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Globalization and Chinese Diaspora Community

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Introduction

The Industrial revolution in 18th century has opened the door of migration. The evolution of society from Feudalism to Industrialism not merely meant the changing of the political system, yet it also represents the subversion of societal structures from the stratification to become a society that divided by its functional system. The mobility of people significantly increased, they no longer bond with a particular land, owning freewill that promote internal migration (from rural to urban) and international migration (from country to country) to fulfill the needs of industrial society. The high demand of labour force in industrialized or industrializing countries in sustaining the economic growth had resulted in an unprecedented release of people from former stratified society, left the agricultural sector and poured it into the industrial sector. Until 20th century, these developments had caused the massive movement of people that immigrated from South toward North and from East toward West², so did the Chinese community.

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² By no means to deny there do also have been mass movements of people within the country such as from rural remote areas moving to industrial areas. Besides that, the ethnonationalist conflicts created the refugees within the country as well.

The Definition of Diaspora

“The Chinese journeyed far as traders, setting up communities and preserving their customs abroad. They have been quasi-enslaved as coolie labours; they have been sojourners in foreign lands, voluntary exiles eager for repatriation; and have adopted the life and languages of the countries in which they have settled.”³

The vagueness definition of diaspora remains debatable and unsettled. Whether Chinese diaspora belongs to diaspora-as-exile or diaspora-as-diversity⁴, this shall not be the center of the paper. The paper, therefore, not involve in the theoretical perspectives and debates of diaspora, rather than defining a clear meaning that it has carried on. The term, diaspora in the paper is indicating the migratory dispersal which is including voluntary and involuntary migration, for instances, 19th century California and Australian Gold Rush, the massive immigration of Chinese from Southern provinces to Southeast Asia in the 20th century, during the tide of emigration in Hong Kong due to the fear of sovereignty handover to China in 1997 and the cosmopolitan Chinese businessmen that constantly moving around the world. The uses of diaspora and overseas Chinese are interchangeable in the paper, as both consists of similar meaning that indicating the Chinese communities outside the China.

Migration: Voluntary or Involuntary

Generally, the migration can be categorized into two aspects: voluntary and involuntary.⁵ Firstly, voluntary migration means that people decide to leave their native land in expecting of a better living. It may be a permanent relocation or temporary purpose (sojourn). Secondly, involuntary migration may be caused by natural disasters or human causes, such as draught, civil wars or ethno-nationalism movement. The involuntary immigrants have mostly been seen as refugee, living in a temporary campsite, being guarded and keeping them isolated from the host society. Nevertheless, in this paper will only concentrate with the first category as it is the type of migration that Chinese generally belongs.

³ Heibron(2003), p. Xiv.

⁴ McKeown(1999), p.311.

⁵ Tambiah(2000), p.164.

The history of Chinese diaspora can be traced back to centuries ago, a metaphorical expression in depicting the prevalence of Chinese migration “wherever ocean waves touch, there are overseas Chinese”. Prosperous, wealth and better living condition are the motivations that spurred Chinese from mainland China away from their ancestral land and travel abroad.

The frequency and quantitative of Chinese migration to Malaya peninsular had reached its peak during the British colonial period in the early 20th century. Majority of them immigrated to Southeast Asia were to fulfill the labour demands as British Colonial government required an enormous amount of human power in order to exploit the natural resources. During that time, a large proportion of the Chinese immigrants were worked in the mining sites and part of them involved themselves in the merchandising activities.

As the matter of fact, the accommodation of newcomers has always been a tricky question for a government as the immigration policy often catching the eyes of the public. Generally, the immigration policy could be differentiated into 4 different incorporation models: assimilation, exclusion, integration and multiculturalism.⁶ In some extent, the division between each model is still blurred but still worth to look into it.

