitative analyses of current data about Chinese peoples in these and other countries.

Indonesia

The immigration of Chinese to Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia first began, as noted above, in the early years of the Ming dynasty, via the expeditions of Zheng He. The Chinese used the islands of the Indonesian Archipelago as intermediate locations for their trade with India and the Middle East.

One of the first settlements of Chinese in Indonesia occurred in the 1600s in Batavia, now the capital city of Jakarta. This community was then and is today the largest Chinese community in Indonesia. Heidhues has written that “Chinese junks came annually to the harbor, and Chinese settlers increasingly spilled over into the countryside of Java, out of the control of the few Europeans living in the walled town ...” (Heidhues 1999: 152).

Following the *Huashang* pattern, most of the immigrants to Batavia and other Indonesian locations along the north coast were males who first married local, usually non-Muslim women. Women were later brought from China allowing the more well-to-do Chinese men to marry and mix with Chinese women. The lower-class Chinese settlers tended usually to marry non-Chinese women. But starting in the late nineteenth century, Chinese men in Java began more so to marry Chinese women. The introduction of steamships “made it easier to bring Chinese brides to Java, facilitating travel to the (Chinese) homeland for those with means. New migrants could establish families which were more purely Chinese, retaining Chinese language, dress and customs” (Heidhues 1999: 157).

Lynn Pan’s (1990) *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: The Story of the Overseas Chinese* provides some interesting and fascinating stories of the emigrations of numerous Chinese families, many of whom followed the *Huashang* pattern. Here is the story of Liem Sioe Liong, who was born in 1916 in Fuqing, Fujian Province, China, as the second son in a very poor Chinese peasant family. When he was 16, he set up a noodle stand in his home village. A year or so later when war started between China and Japan, he immigrated to Indonesia to the central Javanese town of Kudus to help his older brother manage and run a small peanut oil business. The first few years in Indonesia were rough and difficult. The Chinese immigrants, especially those from Fujian Province, suffered discrimination and prejudice on the part of the local Indonesians. But little by little, Liem became more involved in the trading and smuggling of cigarettes, sugar, cloves, and numerous other commodities. He established many firms to further his business activities. Eventually all cars, motorcycles, minibuses, and trucks made, assembled, or distributed in Indonesia passed through one of Liem’s establishments. Pan has observed that “hardly an area of Indonesian economic life escapes penetration by the tentacles of the Liem group of companies” (Pan 1990: 234). When Liem died in 2012, he was reported to be the richest person in Indonesia.

Through hard work and endurance, the Chinese have succeeded and established themselves in Indonesia building and conducting local businesses and related economic activities. One reads of Chinese markets along the rivers, and flotillas of Chinese houseboats that were half home and half shop. Pan has written that in

Indonesia and “all over Southeast Asia, it was a Chinese who sold you a drink, a chicken, a needle, a lamp, a catty of rice, a length of cloth, a bag of spices, a quantity of anything that was essential to everyday living” (Pan 1990: 129). Since the early years of the Ming, Indonesia has been a major destination of Chinese immigrants. Currently, as we will show below, Indonesia has the largest number of overseas Chinese of any country in the world.

Malaysia

The country of Malaysia consists of a number of states and territories separated by the South China Sea into two regions of about the same size, Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia. Although the two regions are about equal in size geographically, most of the country’s 32.5 million population – around 80 percent – lives in Peninsular Malaysia. About one-fifth of the country’s population is overseas Chinese, and most of them also live in Peninsular Malaysia.

Human habitation in Malaysia goes back around 40,000 years. But the earliest Chinese settlement was a small community in Malacca established around 1400 by Fujianese traders “who came to engage in the thriving maritime trade of the sultanate” (Tong 1999: 172). These Chinese settlers were mostly men, and they intermarried with local women, comprising a “tiny minority within the Malaysian Chinese population today, residing primarily in Malacca and Penang” (Tong 1999: 172). The Chinese population increased in size and assumed major positions of economic influence in the society. So ubiquitous were the Chinese that Isabella Bird (1831–1904), the English traveler and explorer, spoke of her time in Malaya in 1879 as follows: “I have written a great deal about the Chinese and very little about the Malays, the nominal possessors of the country, but the Chinese may be said to be everywhere, and the Malays nowhere. You have to look for them (the Malays) to see them” (Bird 1883: 201).

