Chinese new migrants in Suriname: the inevitability of ethnic performing

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4 THE NEW CHINESE

The way Chinese migrants are portrayed in the Surinamese media during the first decade of the third millennium would suggest a clean break with all previous Chinese migration to Suriname, and that the distinction between ‘Old Chinese’ and New Chinese is indisputable, even fundamentally ethnic. However, there is continuity as well as clear difference between the old and the new. As we saw in the previous chapter there is quite an overlap between the last Fuidung’ on Hakka migrant cohorts and the New Chinese, as both groups originate from the PRC and speak PTH. As we shall see in this chapter, many of the migrants who are called New Chinese are also entrepreneurial chain migrants, while contrasts between the ‘Old Chinese’ and New Chinese include competing commercial niches, different regional and linguistic backgrounds, and a wider range in migration strategies.

New Chinese in Suriname are associated with a sudden and remarkable increase in Chinese immigration in the 1990s. Throughout the 1980s the number of PRC nationals entering Suriname remained a steady 200 persons up to 1990, when about 4,800 Chinese citizens were registered at the Surinamese border controls.1 The following year a record number of 7,587 Chinese citizens entered Suriname (more than 11% of all non-resident aliens entering Suriname). The numbers sharply dropped in 1996, and averaged a little over 1,100 until 2003. Although the numbers rose in 2004, they fell over the next two years to 1,246 in 2006

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1 Interestingly, in the same period the number of people who self-identified as ethnic Chinese in neighbouring Guyana remained roughly stable: 1,864 in 1980, 1,290 in 1991, and 1,395 in 2002, about 0.2% of the total population. In 2002, foreign nationals (646) made up 46.3% of all self-identified Chinese (2002 Population and Housing Census, published 13 October 2005, obtained via the Embassy of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in Paramaribo). Up to 1980 the Chinese population of Guyana had been shrinking, to the point that it was no longer listed as a separate category in the Population Census. Chinese were included with Europeans, Portuguese, Syrians and Lebanese in the Portuguese-dominated ‘Other’ category, together only 1% of the total population. (Kwok-Crawford 1989: 6). Nothing quite like the Surinamese ‘New Chinese’ phenomenon has been reported from Guyana.
Chinese were a minor part of the influx of non-resident aliens during these 21 years, as the majority consisted of holders of Dutch passports.

 Anything approaching real migration data for Chinese in Suriname only covers the period after the great influx of the 1990s. Emigration figures compiled by the Department of Demographic Statistics of the Surinamese Civil Registry (CBB) are inaccurate, as most emigrants do not trouble with removing their names from the civil registry list. The vast majority of those who do follow the procedure move to the Netherlands. In 2002 (the year for which data are available from CBB, ABS, as well as the Surinamese Ministry of Labour) 886 out of the 951 registered emigrants (93.1%) moved to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, mostly to the Netherlands (790, or 83.1%). The Dutch CBS, however, recorded 3,356 immigrants from Suriname, more than four times as many as the number of emigrants to the Netherlands recorded by the Surinamese CBB. The CBB did not record PRC nationals among the emigrants to the Netherlands in 2002. PRC citizens who acquired Surinamese

Chart 1: Numbers of Non-Resident Chinese Nationals Entering Suriname via J.A.Pengel International Airport, 1985-2006 (data from SIC 220-2006/2 and SIC 242-2008/1)

ABS data are not fully reliable. According to the statistics for 2006 in SIC 242-2008/1, tourists from the PRC outnumbered PRC nationals entering via the international airport and the port of Nieuw Nickerie: 1,757 versus 1,391. In SIC 242-2008/1, the number of non-resident PRC nationals entering via the international airport in the year 1996 was set at 2,011, instead of 724 in earlier publications (e.g. SIC 220-2006/2).
nationality might of course have registered their exit with the CBB, but this category was simply not recorded.

It is unclear how accurate CBB immigration figures are. It is also not really clear to what extent migrants can avoid formal registration in Suriname; insofar they exist, data on undocumented immigrants in Suriname are unreliable (see Chart 2). According to the CBB, the numbers of Chinese immigrants 3 averaged at a relatively stable rate of 212 between 2000 and 2004. If we again take the year 2002 as an example, there were 152 registered immigrants from the PRC, most of whom settled in Paramaribo (127 or 83.6%). The Ministry of Labour issued work permits to 373 PRC nationals in that year. This is far less than the 962 non-resident PRC nationals who entered via the international airport and more than twice the 152 PRC nationals who formally immigrated. With migration statistics lacking, there is no way to accurately track the number of PRC citizens or ethnic Chinese entering and leaving the country. 4 In any case the 2004 population census registered 3,654 PRC nationals, which is 41.6% of the 8,775 self-identified ethnic Chinese who were registered in that census.

In the 1990s the new influx of Chinese migrants was immediately noticeable to local observers: PTH was spoken in the street, names were transcribed from PTH in the Pinyin Romanization of the PRC, new Chinese shops were springing up everywhere and in a break with the stereotype of Chinese shopkeeper, and these new shopkeepers did not speak Sranantongo. In an appendix on the Chinese which is included in their short study of class and ethnic distribution in Paramaribo, in 1997 Schalkwijk and De Bruijne 5 described a basically stable Hakka-dominated urban entrepreneurial minority group, but in the revised second edition of 1999, they noted changes with regard to homelands, languages, and financial resources of recent Chinese migrants, as well as the new phenomenon of PRC resource extraction and technical cooperation projects. 6

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3 This refers to PRC nationals who have formally registered their Surinamese residence status with the CBB.
4 Travellers are asked to give their reasons for entering Suriname in a limited questionnaire; Chinese chain migrants generally state ‘visiting family’. Their motivations for travelling to Suriname or their possible activities there are not asked about elsewhere. Travellers leaving Suriname and emigrants are also not asked about their destinations or the reasons for leaving.
5 Schalkwijk & De Bruijne 1997: 98-99. The study was based mainly on 1992 fieldwork data.
Because they were so unlike the Chinese of the past, the unfamiliar immigrants were soon commonly called *nieuwe Chinezen* (Dutch: ‘new Chinese’) and *nyun Sneisi* (Sranantongo: ‘new Chinese’). These latest migrants were also ‘new’ to Fuidung’on Hakka observers in Suriname, and not just as the latest migrant cohort (*sinkeh*); the Chinese-language newspapers in Paramaribo refer to the New Chinese as ‘New Migrants’ (*xin yimin*), a term transplanted from the PRC to these latest migrants. ‘New Migrants’ is not an exact equivalent of ‘New Chinese’; New Migrants is an international terms that refers to migrants who left the PRC after 1978, while New Chinese (*nieuwe Chinezen*) is a local term that refers to Chinese migrants who became noticeable to the Surinamese public after 1990. In the local Chinese papers, the new cohorts even referred to themselves as ‘New Chinese’ (*xin huaren, see Paragraph 9.2.3*).

Wang Gungwu notes that the term New Migrants was coined by PRC authorities to refer to the renewed emigration following economic reforms in the late 1970s.7 The New Migrants category is in fact a pragmatic strategy linked to economic develop-

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ment. The communist ideology of the PRC could not readily accommodate the existence of *huajuan* (dependents of Overseas Chinese), although it recognized that huqiao were a useful source of foreign exchange through the remittances they sent to their dependents in the homeland. When the promise of remittances remained unfulfilled in the 1950s, the special privileges of Overseas Chinese dependents under the Maoist regime were curtailed. In the post-Mao reform period of the late 1970s, Overseas Chinese and their dependents were rehabilitated, as they came to be seen as an asset in the modernization project of the PRC. Rapid economic development was the main reason why the PRC established policies to engage with the ‘Chinese diaspora.’ With direct contact with the homelands renewed, Overseas Chinese supported their dependents with luxury goods and cash gifts, but by the mid-1980s it had become clear that remittances and donations were no longer necessary or as important as they once were.

The Chinese authorities managed the loyalties of Overseas Chinese by refocusing them on their dependents in China. Overseas Chinese interest in the homeland was organized in terms of interest in one’s ‘ancestral village’, and such contacts were managed by the state institution of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. *Huajuan* areas were institutionalized as qiaoxiang to accommodate Overseas Chinese contributions, and eventually certain qiaoxiang in the coastal areas were designated Special Economic Zones to attract investments. In the migration policy of the PRC which is geared to bringing migrant groups under its control, the formal category of New Migrants is a subset of the *huaren* (i.e. ‘ethnic Chinese’) category, together with *huayi* (i.e. ‘people of Chinese descent’). While Wang does not see New Migrants replacing the Overseas Chinese (*huajiao-qiaoxiang*) model, PRC authors treat the new migration less as an extension of the labourer-merchant-sojourner trajectory and more as a redefinition of Chinese migration.

New Migrants were designated as such in line with modern views of globalized migration – the ‘new migration’. They were also new in the context of the PRC: they were taking part in a renewed migration after almost thirty years (between the founding of the PRC in 1949 and the relaxation of emigration barriers in 1978), but

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8 Thunø 2001; Barabantseva 2005.
9 Bolt 1996.
10 Barabantseva 2005: 12.
12 Xiang 2003.
there were also new types of transnational ties between migrants and their homeland through modern mass media and mass transit. There is also the sense that New Migrants may be like ‘old migrants’ in that they are ethnically and culturally bound to China, but they inherently share the modernizing goal of the state; in this way economic success makes them patriotic. \(^{14}\) Reasons for recognizing the overseas links of New Migrants were therefore fundamentally pragmatic – to manage their transnationalism by preserving their link with the PRC. However, their transnationalism remains fundamentally problematic for the PRC; dual nationality is not a problem, but no transnational citizenship participation in PRC is possible. Instead, New Migrants are bound to the PRC via transnationalized ethno-patriotic loyalty, which rephrases sinocentric notions of Chinese identity in terms of the PRC as ‘the motherland’. \(^{15}\)

As a segment of globalized migration, New Chinese Migrants are literally found all over the globe, but they were first described as such in relation to North America and Europe. \(^{16}\) Writing in the late 1990s, Zhuang Guotu typified post-1978 migrants as relatively young, firmly embedded in Chinese culture, well-educated, mostly legal, and with a definite economic motivation. \(^{17}\) Pál Nyíri lists the characteristics of New Chinese Migration in Europe: \(^{18}\)

- They may be from regions in the PRC without a tradition of overseas migration;
- For most, overseas migration is a continuation of internal migration in the PRC;
- They are upwardly mobile;
- Migration is not a survival strategy;
- Destinations are chosen to minimise competition with other Chinese migrants, and competition drives remigration;
- Migrant categories (traders, labourers, students, etc.) shift and overlap;
- Distinctions between legal and illegal migration are blurred;
- China is the centralized concept of the PRC, not the specific qiaoxiang central to huaqiao imagination;
- They are less likely to adapt economic and cultural mechanisms to local conditions.

