

S. 2. 1. CHINESE DIASPORAS AND MARITIME HISTORIES, 16TH-19TH CENTURIES

Chair: Steven B. Miles
(Washington U. in St. Louis)

Panel Abstract

This panel explores the question of whether or not the history of the Chinese diaspora in late imperial times (sixteenth through nineteenth centuries) is necessarily and by definition a maritime history. We explore this question through thematic studies of regional and dialect groups in the southeastern coastal provinces of Fujian (Hokkien) and Guangdong (Cantonese), which produced the largest proportion of overseas Chinese during this period.

Exploring the involvement of Hokkien seafarers in smuggling and piracy in the sixteenth century, Harriet Zurndorfer situates this Chinese diaspora, the Ming state, and the Portuguese in global maritime history and the evolution of Eurasian slave markets. Evelyn Hu-DeHart traces Chinese migrants who traveled throughout the Spanish seaborne empire, from the Hokkien in Manila beginning in the late-sixteenth century to the Cantonese in Cuba in the nineteenth century. Focusing on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Steven Miles examines communities and patrilineal lineages in Guangdong that sent migrants both upstream along the West River basin into southeastern China and overseas to destinations in Southeast Asia, Australasia, and the Americas.

Ultimately, we arrive at different answers to the fundamental question that we pose. On the one hand, in Chinese, the closest expression of “Chinese diaspora” is “overseas Chinese” (hua qiao), suggesting that the history of the Chinese diaspora is essentially a maritime history. Undoubtedly, Chinese seafarers and overseas migrants were essential actors in the maritime history of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. On the other hand, many Chinese migrants pursued similar “diasporic strategies” while targeting destinations within China and elsewhere on the Eurasian continent.

Keywords

Coolies, diaspora, maritime history, overseas Chinese, slaves

The Chinese Maritime Diaspora in the Evolving Foundation of Eurasian Slavery Markets during the 16th Century

HARRIET ZURNDORFER (Leiden University)

Abstract

Relying on members of the maritime Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia for nautical and linguistic guidance, the first Portuguese came to China in 1513 from Malacca, intending to establish trading relations in Guangzhou. But Ming dynasty officials believed these Europeans were from Southeast Asia, and purposefully “sneaking around with the local traffic”—meaning that the Portuguese did not represent a separate nation-state but were members of the same gangs who engaged in illegal smuggling and human trafficking along the Chinese littoral. After a failed attempt to enter into official diplomacy with the Ming in 1521, the Portuguese were expelled from China; however, they did not leave, instead aligning themselves with the floating diasporas of Chinese seafarers (mainly Hokkien) who lodged in coastal “pirate havens” from where they processed the expanding circulation of goods (and people) from Southeast Asia to China, and further afield to ports in Korea and Japan. During the 1530s the Portuguese, with the help of the floating Chinese diaspora, created a fixed trading emporium at Shuangyu (Zhejiang) where they traded illegally, but with great profits, Chinese silk for Japanese silver. The success of this illegal trade, however, did not go unnoticed by authorities at Guangzhou who realized the competition with neighboring Fujian and its officials shielding the law-breakers, both native and foreign, did themselves no economic good in the long run, and urged the Ming state to extend trading rights and the leasehold of Macao to the Portuguese. By 1557, now with Macao at their disposal, the Portuguese could now expand their already widespread commercial connections with Japan, exporting Korean and Japanese slaves to Macao and from there to Malacca, other ports in Southeast Asia, and even further west to Goa, and eventually Africa and Europe. The slave trade system that had already been in place.

Biography

Harriet T. Zurndorfer (Ph.D. 1977 from the University of California, Berkeley in Chinese history) is an Affiliated Fellow of the Leiden Institute for Area Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University in the Netherlands where she has worked as a docent and researcher since 1978. She is the author of *Change and Continuity in Chinese Local History* (1989), and *China Bibliography: A Research Guide to Reference Works about China Past and Present* (1995), and has published more than 200 learned articles and reviews. From 1992 to 2000, she served as editor-in-chief of *The Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. She is founder, and editor-in-chief of the journal *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China*, published

since 1999. She also serves as one of the co-editors of the 4-volume Cambridge World History of Violence, and is a contributor to the forthcoming Cambridge Economic History of China.