Chinese settlement in Malaysia was not very significant demographically until the early 1800s. Mass immigration into the country was “prompted by new economic opportunities created by the British mercantile and administrative presence in the Straits Settlements, i.e., Penang, Malacca and Singapore, established in 1826, and in the Malay states after 1874, as well as by adverse economic and political conditions in China” (Tong 1999: 172). Most of the Chinese immigrants were from Fujian and Guangdong provinces and were poor and illiterate peasants and coolies. They mainly followed the *Huagong* pattern of Chinese emigration we discussed earlier.

Japan invaded Malaya in December of 1941 and occupied the country until August of 1945. While all Malaysians suffered under the Japanese military occupation, the Chinese were the most harshly treated. “Some 40,000 Chinese were killed in purges. Chinese associations were replaced by the Japanese-sponsored Overseas Chinese Associations... Thousands of Chinese urban dwellers were relocated to rubber plantations and jungle land to cultivate food crops” (Tong 1999: 174). After the Japanese surrendered in 1945, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) assumed

control of the country. When the British returned to the country in mid-1945, they worked alongside the MCP. The MCP was “a landmark in the development of Chinese politics in Malaya ... (because it was committed) to the establishment of a multiracial Communist state” (Tong 1999: 174). With independence and decolonization in the mid-1940s, the Chinese began to obtain increasing independence. Peninsular Malaysia became the Federation of Malaya in 1948 and achieved independence in August of 1957. The federation of Malaya united with North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore in September of 1963 and became Malaysia. In 1965, Singapore left the federation (Baten 2016).

The Chinese benefitted tremendously when Malaysia achieved independence. Chinese economic activities expanded and diversified. “Small- and medium-sized Chinese enterprises established a strong presence in light manufacturing, food processing, and production of household consumer goods. Rapid urban expansion resulted in active Chinese participation in the real estate and construction industries” (Koon 1999: 175).

Philippines

The Chinese perhaps first immigrated to the Philippines during the years of the early Ming as part of the expeditions of Zheng He. Pan has written that one of the very first Chinese settlements in Southeast Asia was comprised of Chinese from Fujian province in around 1405 in the area known today as Manila. Indeed when the Spaniards first entered the Philippines in the 1570s, the Chinese were already there. The Spaniards were met in the Manila area by Chinese traders “who sailed up in their junks and greeted them with a great warlike display, beating on drums, playing on fifes, and firing rockets and cannons” (Pan 1990: 31). But there are no records of the specifics.

Starting in around the 1570s, there was a prosperous trade between Manila and Mexico resulting in an ever-larger Chinese settlement in the Philippines. The Chinese brought in silk to Manila which they traded for silver from Mexico. These interactions resulted in as many as 20,000 Chinese residing in the Manila area in 1600 and between 20,000 and 30,000 Chinese living there for most of the seventeenth century.

Let us mention here the issue of silk from China, a precious commodity in great demand not only in the Philippines. Silk was first developed in China perhaps as early as 6000 BC, but certainly by 3000 BC. It was first reserved for the emperors but later began to be exported in around 1000 BC, first reaching Europe and the Indian subcontinent, leading to what became known as the Silk Roads from north-western China to Europe and beyond. Silk was a prized commodity. Indeed its increased volume and availability in the Mediterranean caused some consternation. It has been reported that Seneca (4 BC–65 AD) “was horrified by the popularity of the thin flowing material, declaring that silk garments could barely be called clothing given that they hid neither the curves nor the decency of the ladies of Rome” (Frankopan 2017: 19).

Silk was only one of the many commodities coming from China to the Philippines. The Chinese also provided extensive commercial and service activities in Manila and became virtually indispensable to the local economies and communities. “The Chinese greatly outnumbered the Spaniards (especially in Manila) who feared their economic power, cultural difference, and the possibility they might seek aid from nearby China to overthrow Spanish rule in the Philippines” (Wickberg 1999: 188). As a consequence, many of the Spaniards fought with the Chinese, and there were uprisings and massacres in the early 1600s and the late 1630s when more than 20,000 Chinese were killed. Nevertheless, the Chinese returned and remained in the Philippines for its economic opportunities, despite the restrictions imposed on them by the Spaniards.