\(^{14}\) Nyíri 2001: 638.
\(^{16}\) Nyíri 1999; Nieto 2003; Pieke et al 2004.
\(^{17}\) Zhuang 1997: 3. Zhuang includes entrepreneurs from Hong Kong and Taiwan in his analysis.
\(^{18}\) Nyíri 1999: 118-128.
Rapidly increasing immigration of the kind that marked the appearance of New Chinese in Suriname was initially noted particularly in Europe.\(^{19}\) With regard to the developing world, New Chinese Migrants have been documented and tracked in Africa and in other locations lacking any previous history of Chinese immigration.\(^{20}\)

In one sense New Chinese migrants are not new; they may be considered the result of renewed migration from China. This is another possible meaning of \textit{xin yimin}. In the thirty-odd years between the founding of the PRC in 1949 and economic reforms in the late 1970s, migration from mainland China came to a virtual standstill. As an incarnation of globalized migration, New Chinese Migrants are often assumed to be transnational, which links them to the older term ‘Chinese diaspora’ by the promise of deterritorialization of collective migrant identity. However, New Chinese migration is a challenge to the traditional assumptions about the nature of a ‘Chinese diaspora’, and is probably more usefully regarded as part of, in Skeldon’s words: ‘a varied and complex migration of Chinese peoples’.\(^{21}\)

In Suriname, New Chinese are also not quite new in another sense, as mentioned in Paragraph 3.5. Although Chinese in Suriname tend to ethnicize the distinction between the \textit{laokeh} and New Chinese - \textit{laokeh} are Hakkas, New Chinese do not, since the latest Fuidung’on Hakka migrant cohorts are New Migrants. It seems that earlier Fuidung’on Hakka migrants had a hard time recognizing post-1990 Chinese migrants were \textit{sinkeh} from the Fuidung’on Hakka qiaoxiang. Pre-1990 Fuidung’on Hakka migrant cohorts were not familiar with more recent branches of the chain migration network and were basically ignorant of the impact of social and cultural developments there.

It is unclear what the proportion of Fuidung’on Hakka \textit{sinkeh} among New Chinese migrants was, but it is unlikely to have dropped to zero after 1990. If all one had to go on were the Surinamese naturalization decrees, there would be no reason to believe that non-Fuidung’on Hakkas had ever entered Suriname in substantial numbers. Between 1977 and 1995 there were only 14 applicants who were born in China and from outside the Fuidung’on area, just 1.3% of the 1,118 applicants had Chinese names and


\(^{20}\) E.g. Li 2000; Dobler 2008; Østbø & Carling 2005.

\(^{21}\) Skeldon 2003:63.
5.6% of these had Mandarin names. A total of nine naturalization decrees were issued between 1996 and 2005, by which 660 Chinese persons were granted Surinamese citizenship. Of these, 88% had names transcribed in Pinyin, of which about 12% were from outside the Fuidung’on qiaoxiang.

It is not possible to reconstruct the number of Fuidung’on Hakka versus non-Fuidung’on Hakka migrants for this period. The naturalization decrees do not accurately reflect immigration patterns, only the willingness of immigrants to naturalize. Taking into account the requirement of 5 years of uninterrupted residence in Suriname before one can apply for citizenship, the Chinese migrants appearing in the decrees of the year 2000 entered Suriname no later than 1995, this is when the second peak of 5,105 non-resident Chinese entries occurred (Chart 1). Non-Fuidung’on migrants had clearly entered Suriname in substantial numbers, but the reasons why so few of them applied for Suriname citizenship remain unknown.

4.1 Regional Backgrounds

As all ethnic Chinese (i.e. Han) migrants in Suriname from the PRC view themselves as originating from a monolithic ‘China’, one should be careful not to overemphasize regional differences that would risk imposing sub-ethnic categories that Chinese subjects do not recognize themselves. However, in the Surinamese case it would certainly do no harm to note the different regional origins of Chinese migrants as loyalty claims based on regional identification is an established basis for social organization among Chinese migrants. Regional backgrounds of New Chinese migrants should also be taken into account, not only as it would counter the tendency to see a monolithic Chinese ethnic group, but also to question ‘New Chinese’ as a uniform ethnic label that distinguishes Fuidung’on Hakkas from other Chinese migrants. This label is an

22 Jiangsu Province: 1; Guizhou Province: 1; Shanghai: 2; Zhejiang Province: 8, of whom 2 from Dongyang, 1 from Wencheng, and 1 from Hangzhou. Besides these 14 from the PRC there were also 4 applicants from Taiwan.
23 Guangdong Province: 27, of which 8 from Guangzhou, 7 from Taishan, 3 from Shunde, 3 from Huidong, 2 from Zhongshan, 1 from Macao, 1 from Yangchun County, 1 from Boluo County, 1 from Zijin County; Zhejiang Province: 5, of which 2 from Wencheng County; Fujian Province: 2, of which 1 from Jinjiang and one from Shishi; Shanghai: 2; ‘Xin Jiong’ (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region? The occasional Han migrant from Xinjiang has been noted in Paramaribo): 1.
The New Chinese in Suriname have come from every imaginable region in the Chinese world, but the vast majority arrived from the coastal provinces of the PRC, from Hainan in the south all the way to Liaoning along the North Korean border. With their arrival, the linguistic and cultural situation within the Chinese segment of Suriname became unusually complex. Up to then, the main factors affecting Chinese identity in Suriname were assimilation (the Tong’ap-Laiap distinction) and modernity (in particular the influence of Hong Kong), and to this were now added regional variation and the modernity of the PRC. Subsequently Fuidung’on Hakka identity was rephrased as a specific provincial (Guangdong) and linguistic background (Kejia). The various New Chinese groups now have their own sinkeh cohorts and local-born or locally educated children, though a distinction between immigrants and ‘New Chinese Laiap’ has not yet emerged.

Regional variation among Chinese migrants in Suriname is framed in Chinese terms by Chinese speakers, the basic distinction being between Northerners and Southerners. New Chinese are often called ‘Northerners’ by Fuidung’on Hakkas in Suriname, because they speak PTH, the Mandarin koine which is the official language of the PRC. There are true Northerners in Suriname – mother tongue speakers of varieties of Mandarin, whose hometowns were in north of the Changjiang / Yangzi River: Nanjing, Shandong Province, Beijing, the Provinces of Liaoning, Heilongjiang and Jilin (the Dongbei region). As native speakers of Mandarin varieties, Northerners enjoy high status among the Southern Chinese majority in Suriname, but they are keenly aware that they are occasionally associated with some less desirable (non-Northern) New Chinese cohorts by the Fuidung’on Hakkas. In turn, they distinguish themselves linguistically and phenotypically as ‘Northerners’ versus the ‘Southerners’ – everybody else. The North-South divide is sometimes used to claim affinity across sub-ethnic boundaries. For instance, Hainanese accept that they speak a different language and have a different qiaoxiang than the Fuidung’on Hakkas, but they will include themselves among ‘us Southerners’

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24 There is no reason to assume that New Chinese migrants will avoid processes of integration and assimilation that produced Laiap. It will be interesting to see how large such a local-born New Chinese generation will be, and if it will merge with the Laiap.
(Hainanese, Hakkas, Cantonese, Hongkongese, Guangxinese) in contrast to ‘others’ (Wenzhounese, Mandarin native speakers, etc.).

**4.1.1 The North: Shandong Province, Dongbei Region**

Currently the largest group of Mandarin native speakers in Suriname consists of about 100 Shandongese, a slight majority of whom come from Qingdao. Although there might have been individual Shandongese immigrants in Suriname in the early 1990s, there has only been a sustained presence of Shandongese in Suriname since the middle of that decade. Economically, the Shandongese in Suriname are a heterogeneous group, ranging from street vendors to Baihuo Business traders (see Paragraph 4.2.1 below), and individuals known to have a lot of foreign currency. Generally speaking, the Shandongese are better educated than most New Chinese, and do not copy the Fuidung’on Hakka habit of retreating from public scrutiny; for instance, a short-lived one-hour programme on the ATV television station in 2003 in PTH and English (‘A Bridge to Suriname, a Window to China’) was an initiative of two Shandongese women, and the only non-Fuidung’on Hakka newspaper (*Huawen Zhoubao*) is published by a Shandongese man.

Most other native speakers of Mandarin varieties in Suriname are from the Dongbei region (known in the West as Manchuria). Their presence is the result of PRC technical cooperation projects and resource extraction projects (see Chapter 5.4). During the 1990s, a group of about 50 construction workers from Nanjing worked in Paramaribo under temporary contracts; a smaller number entered a decade later and set up a construction company catering to ethnic Chinese clients. About 50 people from the Dongbei region work in Suriname in logging and construction, as workers and administrators. People working in the timber industry are virtually all from Jilin Province. The China Dalian International Cooperation (group) Holdings Ltd., based in Dalian in Liaoning Province, which carried out an extensive road rehabilitation project in Paramaribo (see Chapter 4) during the 1990s and early 2000s, used construction workers from Nanjing and higher level expat staff from Liaoning Province. Dongbei people not involved in logging or construction work in supermarkets owned by Chinese from other backgrounds, and a few individuals own their own businesses. The

25 Current contract labourers in the Dalian road rehabilitation projects have various regional backgrounds.
vast majority – from all three Dongbei Provinces of Jilin, Liaoning and Heilongjiang – are men, with only a few families in Suriname. There are small numbers of individual women migrants, some of whom work as salespeople in ethnic Chinese shops, while others seem to be sex workers.

Not all Liaoningese are ethnic Han, however. An unknown, but apparently substantial number are ethnic Koreans – the only ‘ethnic minority overseas Chinese’ in Suriname.26 The Liaoning Koreans came to work for South Korean fishery companies that were active in Suriname during the 1980s and 1990s. The South Koreans had their own migration network in South America, focusing on São Paulo, Buenos Aires and Paraguay. During the 1990s, the South Korean fishermen were applying for entry visa and work permits for ethnic Korean men from Liaoning Province, as specialized workers. As a result, the number of ethnic Koreans in Suriname grew while the number of South Korean citizens shrunk. The Korean presence in Suriname might not be sustainable; the South Korean fishing fleets have left Suriname, which ended the recruitment of specialized workers from Liaoning Province, and no links were ever developed through chain migration with the ethnic Korean hometowns.

The existence of the Koreans refutes the illusion of objective truth produced by formal categorization of Chinese nationality. Although the Surinamese State does not formally recognize ethnic categories, its representatives tend to confuse ascribed Chinese identity with holding Chinese citizenship. The Fuidung’on Hakkas from Vietnam were registered as ‘Annamese’ rather than ‘Chinese’ in the 1950 general census, though they were recognized by the established migrants as part of their migrant network. The ethnic Koreans of Suriname were originally South Korean fishermen who operated off the Surinamese coast from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Some fishermen settled in Suriname, and some of these eventually became involved in a Korean migration network that linked Chile, Argentina and Paraguay with Korea and the Dongbei region. The Surinamese authorities registered the Dongbei Koreans

26 Cf. Zhao 2004 for the use of the term. Like ‘New Chinese’, the term ‘ethnic minority overseas Chinese’ (少數民族華僑華人) is a political term, aimed at bringing together non-Han migrants from the PRC and relationships with foreign coethnics under the umbrella of the state. Ethnic Koreans are one of the 56 Minority Nationalities recognized by the PRC. A majority live in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province, situated within the territories of the early medieval kingdoms of Goguryeo and Balhae. Despite being from Northern China, they are do not enjoy the same status as ‘Northerners’ in Suriname, who are ethnic Han Chinese.
as citizens of the People’s Republic of China, and were never aware that this particular cohort of New Chinese did not integrate with the established Chinese migrants.

