Chinese Diaspora “at Home”: Mainlander Taiwanese in Dongguan and Shanghai*

Ping Lin

Abstract
While most research on migration in China focuses on the Chinese overseas, this research instead analyzes the immigration of the “Chinese”

Ping LIN is an assistant professor at the Department of Political Science, National Chung Cheng University in Taiwan. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Oxford. His research interests include migration, social stratification, and social psychology. His articles have been published in Taiwanese Political Science Review, East Asian Studies, and Journal of Population Studies.

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The main subject of this article is Mainlander Taiwanese, who were born and educated in Taiwan in the 1950s–1970s but whose parents left from Mainland China (the PRC) to Island Taiwan (the ROC) in the late 1940s. In order to make the following discussion clear, the author adopts the terms “China” and “Taiwan” to refer to “Mainland China” and “Island Taiwan,” respectively. He also adopts the terms “Chinese” and “Taiwanese” to refer to “citizens of the PRC” and “citizens of the ROC,” respectively. However, these terms do not imply any preference or expectation from the respondents or the author on the issue of China unification (or Taiwan independence) unless otherwise indicated specifically.
from Taiwan. This article uses data gathered in Dongguan and Shanghai in 2004–5 and follow-up interviews in 2008–10 to explore the experiences of Mainlander Taiwanese living in China. By examining their Chinese experience and the perceptions of the Chinese, this article argues that both the immigrants and the locals were reluctant to integrate with each other. They view one another as brothers only in name. It suggests that ethnicity is not a thing in the world but a perspective on the world formed through the daily interaction and learning process.

Introduction

While most research on migration and China focuses on the Chinese overseas, little attention has been paid to migration into China. News from the press and research findings suggest that most people moving into China are professionals exploring business opportunities. In 2004–5, it was estimated that more than 175,000 and 750,000 people from countries in the West and Taiwan, respectively, were living in China. Most of them are well educated and were hired by foreign firms. However, there is little literature on either Western professionals or the “Chinese” moving into China. Although Taiwanese people in China are by no means the largest proportion of noncitizens, their migration experience has been scantily explored. What deserves attention is that this group of people is regarded as playing a key role in the competitive election campaigns in Taiwan, which will have a certain impact on the cross-Strait relationship in the coming future. However, it is difficult to predict who they are going to vote for if we are not knowledgeable about their Chinese experiences. Because of difficulties in statistical sampling, this article focuses on only some part of this group, the Mainlander Taiwanese. They are often referred as the “pro-China” group in Taiwan (see the following discussion). Although the experiences discussed in this study refer to only this small group, they still provide us a good opportunity to “guess” how the majority of Taiwanese people with Chinese experience may vote for if we can explore their Chinese experience deeply.

Apart from the practical needs to examine the migration experiences of the Mainlander Taiwanese, this article also explores how local Chinese people perceive the arrival of Mainlander Taiwanese. How both Mainlander Taiwanese and the local Chinese people perceive each other