Assimilation is the best well known method that applied by lots of countries in the world. The newcomers are expecting have to sacrifice their personal culture and adapt themselves into the host society by embracing and practicing the common shared culture. The salient exemplary would be the melting-pot theory that implemented in the United States before 1970s. Besides that, exclusion is relatively uncommon nowadays, by means of applying some restrictions on immigrants, such as in the working field and living area. In short, immigrants are not entirely but partially “absorbed” into the host society. The “divide and rule” that applied during the British colonial period in Malaya, it classified people along the ethnic lines and constrained each ethnic group in separate living area and occupation. Integration is the two way mutual understanding process in between host society and the immigrant community. The immigrants are entitling in the public welfare systems, granting their civil and

⁶ Tambiah(2000), pp.167-168.

political rights such as right to vote and other rights. Lastly, multiculturalism is similar with integration, it emphasizes on the preservation and tolerance of the differences of immigrants and host cultures and protects the citizen's culture rights for having their distinctive own culture.

The assimilation or integration of incorporation that enhance the likelihood of interactions between particular diaspora community with the host society. Before the revolution of communication technology, the diaspora community tend sacrificing its own culture, absorbing the host culture and literally becoming cultural indistinguishable member of society.

However, nowadays the hybridization is a more conceivable outcome. Giving up their own culture would never be a essential requirement of the diaspora community during adaptation, after the give and take, cultural exchanges often result to a "Creolization", a new form of hybrid culture which consisting host and diaspora community cultures.

"When they(Chinese Malaysian) speak Hokkien (*Min'nanhua*) to the Taiwanese, the latter may find it a bit *fan* (not so Chinese, influenced by non-Chinese); for the so-called pure Hokkien Chinese in Malaysia also use some Malay loan words like *kau-yin* (from Malay *kahwin* for "marry"), *pun* (meaning "also" in Malay) and others....."⁷

For instance, overseas Chinese understands the world differently with the Chinese mainland, the living style of Chinese American will never be the same with the Chinese communities in the Southeast Asia. The Chinese American and Chinese mainland will never possess an exactly sameness or pureness of certain culture, so to Chinese Malaysian.

After WWII, the word "assimilation" turned into a highly controversial term and embraced with a negative connotation. Moreover, the revolution of modern communication and transportation have profoundly "compressed" the world as such, the movement of people become cheaper, faster and easier nowadays. These phenomena is making assimilation even harder to achieve. In the respect that, democracy and human rights turned out to be the international recognized standards

⁷ Tan(2003), p. 42.

and both constantly stressed the freedom, equality and the minority rights such as “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community.....”⁸. And else, due to globalization, every country society more or less have inevitably added its cultural heterogeneity. Hence, multiculturalism is prevalent ideology that accepted by the international community as the “panacea” for making a perfect society. This development provides a favourable condition for the flourishing of transnational culture for the diaspora community.

As like other diaspora communities, while holding other country citizenship, the overseas Chinese still maintain its relationship with mainland Chinese in vary spheres such as money remittance, having a conjugal relationship in the homeland or “motherland”. According to an anthropologist, Tambiah ideas, this “dual territorialization” can be explained in three networks that comprise the virtual relationships with the homeland and the existential circumstances.

The first is “vertical” network indicates a network formed within the diaspora community in particular host society, in order to confront with the stereotypes and discriminations that may experience in the society. In this network, multilevel ethnic based organizations are established from local all along to the national level, aiming to protect their group rights and cultural preservation in the relatively hostile host society. At the same time, it represents a social network that using a single entity (ethnic) to consolidate the supports and resources overarching social identities, utilizing them as the bargaining chips in negotiation with the host society. The solidarity, brotherhood, or brethren is widespreaded within the ethnic group, and the race conscious can easily be observed in the everyday life. This phenomenon is far more often occurred in the country that apply assimilation and exclusion as the methods in incorporating or not incorporating the immigrants into the host society. Malaysian society is exactly constructed in this way; distrusting, misunderstanding and stereotyping between ethnic groups are still noticeable and deep-rooted, and repeatedly emphasized by the government policies and social classifications.