These resentments, suspicions, and conflicts continued into the 1700s when the Spaniards introduced controls to limit the number of Chinese immigrants to the Philippines. Sometimes, the Filipinos were on the side of the Chinese and defended them from the Spaniards. Other times, the Chinese and the Filipinos were on opposite sides. In the mid-nineteenth century when Spain opened the Philippines to worldwide trade and economic activity, even greater numbers of Chinese were allowed to immigrate to the Philippines. When the United States assumed control of the country in 1898, there were over 100,000 Chinese there. “Chinese were now settled in every part of the Philippines and had entered many new lines of work: collectors and distributors of export crops and imported goods, rice and cotton millers, labor contractors, and operators of small *sari-sari* (miscellaneous goods) retail stores in remote villages” (Wickberg 1999: 188). The Chinese were now not only in Manila but in many other parts of the country.

One of the most famous persons born in the Philippines was a descendant of a Chinese person who immigrated to the Philippines from China several generations earlier following the *Huashang* pattern. Giok Kuan Co was a young 6-year-old boy when he left Tongan County in Fujian Province in 1841 with his 24-year-old father and migrated to the Philippines. In the Philippines, Giok Kuan Co was later baptized by the Spaniards and became known as Jose Cojuangco. Jose started as a carpenter in Manila, established a large business specializing in sugar and rice, and also became a money lender. He accumulated a great deal of land in the Philippine province of Tarlac. He married, had children, and they married and had children, and this Chinese-Filipino family grew and prospered. The great-granddaughter of Jose Cojuangco (Giok Kuan Co) was María Corazon Sumulong “Cory” Cojuangco-Aquino, who was born in the Philippines in 1935 and died in 2009. She served as the eleventh President of the Philippines and was the first woman ever to hold that office. Often regarded as the “Mother of Philippine Democracy,” she was also the first female to serve as a president in all of Asia (Pan 1990: 154–155).

United States

Chinese immigrants to the United States were banned for almost a century, but in recent decades, their numbers have increased dramatically (Sung 1967; Poston and Wong, 2016). Indeed, starting in 2013 to the present, there have been more immigrants to the United States from China than from any other country in the world, including Mexico. In 2013, there were 150,000 immigrants to the United States from China, compared to 125,000 immigrants from Mexico (Jensen et al. 2015). This pattern has been maintained since 2013.

Chinese first came to the United States in large numbers with the discovery of gold in California in 1848. California's Chinese population jumped from approximately 50 persons in the late 1840s to more than 25,000 by 1852 (Lai 1999: 261). In the early 1860s, the Central Pacific Railway Company was established to lay lines from Sacramento eastward, while a rival company began laying lines westward from Omaha, Nebraska. "The Central Pacific had the harder task, for the line from Sacramento had to cross the massive granite slab of the Sierra Nevada and mile after arid mile of the Nevada and Utah deserts" (Pan 1990: 55). Chinese were hired by the Central Pacific as laborers when Irish immigrants faltered. When the so-called Golden Spike was laid in 1869 in Promontory, Utah, connecting the western line from Sacramento with the eastern line from Omaha, the Central Pacific had almost 14,000 Chinese workers on its payroll, comprising over 80 percent of its workforce (Pan 1990; Cassel 2002). The western half of the railroad could not have been built without the overseas Chinese laborers (Ambrose 2001; Chang 2019).

Most of the early Chinese immigrants coming to the United States to mine gold and to work on the railroad were Cantonese villagers from the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong Province, mainly from *Siyi*, the four counties on the west flank of the delta (Lai 1999: 261).

Despite these major contributions of the Chinese to the US economy and society, immigration from China ended up being severely restricted between 1882 and 1943. But the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 eliminated national origin, race, and ancestry as bases for immigration. Since 1968 when the above law came into effect, thousands of Chinese immigrants have entered the United States every year, and the Chinese immigrant population has increased tenfold.

