

# CONSTRUCTING THE EMIGRANT'S VILLAGE IN TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL SPACE: THE EXPERIENCE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEAN CHINESE

ICHIKAWA Tetsu

National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka 565-8511, Japan

E-mail: tetsu-i@kb3.so-net.ne.jp

This paper discusses the nature of the homeland of the ethnic Chinese in Papua New Guinea. To determine the characteristics of their homeland, this study investigated the relationship between their migration process and their place of residence.

Papua New Guinea has had a Chinese community since colonial times. New Guinea Island was colonized by Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Germany introduced Chinese labor in order to develop the economy of their colony. After World War I, Australia took over German New Guinea and the Chinese fell under Australian colonial rule. The Australian government allowed the Chinese residents to acquire Australian citizenship in the late 1950s. Subsequently, most of the Chinese became Australian citizens and remained in New Guinea.

After the independence of Papua New Guinea in 1975, the Chinese started re-migrating to Australia. Those Chinese who had Australian citizenship preferred to immigrate to Australia, rather than to naturalize as Papua New Guinea citizens. Currently, the community of Papua New Guinean Chinese in Australia is bigger than the community in Papua New Guinea.

The Papua New Guinean Chinese have migrated from China, and then on to Australia over several generations. As a result of the migration process, the Papua New Guinean Chinese have lived in three countries: China, Papua New Guinea, and Australia. Through their experience of migration and settlement in three countries, the Papua New Guinean Chinese attach different meanings to these countries. For the first generation, Mainland China is their homeland, while the generation born locally does not attach importance to Mainland China. Conversely, the younger generation who were born in Papua New Guinea do not have close contact with their relatives in mainland China. The significance of China, especially the emigrant's village, differs among the generations, and the younger generations who live in Australia tend to regard Papua New Guinea as their homeland.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Chinese, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Mainland China, Transnational migration