

Is There a Chinese Diaspora?

Does it really matter?

Goals for the Presentation

- I. Describe the concept of “diaspora” as currently used in social science today
- II. Explore the history and patterns of Chinese migrations in the framework of diaspora
- III. Introduce “diaspora” as an explanatory paradigm for understanding social and cultural phenomena

The classic diasporas

- Jews
- Armenians
- Greeks
- Africans
- Basques

What are the central elements of a classic diaspora?

1. “A people”
2. Shared culture
3. Homeland
4. Exiled
5. Return

Do *these* groups meet the definition?

Muslims

South Asians

Sikhs

Iranians

British

Filipinos

*Elements
of a
Diaspora*

*“A People”
Shared Culture
Exiled
Homeland
“Return”*

What about a Chinese Diaspora?

Does it fit a pattern?

1. *“A People”*
2. *Shared Culture*
3. *Homeland*
4. *Exiled*
5. *“Return”*

*Is there evidence in
history of a
Chinese diaspora?*

Chinese Overseas Migration Before 1800

Three Groups

Merchants

Official Emissaries

Adventurers

Why was overseas travelers limited before 1800's?

- No urge to go overseas
- Confucian Values
- Laws prevented Chinese from leaving
- Traditional enemies were land-based



What events in 1800's opened up Chinese to overseas migration?

1. Weak Chinese government
2. Japan resisted western trade
3. Dutch and Spaniards at war
4. Chinese government realized it could learn from West
5. Expansion in world trade

What events in 1800's opened up Chinese to overseas migration?

1. War, famine, social unrest in southern China
2. End of slavery
3. 1842 Treaty of Nanking opened Hong Kong as a gateway
4. 1848-1852 California Gold Rush (24,000 by 1852)
5. 1862-1869 U.S. Transcontinental Railroad (12,000 by 1867)



http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Treaty_of_Nanking

Hong Kong in the 19th Century

Early Destinations

“Nan Yang” or “Southern Ocean”

Main receiving countries

- Malaysia
- Singapore
- Indonesia
- Thailand

Other countries

- Philippines
- Cambodia

Latin America

- Peru 1849-1874
- Cuba 1847

United States

- California Gold Rush, 1848-1852
- Transcontinental Railroad, 1862-1869



Were Chinese exiled?

Pattern of Early Chinese Emigration

- Men emigrated as workers for plantations and mines
- Became merchants and craftsmen
- Traded with China
- Attracted new family members
- Men returned to China for marriage.
- Families sent sons to China to bring back wives.
- Communities grew as middlemen for colonial powers

Overseas Chinese Population Countries with the Highest Concentrations Estimate: 40,000,000

From: Overseas Compatriot Affairs Division, R.O.C.

Indonesia	7,566,200	Philippines	1,146,250
Thailand	7,153,240	Myanmar (Burma)	1,101,314
Malaysia	7,070,500	Russia	998,000
Singapore	3,496,710	Australia	669,896
United States	3,376,031	Japan	519,561
Canada	1,612,173	Cambodia	343,855
Peru	1,300,000	United Kingdom	296,623
Vietnam	1,263,570	France	230,515



What about a homeland?

Chinese population movements in the 20th century largely originated from countries outside of China—Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

New York Times

Super Saturday: The City's Taiwanese Head Home to Vote

By FLORA LEE

Sunday, March 7, 2004

For some residents of Flushing, Queens, the most riveting race for president isn't in the United States, it's in Taiwan.

On Saturday, March 20, President Chen Shui-bian faces off against Lien Chan in what is expected to be a close election. So close, in fact, that Taiwanese voters who live in America are being encouraged to go home and vote; ...

...One person who plans to go back is Tony H. Chang, leader of the New York branch of Mr. Lien's Nationalist Party....

...he switched to Mandarin Chinese when he revealed the true secret of the voter drive. "We are going back," he said, "because we love our country."

Are Chinese “a people?”

Three Symbolic Universes (Tu 1994):

1. China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.
2. Chinese in other parts of the world
3. Intellectual China.

Chinese symbolizes a “guardian of moral order.”

Do overseas Chinese community consider themselves as a diaspora?