During the many decades the Chinese have been in the United States, their social status has undergone significant change. The socioeconomic status of this one time laboring ethnic group has improved considerably. Sociologists now regard the Chinese as one of the most "successful" of the minority groups in America (Wong 1980).

The initial immigrations of Chinese to the United States did not follow the *Huashang* emigration pattern that was so common for Chinese immigrants to most Southeast Asian countries. Instead the *Huagong* pattern of migration was followed. Poston Jr. and Luo (2007: 328) have noted that "during the rapid growth period of the frontier economy in the U.S. between 1850 and 1880, thousands of Chinese immigrated, mainly to the western United States, under the indenture system as

miners, railroad workers, and agricultural laborers. They also came as cooks, laundrymen, and in other jobs that American workers did not want. Later, they were instrumental in building the western part of the trans-continental railroad.” The emigrants under the *Huagong* pattern were usually men of peasant origins, and their migrations were often temporary because a “large proportion of the contract laborers returned to China after their contract came to an end” (Wang 1991: 6).

Canada

There are several main periods of Chinese immigration to Canada (Ng 1999: 234). The initial period was between 1858 and 1884, and it involved large numbers of immigrants from Guangdong and Fujian provinces. The Canadian pattern in this era was similar to the early immigrations of Chinese to the United States, fueled first by gold mining and then by the opportunity for construction work in British Columbia. “The building of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1880-84 brought in 17,000 Chinese” (Ng 1999: 234). Some came to Canada after finishing similar employment in the United States, but most came directly from southern China. As was the situation with respect to the early waves of Chinese immigration to the United States, the early waves of Chinese immigration to Canada followed the *Huagong* pattern.

A period of restricted entry started in 1885 and continued until 1923. This was largely a response of Canadians to the competition the Chinese posed to other workers and to their perceived cultural differences. Chinese were still able to enter Canada during this period but had to pay a head tax of C\$50 per immigrant, later increased to C\$100 in 1900 and to C\$500 in 1903. A more stringent Chinese immigration law was implemented in 1923. Under this exclusion law, “no more than two dozen Chinese were admitted in the following 24 years...The Chinese population shrank and so did many Canadian Chinatowns” (Ng 1999: 235).

The fourth era of Chinese immigration to Canada was a renewed immigration period that began in 1947 and continued through 1967. This immigration was mainly geared toward family reunion, allowing spouses and children to join the older immigrants. “To qualify for admission, the applicants had first to make their way from mainland China to Hong Kong, then go through checking and security clearance procedures under the sponsorship of their relatives in Canada” (Ng 1999: 235). Major immigrations from China to Canada started in 1967 and continue to this day. Immigrants are no longer mainly from Guangdong and Fujian provinces. Indeed, Chinese immigrants now hail not only from mainland China and Taiwan but also from Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and other countries. They are mainly attracted to Canada by its “more democratic and peaceful environment and supposedly greater economic opportunities” (Ng 1999: 236). These days there are large concentrations of Chinese not only in Vancouver on the west coast but also in the major eastern cities of Toronto and Montreal. We show below that Canada today has the sixth largest number of overseas Chinese of all the countries in the world and the second largest number of non-Southeast Asian countries.

In Canada these days, Chinese are welcomed as citizens. “To become Canadian, Chinese need not discard their cultural heritage; indeed such heritage should be preserved for the enrichment of Canadian life” (Ng 1999: 241).

Australia

Of the six countries specifically covered in this chapter, Australia has the fewest overseas Chinese, just under one million in 2014. Immigration from China to Australia has mainly occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century and since the 1960s. Inglis (1999: 274) has noted that these two immigrations have “coincided with watersheds in Australian history.” It was during the latter decades of the nineteenth century when Australia’s population grew most rapidly, culminating in the establishment of the nation of Australia in 1901. And since the 1960s, the Australian government moved away from assimilation of the population to one of multiculturalism. Plus the economy was restructured during this time, leading to more involvement of the country with the newly independent and growing countries of Asia (Inglis 1999).

