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INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
NATIONAL CHENGCHI UNIVERSITY, TAIPEI, TAIWAN (ROC)

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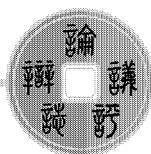
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Private Enterprise Development in a One-Party Autocratic State: The Case of Alibaba Group in China's E-Commerce

FU LAI TONY YU

This study attempts to explain China's industrial development with special reference to e-commerce. It argues that in a one-party autocratic regime such as China, the collaboration between government officials and private entrepreneurs in strategic industries can promote industrial growth. Since Internet can jeopardize communist party's goal of maintaining cohesiveness and absolute political power, the Chinese government has imposed surveillance on private operation in all IT operations. Specifically, in e-commerce industry, through collaborations with private enterprises, the communist party can "kill two birds in one arrow." On the one hand, party members are able to preserve national security and maintain social and financial stability by closely monitoring the private enterprise operation. Moreover, party members can seize tangible and non-tangible benefits from the growth in e-commerce firms. On the other hand, private e-commerce enterprises, by building close connection with public officials and senior party members, can obtain strong support from the government, and thus boosting its business growth. This argument is applied to explain the miraculous growth of Alibaba Group, a private e-commerce enterprise in China. In particular, the paper attempts to show the relationship between the Chinese government and the private entrepreneur in the e-business development and how their collaboration enhances growth in the Internet market.

KEYWORDS: China's e-commerce; Alibaba Group; Jack Ma; government and business collaboration.

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China is a latecomer in Internet adoption, with its Internet involvement dating back to 1994 (Jiang, 2012). Few in the early 1990s would predict that China could become a gigantic Internet market. However, by 2013, China had the world's largest Internet population and cellphone subscribers, making it a highly attractive market in the world (China Internet Network Information Center, 2013).

E-commerce emerges in China in the 1990s and experiences rapid growth after 2008. According to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (China e-commerce market, 2017), China's e-commerce market reached a sales record of 26.1 trillion yuan (3.82 trillion US dollars) in 2016, accounting for nearly 40% of the world's total. The number of online shoppers in China reached 467 million at the end of 2015, or 63.8% of Internet users. Placing orders online via mobile phones reached 441 million at the end of 2016, taking up 63.4% of total mobile Internet users (Lee, 2017). China's cross-border e-commerce has also maintained a strong growth rate. Cross-border e-commerce sales was estimated to be 259 billion yuan (around 40 billion US dollars) in 2015. From 2008 to 2016, its turnover grows from 800 billion yuan (around 123 billion US dollars) to 6.5 trillion yuan (around 1 trillion US dollars) (International Trade Centre [ITC], 2016).

The explosive growth of China's e-commerce sector over the past year is said to be the result of fast expansion of Alibaba, Tmall.com and JD.com (Lee, 2017).¹

Given that the Chinese government has aggressively regulated China's information superhighways (Jiang, 2012), the miracle performance in China's Internet market in general and e-commerce in particular begs for an answer.

Free market economists often argue that capitalist regimes such as the United States, with private property rights, are a preferred system in promoting industrial growth. However, China is not a capitalist regime as the US. It is a nation in which the authoritarian government tightly controls her economy. We may refer the economic system of China as "state capitalism" (X. Li, Liu, & Wang, 2015). As we can observe, China with a one-party autocratic government can also achieve economic growth in general and e-commerce in particular in the last decades. Her economic achievement arouses a lot of attention from scholars in economic development. The neoclassical growth theorists, though equipped with sophisticated optimization and quantitative techniques, are unable to explain satisfactorily why one-party autocratic China has been able to achieve impressive growth in e-commerce.

Alibaba Group has been hailed as almost single-handedly brought e-commerce to China (Clover, 2014; ITC, 2016). Using Alibaba Group as illustration, this paper attempts to explain how the Chinese government promotes its e-business, resulting in a

¹Tmall is a spin-off from Alibaba and JD.com is backed by another Chinese IT giant Tencent.

striking growth in China's Internet market. This paper aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) How does the Chinese government govern private enterprises in the e-commerce so that the industry can be advanced?
- (2) How do the Chinese government officials strategically collaborate with the private entrepreneur, Jack Ma of the Alibaba Group, in developing its e-commerce?
- (3) How does Jack Ma expand Alibaba's e-business given that e-commerce in China is tightly controlled?

This paper will first explain the role of the Chinese government in China's e-commerce development. It will then argue that the Chinese government on the one hand imposes a tight control on e-commerce development, and on the other hand, allows its party members and public officials to collaborate with private entrepreneurs in e-commerce. By doing so, the state can preserve national and financial security and, at the same time, party members and government officials can exploit benefits from the e-commerce growth in China. Due to the support of government, private enterprises too can expand their businesses rapidly. It is envisaged that the story of Alibaba can be used to explain the success of another China's IT giant, namely Tencent, in e-trading businesses.

Methods of the Chinese Government to Promote Enterprises and Economic Growth

This study argues that the primary goal of the Chinese government, as a one-party state, is to preserve the communist party's cohesiveness and absolute political power so that members of the ruling party can exploit pecuniary or non-pecuniary benefits from their exclusive privilege. In order to achieve this goal, the communist party strives to secure national security, maintain social stability and harmony, as well as attain good economic performance. Hence, markets are carefully regulated and governed. Chinese leaders steer the direction of economic growth. In general, there are three major ways for Beijing leaders to enhance national economic growth, but at the same time, maintaining the party's survival. First, the government can take the full responsibility for certain production. This is done by state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Second, some enterprises are chosen to operate as state holding enterprises and third, it allows private enterprises to operate but under strict government control. The choice of a method depends on the nature of the industry. For instance, some productions exhibit

strategic significance, such as national defense and crude oil. Then, they are owned and operated solely by the state. Some industries yield impressive revenues for the state, and others allow government officials to engage in rent-seeking. Depending on the government's goals and the nature of the industry, state involvement in industries can be classified as follows (Mattlin, 2009):

- (A) **Key strategic industries²:** These industries involve national security such as national defense, armaments, electrical power, oil and chemicals, telecommunications, coal, aviation and shipping. For these industries, the government maintains 100% state ownership or absolute control via SOEs.
- (B) **Basic and pillar industries:** These industries influence peoples' livelihood and economic prosperity. This category includes water, basic foods, steel, public utilities, dairy goods, construction and heavy machinery. The state takes controlling stakes in these industries.
- (C) **Other industries:** These industries have no strategic significance to the national goals directly but can provide a source of tax revenue or rent-seeking potential to public officials. Examples are luxurious goods, real estate, health products, machinery and automotives. Though these industries are left to the private sector, they are under general surveillance by the state.³

The significance of SOEs in China's economic reform are well documented in the literature (L. Y. Chen, 2013; H. Fan, 2014; Hubbard & Williams, 2014; X. Li et al., 2015; Liou, 2014; Mattlin, 2009). The focus of our paper is on the e-commerce enterprises which are non-state-owned. It is generally agreed that information flow via websites news, cyber social network or chatroom can impose huge threats to China's national security, and therefore needs to be carefully developed and monitored. It is also argued that e-commerce such as online shopping does not result in the same security problems to the Chinese government as those cyber social networks. However, e-shopping to some extents can jeopardize national security because it can conduct illegal transactions and deprive the government's monopoly position in the financial sector. Some of the potential threats of e-commerce to the Chinese economy include:

²Strategically important sectors are defined by Li Rongrong, Chairman of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (SASAC), as "the vital arteries of the national economy and essential to national security." They were armaments, electrical power and distribution, oil and chemicals, telecommunications, coal, aviation and shipping. These sectors accounted for around a quarter of central state-owned enterprises at the time, three quarters of their assets and 79% of their profits (China defines key, 2006).

³X. Li et al. (2015) argue that "SOEs monopolize key upstream industries (strategic industries), whereas downstream industries (non-strategic industries) are largely open to private competition."

- Transaction of illegal products such as drugs, weapons, pornography, political books and magazines, fireflies and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) software⁴;
- Tax evasion and money laundering;
- Transactions bypassing the Central Bank, hence, depriving China's monopoly situation in monetary and financial systems (e.g., Alipay, see below);
- Product safety and online shopping cheating.

Online shopping is in many ways similar to the traditional transaction in the market. For example, both kinds of shopping can involve the possibility of cheating, fake products or dishonest sales. Both sellers may attempt to conduct tax evasion or sell illegal drugs, pets or porn magazines. However, there are some essential differences between the two. First, Internet shopping can conduct transactions by anonymous parties without revealing real names or faces.⁵ Martinsons (2008, pp. 338–339) argues that e-commerce “increases worries about counterfeiting since sellers can remain anonymous or provide false identities and goods cannot be inspected physically.” Second, online shopping allows people to obtain certain products such as fireflies or VPN that are not available or forbidden in China. H. Yu (2005, pp. 652–657) rightly argues that e-commerce “suppresses time and place limits.” Third, compared to the traditional shopping, the e-commerce can preserve a more complete record of each transaction. However, if the e-commerce vendor does not disclose its transaction records to the public or government, there is no way that the trading parties to be known. Hence, the Chinese government will take this problem into its regulatory framework and only support an e-company that is willing to disclose its data to the government. It will be shown later in this paper that Alibaba is more willing to cooperate with the Chinese government than other e-commerce vendors by showing its sincerity of working with the government in practices. Hence, Alibaba has been favored by the government. Third, transaction via Internet involves cross-border or domestic payment that can circumvent the central bank, hence, influencing domestic monetary system.⁶ For example, people can buy investment funds and insurance via Alibaba's Zhao Cao Bao (see Appendix A).

⁴Chinese citizens circumvent China's censorship system, known as the Great Firewall, by using a VPNs app, allowing unfettered access to any website. The tool allows users to encrypt traffic, circumvent censorship and experience the Internet exactly as people in the US. The Chinese authorities have recently issued a warning to the nation's top e-commerce platforms over the sale of illegal VPNs that allow users to skip state censorship controls. Five websites in China have been asked to carry out immediate “self-examination and correction” to remove vendors that sell illegal VPNs (Cadell, 2017).

⁵On December 28, 2012, the Chinese government requires that all Internet users to use real names (National People's Congress of the PRC, 2012).

⁶See the section on “Government Control of E-Commerce in China” for further elaboration.

Martinsons (2008, p. 337) rightly argues that e-commerce “makes it more difficult for state officials to restrict the business activities of ‘untrustworthy’ people (based upon social origin or status) arbitrarily or to manipulate government records.”

In sum, comparing to traditional shopping, Internet transaction can easily by-pass government’s surveillance, conducting criminal activities and threatening social and financial stability.

Facing these problems, of course, the central government can establish an SOE in e-commerce by itself so that the business can be directly monitored. However, the government may not have the entrepreneurial capabilities to develop a new business. Therefore, it has to rely on private entrepreneurs who are able to identify new opportunities and transfer western technological skills to China. Since e-commerce can pose a threat to economic security and financial stability in China, therefore, it has to be kept under state surveillance if it is allowed to be developed in the private sector. In this situation, it is necessary to investigate how the public and private sectors collaborate to develop e-business in China. Specifically, we examine the incentives for public officials and private entrepreneurs in the enterprise collaboration.

Incentives for Public Officials and Private Entrepreneurs in E-Business Collaboration in China

X. Li et al. (2015) argue that in China, non-strategic industries are open to private competition. It is observed that e-commerce in China is largely explored by private entrepreneurs such as Jack Ma of Alibaba and Richard Liu of Tencent and JD.com, and grows under government surveillance. When these e-businesses grow and become successful, public officials or party members will engage in them by holding some shares of the company. As a result of the public and private collaboration, the business will grow even bigger. Hence, both sides will enjoy even larger share of the pie as the e-commerce market grows. In this section, we examine the kinds of incentives for both party members and private entrepreneurs so that both sides are willing to promote the industry. Public and private collaboration can create a win-win situation for both parties involved. On the one hand, government officials can obtain, apart from achieving the goal of national security, direct and indirect benefits from private enterprise growth. On the other hand, entrepreneurs, in collaborating with the governments, can get a green light to expand new businesses. With the support from government officials, political uncertainty can be reduced.

Incentives for Public Officials Engaging in Public–Private Business Collaboration

When the government involves in private business, public officials can obtain tangible and intangible benefits. As argued by the Public Choice School, government officials' primary interests center on developing their own political careers. Accordingly, the top priority of a government official is to please superordinate officials (Sheng, Zhou, & Li, 2011). As a public official, if he or she has done a good job in monitoring e-business through the collaboration, and at the same time, helping boost industrial growth, then he or she will be promoted. Furthermore, public officials can obtain pecuniary or non-pecuniary benefits in the forms of graft, bribes, rent-seeking or prebendalism⁷ (Lü, 2000, p. 14).

Regarding the function of corruption in economic growth, C. S. Fan and Grossman (2001) argue that “corruption . . . serves as a method of compensation that both satisfies the political objectives of the Communist Party and provides an effective inducement to local officials to promote economic reform.”

Apart from corruption, what are the reasons for the Chinese government officials to select and cooperate with a certain private firm? This study identifies four main reasons. They are

- (A) **Trustworthy and loyalty:** H. Li, Meng, Wang, and Zhou (2008, p. 284) argue that “in an environment in which skepticism, mistrust, and discrimination toward private enterprises abound, business–government collaboration emphasizes much on trustworthiness.” In a one-party autocratic state, the Chinese government officials will only support a private enterprise which is trustworthy. It will be shown later that Jack Ma's Alibaba is loyal and trustworthy in government and party officials' eyes.
- (B) **Building up a national enterprise that can go global:** A private enterprise will receive special attention and support from the Chinese government if the enterprise is able to establish a global brand name (see Liou, 2014; Luo, Xue, & Han, 2010; Somaney, 2015). It will be shown that Alibaba possesses huge potential to go global.

⁷Graft is often referred to as bribery. It involves something of value given to, and accepted by, public officials for dishonest or illegal purposes. Rent-seeking refers to the case that public officials, through granting a license or monopoly to their clients, get “rents,” i.e., earning as a result of a restricted market. Prebendalism means that public and private business collaboration enables government officials to turn those enterprises into “resource banks” where interests can be drawn. Prebendal corruption needs not to be monetary gains, but may include usurpation of official privilege, backdoor deals, clientelism, cronyism, and nepotism.

- (C) **A learning government**⁸: At the early stage of Internet development, the Chinese government also needs to learn the new technology. The Chinese government can learn from private firms which are on the forefront of Internet technology. As will be illustrated later, Alibaba's story implies a successful strategy: educating the Chinese government and changing the perceptions of government officials while abiding by the government's regulations (Hu, Wu, & Wang, 2004, p. 305).
- (D) **Jumping on the bandwagon**: Seeing that a certain private enterprise performs well in domestic and global markets, government agents and Princelings⁹ want to join the game to share the pie, either through formal shareholding or corruption.

These reasons explain why a private enterprise such as Alibaba is selected by the Chinese government officials to collaborate with.¹⁰

Benefits to Entrepreneurs in Public–Private Enterprise Collaboration

In a one-party autocratic regime such as China, doing business involves high risk and political uncertainty due to power struggle of the communist party and lack of rule of law. To tackle with uncertainty, private entrepreneurs build up good connections with public officials or what is commonly known as political *guanxi*.¹¹ Shum (2007, p. 20) argues that *guanxi* with the government allows businessmen to reduce asymmetric information, and business risk can be lowered. For example, from the late 1980s to early 1990s, the central government enforced policies with the aim to restrict the development of private sectors. Many private firms continued to survive in the form of “red hat.”¹² The permit and favor from the local government were gained through the collaborative relationship, i.e., good *guanxi*, between the local authorities and entrepreneurs (Ma, 2009, p. 85).

Kung and Ma (2018, p. 41) argue that “in a weak property rights environment, many private business owners devote time and money to developing political connections with the government — a version of the general practice known as cultivating *guanxi* or personal ties in China. In return, they seek business favors such as looser

⁸For a theory of learning government, see F. L. T. Yu (2008).

⁹“Princelings” refer to sons and daughters of high-ranking leaders in China. Some of the leaders were the founders of the People's Republic of China. Due to the contribution of these leaders, their offspring are always respected and play important roles in business and political affairs.

¹⁰It can be asserted that these reasons also hold true for Tencent, another e-business giant in China.

¹¹For a model of building up *guanxi* in China, see X. P. Chen (2004).

¹²That is, declare themselves belonging to the socialist camp.

regulation and easier access to bank loans. Stated differently, political connections serve as a substitute for the missing or weak property rights.”

Guanxi with public officials also allows business people an access to limited supply of goods and services such as rare soils, electricity, fuels and energies. When the government is a contractor or buyer, entrepreneurs who have guanxi with the government can be listed in qualified bidders. They can have the special privilege to be the only qualified supplier. There are quite a number of advantages of being a supplier of government. Not only can they get resources, but also earn government subsidy. Entrepreneurs can sell goods at state-subsidized price. H. Li et al. (2008) find that party members in China assist Chinese firms to obtain loans from banks and other state institutions if these firms already establish political connection with them. Martinsons (2008, p. 337) rightly argues that “state bureaus and government officials have traditionally used their discretionary power to authorize/support or forbid/hinder commerce. Consequently, business people in economies like China cultivate government patrons in order to access state-controlled resources and protect themselves from bureaucratic interference.”

One important method to build up a good guanxi with public officials is through bribery. Entrepreneurs bribe government officials to seek “improper benefits,” which “include: (a) benefits from a state functionary which would be a breach of law, regulations, administrative rules, or policies for that state functionary to provide; or (b) requesting a state functionary, to breach the law, regulations, administrative rules or policies to provide assistance or facilitating conditions” (Palmer & Jing, 2014, p. 78).¹³ In finance, C. S. Fan and Grossman (2001, pp. 199–200) argue that bribes might be paid to government officials by entrepreneurs for access to credit. Government officials act as the equivalent of a board of directors and provide what entrepreneurs need. Then new products, ideas, and technology can be developed. In the following sections, we shall use our framework to explain the development of Alibaba in China.

Government Control of E-Commerce in China

Saich (2000, pp. 208–228) points out that the information revolution and the Internet in particular threaten the communist party’s monopoly over the flow of

¹³The benefits which private businesses obtained from bribing public officials can be seen from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s survey (2014). According to the survey, bribes were paid to public officials in China in order to obtain public procurement contracts (57%), clearance of customs procedures and travel visa (13%), favorable tax treatment (6%), obtaining a license or other form of authorization (6%), access to confidential information (4%) and other preferential treatments (15%).

information in China. Although e-commerce such as online shopping is not as politically sensitive as search engines (e.g., Google or Baidu), web news, or cyber social networking (such as chatroom, Facebook or Twitter) in terms of national security, the Chinese authority is well aware that Internet shopping can pose potential risks to national and financial stability in the forms of criminal activities or money laundering. The Chinese government has adopted a two-pronged approach to e-commerce development. On the one hand, it has enthusiastically supported the development of e-commerce in order to maximize its potential for national development. On the other hand, it has devoted huge resources in IT to ensure that e-commerce industry follows a “healthy” development according to the government guidelines (Jones, 2014, p. 2).

In China, the Telecommunications Regulations of the People’s Republic of China (announced on September 25, 2000) stipulate the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology to regulate all telecommunications-related activities, including e-commerce. On the same day, “Administrative Measures on Internet Information Services” sets out the first administrative regulation to address profit-generating activities conducted through the Internet, and lay the foundation for future regulations governing e-commerce in China (China Internet Information Center, 2010). On August 28, 2004, the Electronic Signature Law, which regulates data message, electronic signature authentication and legal liability issues becomes a milestone in China’s electronic commerce legislation. In 2013, the National People’s Congress (NPC) initiated legislations to promote e-commerce and regulate the market (F. Fan, 2016).

In December 2016, China drafts E-commerce Law which applies to e-commerce activities occurring within China or activities involving the participation of e-commerce operators or customers who are within China. Hence, a foreign website that targets Chinese customers, or a foreign platform that allows Chinese sellers to trade on it, will also fall into the regulatory regime of the Draft Law (CMS Laws, 2017).¹⁴

The Chinese government also notices that the current e-commerce mechanism can bypass the central bank’s clearing system, making it difficult for the government to

¹⁴The Draft differentiates “3rd party e-commerce platforms operators” such as Taobao from “other e-commerce operators” (which would include vendors residing on Taobao). A platform operator is required to “(1) examine and supervise the operational activities of other e-commerce operators residing on its platform; (2) formulate and publish fair and clear rules for transactions conducted through its platform; (3) take necessary measures to provide stable and secure platform services, and keep operation records properly; and (4) establish credit evaluation mechanisms, emergency response mechanisms, mechanisms for a vendor to terminate its trading activities through the platform, and other necessary mechanisms” (CMS Laws, 2017).

track and monitor the capital flow of those payments, leaving rooms for money laundering and other illegal activities. In 2017, China's central bank establishes a nationwide clearing house for all online payment services. The central bank instructs these online payment services to route their transactions via the new platform by October 15, 2017 (Zhang, 2017).

Tight government control on IT in general and online shopping in particular have created a fertile ground for home-grown firms to fill the void in satisfying the needs of Chinese users (Tai & Lin, 2015). The rise of the Alibaba Group, a gigantic e-commerce company in China, is a good example.

The Alibaba Group: An Introduction

The Alibaba Group (thereafter Alibaba) is one of the three largest private e-commerce companies in China.¹⁵ In 2014, Alibaba's market value exceeded 253.4 billion US dollars, ranking top among all China Internet companies. The Group was set up in 1999 by Jack Yun Ma (thereafter Ma).¹⁶ The slogan of Alibaba Group is to "make it easy to do business anywhere." The Group provides "technology and services to enable consumers, merchants, and other participants to conduct commerce in our ecosystem."¹⁷ Specifically, Alibaba operates "leading online and mobile marketplaces in retail and wholesale trade, as well as cloud computing and other services." It provides sales platform for business to consumer (B2C), business to business (B2B) and consumer to consumer (C2C). Alibaba operates four main e-businesses similar to those services provided by Amazon, eBay and Paypal. They are Taobao, Alipay, Yu'E Bao and Zhao Cao Bao (see Appendix A).

Born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province in 1964, Ma obtained his bachelor degree in English in Hangzhou Normal University and became an English teacher. Prior to 1995, e-business was virtually unknown to most Chinese.¹⁸ As Yu Xiaohong (Ma's partner) comments, "at that time, the concept of the Internet was foreign to the Chinese

¹⁵The other two largest Internet companies in China are Tencent and Baidu, with market value 135.50 billion US dollars and 80.32 billion US dollars, respectively, in 2014 ("Top 20 China," 2015). In particular, Alibaba and Tencent have empowered the development of digital trading in China, making the country the largest e-commerce market globally in recent years (Lec, 2017).

¹⁶Jack Ma reaches the top of the wealth list in Hurun Report (Snyder, 2014). He was also selected as a representative of Chinese Communist Party National 17th Congress in e-commerce industry.

¹⁷See <<http://www.alibabagroup.com/cn/about/overview>> (accessed on August 12, 2015).

¹⁸On Ma's first trip to the US in 1995, a friend in Seattle showed him the Internet, Ma typed the word "China" and "beer" through Yahoo search. However, he could not find any information. He decided to do something on it (Barboza, 2005).

people — people had no idea and no reaction when we introduced them to the idea” (Barboza, 2014). However, Ma saw that there is an enormous potential to introduce Internet in China to bridge businesses across huge population. In other words, Ma perceived e-business a big profit opportunity in China. Ma started his business by setting up a small website called “China Yellow Pages.” With a small capital of only 50,000 yuan¹⁹ (Beh, 2013), the firm faced a keen competition from Hangzhou Telecom, a state-owned corporation in China. In 1996, “China Yellow Pages” was forced to form a joint venture with Hangzhou Telecom. The deal put the government firmly in charge. As a result, Ma lost control of his company in 1997 (Barboza, 2014). Although Ma’s first business was thwarted, he gained experiences of how to deal with the government officials.

The Success of Alibaba: Building up Guanxi with the Chinese Government

This paper highlights Ma’s ability to deal with the Chinese government and comply with the government regulations as one of the most important factors for Alibaba’s success. China is a latecomer in e-commerce. With a huge market potential in China, many top American e-commerce companies, namely Yahoo, eBay and Amazon tried to penetrate China’s market but none of them succeeded. While there are many reasons for their failures in China, according to Shawn Mahoney, managing director of the EP China consulting group, “it’s a lack of understanding of the legal and cultural environment that leads to most failures” (Carlson, 2013). American e-business companies which transplant from the US have failed in China because they are unfamiliar with Chinese government policies (Grau, 2007; Martinsons, 2008, p. 239). Their failures in China have been attributed, at least partly, to poor relationships with the authorities (Bradsher, 2006) or inability to address challenges from Chinese authorities (Wang & Ren, 2012).

Specifically, the closure of eBay’s online site in China highlights the importance of political connections. For years, the Chinese authorities have censored or intervened foreign Internet companies that target on the Chinese market, especially those competing with existing domestic Chinese suppliers. eBay lacked the political influence to fully implement its payment service. On the other hand, Alibaba is familiar

¹⁹This is very small when compared to China Telecom’s capital of 240 million yuan.

with the Chinese regulatory environment (Minter, 2015). Alibaba builds up good relationship with the government, and hence its Taobao business rapidly gained C2C market share from eBay by enabling potential buyers and sellers to communicate directly and establish personal trust with an embedded instant-messaging service (Martinsons, 2008, pp. 345–346).