The second and third are belonged to “lateral” networks, networks that connecting diaspora communities and diaspora community with the “homeland”

⁸ The Declaration of Human Right, Article 27.

society. The existence of lateral transnational global networks⁹ are interconnecting the diaspora communities and the homeland of society, regardless the state boundary and distance. These connections usually happened between diaspora community with their “homeland” or in between diaspora communities themselves, can be based on personal interests or economic purpose, for instance, remitting funds, inviting investments, and establishing a kin-economic network, or involving in a long distant ethno-nationalism, since the advancement of communication technologies and air transportation has overcome the “distance” constrain. The actors in these networks are constituting individuals, families, groups, organizations and business enterprises for whom building the intertwined relations, considering other purposes more than the irrelevance of nationality and state boundaries. The exchanges and interactions among diaspora communities are likely to be happened, due to the kinship effect.¹⁰

The construction of Chinese Race and Greater China

The people with “black eyes and yellow skin”, are the physical identifications that enable overseas Chinese to assembly or recognize their Chineseness and to be categorized as Chinese descent, even though they are no longer living on China’s soil. As a Chinese, he or she is not obligated has to practice Chinese culture but merely having the Chineseness appearances.

A historian, Dikotter mentions that the emergence of Chinese race is far from 15th century. As it has been undergoing centuries of evolution to reach today situation “a race as nation”(Chinese race and China nation). The biological distinctiveness represented "racial (biological) cohesiveness that would subsume regional alliances in the face of foreign aggression"¹¹. The definition of Chinese reconstructed when the China transformed from an empire to a nation-state in 1911. The nationalism has reshaped Chinese, a previously pure racial definition by adding the nationalist sentiments “love for one’s country with for one’s race”¹². The new republic applied a

⁹ Tambiah(2000), pp.169-173.

¹⁰ Ibid p.172.

¹¹ Dikotter (1992)

¹² Louie (2000), p.650.

broader sense of nationality. It respected the existence of multicultural society that recognized 55 ethnic minorities groups in China. Therefore, overseas China “has had little difficulty identifying with this more inclusive nationalism.”¹³

An anthropologist, Andrea Louie, her article interestingly she had compiled many scholars’ arguments that offering explanations of overseas Chinese maintains their connections and cultural identity with their homeland, for instance “this is because the primordial sentiments, national unity and family pride”(Helen Siu), the “culturalistic” conceptions that pre-existed Chinese identity before modern nationalism provided the fundamental to the extension of this identity beyond the national boundary (Duara) and Goodman argues the development of Chinese nationalism encouraged the love for one’s native land is “morally excellent” and Chinese immigrants usually expressed their feeling of homeland in a nostalgic way.¹⁴ These arguments unanimously stressed the kinship effect is undoubtedly and explicitly efficient and strong. Nonetheless, the result of kinship is not an absolute as it still depends on the generation of overseas Chinese as it indicated of, the differences will be discussed in the paper later.

The idea of Greater China is still remaining ambiguous; it could be indicated as the reunification of Chinese peripheral territories particularly Taiwan, or it could be developed from the cultural perspective which consists of the overseas Chinese world around. In this paper, I will examine the Greater China from three distinguished perspectives: economic, political and cultural.¹⁵ Economic perspective always represents the prominent driving force. Political Greater China still remains as a stalemate and cultural Greater China is vagueness and uncertainty.

During the Colonization era, thousands of Chinese from southern provinces of China immigrated to Southeast Asia in seeking a better living and better economic opportunities. While most of them maintained close-knit relations with mainland China, either fund remittance to the homeland or capital inflow for the purpose of investment were expectedly exceedingly frequent and continuous. Some successful

¹³ Wong(2003), p.76.

¹⁴ Those examples were taken from Louie, Andrea article Re-Territorializing Transnationalism: Chinese Americans and the Chinese Motherland p 650, paragraph 4.

¹⁵ Wang (1993), p.929.

Chinese businessmen in Southeast Asia have been reported in the Chinese newspapers. All of them are transnational businessmen who owned their plants and offices in China. Despite they are holding other country nationalities, yet the news were framed in the way merely emphasizing their Chinese ethnicity.