After the revolution in 1911, the new Republic of China assigned the term “hua qiao” 华侨 for all “overseas” Chinese.

“By giving the phenomenon an elegant and respectable name, it gave sojourning a definite direction and a new purposefulness, and made it into a powerful political force in the 20th Century.” (Wang, G 2000:54)

Who are the 华侨 (Hua Qiao)?

1949, the Republic of China (ROC) left the mainland.

The ROC refers to itself as the true China.

The ROC does not refer to those living in Taiwan as 华侨 (hua qiao) but use the term for all other overseas Chinese.

The Chinese of Hong Kong and Macao also referred to themselves as 华侨 (hua qiao).

Who are the 华侨 (Hua Qiao)?

- In 1997, Hong Kong was returned to People's Republic of China (PRC)
- The Chinese in Hong Kong wanted to retain 华侨 (hua qiao).
- P.R.C. refers to them as 同胞 (tong bao) or compatriot.

Do overseas Chinese meet the elements of a diaspora?

1. A people
2. Shared culture
3. Homeland
4. Exiled
5. Return

Is there a working definition of “diaspora?”

- No consensus
- Can refer to any social grouping
- Replaces “minority” discourse
- Metaphor

If there is no true definition of a
diaspora,
why does it matter?

- Diaspora as a descriptive term
- Diaspora as a paradigm
- Diaspora as an explanatory model for social phenomena

Do diaspora populations
have to meet all of the elements?

“(M)etaphoric designations for several categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities...” (Safran 1991:83).

Replaces or “...at least supplementing minority discourse” (Clifford 1994:311).

Need for new terminology

Colonial and Cold War categories are obsolete-

- East and West
- Socialists and Democratic, and Non-aligned
- First, Second and Third World
- Developed, Developing and Underdeveloped Nations
- North – South
- Regional “Systems:” North Atlantic, Pacific Rim

So why is the term “diaspora” commonly used today?

- Reduced importance of nation-state borders
- Increase awareness of indigenous populations
- Wider monitoring of world population movements
- Expanded responses to refugees
- Greater impact of migrant laborers
- Growing role of ethnic and social networks on national and multi-national politics
- Broader concern for oppressed groups
- More frequent expressions of ethnic pride

Diaspora is a Useful Paradigm

- Provides a sense of history
- Links population through time (history) and space (location)
- Brings to light political climate of minority populations within larger (host) populations

Diaspora as an Explanatory Model

- Explains political processes and social movements
- Populations will adopt the diaspora label to increase group solidarity and perceptions of political power.

Kurdistan



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Diaspora as an Explanatory Model

- The strength and weakness of a diasporic community will fluctuate in response to political, cultural and economic pressures from the host and homeland societies and governments.

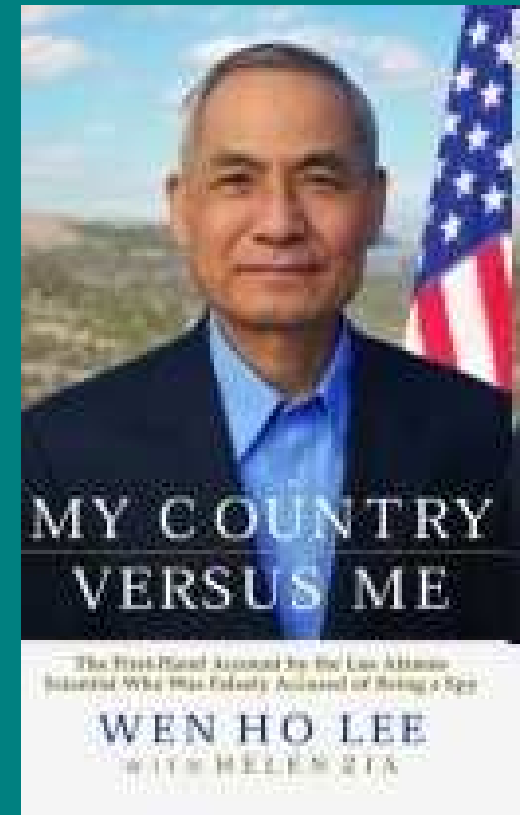
Diaspora as an Explanatory Model

- Explains external social and political pressures on minority groups
- Host populations may attach the label to minority groups when seeking scapegoats.