Without *guanxi* with the government, a western firm entering China is like entering an abyss. This is also the case for Amazon, an online shopping guru from the US. Of course, there are quite a number of reasons for Amazon's failure in China. First of all, Amazon is an American company which is distrusted by the Chinese government. We may refer this failure as an "original sin." Second, Amazon is unable to develop a B2C or C2C platform with Chinese characteristics. In other words, Amazon's service does not suit the taste of Chinese customers.²⁰ Most of all, as a giant foreign company, Amazon is unable and/or unwilling to deal with the Chinese government in the Chinese way! Hossain (2016) concludes that "China's regulated market environment has censored and deterred foreign companies from entering for decades. This, in addition to the (market) constraints . . . does make it a hard case for Amazon's survival in the Chinese market in the long run." This study will illustrate how a Chinese entrepreneur such as Ma makes a difference.

As noted previously, a latecomer in IT, the Chinese government is eager to have a Chinese company breaking into the world's technology elite circle (Liou, 2014; Luo et al., 2010). It wants to build up a national enterprise that can go global. The success of Alibaba highlights the value of the support from the Chinese government. Alibaba's dramatic rise has been made possible by China's IT policies that have made the country a very inhospitable place for US companies. The policies also provide local firms such as Alibaba with plenty of rooms they need to become a global player. As a result, Alibaba had an unimpeded entry into the world's largest e-commerce market and it will continue to grow without challenge from American competition (Einhorn, 2014). As Lynch (2014) comments,

Ma got into the Internet when no one in China was yet able to envision its power. And that is what makes Ma so impressive — his ability to see, before anyone else did, how the Internet would reshape China's commerce . . . Alibaba could not succeed in China without the approval of the Chinese government.

²⁰Rein (2012) argues that American giants including Amazon did not localize business strategies and models enough to account for local conditions. In other words, localization matters. The Chinese understand the Chinese fully well. What were true for American netizens were not necessarily true for Chinese. Specifically, Amazon does not focus on improving technologies adapting to the Chinese users.

Expansion of Alibaba by Tapping on Foreign Technologies

In the following sections, we shall examine how Ma built up his Alibaba empire. At the beginning, Alibaba was weak in technological base. It needed to tap on foreign technologies by working with international giants. Mathews (2006) argues that the international expansion of multinationals from emerging economies such as China is driven by resource linkage (L), leverage (L) and learning (L). Alibaba's strategic connection with foreign firms is consistent with Mathews' LLL framework. Given a huge market potential in China's e-commerce, many foreign investors took interest in Alibaba with the aim to share a spoonful of profit in China's unexploited Internet market. With the support of foreign investors, Ma's Alibaba could learn and acquire advanced technology that China did not possess at that time. As a result, Alibaba has been able to prove itself as an excellent learner.

Investment from Goldman Sachs: The First International Link

Ma felt that his competitors were not only in China, but also from California's Silicon Valley. As Ma puts it, "we may be fighting for the Chinese market, but what we're doing here is truly global" (Barboza, 2014). In 1999, Ma was able to attract Goldman Sachs to invest 5 million US dollars in Alibaba (Barboza, 2014). Although the requirements of Goldman Sachs' investment were quite stringent, Ma agreed to cooperate with this international investment house with the view to expand his own enterprise. Alibaba could obtain investment advice from Goldman Sachs. Goldman Sachs' investment on Alibaba gave great confidence to global investors. Led by Goldman Sachs, Ma received extensive capital from equity firms overseas.

Tapping Technology from Japan's SoftBank

As a young Internet company, Alibaba needed to tap in technological knowledge from sophisticated IT firms. SoftBank Corporation is a Japanese multinational telecommunications and Internet corporation, with operations in fixed-line telecommunications, broadband, e-commerce, Internet, technology services, finance, media and marketing. The entrepreneurial vision of Ma and huge China's market attracted Masayoshi Son, the CEO of SoftBank, to invest 20 million US dollars in Alibaba in 1999 (Steger & Frischkorn, 2013). With investment from SoftBank, Son became the chief consultant for Alibaba.

Almost all of IT companies in China collapsed due to the burst of dot-com bubble in 1999–2001. Alibaba's strategy changed to three "B2C," i.e., "Back to

China,” “Back to Coast” and “Back to Center.” In practice, Alibaba’s headquarters moved back to Hangzhou, China and the business of Alibaba focused on China.

Furthermore, Ma faced strong competition in China’s market when he set up Taobao in 2004. He planned to develop his own C2C market. However, eBay had already occupied almost 80% of market share in China in 2002. Nevertheless, Son was willing to back up Ma to compete against eBay. With a further 82 million US dollars support from Son, Taobao was able to grow rapidly and eventually drove eBay out of the Chinese market. Son’s investment paid off too. The return to Son’s SoftBank was estimated almost 2,500 times as Alibaba registered for Initial Public Offering (IPO) in New York in 2014 (Farrell, 2014; Forsythe, 2014).

Technology Leverage from Yahoo

In 1997, Ma met Jerry Yang, the founder and former chief executive officer (CEO) of Yahoo! Inc. when Yang visited the Great Wall of China. In 2005, Ma and Yang formed strategic partnership in e-business. Yang acquired 40% of Alibaba.com for 1 billion US dollars and handed over the operation of its e-business in China to Ma (Yahoo buys US\$1 billion, 2005). The cooperation with Yahoo enabled Ma to obtain advanced technical knowledge and funding for further development. In particular, Yahoo is globally known for her search engine. Alibaba could learn the advanced technology of search engine, telecommunication and advertisement business from Yahoo. Moreover, Ma could also take the advantage of the Yahoo’s brand name in his “Yahoo China” operation. With more than 2.8 million online stores and 1 billion products, Alibaba developed a user-friendly search engine for online shopping. Specifically, web browsing history can be saved and customers’ habits can be analyzed and reappear again in a unique order just like Yahoo did (Yahoo buys US\$1 billion, 2005).

Expansion of Alibaba by Collaborating and Building up Trusts with Different Levels of Chinese Government

After Alibaba gaining solid technological skills and international exposure, Ma expanded his company by building up connection with different levels of government in China in the following order: (1) working with local governments, (2) building up guanxi with Princelings and party members and (3) collaborating with state enterprises and the central government. Each stage of collaboration fully reflects Ma’s foresight and entrepreneurial skills in dealing with the Chinese government. Furthermore, the order of involvement is not by coincidence. Collaboration with governments requires

learning and *guanxi*. This is a very subtle game. Without experience of dealing with the government officials at the beginning, Ma uses Zhejiang as his *guanxi* experimental ground. Zhejiang is Ma's hometown where Ma is most familiar with. Hence, building up *guanxi* with local governments in Zhejiang makes much sense in learning theory. Once succeeded in Zhejiang, Ma can apply the same *guanxi* strategies to other local governments, say Hainan, etc. (see below). Second, as Alibaba grows, Ma's friendship and *guanxi* circle expand. Ma can get closer to the Princlings and party members and propose to them to invest in Alibaba. Princlings' personal involvements with a private enterprise can be viewed by the public as normal business practice and private investment, and have nothing to do with rent-seeking or corruption. Finally, after Alibaba building a solid foundation and trusts from Princlings and party members, state enterprises and the central government observe that Alibaba can be fully trusted. In other words, working with Alibaba exercises no harm to the reputation of the state. Hence, state enterprises and the central government are willing to work with Alibaba and borrow Alibaba's Internet capabilities to furnish e-commerce in China. Ma's involvement with different levels of government is illustrated as follows.

Stage 1: Getting Bigger by Working with Local Governments in China

Born in China, Ma has a full understanding of how to operate a company in China "where business and politics are often intertwined. He knows what he can get away with and what he can't" (Chu, 2014). Ma knew that if he wanted to expand his company in China, he needed to establish "*guanxi*" with government officials because "partnering with [the Chinese] government will help Alibaba become more valuable in China, hence more valuable to the global companies to do business in China, hence more valuable to the global market" (Carsten & Ruwitsch, 2015). X. P. Chen (2004, p. 315) argues that in cultivating *guanxi*, "potential parties need to get familiar with each other by relating to each other their own personal background including where they were born and raised, their family, their home town, the schools they attended, and where they have worked and are working, etc. It is in these social and personal conversations that potential *guanxi* parties look for common experiences that will establish their common social identity bases." Hence, it is no surprise that Ma started by making strategic partnership with government officials in Zhejiang province, Ma's hometown. If the *guanxi* were to work, then Ma would extend the *guanxi* strategy to other provinces including Hainan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Ningxia, Henan and Hebei. Since playing politics in China is like walking on a tight rope, therefore, Ma's relationship with the Chinese government was very subtle at the beginning. This can be seen in a speech delivered by Ma at Columbia Business School that "his relationship

with government is to be in love with them, never marry them” (Fenner, 2014). In the following sub-sections, we illustrate how Ma dealt with government officials in Zhejiang and Hainan provinces.

Collaboration with local governments in Zhejiang province

Zhejiang is one of the most prosperous provinces in China. Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang has been regarded as the best place to do business in China.²¹ In 1999, Ma moved the headquarters of Alibaba from Shanghai to Hangzhou, Zhejiang, where he was born and educated. The relationship between Ma and the Zhejiang provincial government was good. In 2013, Ma set up Cainiao Network Technology Co., Ltd. The logistic business required huge amount of land. The Zhejiang government welcomed Ma’s investment and provided Ma’s company with logistics industrial areas. Nie (2014) reports that at a time when Jinhua, a prefecture-level city in central Zhejiang, needs to boost its economic growth, Alibaba was quick to purchase 100 hectares of land to be developed into a logistics region, totaling 150 billion yuan (2.5 billion US dollars) in investment. The local government delightedly gave preferential treatment to Ma. Nie (2014) notes that the local government levied 40 hectares for the first phase of project within three months. Eighty hectares were also seized in a similar process. Half of which were allocated to Cainiao and the rest to other logistics companies. The help from Zhejiang government partly explained the rapid expansion of Cainiao.

Collaboration with local governments in Hainan province

With success in his hometown Zhejiang, Ma is able to extend his guanxi experience to other provinces. Ma noticed that the Hainan provincial government was eager to promote ecological agriculture in order to boost farmer’s income. In 2013, Ma suggested to Luo Baoming, the secretary of Committee of Communist Party of Hainan Province to launch an Internet cooperation through “ecological agriculture Taobao channel.” Ma put 13 Hainan agricultural products into promotion activities. The result was promising. The trading volume boosted to 24.09 million yuan within three days (Peng & Jun, 2014).

Ma also approached Tan Li, Provincial Committee and the deputy governor of Hainan Province to introduce “data port” in Hainan province. The “data port” includes wisdom harbors, e-commerce, etc. that required cloud computing and big data. The move allowed people to use Alibaba’s Internet facilities. Since e-commerce was still

²¹ *China Daily* reports that Hangzhou was the best place to do business in China for a fifth consecutive year in a Forbes survey in 2008 (Hangzhou named top, 2008).

very new in China, once Hainan province becomes a “wisdom area,” people could use their own mobile phone to do businesses wherever they wanted.

With close *guanxi* with Tan, Ma could smoothly run his e-business in Hainan. Moreover, Tan, using his authority, requested other government departments of Hainan province to help Ma. Whether Tan received benefits from the collaborative projects with Ma is not known. In 2014, Tan was subject to a corruption investigation by the communist party’s internal disciplinary body. According to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, Tan was suspected of “severely violating laws and discipline.” His Hainan colleague Ji Wenlin was also implicated with corruption and was removed from office in July 2014 (Huang & Zhai, 2014).

Stage 2: Cooperation with Princelings and Senior Party Members

According to Yeh Lin (a private law practitioner in New York), in China’s authoritative regime, it is impossible for large enterprises to operate in pure private market ways (Fang, 2014). John Doggett, a scholar at the University of Texas (Austin), states that “among publicly-traded companies [in China], the Chinese government is often the majority owner — with its own set of rules” and “for most of the publicly traded companies in China . . . the amount of stock that the public owns is anywhere between 15% and 30%, and the rest is owned by the government” (Dawson, 2014).

In particular, the princeling families control the majority of the Chinese economy. For instance, in Guangdong province, these families control 70% of the real estate businesses and 60% of the insurance and finance industries. In such economic and political environments, Ma could not separate his business operation from the government. In other words, Ma needed to collaborate with powerful people in the communist party. Nevertheless, Ma is skilful in handling Chinese politics. He could play according to the rule of game in China (Fang, 2014). On this, Foley (2015) comments that “Alibaba became the China’s biggest e-commerce group partly by managing its government connections [including princelings and senior party members] . . . Without skillful handling of China’s favor-based system, Alibaba could never have grown to its current US\$245 billion size.”

Allowing princelings and party members to share the benefits of Alibaba’s growth

It is well known that princelings have exercised powerful influences on business affairs in China. Ma understood Chinese politics and culture well. He was willing to let princeling families play a role in and share the benefits of his growing enterprise.

In doing so, princelings could obtain impressive returns from Alibaba's businesses. Pei Minxin, an expert on China's leadership, rightly points out that "whenever there is something profitable that emerges in the economy, they [princelings] will be at the front of the queue" (Barboza & LaFraniere, 2012). These were evidenced in China's telecommunication, satellite, financial investment, natural resources, domestic security and energy, etc.

As mentioned, when a Chinese enterprise performs well in domestic and global markets, government agents and Princelings would like to jump on the bandwagon to share the pie. Specifically, seeing that Ma's enterprise exhibiting huge growth potential, princelings were happy to share a spoonful of sugar from Alibaba's growth. As will be shown in full detail later, during the equity transfer of Alipay, Ma dared to violate the contract with Yahoo and Softbank in exchange for closer relationship with princelings. Yahoo and Softbank lost a valuable cash cow, Alipay. The compensation of at least around 2 billion US dollars to 6 billion US dollars to the two companies²² was made possible from the support of at least four princelings.²³ They are Alvin Jiang, grandson of former president Jiang Zemin; Jeffrey Zeng, the son of former vice premier Zeng Pei Yan; Liu Lok Fei, the son of Liu Yun Shan who held the first secretary position of the Central Secretariat of the Communist Party of China; Winston Wen, the son of former premier, Wen Jiabao (see Appendix B for their Chinese names). All of them have been reported to gain from Alibaba's IPO in the US on September 19, 2014 (Forsythe, 2014; Pandey, 2014).

With Alvin Jiang

Alvin Jiang, the grandson of former president Jiang Zemin, helped manage the Boyu Capital, a private equity firm. Aldred and Liu (2014) report that in 2012, Ma negotiated with Alvin Jiang to finance a 7.6 billion US dollars buyback deal from Yahoo. In return, Boyu Capital got 0.55% shares of Alibaba. Pandey (2014) reveals that 400 million US dollars investment in Alibaba made by Boyu Capital would stand at more than 1 billion US dollars in early 2014. In September 2014, it is estimated that Boyu Capital could sell 1.28 million shares of Alibaba in return for about US\$84.31 million (Farrell, 2014; Forsythe, 2014).

²²According to Hille and Menn (2011), "the agreement guarantees Alibaba 37.5% of the total equity value of Alipay or a payment of at least US\$2bn and up to US\$6bn, in case the spun-off company goes public or another 'liquidity event' takes place."

²³Data in this section are modified from Wong (2015).

With Jeffrey Zeng and Liu Lok Fei

Jeffrey Zeng is the son of former vice premier Zeng Pei Yan while Liu Lok Fei is the son of LIU Yun Shan. Both play an important role in CITIC Capital Holdings. Liu Lok Fei is the board of director, CEO of investment division of the company. Jeffrey Zeng is the senior managing director of the company. After investing in Alipay, CITIC Capital owns 26.8 million shares, valued between 1.54 billion US dollars and 1.7 billion US dollars in 2012. It is estimated that the company could sell 4.91 million shares in the Alibaba's IPO in September 2014 (Farrell, 2014; Forsythe, 2014).

With Winston Wen

Winston Wen is the son of former premier, WEN Jiabao. Winston Wen is the co-founder of New Horizon Capital which involved in the Alipay's buy-back deal. According to New Horizon Capital's report, at the end of 2013, the value of its Alibaba stake stood at 3.73 times the cost of its initial investment (Forsythe, 2014).

With He Jin Lei

He Jin Lei is the son of He Guo Qiang, a former communist Politburo member. He was the vice president at China Development Bank (CDB) Capital, the investment arm of CDB. CDB, a state-owned corporation, also helped Ma in Alipay's buy-back deal. Unlike direct investment of Boyu Capital, CITIC Capital and New Horizon Capital, CDB made loans to Alibaba. Mock (2012) reports that CDB provided a 1 billion US dollars four-year loan separately to help Alibaba repurchase the stake. It is estimated that CDB Capital holds nearly 11 million Alibaba shares, worth about 750 million US dollars in the Alibaba's IPO in September 2014 (Farrell, 2014; Gold, 2014).

Observing this phenomenon, Forsythe (2014) comments that, "in a country of more than 1.3 billion people, the fact that four Chinese companies investing in Alibaba have had executives who are either sons or grandsons of the two dozen men who have since 2002 served on the Politburo Standing Committee, the most elite group of leaders, speaks to how deeply China's political class has attached itself to the highest echelons of finance." Dawson (2014) concludes that "it is not individual or institutional investors that Chinese politics dictates Alibaba's primary stakeholder, but the government itself."

Alibaba's benefits in collaborating with the princeling families and party members

Chen Xiaoping, the editor of *Mingjing News*, points out that it is impossible for Ma to develop his e-business simply by following the rule of the market force, because

finance in China is always a monopoly business (Fang, 2014). Specifically, China does not allow foreign-owned companies to go into its finance area. Hence, it is important to find out how Ma could seize an entry ticket into IT and finance services in China (Fang, 2014).

In launching his finance services, namely, Alipay, Ma faced licensing problem because Alipay was involved in foreign ownership. According to “China Third-Party Payment Industry Report 2013–2016” (2013, p. 6), Yahoo US, Softbank and Ma owned 44%, 30% and 25% stake of Alibaba, respectively, in 2010. In other words, foreign ownership occupied more than half of the total Alibaba’s shares. It would inhibit the granting of a license to Alipay. As a smart Chinese entrepreneur, Ma avoided doing anything that could be considered a threat to China’s ruling Party (Chu, 2014). Thus, Ma acted decisively and bought back the shares of Alipay from Yahoo and Softbank. It is generally known that the funding for buying back Alipay came from princelings (see above).

Viewing the buy-back deal in terms of national security, Shi Yuzhu, CEO of Giant Interactive applauds, “congratulations on Alipay’s return to China. With an annual cash flow of 2000 billion yuan, if Alibaba’s major equity were still in the hands of Americans and Japanese, China’s national security would be affected. Now it’s the ideal time that we oblige Yahoo and Japan’s Softbank to sell part of their equity to the Chinese government and companies” (Bishop, 2011).

More importantly, after Ma personally declared his loyalty to the Chinese authority, the Beijing government hailed Alipay operation (Fang, 2014). In a *South China Morning Post* interview published on July 13, 2013, Ma commented that the former Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, acted appropriately during the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen crackdown (Chen, 2013). In Ma’s view, Deng had to make “cruel decisions” at that time for the sake of country’s stability. Ma said that he likened his own decisions at Alibaba to choices made by Deng (L. Y. Chen, 2013).

Similarly, in an interview on February 9, 2015, when being asked about whether the Chinese government should have any access to files operated by Alibaba, Ma replied affirmatively that he would fully cooperate with the Chinese government and “his company would happily hand over any information on domestic dissidents to the Beijing authorities” (Chu, 2014). Ma states his position in unambiguous manner, “well, so far I don’t have these types of problems around the Chinese Government. I told them if any government comes here for the national security/anti-terrorism, we’ll work together” (Entrepreneurial masterclass, 2015). Later, *The Financial Times* reports that the Chinese government installed e-police at Alibaba’s Internet businesses to enforce web censorship (Clover, 2015).

Whether it is a matter of coincidence or not, it was reported in *The Events*, a Chinese magazine specialized in China's politics, that after Ma declared his loyalty to the Chinese government, the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang spoke to Ma on November 2013,²⁴ “frankly speaking, comrade Ma Yun, your company does not comply with our law. But now your company can go ahead because we have eliminated the entry requirements” (Fang, 2014, translated by the author). On November 5, 2015, Premier Li even endorsed Alibaba's success in driving consumption peak season in China (Song, 2013). These evidences show that Ma and his Alibaba are able to exhibit high degree of loyalty to the Chinese government and gain trust from the government officials. In return, the Chinese government is willing to boost Alibaba to become a national and global enterprise.

Stage 3: Getting Even Bigger by Formal Collaboration with State Enterprises and Government Agents

For Ma, ambition is a road that has no ending. As mentioned earlier, the Chinese government is also a learning organization and needs to learn new knowledge and technology. Alibaba succeeds in helping different levels of government to grab the new technologies and upgrade their IT capabilities in business transaction. By collaborating with two large state-owned corporations (namely, ChinaSoft International and China Post), and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Alibaba grows even further.

ChinaSoft International

Alibaba Cloud Computing (*Aliyun* 阿里雲) is the subsidiary of Alibaba that provides cloud computing service platform for data analyzing. Alibaba Cloud Computing enables enterprises and consumers to buy, lease, sell or distribute over the Internet a range of software, business systems, data and other digital resources as an on-demand service, like electricity from a power grid (Perez, 2013). ChinaSoft International is a state-owned company with businesses in information technology. In 2013, Alibaba's Cloud Computing cooperated with ChinaSoft International to build a smart e-government by establishing cloud computing platform for the Lishui city government. The two firms collaborated in the project called “Smart City.” The project helped the local government upgrade information-technology platforms to improve the efficiency of government operations in, for example, automatic tax collection, public

²⁴However, the statement cannot be confirmed elsewhere.

service delivering, etc. The central and provincial governments are eager to upgrade Internet facilities nationwide and support the project. It is reported that the State Council issued guidelines to local governments in supporting the cloud-computing initiatives (Perez, 2013).

Delivery deal with China Post

China Post provides postal service in China. The State Post Bureau of the People's Republic of China, the owner of China Post, is both a regulatory authority and SOE. Alibaba embarked on a strategic cooperation with China Post in 2014, a move that is expected to boost Alibaba's e-commerce in China's less developing cities. Under the agreement, Alibaba and China Post, the world's largest postal network, collaborated on e-commerce, finance logistics, information security, as well as developing new business and new markets. The two parties agreed to open up their warehouses, processing centers and delivery resources to each other, building an e-commerce logistics platform that served third-party couriers in China. As a result of the cooperation, China Post has opened up its 100,000 service points in China's developed cities and less-developed villages, providing both delivery and pickup services for online retailers and shoppers in order to give these remote areas an improved e-commerce experience. It is expected that the emergence of online platforms in China will handle transactions of more than 10 trillion yuan (1.6 trillion US dollars) a year (Meng, 2014).

Collaborating with the NDRC

Alibaba reached an agreement on February 17, 2016 with the NDRC to expand e-commerce in more than 300 rural areas. The project aims to optimize the agriculture industrial chain and encourage villagers to start their own businesses in rural areas. Alibaba will set up service stations in villages to help those who lack the Internet skills to shop online. Through the service stations, villagers can order goods and collect their packages a few days later. The number of Alibaba's village service stations has risen from three in 2009 to 780 in 2016. Alibaba plans to build a total of 100,000 such stations by 2019 (Alibaba takes e-commerce, 2016). Working with the government agents, Alibaba can be described as a quasi-national development board.

In short, Alibaba, starting from a small humble IT firm, has transformed into a global e-commerce powerhouse. On May 6, 2014, the Alibaba Group filed registration documents to go public in New York Stock Exchange. Its IPO in the US on September 18, 2014 came out as one of the biggest offering in American history (Mac & Solomon, 2014).

Conclusion

After tapping on foreign technologies and obtain enough global exposure, Alibaba's involvement with different levels of Chinese government can be classified into three stages. In the first stage, Alibaba expanded by collaborating with local governments in China. In the second stage, it expands by building up *guanxi* with princeling families and senior party members. In the third stage, after obtaining trust from the governments, Alibaba grew even bigger by collaborating with state-owned corporations and top economic planners. On this, Ma is not wrong to say that Alibaba could be regarded as a "national enterprise" which has made contributions to China's economic development (Carsten & Ruwittch, 2015). Regarding China's style of economic growth, Breslin (2010, p. 3) rightly argues that "China has moved from a state planned and state-owned economy towards state regulation of a hybrid economic system with the existence of a private economic sphere that remains very close to the state system that created it, with the state sector dominating key economic sectors."

The success of Alibaba also shows that Ma is a talented entrepreneur in Chinese political economy. Ma has been able to build up sophisticated social and political networks between other companies and government bureaucrats/senior party members. Without backing from the government, Ma is unable to expand his e-business, nor is he able to enter China's finance industry. Hence, it can be concluded that the strategic interactions between the central authority, senior party members, local government officials and private entrepreneurs are responsible for enterprise growth in China.