4.1.2 The South-East: Zhejiang Province, Fujian Province

In Suriname, the unflattering Kejia term for New Chinese migrants, Zetgongzai (‘those people from Zhejiang Province’) reflects the fact that the largest New Chinese group is from the southern part of Zhejiang Province. The majority - possibly more than half of an estimated 1,000-2,000 people27 - are from Wencheng in the Wenzhou area, with smaller numbers from Lishui. There are some people from other areas in Zhejiang Province, such as Hangzhou, but these do not have stable networks linking Suriname to their homeland (migration, qiaoxiang or other transnational networks).

Wenzhounese have been in Suriname from the early 1990s, and they seem to have found Suriname as a natural extension of their European networks, possibly by using the migrant networks of the Fuidung’on Hakkas.28 The Wenzhounese who I have talked to are linked by language and qiaoxiang, but in contrast to the Fuidung’on Hakkas, they ranged from large groups of people linked by blood, hometown loyalties or employment, who try to maintain two-way flows of people, goods and money across their international networks, to single women going it alone. Zhejiangese entrepreneurial chain migration is basically a variation of the Fuidung’on Hakka system, with ethnic entrepreneurs sponsoring coregionalists or relatives to come to work in their businesses in Suriname.

As a result, most Zhejiangese in Suriname are self-employed owners of corner shops or supermarkets. The Wenzhou-nese system (‘Baihuo Business’, see below) is closely tied in with the rapid development of Zhejiangese exports, and it is common among New Chinese, particularly Wenzhounese, in many parts of the developing world. However, Zhejiangese migrants do not exhibit much of a transnational identity in Suriname; instead they tend to copy local, tried and proven Fuidung’on Hakka positioning strategies, such as huiguan, ROSCAs and political patronage (see

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27 The size of the populations of the various regional groups can only be guessed. Estimates come from various sources among the New Chinese and Fuidung’on Hakkas, and are in no way accurate.

28 A table of language preferences in Huang (2008: 32) carries an interesting suggestion that at least speakers of Zhejiangese varieties have produced a local-born generation.
Chapter 8 for the ‘Zhejiangese Hometown Association’ / *Zhejiang Tongxiang Hui*). Their particular version of entrepreneurial chain migration has strongly influenced the economic landscape of Suriname.

Wenzhou prospered with the economic reforms in the 1980s, yet the number of huaqiao keeps growing. Wenzhounese have developed a culture of migration which puts great pressure on young people to leave; in the 1930s, returnees could enhance their status and that of their family with money earned in Europe, and by the 1990s a strong ‘qiaoxiang consciousness’ had developed where huaqiao were expected to flaunt their wealth and *qiaojuan* (i.e. dependents in the qiaoxiang) celebrate their connections in Europe. Wenzhounese are prominent among Chinese migrants in Europe, but Latin America and the Caribbean were not traditional destinations in the 1990s. About 5% of the 7 million inhabitants of greater Wenzhou live abroad, and up to 80% of these are in Western Europe: France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. This European presence began in the 1930s, after migration to Japan came to a halt in the 1920s; less than a third of all Wenchengese migrants went to Europe up to 1929. Motivations of Wenzhou-nese migrants to Suriname are basically the same as those of Wenzhounese Huaqiao in Europe - to return to Wenzhou rich.

There were apparently also no Fujianese in Suriname before the early 1990s. Current numbers are impossible to estimate, this is so even for the few Fujianese shopkeepers willing to speak to outsiders. Linguistic identification is difficult, as many Min varieties are mutually unintelligible and Fujianese therefore tend to use PTH as a lingua franca. Although the Fujianese migrants seem to be encouraging the mystery surrounding their presence in Suriname, they publicly - in Chinese-language media - refer to themselves as Fujianese (*fujianren*) and have started to organize themselves accordingly (the *Fujian Tongxiang Hui*, see Paragraph 8.3). Other than the indisputable fact that there are New Chinese from Fujian Province in Suriname, very little can be said about them. Most Fujianese are said to run supermarkets; none of the Fujianese supermarkets that could be identified with certainty appeared to be very successful.

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29 Thunø 1999: 175.
30 Li 1999a: 190-192.
32 Thunø 1999.
33 Strictly speaking, the few Peranakan Chinese in Suriname from Indonesia could be said to have had a Fujianese background.
Despite the lack of clear data on Fujianese in Suriname, the Surinamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, influenced by the international media and apparently the US embassy, assumed that New Chinese were mainly and perhaps even exclusively Fujianese.\textsuperscript{34} This association of New Chinese with one particular regional background parallels the way New Chinese were called ‘Zhejiangese’ by the established Fuidung’on Hakkas. In 1991 a Shanghainese informant told me that there were some shopkeepers in Paramaribo from the Jinjiang Area in Fujian Province. In 2002 a Hainanese informant was certain that Fujianese made up the vast majority of New Chinese immigrants in Suriname and that most of these Fujianese were from Sanming in Fujian Province. Has there been a shift from one Fujianese qiaoxiang to another over the years, or have there always been smaller numbers of people or even individuals from other areas in Fujian?

Migrants from a few villages in Xianyou County formed a remarkable subgroup.\textsuperscript{35} All were involved in selling instant lottery tickets for the \textit{Sociaal Culturele Vereniging Xin Hua Lin Liang Xin} (‘the Xin Hua Lin Liang Xin Socio-Cultural Association’), founded by one Lin Liangxin along the Latourweg in the southern outskirts of Paramaribo. The lottery served to facilitate chain migration; newcomers from Xianyou paid off loans for their travel expenses and other debts by selling tickets.\textsuperscript{36} The Lin Liangxin Association was dismantled by 2003, but the group’s shadowy organizer had moved on to other short-term money-making ideas, for instance an enterprise with a number of Tong’ap exploiting a small and temporary amusement park in the entertainment district of Paramaribo under the name of ‘Good World Tourism N.V.’\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} Interview: Visa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001.
\textsuperscript{35} The group would be called Henghua (PTH: Xinghua, the name of the older administrative entity that included the current counties of Xianyou and Putian in central Fujian) in Singapore. Henghua migrants are common in Southeast Asia, but comparatively rare in the New World (Fujian Sheng Zhi: 183-188). Associations on the basis of Henghua identity are even rarer there. Xianyou County is not a major qiaoxiang. According to the Xianyou Xian Zhi, 7,914 people of a population of 914,756 in 1992 were migrants, mostly entrepreneurial migrants.
\textsuperscript{36} The instant lottery scheme mirrored earlier Fuidung’on Hakka lotteries, \textit{lampa} in the 19\textsuperscript{th} and \textit{piauw} in the twentieth centuries, which served to provide destitute immigrants with a source of income. Cf. Zijlmans & Enser 2002: 58-62, 126-129.
\textsuperscript{37} 好世界國際旅遊業有限公司.
Taiwanese, who are geographically and linguistically linked to Fujian Province, are present in Suriname in negligible numbers.\footnote{The island of Taiwan lies across the Taiwan Straits from Fujian Province. The majority of Taiwanese speak Southern Min (Minnan), which is also spoken in southern Fujian, around Xiamen.} Taiwanese in Suriname are like New Chinese in the sense that they are not Fuidung’on Hakka, but their presence has nothing to do with renewed migration from the PRC in the late 1970s. In South America, Suriname is not a primary destination of choice for Taiwanese migrants, most of whom can be found in metropolises such as São Paulo. The Taiwanese presence in Suriname can be traced back to the founding of the Surinamese branch of the Kuomintang in Paramaribo (1943), in line with the policy of the Chinese Nationalist government to increase its influence among Overseas Chinese. The Kuomintang government in Taiwan funded a printing press for a Chinese language newspaper in Suriname, \textit{Lam Foeng} (‘Southern Wind’).\footnote{Man A Hing 1988.} Taiwanese taught Mandarin in the Chinese school on the premises of the Kuomintang club / Fa Tjauw Song Foei. But by the time the People’s Republic of China was the first foreign state to recognize the newly independent Suriname in 1975, the role of the Kuomintang was over. In 2003 there were five Taiwanese families in Suriname, with a total of about 20 persons. One family has been there for more than twenty years, fully integrated into Surinamese society, with children who are indistinguishable from fully assimilated children from the Fuidung’on Hakka cohort. The four other families arrived in Suriname around 1997, and are all missionaries of a Taiwanese syncretist ‘Daoist’ lay group that is active among non-Chinese in Latin America and the Caribbean.\footnote{The missionaries will not and can not name or explain their sect to the uninitiated, and once initiated one cannot actively disclose such information – which contributes to their limited succes in Suriname. Like the Christian American Missionary Alliance church that has a Chinese congregation in Suriname, the Taoist missionaries are part of a transnational religious network. Every four months they gather to exchange and compare experiences and they keep in regular touch with their headquarters in Taiwan (very likely a Tian Dao / Yiguan Dao sect).}

4.1.3 The South: Hainan Province, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Guangdong Province

Hainanese migrants are the most prominent of the New Chinese from the South. One estimate of about 500 of Hainanese in Suriname,
me in 2003 is based on a suggestion of a Hainanese informant that there were about 100 families. Most are from Wenchang, in the North-east of Hainan Province, with smaller numbers from the provincial capital Haikou. The first Hainanese in Suriname apparently arrived as partners of Fuidung’on Hakkas, sometimes in the late 1980s. They quickly developed a stable Hainanese group, with an identical system of sponsored migration through apprenticeship in retail shops as the Fuidung’on Hakkas. Hainanese copied the local Fuidung’on Hakka strategy of corner shops and supermarkets, as well as riding the rollercoaster of Zhejiangese commodity export via the Baihuo Business links of the Wenzhounese. Although there is chain migration, in the sense of Hainanese entrepreneurs sponsoring relatives and others from the qiaoxiang to come to Suriname, it is unclear to what extent Hainanese migrants use transnational networks (i.e. Hainanese speakers and coregionalists not necessarily resident in the qiaoxiang) to reach Suriname, nor if Suriname is anything but an ad hoc destination.

To outsiders, Hainanese in Suriname are not clearly distinguishable from Tong’ap. They copy Fuidung’on Hakka attitudes to local positioning, and are Chinese migrants in a very broad sense, with very little ‘traditional culture’ for non-Chinese to observe. Although Hainan Province is home to four official nationalities and at least eight languages in four distinct language groups, all Hainanese in Suriname call themselves Han Chinese, which is not surprising, as northern Hainan is dominated by Han. The more robustly assertive Wenzhounese are much easier to identify for Fuidung’on Hakkas and to dislike than the Hainanese. Hainanese in Suriname consider themselves less affluent than either the Fuidung’on Hakkas or the Wenzhounese, though there is clear variation in wealth within the group. Hainanese have established an organization, the *Hainan Tongxiang Hui*, which is actively fostering links with other Hainanese tongxianghui abroad (see Chapter 8).