Crawford describes “Economic activity is thus deeply embedded in social life and knitted together by a wide variety of norms, rules, moral obligations and other habits that together shape society; anchoring these activities are basic reciprocal understandings or conceptions of trust.”¹⁶ Under Capitalism, although the rules and regulations are similar in each country, yet the economic system still consist of a variety as the cultural differences. Social capital such as shared ethnic identity and understanding act as the lubricant in economic cooperation. The non-contractual trust among overseas Chinese is based on the nature of kinship (shared culture or ethnic identity), and “has been tempered by historic uncertainties of capitalism in Southeast Asia”.¹⁷ This kind of Chinese business networks is Chinese “tribalism” that individuals and organizations that belong to same values, beliefs and rituals incline “grouping and cooperating among themselves.”¹⁸ The Chinese community robustly concerns on *guanxi* (social connection) whereas the confidence and trust within the community are based.

At the political perspective, it is not merely concerning the establishment of an unified China. Yet it is explaining the affiliation of overseas Chinese over China as well. The developments and improvements of China’s international status have been provided the self-pride and honour to overseas Chinese. Even though, in practically China is just no more than another country but they do believe these progresses of China elevating their social status in the host society, in some extent. In Malaysia, the international section of the Chinese newspapers often flooded with the news relating to China or Taiwan developments compared with other parts of the world. As the matter of fact, the Chinese community in Malaysia may believe that their social status in Malaysian society is co-related with the status of China in the international community, especially the growing of economic power of China. As China emerged

¹⁶ Crawford(2000), p.72.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 73.

¹⁸ Yow(2005), p.562.

as one of the key players in the international affairs, the usefulness and importance of Mandarin have significantly increased which encourage the learning of Mandarin due to its economic value. The Chinese education movement in Malaysia that has been fought persistently to defend their language rights in using their mother tongue as teaching and learning resources. They have been directly benefited from this development which enhanced their bargaining power during the negotiations with the Malaysian government.

For the cultural Greater China, it indicate the adornment or be in love with the Chinese culture such as rituals, festivals, dances, paintings, history, dialects, customs and other form of Chinese cultures. The Chinese government is not the sole actor in promoting Chinese culture as it is a transnational movement that involving lots of cultural organizations in Chinese diaspora communities as well. Most of the time, the Chinese cultural activities can observe in different layers such as local, regional and international, and sometimes the non-government organizations are the organizers and some of the activities may or even no rely on the government funding but raising their funds directly from the diaspora community. The recent resurrection of Confucianism, a well-crafted movement by Chinese government that trying to promote the Confucian ideology, intentionally to establish the connection with the overseas Chinese such as setting of Confucian's School in Chinese diaspora communities. Furthermore, the translation of Chinese novels into other languages has given the opportunity for people who do not understand Chinese language to learn Chinese cultures. In some extent, cultural Greater China also means return to the Chinese traditional cultures which indicates the time before other foreign ideologies such as Communism affected the "pureness" of Chinese culture.

Discussion

Nonetheless, the impact of "kinship" caused the overseas Chinese capital inflow to China is still highly questionable. Indeed, the overseas Chinese investments in China are clearly notified in every province of China, yet the main purpose of investing in China is purely profit seeking, lured by China's a potentially enormous

consumer's market with relatively cheap labour cost; but they are certainly not contributing their capitals for non-profitable and philanthropic projects or giving a helping hand to develop Chinese economic without questioning the returns.¹⁹“A few of them may be swayed sometimes to make sentimental gestures, but all the evidence points to the hard-headed calculation of profit behind their every move.”²⁰ The kinship is barely a sentimental instrument that manipulated by overseas Chinese businessmen, in order to lubricate their investment projects in Chinese market.