Free market economists often argue that capitalist regimes are a preferred system in promoting industrial growth. However, China is a nation in which the authoritarian government tightly controls her economy. As illustrated in this study, China with a one-party autocratic government can too achieve tremendous growth in e-commerce in the last decades. The neoclassical growth theorists, though equipped with sophisticated optimization and quantitative techniques, are unable to explain satisfactorily why one-party autocratic China has been able to achieve impressive growth in e-commerce. Even worse, the neo-classical analytical framework which is based on a dichotomy of the government and market is unable to convincingly explain China's economic dynamics.

The development experiences of e-commerce in China reveal a high degree of interaction between states and private enterprises. Therefore, instead of maintaining an ideological insistence that free markets are superior than the government, it would be more fruitful to investigate the different ways in which states and private enterprises

are interacted and how both government and private businesses can consciously work together toward specific goals.

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Appendix A

Alibaba's Four Main E-Businesses

Alibaba's four major e-businesses were given Chinese names which mean good fortune in Chinese culture.

Taobao: Taobao means "digging out treasures (from Internet)." It provides e-trading platform from B2C and from C2C which are similar to eBay and Amazon. Taobao was launched in 2003. Sellers can post their goods for sales free of charge. A distinctive feature of shopping via Taobao is the ease of communication between buyers and sellers prior to the purchase through its embedded proprietary instant chat program, named AliWangWang. Shoppers can make inquiry about the products and bargaining with sellers through AliWangWang. This feature increases buyers' confidence in the transaction. Taobao becomes China's largest online shopping platform.

Alipay: Alipay is Alibaba Group's third-party payment affiliate, which was launched in 2004. The function of Alipay is similar to Paypal, which ensures safe transaction through Internet. It acts as middleman between buyers and sellers. Alipay could warrant buyers and sellers to get exactly what they should obtain in the transaction.

Yu'E Bao: Yu'E Bao means "treasure leftover in deposits." Yu'E Bao is China's first online investment fund. It was launched in 2013. This platform allows customers to reinvest their idle cash from Alipay account.

Zhao Cao Bao: Zhao Cao Bao means "attracting fortune." It is an upgraded version of Yu'E Bao, which was set up in 2014. Through the platform, customers could buy a variety of investment funds as well as insurance. Investors can obtain a stable and lower risk return. Customers can also get loan from Zhao Cao Bao without going through banking intermediaries.

Appendix B

Glossary of English–Chinese Names/Terms

Alibaba Group (阿里巴巴)
Aliyun (Alibaba Cloud Computing 阿里雲)
Baidu (百度)
Boyu Capital Investment (博裕)
CDB Capital (國開金融)
Chengguan (城管)
China Investment Corporation (中投)
ChinaSoft International (中軟國際)
CITIC 21CN (中信 21 世紀)
CITIC Capital Holdings (中信資本)
HE Guo Qiang (賀國強)
HE Jin Lei (賀錦濤)
JIANG Alvin (江志成)
JIANG Zemin (江澤民)
LIU Lok Fei (劉樂飛)
LIU Yun Shan (劉雲山)
LUO Bao Ming (羅保銘)
MA Jack (馬雲)
princelings (太子黨)
PSC criminal immunity (刑不上常委)
TAN Li (譚力)
Tencent (騰訊)
WEN Jiabao (溫家寶)
WEN Winston (溫雲松)
Yu'E Bao (餘額寶)
ZENG Pei Yan (曾培炎)
ZENG Jeffrey (曾之杰)
Zhao Cao Bao (招財寶)

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Introduction to the Special Issue — Re-Positioning China's and Taiwan's Migration in Southeast Asia

Finding Passages with Cultural Capital: New Dimension of Mobilities in East and Southeast Asia

YUMI KITAMURA



The idea for this special issue came after the International Workshop on Making Global Trajectories of Chinese Diaspora Studies in Asia, held in Jakarta on November 5–6, 2017, at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI).

The intention of the seminar was to understand the dynamics of Chinese migration and diaspora populations in East and Southeast in both historical and comparative perspectives and the long-term impacts to Asian societies. By following Hall's conceptualization (Hall, 1990, p. 235), the term “diaspora” was used “metaphorically” not “literally.” In other words, we did not discuss “Chinese diaspora” as a group of people who are culturally defined in relation to their “homeland” in China, but rather as different generations of descendants of Chinese outside of China whose identities are hybrid and “constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Hall, 1990, p. 235).

While Hall's main interest is on the issue of identity, not all papers presented in the current volume are centered on identity. Instead, they focus on various forms of mobilities between Southeast Asia and Greater China (China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) which are partly caused by the diasporic identity though not always in direct way. With the rise of China as a major global power, we are witnessing new flows and patterns of Chinese migration both in physical and cultural dimensions. We observe

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these mobilities as the result of both contemporary and historical relationships between Greater China and Southeast Asia.

After the turn of the 21st century, China is viewed as a leading player in the post-Cold War world, obtaining significant attention in 2009 when it overtook Japan as the second largest economy in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) behind the United States. This phenomenon of China as an emerging power, however, should not simply be interpreted within the framework of global economy or contemporary international relations. For East and Southeast Asian international relations, we need to develop an understanding on the current phenomenon within the context of the long history of migration of Chinese to Southeast Asia and their historical integration which brought circulation of people, ideas, and products.

The migration of Chinese to Southeast Asia can be traced back far before the region was colonized by the European countries. The significant flow of people from China to Southeast Asia before the Europeans came during the Ming Empire from 1368. A series of expeditions by Muslim general Zheng He (a.k.a Cheng Ho) to Southeast Asia in 1405–1433 is most notable. It was the colonial order that formed the position of Chinese in Southeast Asia as “essential outsiders” by assigning them the tasks as middleman between the Europeans and the locals and Chinese remained as “others” in the racially divided structure (Chiot & Reid, 1997; Reid, 2010). This division still remains clear in many Southeast Asian countries especially in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Due to these historical divisions, the contemporary rise of China brings both opportunity and fear to the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia. Opportunity is to position themselves as bridges between Chinese and Southeast Asian business interests (e.g., Setijadi (2016)). Fear, because China is now considered as a security threat in the South China Sea as well as an economic superpower adding to the negative images toward China often result in negative perceptions to Chinese descendants even though most of them have no direct ties to China any longer.

In addition to this complexity of historical linkages between China and Southeast Asia through the Chinese migration, as the papers in this issue offer, we are currently witnessing new patterns of migration between Greater China and Southeast Asia and their consequent impact in each society.

The papers in this special issue bring new insights on socio-cultural and political impact of rising China in Southeast Asia and Taiwan. More specifically, the first two papers by **Hew** and **Barker** aim to analyze the newly observed migration patterns between China and Southeast Asia while **Yang**’s explores recent development of Taiwan’s policy toward Southeast Asia.

Hew's paper focuses on the recent Hui migrants in Malaysia. Hui are Mandarin-speaking Chinese Muslims. Of the 10 ethnic groups who are Muslims in China, Huis are the largest in number followed by Uyghurs. Huis are concentrated in Northwestern Chinese provinces such as Ningxia and Gansu, and in Yunnan province in Southwest of China. While Hui migration from Yunnan to the bordering countries in mainland Southeast Asia such as Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos has been observed since the 19th century and well studied (for example, Forbes & Henley (1997) and Hill (1998)), Hui migration to insular Southeast Asia is still underexplored.

After the implementation of the Opening and Reform Policy in 1976, the relaxation of policy over religion leads to the revival of Islam in Hui communities (Gillette, 2000). According to Gillette's ethnography on Huis in Xi'an based on her fieldwork in mid-1990s, under the incoming influence from Middle East after 1980s, Huis viewed Middle East not only as the source of orthodox Islamic practice, but also on modernity (Gillette, 2000). In the 1980s, Huis increasingly began to migrate to the Middle East as well as Malaysia (Gillette, 2000).

Hew's paper describes group of Huis who have come to Malaysia since the 1980s. Many come to study in Malaysia where Islam is the official religion but is also home to a significant percentage of Mandarin-speaking non-Muslim Chinese. Hui numbers have increased since 2000. Instead of going back to China, they prefer to stay in the society where majority are Muslims. Eventually, they build further business networks while placing themselves among both Malays and non-Muslim Chinese.

Cases examined in **Hew's** paper share some commonality with the Hui migrants to mainland Southeast Asia from Yunnan such as the business- and mosque-centered networks. However, unlike the Hui migrants to mainland Southeast Asia where the main motivations for migration were economic and political hardship, **Hew** sees this phenomenon as an active process of piety enhancement. While **Hew's** informants find Malaysia to be a place of opportunities to invest their cultural capital as Mandarin-speaking Muslims in order to exercise their religious freedom, the informants in **Barker's** paper see mainland China as a place to further their professional ambitions. Both Malaysia and Indonesia are countries with a large number of Chinese descendants living in Muslim majority countries. However, the differences in their history and political environment have led to different experiences and resulted in differing expressions of Chineseness. The most significant difference is the continuity of Mandarin education.

In Malaysia, it is possible to pursue education in Mandarin from elementary to higher education while it became illegal in Indonesia after the establishment of the New Order regime in 1966. In addition, the language of the former colonizer, English, remains significant in Malaysia. This linguistic environment equips many ethnic Chinese with cultural capital of both languages.

Barker's paper shows how Chinese Malaysians take advantage of this cultural capital to become migrant creative workers in Greater China. Taking the world of Chinese language cinema as example, **Barker** explains how Chinese Malaysians are connected to "Sinophone"¹ cultural world with vivid narratives from the directors and actors themselves and define them as the active agents of Chinese transnationalism in this century. **Barker's** paper sheds light on behind the scene of "Sinophone" world.

In the past, Chinese Malaysian film directors and actors pursued opportunities as cultural workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan where the center of Chinese films and access to the market existed. With the growth of China, China is now a viable destination for these film producers and actors. According to **Barker**, Chinese language filmmaking in Malaysia has only become active after 2000 and is also contributing to this migration of creative labor due to the limited market for locally made Chinese language content in Malaysia.

Finally, **Yang's** paper provides us the positioning of Taiwan in its relation to China and Southeast Asia with firsthand information. Without a doubt, Taiwan has been one of the most affected countries by China's rise. **Yang's** paper traces how Taiwan has tried to balance its relationship with China by developing stronger ties with Southeast Asia since 1990s and how this strategy was accelerated with the implementation of the New Southbound Policy implemented when the Democratic Progressive Party took over the office in 2016.

According to **Yang**, the New Southbound Policy has shifted Taiwan's relation with Southeast Asia from the "interest-based economic expansion to the development of people-centered social linkages." In addition to bilateral agreements between Taiwan and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, it emphasizes the mobilization of human resources. Along with maximizing the capacity of Taishang (Taiwanese businesses) in Southeast Asia, the Policy tries to empower migrants and their descendants from Southeast Asia as possible agents to re-position Taiwan as part of larger Asia and the neighbor of ASEAN countries. In other words, Taiwan is rewriting its position in political and economic map from "Cross-Strait Taiwan" to "Asian Taiwan."

By reading the three papers together, readers will be able to explore the new dimension of mobilities in Southeast and East Asia and their long-term implications.

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¹"Sinophone" is a working concept which embraces the diversity of cultural products produced in Chinese language beyond the boundary of China and ethnicity (for example, Shih, Tsai & Bernards (2013)).

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Entangled Mobility: Hui Migration, Religious Identity and Cultural Capital in Malaysia

HEW WAI WENG

In recent years, there is an increasing number of Hui migrants in Malaysia. This paper examines the accumulation of various forms of capital (cultural, social and economic) and the intersection of capitalization of “Chineseness” and “Muslimness” among overseas Hui. It begins with a discussion on the mobility capital — in which Hui Muslims enjoy relative freedom to move around in China and beyond China, compared to their Uyghur counterparts who have limited mobility. It is followed by analyzing how aspirations such as “cultural affinity,” “religious authenticity,” “educational mobility” and “business opportunity” drive contemporary Hui mobility to Malaysia. By describing the religious, cultural and business activities of Hui migrants, it explores how the accumulation and circulation of different forms of capital take place in mosques, in restaurants and on social media platforms. It proposes a concept of “entangled mobility” to examine the intersection between their cultural and religious identity, the interconnection between spatial and social mobility, the combination of religious and economic aspiration, as well as how their capital circulations are entangled with broader economic, social and political processes. However, instead of reifying cultural capital as given one, Hui migrants re-enact their cultural capital depending on the Malaysian contexts. Such enactment of cultural capital plays an important role in Hui mobility and enables them to navigate their life in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Malaysia.

KEYWORDS: entangled mobility; Hui migration; religious identity; cultural capital; Muslims in China and in Malaysia.

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Contemporary Hui Mobility



“We share a language with the local Chinese, and we share a religion with Malay Muslims. We get along well with both communities” — this is a popular saying of many overseas Hui I met in Malaysia. By capitalizing on both Chinese and Islamic identity, despite being non-citizens, many contemporary Hui migrants enjoy relative well-off livelihoods in Malaysia, a Muslim majority country with a considerable number of ethnic Chinese. For example, the encounter of an imam from China, Abu Bakar Siddiq, known as Imam Yu in Malaysia clearly exemplifies how the ability of speaking Chinese and mastering Islamic knowledge allow him to move around different places as well as to build good relations with religious leaders and to make a living in Malaysia.

As I will further illustrate, Imam Yu’s experience in Malaysia shows how cultural capital (speaking Chinese and mastering Islamic knowledge) are turned into social capital (networking with religious leaders) and economic capital (working as an Imam and running a part-time business). His case exemplifies various entanglements between spatial and social mobility, between religious and economic aspirations, between Islamic practices and Chinese culture, between transnational connections and local adaptations amidst Hui mobility in Malaysia today. By describing the social encounters of a few Hui migrants living in Malaysia, this paper examines how Hui mobility is intertwined with religious aspiration, educational opportunity and business prospect, as well as intersected with the accumulation and circulation of various forms of capital associated to their Chineseness and Muslimness.

Muslims from China have long traveled and lived in Southeast Asia (Ma, 2010; C. B. Tan, 1991). The most well-known cases in Malaysia and Indonesia include the visit of Admiral Zheng He in the 15th and 16th centuries, and more recently the arrival of Ibrahim Ma Tian Ying and his families in the mid-20th century. Yet, the recent presence and visibility of Hui in both countries, especially in Malaysia, began in the 1980s, as a result of student mobility. Although there are no official figures of Hui migrants in Malaysia, Wong (2013) estimates that there are about 2,000 Hui students studying and 50 Hui families living in Malaysia, most of whom would have first come as students and later engaged in business activities. My research experience suggests that the exact number of Hui in Malaysia would be slightly higher than this estimation.

There are arguably two waves of contemporary Hui migrations in Malaysia — the first one beginning in the 1980s was mainly motivated by educational purposes; the second one began in the 2000s and is driven by multiple reasons. Since 1980s, many Hui have come to Malaysia to pursue their studies (of both religious and modern

subjects) at public universities and private colleges. In a survey of 888 mainland Chinese students in various universities and colleges in Malaysia, about 13.9% were Hui (Wong & Ooi, 2013). This figure is high compared with their 2.5% share of China's total population. Many of them are from the northwestern region of China, especially Gansu Province, while others come from other provinces such as Yunnan, Henan, Qinghai and Ningxia. Kuala Lumpur and Selangor have the highest concentration of Hui students with a high proportion registered at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). Gombak and Wangsa Waju, two suburbs of Kuala Lumpur adjacent to IIUM, are places where many Hui live and, in some cases, also run their businesses. I have also met some Hui who are studying and living in Johor, Penang, Kelantan and Perak.

Hui students frequently visit China, keep close connection with families and friends back home, and quite often also persuade more Hui to join them in Malaysia. After the completion of their studies, some of them stay in Malaysia to develop their careers and business activities, while others, upon their return to China, move from the Muslim heartland in the Northwest to the country's commercial coastal cities such as Guangzhou and Shanghai, where they are largely engaged in the import-export trade and service industries (Wong, 2013).

In addition to students, there has been a growing number of religiously motivated and economically driven Hui migrants, especially since 2000. They come to Malaysia aspiring to learn about Islam, to act as an imam (religious leader) or simply to live in a Muslim-majority environment, as well as to seek job opportunities or expand their business networks. The recent mushrooming of Hui-established restaurants and travel agencies as well as the visibility of Hui imams are clear evidence of their presence. Although fewer in numbers, some Hui make their way to Indonesia, for example, to study at Saudi-funded Islamic institutions and to run restaurants. For many Hui, mobility, business interests and religious activities go hand in hand (Hew, 2017). As Wong (2013, 2015) points out, religion plays a critical role in the mobility decisions and migration patterns of Hui Muslims, as they navigate their minority lives through the spaces of the Chinese nation-state and the transnational Islamic world.

The increase of contemporary Hui mobility is in response to two current trends noted among the Hui in China. First, there has been a religious revival and increasing aspiration for Islamic education among segments of Hui Muslims (Armijo-Hussein, 1999; Stewart, 2016), leading some of them to pursue their studies in Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Second, there has been an increasing number of Hui business people who are eager to build business networks in Muslim-majority countries. In many cases, both religious motivation and economic

aspiration co-exist. At the same time, there are some middle-class Muslims in cities such as those in Xi'an, who prefer to purchase Malaysian halal-certified products and view Malaysia as their favorable Muslim-friendly travel destination (Yang, in press).

Recently, as China embarked on its ambitious strategy of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), some Hui businessmen tap into such initiative to invest in halal industries in Muslim-majority countries. In addition, there are also increasing numbers of Hui traveling to Malaysia and Indonesia for holidays. It is important to note that many overseas Hui keep their Chinese citizenship, strategically using both their Chinese and Islamic identities to navigate their life in Malaysia. For many reasons, Malaysia stands out as a strategic and favorable country for Hui to study, to live or to invest. It is perceived as a multilingual modern Muslim country with sizeable Chinese-speaking population, comprehensive Islamic education system in English and Arabic language as well as growing numbers of middle-class Muslims — offering Hui migrants “cultural affinity,” “religious authenticity,” “educational mobility” and “business opportunity” (Hew, in press).

At the same time, there are increasing demands for cultural diversity within Islamic framework among urban middle-class Malay Muslims. Various cultural and aesthetic forms — be it Arabic or Western, be it Korean or Chinese — have been adopted and appropriated in contemporary Islamic expressions in Malaysia and Indonesia today (Hew, 2016). Together with local Chinese converts, overseas Hui can offer them Chinese-cultured Islamic expressions. For example, Chinese-style mosques, Chinese halal cuisine and Chinese-style Arabic calligraphy are desirable among segments of Malay Muslims (Hew, 2014, 2018). Instead of seeing Islam as a “Malay religion,” there is a growing number of pious middle-class Malay Muslims who view Islam as a religion for all mankind — therefore, appreciating Chinese culture does not only acknowledge the universality of Islam, but also becomes their subtle ways of preaching Islam among non-Muslim Chinese Malaysians (Hew, 2013).

It is important to clarify the different meaning between Chinese Muslims and Hui Muslims in this paper. I use Hui mainly referring to Chinese-speaking born-Muslims from China, while Chinese Muslims refer to Chinese Malaysians and Indonesians (citizens) who embrace Islam. Most Chinese Muslims in Malaysia today are third or fourth generation of non-Muslim Han Chinese migrants from the southeastern regions of China; many of them are converts. Meanwhile, many contemporary Hui migrants in both countries are originally from the northwestern part of China, especially the Gansu Province. Of course, what constitute Hui and who are Hui are heavily debated and contested. The term Hui has had different meanings in different periods of China's history. Hui identities are also expressed diversely in different local contexts in China

(Gillette, 2000; Gladney, 1996; Lipman, 1998). I also specifically use Hui, instead of “Muslims in China,” as most of my informants are ethnically Hui (broadly defined) and there are very few Uyghur migrants in Malaysia due to their limited mobility.

In Chinese, many overseas Hui prefer to identify themselves as “中國穆斯林” (Chinese-national Muslims), while local Chinese Muslims call themselves as “華人穆斯林” (ethnically-Chinese Muslims). Yet, in English, the common use of “Chinese Muslims” might cause some confusion — as some Hui restaurants also name themselves as “Chinese Muslim” in English but “中國穆斯林” in Chinese. In this paper, with the exception of the restaurant names, I use “Chinese Muslims” mainly referring to local Chinese converts. Despite different nationalities as well as religious schools of thought (most Hui Muslims follow Hanafi school, while Chinese Muslims in Malaysia follow Shafii school), the ability to speak Chinese bonds both overseas Hui and local Chinese Muslims who can speak Chinese together, prompting a possibility of “Sinophone Muslim diaspora.” A Hui imam living in Malaysia emphasized that Hui have played an important role in the changing of terms used to refer to Islam and Muslim among Chinese-speaking Malaysians (from “回教” to “伊斯蘭” for Islam, from “回教徒” to “穆斯林” for Muslim), as he suggested that phonetic translations can better reflect the universality of Islamic teaching.¹

I have elsewhere discussed the intersection of religion, business and mobility (Hew, 2017) as well as the place-making amidst their mobility (Hew, in press). This paper examines the circulation of various forms of capital (cultural, social and economic) and the intersection of capitalization of “Chineseness” and “Muslimness” among Hui living in Malaysia. First, it discusses the mobility capital — in which Hui Muslims enjoy relative freedom to move around in China and beyond China, compared to their Uyghur counterparts who have limited mobility. Second, by exploring the religious, cultural and business activities of Hui migrants, it explores how the accumulation and circulation of different forms of capital take place in mosques, in restaurants and on social media platforms. Third, it highlights that Hui mobility is not only about their physical movements from one place to another place, but also about their social mobility, business expansion and religious enhancement.

Mobility Capital of Hui Muslims

Different persons and groups have different capacities, potentials and choices of mobility. A concept of “motility” or “mobility capital” (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye,

¹Interview with Imam Yu, February 17, 2017.

2004) has been deployed to analyze how different groups and individuals “appropriate the field of possibilities relative to movement and uses them” (Kaufmann & Montulet, 2008, p. 45). According to Kaufmann et al. (2004, p. 750), spatial mobility refers to geographic movement from a site to another site, while social mobility refers to the transformation in the distribution of resources or social positions of access and the appropriation of capacities for socio-spatial mobility within a given social structure or network. Hence, motility entails both spatial and social mobility, can be defined as the capacity of entities to be mobile in both social and geographic spaces. Depending on the context, individual actors, groups and institutions differ in access, competence and appropriation, and have thus at their disposal different motility options (Kaufmann et al., 2004, p. 754).

In other words, Sheller (2011, p. 5) proposes to conceptualize “mobility capital” (Kaufmann et al., 2004) as the uneven distribution of these capacities and competencies, in relation to the surrounding physical, social and political affordances for movement (with the legal structures regulating who or what can and cannot move being crucial). Hui and Uyghur are the two largest Muslim-majority ethnic groups in China — Hui are scattered across different areas in China with a higher concentration in Northwestern Chinese provinces such as Ningxia and Gansu, and in Yunnan province in Southwest of China, while most Uyghurs reside in the Xinjiang Province. Despite both being Muslims, these two ethnic groups have different “mobility capital” — the Chinese government gives Hui relative freedom to move around in China and beyond China but restrict the mobility of Uyghurs (Crane, 2014).

Overall, even though Han–Hui relations are far from always harmonious, they are certainly better than Han–Uyghur relations (Friedrichs, 2017). Geopolitically speaking, there is a long-existing independence movement among Uyghurs in Xinjiang, considered by the Chinese government as an act of destabilizing its state sovereignty. Culturally speaking, Uyghurs speak a Turkic language and are racially distinct from the Han, while the Hui have many cultural and linguistic similarities with their Han counterparts. Similarly, many Malaysians welcome Hui as students, businessmen, tourists or imams, but the Malaysian government has hesitated to receive Uyghur as refugees in order to maintain a good relationship with the Chinese government. Uyghur might also prefer to move to Turkey for cultural proximity, while Hui prefer Malaysia for its relatively large Chinese-speaking community.

In 2013, the Chinese President Xi Jinping launched China’s BRI with the aim to interconnect major economies in Asia and Europe through infrastructure, investment and trade. China has to familiarize itself with Islamic beliefs and cultures given that many of the core countries along the BRI are Muslim-majority: the Central Asian

republics, Iran, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia and Middle Eastern countries among others. Muslims in China might be able to play a role in promoting intercultural exchanges and facilitating the people-to-people interactions needed to make multi-national initiatives successful. However, the Chinese state is also worried that such positioning of Muslims in China might risk domestic instability and threaten national sovereignty, especially in the province of Xinjiang (Meyer, 2016). Despite such worries, cultural exchange and economic cooperation between Muslims in China and other Muslim-majority countries has intensified, reflected in the growing number of Hui migrants and tourists, the expansion of Chinese halal market and the mushrooming of Hui restaurants in countries such as Malaysia. It is important to note that such intensified interactions between Muslims in China and in Malaysia are not a new phenomenon after the launch of BRI. Instead of seeing BRI as a main causal factor of contemporary Hui mobility, this paper suggests that many Hui migrants and businessmen tap into such initiative to justify and to facilitate their mobility beyond China.

Even before the launch of BRI, Ningxia Autonomous Region, with a large concentration of Muslims, was designated by the Chinese government as the production center for halal food products in China (Chow, 2010). Such an initiative is a key strategy for improving China's global image, especially in building strategic foreign relations and business opportunities with the Arab and Muslim world (Ho, 2012). Ho (2012, p. 106) suggests that Hui might be an important "asset" representing China's national interest and goodwill in the Muslim world.

