

The Meaning of Their Migration Choices: The Case of Myanmar-Chinese Migrants in Taiwan in the 1990s

Peng, Nini

This research focuses on the Myanmar-Chinese migrants in Taiwan in the 1990s, aiming to examine their choices to migrate to Taiwan.

An early migration wave of Myanmar-Chinese to Taiwan was brought by socio-economic impacts in Myanmar in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1988, there occurred a huge national anti-government protest in Myanmar. Control of the country was then handed over to a new military junta. Following 1990 the new military regime implemented an internal and external “open-door policy” in order to improve the economic development in Myanmar, but the failure of the new military regime to curb the long standing crucial human right issues in Myanmar caused international economic sanctions against Myanmar. The continuous deterioration of educational and economic environment in Myanmar contributed to pushing out those young people, who were seeking higher education and better work opportunities. Most Ethnic Chinese choose to migrate to Taiwan. This research further investigated the meaning of “motives” and “intention” of voluntary Myanmar-Chinese migrants in Taiwan in the 1990s.

The interview results showed that the “motives” and “intention” of informal migration to Taiwan through the Taiwan Overseas Chinese education policy to achieve “work opportunities in Taiwan”, “Taiwan as a spring board to U.S”, “for further education”, “return to imagined fatherland”, “follow the steps of the others”, and “family’s urging”. In the other words, the meaning of their “motives” and “intention” of migration choices, is a kind of Instrumental rationality (Taylor 2001), consisted of Imagined modernities (Giddens 2005; Appaduria 1996), or Imagined community (Anderson 1999).

Keywords : Myanmar-Chinese, Overseas Chinese Students from Myanmar, Overseas Chinese Education policy, Migration