Paradigm Misused

“...What was the government's motive in insisting on your being jailed pretrial under extraordinarily onerous conditions of confinement until today, when the Executive Branch agrees that you may be set free essentially unrestricted? This makes no sense to me.”

- Federal Judge James Parker



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“Diaspora” describes populations
in the post-modern era

Globalization

Transnationalism

Investment in Social Capital

A circulating network of people, trade goods and capital

- Strong ties to the home village and kin
- Continual rejuvenation of culture and social organization
- Fostered solidarity in the immigrant community

Investment strategy that was based on social organization

South East Asia

Last updated: 24 Jan 97



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Zheng He
(Cheng Ho)

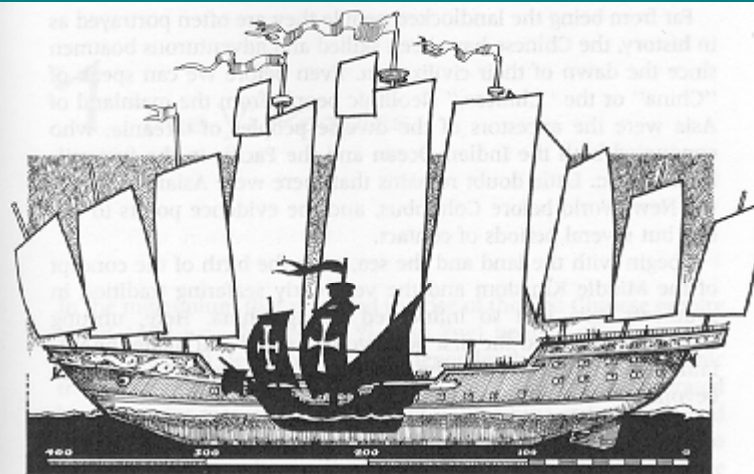
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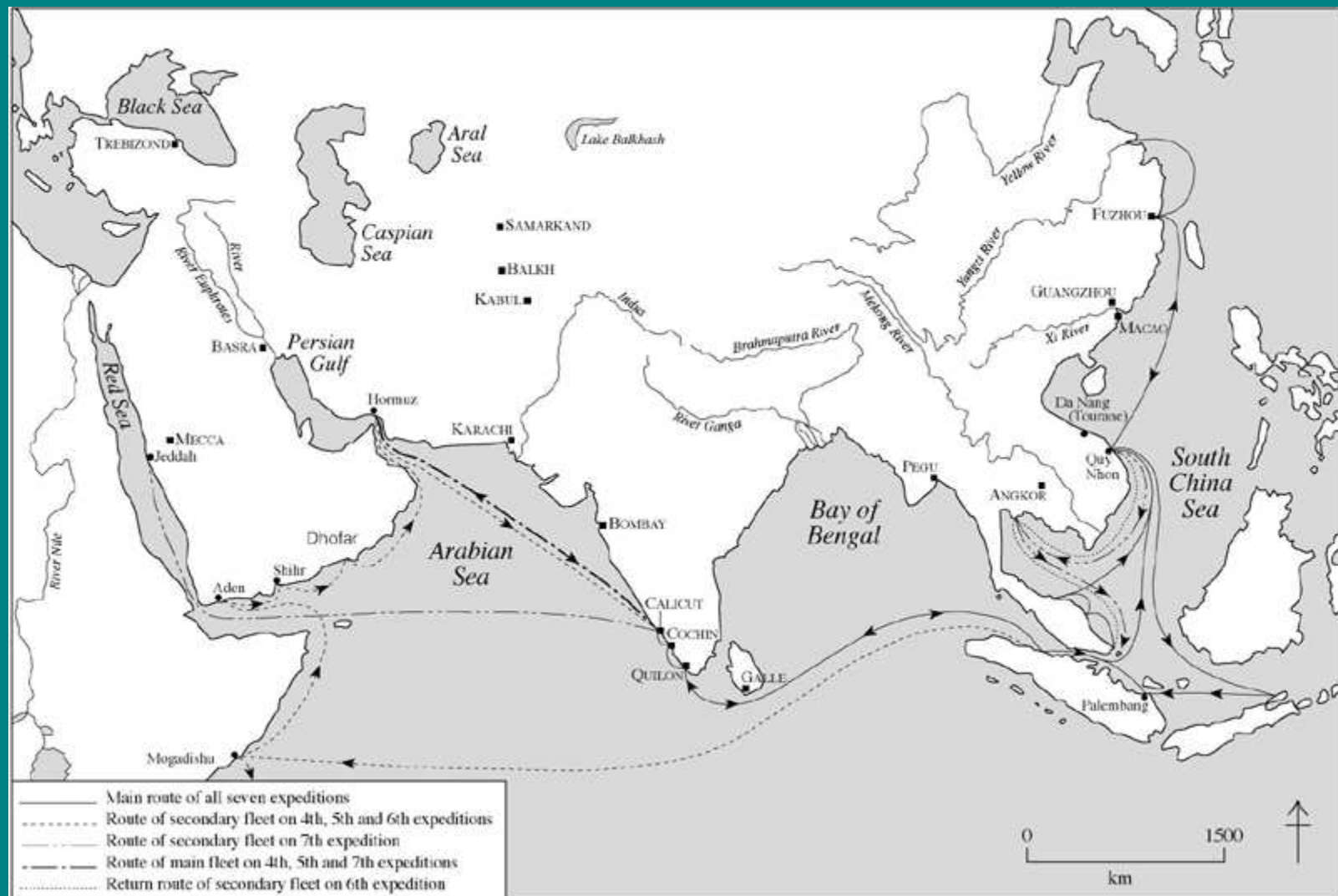
<http://www.coaaweb.org/Zheng-Ho/WuJin-on-CH.pdf>