In Malaysia, the state of Kelantan has been ruled since 1990 by a coalition led by the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). At the federal level, this party is in opposition, as a result of which Kelantan does not receive full financial support from the federal government. Thus, in order to attract Chinese investment into the state, the Kelantan government has initiated various efforts to attract investment from both Hui and Han entrepreneurs from mainland China, such as organizing the 2010 Cheng Ho Expo (Kelantan–China International Trade Fair) and the 2011 Kelantan Cheng Ho International Food Festival (KELCHEF).² In 2011, the Kelantan state government signed a memorandum of understanding with Qinghai Yijiale Halal Supermarket to promote business collaboration between Kelantan and Qinghai (Usahawan Kelantan dipelawa, 2011).

In 2013, there has been a new collaboration between Malaysia's East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC) and China's Ningxia Light and

²For more details on these events, see <<http://kelcheff.blogspot.de/>> (accessed January 8, 2015).

Textile Industrial Bureau (NLTIB) to develop a regional halal food-manufacturing hub in Pahang, another state in Malaysia (Salama, 2013). In addition, since 2000, Hui from China have actively taken part in various halal food and product exhibitions in Malaysia (Hew, 2014). After the launch of China's BRI, the Malaysian government is also keen to tap opportunities to promote cross-border trade and investment, in which halal market has been identified as a key highlight (C. K. Tan, 2017). In addition, Malaysia is one of the most favorable destinations for Hui Muslims to further study and to travel. Some Hui in Malaysia run travel agencies to cater to tourists from China, especially Muslims. In 2017, the state of Johor also aimed to attract more Muslim tourists from China (Basri, 2017). In addition, from its inception in 2002 till July 2017, the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) scheme has approved 35,381 overseas applicants, with Chinese nationals topping the list with 8,714 applicants. MM2H is an international residency scheme enacted by the Government of Malaysia to allow foreigners to live in the country on a long-stay visa of up to 10 years. A few informants have told me some of these Chinese-national MM2H residents in Malaysia are of Hui background.

Besides some MM2H residents, most Hui living in Malaysia today are mainly documented migrants holding either student, business or working visa. In contrast, on the news, Uyghurs in Malaysia have been associated with undocumented refugees or even suspected "militants," due to their alleged involvement in the Xinjiang separatist secession movement in China. Different groups of non-citizens, including foreign workers, students and refugees experience different forms of rights and belonging in Malaysia today (Khoo, 2014). Similarly, the Malaysian government has a mixed record in providing for Muslims refugees, such as Bosnian, Syrian, Cham and Rohingya asylum seekers (Hoffstaedter, 2017). Yet, in order to maintain a good relationship with the Chinese government, the Malaysian government has refused to protect Uyghur asylum seekers and has deported them back to China. In 2011 and 2013, Malaysia respectively returned six and 11 Uyghurs to China. In September 2017, then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said Malaysia had since 2011 arrested 29 suspected Uyghur "militants" and deported them to China (Malaysia had deported, 2017). Malaysia's relationship with China had become closer in recent years under former Prime Minister Najib Razak, as Beijing had pumped billions into Malaysia since 2016, particularly into infrastructure projects, as Najib looked to tackle massive government debt (Ananthalakshmi, 2018). Perhaps, in contemporary warming Malaysia-China relations, Hui might have advantages to position themselves as cultural brokers and trade partners, yet Uyghurs face a higher risk in their journeys to seek asylum.

Capital Accumulation and Circulation among Hui Muslims

To grasp the entanglements between the economic, cultural, religious and social dimensions of Hui mobility, this paper uses Bourdieu's (1986) conceptualization of different forms of capital and their convertibility. In his classic paper titled "The Forms of Capital," Bourdieu distinguishes three main types of capital, namely, economic, social and cultural. Economic capital includes command of economic resources; social capital refers to actual and potential resources linked to the possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition; while cultural capital entails a person's education, knowledge and intellectual skills that enable social mobility. These forms of capital are interlinked and convertible. Their convertibility is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital and the position occupied in social space.

Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986), appears in three states: embodied, institutionalized and objectified. As for the case of Hui migrants, their cultural capital are embodied in practices such as speaking Chinese and reciting Qur'anic verses, institutionalized by universities and mosque committees, as well as objectified in their cuisine, mosque architectural design and calligraphic works. In his paper on Indonesia's Islamic preacher economy, Slama (2017) focuses on the rise of social media and the temporality of capital accumulation. In this paper, I emphasize the spatial aspects to explore how the physical movement from one site to another site and the place-making in a certain site entail the processes of capital accumulation and circulation. It explores where the capital exchange takes place (e.g., in the IIUM or on the social media platforms such as WeChat), and how it results in the making of certain places such as Chinese-style mosques and Hui restaurants.

Vasquez and Knott (2014) have emphasized that spatial strategies are crucial in managing the migrants' presence, visibility and invisibility. I further examine the interconnection between spatial strategies and capital accumulation among Hui migrants in Malaysia today. Economic capital provides the middle-class Hui with financial support to study at overseas universities and colleges, while cultural capital gives religiously-learned Hui the ability to secure a job as an imam in Chinese-style mosques in Malaysia. In Malaysia, capitalizing on their Chinese and Islamic identities, many Hui enhance their social capital in "a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) not only through education, but also through their interaction with Malay Muslims and non-Muslim Chinese. Such social capital might be able to transform into an economic one, allowing some Hui to run businesses, such as opening restaurants. These restaurants can function as sites of

interaction for people of different ethnic, religious and national background — exemplifying a conversion from economic capital into cultural and social capital. In return, such positioning of a socio-cultural space might attract more customers to visit the restaurant in which these forms of capital are transformed back into economic capital easily. For many Hui living in Malaysia, accumulating economic capital (money), cultural capital (being pious), and social capital (ability to mix well in Malaysian societies) are equally important. The ethnographic examples in the next section illustrate how such accumulation and circulation of such capital take place.

Looking at the localizations of “Arabness” through the lens of Bourdieu’s theory on different forms of capital, Luecking (2016) suggests that “Arabness” appears to bear the potential to become a resource within economic, cultural and social dynamics in Madura, an overwhelmingly Muslim-majority island in Indonesia. As a symbol for piety and learnedness, “Arabness” acquired through cultural and religious practices among Madurese Muslims legitimizes their leadership claims and enables their participation in the management of the *hajj* — and thus offers the possibility to generate economic capital in the pilgrimage business. In return, the business success gives them higher social status as well as more resources to invest in the accumulation of cultural capital. She suggests that such circulation of capital relies on local contexts — in which “Arabness” only becomes meaningful in the web of social relationships and values on the ground (Luecking, 2016, p. 20). She also suggests that there are multiple meanings and manifestation of “Arabness,” be it Hadhrami Arabness, Pop Arabness and Madurese Arabness (Luecking, 2016, p. 21).

Similarly, “Chineseness” of Hui Muslims from China and Chinese converts in Malaysia have different connotations and configurations in China and in Malaysia. As Hau (2014, p. 310) frames it, there is “an internal contestation over what ‘Chinese’ means, who can claim Chineseness, who counts as Chinese, and who can ‘represent’ it”. For example, many Hui do not celebrate Chinese New Year in mainland China, but they endorse the Chinese New Year open house events organized by local Chinese Muslims to support their preaching activities. Similarly, some Hui I met expressed their preferences to build new mosques in pan-Islamic style, but they have no problem to join activities at Chinese-style mosques in Malaysia. To distinguish themselves from Han Chinese, Hui downplay certain aspects of their “Chineseness” in China. Yet, to make themselves appealing among Malay Muslims in Malaysia, Hui embrace their “Chineseness,” which could be a resource within economic, cultural and social dynamics in Malaysia, as there is a growing demand among middle-class Malay Muslims for diverse cultural expression of Islamic identities. By doing so, the Hui presence also challenges the perceived perception that Islam and “Chineseness” are incompatible.

Indeed, this case shows that migration results in “new ways of producing and re-producing (mobilizing, enacting, validating) cultural capital that builds on, rather than simply mirrors, power relations of either the country of origin or the country of migration” (Erel, 2010, p. 642). As Erel (2010, p. 642) further argues, “migrants create mechanisms of validation for their cultural capital, negotiating both ethnic majority and migrant institutions and networks.” By validating their “Chineseness” and “Muslimness,” Hui migrants exercise their cultural capital to navigate their life within Malaysian multi-ethnic and multi-religious contexts.

Building upon the concept of mobility capital (Kaufmann et al., 2004) and capital convertibility (Bourdieu, 1986), I propose the concept of “entangled mobility” to examine the intersection between Chineseness and Muslimness, the interconnection between spatial and social mobility, the combination of religious and economic aspiration, as well as the circulation of various forms of capital among Hui amidst their mobility across spaces and settlement in certain sites. For sure, Hui migrants do not hold homogenous cultural capital, instead, their cultural capital vary according to their gender, religiosity, class and educational background. In the following section, I highlight social encounters of three male Imams — Imam Yu, Imam Ali and Imam Qin. Despite originally from different parts of China and residing in different towns in Malaysia, they share certain similarities — have religious credentials, play a role in disseminating Islamic knowledge, maintain good relation with local Chinese and Muslim leaders, as well as directly or indirectly involve in some business activities. By exploring their stories and cases studies related to them, this paper illustrates how aspirations such as “cultural affinity,” “religious authenticity,” “educational mobility” and “business opportunity” drive Hui migration to Malaysia. By doing so, it examines how their spatial and social mobility are entangled with each other and with broader economic, social and religious processes.

Imam Ali: Teaching Chinese in an Islamic School

Originally from Yunnan, Imam Ali Wang left his home country in 1995, and studied in a college in Terengganu for three years before moving to Kelantan for work. Imam Ali was an imam for the Sultan Petra Ismail Mosque, a Chinese-style mosque, which is also best known as “Beijing Mosque,” because its architectural design is inspired by the Niujie Mosque, an ancient mosque in Beijing. He led Ramadan *terawih* prayers (non-obligatory prayers during the month of Ramadan) in the mosque in 2010. Today, Imam Ali is no longer an imam for the mosque, but he is still teaching Arabic, Chinese and Islamic subjects at Sultan Petra Ismail International Islamic College

(Kolej Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Petra Ismail, KIAS), an Islamic college in Kota Bahru, the capital city of Kelantan state in Malaysia. On weekends, his wife runs a small stall that sells grocery items imported from China, in a market in downtown Kota Bahru.³

Imam Ali, his wife, and his two eldest sons, who were all born in China, have not obtained Malaysian citizenship. Yet, his youngest son, Badaruddin, who was born in Kelantan, has been granted such citizenship. Remarkably, Badaruddin is also the godchild of the late Nik Abdul Aziz, former Kelantan Chief Minister and spiritual leader of PAS. Badaruddin spent a few years living together with Nik Abdul Aziz. Nik Abdul Aziz had also frequently publicly expressed his support toward Malaysian Chinese Muslims and Hui Muslims from China. He was the key proponent of building the “Beijing Mosque” to manifest the universality of Islamic teaching. He invited many imams from China to visit Kelantan and has appointed Imam Ali to be an imam for the mosque. Imam Ali’s knowledge in Islamic texts and his fluency in Chinese language are his cultural capital which enable him to acquire a kind of social capital — being close to local religious leaders and respected among Malay Muslims. Such cultural and social capital give him a chance to stay in Malaysia continuously over many years, to secure a permanent job in an Islamic college and to enable his wife to run a small business in a local market, even though they have not been granted Malaysian citizenship.

Since late 2000s, his eldest son Hassan Wang, who was raised in Yunnan followed his father and moved to Kota Bahru. Hassan Wang first studied Islam in Chiang Mai, a northern city in Thailand, before moving to study Arabic language in an Islamic college in Kota Bahru. In 2012, working together with another Hui migrant, Hassan opened a grocery shop called Yunnan Berkas. The shop sells various grocery items, from cooking utensils to religious clothing, from decorative items to sleeping mats, all imported from China. The shop also sells its imported products to other shops in Kelantan and Terengganu. Given that both Kelantan and Terengganu are Muslim-majority states, many of the shop’s customers are Malay Muslims. Naming the shop with “Yunnan” is a strategic choice as many Malays heard about Muslims in the province of Yunnan in China and that the famous Admiral Zheng He was born in Yunnan (C. B. Tan, 1991). In other words, “Yunnan” signifies the authenticity of “being a Muslim in China” and is a trademark that could attract Malay customers in Kelantan. Similarly, while preferring me to call him in his Chinese given name “Weibo,” he uses his Islamic name together with Chinese surname “Hassan Wang”

³Interview with Imam Ali, September 17, 2011.

when interacting with local Malays.⁴ In some ways, his everyday naming practices validate his cultural capital and enable the circulation of his cultural capital into social capital (communicating with local Malays) and economic capital (attracting Muslim customers).

While many Hui study at the IIUM and other colleges in Kuala Lumpur, there are some Hui who pursue their studies in Kota Bahru, Kelantan. Hassan explained why Malaysia has become one of the favorite educational destinations for Hui: “Malaysia is a Muslim majority country and it offers a more comprehensive religious education than China. We can also learn different languages — Malay, English and Arabic. We have no problem communicating with those local Chinese, who can speak Chinese. Moreover, the certificates issued here are acknowledged overseas, which allows graduates to pursue their studies in other countries.”⁵ He cited an example in which a few Hui students went to Jordan to pursue their studies after completing their courses in Kelantan.

Unsurprisingly, Hassan suggested that by sharing a language with local Chinese and a religion with Malay Muslims, Hui Muslims are able to get along with the two ethnic majority groups in Malaysia — a unique advantage for them to establish business network. He noted that many Hui entrepreneurs have visited Malaysia and Indonesia in the last few years to seek business and investment opportunities in industries such as food production, palm oil plantations and mining. In Kelantan, the PAS-led government has frequently invited imams from China to visit the state. As discussed previously, the Kelantan government organized the Cheng Ho Expo several years ago, inviting businessmen from China and seeking their investment. Whenever there are Hui visiting from China, whether they be imams or entrepreneurs, Hassan and his friends will help the state government to welcome and assist them.

Imam Yu: Teaching Islam in a Chinese-Style Mosque

In 2013, in Seremban, a town not far from Kuala Lumpur, there was a Chinese New Year dinner celebration inside the Al-Saadah Complex, a Chinese-style mosque, mimicking the design of the Great Mosque in Xi'an. An imam from mainland China, Abu Bakar Siddiq, known as Imam Yu, recited the *du'a* (prayers) at the beginning of this event. Meanwhile, his wife set up a small stall next to the dinner venue, selling

⁴Interview with Hassan Wang, December 9, 2012.

⁵Interview with Hassan Wang, December 9, 2012.

various products, mostly imported from China. At that event, Imam Yu wore *tangzhuang*,⁶ a kind of Chinese traditional dress, an attire that he rarely wears in China. He explained, “the local Chinese Muslim leaders always wear *tangzhuang* in order to manifest their Chineseness. I was asked to do the same. It is okay. It is not our tradition back home, but I understand the context in Malaysia.”⁷ This case shows that while Imam Yu is well equipped in Islamic knowledge and Chinese language which have given him “mobility capital” to move beyond China, the enactment of his cultural identity (e.g., wearing *tangzhuang*) is crucial to enable its transformation to social capital in the context of Malaysia.

Imam Yu, originally from Gansu, first came to Kuching in Sarawak, where he worked as a religious teacher — giving regular classes and counseling on Islam in Chinese language to new Chinese converts. He later moved to Seremban in Negeri Sembilan to serve as imam for the newly established mosque, Al-Saadah Mosque Complex. This mosque, built in 2011, is the first mosque in contemporary Malaysia that occasionally conducts Friday sermons in Chinese language, which is led by Imam Yu. Both cultural and religious factors are integral to Imam Yu’s mobility. As he said, “not many Chinese Muslims in Malaysia who can speak good Chinese and master Islamic knowledge at the same time, that is why I am invited to be an Imam here.”⁸ At the same time, Imam Yu sees Malaysia as an ideal place for overseas Hui, because “I can send my kids to Chinese language school and at the same time, they can grow up in a Muslim-majority environment.”⁹ Having said that, Imam Yu keeps his Chinese-national citizenship and maintains a close relationship with Hui in China. Being an Imam back in China, he does not think that life has become untenable at home, instead a desire to explore opportunities abroad brings him to Malaysia. Indeed, as he said “Hui people are always traveling for a better life. In the past, we move around within China and now, we can also move beyond China, without losing our Chinese nationality.”¹⁰

I met Imam Yu again in 2017 in the Al-Saadah Mosque after Friday prayer. At that time, he was no longer working fulltime for the mosque, but was employed in a

⁶*Tangzhuang* refers to the Chinese jacket that originated at the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). It evolved from *magua*, a Manchurian costume, which was, in turn, adopted by the Han Chinese during the Qing Dynasty. Today, *tangzhuang* is one of the main formal costumes for Chinese men for many occasions. At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Shanghai, China in November 2001, the host presented its silk *tangzhuang* jacket as the Chinese traditional national costume. Since then, some Chinese overseas have worn *tangzhuang*, either as a fashion statement or for cultural expression.

⁷Interview with Imam Yu, February 16, 2013.

⁸Interview with Imam Yu, February 16, 2013.

⁹Interview with Imam Yu, February 16, 2013.

¹⁰Interview with Imam Yu, February 16, 2013.

government-sponsored convert organization.¹¹ Like Imam Ali in Kelantan, Imam Yu enjoys a good relationship with religious officials and leaders in Negeri Sembilan. Imam Yu introduced to me a Han convert from China. She told me why she moved to Malaysia to practice Islam, “compared to Saudi Arabia, I feel more at home in Malaysia, as culturally and linguistically speaking, there are similarities. I can get by easily by speaking Chinese. But at the same time, I can learn ‘true Islam’ in Malaysia, because in China, Islamic teaching and learning is censored.”¹² In other words, Malaysia offers some Hui from China both “cultural affinity” and “religious authenticity,” together with “business opportunity.” At the same time, Hui migrants also capitalize their cultural and religious affiliations to make their life easier in Malaysia.

The relations between cultural, social, economic and mobility capital are not resulted in a simple causal–effect relationship but manifested in a circular transformation. For sure, cultural capital enables Imam Yu to move beyond China, to work as imam and to live a rather good life in Malaysia. Yet, at the same, his mobility and economic capital also enable him to contribute to the networking of Hui and the wellbeing of Muslims, both in China and beyond. In 2017, Imam Yu established a WeChat group 大馬華穆之家 (Home of Chinese Muslims in Malaysia), in which he introduces the group as a platform where Malaysian Chinese (non-Muslims), Chinese Muslims and China-national Muslims living in Malaysia interact and share information on religious, cultural and business issues. In 2016, Imam Yu also set up another WeChat page (新月國際視線, Crescent International Insight) sharing news and charity information among Chinese-speaking Muslims in China and in Malaysia. Through WeChat, the popular social media platform in China, he initiated 中國穆斯林援助羅興亞穆斯林志願團 (Chinese-national Muslim Volunteer Team for Helping Rohingya Muslims) to collect donations from Hui, both in China and overseas, to help Rohingya Muslims living in Malaysia and Myanmar. To a certain extent, WeChat helps overseas Hui in overcoming the geographical barriers, bonding Hui living in China and in Malaysia, as well as connecting them to the plights of Muslims living in Myanmar (Hew, in press).

While Imam Ali and Imam Yu are both residing in Malaysia now, there are also other Hui imams who frequently visit Malaysia for religious and business purposes. One of them is Imam Yahya Ma Yiping who is an Imam of the Great Mosque of Xi’an and a well-known Chinese–Arabic calligrapher. He has visited Malaysia a number of times and has run a few Chinese Islamic calligraphy exhibitions. In 2016, with the help

¹¹Interview with Imam Yu, February 17, 2017.

¹²Fieldnote, February 17, 2017.

of a group of Malay students who studied in Beijing, he hosted a calligraphy exhibition at Putrajaya International Islamic Arts and Cultural Festival. As I observed, his calligraphy was very popular among Malay Muslim attendants. As of 2016, his son was studying at IIUM.¹³ In the same year, Imam Ma led a Friday prayer and held a calligraphy exhibition in the Al-Saadah Mosque Complex. In 2017, another Chinese–Arabic calligrapher Liu Jingyi operated a small stall selling Chinese–Arabic calligraphic artworks in a shopping complex in Johor Bahru. Together with other Islamic-themed arts, Chinese–Arabic calligraphies are popular among segments of urban middle-class Malay Muslims. Such demands for Chinese–Arabic calligraphy works have given some Hui calligraphers opportunities to convert their cultural capital into financial income in Malaysia.

Imam Qin: Selling Halal Cuisine at Hui Restaurants

Using Hui Muslims in Beijing as a case study, Gladney (1993) suggests that the importance of the pork taboo, the dispersion of Hui in most cities and their important mediating socio-economic position all help to make the Hui restaurant a Hui cultural center in the city. In Beijing and other Chinese cities, Hui involvement in halal restaurants is crucial to both their economic survival and the maintaining of the identity. Hui restaurants in Kuala Lumpur play a similar role as sites for Hui migrants to maintain their identity, to preach Islam, and to make a living. As I will describe, as being both “Chinese” and “halal” are desirable in contemporary Muslim consumer market, these restaurants are also sites where the accumulation and circulation of various forms of capital among some Hui migrants take place.

In Kuala Lumpur, Imam Ishaq Qin runs a Hui restaurant, “Imam Qin Restaurant,” with another Hui migrant. Imam Qin is also a good friend of Imam Yu in Seremban, as they studied together at the same college in China. Having earlier served as an imam in a mosque in his home province of Gansu, Imam Qin first visited Kuala Lumpur briefly in 2008 to attend a religious course. In 2009, he moved to Malaysia to pursue his studies in Arabic literature at the IIUM with a hope to deepen his knowledge and to secure a better livelihood. In order to support his living cost, he first ran a small food stall in the university canteen. In 2012, he opened a restaurant selling dishes such as Lanzhou hand-pulled noodle, Xinjiang grilled meat and dumplings, food that is popular among Muslims in China. In 2014, he renamed his

¹³Interview with Imam Ma Yiping, December 3, 2016.

restaurants to “CIQ (China Imam Qin) Restaurant.” By 2015, he had opened three branches of his restaurants.

Strategically putting “Imam” as part of the restaurant name and “China Islamic Traditional Cuisine” as the restaurant tagline, together with decorating his restaurants with Chinese-style Islamic calligraphy, Imam Qin took advantages of his religious authority and cultural authenticity to establish social network and to generate economic capital through restaurant business. By doing so, he could also convince Malay Muslims that the food his restaurants serve are halal, even though they were not yet officially certified by the Malaysian religious department. As he explained, “in the beginning, some Malay hesitate to visit our restaurants because they worried the food might not halal. But the name of my restaurants already clearly reflected: we serve Muslim cuisine from China.”¹⁴ Indeed, the term “Chinese/China Muslim” is widespread in the naming of the Hui restaurants in Malaysia. Many of them claim themselves to serve “authentic Chinese Muslim cuisine” or “authentic Muslim cuisine from China,” which is mainly a mixture of Northwestern Chinese and Uyghur dishes, such as Lanzhou hand-pulled noodle and Xinjiang grilled meat.

Imam Qin sees his restaurant not only as a way of making profit, but also as a medium for preaching Islam (*dakwah*). As he said, “I take the opportunity to share my thoughts with my customers, both non-Muslim Chinese and Malay Muslims, about the life of Hui in China. I want my customers to understand the beauty of Islam, and to realize that converting to Islam does not mean that you have to lose your Chinese cultural identity.”¹⁵ According to Imam Qin, the restaurant also functions as a site of social interaction and religious preaching, illustrating how the economic capital is being transformed back to social and cultural capital.

CIQ Restaurant is only one of the many Hui restaurants mushrooming in Malaysia over the last few years. While CIQ Restaurant has closed in 2016 probably due to financial problem, other Hui restaurants are flourishing. The most successful and popular case is “Chinese Muslim Authentic Heritage Pulled Noodle Restaurant” chain. As of 2017, it had 33 branches and its target is rather ambitious, to have more than 100 branches across cities in Malaysia. Some of its branches have live performance of Hui making the hand-pulled noodle, a cultural magnetism that draws customers to visit the restaurants. While most of these restaurants are profit-driven, some owners cite religious consideration in their business enterprise. For example, Yahya Liu who co-runs “Salam Noodles Restaurant” explained to me why he left

¹⁴Interview with Imam Qin, February 5, 2013.

¹⁵Interview with Imam Qin, February 5, 2013.