When self-differentiating, the southern Chinese in Suriname tend to combine criteria of provincial origins and spoken dialect. This results in a broad distinction between Hainanese and mainland southerners from Guangxi and Guangdong Provinces. In practice, mainland southerners further distinguish between speakers of Yue (‘Cantonese’) and Kejia, basically reflecting the distinction between

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41 The four officially recognized ethnic groups of Hainan are Han (i.e. ethnic Chinese), and the three Minority Nationalities of Li, Yao, and Hui. These speak, respectively, Sinitic (Wenchang, Haikou and Yue), Tai-Kadai (Lingao, Hlai, Jiamao, Cun), Hmong-Mien (Kim Mun) and Austronesian (Tsat) languages.
Fuidung’on Hakkas and outsiders. Migrants from Guangxi Province, for instance, all speak local varieties of Yue.42 Like the Fujianese, migrants from Guangxi Province only relate to one another at the provincial level. Most long-term residents in Suriname from Guangxi are shopkeepers, but these do not seem to have developed a chain migration link with their hometowns. It is unclear how and when the first Guangxinese arrived in Suriname, and although we know that they were not many, their numbers can only be guessed at.

Guangdong Province has obviously provided the vast majority of Chinese migrants to Suriname – the Fuidung’on Hakkas. New Chinese from Guangdong, however, are a minority. Apparently, most come from Guangzhou City and Taishan in the Siyi Region.43 The majority of native speakers of Yue varieties would seem to be from Guangzhou; in fact, numbers of Guangzhou migrants seem to have been substantial enough to warrant the foundation of a ‘Guangzhou Hometown Association’ (Guangzhou Tongxiang Hui) somewhere before 2007.44

Though they are minority among the Southerners, Chixi Hakkas are remarkable because they have developed a separate ethnic economy based on urban agriculture, they have an institutionalized link with their qiaoxiang via a newsletter, and they are not ‘New Chinese Migrants’ according to Nyíri’s characteristics: they have a long huaqiao tradition, the individuals in Suriname generally do not have a history of internal migration, they are not upwardly mobile and for them overseas migration is very much a survival strategy.45 They are chain migrants, sponsoring relatives to come to Suriname to escape the poverty of Xiangling Village and provide a better future for their children, who are assimilating into Surinamese society.46 Their agricultural activities are a survival strategy

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42 Guangxi is ethnically and linguistically very heterogeneous, which is reflected in its official designation as Zhuang (ethnic group related to the Thai) Autonomous Region. However, all Guangxinese in Suriname self-identify as ethnic Han.
43 Siyi, ‘four counties’, refers to the former counties of Taishan, Enping, Kaiping and Xinhui in the west of the Pearl River Delta. The Chixi Hakkas are not the first Siyi migrants in Suriname; some of the indentured labourers were from the Siyi area, and according to Lai & Yang (1990: 681) a minority of Surinamese Chinese hailed from Heshan the ‘fifth county’ in the Siyi area.
44 Times of Suriname, 28 April 2007, ‘Communique “Fa Tjauw Tjoen Foei”’ (Communique from Fa Tjauw Tjoen Foei).
45 Nyíri 1999.
46 The Chixi Hakka chain migrant network originated from within the Fuidung’on Hakka network. Sometime in the 1950s the son of a Tong’ap and a Creole woman was sent to the PRC for a Chinese education, and in the early 1980s he returned with a Chixi Hakka wife. The wife’s relatives followed, and by 2003 there were about 100 Hakkas from the village of Xiangling in Chixi District (Kejia: Ciakkai Hî), Taishan,
copied from Xiangling, where planting vegetables for private use is normal. Qiaoxiang ties are strong, with relatives in Xiangling sending packets of seed, clothing, etc. to Suriname, and migrants sending back goods and cash when possible. Chixi migrants consider urban agriculture as a proven survival strategy, but none have long-term entrepreneurial ambitions in agriculture.47

Though the group of Chixi Hakka agriculturalists is small, with no more than about eight households planting full-time at any moment, they are basically the only group involved in classical urban agriculture in Paramaribo.48 Despite problems such as bad drainage and inferior soil, the urban farmers from Xiangling have succeeded in sustaining a weekly market every Sunday morning in Paramaribo, this is one of a number of informal Sunday markets.49 Their chain migration network is not based on apprenticeship in

spread over Greater Paramaribo. About 200 Hakka from other areas in Chixi District followed this link to Suriname, as well as about 300 Hoisan-speakers from other Taishan districts. Most (particularly the Hoisan-speakers) are in the same economic niche as Fuidungeron Hakka: supermarkets and corner shops. Quite a few can be found in the informal sector, selling roast meat, washing cars, and engaged in urban agriculture. Although Hoisan (or Taishanese: Sinitic > Yue > Yue Hai > Siyi > Taishan), is related to standard Cantonese, the two languages are not mutually comprehensible.

47 I introduced University of Amsterdam geography student Frank Hoogendoorn who was in Suriname to write an Ma. Thesis on urban agriculture in Suriname to some Chixi Hakka agriculturalists in 2003. One respondent reluctantly suggested to Hoogendoorn that a good monthly yield could amount to €200, if the rainy season was not too heavy and pests could be controlled and landlords (non-Chinese as well as Chinese) did not decide to raise rents (Hoogendoorn 2004: 110).


49 The ‘Chinese Sunday Market’ began in front of a Tong’ap restaurant (Weidestraat / Fred Derbystraat) in the 1990s, but after municipal authorities decided to crack down on informal markets for the regional Carifesta festival of Caribbean culture that was to be held in Paramaribo in 2003, the market moved to the Waaldijkstraat where the Tong’ap owner of a restaurant / hotel interceded to acquire permits on behalf of the Chixi Hakkas. In 2006 the market had grown and moved to a parking lot near the Chung Fa Foei Kon huiguan. It was to find a permanent location in the Kankantriestraat in Paramaribo in late 2008. (De Ware Tijd 19 May 2008, ‘Chinese zondagmarkt krijgt binnenkort vaste stek’ (Chinese Sunday market to get permanent location shortly)). The Chinese Sunday market is unique in the Caribbean, with its Southern Chinese or Southeast Asian combination of locally grown Chinese vegetables, poultry, imported Chinese foodstuffs and dim-sum style foods. According to a short item on the Market in Paramaribo Post magazine, the snacks are a transplanted strategy; in Chixi people would compete by selling the same vegetables and try to diversify by selling snacks (Chang 2005). The market has a favourable reputation as a specialty market with the closest approximation of organically grown produce in Paramaribo. The rest of the week the urban agriculturalists sell their products directly from home or from fixed locations in downtown Paramaribo under the protection of Fuidunge’on Hakka businesses, and they also supply fresh vegetables to Chinese restaurants.
corner shops or supermarkets, either as insiders in Taishanese businesses or as outsiders in non-Taishanese (i.e. established Fuidung’on Hakkas or different New Chinese) businesses. Urban agriculture is a niche for fresh chain migrants; ideally, Chixi Hakka sponsors in Paramaribo will have moved on to the retail business and let their relatives take over their agricultural network. Urban agriculture does not promote community formation in Suriname, even though mutual cooperation would be far more feasible than in the retail niche. The agriculturalists view each other as competitors and keep communication down to a minimum. Participants in the Chinese Sunday Market copy each other’s innovations almost immediately.

The Chixi Hakkas overseas are linked through a qiaokan, a special type of magazine linking huaqiao to the qiaoxiang, which was first published in Taishan in the 1910s. The modern magazine for Chixi Hakka huaqiao, the Caofeng Qiaokan appeals to the loyalty of Chixi Hakka huaqiao on the basis of Hakka identity. The magazine contains general information for Overseas Chinese, news from home, lists of remittances from Chixi Hakkas overseas and items on Hakka culture, but Chixi Hakkas from Suriname are glaringly absent. This makes the Chixi Hakkas the only Chinese in Suriname with a clear-cut transnational Chinese, albeit Hakka, identity. Individuals have an ancestral village and the whole group is linked to a qiaoxiang, but Chixi Hakkas do not imagine ‘Hakka-ness’ as defined by and limited to the geographical territory of China.

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50 Hsu 2004.
51 The particular history of Chixi District as a ‘Hakka reservation’ to accommodate ‘ethnic cleansing’ as a means to end Hakka-Punti violence at the end of the 19th century (Zheng 1998) has influenced the way Chixi Hakkas view Hakka identity. All differences between Hakkas are considered minor. Asked if Chixi Kejia and Fuidung’on Kejia are mutually intelligible, one Chixi Hakka informant in her early thirties answered: “Of course. They’re completely the same. We’re all Hakkas, we all speak Kejia.” This contrasts with the response of a Kejia-speaking Laiap woman of about the same age: “Yes, I can understand them. But it’s different. The tones are different. They are Hakkas, but they’re not like us.” Chixi Kejia is unclassified in the Language Atlas of China. Dongguan Kejia may be classified as: Sinitic > Kejia > Yuetai > Xinhui > Dongguan Kejia (> Laiap Kejia). Chixi Hakka children, whether born or raised in Suriname, are fully integrated in Paramaribo society from a young age and are for all intents and purposes Laiap. They speak several languages (any bigger or smaller combination of Fuidung’on Kejia, Mandarin, Dutch, Sranantongo, Hoisan, Cantonese, English), unlike their parents, who generally only speak Chixi Kejia and PTH.
4.2 Language and Religion

Language and religion play an important role in Surinamese ethnic discourse by signalling inclusion and exclusion. Religion (common cult) is in fact a very basic ethnic boundary marker, and like commensality and kinship it is a ‘single recursive metaphor’ that simultaneously symbolize and constitute the group.\textsuperscript{52} Language, like ethnic dress, is a secondary surface marker, in the sense that it communicates the deep basis of ethnic identity but does not constitute it. As an ethnic marker, however, language must be native, not acquired, so that full competence in a particular language variety clearly matches group identification.\textsuperscript{53} Even so, language and religion associated with ethnic Chinese and Chinese migrants are presented here from the viewpoint of a Surinamese agenda (“who are these people, what do they speak, to what religion do they belong?”) in order to be able to answer the question to what extent these boundary markers are locally constructed.