Furthermore, most of the overseas Chinese investments were flowed into China after Chinese government decided to incorporate the market economic system in 1978. Yet the real difference happened in 1990, after Chinese government genuinely devoted itself in market economic system.²¹ It was a striking change with the means of China eventually has participated in the global systems. As China attached itself in the global systems which are well understood by the businessmen from other countries, in the meantime this has given familiarity and confidence for others to invest in China. Foreign investors, irrespective of ethnicity, however, will immediately pull out their investments if the economic conditions of China deteriorate during civil disorder or the outbreak of intense power struggling either in the central or the province government occurred.²²

Would the time change the attitude of Chinese diaspora over China? How about the younger generation, do they inherent the nostalgic feeling from the forefather? According Wong's arguments, the sentiments will preserve as the Chinese diaspora resisting the assimilation and deciding to protect the Chinese identity in the host society. Furthermore, this is also depended on the attitude of the host society: discriminatory approaches agitating the ingroups and outgroups bias in the ethnic groups, restrained the interactions between ethnic groups that resulted in the younger generation may still proud of their ethnic identity same as their forefather. On the other hand, an openness, generous and inclusiveness of the host society that treating immigrants with equal rights make the importance of ethnicity slowly fading.

¹⁹ 洪嘉泽(2009), 34.

²⁰ Wong,(1993), p. 931.

²¹ Ibid, p. 930.

²² Ibid, p. 931.

In my opinion, the significance of economic effect in shaping the ethnic identity cannot be ignored. As a diaspora community in the developed country which has provided immigrants a relatively comfortable social conditions and economic advantages, created a favourable conditions to ameliorate immigrants' anxiety. As a result, they willing to sacrifice their own culture and embrace the culture of the host society, an exemplary case is Chinese American who generally enjoys a well-off social condition. Contrary, the immigrants may decide to remain their Chinese ethnicity if those differences are irrelevant. Also, overseas Chinese may keep their ethnicity merely intends to distinguish themselves with the host society. This phenomenon occurs when diasporic community is enjoying a higher socioeconomic status in the host society, for instance, the education and economic achievements of Chinese Malaysian relatively superior to other ethnic groups, therefore, Chinese Malaysian feels self-proud of being Chinese, yet this has nothing affiliated with their homeland, China. The sense of honour is caused by the superiority of social status they enjoyed in the host society regardless of the biological or physical identification.

Preserving Chinese as an ethnicity by no means less integrated into the national society. Practicing Chinese cultures does not means less Malaysian, in fact they "will feel quite offended if their loyalty to the country is questioned". The ignorant comments from China's personnel that asking Chinese Malaysian shall show their loyalty to Malaysia have been seen as unacceptable insults for who have identified with Malaysian society.²³ In international events or other country, the overseas Chinese will insist the differentiation of himself or herself with mainland Chinese, while clarify the misunderstanding or the confusion in between the "Chinese as ethnicity" and "Chinese as nationality".

From my point of view, the cultural Greater China indeed is a powerful idea that successfully establishing the connections between Chinese diaspora communities with China. For instances, setting a specific category of the scholarship or subsidiaries has been allocated by Chinese and Taiwanese governments that only entitled by "huaqiao" (overseas Chinese), who are willing come to China and Taiwan to further his or her studies. Also, the exposure trips to China or summer camps organized by

²³ Tan (2003), p54.

Chinese or Taiwanese governments, which have been frequently used as instruments to attract the overseas Chinese investments and promote the Chinese cultures. Meanwhile, The establishments of Chinese organizations and organizing the Chinese traditional festivals in the diaspora communities more or less have awakened and intensified the sense of ethnicity.

Nevertheless, as culture reshaped by everyday experiences, it is impossible for anyone or anywhere to proclaim the lineal of certain origin of culture. This is exactly for Chinese culture, as under the impact of globalization, the living style in China have been embedded with “alien” elements. It would never be the alike with hundred years before. Therefore, although the exposure trips and summer camps are aiming to inculcate Chinese cultures into the mind of oversea Chinese, but most of the times they usually have failed to achieve its original objectives. Appadurai describes that globalization has created transnational movements. People, cultures, capital and other aspects that distributing the information to the migrants.²⁴ The overseas Chinese always portray an imaginary China even he or she has ever set foot on China’s soil before. These anticipations also occur among the participants; However, while the imagination not in concert with the reality, the participants felt disappointed and demystified once they realized that China is merely a developing country which alike other modern city. In the other hand, during the observations and interactions with overseas Chinese participants, it has also reshaped the perceptions of mainland Chinese, demystifying the fantasy of living abroad. These phenomena are known as “re-territorializing”.²⁵

Conclusion

The globalization is not a new phenomenon as it can be dated back to the 18th century French Enlightenment, the spreading of equality, nationality and citizenship in the Europe. The new factors creating the uniqueness of globalization in twenty century would be the advancement of sciences and technologies which have

²⁴ Appadurai(1996).