China and moved to Malaysia, “In China, we ran our restaurants in Shenzhen, a city with very small Muslim population and in order to survive, we rely on non-Muslim customers and we have to serve alcohol drinks. The money we earn is not halal. . . My brother and I decided to move to Malaysia, as it is a Muslim-majority country and we can sustain our business without serving alcoholic drinks. Malaysia is also a better place for us to learn and to practice Islam.”¹⁶

There are at least three different categories of Hui restaurants in Malaysia. The first one is a small-scale restaurant, mainly run by student-turned-businessperson, such as “CIQ Restaurant.” Another example is “Hot Meal Bar” in the campus of the National University of Malaysia, operated by Yang Jing Ishak, a PhD student at IIUM. The second type is a larger-scale restaurant, mainly run by Hui migrants with some food business experience back in China, such as “Salam Noodle” and “Chinese Muslim Authentic Heritage Pulled Noodle Restaurant,” both now having multiple branches in Malaysia. The third one is a branch of chained Hui restaurant in China, which is expanding its business overseas such as “Amber Restaurant” and “Qingfang Restaurant.” Established in 2015, tapping into the China’s BRI, as a branch from Hui restaurant chain based in Gansu, “Amber Restaurant” in Kuala Lumpur claims it serves “Silk Road” Muslim cuisine, referring to halal Chinese cuisine from the northern parts of China. However, in this case, such trademark of “Silk Road” cuisine is much more a marketing strategy and it does not imply that the restaurant expansion is part of the China’s BRI strategy. In some ways, all the restaurants are not only selling Chinese halal cuisine from China, but also selling “Islamic culture from China” to local Malay Muslims who are searching for cultural diversity within Islamic framework.

Conclusion: Entangled Hui Mobility

The increasing visibility of Hui presence in Malaysia is in tandem with another trend — an increasing number of Malay and Chinese Muslims from Malaysia who go to China to study, to travel and to run business. These developments appropriate the meaning of “Chineseness” and “Muslimness” in Malaysia by reconciling two sets of perceived incompatible identities. Such combination of “Chineseness” and “Muslimness” enables the accumulation and circulation of different forms of capital, be it mobility, cultural, social and economic among contemporary Hui migrants. Generally

¹⁶Interview with Yahya Liu, February 19, 2016.

speaking, as compared to Uyghur, Hui in China are free to move within and beyond China. By sharing similar language (Chinese) with Chinese Malaysians and sharing the same religion (Islam) with ethnic Malays, as well as positioning themselves as a bridge between non-Muslims Chinese and Malay Muslims, Hui Muslims acquire cultural capital in navigating their life in Malaysia even if they are non-citizens. Such cultural capital have turned into social and economic capital, allowing them to interact with people from different ethnic and religious background, as well as to attract potential customers if they run businesses. In return, such social and economic status also allow Hui to play a greater role in preaching Islam as well as promoting their unique cultural identity.

However, instead of reifying such capital as given, Hui migrants also perform their cultural capital for the Malaysian context, exemplified by practices such as using Islamic names, wearing traditional Chinese clothing and promoting the so-called Muslim cuisine from China. Such enactments of cultural capital play significant role in Hui mobility across national borders and enable the circulation of their different forms of capital to take place in different sites, such as in Chinese-style mosques and Hui restaurants. Hui mobility can be conceptualized as a form of “entangled mobility” as their mobility does not only entail their physical and spatial movement, but also the travel and transformation of food practices, architectural idioms and Islamic knowledges. Their spatial mobility goes hand in hand with their social mobility, and sometimes, with piety enhancement, knowledge improvement and business expansion. By moving to Malaysia, either to study or to work, some Hui desire a movement up scale of their socio-economic classes, while others might think that they could live a more pious lifestyle in Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia. Such processes often entail the accumulation and circulation of different forms of capital amidst Hui mobility. In other words, “entangled mobility” seeks to understand how and under what conditions, spatial and social mobilities are entangled with each other and broader economic, social and political processes.

By exploring three cases of Hui imams living in Malaysia, I have illustrated the intersection between Chineseness and Muslimness, the interconnection between spatial and social mobility, the combination of religious and economic aspiration, as well as the circulation of various forms of capital among Hui amidst their mobility across spaces and settlement in certain sites. Here, I would like to end by reiterating a few features that underpin contemporary Hui entangled mobility. First, Hui mobility is entangled with the cultural politics of Islam and Chineseness in China and in Malaysia. Their mobility is in some way engages with competing discourses of what constitute “authentic Chinese culture” and “proper Islamic practices” in both countries today.

Second, Hui mobility entails both spatial and social mobilities as well as religious and economic aspirations. Being able to interact with both local Malay Muslims and non-Muslim Chinese in Malaysia, they appropriate and exercise their cultural capital to navigate their life in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Malaysia. Third, the relations between cultural, social, economic and mobility capital do not result in a simple cause–effect relationship but manifest in a circular transformation. I have discussed how these forms of capital are accumulated across spaces, and how their exchanges take place and contribute to place-making such as Hui restaurants. Last but not the least, Hui mobility today is mediated in both online and offline spheres, shaping and shaped by material environments and digital technologies.

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Screen Connections between Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China

THOMAS ALEXANDER CHARLES BARKER

To date Malaysia has occupied a peripheral position in studies of Chinese cinemas and East Asian pop culture, often overlooked in favor of the more productive centers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and increasingly China. By engaging with the field of Chinese transnationalism as developed by Aihwa Ong and others, this paper reconsiders Malaysia's place in the broader Chinese media landscape and the role of Chinese Malaysians as agents driving Malaysia's engagement with Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China. Focusing on Malaysia, this paper explores Malaysia's screen connections to China through the two vectors of Malaysian migration and Chinese co-productions entering Malaysia. Increasingly, Malaysian creative workers who are already quite mobile are moving in increasing numbers to Mainland China and working on Chinese entertainment projects. Primarily, they take on intermediary roles within China's growing entertainment industries which need cosmopolitan, multi-lingual creative labor as it increasingly globalizes and seeks foreign partners. Conversely, as China's industry expands outwards, it seeks co-production partners and locations and has found Malaysia to be conducive. In outlining this new screen industry relationship, this paper suggests cultural and economic implications and futures for Chinese cinemas in Southeast Asia and the role of Malaysia's ethnic Chinese population.

KEYWORDS: Malaysia; cinema; migration; creative labor; China.

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This paper contributes to the understanding of Chinese transnationalism by focusing on the screen industry connections between Malaysia and production centers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China. Transnational screen industries connections are formed through creative labor migration, the flow of capital and investment across borders, co-production partnerships and out-sourcing, as well as the establishment and acquisition of screen industries companies and businesses.

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Alongside a conceptual perspective drawn from Chinese transnationalism, this study engages with scholarly work in East Asian pop culture, Chinese cinemas, and studies of creative labor migration within the context of a growing and regionally assertive China (Percival, 2007). It contributes to a growing body of work that seeks to understand how a “rising China” is reshaping Chinese language screen industries through the circulation of cultural products, capital, imagery, and people.

As the screen industries of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have become more intertwined and interdependent, it is useful to posit Malaysia as a new vantage point from which to consider transnational connections. Malaysia is geographically distant from East Asia and provides a counterpoint to the work that has been done on the Chinese diaspora in North America (Lu, 1997). Driving these connections are Chinese Malaysians who utilize their linguistic and cultural resources to become participants as mobile creative labor and co-production partners. In examining the evolving greater China–Malaysia relationship, this paper describes new patterns of migration and interaction between Mainland China and Malaysia that form part of the “new Chinese mobility landscape” (Chan & Koh, 2017).

In particular, this paper focuses on two vectors of this relationship linking the screen industries of Malaysia and China. The first set of relationships is forged as Chinese Malaysians travel to China either temporarily or permanently to work on film and television projects. These moves are supplanting the more established destinations of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore or the United States as Malaysians see China as a viable destination to develop and forge a media career. The second vector consists of the outbound productions coming to Malaysia to use locations, facilities, and engage co-production partners. These provide opportunities for local co-production businesses in Malaysia to build relationships with China and its screen industries. Together they develop connections between Malaysia and China that speak of a growing relationship between the two countries.

Defining “China” for the purposes of this paper is fraught not only with historical, territorial, and administrative complexities but also the processes of Chinese transnationalism and globalization have made societies and economies much more integrated and interdependent. This recalls the debate around the concept of “Greater China” and how the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China (Taiwan), and the territories of Macau and Hong Kong are situated in discourse (Harding, 1993). Although Hong Kong returned to PRC rule in 1997 thereby enlarging the administrative territory of the PRC, Hong Kong retains quite a distinctive identity, culture, as well as some administrative autonomy under the “one country, two systems” concept (Lu, 1997, p. 2). China in this paper refers primarily to mainland China

as a territory and people, without wanting to reify China as meaning the Chinese Communist Party or Chinese state, whilst being cognizant of the diversity and complexities within the PRC itself.

Malaysia has come under increased interest recently due to the flow of capital and investment linked to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, formerly One Belt One Road). Located strategically along the Strait of Malacca, Malaysia has been the focus of Chinese investment in ports, rail, and been willing to take over assets linked to the multi-billion-dollar 1MDB Development Fund scandal (Lopez, 2017). Accompanying this has also been soft power initiatives including the establishment of two Confucius Institutes in Malaysia, the opening of Xiamen University Malaysia Campus in 2016, and increasingly outreach efforts in culture and media (Barker, 2017; Su, 2010). This speaks of both a new recognition of Malaysia's importance to the Southeast Asian region and to China's ambitions, and also to the growing power and wealth of China in the region.

This paper is based on ongoing research into the screen industry connections between China and Malaysia. Alongside an evolving database of productions and projects that see the participation of Chinese and Malaysians parties, I have interviewed a number of Malaysians who have worked in China or with Chinese companies or on Chinese projects. Some of these interviews have been conducted in person in Malaysia, in China, or via Skype. Those interviews are interested in learning about the experiences of working in China, motivations, and impressions of China's media industries, and thoughts about the relationship between Malaysia and China. They represent an important new dimension in the study of transnational media production, the growth in Chinese media, and how East Asian pop culture is being re-conceptualized in the era of a rising China.

Chinese Transnationalism and the Rise of China

Since the 1980s, the growth and integration of economic activity in the Asia-Pacific region can in part be attributed to what Ong and Nonini dubbed "Chinese transnationalism" (Ong & Nonini, 1997). They sought to account for increased flows of people, capital, and ideas in the Asia-Pacific region and the particular role and importance of the region's ethnic Chinese populations. Through the vector of Chinese communities, businesses, and *guanxi* networks, new flows of capital and investment have been activated. Since 1978 and into the 1980s, this has centered on Mainland China with the development of the Guangdong industrial area attracting significant investment from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. At the same time, Chinese

transnationalism yields new Chinese identities linked to diaspora experiences and a reshaping of social and institutional arrangements across the Asian region (Ong & Nonini, 1997).

Considerable attention has been placed on the Chinese diaspora who are a “transnational community” (Ang, 2004, p. 179) in the creation of transnational networks and connections. In further defining Chinese transnationalism, Sun and Sinclair (2015) propose the three dimensions of movement and circulation; connectedness, flows, linkages, and networks; and a distancing from traditional culture. Whilst Mainland China remains the “center of culture” (Lu, 1997, p. 12), the realities of diaspora, media making, and ongoing hybridization mean that Chinese identity and definitions of Chineseness are multiple both within China itself and globally (Ang, 2004, p. 193). For Sun and Sinclair, diasporic lines of communication provide “a material and cultural geography of belonging” (2015). Here, media, such as Chinese language film and television, provide imaginations and representations of identity and culture as well as opportunities for business, collaboration, and cultural production.

Chinese transnationalism and the media networks associated with it challenge national models of media production and media markets. In particular, Yue and Khoo (2014) have proposed using “Sinophone” to conceptually capture the diverse range of Sinitic language cinemas and diversity of representations of Chineseness in Chinese language cinema. Chinese cinemas are therefore theorized as both transnational and plural at the same time (Berry & Pang, 2008), thereby challenging the national cinema models and assumed cultural center of Mainland China (Ang, 2004, p. 184). This has been reflected in the scholarly and popular interest in film production in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and in the Chinese diaspora, especially in the United States (Lim, 2006; Lu, 1997).

Within media economies and markets of the East Asian region more broadly, until recently, China has not been seen as a significant production center. As media theorists sought to decenter globalization away from the West (Curran & Park, 2000), production and circulation of pop culture in East Asia provoked the conceptualization of an East Asian pop culture (Chua, 2004) in which countries such as Japan took an important lead role (Iwabuchi, 2002). Chua’s conceptualization of “East Asia” is characterized by an unevenness of role of which the most notable was the position of Mainland China which was a large consumer but insignificant producer of cultural content. It was taken that China with its authoritarian political structures, widespread state-ownership, and strict censorship, would not be able to produce pop culture as cool or appealing as that produced by market-based capitalist economies such as Japan or South Korea. China-made content would therefore not appeal to audiences outside

its borders. Rather, audiences in China were seen to be hungry for cooler and more trendy material from elsewhere — especially music and drama from South Korea and Japan.

Although China has remained somewhat peripheral to studies of Chinese cinemas and East Asian pop culture until very recently, its integration into regional media industries and the importance of the Mainland market is beginning to reshape the contours and definitions of Chinese cinemas. By the 1990s, global media companies, many in advertising, were moving into China to take advantage of the emerging consumer economy and new opportunities for market development. China's ascension to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 followed by the Beijing Olympics in 2008 further opened China's media and its markets to foreign players and market forces (Kokas, 2017; Lee, 2003; Shirk, 2011). More media partnerships were developed to help modernize and internationalize China's media including Hong Kong's Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) who partnered with China Media Capital (CMC) and Shanghai Media Group (SMG) in China to establish TVBC in 2012 (Sun & Sinclair, 2015).

Mainland China is altering this narrative as its domestic production increases and carves a significant presence in global media industries through private enterprise and state-led initiatives such as “media going global” (Sun & Sinclair, 2015). Marketization and the establishment of privately owned production companies, such as Bona Film Group, Huayi Brothers, and Wanda, have marked the emergence of commercially driven production and a corresponding growth in the exhibition sector. Through capital accumulation, Mainland Chinese companies are now making significant and strategic acquisitions of media assets in Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States. When Wanda purchased AMC Cinemas in 2012 and Legendary Pictures in 2016 in the United States, many observers began to take note of China (Rainey, 2016). Signs of China's global ambitions are evident in films made and set overseas including the jingoistic action films *Wolf Warrior 2* (Wu Jing, 2017) and *Operation Red Sea* (Dante Lam, 2018) both set in Africa, and comedies such as *Lost in Thailand* (Zheng Xu, 2012) and *Detective Chinatown 2* (Sicheng Chen, 2018). These films are also beginning to be screened commercially overseas — for example, *Operation Red Sea* was released in AMC Cinemas in the United States.

One phenomenon linked to the growing importance of the Chinese media market is the emergence of co-productions that often aim for distribution in China to circumvent the import quotas on foreign films and thereby enjoy a wide release (Kokas, 2017). The most prominent example of this was the Hollywood–China co-production *The Great Wall* (Zhang Yimou, 2015) which starred Matt Damon, Pedro Pascal, Willem Dafoe, Hong Kong megastar Andy Lau, and Chinese actress Jing Tian. With a

budget of 150 million US dollars, making it the most expensive film to be shot in China, it saw American and Chinese crews working alongside each other. *The Great Wall* was envisaged as a Chinese blockbuster that could be big in both China and the United States although on its release, it failed to get much traction in either market. Nevertheless, it speaks of the growing sophistication of the Chinese film industry and the importance of its market to the global film industry.

What is occurring then is a rapid reshaping and reorientation of East Asian pop culture, and indeed parts of global pop culture, toward China. Definitions and understandings of Chinese cinemas will invariably accommodate these changes, not only to include Greater Mainland product, but also to account for the variety of content from within China itself. It is important to note that media production happens all over China and complicates any simple definition of a Chinese cinema (Zhang, 2008). Nor is China just a captive market of 1 billion people but is a complex site for negotiation in terms of co-productions which are increasingly competitive as Chinese companies and producers become more assertive and globally savvy. China is thus drawing in foreign participants just as much as it is now looking outwards for new markets for its products, acquisitions, and exerting its cultural influence or soft power.

Malaysia in Chinese Media Transnationalism

If China has only recently become a country of interest to studies of Chinese cinemas and East Asian pop culture, Malaysia is even less visible. It has rarely figured in the studies of Chinese cinemas and is neither seen as a significant source nor a consumer of pop culture. It is overshadowed by the more prominent nodes of Chinese language production in Taiwan or Hong Kong and does not command the interest and excitement of a rising China. Nevertheless, Malaysia is home to Southeast Asia's largest ethnic Chinese population of 6.52 million people, more than the total population of multi-ethnic Singapore (5.89 million) but less than the population of Hong Kong (7.19 million).¹ If it is not a function of population, then other factors contribute to Malaysia's role and prominence in Chinese media transnationalism. Indeed, Chinese Malaysians have a long history of engagement and participation in Chinese media circuits through "*mahua*" or "South Seas" (Nanyang) literature (Bernards, 2017; Raju, 2008) and film companies such as the Shaw Brothers and Cathay-Keris organizations (Muthalib, 2013).

¹ See *The World Factbook 2017* <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>>.

With China closed off after 1949, Mandarin-speaking Malaysians seeking to connect with Greater China have seen Taiwan as their natural destination to pursue education related to the media or to pursue a career in the creative industries. Connections to Taiwan developed in the context of Cold War geopolitical alignment away from Communist China led first by the British and later by the independent Malaysian government. As a result, Malaysian indie filmmaker Tan Chui Mui notes that

The Chinese community in Malaysia is closer to Taiwan than to China. Cultural exchanges between China and Malaysia began as late as 1990s. Many Malaysians who were educated in the Chinese language, especially those in their 40s or 50s now, studied in Taiwan. So, there's quite a strong connection with Taiwan. (quoted in Segay (2007))

Of the Malaysians who moved to Taiwan, the most notable case is filmmaker Tsai Ming-Liang who studied in Taiwan in the early 1980s and has remained there as a prominent artist and filmmaker. Other recent creative migrants to Taiwan include actors Lawrence Ong and Daphne Low, and director Ho Wi-Ding.

Other prominent cultural connections to Taiwan are evident in the music industry as many Chinese Malaysian singers since the 1980s have emigrated to Taiwan to take advantage of its larger audience base, music industry infrastructure, and distribution and marketing networks. One of the first notable musical emigres to Taiwan was Malaysian singer Eric Moo whose career took off after he relocated in the late 1980s. Many other singers have followed including Lee Sinje (Angelica Lee), Fish Leong, and Michael Wong. Many of these artists have been reimported back into Malaysia via their Taiwanese labels or concert promoters. They too are part of the transnational circulation of Chinese pop culture and performers, circulating between Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and increasingly China.

Hong Kong also offered similar opportunities to Malaysians in the 1980s with the development of broadcaster TVB and a buoyant film industry. Michelle Yeoh, born in Ipoh, moved to Hong Kong in the mid-1980s to pursue a modeling career, before becoming an actress starring in titles such as *Police Story 3: Supercop* (Stanley Tong, 1992) alongside Jackie Chan. In the years since, she has become an international superstar acting in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, 2000) and *Crazy Rich Asians* (Jon M. Chu, 2018). Similarly, Willie Chan (born Chan Chi-Keung) migrated to Hong Kong in 1970 where he met Jackie Chan and became his agent and promoter, especially to support Jackie Chan when he moved to the United States in the 1990s. Willie Chan was also the agent for many other Hong Kong stars of the 1980s and 1990s including Maggie Cheung, Tony Leung Ka Fai, Simon Yam, and Edison Chen.

In Malaysia at least, Chinese language filmmaking has only become notable in the years since 2000 (Raju, 2008). Although there are Chinese language television

stations, opportunities are limited, and many Chinese diverted into other careers or went overseas. After 2000, a new generation of indie filmmakers have remained in Malaysia to produce work in Chinese whilst retaining a cosmopolitan outlook (Khoo, 2007). Notable names include James Lee, Tan Chui Mui, Liew Sengtat, Ho Yuhang, and Teck Tan. Teck Tan's *Spinning Gasing* (2000) for example features Malay, English, and Cantonese dialogue. Many found exposure at international film festivals and tapped into the growing interest in digital and indie production from Southeast Asia at the time. They have also sought work overseas as well with Tan Chui Mui for example spending a number of years in China working alongside Chinese luminary Jia Zhangke making advertisements and contributing to the omnibus documentary *Yulu* (2011).

In the last 10 years, Chinese language filmmaking in Malaysia has undergone a revival, both commercially and critically. Box-office success of titles like *Nasi Lemak 2.0* (Namewee, 2011) and *The Journey* (Chiu Keng Guan, 2014) have shown the commercial potential of Chinese language films, alongside the critical success of films like *Shuttle Life* (Tan Seng Kiat, 2017) which won awards at the 20th Shanghai International Film Festival. Many of these films take advantage of the Chinese New Year screening slot to maximize their audience such as the comedy *Think Big Big* (Chiu Keng Guan, 2017). Director Chiu Keng Guan has become a significant mainstream director since graduating from the Beijing Film Academy and returning to Malaysia. Likewise, Ho Yuhang recently directed the Malaysia–Hong Kong–China produced triad-revenge film *Mrs K* (2016) with Hong Kong actors Simon Yam, Kara Wai, and Taiwanese singer Wu Bai. Currently, about 10 Chinese feature films are released annually, mostly in Cantonese or Mandarin.

As members of an ethnic minority in Malaysia, Chinese filmmakers are presented with limited opportunities in Malaysia's already present small market. Malaysia's film market is divided ethnically and linguistically into four "racial" groups—English, Malay, Indian (Tamil), and Chinese (primarily Mandarin and Cantonese).² Aspiring Chinese filmmakers are thus left with a series of choices: remain in the limited Chinese language market; go mainstream into the commercial Malay market; or seek opportunity overseas. Many Chinese Malaysians have been willing to move overseas for opportunities. Whereas Taiwan was often the most obvious choice, China has become a new option for Malaysian filmmakers. As a Malaysian actress now in Beijing says

²Malaysia's first Hokkien film *You Mean the World to Me* (Saw Tcong Hin) was released in 2017. Shot in Penang, the film stars a number of Malaysian and Singaporean actors with cinematography by Christopher Doyle.

“Trust me, when I was young I never thought I would end up in China. I always wanted to go to US.” Commenting on her own options for work, one Malaysian freelance producer notes:

I was thinking, should I stay in China because everybody tells you it's more prospective to work in China and [there are] opportunities there. . . it's like an eye-opener etc. [. . .] money's there and [the] Malaysian film industry was really small.

Just as China's market is at a moment of expansion and internationalization, Malaysian Chinese filmmakers are looking for greater opportunities. There is a moment of confluence between the two countries which is prompting many Malaysians to see China as a viable destination.

Moving to Mainland China

Concurrent with observations about Chinese transnationalism, scholars of migration are tracing the new migration patterns of the Chinese in Southeast Asia. Chan and Koh (2017) describe a “new Chinese mobility landscape” in which new flows and directions of migration are being activated both to and from the Mainland and from within the diaspora. Through migration, both temporary and permanent, and transnational collaboration new “transnational social fields” are created (Willis, Yeoh, & Fakhri, 2004, p. 3). Over the past 20 years, as Thunø suggests, “Chinese migration experiences [. . .] are shaped in new ways by global capitalism, globalization, and the rising economic significance of China” (Thunø, 2007, p. 2). Routes back to the Mainland are being opened again as China liberalizes and has even recently proposed a special category of residency visa for “Overseas Chinese” who want to return to China (Luo & Li, 2018).

Historically, as the work of Wang (2000) suggests, much of the migratory patterns were outwards from China, creating the diaspora populations across the world. With the PRC inaccessible for decades during the 20th century, overseas Chinese populations developed distinctive regional identities that diverged from those on the Mainland. This saw the “development of new (global and hybrid) Chinese identities” (Chan & Koh, 2017) of which Chinese Malaysians represent a very broad category. Chinese Malaysians are shaped by their experience as a minority population in Malaysia: politically marginalized but with high socio-economic status (Freedman, 2000). As a former British colony, English has also been widely adopted as a language in the education system and broadly in the media, thus entrenching broad fluency in English across much of Malaysia's educated and urban population.

Malaysian independence in 1957 wedded many Chinese Malaysians to the new nation, but they retained transnational linkages and ties to Chinese cultural traditions and practices. This differed from the experience of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia who were forced to assimilate to the majority national culture accompanied by a ban on Chinese languages in 1966, and in Singapore where the state insisted much more tightly on English language in education and official discourse. In Malaysia, Chinese language education was able to continue providing a pathway for students in Malaysia to learn in Mandarin and graduate with a Unified Education Certificate (UEC). Due to state education policies, however, Malaysians earning a UEC are unable to enroll in the state university system. As most UEC graduates are Mandarin-speaking Chinese, many of them pursued further study overseas. In more recent years, this maintenance of linguistic and cultural links has given Chinese Malaysians a lead in recent “resinicization” efforts as Southeast Asian Chinese populations seek to reconnect with China and take advantage of China’s growth (Wang, 2000, pp. 84–85).

Communal and linguistic linkages are not the only reasons provoking Chinese Malaysians to seek opportunities outside Malaysia. As discussed in the previous section, the small size of the Chinese language market in Malaysia is a factor, but there are larger trends seen in the migration desires and patterns of Chinese Malaysians that also shape the pathways of migration for film workers. Nationalist policies and rhetoric in Malaysia led by the ruling UMNO party have positioned ethnic Chinese as tenuous citizens through such labels as “pendatang” (visitor/outsider) and via *pro-bumiputera* (Malay) economic and social policies implemented since 1971.³ These conditions have created uncertainty in the minds of many Chinese Malaysians and a feeling of what Koh (2014) calls “unbelonging”. As a result, trends of outward migration from Malaysia by members of the minority Indian and Chinese communities have been noted especially via the phenomena of “brain drain” as highly skilled and educated Malaysians seek permanent emigration elsewhere (Hugo, 2011, p. 148). Traditionally, migrants have focused on destination countries such as Singapore and Australia, rather than China (Hugo, 2011).