There is no doubt that Chinese script is a clear marker of Chinese culture, but since the arrival of New Chinese, how strong is spoken Chinese language as an ethnic marker in Suriname? The 2004 census recorded 3,654 Chinese nationals (i.e. holders of a PRC passport) in Suriname and 8,775 people who self-identified as ‘Chinese’. It should be noted that the formal category of Chinese nationals does not necessarily correspond to a self-ascribed label of Chinese ethnicity. Nor is it the same as ‘New Chinese’ because Chinese nationals in Suriname may be Suriname-born Fuidung’on Hakkas. More than 90% (7,954) of self-identified ethnic Chinese lived in Paramaribo (7,151) and the neighbouring districts of Wanica (653) and Para (150); here there were 3,139 PRC nationals. In these three districts 4,848 first language speakers of unspecified Chinese languages were recorded, as well as 211 second language speakers. This corresponds to 61% and 2.7% respectively of the ethnic Chinese in those areas. Numbers of non-ethnic Chinese speakers of Chinese language were likely very small. If we assume that all Chinese nationals are also first language speakers of a Chinese language, then 1,709 ethnic Chinese in Paramaribo, Wanica and Para are native speakers of some variety of Chinese and are not Chinese nationals; this works out to 21.5% of all ethnic Chinese there. As this would suggest that less than two-thirds of all ethnic Chinese in Suriname are native speakers of a Chinese language and

\textsuperscript{52} Nash 1989: 11.
\textsuperscript{53} Nash 1989: 12.
that about one-fifth of non-immigrants speak Chinese, speaking ‘Chinese’ is not a reliable marker of Chinese ethnic identity in Suriname.\textsuperscript{54}

One can safely assume that all New Chinese are native speakers of some form of Chinese, and as PRC citizens they also all speak PTH. The Wenzhouese are speakers of varieties of Wenzhouese (\textit{Wenzhouhua})\textsuperscript{55}. To be precise, the majority of Wenzhouese in Suriname speak rather different sub-varieties from what is spoken in the Wencheng area, such as Daxue, Ruidan, and Huangdan. The sociolinguistic situation in Wencheng is complex; locals are confronted not only with Wenzhouese varieties and the national standard PTH, but also with Southern Min varieties and the non-Sinitic language of the She nationality (\textit{Wenchang} Xian Zhi: 239-242). The dominant language of Hainanese in Suriname is \textit{Hainanhuə} (‘Hainanese’), also known as \textit{Wenchanghuə} (‘Wenchangese’).\textsuperscript{56} It is quite different from other Min varieties spoken in Suriname by the Fujianese\textsuperscript{57} and the Taiwanese.\textsuperscript{58} Varieties of Yue spoken in Suriname include Hoisan, Standard Cantonese (Guangzhou), Hong Kong Cantonese, Guangxi Yue.\textsuperscript{59} Shandongese and other Northerners are well aware of the prestige they have in Suriname among the Hakkas and other Southerners and Easterners as native speakers of North-eastern Mandarin varieties, which are very close to PTH.

The main linguistic impact of New Chinese within the Chinese language community in Suriname is the increasing impor-

\textsuperscript{54} Data derived from SIC 224-2006/06, SIC 225-2006/07. As noted earlier, of 1,309 households in Paramaribo, Wanica and Para where some variety of Chinese was either the first or second language, 49.96% used Chinese as the first language and Sranantongo as the second language.

A recent and more reliable estimate of numbers of speakers of Chinese varieties in Suriname is provided by Huang (2008). Based on a sample of 180 subscribers to the Chinese-language huiguan newspapers, Huang (a Laiap native speaker of Kejia) concludes that immigrant subscribers are overwhelmingly multi-lingual, with 83% speaking more than one variety of Chinese, and about 82% speaking Sranantongo. Over 80% prefers Mandarin, slightly more than half prefer Kejia, slightly less than half prefer Cantonese, while about 16% prefer ‘Zhejiangese’ and about 8% ‘Fujianese’, leaving roughly 2% ‘other’ varieties (Huang 2008: 32).

\textsuperscript{55} Sinitic > Wu > Oujiang > Wenzhou.

\textsuperscript{56} Sinitic > Min > Qiongwen > Wenchang

\textsuperscript{57} Sinitic > Min > Puxian > Xianyou

\textsuperscript{58} Sinitic > Min > Minnan > Taiwanese. An interesting detail is that the head of one of the Taiwanese missionary families is a Hakka, which brings the number of reported Kejia varieties in Suriname to four: Dongguan, Chixi, Meixian and Taiwanese (Hailu?).

\textsuperscript{59} Sinitic > Yue > Siyi > Taishan; Sinitic > Yue > Guangfu > Standard Canton, Dongguan Cantonese, Guangxi Cantonese
tance of PTH as an intra-ethnic lingua franca. Not only is PTH a prestige language that signals globalized Chinese identity, but it is also a symbol of the growing power of the PRC and thus ethnic pride through PRC patriotism. PTH is becoming closely linked to written Chinese in Suriname, as transcriptions of local and non-Chinese names are increasingly based on PTH pronunciations rather than Kejia or Cantonese. However, the PRC orthography of simplified characters has not overtaken the traditional orthography, and Chinese texts in Suriname can be found either made up of horizontal lines reading form left to right (and occasionally from right to left) or of columns reading from right to left, with simplified characters treated more like a typographic style than an official orthography.

Language also reflects the position of New Chinese in the broader context of Surinamese society. Immigrants in Suriname can get away with not speaking Dutch, on the condition that they learn Sranantongo. Even though it is not a prestige language and some Surinamese tend to treat it with near disrespect, it is the medium of informal communication and thus signals the lowering of barriers. In 2003 a common criticism levelled at Chinese immigrants was that they did not speak Sranantongo - which was hardly surprising, as many were fairly recent immigrants. The charge of arrogance probably involved the common perception that all Chinese speak Sranantongo, but even so Chinese immigrants (who were seen as profiteers) were singled out as problematic. 60 The apparent increase in discomfort with Chinese immigrants was often expressed by oblique statements, such as, “They should learn the language”.61

Despite its importance in Suriname as an ethnic marker, religion does not appear to be treated as such by New Chinese. It may be that they are reticent about clearly placing themselves in religious categories, conditioned by the officially anti-religious stance of the Chinese Communist Party. However toleration for

60 According to the Seventh General Census, of the 1,309 households in the three districts of Paramaribo, Wanica and Para (where most self-identified ethnic Chinese were registered) where a variety of Chinese was either the first or second language, 22.7% used only Chinese. Households in which Chinese was the first language and Sranantongo was the second, made up 49.9%. (Data derived from SIC 224-2006/06, SIC 225-2006/07).

61 The formula was even repeated by President Venetiaan in a speech during the celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year on February 1, 2003 in a huiguan in Paramaribo, when - speaking Sranantongo at the advice of his hosts - he urged new Chinese immigrants in Suriname to ‘learn the language as quickly as possible’. In that particular context, the implied language was Sranantongo.
traditional religions is greater than ever among the various qiaoxiang represented in Suriname. It might also be that New Chinese are trying to reduce their alienness in Suriname as much as possible, or that religious identity is not a relevant ethnic resource in New Chinese economic strategies. In any case, data on religion and ethnicity in the 2004 census in Suriname (see Chart 3) showed an increase in the number of self-proclaimed Chinese ‘adherents of traditional religion’, they numbered 299 out of 8,775 self-identified ethnic Chinese, or 3.4%. However, the term was not clearly defined for Chinese, and there are indications that the actual number may be higher. The number of respondents in the category ‘does not know’ is a remarkable 2,877 or 32.8%. Combining the numbers of adherents of ‘traditional religion’ with those who could (or would) not indicate a religion and those who checked the category of ‘other’, would produce a high sum of 4,044 adherents of Chinese religions, or about 46% of all self-identified ethnic Chinese in Suriname. If the number of traditionalists is nearer this higher range, then the cultural differences between New Chinese and Fuidung’on Hakkas may be greater than the Chinese of Suriname will publicly admit to.

Then again, transplanted irreligious attitudes among migrants from the PRC would present a far less complicated explanation for the results of the census. The varied religious experiences in the different New Migrant qiaoxiang were not reflected in Surina-
me between 1990 and 2005. Popular religion is alive in Wencheng (Wenzhou region), where the most prominent officially sanctioned religion is Buddhism, with 28 functioning monasteries and nunneries in 1990. But Wencheng migrants, who are the majority of New Chinese, do not build temples or shrines or attempt to establish a religious identity in the public sphere. There were also no reports of household shrines or altars. Moreover, no remarkable changes in existing public religious practices, for instance relating to the Chinese burial ground, were apparent. But public displays of Chinese festivals did increase. New Chinese tended to celebrate the Lunar New Year / Spring Festival as they have done in their hometowns, but at home with fireworks. Many Tong'ap (Hong Kong Chinese who were now laokeh) considered this very audible statement of cultural belonging too public. The Surinamese public seemed somewhat surprised at the change in 'Chinese New Year' from a localized and contained huiguan event to a neighbourhood spectacle.

The conservative nondenominational Protestant church which in Suriname is the Chinese CAMA church (see Paragraph 3.6) is the only organized religious institution that caters to Chinese migrants. Yang’s observations of Chinese conversion to Evangelical Churches in the US also ring true in Suriname; namely, that these are instrumental responses to local realities rather than personal crises, and that personalities and networks of individual migrants determine the rate of conversion. The CAMA church potentially provides Chinese migrants with a number of benefits: a Chinese environment; an inclusive identity instead of a variety of regional and linguistic identifications; access to local networks of earlier migrant cohorts and established Fuidung'on Hakkas; the transnational network of CAMA, either through missionary networks or between established Chinese churches in the USA, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, etc.; and finally global Evangelical modernity as an alternative to the traditionalism of local Chinese ethnic identity. Even so, the church targets middle-class ethnic Chinese rather than the average, less influential, Chinese migrant. Conversion does not automatically lead to local assimilation, and in fact the Chinese CAMA church can become a generator of instrumental Chinese ethnicity. On the one hand the Chinese-language environment of the ethnic Chinese church community is fostered as a tool for reaching ethnic Chinese in Suriname and abroad, while on the other

62 Wencheng Xian Zhi: 886, 895.
63 Yang 1998.
conversion to protestant conservatism is easy as it is compatible with conservative Chinese notions of family, gender and governance.

4.3 New Chinese as Migrant Entrepreneurs

New Chinese migrants entered Suriname in a period of economic stagnation in the 1990s. Suriname had managed to avoid economic problems of Latin America in 1980s, but just as Latin America was recovering, Suriname was hit by extremely high inflation in the 1990s as a result of huge budget deficits. These were caused by the suspension of Dutch development aid in the 1980s during the period of Military Rule, plummeting world market prices for bauxite and aluminum, the Jungle War which crippled mining operations, and the fact that Suriname had not been able to access loans from multilateral institutions such as IMF, the World Bank, and IDB. Inflation peaked at 43% in November 1994, and a wide gap opened between official and parallel market exchange rates. Devaluation of the official rate in January 1999 started a new spiral of inflation, which eventually rose to 150%. Consequently there was a severe recession. The informal sector grew substantially, with an estimated size of 26% of the registered labour force, generating equivalent of over 25% of GDP by the mid-1990s. A substantial illegal sector also developed based on drug trafficking. One IDB estimate suggest about this made up one-third of legitimate formal economy. Condemned to clientelism in apanjaht ethnopolitics, the government carried out populist policies such as massive growth in government sector wages, expansion of the health care sector (staatsziekenfonds), and price controls.