Despite these two recent periods of large numbers of Chinese immigrating to Australia, there is archeological evidence indicating a Chinese presence in Australia much prior to European colonization. But similar to the first immigrations of sizable numbers of Chinese to the United States and to Canada, the first sizable group of Chinese immigrated to Australia in the early 1850s with the discovery of gold. However, Pan has noted, these large numbers of Chinese entering Australia in the 1850s led to “a spring of racist emotions. ‘Mongolian filth’ and ‘locusts’ were two epithets hurled at (the Chinese) by hostile members of the local (Australian) population” (Pan 1990: 57). Actions were taken by the British officials in Australia to restrict the numbers of Chinese entering the country, and these later evolved into what became known as the “White Australia Policy” (Pan 1990).

Australia began in the 1950s and 1960s to relax the “White Australia Policy,” but the numbers of Chinese did not increase appreciably. “A third of the Chinese were Australian-born, a quarter had been born in China, and another 40 percent had been born elsewhere in Asia” (Inglis 1999: 275), and most of this latter group were Chinese students. But with the election in 1972 of a Labor government, the “White Australia Policy” was finally abandoned. This occurred about the same time as the diplomatic recognition by Australia of the People’s Republic of China. The numbers of Chinese immigrants began to increase. The overseas Chinese population in Australia reached almost one-half million by 1996, and as we will show in Table 11.2, it had almost doubled in size by 2014. “Chinese migrants came (to Australia) in search not so much of the New Gold Mountain as political and personal security, and a less politically polluted environment” (Inglis 1999: 275).

According to the United Nations, Australia is one of the most urbanized countries in the world, with nearly 90 percent of its population living in urban areas (United Nations 2014). New South Wales and its capital city of Sydney attract up to

40 percent of all the immigrants to Australia, and the percentage is even higher for immigrants from Asia. Over half of the Chinese population in Australia who were born in the PRC, Hong Kong, and Macau reside in New South Wales. Importantly, the “geographical distribution of Chinese (in Australia) reflects the diverse educational, kinship, geographical and economic networks which have molded settlement patterns, and in the case of Indochinese refugee groups, the role of government resettlement policies” (Inglis 1999: 278).

The Size and Distribution of the Overseas Chinese Populations

Our previous analyses of the overseas Chinese (Poston Jr. and Mei-Yu 1990; Poston Jr. et al. 1994; Poston Jr. 2003; Poston Jr. and Wong 2016) examined their distributions throughout the world in the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2010s. In our prior research, just as in the research we present in this chapter, we defined the overseas Chinese very broadly as all Chinese persons living outside the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan and, after 1997–1999, also living outside Hong Kong and Macau, including the *Huaren* (华人), (naturalized citizens of Chinese descent) and the *Huayi* (华裔) (the descendants of Chinese). The definitions of the overseas Chinese vary from country to country and from scholar to scholar. No definition is unflinchingly sharp and concise because the decision on whether or not a person or a group is Chinese tends to be made by governments, both Chinese and foreign, by the larger societies alongside and where the Chinese settlers live, and often by individual scholars (Williams 1966; Poston Jr. et al. 1994; Poston Jr. and Wong 2016).

The overseas Chinese population of the world numbered around 27 million people in the early 1980s, 37 million in early 1990, 39 million in around 2001, and 40 million in around 2011. It reached almost 49 million in 2018. The 2011 population of overseas Chinese was 4.4 times that in 1948. Europe and the Americas had relatively high growth rates, Africa intermediate, and both Asia and Oceania low. Individual countries also had different rates of overseas Chinese population change, with Western European countries, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and some of the Asian countries having higher than average annual growth rates.

Although the overseas Chinese in the early 1980s lived in virtually all parts of the world, their distribution was uneven. From the early 1980s to the early 1990s, they comprised a small minority in most countries. More than 90 percent lived in Asia in the early 1980s, and almost 88 percent lived in Asia in the early 1990s. In both periods, over 80 percent of the overseas Chinese residing outside Asia lived in more developed countries. Of the more than 40 million overseas Chinese living in 149 countries in 2011, almost 30 million, or 73 percent, lived in 35 Asian countries. The data we report in this chapter will take us forward another 7 years to 2018.