Throughout China’s post-independence era until its opening up and marketization from 1978 onward, Chinese Malaysians were unable to migrate to China for business or work. As noted in the previous section, if they wanted to work in a Chinese milieu, they sought opportunities in Hong Kong, Singapore or Taiwan. By the 2000s, China was also beginning to liberalize its media industries with the privatization of

³This paper was written before the defeat of the UMNO-led ruling Barisan Nasional coalition in the May 2018 General Election. The point still stands however.

state-owned media companies, the creation of a domestic commercial film industry, and the proliferation of digital and online platforms such as Youku and Tudou (Kokas, 2017). China has only recently become a viable destination for Malaysian creative labor seeking work in China's media sector.

Much of the concern with creative labor migration has been framed within the creative cities discourse initiated by Florida (2003). Providing a playbook for urban administrators, Florida argues that for cities to remain competitive in the globalized knowledge economy, cities need to attract young, creatives through incentives such as high-speed internet, liberal social policies, and art districts. Such superficial prescriptions have been rightly critiqued (Peck, 2005), with others placing emphasis on how established "media cities" (e.g., Shanghai, Los Angeles, Tokyo, London) are able to attract migrants due to the existence of global media companies, job opportunities, and peripheral services (Krätke, 2003). Push and pull factors drive Chinese Malaysians to move to China, but the attractiveness of China as a destination is in part due to the advantageous position they have in the networks of Chinese transnationalism.

As media production expands in China, many migrants have sought work in its media centers. Primarily, this is to the urban centers of Shanghai and Beijing which remain important media cities hosting global companies as well as domestic production houses, but new production centers are emerging around the Hengdian World Studios and in Qingdao where Wanda have recently built studios. Hengdian World Studios is estimated to account for 70% of domestic film and television production in China due to its permanent and largescale sets and locations and has attracted many internal migrants (Johnson, 2013). Centers of media production are also emerging at the provincial level — usually in the capital cities — as provincial media businesses seek to modernize their infrastructure and product and compete nationally. With Beijing and Shanghai rapidly becoming global cities, they simultaneously become a "transnational community" (Ang, 2004, p. 190).

Creative labor migration to mainland China has been led primarily by Taiwanese and Hong Kong above-the-line talent including cinematographers, directors, producers, art directors, and actors. Writing from Hong Kong, Szeto and Chen (2012) have described this phenomenon as "mainlandization" noting that the skimming off of above-the-line talent from Hong Kong has left below-the-line crews out of work, but also opened space for a new kind of Hong Kong filmmaking to emerge that is much more local in its orientation and Cantonese in its dialect. Mainlandization also sees the Mainland market and political interests infiltrating into film content, with the increased use of Mandarin and deference to Mainland sensitivities and political concerns. This has also resulted in the blurring of what is a "Chinese film" as a production may

involve Mainland money and locations, Hong Kong above-the-line talent, and feature actors from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China.

Malaysians are also drawn into these circulations of production with many Chinese Malaysians moving to China becoming new actors in the networks of Chinese transnationalism. Some respondents reported moving to China for only a few months whereas others have settled permanently there, marrying PRC citizens, and establishing families. This variety of migratory patterns reflect an “open-ended rather than finite process” (Ip, Hibbins, & Chui, 2006, p. 3) as China may not be the final or permanent migration destination. Instead, China becomes a new node in the creative labor networks alongside Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, as well as Japan, South Korea, and extending as far as Indonesia and the United States. No doubt there are more workers from Taiwan and Hong Kong working in China due to the geographical proximity and the earlier integration of their markets and the first mover advantage.⁴ Moreover, both countries had much higher profile film and media industries through into the 2000s and can offer greater expertise. However, Malaysians are beginning to find a niche for themselves in China’s media industries due in part to their mobility, transnational vision, linguistic abilities, and exposure to international media business practices.

How mainland China now appears in circuits of creative labor migration is evident in the trajectory of Malaysian director Ho Wi-Ding who after graduation from NYU Tisch School settled in Taiwan where he directed his first feature *Pinoy Sunday* (2009) for which he won the Best New Director award at the Golden Horse Awards. From his base in Taipei, he worked on two telemovie projects on the Mainland (*My Elder Brother in Taiwan*, 2010; *The Biggest Toad in the Puddle*, 2014) which he described in one interview as “stepping into the Wild West. [...] It was a tough situation to work in, but it was good training” (Koay, 2014). More recently, he completed a feature in Singapore *Our Sister Mambo* (2015) for Cathay — their first production in 15 years. Then in 2017, he released *Beautiful Accident* (2017) made in China for Huayi Brothers and Taihe Film Investment and as of January 2018 is working on a Taiwan–France co-production called *Cities of Last Things*. Now based in Beijing, Ho displays a transnational sensibility in which Mainland China has become a central node in his filmmaking network and thereby creating new circuits and connections within Chinese cinemas.

A similar trajectory is seen in the career of Malaysian singer–actor–director Namewee who now circulates between Taiwan, China, Singapore, and Malaysia.

⁴The exact numbers of migrants are not known. It is outside the scope of this research project to know exactly how many Malaysians are working in China presently. Some informants mentioned a “Malaysians in China” WeChat group with a few hundred members.

Originally from Johor and developing a media career in online video and pop music, Namewee moved into feature film as an actor and sometimes a director. After his sixth feature film *Banglasia* (2013) was banned in Malaysia, Namewee largely abandoned feature filmmaking to concentrate on his music career. He moved to Taiwan where he is able to work more freely — but returns to Malaysia for tours and recording — including filming for his music video *Oh My God* (2016) which led to him being arrested due to scenes in the video showing him dancing in a mosque and *Like a Dog* (2017) ostensibly to celebrate the Year of the Dog but also a satire on Malaysian politics. Earlier in 2017, Namewee collaborated with American–Chinese singer Wang Leehom to release *Stranger in the North* which describes the life of migrant workers in Beijing.

Namewee's producer Fred Chong also now works beyond Malaysia by developing a new trans-Asia music and entertainment business called WebTVAsia (<http://webtvasia.com>). WebTVAsia was established in 2013 and promotes Asian pop music and video content to audiences in China, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore via its 600 channels aggregated on YouTube. At the same time, WebTVAsia is able to cross-promote between different national markets developing a trans-Asian brand and market presence. WebTVAsia is headquartered in Kuala Lumpur but has a significant office in Beijing (Prodigee Media) with plans to produce feature films in China including a remake of the Thai film *Teacher's Diary* (Nithiwat Tharathorn, 2014). We see here the ways in which Malaysian media companies and individuals are moving into trans-Asian circuits of production, promotion, and consumption that include China.

China now becomes a logical destination for Malaysians seeking their next big project or wanting to step up in their career. Malaysia's market remains limited in terms of the budgets available to directors and the ambitions of local television producers. One Malaysian cinematographer — Stephen Chua — is the lead cinematographer for a 50-episode Chinese TV series called *God of Lost Fantasy* (Hu Chuxi and Chen Weixiang, 2018) shot partly at the Hengdian World Studios and locations in Tongzhou grasslands, Yellow River Hoodoo National Geopark, and Yuanmou forests. This kind of largescale project is rarely produced domestically in Malaysia and gives cinematographer Chua not only larger sets, budgets, and scale to work with but also represents a means to network further in China's media industry.

Linguistic ability is important for China's rapidly globalizing media industries as it seeks to host more co-productions, invite foreign talent, and negotiate for distribution deals overseas. While English is the language of international business, working in the media sector in China requires Mandarin. Many Western workers

therefore struggle in this environment or require translators or other linguistic assistance. In other instances, bilingual employees are preferred including American Born Chinese (ABC), Singaporeans, or Chinese Malaysians. Co-productions which involve delicate negotiations and relationships between different parties may look to Malaysians as neutral arbiters between the English-speaking and Mandarin-speaking sides. As one Beijing-based Malaysian actress notes:

That's why I have more chances to get in English or bi-lingual project or co-production project in the film industry. Because I'm still Chinese but just that I was born in Malaysia.

In other instances, Malaysians speaking Mandarin, Cantonese, and English are able to operate on multi-cultural productions. Another Beijing-based Malaysian producer notes that

I grew up speaking Mandarin, Cantonese, and a bit of English, but mostly I grew up with a bunch of friends and relatives who are Chinese educated that's why I am very familiar, and I see myself very close to these Mainland Chinese or Taiwanese Chinese culture as well.

Cantonese helps in relationships with Hong Kong filmmakers also working on the Mainland. On the production side, Chinese Malaysians tend to be polyglots who have gone through the Chinese education system attaining not only fluency in Mandarin but also fluency in English.

Within the rapidly globalizing Chinese media, Malaysians become intermediaries in-between Mainland partners and foreigners. One interviewee worked for a Japanese company in Shanghai producing co-productions in part because of his command of English, Mandarin, and Japanese after graduating from a Japanese university. This pattern of being cultural intermediaries extends to Willie Chan, Jackie Chan's long-time agent, who became an important middleman for Jackie Chan as he noted in this 1998 interview:

Jackie has no education. Since he was seven he was at Beijing Opera School. As he goes on in his career, he will need me more and more. It cannot be less. I spent two years at the East-West Center in Hawaii in 1966 getting my master's degree in marketing, the best years of my life. And handling a movie star is like marketing. It's a product — that may not sound nice, but the principles are the same. He needs someone to handle his finances, and he needs me for the American market because I know English very well. (quoted in McHugh (1998))

Another Malaysian producer worked on the French–China production *Le Portrait interdit* (*The Lady in the Portrait*, Charles de Meaux, 2017) mediating between the French team and the Chinese team. Although somewhat difficult to negotiate, her experience speaks of her role in-between the two sides:

So when I'm with the Chinese, they felt that I'm a foreigner because I'm not a real Chinese to them, but when I'm with the French, the Chinese would think that "Hello, you are Chinese. How could you side [with] the French?" So, I'm like "Okay, who do you want me to be?"

Despite these difficulties, Malaysians come to occupy an important and needed function within the Chinese media industries. But like many Hong Kong and Taiwanese creative migrants, Malaysians are also occupying important roles in China's media productions.

Taking on these roles allows Chinese Malaysians to participate in the internationalization of China's media industries which can be a point of pride. Chinese Malaysians help connect China into networks of production, capital flow, skills transfer, and product distribution both in the region and globally. The actress based in Beijing sees her role partly as a cultural ambassador for China, helping the world to see and understand China better:

So, I think that... I'm a Chinese I should try out in China... at the end of the day you still want to promote this culture outside. Because I'm more strong [sic] in Chinese culture then you need to bring this Chinese culture outside China. This is the exchange. There is a value there.

What we are seeing then is a growing integration of China into cultural and media circuits of Chinese transnationalism. Chinese Malaysians become a vector for China's integration as they seek opportunities and take operational roles in the Chinese media market. This represents one way in which new relationships are being forged between China and Southeast Asia through the region's local Chinese population.

China's Film Industry in Malaysia

At the same time, as more Malaysians have been moving to China to seek work in the entertainment industries, Chinese productions have been looking outwards for locations, facilities, talent, and co-production partners. In other cases, Mainland actors, talents, and other filmmakers are featured in Malaysian productions. The Malaysian horror film *Haunted Hotel* (Ryon Lee, 2017) for example featured a young Mainland Chinese couple who are chased by a ghost in Genting Highlands while on holiday. The film features Thai Chinese actress Aom (Li Haina) and Mainland actor Leon Li Chuan. *Haunted Hotel* was later released in cinemas in China, completing its transnational journey in both production and exhibition. These screen industries linkages carry new interactions and create new networks of transnationalism between Chinese populations in China and Malaysia.

Scholars have previously noted how the United States, Australia, and Canada have figured in the new networks of Chinese outbound investment and productions, with specific services catering to facilitating co-productions emerging in different locations (Walsh, 2012; Yue, 2014). In Canada for example, Leung (2016) notes how Canadian–Chinese become co-production partners for Chinese film projects providing location and production support. Malaysia has hosted foreign film shoots and crews using its locations for various types of films. Some of the most famous films shot in Malaysia include *Anna and the King* (Andy Tennant, 1999) starring Chow Yun-Fat and Jodie Foster, *Entrapment* (Jon Amiel, 1999) starring Sean Connery, and *Police Story 3: Supercop* (Stanley Tong, 1992) with Jackie Chan and Michelle Yeoh. Since 2000, there has been an increase in the number of productions originating from China and/or Hong Kong. Romantic drama *Summer Holiday* (Jingle Ma, 2000) filmed on location in Redang Island initiated the flow of new Chinese productions into Malaysia. *Summer Holiday* earned 21,336,647 Hong Kong dollars (2.7 million US dollars) at the Hong Kong box office making it the second highest grossing Hong Kong film for that year. In the years since 2000, over 20 Chinese productions have come to Malaysia.

What needs to be noted here is that identifying a “Chinese” project or production is increasingly difficult as more productions become transnational in their design, production, content, and distribution. With the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, Hong Kong’s status is somewhat ambiguous — retaining some of its identity and autonomy through the use of Cantonese for example, but in reality, rapidly integrating with Mainland China. Hong Kong still hosts many established film companies such as Golden Harvest, Media Asia, and Emperor Pictures but these are now either collaborating increasingly with Mainland companies or being bought over. Hong Kong film mainstay Golden Harvest for example was bought over by Mainland Company Orange Sky in 2007. A similar integration between Hong Kong and China occurs in productions as a result of “mainlandization” as discussed earlier.

To aid China’s growing collaborations with foreign partners and in overseas locations, a number of co-production agreements have been signed with other countries and there are film exchanges, festivals, and government-to-government forums to promote China overseas. While no co-production agreement has been signed between China and Malaysia, in 2017, the Beijing-based ASEAN-China Center (ACC) hosted the China ASEAN Film Festival in Kuala Lumpur, hosting officials from China, filmmakers from across ASEAN, and screening a number of Chinese films including *Wolf Warrior 2*.⁵ China presented itself as a logical partner to Southeast Asian

⁵See <http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2017-12/01/c_136830299.htm>.

filmmakers in the hope for more cultural exchanges and filmmaking collaborations. Choosing Kuala Lumpur as the venue also spoke of the receptiveness to China in Malaysia and the existing screen industries and business relationships between the two countries. Although these operated at the official level, China–Malaysia projects have been proceeding through private initiative and based on company-to-company partnerships.

To service these productions, a small number of local companies provide co-production services, the most prolific assisting Chinese language production is Asia Tropical Film (ATF) based in Petaling Jaya. ATF was formed in 2008 by CEO Adrian Teh, alongside Production Controller Allyan Too, and Senior Executive Producer Matt Lai,⁶ both of whom had associations with film and television production in China and Hong Kong. Asia Tropical markets itself as a production company “providing one-stop professional film production services” with “vast joint venture experiences with filmmakers from around the region.” ATF have provided assistance or co-produced a number of Chinese productions including *The Viral Factor*, *Conspirators* (Oxide Pang Chun, 2013), *Death Trip* (Li Tian and Chen Liu, 2014), and *Operation Mekong*. ATF themselves produced a local version of the hit Chinese film *Goodbye Mr Loser* (Adrian Teh, 2017) based on the 2015 original by directors Yan Fei and Peng Damo.

In assisting Chinese productions incorporate international locations and talent, Chinese Malaysian companies are playing the role of bridge or conduit. Adrian Teh’s profile on the ATF website states: “Work with us, together we introduce Malaysia production to the world!”⁷ This sentiment is echoed by a former producer at ATF and now marketing manager at Pinewood Malaysia Studios (PIMS) who says that

I tried to build the bridge, the communication bridge between Malaysia and China and let them know that they can always find Chinese-speaking crew in Malaysia and they also work with China production before.

At Pinewood Studios in the southern state of Johor, there has been a similar reorientation towards projects from China as the studios try and pick up the increased interest from outbound Chinese productions. PIMS most recently provided sets for the aeroplane crash movie *Lost in the Pacific* (Vincent Zhou, 2016), a US–China co-production starring Brandon Routh and Zhang Yuqi.

As Chinese Malaysians position themselves as a bridge to China, they contribute to Chinese transnationalism alongside other members of the Chinese diaspora in

⁶See <<http://www.atfilms.com.my/index.php/about/key-person>>.

⁷See <<http://www.atfilms.com.my/index.php/about/key-person>>.

Southeast Asia. Researcher Setijadi (2016) has found similar patterns in the case of Chinese Indonesian businessman who plays a crucial function as “trade and cultural intermediaries” with China, or what she calls a “beautiful bridge”. Chinese Malaysians are already facilitating the internationalization of China’s media industries and becoming active participants in developing overseas linkages and networks. By playing this intermediary role and linking China to the other parts the world, Chinese Malaysians become nodal agents in furthering Chinese transnationalism.

Malaysia is attractive for Chinese filmmakers for its variety of locations that include natural and manmade landscapes, and also importantly its multi-lingual speaking population which makes working relationships easier to manage. This has been partly the motivation of Hong Kong director Dante Lam who shot *The Viral Factor* (2012) and *Operation Mekong* (2015) in Malaysia. Working with a Hong Kong crew, and actors from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and Malaysia, Lam says for *The Viral Factor* “everything fell into place when we decided that the movie would be mainly set in Malaysia” (Seto, 2012). Funding for the film came through Emperor Motion Pictures (Hong Kong), and the two Mainland companies Beijing Universe Starlight Culture Media and Huayi Brothers. Lam returned to Malaysia to shoot *Operation Mekong* (2015) for Bona Group.

Likewise, China’s capital investment in media and entertainment is expanding into Southeast Asia. In February 2018, the Bona Group opened their first overseas cinema in Malaysia at the casino complex in Genting Highlands. At the opening with Bona Group boss Yu Dong, attendees watched *Operation Red Sea* (Dante Lam, 2018), the latest action film funded by Bona. China’s biggest special effects company BaseFX headquartered in Beijing, has just announced an expansion to Malaysia where it will open an office in Kuala Lumpur (Frater, 2018). This will complement its established offices in Xiamen and Wuxi and take advantage of Malaysia as a low-cost location that can mediate between China and the West. It is likely that over the coming decade, other Mainland Chinese companies will expand to Malaysia or acquire local media operators as they seek to consolidate their market presence in Southeast Asia and use them as avenues of distribution and exhibition.

As Mainland China commands greater interest and leverage in these media relationships, Mandarin increasingly becomes the required working language. As in Hong Kong where Cantonese films have become a form of resistance and alternative to Mainland China (Szeto & Chen, 2012), there will be ongoing challenges and interpretations of Chinese culture and Chineseness. Nevertheless, Malaysia will remain attractive for Mainland filmmakers looking for locations to shoot in, just as Malaysia will remain receptive to Chinese productions because they contribute to the

local film industry. These productions accompany a range of other “soft power” or cultural initiatives that seek to promote China in the region and to bolster its image and regional presence (Su, 2010).⁸

Conclusion: China Dream Factory

As China becomes a more assertive player in Chinese transnationalism, it also draws Malaysia and Chinese Malaysians into its economic and cultural orbit. Chinese Malaysians become important partners and participants in the growth of China’s screen industries. This is due to the large Chinese population in Malaysia, including many Mandarin speakers, the continued linguistic and cultural attachments to Chinese culture, the small domestic Chinese media market, and the precarious political position of the Chinese in Malaysia. We will therefore see more Chinese Malaysians consider China as a destination to pursue their ambitions as cultural producers, resulting in deeper integration between the two countries.

For Malaysian companies and individuals, this means a much clearer role in a reshaped East Asian pop culture in which China now plays a much larger role. It sees China emerging as a powerful source of capital and content that is reshaping the film and media industries across the region as it has already in Hong Kong and Taiwan and drawing in others attracted by the possibilities of co-productions and access to China’s massive market. What is obvious is that our understanding of Chinese transnationalism is changing with China becoming a much more active and powerful participant.

As Nyíri and Tan (2017, p. 22) note, however, China’s “rise” is by no means just a top-down, coordinated process and involves much negotiation and diversity “on the ground.” This means that the rise and power of China in East Asian pop culture will not homogenize the region, making it the same as China. One of the clearest manifestations of this is in the relative political openness and opportunity for critique and opposition in each country. In recent years for example, a number of Taiwanese and Hong Kong artists have been forced to publicly apologize to China following their support of independence movements.⁹ At the same time, filmmakers and others seeking greater cultural freedom and space for expression may look to countries like Taiwan where different norms and traditions exist. Tsai Ming-Liang for example works with controversial material in his films and has found Taiwan conducive to his

⁸For example, China recently promoted the “Information Silk Road” through news and broadcast media in Thailand. See <http://www.ascan-china-center.org/english/2018-02/02/c_136953748.htm>.

⁹Examples include Taiwanese pop singer Chou Tzu-yu and Hong Kong actor Wong He.

work — a situation unlikely in either Malaysia or China. Similarly, talented Mainland filmmakers who face censure at home, look abroad to explore possibilities for their filmmaking (Marchetti, 2006).

It is important to note that not all Chinese Malaysians are aligned to China, use Mandarin, or see China as a benign and benevolent actor. China has attempted to use the overseas Chinese community as a community of influence overseas and to cultivate and suggest that their ultimate allegiance is to China, rather than their adopted home. Many Chinese Malaysians are dedicated citizens of Malaysia and have established roots in the country, building lives and families, and do not recognize or feel attachment to the PRC which itself has undergone significant political change since the ancestors of many Chinese Malaysians migrated. The ongoing attachments, identifications, and relationships with China will remain complicated.

By examining screen industries connections, we are reminded that the product also carries cultural meaning and significance. The choice of language, themes, narrative resolutions, and so on can all be significant for different audiences. While film is often treated as a commodity for capital accumulation, it also draws attention to representations, imagery, and ideas in ways that other products do not. Scholars in Chinese cinemas have developed these themes much more strongly as the transnational nature of Chinese cinemas itself gives rise to diversity and different possibilities of representation. The politics of representation will increasingly become more contentious and complicated.

As screen industries relationships develop between Malaysian and China, there is a reshaping of our understanding and parameters of Chinese transnationalism. Not only does it mark the rise of China as an active participant in developing new networks and relationships, but also highlights the new roles that Chinese Malaysians are playing. Their presence helps globalize the Chinese screen industries and thereby develop a more international outlook. It also marks a realignment towards Mainland China from Taiwan and Hong Kong for Chinese Malaysians and therefore part of a larger reshaping of the transnational Chinese language media economy and market.

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Unpacking Taiwan's Presence in Southeast Asia: The International Socialization of the New Southbound Policy

ALAN H. YANG

Over the past three decades, Taiwan has been struggling to gain an advantage and develop its role in Asia. This island has strived to balance its asymmetric relationship with China by engaging in regional integration in Southeast Asia and beyond. In the 1990s, the Taiwan government initiated the first wave of its Go South Policy aimed at building links at business and government levels with that region. The institutional and social legacy of the Go South Policy contributed to the making of the New Southbound Policy (NSP) which was proposed toward the end of 2015. This paper will unpack Taiwan's presence in Southeast Asia by highlighting the international socialization process of the NSP and Taiwan's strategic interaction with the region. It consists of four sections: the first section introduces the concept of international socialization. The second section discusses the positioning of Taiwan's previous Go South policies. Starting with the shift from a mentality of "Taiwanese Asia" (Taiwan de yazhou, 臺灣的亞洲) to one of "Asian Taiwan" (Yazhou de Taiwan, 亞洲的臺灣), it describes in detail how Taiwan's successive southward engagement initiatives have blended into the international socialization processes in the region. The third section highlights the relationships the policy's key actors and stakeholders, including transnational actors, are establishing with their counterparts in Southeast Asia and the new social linkages that are currently being promoted. This includes the activities of Taiwanese residents in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian migrants in Taiwan. The paper concludes by summarizing Taiwan's international socialization in Asia.

KEYWORDS: New Southbound Policy; international socialization; ASEAN; Taiwan; Southeast Asia; interaction-based learning.

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Regionalism and regionalization are the two main theoretical perspectives on contemporary regional integration and regional community building in the Asia-Pacific and beyond (Beeson, 2014; Dent, 2016; Söderbaum, 2016). The former focuses on the outcomes of inter-governmental collaboration, whereas the latter explores how forces within society, hidden behind state-centrism, foster transnational linkages (Beeson, 2014, p. 5). Regionalism tends to be state-centrist. Its goals are to safeguard peace and stability in the region, reduce confrontation, and prevent an unforeseen outbreak of hostilities (Calder & Ye, 2010, pp. 225–250; Mansfield & Milner, 1997, p. 3; Severino, 2009, pp. 5–6, 16–18). One recent focus of regionalism is the integration of regional economies and the fostering of exchanges between them with the purpose of creating common interests among regional stakeholders through institutional frameworks or informal networks (Combes, Mayer, & Thisse, 2008; Eko, 2017; Fithra, 2016). Regionalization, on the other hand, concerns the way in which civic forces create intricate linkages between societies and build transnational communities in the pursuit of “soft regionalism” (Hurrell, 1995, pp. 39–40).¹ Regionalization is usually a bottom-up approach to fostering regional networks and further advancing the regional community (Hatch, 2010; Klecha-Tylec, 2017).