²⁵ Summaried from Louie, Andrea article *Re-Territorializing Transnationalism: Chinese Americans and the Chinese Motherland*, conclusion part pp.661-662

profoundly changed human lifestyle: the innovation of Internet that connecting all the information from every part of the world has enhanced the knowledge accessibility of people through the information sharing. And, the revolution of telecommunications such as telephone, facsimile and to more recent the video conversation, these innovations have intensely accelerated the speed of information transfer and resolved the geographical constrain. It would be justifiable for saying the revolution of technology doubtless is the key factors that stimulate the emergences of transnationalism.

Referring to Lounie argues the transnational movements do “re-territorialized” people by demystified the imagination of life abroad, understanding that living abroad is not a fairly tale but as realistic as living in native land. Interestingly, compressions of space and time have given humankind the possibility to understand the culture from distance.

As culture is continuously constructed by the interactions of people behaviours and with the surrounding environment, every culture consist of its unique characteristics categorize as subcultures. Therefore, the evolution of culture will never be finished until the day it has been wiped out entirely due to its incompatibility for the environment.

The Chinese immigrants brought their “exotic” culture into the host society. Under different immigrant policy, some of the them have gone through assimilation, willingly or unwillingly giving up their own culture identity, utterly embrace the host society culture. Some of the Chinese diaspora community able to preserve their cultural identity in relatively tolerated host society. Nevertheless, the diaspora community cultures in each different countries constitute their own distinctiveness which caused by decades of interactions with host cultures and surrounding environments. The cultural adaptation and hybridization are inevitably happened.

In the birth land of Chinese culture, China is also inescapable from the impacts of globalization; the tourism, information and knowledge exchanges and foreign investments, all these accompany with “alien” cultures that have been continuously affecting the Chinese culture from time to time. Hence, the “pureness” of Chinese

culture may only preserve in the museums or the nostalgic memory of the older generation.

In the other hand, The “kinship” shall not be the main reason or primary motivation for overseas Chinese to begin their investments in China. As the matter of fact, kinship barely represent a tool in the business negotiation, yet the revenues and profits are always the golden rules of the investments. The large scale implementation of “market socialism” in 1990, identifying the compliance of Chinese government in the international economic rules and regulations that offering a familiar platform or game plan for foreign investors to pour in their capitals into China’s market.

Nevertheless, this is no denying the fact that the familiarity for people who are having a same culture and the social connection “*guanxi*”. Nevertheless, it is just to be caution the overstressed of the “kinship effect”, at the meantime highlighting the diversity of culture. Even though people belong to the same culture, yet they still consist of differences as they are come from different countries or different cities which constantly influenced by its unique environment, such as speaking the same language with different ascent and celebrating a festival with different rites. In some circumstances, the understanding is due to the association rather than cultural belonging, the closeness of people of the same culture may be much lesser than people that having different culture, for instance the resonance between Chinese Malaysian with Chinese American may be insignificant compare Malay Malaysian which shares the same society.

As the transnationalism increased the people’s mobility, but it does not mean the total “deterritorialization”. In the host society, Chinese ethnicity perhaps significantly needed for social division. Nevertheless, when it reaches beyond the host society, ethnic identity will be overruled by nationality serves as a purpose for differentiating overseas Chinese with mainland Chinese. The overseas Chinese understand the similarity and diversity among them, “we are all Chinese” stressing the amity of Chinese with a different nationality, the Chinese mainland may say “we are all zhongguoren”, yet Chinese in Southeast Asia more likely express in “we are all

huaren”(indicate Chinese ethnicity), averting “zhonguoren” which carry the meaning of Chinese nationality.²⁶

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²⁶ Tan (2003) p.53.

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