In Table 11.1, we report for the 8 years of 2011 to 2018 the numbers of overseas Chinese residing in the major world regions. We obtained the data for each of the years in the table from the online data link provided by the Overseas Community

Table 11.1 Distribution of overseas Chinese in the world, 2011–2018 (in 10,000)

Year	Total	Asia	America	Europe	Oceania	Africa
2011	4031	3004	750	156	95	25
2012	4136	3072	769	161	107	27
2013	4178	3066	790	170	113	40
2014	4250	3101	811	176	117	47
2015	4330	3128	834	196	119	53
2016	4462	3203	867	215	121	57
2017	4749	3391	930	225	145	58
2018	4869	3426	953	225	154	111

Source of Data: Overseas Community Affairs Council, Taiwan. The Numbers of Overseas Chinese (歷年海外華人人數, [Pinyin, Linian Haiwai Huaren Renshu]); accessed at <https://data.gov.tw/dataset/9738>

Affairs Council, Taiwan (see link at the base of Table 11.1). The primary sources of most of the data gathered by the Taiwan offices around the world are the national censuses of the countries, and the secondary sources include statistical and data publications from the United Nations and the US Central Intelligence Agency.

There were 40.3 million overseas Chinese in the world in 2011, increasing to 48.7 million by 2018. In 2011, almost 75 percent of the overseas Chinese resided in Asian countries. By 2018, the share of overseas Chinese living in Asian countries had dropped slightly to 70.3 percent.

We present in Table 11.2 the numbers of overseas Chinese in 2014 in the twenty countries with the largest numbers of overseas Chinese and the percentage of all overseas Chinese in each country. Indonesia has the most Chinese of all the countries in the world, almost 8.4 million (Table 11.2), representing 17.2 percent of all overseas Chinese. Thailand and Malaysia have the next greatest representations of overseas Chinese, seven million and 6.6 million, respectively. The non-Southeast Asian country with the largest number of Chinese residents is the United States, with almost 4.6 million, almost one in ten (9.3 percent) of all the overseas Chinese in the world. Canada (1.58 million, 3.3 percent), the Philippines (1.50 million, 3.1 percent), and Australia (950,000, 2.0 percent) have, respectively, the sixth, seventh, and eleventh largest overseas Chinese populations. Of the 20 countries with the largest numbers of Chinese residents, nine are Asian countries, seven of which are Southeast Asian.

Characteristics of Countries with the Largest Numbers of Overseas Chinese

Finally, we ask whether there are any noticeable regularities with respect to the locations of the overseas Chinese in the countries around the world. For instance, are more overseas Chinese found in richer or in poorer countries? Are more found

Table 11.2 The twenty largest overseas Chinese populations in the world in 2014

	Number of overseas Chinese in 2014	Percent of global overseas Chinese population
Indonesia	8,360,000	19.67
Thailand	7,000,000	16.47
Malaysia	6,580,000	15.48
United States	4,550,000	10.71
Singapore	2,870,000	6.75
Canada	1,580,000	3.72
Philippines	1,500,000	3.53
Myanmar	1,220,000	2.87
Vietnam	1,030,000	2.42
Peru	990,000	2.33
Australia	950,000	2.24
Japan	690,000	1.62
South Korea	530,000	1.25
France	500,000	1.18
Russia	490,000	1.15
United Kingdom	460,000	1.08
Brazil	300,000	0.71
South Africa	250,000	0.59
Italy	210,000	0.49
New Zealand	170,000	0.40
All other countries	2,270,000	5.34
Total overseas Chinese	42,500,000	100.00

Source: Overseas Community Affairs Council, Taiwan, http://www.ocac.gov.tw/OCAC/File/Attach/10/File_54.pdf

in urban or rural countries? Are Chinese more prevalent in large or in small countries? Also, does the number of overseas Chinese in a country decline with increasing distance from China?

Ecological theories of migration and settlement patterns (Hawley 1950; Poston Jr. and Frisbie 2019) suggest that there should be more overseas Chinese in richer, urban, and large countries (both in terms of population size and geographic area). Further, the classic distance decay theory of migration (Ravenstein 1885; Zipf 1946) suggests that the farther a country is from China, the smaller should be its number of overseas Chinese.