Most of the International Relations (IR) literature adopts a regionalist approach to regional integration, focusing on the policies and behavior of the state (Blackwill & Harris, 2016; Hobson, 2000). Nevertheless, the development of transnational communities in various regions today indicates that we need a more holistic understanding of such integration efforts. It is imperative to “bring society back in” by highlighting the role and capacity of transnational actors and the micro-process of networks in the making of regional society.

Taiwan is an ideal case for a reexamination of regionalization in Asia. It is located where Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia meet, and it has long been engaged in a search for identity and “a more advantageous position” within Asia (Office of the President, 2017a). On the one hand, this has been a matter of wanting to break free from the constraints of its relationship with China, while on the other hand, it is associated with a desire to become part of Asian integration for its own sake. Since the 1990s, Taiwan’s government has sought to develop relations with Southeast Asian countries. Initially, this took the form of plans for Taiwanese businesses (*Taishang*, 台商) to establish production bases in the region; this was followed by the bilateral investment projects and special economic zone development plans led by the then-Kuomintang (KMT) government and continued by subsequent leaders of both the KMT and the Democratic Progressive Party

¹ A narrow definition of regionalization is that it is a process driven by market forces. See Hatch (2010, pp. 6–7).

(DPP) (J. Chen, 2002; Cooper, 2015, pp. 140–141). Twenty years later, in 2016, these endeavors formed the foundation for the DPP government's New Southbound Policy (NSP) (Glaser, Kennedy, Mitchell, & Funaiolo, 2018, pp. 6–9; Yang & Hsiao, 2015, pp. 226–227). The NSP is essentially a repositioning of Taiwan's development and growth strategy, from one that is state-managed and purely profit based to one that is people centered and based on social interchange (Yang, 2016, 2017a).

There are at least two aspects to the development of the NSP. On the domestic front, Taiwanese society had become increasingly knowledgeable about and familiar with its neighbors in Southeast Asia, so things just fell into place after the NSP was initiated. On an international level, the content of the NSP indicates that Taiwan is reinventing its “regional strategy for Asia” by incorporating more local and regional development needs (Office of the President, 2017b). Although there is room for improvement in the policy, the NSP has opened up Taiwan's path toward international socialization as it participates in the community-building process led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Yet the question is, who is socializing whom in Taiwan's relationship with its neighbors? Is the international socialization one-directional, or is it a process of two-directional social exchange? How can such a long-term socialization process stimulate or strengthen social linkages? These are the research questions to address the interaction between Taiwan and Southeast Asia and what this paper aims to explore. This paper consists of four sections: the first section introduces the theoretical basis and focus of international socialization and social linkages. The second section discusses the positioning of Taiwan's previous Go South policies and, starting with the shift from a mentality of “Taiwanese Asia” (*Taiwan de Yazhou*, 臺灣的亞洲) to one of “Asian Taiwan” (*Yazhou de Taiwan*, 亞洲的臺灣), describes in detail how Taiwan's successive southward engagement initiatives have blended into the international socialization processes in the region. The third section highlights the relationships the policy's key actors and stakeholders, including transnational actors, are establishing with their counterparts in Southeast Asia and the new social linkages that are currently being promoted. This includes the activities of Taiwanese in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian migrants in Taiwan. This paper concludes by summarizing Taiwan's international socialization in Asia.

International Socialization: Learning to be Regionalized

The IR literature on international socialization focuses on causes and effects between the international and domestic levels. Most studies explore how international

norms and institutions affect the development of domestic law, policy, and social practices. This interstate conceptualization of socialization is prevalent in the works of leading IR scholars (Alderson, 2001; Checkel, 2003; Flockhart, 2006; Schimmelfennig, 2000).

There are two contending perspectives among these scholars. The first emphasizes the institutional process of socialization. For example, Checkel (2003) demonstrates how the Council of Europe shapes changes in agent preferences of European countries whereas Greenhill (2010, pp. 131–133) investigates how the mediated socialization of international governmental organizations (IGOs) facilitates their member-states' compliance with human rights norms. A recent discussion on state and individual socialization with reference to the adoption of intellectual property norms by Morin and Gold (2016) uses triangulated data to examine the contradictions and intractability of this two-level socialization. From an institutional perspective, socialization refers to the effectiveness of governance or the establishment of "habits of cooperation" that make member countries comply with relevant norms (Johnston, 2003, p. 108).

A second argument focuses on the individual state actor, highlighting either the capacity of great powers to influence the process of international socialization by manipulating material incentives and altering substantive beliefs (Ikenberry & Kupchan, 1990, p. 285) or the way that rising powers are socialized into the international order and how they reshape that order once they enter it (Terhalle, 2011). For example, Makarychev (2017) sees Russia's growing engagement with the Asia-Pacific as a strategic international socialization effort. Sudo (2015, p. 239) contends that Japan's ASEAN policy involves the pursuit of multilateralism by promoting changing patterns of foreign policy, shifting from dependence on the United States to an autonomous policy stance and practicing multilateral diplomacy in the region. Furthermore, the Abe government in Japan advocates the sharing of norms and promotion of the principle of the "rule of law" in the region in an effort to socialize its counterparts in Southeast Asia and beyond (The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2017, p. 252). Shambaugh (2013, p. 131) argues that China "seems stuck somewhere" between the two phases of international socialization, that is, feigned compliance through a conscious and instrumental calculation and internalization with a deeply transformed identity. Since late 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), regarded by the Chinese as a new Long March, has used soft propaganda (the "Chinese dream") and hard performance (economic strength seamlessly backed up by investment, production, and political support) to socialize neighboring countries and encourage them to collaborate with the global rise of China (Yang, 2017b).

In contrast to the macro (*structural* and *power politics-oriented*) and meso (*institutional*) accounts of international socialization in the contemporary IR literature, this paper explores the micro-process of socialization by highlighting the importance of *learning*. It holds that in the regional context, socialization manifests itself as some kind of learning process. At the regional level, this paper identifies at least three types of learning: *interest-based*, *institution-based*, and *interaction-based*. Interest-based learning involves an exchange of tangible or non-tangible interests. A country with abundant power resources may try to socialize a smaller country by offering material incentives for the small country to comply with its norms and internalize its policy references.² The socialization of a small country through interest-based learning easily deteriorates into one-directional manipulation in which the bigger, bullying government plays the key role.

Institution-based learning refers to the socialization of states when they become members of an international institution. Member-states are expected to adopt a united stance within the institutional framework to encourage collective action. It is through such institution-based learning and the diffusion of values, identities, and norms based on the rules of the game agreed by all that international organizations and institutions foster common behaviors and beliefs. In Southeast Asia, following the “ASEAN Way” is a process of institution-based learning involving soft regionalism and a flexible consensus on the pursuit of regional integration (Acharya, 1997).

In contrast to the state-centric forms of socialization mentioned earlier, interaction-based learning is clearly more dynamic. At the regional level, it involves actors internalizing knowledge, norms, and interests through interaction so that they become part of a regional development scheme. It is a process of learning to be regionalized. Interaction is conducive to emulation and learning and it makes the actor a node in the institutional network as well as a member of a community. In a process similar to that of “reciprocal socialization” (Terhalle, 2011), as the institution solidifies the learning process, the collective action resulting from learning among members of the “we group” is likely to reshape the institution and the learning criteria.

The interaction-based learning process involves various stakeholders aside from governments and therefore tends to foster diverse social linkages. This paper focuses on two categories of stakeholders: *epistemic communities* and *transnational actors*. Socialization involving epistemic communities (defined as “network(s) of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative

²The “one China” policy of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is a vivid example of how Beijing socializes its neighbors in Southeast Asia using a formatted norm for bilateral and multilateral relations with Taiwan (Dou, 2009, p. 18).

claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area” (Haas, 1992, p. 3)) occurs as the norms and rules of the external environment are internalized as part of policy making. The learning process during socialization enables epistemic communities to design more well-rounded policies that match the current dynamics, thereby establishing frameworks and projects to promote social linkages.

The socialization of transnational actors entails learning how to interact with other stakeholders, so they can become part of a transnational civil society and realize the ideal of a regional community. Having learned through a process of socialization, transnational actors will be able to take advantage of their in-depth understanding of different political, social, economic, and cultural systems to shape new shared interests and identities. Meanwhile, they can utilize the interaction to cultivate diverse social linkages.

This paper argues that *epistemic communities* play a crucial role in imagining policy agendas and frameworks and are seen as initiators of international socialization and social networks at a regional level. *Transnational actors*, on the other hand, are agents/executors of regional socialization and at the same time participants in social networks at a regional level.

In the following sections, Taiwan’s policies toward Southeast Asia will be used as a case study of its practice of international socialization. An exploration of the learning pathway taken by epistemic communities in the process of “becoming part of Asia” (Miller & Wich, 2011) will be followed by an examination of the dynamics of socialization and the micro-process driven by various transnational actors.

Taiwan’s “Go South” Efforts

Despite the volatile international environment, Taiwan has continued to seek to develop relationships with Southeast Asia. The first goal of Taiwan’s Go South Policy (*nanxiangzhengce*, 南向政策) was to break out of the political frame of Cross-Strait rivalry and reduce Taiwan’s economic reliance on China (Glaser et al., 2018, p. 6) by steering trade and investment toward Southeast Asia. However, because the policy initiatives in the early stage were not based on a solid understanding of the countries and societies in the region, Taiwan, as an outlying island in Asia, developed a sense of alienation from its southern neighbors and came to regard Southeast Asia merely as a production base and investment target for the *Taishang*. Every Taiwan president from Lee Teng-hui onward has come under intense political pressure to expand the island’s international space, and they all saw Southeast Asia as a promising region in which to explore strategic possibilities and functional ties. Nevertheless, Taiwan’s political leaders still harbored an instrumentalist attitude, imagining Asia or even trying to

influence Asia from a Taiwanese perspective that estranged Taiwan still further from the regional community.

To extricate themselves from this interest-based dilemma, the Taiwan government and Taiwanese society have reinvented themselves in recent years in response to the *people-centered* development agenda promoted and practiced by ASEAN and its member-states. This constitutes a community-deepening project that involves a transition from a “Cross-Strait Taiwan” (*liangan de Taiwan*, 兩岸的臺灣) via a muddling-through process of “*Taiwanese Asia*” toward an “Asian Taiwan.” This transformation represents a paradigm shift among Taiwan’s epistemic communities that deserves closer investigation.

Cross-Strait Taiwan

The factor of Cross-Strait relations casts a deep shadow over Taiwan’s foreign relations. From the “hot conflict” of the Cold War period to the “cold peace” that has reigned since the Cold War ended, Taiwan has never been able to extricate itself from the structural constraints of its relationship with China (Rowe, 2017; Taiwan says China, 2013). On the political front, after it relocated to the island in 1949, the KMT government maintained a “Greater China” party-state ideology. As a result, during the KMT era, Taiwan’s epistemic communities prioritized Cross-Strait factors when floating ideas about political development and external relations, which limited Taiwan’s regional participation in terms of capacity and strategy (one example being the 1992 Consensus, see Huang and Li (2010, pp. 153–162)). At the same time, Beijing has never renounced its threat to use military force to unify China, and its continued undermining of Taiwan’s international capacity through verbal intimidation and international pressure remains Taiwan’s most severe challenge (de Lisle, 2016; Easton, 2017).

On the economic front, China’s magnetic effect on Taiwan is the key. After Beijing launched its reform and opening-up policy in the late 1970s, China became the world’s factory, attracting Taiwanese enterprises in particular on account of a shared cultural and linguistic heritage. In 1988, Beijing issued the Provisions of the State Council Concerning the Encouragement of Investments by Compatriots from Taiwan (*guanyu guli Taiwan tongbao touzi de guiding*, 關於鼓勵台灣同胞投資的規定), designed to entice Taiwanese entrepreneurs to expand into China (Investment Promotion Agency of MOFCOM, 1988). Two years later, Taiwan issued its Regulations on Managing Indirect Investment or Technological Cooperation in the Mainland Area (*dui daludiqu jianjiatouzi huo jishuhezuo guanlibanfa*, 對大陸地區間接投資或技術合作管理辦法) (Investment Commission, Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEAIC), 1990). As a result, the *Taishang* quickly increased their presence in China, expanding from the Pearl River Delta (*Zhujiang sanjiaozhou*,

珠江三角洲) to the Yangzi River Delta (*Changjiang sanjiaozhou*, 長江三角洲), and further westward to the interior.

This challenge of having to deal with Chinese pressure in its relations with other countries, plus the difficulties of political and economic relations across the Taiwan Strait, placed structural constraints on Taiwan's foreign relations. As China continues to grow more powerful, any Taiwanese leader must find a way to break out of encirclement by China. Against this backdrop, nearby Southeast Asia, rather than Taiwan's diplomatic allies in far-flung Latin America and Africa, became the strategic choice of the Taiwan government.

A Taiwanese Asia

In the 1990s, Taiwan cast off its authoritarian past and began to democratize. Being subject to continuing political pressure from China, newly democratized Taiwan had to be more active and flexible in developing its foreign policy. It was in this context that Taiwan's president at the time, Lee, conceived and began to promote the first wave of the Go South Policy. In combination with his "go slow, be patient" (*jieji yongren*, 戒急用忍) approach toward China, the Go South Policy was interpreted as a counterbalance to the prevailing westward trend and part of an effort to slow Taiwanese investment in China. The success of this new policy orientation depended on the ability of the public sector, state-owned enterprises, and KMT-affiliated businesses to break out of the structural constraints of "Cross-Strait Taiwan" (Yang & Hsiao, 2015, pp. 216–218). Meanwhile, the policy also meant establishing flexible intergovernmental linkages with Southeast Asian countries. The government, the public sector, state-owned enterprises, and government-related institutions were all involved in imbuing the policy with a strong "Taiwanese Asia" flavor.³

Taiwan's epistemic communities also began to investigate Taiwan's relations with the major countries of Southeast Asia, trying to work out how Southeast Asia could be inserted into the strategic environment that Taiwan had developed for its foreign relations. The establishment of think tanks,⁴ research centers,⁵ and a research program⁶ enhanced the capacities of the epistemic communities and strengthened their

³The policy served as Taiwan's approach to becoming the logistics hub of Asia.

⁴For example, the secretariat of the Taiwanese participatory group for the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) was set up at the Institute of International Relations (IIR) as a platform for Track II diplomacy with leading think tanks in ASEAN and other Asia-Pacific countries.

⁵Centers for Southeast Asian studies were set up at Tamkang University, National Chi Nan University, National Cheng Kung University, and National Sun Yat-sen University.

⁶In 1994, Taiwan's leading research institution, Academia Sinica, initiated its Program for Southeast Asian Studies (PROSEA). The program was upgraded in 2003 and renamed the Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies (CAPAS).

links with Southeast Asia, thus fostering an understanding of the region in Taiwanese society.

The first wave of Go South saw the establishment of a modern bilateral framework for functional cooperation between Taiwan and the countries of Southeast Asia, which included exchanges of visits by political leaders,⁷ the upgrading and renaming of Taiwanese representative offices in the region, the signing of bilateral agreements, and the setting up of a ministerial-level dialogue mechanism in the 1990s (see Table 1). In 1994, Taiwan adopted the Guidelines on Enhancing Economic and Trade Relations with Southeast Asia (*jiaqiang dui dongnanya diqu jingmaohezuo*

Table 1.

Bilateral Agreements between Taiwan and Southeast Asia Countries (Selective Items on Trade and Investment Issues in the 1990s)

Country	Date	Titles
Vietnam	1993/4/21	Agreement between the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hanoi and the Vietnam Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei on the Promotion and Protection of Investments
	1993/7/29	Memorandum of Understanding on the Promotion of Investment (between the Industrial Development & Investment Center in Taipei and Investment Transaction Center in Hanoi)
	1998/4/6	Agreement between the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hanoi and the Vietnam Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income
Philippines	1992/1/27	Agreement between the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office and the Manila Economic and Cultural Office for the Promotion and Protection of Investments
	1994/7/2	Memorandum of Understanding between the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (Party A) and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (Party B) on the Promotion of Investments and Exports in the Textile and Apparel Industry
Singapore	1990/4/9	Agreement between the Industrial Development & Investment Center in Taipei and the Economic Development Board in Singapore on the Promotion & Protection of Investments

⁷Political leaders such as Fidel Ramos of the Philippines, Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia, and Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong of Singapore all visited Taiwan, and Lee Teng-Hui visited Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Table 1. (Continued)

Country	Date	Titles
Malaysia	1993/2/18	Agreement between the Malaysian Friendship and Trade Centre, Taipei and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia for the Promotion and Protection of Investments
	1996/7/23	Agreement between the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia and the Malaysian Friendship and Trade Center in Taipei for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income
Thailand	1996/4/30	Agreement between the Taipei Economic and Trade Office in Thailand and the Thailand Trade and Economic Office in Taipei for the Promotion and Protection of Investments
	1999/7/9	The Taipei Economic and Trade Office in Thailand and the Thailand Trade and Economic Office in Taipei for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income
Indonesia	1990/2/9	Memorandum of Understanding between the Taipei Economic and Trade Office and the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce in Taipei Concerning Co-operation for the Promotion of Investment
	1990/12/19	Agreement between the Taipei Economic and Trade Office and the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce to Taipei for the Promotion and Protection of Investments
	1995/3/1	Agreement between the Taipei Economic and Trade Office and the Indonesian Economic and Trade Office to Taipei for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income

Source: Treaty Database of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (R.O.C.), retrieved on February 10, 2018 from <<http://no06.mofa.gov.tw/mofatreatys/Index.aspx>>.

gangling, 加強對東南亞地區經貿合作綱領) which set the tone for regional engagement.

In line with the Taiwan government's policy, state-owned enterprises emerged as transnational actors and began investing in Southeast Asia. This triggered an investment rush and an increase in trade between Taiwan and the region. In 1994, Taiwanese investment in Southeast Asia was worth US\$4.98 billion, compared to US\$1.17 billion the previous year, whereas investment in China decreased from US\$3.17 billion to US\$962 million (Glaser et al., 2018, p. 6). Trade increased by 22.5% over the same period, from US\$16.4 billion to US\$20.2 billion (see Table 2). Of course, investment by state-owned enterprises had the effect of encouraging small and medium-sized

Table 2.

Taiwan's Trade with Southeast Asia (Selective Years/USD Million)

Country \ Year	GSP					NSP	
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	2016	2017
Southeast Asia	16,438.90	20,212.86	25,544.65	26,693.20	29,708.24	78,444.67	89,599.85
Brunei	76.20	77.15	72.35	99.23	91.19	134.08	235.21
Indonesia	2,908.52	3,547.31	4,019.20	3,839.73	4,318.46	7,046.76	8,092.18
Cambodia	9.56	11.89	33.96	68.15	93.42	728.49	727.36
Laos	8.04	16.53	23.27	12.57	16.58	21.06	22.31
Myanmar	26.73	44.28	63.45	67.92	85.77	281.86	295.46
Malaysia	3,610.63	4,550.89	5,852.18	6,518.83	7,263.60	14,095.94	17,551.13
Philippines	1,395.85	1,683.09	2,276.69	2,771.41	3,616.97	10,863.29	11,971.60
Singapore	4,756.11	5,771.34	7,362.76	7,362.12	8,044.76	23,669.61	26,340.89
Thailand	2,991.85	3,548.87	4,556.87	4,461.18	4,488.89	9,308.85	10,740.46
Vietnam	655.41	961.51	1,283.91	1,492.05	1,688.60	12,294.72	13,623.23

Source: Bureau of Trade (Trade Statistics), retrieved from <<https://cus93.trade.gov.tw/FSCE000F/FSCE000F>>.

enterprises (SMEs) to expand into Southeast Asia. In the 1990s, for example, more than 2,000 Taiwanese electronic companies invested in Malaysia, facilitating the regional expansion of value chains in Southeast Asia (Hsu, 2017, p. 65).

The Go South Policy's encouraging impact on trade and investment indicates that the Taiwan government was to some extent meeting a need for national economic transformation by, for instance, encouraging the relocation of "sunset industries" and facilitating a supply of skilled labor. The policy also helped to counterbalance the movement of *Taishang* westward into China. Still, it drew criticism for treating Southeast Asia as an appendage to the advance of the "Taiwan model" of economic development while purporting to show respect for the countries of the region (Ngeow, 2017, p. 103). Some argued that Taiwan was imitating the United States and Japan by fanning out across the region, promoting itself as a "secondary imperial power" (K.-H. Chen, 2010; Weber, 2016, p. 188), treating Southeast Asia as a southward extension of its economy, culture, and politics.

The idea of economic networks and expansion activities based on a "Taiwanese Asia" implied a strong belief that Taiwan's development experience could serve as catalyst or guide for developing countries elsewhere in the region. This conception was prevalent during the presidencies of Chen Shui-bian and Ma Ying-jeou. Confronted with a stronger China, both Chen and Ma saw Go South as a way of

extricating Taiwan from its foreign relations predicament. Both presidents retained the existing guidelines on economic and trade relations and even expanded the scope of the policy and the number of countries included in it.⁸

Amid these moves, the epistemic communities, taking an interest in the development of the economy and free trade, played an important leading role.⁹ The only difference was that Chen, preoccupied with the political indigenization of Taiwan, did not prioritize “Cross-Strait Taiwan,” turning instead to the networks that the DPP had cultivated before it came to power. In 2004, for example, Chen assumed the chairmanship of the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), further advancing party-to-party links with the region (CALD, 2004). He combined Taiwan’s presence in Southeast Asia with the promotion of an Asian democratic alliance that increased the political capacity of Go South and expanded the international democratic support for the policy.

Soon after taking office, Chen’s successor, Ma, returned to the ideology of “Cross-Strait Taiwan,” working toward a diplomatic truce with Beijing, energizing Cross-Strait commerce and trade, and institutionalizing them through the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). As Cross-Strait policy came to the fore once again, the establishment of economic cooperation agreements (ECAs), including the ongoing Go South effort, was reduced to being merely a means to an end. However, one optimist did argue that if Cross-Strait relations went well, Taiwan could expect to get more opportunities to engage in multilateral activities in Southeast Asia, perhaps even as an observer in ASEAN (S. C. Y. Ku, 2009, p. 94).

As long as President Chen did not declare independence and President Ma did not pursue unification, the people of Taiwan were prepared to accept the status quo. Hence, the Taiwanese political elites and epistemic communities were still stuck in a “Taiwanese Asia” mindset rather than thinking of relations with Southeast Asia from a regional community perspective. Nonetheless, “Taiwanese Asia” was never able to take precedence over “Cross-Strait Taiwan.” During Chen’s time in office, Taiwan’s dependence on trade and investment with China continued to increase, and when Ma

⁸During the Ma administration, Taiwan’s universities and colleges were encouraged to recruit more students from Southeast Asia to increase the sustainability of the higher education system (Office of the President, 2013).

⁹Leading economic think tanks in Taiwan, such as the Taiwan Institute of Economic Research (TIER), the Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research (CIER), and the Taiwan Research Institute (TRI), were recommending that Taiwan’s domestic economic development should be linked to its external trade and investment policy, while the strategic think tanks such as IIR were also concerned with strategizing Taiwan’s networks with ASEAN-led regionalism.

succeeded him, Taiwan's overall development became even more closely tied to China through the ECFA.

An Asian Taiwan

Taiwan passed another milestone on the road to democratic consolidation when the DPP returned to power in 2016. The President-elect Tsai Ing-wen declared before her inauguration that she would promote a new initiative in Southeast Asia, the "NSP." The NSP, the goal of which was to promote domestic socioeconomic transformation through regional integration, became the DPP administration's flagship policy. The new policy is different from what went before in two ways. First, it involves a repositioning of Taiwan and Southeast Asia so that Southeast Asia is no longer seen as a southward extension of Taiwan and Northeast Asia. Instead, Taiwan is to become an important link between Southeast Asia and the north. Under this premise, Taiwan will be socialized as a partner for the ASEAN-led community in its network-building process (Yang, 2017a, pp. 5–8). Second, the NSP represents a significant change in policy direction. The epistemic communities are now paying close attention to the regional dynamics of ASEAN. The strategic importance of Southeast and South Asia is highlighted in Taiwan's foreign policy as articulated by the National Security Council (NSC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The people-centered NSP is Taiwan's first official response to the regional integration project that the ASEAN Community has been developing since the 1990s. It is shaping Taiwan's "regional strategy for Asia" and making Taiwan an indispensable link with the region (Hsiao & Yang, 2018). Since Joseph Wu was appointed foreign minister in early 2018 (he was previously secretary-general of the Office of the President), the NSP has remained Taiwan's foremost foreign policy (Teng, 2018).

As a result of this reorientation, Taiwan no longer belongs *only* in a Cross-Strait setting but is *also* part of a much larger Asian economic and developmental grouping. The agenda of the NSP, socialized through the concurrent regional dynamics of ASEAN integration, has also changed from interest-based economic expansion to the development of people-centered social linkages, building robust partnerships by bringing together stakeholders in societies on both sides and nurturing regional awareness (Yang, 2016). This change has altered the "Taiwanese Asia" consciousness that was deeply ingrained in the mindset of the Taiwanese epistemic communities, and due to the nurturing and opening up of new social linkages, a new "Asian Taiwan" identity is being shaped.