Chinese in the Spanish Seaborne Empire: Joining the Pacific and the Atlantic Maritime Worlds

EVELYN HU-DEHART (Brown University)

Abstract

This paper examines the course of the Chinese diaspora, beginning with the rise of the first large Chinese community overseas, which occurred in the Spanish colony of Manila with the arrival of the Spaniards coming from New Spain in 1565. Miguel de Legazpi launched the Manila Galleon trade that exchanged American silver for Chinese silk and luxury goods across the Pacific for 250 years. From the Pacific port of Acapulco, Mexico, Chinese and Asian goods were distributed across the Americas, as well as transshipped from the Atlantic port of Veracruz to Sevilla, Spain and across Europe, the Mediterranean world, and Africa. Coming mainly from southern Fujian, the Hokkien traders, artisans, shopkeepers, farmers, fishermen, and laborers who peopled the *parián* (Chinatown) of Manila went on to populate Batavia under the Dutch, and Singapore and the Straits Colony (Malaya) under the British, spreading the Chinese diaspora across southeast Asia. In the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese labor migrants from coastal Guangdong province in south China were recruited to Spanish Cuba to complement slave labor on the sugar plantations, bonded by contract for 8 years. They were the first among tens of thousands of Cantonese men enticed to leave home for the Americas, from Peru to the Western United States and up the Pacific coast to Canada, as well as all over the Caribbean. For most of them, they crossed the Pacific in the route heavily traveled by the Manila galleons. But for the Cantonese destined for Cuba, they had to undertake a much longer and more arduous voyage across the Indian Ocean into the Atlantic, and northward to the Caribbean. The *barrio chino* (Chinatown) that these Chinese migrants built in Havana predated Chinatowns in the United States. If the Chinese diaspora in southeast Asia began in Manila, it can be said that the Chinese diaspora in the Americas began in Cuba, as trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic maritime enterprises within the Spanish Seaborne Empire.

Biography

Evelyn Hu-DeHart is Professor of History, American Studies and Ethnic Studies at Brown University. She received her B.A in Political Science from Stanford University and her PhD in Latin American/Caribbean history from the University of Texas at Austin. She has received two Fulbright fellowships, to Brazil and Peru. She has written, edited and published 11 books and over 60 articles/book chapters, on three main topics, in 4 languages on 5 continents: indigenous peoples on the U.S.-Mexico border; the Chinese diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean; and race relations and minority politics in the U.S. She was a founding member of

the Chinese Railroad Workers of North America at Stanford University. Currently (2018-19), she is the American Council of Learned Scholars Centennial Fellow in the Dynamics of Place, to research and write a book on “China, the Chinese Diaspora, and the Spanish Empire, 16th to 21st Centuries.”

Riverine and Maritime Cantonese Diasporas in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

STEVEN MILES (Washington University in St. Louis)

Abstract

Drawing on scholarship that questions the usefulness of the analytical divide between internal and external Chinese migration, this paper focuses on Cantonese migrants from the Pearl River delta in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong. During the eighteenth century, before the age of mass migration, many Cantonese migrants sought their fortunes upstream along the West River basin into the southwestern Chinese frontier. Consequently, when, during the nineteenth century, Cantonese migrants headed for new destinations overseas, there already existed in many delta communities and lineages a culture of migration.

By the nineteenth century, it was common for particular communities and lineages in the Pearl River delta to send migrants both upriver and overseas. The important township of Jiujiang for example, was by the nineteenth century tightly linked to the upper West River basin, from where Jiujiang residents imported rice and harvested fish fry that made the township's pisciculture famous. Jiujiang merchants were also active in such destinations as Vietnam, Cuba, and Mexico. By the close of the nineteenth century, an English-language travel guide wrote of Jiujiang that many of the township's residents had "lived in America and Australia."

In other words, residents of Jiujiang and other delta communities were part of a highly mobile population before the "age of mass migration" commenced in the mid-nineteenth century. When new, overseas destinations became available to Cantonese migrants, these destinations were incorporated into a pre-existing but rapidly expanding Cantonese diaspora.

Biography

Steven B. Miles is a professor of early modern Chinese history at Washington University in Saint Louis. He is author of *The Sea of Learning: Mobility and Identity in Nineteenth-Century China* (2006), *Upriver Journeys: Diaspora and Empire in Southern China, 1570-1850* (2017), and *Chinese Diasporas: A Social History of Global Migration* (forthcoming, 2020). He is editor-in-chief of the journal, *Late Imperial China*.