To answer the above questions, we used circa 2011 data on the size of the overseas Chinese population in all the countries of the world (Poston Jr. and Wong 2016). We used their absolute population size, rather than their relative population size, because a relative number tends to minimize the presence of overseas Chinese in countries with large overall populations and exaggerates their presence in small countries. For example, as we noted above, Indonesia has the largest number of

overseas Chinese, over eight million, but the Chinese only comprise just over 3 percent of Indonesia's population. Conversely, Brunei has just over 50,000 overseas Chinese, but they comprise over 12 percent of Brunei's population. Indonesia's overseas Chinese population has much greater worldwide and national demographic, economic, and political impacts with regard to Chinese activities and the in-migration of Chinese to Indonesia, than that of Brunei's. Yet the relative size of the overseas Chinese population in Brunei is four times that in Indonesia.

In Table 11.3, we report zero-order correlations among the countries of the world with Chinese residents between the logged population size of their overseas Chinese population and several variables reflecting the ecological characteristics mentioned above, namely, per capita GNP, percentage urban, population density per square kilometer, population size (logged), geographic area in square kilometers, and the distance in kilometers from Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong Province, the major province from which Chinese emigration historically has come (Kwong 1987; Pan 1990; Redding 1990).

The correlations in the first column of the table refer to all 148 countries in the world with 100 or more overseas Chinese in 2011; the correlations in the second column pertain to those 77 countries with overseas Chinese populations of over 5000 in 2011. Among all 148 countries, the correlations in Table 11.3 show a positive association between the logged values of the size of the overseas Chinese population and the logged values of the country's total population and its geographic area; the larger the population and the larger the geographic area of a country, the larger the number of overseas Chinese in the country. Also, the richer the country in terms of per capita GNP, the larger the number of overseas Chinese. And the farther the country is from Guangzhou, the smaller its number of overseas Chinese. We found no statistically significant correlations between the number of overseas Chinese and either percentage urban or population density.

Turning next to the relationships among those 77 receiving countries with at least 5000 overseas Chinese, we find the same results regarding the correlations between the number of overseas Chinese and the size of the host country (both population and geographic area) and the distance of the country from Guangzhou. However,

Table 11.3 Zero-order correlation coefficients between the number of overseas Chinese (logged) and six demographic and ecological characteristics: 148 and 77 countries in the world, circa 2011

Demographic/ecological Characteristics of the country	Correlation coefficients	
	148 countries	77 countries with 5 K+ Chinese
Per capita GNP	0.233**	0.090
Percent urban	0.151	0.055
Population density	0.113	0.232*
Population size (log)	0.540***	0.579***
Geographic area (square kilometers)	0.354***	0.395***
Distance (in km) from Guangzhou	-0.160*	-0.282**

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

there are two differences in the correlations for the 77 countries compared to those for all 148 countries.

First, overseas Chinese were found to be more numerous in the richer countries when we focused on all 148 countries, but when we restrict the analysis to only those 77 countries with at least 5000 overseas Chinese, the relationship becomes insignificant. This reversal in statistical significance is likely due to the fact that most of the poorer countries, i.e., those with low values of GNP and with fewer overseas Chinese, are no longer included in the analysis.

Second, when focusing on the 77 countries with at least 5000 overseas Chinese, we find a significant correlation between the number of overseas Chinese and population density per square kilometer; $r = 0.232$. The more densely populated the country, the greater the number of overseas Chinese. However, this association is highly conditioned by the extreme outlier of Singapore, the country with the fifth largest number of overseas Chinese and the highest population density of all the countries in the world. When we remove Singapore from the analysis, the correlation coefficient between the number of overseas Chinese and population density declines to a level of insignificance; $r = 0.027$.