Admittedly, the reorientation process has also involved many more stakeholders, including local governments, the Legislative Yuan, the business community, and

Taiwan's vibrant civil society.¹⁰ All of these sectors are learning to become the advocates, socializers, and transnational actors involved in shaping the new discourse of an "Asian Taiwan." For the public sector, Ma's Guidelines on Enhancing Economic and Trade Relations with Southeast Asia have been replaced by the Guidelines for the NSP (*xinnanxiangzhengce gangling*, 新南向政策綱領, August 2016), the Promotion Plan for the NSP (*xinnanxiangzhengce tuixing jihua*, 新南向政策推行計畫, September 2016), the Work Plan for the NSP (*xinnanxiangzhengce gongzuojihua*, 新南向政策工作計畫, December 2016), and the Five Flagship Programs (*wudaqijianjihua*, 五大旗艦計畫, April and August, 2017)¹¹ all of which focus on a broader people-centered development agenda and social linkages. The government's institutional reinforcement of the NSP is aimed at ensuring Taiwan's survival by coupling it with the security of South and Southeast Asia.¹²

At the beginning of 2018, there was a corresponding restructuring of the government departments in charge of the NSP. A special panel in charge of strategic planning and coordination across government agencies has been set up within the NSC to replace the NSP Office, while an NSP working group responsible for implementing the policy has been formed within the Executive Yuan (C. Ku & Kao, 2018).

Local governments, including those of Taipei, New Taipei, Kaohsiung, Taoyuan, Taichung, and Tainan, have set up committees and councils to take charge of the welfare of Southeast Asian residents in Taiwan while the Legislative Yuan has set up amity associations and policy groups to strengthen ties with lawmakers from Southeast Asian countries (Yang, 2017a, p. 24). These endeavors reflect a careful socialization process within Taiwan's public sector, with increased emphasis being placed on what Taiwan can contribute to Southeast Asia, its people, and the regional community. Government agencies are learning to highlight what resources should be shared between the two sides and how regional institutionalized collaboration and social linkages should be designed.

The private sector in Taiwan is also endeavoring to strengthen ties with Southeast Asia, building on the achievements of the past two decades and learning from the dynamics and requirements of ASEAN integration. *Taishang* are no longer trying to

¹⁰More involvement in the NSP by different sectors and stakeholders would enable "Taiwan to be recognized by the region." Interview with a leading member of a US think tank on Southeast Asian affairs, Washington, DC, March 23, 2018.

¹¹One regional agricultural program seeks to enhance food security by working together with countries in South and Southeast Asia to promote sustainable development and share technical expertise.

¹²When Joseph Wu was appointed secretary-general of the NSC in May 2016, the rationale of "comprehensive security" was highlighted in order to strategize Taiwan's national security. This had a big impact on the formation of the NSP (Zhu, 2016).

export the Taiwan model of economic development to Southeast Asia; instead, they are being socialized to pay attention to local needs and regional trends.¹³ As companies become more aware of the need for corporate social responsibility (CSR), they are trying to improve Taiwan's negative reputation as a polluter of the local environment. Taiwanese-owned banks in Southeast Asia are also beginning to look beyond the *Taishang* and offer their services to locals.¹⁴ More importantly, Taiwan's vibrant tech sector and startups such as Appworks are serving as a hub for liaison with the networks of "Greater Southeast Asia" and incubating a new generation of startups (Chow, 2017).

Media coverage of Southeast Asia in Taiwan has been increasing since 2016, and public debate over the content and practice of the NSP is more lively than ever, which underlines the policy's relevance to regional dynamics in Asia. Universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and social enterprises have also become important socializers of the NSP in Taiwan society and transnational actors in the region. They boost Taiwan's influence in Southeast Asian societies as they resonate with the ASEAN-led development and connectivity project in the region.

The NSP gives Taiwan a place within the ASEAN-led communities and networks. And by "Taiwan" we mean not only the government and the public sector, but also other stakeholders and transnational actors who have long had links beyond the island. The "Taiwan" of the NSP is an "Asian Taiwan." Only if Taiwan can closely link its national interests with the development concerns of individual Southeast Asian countries, a regional collective awareness and identity will take root in the island. Only then Taiwan's Asian neighbors can find a more appropriate positioning for this territory.

To sum up, "Cross-Strait Taiwan" is a structural constraint that still exists today, despite the Taiwan government's efforts to overcome it. Although previous Go South efforts were imbued with a "Taiwanese Asia" consciousness, they did demonstrate Taiwan's struggle to find strategic opportunities. The increased contacts with the rest of Asia that resulted from Go South drove the transition from "Cross-Strait Taiwan" to "Asian Taiwan." It has taken both the government and society more than two decades to come to regard Taiwan as a northern extension of Southeast Asia and a partner in the making of a regional community rather than being just an outlying island.

¹³Interview with a Taiwanese businessman from Singapore, Taipei, February 12, 2018.

¹⁴Interview with Taiwanese bankers in Vientiane, Laos, August 16, 2016.

Socializing Taiwan in Southeast Asia

The Go South effort has gained a great deal of momentum since the 1990s. Although Taiwan finds it challenging to establish formal diplomatic ties with its neighbors due to the political pressure from Beijing, it maintains a stable informal intergovernmental collaboration and useful civil society ties with the countries of Southeast Asia, and these contribute to making Taiwan an indispensable link in Asian regional networks.¹⁵ This is due to a process of socialization through interaction-based learning among Taiwanese living in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian residents of Taiwan. The former are learning to be “localized” and “regionalized” simultaneously, whereas the latter, through their work and social interaction in Taiwan, have come to understand a society which is geographically so close to home yet also quite unfamiliar. Of course, they are also seen by Taiwanese as an important reference point for understanding Southeast Asia.

The Socialization of Taishang in Southeast Asia

Contemporary interaction between Taiwan and Southeast Asia began with trade and investment activities. These included government-supported special economic zone projects, trade and investment plans, and functional cooperation initiatives such as those established with Thailand’s Royal Project Foundation in the mountainous north of the country. These projects brought Taiwanese people to settle in Southeast Asia. In the past, the vast majority were entrepreneurs and investors, but now more diverse social exchanges are emerging. Overall, Taiwan’s presence takes at least two forms: commercial and social (see Table 3).

On the commercial side, *Taishang* account for the lion’s share of Taiwanese residents in Southeast Asia. They arrived in the 1980s, or even earlier, to invest, to seek new business opportunities, or to participate in global production chains.¹⁶ Over the decades, individual *Taishang* banded together, founding friendship association-type business organizations in their host countries. The country with the most *Taishang* businesses is Thailand, which has some 5,000 companies registered with

¹⁵Interview with former chairperson of a Taiwanese business association in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 4, 2015.

¹⁶Taiwanese investment in Southeast Asia at that time was focused on manufacturing industry and was facilitated by SMEs. These private businesses reached out to the world much earlier than the Taiwan government. Interview with former chairperson of Taiwanese business association in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, December 12, 2012; interview with former chairperson of Taiwanese business association in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 4, 2015; interview with Taiwanese bankers in Vientiane, Laos, August 16, 2016.

Table 3.

Taiwanese People in Southeast Asia (Approximate Statistics)

Country	Ethnic Chinese Population	Ethnic Taiwanese Population	Population of Taishang	Taishang Companies	Number of Taishang Association
Brunei	40,000	23,598	30	30	1
Cambodia	140,000	3,000	4,000	300	1
Indonesia	8.48 million	201,000	10,000	2,000	9
Laos	150,000	100	100	100	1
Malaysia	6.44 million	43,000	40,000	1,800	8
Myanmar	1.23 million	400	400	200	2
Philippines	1.5 million	7,000	5,000	300	7
Singapore	2.9 million	30,000	400	200	1
Thailand	7 million	144,000	150,000	5,000	16
Vietnam	1.04 million	63,000	50,000	4,000	17

Source: Compiled by the author from the statistics provided by the Office of Trade Negotiation (R.O.C.) and from Yang and Hsiao (2015, p. 221).

local chambers of commerce, followed by Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In terms of numbers of people, Thailand has the most (about 150,000), followed by Vietnam (with 50,000). In the early period, most Taiwanese companies in the region were there because of labor market considerations and also to develop links to European and American markets. As Taiwanese business people have expanded their presence in Southeast Asia over the decades, they have gradually familiarized themselves with the local languages, cultures, and legal systems. This socialization process has taken more than 10 years of interaction with local governments and societies. Their successors, usually the product of marriages with locals, are more Southeast Asian than Taiwanese in the way they manage their businesses and cultivate networks in the region.¹⁷ Aside from assimilating into local society, they are able to exert their own unique political and commercial influence through local interpersonal networks.¹⁸

The *Taishang* experience in Vietnam and Thailand deserves further investigation. The development of the Phu My Hung Urban Area in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, has attracted the greatest attention in recent years. Investment in the project by the KMT-affiliated Central Trading & Development Group (CT&D) Group, part of the

¹⁷Interview with a Taiwanese businessman based in Singapore, Taipei, February 12, 2018.

¹⁸Most Taiwanese business people shy away from politically sensitive issues and activities. Nonetheless, maintaining good relationships with local officials and political leaders is important for safeguarding their interests in Vietnam. Interview with a Taiwanese businessman based in Hanoi, Vietnam, November 30, 2017.

first wave of the Go South Policy, was approved by the Vietnamese government in 1993. As the KMT withdrew its investment, Taiwanese entrepreneur Lawrence S. Ting took over, using Taiwanese corporate funds to reclaim wetlands and develop the once desolate terrain into a modern, internationalized new urban area. Now, Phu My Hung is not just important in terms of *Taishang* investment, it has become a national flagship project as well. The area is an international investment hub that has attracted Korean corporations and a Japanese school among others.¹⁹ The Phu My Hung Development Company, managed by the Ting family, has been named as Vietnam's first "Model New Urban Area" (Phu My Hung Development Company, 2018). As of 2015, the Lawrence S. Ting Memorial Fund had received more than 65 commendations and awards from the Vietnamese government in recognition of its contributions to Vietnam (Lawrence S. Ting Memorial Fund, 2018).

In Thailand, the chairman of the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce (JFCCT), Stanley Kang, hails from Taiwan. As an umbrella organization, the JFCCT represents 63 foreign chambers and business organizations (JFCCT, 2018). Kang has much in common with other senior *Taishang* in that he is familiar with Thai social customs and the country's economic development trends. However, his socialization goes even deeper because he actively canvasses the foreign business communities for their views on Thailand's investment environment and economic policies and submits suggestions to the government, albeit maintaining a position of strict neutrality where Thai internal politics are concerned. As a result of his successful socialization, Kang quickly became an advisor on economic policy and the development of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) (JFCCT chairman Stanley, 2014).

These are just two examples of prominent *Taishang* who through a process of socialization have become transnational actors in Southeast Asia. Their experiences, based upon interaction-based learning, provide an important point of reference for Taiwan as it learns how to become part of Southeast Asia's economic and social integration project and for their host countries seeking to benefit from Taiwan's unique experience. Ting's story is one of the long-term investment and cultivation of business ties by a large corporation and its subsequent contribution to Vietnam's urban regeneration efforts, all made possible by that corporation's familiarity with the host country's socioeconomic development dynamics. Kang, for his part, made a point of studying Thai social customs, and his socialization through interaction with the local community has directly contributed to Thailand's national growth policy. Indeed, the

¹⁹As there are many Korean corporations and shops in Phu My Hung, some Vietnamese people wrongly assume it as a Korean investment project. Interview with a Taiwanese businessman based in Singapore, Taipei, February 12, 2018.

countries of Southeast Asia are referring to Taiwan's corporate governance model and development experience in the development of their own economies.

Since the launch of the NSP, trade and investment have remained crucial to Taiwan's overall regional presence. However, Taiwan is also encouraging *Taishang* and large corporations from Southeast Asia to invest in Taiwan. Backed by policy guidance and assisted by Taiwan's representatives (ambassadors) in Southeast Asia, outstanding members of the Southeast Asian *Taishang* community have visited Taiwan to explore investment and over-the-counter (OTC) market listing opportunities (Liu, 2017). Due to the interaction-based learning process activated by the NSP, Taiwan is on course to becoming fully socialized as a partner of Southeast Asia through deeper and more diverse bidirectional social networks.

Cultivating new networks for regional partnership

In recent years, Taiwan has also began developing non-business networks in its effort to seek partnerships in Southeast Asia. These include exchanges at the institutional, social, and personal levels that have facilitated interaction-based learning in different fields. Since 2016, a substantial part of the national budget has been devoted to NSP programs in education, agriculture, innovative industries, and the training of young talent, all of which reflect the people-centered agenda of the ASEAN Community.²⁰

Regarding institutional networks, universities and research centers in Taiwan are learning to be regionalized by cooperating with their counterparts in Southeast Asia, sharing common interests and encouraging professional exchanges, increasing Taiwan's visibility and contributions to the region. Some new institutions have been set up with *Taishang* associations in Southeast Asia, while existing ones are seeking ties with leading Southeast Asian academic institutions and think tanks (see Tables 4–6).

The new institutions are mostly sponsored by Taiwan's Ministry of Education (for example, the Regional Resources Centers, the Academic Alliance for the NSP, and Taiwan Connection) or the Ministry of Science and Technology (for example, STIC). They have become transnational actors in the context of the NSP. The new networks are facilitating training programs and young talent cultivation projects for students and faculty members in Southeast Asia or Taiwan.

²⁰The United States and Japan have both been engaging with young leaders in Southeast Asia for some years through the Young Southeast Asian Leader Initiatives (YSEALI) and the Ship for Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Program (SSEAYP). It is important for Taiwan to participate in a region-wide network designed to cultivate young talent through joint efforts with YSEALI and SSEAYP. Interview with a leading member of a Southeast Asian affairs think tank in Washington, D.C., March 22, 2018.

Table 4.

Taiwan's Regional Resource Centers in Southeast and South Asia under the NSP

Institutions	Coordinator
Regional Resource Centers in Malaysia/Singapore	National Cheng Kung University
Regional Resource Centers in Indonesia	Chung Yuan Christian University
Regional Resource Centers in Vietnam	National Taiwan Ocean University
Regional Resource Centers in Myanmar	National Chi Nan University
Regional Resource Centers in the Philippines	National Sun Yet-sun University
Regional Resource Centers in India	National Tsing Hua University

Source: Compiled by the author.

Table 5.

Taiwan's Overseas Science and Technology Innovation Centers (STIC) in Southeast and South Asia under the NSP

Institutions	Coordinator
STIC in the Philippines (water quality)	National Cheng Kung University
STIC in Thailand (medical)	Pingtung Christian Hospital
STIC in Laos (plan resources and conservation)	National Tsing Hua University
STIC in Vietnam (agriculture)	National Chung Hsing University
STIC in Indonesia (Austronesian cultures and societies)	National Taitung University
STIC in Malaysia (project management and information technology)	Tamkang University

Source: Compiled by the author.

Table 6.

Taiwan's Academic Alliances for the NSP

Networks and Fields	Coordinator
Business and Social Sciences	National Chengchi University
Medical	National Cheng Kung University
Agriculture	National Chung Hsing University
Education and Humanities	National Taiwan Normal University
Engineering	National Tsing Hua University

Source: Compiled by the author.

For instance, new research centers for Southeast Asian (development) studies were established in Taiwan right after the NSP was launched in 2016. Among them, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) at National Chengchi University — established in partnership with a similar center at Kyoto University, Japan — is a leading institution promoting academic regionalization in Taiwan. Since 2018, the CSEAS has hosted the secretariat of the Consortium of Southeast Asian Studies in Asia (SEASIA), which will facilitate cooperation between Taiwanese epistemic communities and their counterparts in 13 East and Southeast Asian member-institutions, promoting Southeast Asian studies and the cultivation of young professionals in the region.

Regarding the development of social networks, new media in Taiwan that specifically focus on Southeast Asia have become a channel through which Taiwanese people can learn more about the societies and economies of Southeast Asia.²¹ Exchanges between museums and individual artists are encouraging those involved to learn from each other's societies and see each other's cultures in a fresh light. NGOs are even more active in providing capacity-building programs to empower Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan²² and running partnership programs in international development in Southeast and South Asia. The Taiwan Alliance for International Development (Taiwan Aid, 2015, pp. 7–10) acts as a platform for 25 grassroots NGOs in Taiwan which are involved in international projects with their global counterparts. Taiwan Aid has 69 development projects in the region — 12 each in Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam; 10 in Myanmar; 5 in Indonesia; 4 in Laos; and one each in Brunei and Malaysia. These projects embrace the areas of education, medical care, community development, environment, public health and nutrition, infrastructure construction, and disaster management.

On an individual basis, a growing number of young Taiwanese is taking up permanent residence in Southeast Asia for reasons of personal interest, work, travel, or marriage. Some who are working in local enterprises have also begun to learn the languages of their host countries, gaining a better understanding of local cultures and sometimes choosing to start a business and settle down in the region. They are both

²¹New social media platforms such as News Lens, the ASEAN Plus Journal, and the Southeast Asia Youth Researchers in Taiwan (SEAYRT) Facebook group are using the internet to organize workshops, lectures, and even public opinion surveys on Taiwan–Southeast Asian relations. Most of these activities are initiated by talented young Taiwanese and students in partnership with their counterparts from Southeast Asia.

²²One-Forty, for instance, is the leading grassroots NGO promoting capacity-building projects for migrant workers in Taiwan (Hsiao & Yang, 2018, p. 3).

socializers and recipients of socialization. In recent years, Southeast Asia has become increasingly attractive for Taiwanese;²³ the region is not only a strategic alternative that counterbalances the pull toward China but is also a way for Taiwan to become part of a regional economic and social grouping.

A lot of these projects are government sponsored, but many more have been initiated by civil society groups. They enable Taiwanese to familiarize themselves with the vision and the roadmap of the ASEAN-led community-building project, and through a process of socialization and interaction-based learning, they allow the governments and societies of Southeast Asia to better understand how Taiwan can become a partner for regional growth.

Southeast Asian Residents Creating a Better Taiwan

In recent years, there has been a steady increase in the number of Southeast Asian residents in Taiwan, and by 2018, there were about 600,000, most of whom are manual workers. The lion's share of migrant workers from Indonesia are caregivers in private homes, whereas most of those from the Philippines and Thailand work in the infrastructure construction and manufacturing sectors. Another 149,000 Southeast Asians are married to Taiwanese and around 114,000 of their children, so-called second-generation new immigrants, are attending local primary and secondary schools (see Table 7). In total, there are more than 860,000 new migrants from Southeast Asia in Taiwan, and the number is soon likely to swell to more than 1 million. These individuals are currently putting down roots in Taiwan and participating in an interaction-based learning process, and they are already excelling in many fields. It is interesting to note that Taiwan's primary schools will be including Southeast Asian languages among their elective subjects, demonstrating that the new socialization process will begin in childhood.

As migrants from Southeast Asia become more prominent in the realm of public affairs, Taiwanese are coming to understand the importance of ethnic diversity and equality. Taiwan's legislature now has its first member of Cambodian descent,²⁴ while the chairwoman of the DPP's New Immigrant's Committee, Tran Thi Hoang Phuong, is from Vietnam. Tran teaches Vietnamese at various universities in Taiwan and is a

²³Thailand and Singapore are the most popular tourist destinations for Taiwanese, and there are increasing numbers of Taiwanese-managed guesthouses in Bangkok. Interview with a Taiwanese businessman based in Singapore, Taipei, February 12, 2018.

²⁴Ms. Lin Li-Chan is a KMT legislator and a member of the Legislative Yuan's Internal Relations Committee, see the Legislative Yuan (2018).

Table 7.

Population of the Second-Generation New Immigrants in Taiwan Enrolled in Secondary and Primary Schools (2016)

Country	Secondary School	Primary School	Total	Share (%)
All Countries	120,284	75,894	196,178	100
Vietnam	32,715	47,169	79,884	40.72
Indonesia	9,191	9,962	19,153	9.76
Cambodia	1,801	2,360	4,161	2.21
The Philippines	1,588	2,596	4,184	2.13
Thailand	1,324	2,158	3,482	1.77
Myanmar	621	1,146	1,767	0.90
Malaysia	466	970	1,436	0.73
Singapore	64	116	180	0.09

Source: Compiled by the author from Ministry of Education (R.O.C.) (2017, p. 4).

recipient of a Golden Bell award for the best educational or cultural radio program in Taiwan. Moreover, increasing numbers of NGOs, such as the TransAsia Sisters Association, Taiwan (TASAT), are concerned with empowering and protecting the rights of new immigrants in Taiwan, working closely with like-minded civil society organizations.

Stories concerning the unfair treatment of Southeast Asian migrant workers were prevalent in the past, but since the issue of migrant rights has become more widely recognized, such incidences have decreased. Recently, Taiwanese labor groups conducted a survey of Taiwanese citizens and migrant workers on the subject of migrant workers' rights. Of the 388 Taiwanese and 2,109 migrants who responded, more than 90% said that family caregivers should enjoy protection under Taiwanese labor laws, that migrant workers should be allowed to change employers freely, and that the private broker system should be replaced by a compulsory government-to-government labor importation mechanism (Lai, 2018). This survey, the first of its kind in Asia, attracted widespread attention in Taiwan and beyond. It made the people of Southeast Asia realize that the Taiwanese public values migrant workers and wants to see their rights protected. The survey and the accompanying campaign also helped Taiwanese better understand migrant worker issues.

Interestingly, the daily life of Southeast Asian migrants in Taiwan is gradually creating new urban landmarks. On weekends, migrant workers from Indonesia and the Philippines gather at Taipei Main Station and St. Christopher's Church in Taipei's Da-an District to take part in cultural and economic activities. Stores in this

commercial district sell food and other goods from the Philippines which provide comfort to homesick migrants.²⁵ There is also a street in the Yonghe district of New Taipei where many of the inhabitants are second-generation immigrants from Myanmar. This distinctly different neighborhood really has a flavor of Southeast Asia rather than Taiwan.²⁶ These clusters of Southeast Asians right in the middle of a large metropolis have become important spaces for Taiwanese to engage in interaction-based learning. They are also successfully creating the social dynamics for *a new Taiwan with Southeast Asian characteristics*.

Taiwan's NSP is indeed people-centered. It is a response both to the development needs of the ASEAN Community and to the diverse cultures of Taiwan's migrant community. Its bidirectional transformation plan is not only allowing Taiwan to participate once again in regional integration and regional community building through linkages between diverse stakeholders and partnerships, but is also helping Taiwanese society develop a sense of community awareness and recognition that it is a part of Asia.

Conclusion: Becoming Asian by Reinvigorating Taiwan

As Taiwan turns its back on its authoritarian past and consolidates its democracy, it needs more international support to secure its survival. The Go South initiatives aimed at integrating Taiwan into Asia can facilitate a shift from "Cross-Strait Taiwan" to "Asian Taiwan." The first wave of the Go South Policy established a preliminary institutional foundation for bilateral interaction between Taiwan and individual Southeast Asian countries; the NSP is strengthening that foundation and initiating new framing networks and learning processes.

The shift from an *interest-oriented* to a *people-centered* ideal, which involves learning from the experience of ASEAN, is helping Taiwan cast off its role as an outlying island in Asia. The "becoming Asian" learning process is creating more transnational social linkages which highlight the fact that Taiwan is an indispensable part of ASEAN-led integration.

This process hinges on the bidirectional socialization of epistemic communities and transnational actors both in Taiwan and Southeast Asia. The NSP encompasses more stakeholders than previous Go South efforts, and it involves a new partnership

²⁵Banks now open on the weekend to provide financial services for workers from the Philippines. Fieldwork conducted in St. Christopher's Church, Taipei, Taiwan, July 10, 2016 and in Taipei Main Station, Taipei, Taiwan, April 9, 2017.

²⁶In recent years, the New Taipei City government has staged a water festival at New Year. Fieldwork conducted in Huaxin Street, New Taipei City, Taiwan, April 15, 2018.

between the public and private sectors. Through a process of policy reinforcement by epistemic communities and even closer exchanges fostered by Taiwanese living and working in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian migrants in Taiwan, international socialization can become more than a tool for exploring international space; it can be the source of a reinvigoration of Asian awareness and Asian identity in Taiwan.

To achieve further international socialization through the NSP, Taiwan needs to overcome the following challenges. First, it is imperative to contextualize the NSP within the national and regional development agenda of the ASEAN Community and its member-states. Only by developing common interests and concerns through interaction-based learning, the NSP can gain more domestic support and recognition throughout the region.

Second, since other major powers, such as the United States, Japan, India, and South Korea, are developing their own strategies for reinforcing their relations with Southeast Asian countries, it is vital for Taiwan, through the NSP, to seek partnerships with these other regional strategies so as to increase awareness of regional integration.

Finally, Beijing is attempting to impede Taiwan's NSP through its BRI. Demands from China that Southeast Asian countries avoid government-to-government collaboration with Taiwan may undermine the practice of the NSP. However, this kind of political intervention cannot disrupt the links that have been established between epistemic communities and transnational actors in Taiwan and Southeast Asia. The NSP, as the cornerstone of Taiwan's regional strategy for Asia, will allow this territory to reinforce its ties with the region and truly become an indispensable part of the regional community.

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