<http://www.coaaweb.org/Zheng-Ho/Zheng-Ho.html>



*Zheng He's treasure ship (four hundred feet) and Columbus's St. Maria (eighty-five feet).
(Illustration by Jan Adkins, 1993.)*



Do these groups meet all of our criteria?

Jews

Armenians

Greeks

Africans

Basques

Chinese

*Elements
of a
Diaspora*

1. *“A People”*
2. *Shared Culture*
3. *Exiled*
4. *Homeland*
5. *“Return”*

Diaspora is an Approach

- Historically based
- Comparative
- Cultural
- Geopolitical
- Community based

Limitations of the Paradigm

- Not dynamic
- Does not examine differences within groups.
- Concept is too sweeping and broad

Do these groups meet
the criteria diaspora?

Muslims

South Asians

Sikhs

Hispanics

Iranians

British

Mexicans

Filipinos

On Theory

- Sociology and organization theory By John Hassard, Edition: 3, Published by Cambridge University Press, 1995

	People	Shared Ancestry	Homeland	Exile	Dispersion
Jews					
Armenians					
Greeks					
Africans					
Basques					

Diaspora as a political concept for group solidarity and political power.

- “...at different times in their history, societies may wax and wane in diasporism, depending on changing possibilities—obstacles, openings, antagonisms, and connections—in their host countries and transnationally”
(James Clifford 1994:306)

Which groups do you think of when you hear
the term “diaspora?”

Are you a member of a diaspora?

Given what you know about the term,
do you personally identify as a
member of a diaspora?



Early reports of Chinese communities

- 210 BC Chinese traders in Tigris – Euphrates Delta
- 1296 Chinese sailors settled in Cambodia
- 1297 10th Cent. Arab trader saw Chinese farmers in Sumatra



<http://www.opioids.com/opium/opiumwar.html>



http://encarta.msn.com/media_461520083_761553669_-1_1/Chinese_Opium_Smokers.html

Merriam-Webster

Etymology: Greek, dispersion, from *diaspeirein* to scatter, from *dia-* + *speirein* to sow

- 1) **capitalized** **a:** the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile **b:** the area outside Palestine settled by Jews **c:** the Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel
- 2) **a:** the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland **<the black diaspora to northern cities>** **b:** people settled far from their ancestral homelands **<African diaspora>** **c:** the place where these people live

Adjective: “Diasporic”



<http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/battleswars1800s/p/secondopiumwar.htm>



<http://web.jjay.cuny.edu/~jobrien/reference/ob36.html>