The socio-economic situation was not a hindrance to the new migrants. New Chinese are a diverse group, as we have seen, and this variety extends to the economic strategies migrants adopt in Suriname. The basic problem is the same, nonetheless; language barriers and the fact that skills and diplomas of Chinese migrants are often not recognized in Suriname, make participation of New Chinese in the formal Surinamese job market as difficult as it was for ‘Old’ migrants. New Chinese faced the same economic challen-

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65 Van Dijk 2001b.
66 Ibid.
ges in Suriname as later members of the Fuidung’on Hakka cohort, and had basically the same options: copy and adapt survival strategies of earlier Chinese immigrants in Suriname or continue survival strategies from the qiaoxiang. In fact, most economic strategies employed by New Chinese in Suriname are transplanted, be it construction companies, contract labour in construction or fishery, barber shops / beauty parlours, urban agriculture, catering, or certain forms of retail trade.68

New Chinese lacking a Surinamese network enter the retail trade and catering niches in the same way early Fuidung’on Hakka migrants did, progressing from the informal sector to formal economic participation, first as itinerant vendors (vending roast meats in the case of New Chinese), then small market stalls or open food stalls, followed by corner shops or small cookshops, up to grocery shops, supermarkets, and restaurants of various sizes. There are few really unique strategies and niches available to New Chinese pioneer migrants in Suriname, but they have proven to be very flexible with various short-term income generating strategies, from washing cars from the yard of one’s rented home, to providing specialized cultural services for ethnic Chinese (Chinese foods, traditional Chinese medical services such as tuina massage and acupuncture, etc.). Some of these informal activities mirror those which the New Migrant engaged in when they were in their hometowns but they also mirror those of internal migrants in the PRC. ‘Barber-shops’ (falang) and ‘Chinese massage parlours’ are often covers for family-run prostitution, and there are people who claim to be traditional Chinese medical specialists (acupuncture, qigong therapies, tuina massage, etc.).

Although the variety of strategies has increased, the bulk of Chinese migration to Suriname basically remains sponsored migration based on privately owned businesses of ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs. Old as well as New Chinese sponsor relatives or coregionalists to come to Suriname in order to work as apprentices in their retail businesses, to learn the ropes and eventually set up their own

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68 Contract labour resurfaced as Chinese-owned construction companies recruited workers from the PRC to work in Suriname. The Chinese contractors were quite competitive in Suriname, and provided jobs (albeit at lower wages) for migrants who otherwise could not compete in the mainstream Surinamese job market. The size of Chinese contract labour in Suriname is unknown. Construction work is not recognized as a specialist skill by the Surinamese Ministry of Labour, and Chinese construction companies in Suriname can only credibly apply for a limited number of entry visas for specialized workers. Numbers of locally recruited Chinese migrants are also unknown. Contract labourers could theoretically choose to remigrate from Suriname, but such remigrants remain unregistered.
businesses. The system may be stable, but the businesses themselves are not necessarily intended to endure; very few plan to set up a sustainable long-term investment that would cross generations, as they are all hoping for rapid social mobility.

Most Chinese migrants, ‘Old’ or New Chinese, prefer to work in some form of retail business, as no special diplomas are required for this in Suriname and very few other economic strategies are compatible with chain migration. Other economic niches, such as catering and restaurants, allow more limited migration through applications for working permits for specialized staff. The nature of ethnic Chinese businesses in Suriname (geared to the requirements of chain migration rather than intended as long-term enterprises) reinforces the incorrect stereotype of Chinese as temporary residents, using Suriname as a stopover on the way to more prosperous destination. Chinese migrant entrepreneurs might indeed like to move away from other Chinese competitors in Suriname, but that would likely be in the direction of a less affluent destination with less competition.

So is there a single Chinese ethnic ownership economy that New Chinese assimilate into, or are the New Chinese involved in different adaptive strategies in Suriname? The available evidence indicates that New Chinese migrants have indeed adopted a wider range of survival and adaptive strategies upon their arrival in Suriname, but also that they carved out a separate niche in the Surinamese retail sector and have developed an ethnic ownership economy that is distinct from and competes with the Chinese ethnic ownership economy of the ‘Old Chinese’: Baihuo Business as we will see below.

4.3.1 Baihuo Business

Like the established Fuidung’on Hakkas, the vast majority of New Chinese, particularly those from Wenzhou and the provinces of Hainan, Fujian, Guangxi, Guangxi and Shandong, based (chain) migration on retail trade. What made them absolutely ‘new’ to the general (non-Chinese) public was their shops which sold an enormous variety of PRC-made commodities for very low prices. The first of these new shops appeared after the influx of Chinese migrants noted by the ABS in the early 1990s; shops selling cheap clothing made in PRC had become noticeable by the late 1990s. The new shops included the term maoyi gongsi (lit.: ‘trading companies’, enterprises) in their Chinese-language shop signs. Locals have no
distinct name for the *maoyi gongsi*, other than *Chinese winkels* ('Chinese shops') or *Chinese supermarkten* ('Chinese supermarkets'). At first glance the main difference between a Chinese supermarket in Suriname and a *maoyi gongsi* is the fact that the latter does not carry foodstuffs. The two shop formats are distinguished by their Chinese language shop signs. One of them uses variations of the word *chaoshi* ('supermarket'), the other uses the term *maoyi gongsi*.

Wenzhounese migrants in particular, in keeping with the general pattern of Wenzhounese entrepreneurial migration in PRC and abroad, established their chain migration to Suriname on the trade in cheap everyday consumer products imported from Yiwu in Zhejiang Province. Østbø and Carling present a rare analysis of Wenzhounese entrepreneurial migration which is useful in understanding the Surinamese situation; but remarkably little has been written on New Chinese entrepreneurial chain migration in a South-South context (and even less that highlight regional differentiation). In their Cape Verdean case, Østbø and Carling coined the useful term ‘Baihuo Business’ for this particular entrepreneurial strategy of New Chinese migrants. In Baihuo Business, migrants develop transnational business networks that exploit the drive of privately owned businesses in Zhejiang Province to increase exports, and the need for self-employment among New Migrants who as outsiders in their host societies face limited opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. Baihuo Business - the ability to access and exploit Overseas Chinese networks - is just one route towards market expansion which is available to Zhejiangese exporters. Baihuo Business is also just one of many self-employment strategies available to New Migrants. From the angle of ethnic economy theory, Baihuo Business is a New Chinese ethnic ownership economy based on access to migrant networks that link Zhejiang Province to various migrant destinations abroad, including Suriname.

The economy of Zhejiang Province developed explosively after the PRC abandoned socialist planning of the economy, the

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69 According to Østbø & Carling (2005) Cape Verdeans call the shops of New Chinese immigrants *loja chinês* ('Chinese shops'), while the immigrants themselves speak of ‘baihuo shops’. Dobler (2008) reports in Oshikango, Namibia the local term 'China shops' is used for the same phenomenon.  
70 Østbø & Carling 2005.  
71 *Baihuo* (lit.: ‘hundred commodity’) means ‘general merchandise’. By capitalizing both words, the term is modified here to refer to all its aspects, and to distinguish it from the closely related, but distinctly non-globalized supermarket strategy of the Fuidung’on Hakkas.
liberalization of emigration regulations in the late 1970s, and through rapid increase in exports of low-priced, labour intensive products made by migrant workers from inland provinces.\(^{72}\) The rapid growth of exports is attributed in particular to the rise of privately-owned enterprises under the Wenzhou Economic Model; most of these exporters are small and medium-sized family-based private enterprises. The family-based enterprises developed from the small traders and producers who clustered in the cities in response to the huge demand for consumer products following the economic reforms, this was basically a revival of local traditions of crafts production or long-distance peddling; small producers gathering together soon gave rise to industrial clustering in Zhejiang - leather shoes in Wenzhou, small commodities for daily use in Yiwu, clothing in Ningbo, ballpoint pens in Fenshui, etc.\(^{73}\) With the addition of small merchants, clustering revived the traditional commercial institution of the transaction market, first in Zhejiang Province, and later in most cities of the PRC.\(^{74}\)

This is the background to the rapid development of the huge commodity wholesale market Yiwu China Commodity City in Yiwu, Jinhua Municipality, located in the centre of Zhejiang Province.\(^{75}\) The Yiwu China Commodity City was formally set up in 1982, and has been the PRC’s largest market of industrial products since 1991. The Yiwu market channels production from Zhejiangese industrial clusters to the rest of the country and abroad. Yiwu China Commodity City sells over 400,000 commodities in 1901 categories from 43 industries, earning it a reputation as the world’s production and distribution centre of daily necessities.\(^{76}\) Wenzhou, a two or three hour bus ride from Yiwu, is firmly linked to the Yiwu market. Nine Wenzhouese industrial clusters opened booths in the Yiwu Market, while Wenzhouese merchants expanded sales networks all over the PRC (a revival of long-distance peddling) and abroad through Wenzhouese migration networks.\(^{77}\) As a hub in a global


\(^{73}\) Zhang & Wang 2004.

\(^{74}\) Ding 2006a.

\(^{75}\) 'Yiwu China Commodity City': 義烏中國小商品市.

\(^{76}\) Ding 2006a.


\(^{77}\) Zhang & Wang 2004; Ding 2006. Exports from Zhejiang are now faced with domestic and foreign barriers. The PRC has suspended the return of value-added
trade network, Yiwu is thus also linked to various migration networks; labour migrants come to Yiwu from inland provinces while Zhejiangese entrepreneurs such as Wenzhounese move products from Yiwu along domestic and transnational networks.78

Baihuo Business and the ethnic ownership economy of the Fuidung’on Hakkas in Suriname have developed in separate ways to meet exactly the same needs but of different migrant cohorts. However, the two ethnic economies are not strictly separated, nor do they distinguish their participants along ethnic lines – hardly anyone can avoid selling Yiwu merchandise in Suriname, and Fuidung’on Hakka supermarkets can and do use the Baihuo Business networks. The idea of Baihuo Business is also not completely new to Suriname; it closely resembles the economic strategies used by later Fuidung’on Hakka migrants such as the Hong Kong Chinese, who would sponsor qiaoxiang migrants on the basis of an economy driven by cheap consumer goods from China. New Chinese entrepreneurial migration to African countries like Cape Verde and Namibia is different from that which exists in countries such as Suriname with an old, established Overseas Chinese presence.

Chinese entrepreneurial migrants in Cape Verde and Namibia see themselves as pioneers in new markets, far removed from the PRC, and in the case of Oshikango they mark an end point of Chinese trading networks.79 Though they face heightened anti-Chinese sentiments, New Migrants in Cape Verde and Oshikango are not faced with the problem of positioning themselves politically or ethnically vis-à-vis established Overseas Chinese communities; they are not ‘new’ in contrast to earlier Chinese migrants, but a new local phenomenon. Even so, the organization of Baihuo Busi-

taxes to exporters – a policy intended to encourage exports – as rapid growth of exports implies equally rapid increase of tax revenue. As most developed countries still see the PRC as a planned economy, Zhejiangese exports face protectionist policies abroad (Zhang & Wang 2004).