Conclusion

Of the four main patterns of emigration from China throughout history – *Huashang*, *Huagong*, *Huaqiao*, and *Huayi* – the *Huashang* (Chinese trader) pattern is the most elementary and persevering. Much of today's global migration of Chinese is *Huashang*, and most future Chinese migrations will be *Huashang*. The second pattern, the *Huagong* (Chinese coolie), occurred in most countries from the 1840s through the 1920s and occurs very little today, as is the case regarding the third pattern, the *Huaqiao* (Chinese sojourner), which was dominant mainly for several decades after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 and was strongly tied to feelings of nationalism. The fourth pattern, the *Huayi* (Chinese descent), is a more recent phenomenon, prevalent mainly since the 1950s. It involves persons of Chinese descent who live in one foreign country and migrate to another. This pattern still occurs, albeit on a limited basis, among some Chinese in Southeast Asian countries who have migrated to countries in Western Europe in recent decades when officials have locked them out of various sectors of their economies to promote the advance of their indigenous peoples.

In our brief historical sketches of the Chinese diasporas in the three Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, and in the three Pacific countries of the United States, Canada, and Australia, one common theme is the significant amount of hostility directed against the early Chinese immigrants to these countries. Another is the recognition these days in most countries of the social and economic advantages of having large populations of Chinese living there.

The basic findings of our earlier research about the distributions of the overseas Chinese throughout the world in the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2010s indicate the

substantial growth of the Chinese diaspora, from around 27 million persons in the early 1980s to around 40 million in 2011. By 2011, the overseas Chinese population was 4.4 times larger than it was in 1948. While most overseas Chinese have always lived in Southeast Asian countries, the proportion has declined slightly in recent years.

New data for the 8 years of 2011 through 2018 on the numbers of overseas Chinese residing in the major regions of the world show that the number has increased from just over 40 million in 2011 to over 48.7 million in 2018. Data on the numbers of overseas Chinese in 2014 in the 20 countries with the largest overseas Chinese populations show that Indonesia has the largest population of overseas Chinese in the world, over 8.4 million. The United States has the fourth largest number of overseas Chinese of all the countries in the world, over 4.5 million. The other four countries featured in this chapter also have sizable representations of Chinese. Thailand has seven million overseas Chinese, the second largest of all the countries in the world. Malaysia has 6.6 million, the third largest; Canada has 1.6 million, the sixth largest; the Philippines has 1.5 million, the seventh largest; and Australia has 950,000, the eleventh largest.

Finally, we examined the characteristics of countries that may be associated with the size of their overseas Chinese populations. We found that there are more Chinese in rich than in poor countries, but the relationship loses its statistical significance when we restrict the analysis to only those countries with 5000 or more Chinese. There are more Chinese in countries with large populations and in geographically large countries. We also found solid evidence of a distance decay function in that the farther away the country is from Guangzhou, China, the smaller is its number of overseas Chinese.

Chinese emigrants began to move to other Asian countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, more than 2000 years ago. Large numbers of Chinese migrated from China to virtually every other country of the world during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As of 2018, over 48.7 million overseas Chinese resided in more than 140 countries around the world. The overseas Chinese are the minority in all countries with the exception of Singapore where they comprise just over half of the population. Slightly more than 70 percent of the overseas Chinese today live in Asia, especially in the Southeast Asian countries, and over 80 percent of the Chinese who live outside Asia reside in more developed countries. There is no reason to believe that the distribution of the overseas Chinese in the world as described in this chapter will change dramatically in the near future.

Today, the direction and magnitude of Chinese international migration are very much influenced by the migration policies of the sending and receiving countries. Three of the countries featured in this chapter, namely, Australia, Canada, and the United States, along with New Zealand, are the main receiving countries these days of Chinese immigrants. Immigration today, however, is strictly limited and enforced in most countries of the world. The growth patterns of the overseas Chinese in the years ahead will likely be more affected by international emigration and immigration policies than by the demographic processes of fertility and mortality which, for overseas Chinese, are similar to those of populations in the host countries.

The overseas Chinese population in the world in 2018 numbered almost 49 million people, a population size larger than the total population of Poland (38.4 million), Iraq (40.2 million), Uganda (44.1 million), Argentina (44.5 million), or Spain (46.7 million), and only three million smaller than South Korea (51.8 million). The Chinese diaspora is the third largest in the world, behind those of Ireland and Germany (Poston Jr. and Wong 2016). The overseas Chinese have had, and will continue to have, important and significant influences in many countries around the world, especially the six countries featured in this chapter, and are certainly not an inconsequential population.

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