78 Probably the most famous example of entrepreneurial migration in the PRC is Dahongmen Clothing Street, or ‘Zhejiang Village’. Located in Nanyuan Township, Fengtai District, in the south of Beijing Municipality, Zhejiang Village was founded in the 1980s by settlers from Wenzhou. Early migrants were marginal ‘ethnic’ entrepreneurs, but soon turned to trade in clothing produced in their hometown areas. Zhejiang Village is now home to more than 100,000 migrants from Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong Provinces, and its annual trade volume accounts for more than half of that of Beijing Municipality’s clothing business. According to Xinhua News Agency (October 2003, ‘Beijing rag-trade “Village” nurtures a host of migrant multimillionaires’) Zhejiang Village has produced multimillionaires, some of whom have extended business networks to the European market.

79 Dobler 2008. According to Dobler, the China shops in Oshikango link Chinese networks and the ‘normal’ retail trade across the border in Angola.
ness in Suriname closely parallels that which is found in the Cape Verdean and Namibian cases. A wide variety of cheap goods of uneven quality are purchased in Zhejiang in relatively small quantities and shipped to Suriname in containers. As in Cape Verde and Namibia, merchants go to Yiwu to order the containers directly, but the number of such importers in Suriname is limited in comparison to the number of migrants involved in Baihuo Business. Under invoicing of the containers to evade import duties and taxes is a regular practice, in order to bring the goods to the Surinamese market as cheaply as possible. Goods are preferably sold wholesale, but they will also be sold individually.

Baihuo Business in Suriname does not produce significant employment for locals; Surinamese are clients in maoyi gongsi, not workers. There are no reliable data on numbers of non-Chinese employed in Chinese-owned businesses in Suriname, but observation in the field suggests that numbers are low. The idea that only well trusted people should be allowed to handle money is common to both Fuidung’on Hakka and New Chinese businesses in Suriname. Chinese workers are therefore recruited among relatives, or from networks of people of good repute, which in the past meant that employees shared the same qiaoxiang as the employer. With falling numbers of reliable immigrants from the Fuidung’on qiaoxiang, the businesses of established Fuidung’on Hakka will also employ non-Fuidung’on Hakka Chinese in the same way as New Chinese maoyi gongsi do. Such Chinese employees are migrants who receive board and lodging, work to repay the costs of a ticket or other expenses related to migration. They might not receive payment in a form acceptable to locals or they might even forego regular payment as apprentices learning business skills and Sranantongo. They are also dependent on their employers in ways that local employees would not be. Maoyi gongsi will employ locals as a practical strategy to overcome the language barriers with the public.

Importers can use cheaply imported goods to provide indirect loans to migrants. The goods are sold to retailers on credit,

80 As Surinamese regulations clearly distinguish between wholesalers and retailers, many maoyigongsi did not live up to local legal standards.
81 Dobler (2008) mentions a value of roughly US$7,000 for a typical container to Oshikango, the same value reported by Surinamese customs officers for containers from Yiwu in Suriname. Dobler notes that under invoicing may also serve to move money out of the PRC, as a lower price is registered in Zhejiang while a higher amount is paid into a foreign bank account. Although the details of transactions for containers to Suriname remain obscure, the payments are made outside Suriname before the goods are dispatched. Middlemen based in Yiwu who can facilitate this are increasingly advertising their services in the two Chinese-language newspapers.
who then repay the importer from the profit once the consignment starts selling. According to Østbø and Carling, ‘lending goods’ adds to the pressure to increase turnover, which can be achieved by opening new outlets. However, increased risk to the lender (there is no guarantee that the lender will recoup the loan) results in even more emphasis on relationships of trust (proven relationships, relatives). The number of maoyi gongsi chains in Suriname is small, they are all family-owned and employing people from the same qiaoxiang. The most extensive maoyi gongsi chain was owned by a family from Qingdao in Shandong Province, with branches in Paramaribo and Nieuw Nickerie in Western Suriname.82 Baihuo Business model might have been introduced to Suriname by the Wenzhouese, but quickly spread to maoyi gongsi from every regional background. However, the main importers of cheap commodities from Yiwu are Wenzhouese.

From a Surinamese perspective Baihuo Business is the latest incarnation of the Chinese ethnic ownership economy and entrepreneurial chain migration. Just like shops and supermarkets of the established Fuidung’on Hakkas, all maoyi gongsi in Suriname compete with each other. In this way Baihuo Business produces the same kind of underlying mutual distrust as the Fuidung’on Hakka supermarket business, which impedes Chinese community development. Ironically, the close trust and personal loyalties required by the system emphasize ties between coregionalists. This in turn gives the appearance of ethnicity formation. Fuidung’on Hakka huiguan were initially organized as tongxianghui – coregionalists’ associations – for the purpose of facilitating qiaoxiang ties, though the associations later shifted to tongyehui / shanghui (business / merchants’ associations), which facilitated the ethnic ownership economy by mediating between the State and Chinese entrepreneurs, and in conflicts among Chinese businessmen.83 New Chinese migrants in Suriname have started to copy this pattern of organiza-

82 Maoyi gongsi will sell wholesale to local wholesalers, but there are no reports of Baihuo Business loans to non-Chinese. There might not yet be any economic incentive to include ‘non-trusted’ links in the Baihuo Business network. Moreover, the strong anti-Chinese discourse does not encourage the locals to trust Baihuo Business entrepreneurs.

83 The huiguan (the san tuan) suppressed price wars by negotiating prices of goods. One recent example is the settling of the price of egg noodles which are locally produced by Chinese, out of sight of the Surinamese State, who might have labelled the action unfair competition or cartel formation. Egg noodles, in the form of fried noodles (Sranantongo/Surinamese Dutch: bami; Kejia: cao mèn) are an important Surinamese staple, and any price war would immediately threaten the livelihood of many Chinese food shops.
tion, and have recently set up their own Hometown Associations (Zhejiang Tongxianghui, Hainan Tongxianghui, Fujian Tongxianghui, see Chapter 8) to transcend the basic distrust between Baihuo Business entrepreneurs, assist in financial transactions, and provide a basic social safety net.

It is debatable whether globalization of the PRC economy drives migration to destinations like Suriname or whether it is New Migrants from China who are introducing PRC products to new markets. The works of Østbø and Carling, and of Dobler on New Chinese migration in Africa confirm the link between cheap Zhejiangese consumer commodities and New Migrants – in particular Wenzhounese – though neither study explicitly analyzes Baihuo Business as a type of ethnic ownership economy and the implications this has for ethnic identification among New Migrants.84 What is new about this type of entrepreneurial chain migration is its South-South pattern. The Chinese entrepreneurs in Africa who are the subject of studies by Østbø and Carling, and by Dobler are just one local aspect of Chinese migration, and typically set up their own businesses separate from established huaqiao groups. Unlike the South-North Wenzhounese migration to Europe,85 Wenzhounese move towards new markets, often in the opposite direction of other migration flows.86 In contrast to the local stereotype of Chinese migrants, Wenzhounese in Suriname are not interested in moving to more affluent places, but to less regulated, open markets in other Southern destinations.

4.3.2 Local Reception of Baihuo Business

The established Fuidung’on Hakkas did not welcome the appearance of Baihuo Business. As maoyi gongsi and supermarkets carried different wares (commodities versus foodstuffs, with an overlap in non-food daily necessities), they could be in principle complement each other, but competition for the new niche was a common source of ‘Old Chinese’ grievance against the New Chinese. Established shopkeepers felt that the newcomers had an unfair advantage, as profit margins in non-food items had always been higher, and the maoyi gongsi could charge far less than established Fuidung’on Hakka supermarkets. Maoyi gongsi initially did not

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84 Østbø & Carling 2005; Dobler 2008.
86 Østbø & Carling 2005.
cause market saturation in the supermarket sector, as the two niches were initially separate. Supermarkets had been an innovation in response to market saturation faced by Fuidung’on Hakka grocery stores. With price wars suppressed by the huiguan, Fuidung’on Hakka chain migrants approached market saturation through geographical and sectoral expansion, moving out of urban areas to the major access roads to Paramaribo and updating the supermarket concept according to the American model. Without their own huiguan to mediate in price wars, New Migrant entrepreneurs faced market saturation in the maoyi gongsi sector within a couple of years after introduction of the concept in Suriname. Supermarkets of established Fuidung’on Hakkas started buying from Baihuo Business importers, which further increased competition among sellers of cheap Zhejiangese goods. During the course of this study, it was observed that New Chinese entrepreneurial migrants seem to set up their businesses as far away from Paramaribo as infrastructure and costs allowed, just like the Fuidung’on Hakka supermarket owners.

Surinamese consumers first became aware of the maoyi gongsi when they started selling cheap textile imports from the PRC. One Wenzhounese proprietor of a maoyi gongsi who specialized in clothing explained that he had been a civil servant in Wencheng, in the Wenzhou area. Invited to Suriname by two brothers, he used his contacts in Zhejiang to establish a trade link with exporters in Yiwu. As a typical maoyi gongsi, the business (which had inexplicably disappeared three years later) was operated as a wholesale, with customers also able to buy single items. Surinamese tend to welcome the availability of cheap products; there is general agreement that maoyi gongsi improved living standards by raising purchasing power of the poorest. Owners turned to renting their shops to New Chinese, while others converted existing properties or constructed new buildings to take advantage of the increased demand for business premises. Though it is impossible to quantify the effect, it is clear that local retailers, especially of clothing, were driven out of business under the new competition. From an initial assumption that big profits were being made in the maoyi gongsi, locals inferred that New Chinese were either rich or were laundering money from the PRC, that the PRC was dumping its over-

87 Cheap Chinese clothing has even begun to impact the Lebanese monopoly in the Surinamese clothing market. Some small Lebanese shops had to close. Some Lebanese entrepreneurs started new businesses. Some for instance began to import textile products directly from China. (De Bruijne 2006: 112-113).
production in Suriname, and that the Surinamese government either ignored the problem or was complicit by giving ethnic Chinese preferential treatment. There have been discussions in the National Assembly about the trade imbalance between Suriname and China, which is often falsely assumed to be something which the PRC has clear control over.88

The opacity of Baihuo Business fostered irrationally negative as well as positive interpretations. Importers found themselves with a measure of political clout as established Fuidung’on Hakka entrepreneurs and elite cautiously overestimated their economic resources. Some locals welcomed the entrepreneurial spirit inherent in Baihuo Business and the possible catalytic effect of Chinese business networks on the Surinamese economy. The real estate boom that developed around the Fuidung’on Hakka sinkeh of the 1980s and 1990s carried on into the new millennium with the broader New Chinese influx as increasing numbers of entrepreneurial chain migrants fuelled a demand for business premises. Many locals (ethnic Chinese as well as non-Chinese) chose to rent out their properties to New Chinese, or constructed new business premises with an eye on increasing demand for shops (ironically, often built by New Chinese construction workers with cheap construction materials imported via Baihuo business). The idea that New Chinese were either rich or could quickly generate hard currency drove up rents. It was not uncommon to find New Chinese entrepreneurs stuck with unaffordable rents and loans which had to be repaid to the Baihuo business sponsor, and accordingly most maoyi gongsí were unsustainable.

Baihuo business had a clear impact on the image of Chinese in Suriname. The Saturday Keerpunt column in De West of 7 February 2004 presents a clear example of the kind of impact Baihuo Business had on the image of Chinese in Suriname:

[…] The Chinese are mostly found in the retail trade and get lots of things done via the Ministry of Trade and Industry. No wonder then that Chinese supermarkets rise like mushrooms. Keerpunt is referring to a certain trend that is noticeable from Albina to Nieuw Nickerie. What we should absolutely consider is that all kinds of

88 Østbø & Carling (2005) report a similar situation in the Cape Verdian Islands. Despite the absence of any direct connection between the two countries, Cape Verdians (laypersons as well as officials) assumed that the Cape Verdian government was giving the Baihuo Business traders preferential treatment in return for PRC development aid. Officials expressed the fear that Cape Verde was being overwhelmed by migrants.
criminal elements enter this country with this immigration, to which we shall have no real response. Bona fide traders have long complained about the attitude of the Chinese importers, and then we are referring to people who have arrived here from China not that long ago and speak not a word of Sranantongo or Dutch. Among them are some very clever types who import almost everything and who are completely ruining the regular retail trade. Not long ago the customs authorities were confronted with a consignment of goods from China, of which the customs authorities were one hundred percent sure that they were heavily under-valued. This was the reason why the customs authorities refused to release the goods. The Chinese importer who was involved then marched to the commercial attaché of the Chinese embassy, who quickly provided the man with documentation which would prove to the customs authorities that the goods had been correctly valued. Our customs authorities had no choice but to release the goods after a pittance of import duties had been paid. In this way the market is severely polluted by all kinds of dumped good and the tax collector does not earn very much. It is precisely this kind of activities that will cause Surinamese trade, and we mean bona fide trade, to fold in a short while. There is then a danger that in the near future the only traders in this country will be of Chinese descent...

Maoyi gongsi came to represent the most concrete sign and outcome of New Chinese migration; people objected to the increasing number of Chinese supermarkten (a phenomenon originally linked to the Fuidung’on Hakka sinkeh of the 1980s and 1990s) popping up all over the place and demanded some kind of government response. Jenny Simons of the NDP opposition party brought the issue to parliament in December 2004, demanding government action against ‘China price’, Chinese migration, lack of regulation, and Chinese labour in maoyi gongsi who do not even speak Sranantongo.

Eventually Baihuo Business was impacted by government action, although such steps were (officially) not primarily aimed at Chinese importers, and were implemented in the context of institutional strengthening and rationalization of government services. In 2004 Baihuo Business had existed in Suriname for roughly a decade, and its success as a business scheme and a strategy to facilitate

89 De West, 7 February 2004, ‘Keerpunt: Onderfacturering door Chinezen schering en inslag’ (Turning Point: Undervaluing by Chinese is quite common now).
90 De West 8 December 2004, Simons bepleit bescherming Surinaamse producenten tegen China price (Simons pleads for protection of Surinamese producers against ‘China Price’).
chain migration depended on its informal nature within the overwhelmingly informal Surinamese economy. Institutional weakness of the Surinamese State fostered informality; policy makers were very slow to take new developments into account, local authorities did not enforce regulations separating the wholesale and retail sectors, and an inefficient customs system allowed Zhejiangese products to enter the Surinamese market cheaply.

The strong links between Baihuo Business and migration became apparent in late 2004. The Surinamese customs authorities contracted Crown Consultants as a follow-up to the assistance provided by the Dutch Ministry of Finance to the Surinamese Ministry of Finance with regard to budget cycles and tax revenue. Under Dutch pressure the Ministry of Finance moved to increase revenue from indirect taxes by reforming the customs service, which was plagued by allegations of corruption and inefficiency. Crown Consultants was given an extensive mandate to restructure the customs service. Interpretations of subsequent developments vary, but it is clear that relations between Surinamese customs officers, the Crown Agents consultants and the Dutch advisors were sometimes not very good. Apparently, the Dutch criticized Crown Agents for focusing too much on the short-term goal of achieving the 50% increase in state revenue, while the establishment of customs officers resented the broad powers granted to Crown Agents. The Dutch supported the introduction of a Customs Intelligence Unit (Douane Informatie Centrum) to investigate corruption. In any case, state revenue from import duties increased. Nobody was surprised to learn that some companies had never paid import duties, nor that the suspicions about containers of goods from Yiwu being undervalued (at US$7,000 on average) turned out to be true.

Once containers from Yiwu were actually inspected and their contents valued at upwards of US$40,000, retail prices in the maoyi gongsi were immediately affected. Prices had been low because the products were produced very cheaply, but also due to evasion of import duties. Maoyi gongsi were suddenly no longer as competitive as they had been, and the network of goods and loans supporting migration collapsed. New Chinese became less visible over the following months as maoyi gongsi and supermarkets star-

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91 Crown Agents were originally a British public corporation which moved to the private sector in 1997. http://www.crownagents.com/
92 The 2004 Country Report of the Economist Intelligence Unit reported an 18.7% increase of tax income over 2004 compared to 2003. But while revenues from direct taxation increased dramatically by 41.5%, taxes linked to production and imports only increased by 10.6%.
ted folding and people were rumoured to be leaving Suriname perhaps earlier than they had expected to. New Migrant households switched to small restaurants, while others with access to the right technical knowledge and / or the right networks switched to running Internet cafés (called cybers by locals). With the import networks unravelling, the sources of goods became more visible. New Migrant entrepreneurs started to facilitate and share their Yiwu connections with Tong’ap entrepreneurs and the general public through advertisements in the Chinese newspapers.

Reforms in the customs service did not prove sustainable after Crown Agents left Suriname and the government became less active in the run-up to the 2005 elections. The reforms had impacted all importers, not only the Chinese. East Indian importers and wholesalers in a position to exert political pressure on the ruling NF coalition were also affected. Customs inspection again became less strict during 2005. Importing cheap consumer goods from Yiwu became once again lucrative, and consequently New Chinese became more visible again as new maoyi gongsi and supermarkets appeared, along with new faces in ethnic Chinese social circuits.

The situation since then has remained basically unchanged. The number of maoyi gongsi remains unknown, but it appeared to be stable (again) in 2005. Shops selling Zhejiangese goods stayed in business for four years on average, and this steady turnover of outlets appears to be delaying market saturation. Importers have innovated and many have conquered a relatively stable and specialized niche in the Surinamese market, such as importers of fruit, bamboo matting and screens, and building material. Trade in Zhejiangese goods is becoming normalized, in the sense that goods are also imported via local, non-Chinese channels, and sold outside the context of maoyi gongsi, and most people are unaware that the products are imported from the PRC, unless they purchased them from a Chinese outlet.

The maoyi gongsi phenomenon in Suriname is linked to New Chinese entrepreneurial migration (particularly from the Wenzhou area in Zhejiang Province), which currently depends on the availability of cheap commodities from Zhejiang. As a form of globalization, Baihuo Business in Suriname stands to benefit from regionalization. Suriname is part of the CARICOM Single Market and

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93 From personal observation, four years is roughly the time from when a new Baihuo Business shop appears in a neighbourhood till the moment when it closes down for whatever reason. Not all Baihuo Business shops are duly registered with the authorities, and so their disappearance is also seldom formally reported.
Economy, and citizens of member states will soon be able to freely establish businesses and travel throughout the CARICOM. Locally, rationalization of economic policies and tougher enforcement of relevant legislation are clear barriers to Baihuo Business in Suriname. Baihuo Business is also potentially threatened by changing policies in the PRC with regard to Zhejiangese exports. For instance, the PRC government suspended the policy of returning value-added taxes to exporters, because rapid increase of exports implied increased tax revenue. This affected the prices at which Baihuo Business entrepreneurs could sell commodities abroad, and consequently affected chain migration.

Increasingly negative local attitudes to Chinese migration and changing motivations and expectations of (Wenzhounese) chain migrants might also impact the future of Baihuo Business. As set out in Chapter 6, the Surinamese government is responding to calls to tighten restrictions on immigration; this will make it increasingly difficult for chain migrants to enter Suriname as workers or apprentices in *maoyi gongsi*, and will reduce the number of outlets available to Baihuo Business importers. Although Baihuo Business links Zhejiangese trading centres and exporters to overseas markets via South-South migration routes, it has not contributed to the development of a transnational social field among the Wenzhou-nese or other New Chinese cohorts in Suriname.

The immediate result of the upsurge in Chinese migration of the early 1990s was that Chinese became more visible; Suriname was becoming ‘more Chinese’. In this slightly weak sense, resinicization of the Chinese group in Suriname means increased Chinese immigration. However, it also signals the threat of cultural change and domination, as stereotypes of contamination (especially the Yellow Peril stereotype, see Paragraph 6.1 and Appendix 1) are resurrected to make sense of Chinese aliens and a substantial influx of unfamiliar Chinese culture and language. The *Mamio* Myth (see Chapter 1) reserved a place for Chinese in the Surinamese multicultural landscape, but offered no protocol to handle their immigration.

‘Resinicization’ as a sense of a renewed Chinese presence in Suriname is as structural as Chinese migration will prove to be, and Chinese migration to Suriname continues because entrepreneurial chain migration continues to make sense. In the near future Chinese migrants in Suriname will very likely continue to position themselves as ethnic entrepreneurs in retail business. Push factors

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such as local traditions of migration in various sending areas, inequality driving internal Chinese migration, and the production of cheap commodities, and pull factors such as the market for cheap Chinese products, the weak Surinamese state, and the viability of Latin American and Caribbean migration circuits, remain relevant, though they are by no means permanent.

Chinese identity is a fixed aspect of Surinamese apanjaht multicultural discourse; people expect Chinese to exist in Suriname. The general public in Suriname (ethnic Chinese or otherwise) distinguishes New Chinese from ‘Old Chinese’ by language, regional backgrounds, type of business. Once again, the concept of the ethnic ownership economy helps to explain why ‘Chinese identity’ is rather different for Fuidung’on Hakkas and the other groups of New Chinese, and why their identities are subtly different from Chinese-ness in their homelands. However, the core of ‘Chineseness’ might shift to Laiap (‘Surinamese Chinese’) as lessens and assimilation starts to dominate. In that case, distinctions between ‘Old Chinese’ and New Chinese or between huaqiao and xin yimin will blur as sinkeh will eventually merge into local society.

In Suriname, Baihuo Business is a migrant self-help strategy for New Chinese who find themselves excluded from the Fuidung’on Hakka ethnic ownership economy. Although it is based on Zhejiangese (in particular Wenchengese) networks, ethnic identification produced by Baihuo Business is not limited by Zhejiangese cultural markers (such as Wenchengese language, religious practices, etc.), but it is based on broader ethnic resources such as PRC modernity, spoken and written PTH, and the ability to access migrant networks that connect New Migrants with export centres in the PRC such as Yiwu. This link with the PRC is crucial to the ethnic ownership economy of New Chinese in Suriname, but its nature is not fully appreciated by the Surinamese public who conflate it with the distinct phenomenon of the growing influence and power of the PRC in the Caribbean and Latin American region. This association made by the Surinamese public is the subject of the next chapter; for this purpose it is necessary to understand the role of the PRC in Suriname, as it shapes the image of Chinese migration in Suriname, and sets limits to local positioning and the articulation of ethnic identity of Chinese in Suriname, ‘Old’ or New.