

INTRODUCTION



Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural



Logics of Transnationality



On the eve of the return of Hong Kong from British to mainland-Chinese rule, the city was abuzz with passport stories. A favorite one concerned mainland official Lu Ping, who presided over the transition. At a talk to Hong Kong business leaders (*taipans*), he fished a number of passports from his pockets to indicate he was fully aware that the Hong Kong elite has a weakness for foreign passports.¹ Indeed, more than half the members of the transition preparatory committee carried foreign passports. These politicians were no different from six hundred thousand other Hong Kongers (about ten percent of the total population) who held foreign passports as insurance against mainland-Chinese rule. *Taipans* who had been busy doing business with Beijing openly accumulated foreign passports, claiming they were merely “a matter of convenience,” but in a Freudian slip, one let on that multiple passports were also “a matter of confidence” in uncertain political times.² The multiple-passport holder seems to display an élan for thriving in conditions of political insecurity, as well as in the turbulence of global trade. He is willing and eager to work with the Chinese-communist state while conjuring up ways of escape from potential dangers to his investment and family.

Another example of the flexible subject is provided by Raymond Chin, one of the founders of the Better Hong Kong Foundation, a pro-China business group. I heard a radio interview in which he was asked about his investment in China and the future of Hong Kong under communist rule. Here, I paraphrase him: “Freedom is a great thing, but I think it should be given to people who have earned it. We should take the long view and see the long-term

returns on our investments in the mainland. Self-censorship and other kinds of responsible behavior may be necessary to get the kind of freedom we want."

This willingness to accommodate self-censorship reflects the displaced person's eagerness to hedge bets, even to the extent of risking property and life under different political conditions anywhere in the world. The Chinese in Hong Kong are of course a rather special kind of refugee, haunted by *memento mori* even when they seek global economic opportunities that include China. The novelist Paul Theroux notes that Hong Kong people are driven by the memory of previous Chinese disasters and shaped by their status as colonials without the normal colonial expectation of independence. They are people always in transit, who have become "world-class practitioners of self-sufficiency."³ In this, they are not much different from overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, who have largely flourished in postcolonial states and yet are considered politically alien, or alienable, when conditions take a turn for the worse. For over a century, overseas Chinese have been the forerunners of today's multiply displaced subjects, who are always on the move both mentally and physically.

The multiple-passport holder is an apt contemporary figure; he or she embodies the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets. In this world of high modernity, as one scholar notes, national and ethnic identities "become distinctly different entities, while at the same time, international frontiers become increasingly insignificant as such."⁴ But are political borders becoming insignificant or is the state merely fashioning a new relationship to capital mobility and to manipulations by citizens and noncitizens alike?

Benedict Anderson suggests an answer when he argues that the goal of the classical nation-state project to align social habits, culture, attachment, and political participation is being unraveled by modern communications and nomadism. As a result, passports have become "less and less attestations of citizenship, let alone of loyalty to a protective nation-state, than of claims to participate in labor markets."⁵ The truth claims of the state that are enshrined in the passport are gradually being replaced by its counterfeit use in response to the claims of global capitalism. Or is there another way of looking at the shifting relations between the nation-state and the global economy in late modernity, one that suggests more complex adjustments and accommodations? The realignment of political, ethnic, and personal identities is not

necessarily a process of "win or lose," whereby political borders become "insignificant" and the nation-state "loses" to global trade in terms of its control over the affiliations and behavior of its subjects.⁶

If, as I intend to do, we pay attention instead to the *transnational practices and imaginings* of the nomadic subject and the social conditions that enable his flexibility, we obtain a different picture of how nation-states articulate with capitalism in late modernity. Indeed, our Hong Kong taipan is not simply a Chinese subject adroitly navigating the disjunctures between political landscapes and the shifting opportunities of global trade. His very flexibility in geographical and social positioning is itself an effect of novel articulations between the regimes of the family, the state, and capital, the kinds of practical-technical adjustments that have implications for our understanding of the late modern subject.

In this book, I intervene in the discussion of globalization, a subject heretofore dominated by the structuralist methods of sociologists and geographers. In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey identifies flexibility as the *modus operandi* of late capitalism. He distinguishes contemporary systems of profit making, production, distribution, and consumption as a break from the earlier, Fordist model of centralized mass-assembly production in which the workers were also the mass consumers of their products. In the era of late capitalism, "the regime of flexible accumulation" reigns, whether in the realms of business philosophy and high finance or in production systems, labor markets, and consumption.⁷ What is missing from Harvey's account is human agency and its production and negotiation of cultural meanings within the normative milieus of late capitalism. More recently, writers on "the information age" maintain that globalization—in which financial markets around the world are unified by information from the electronic-data stream—operates according to its own logic without a class of managers or capitalists in charge.⁸

These strategies—the decentralization of corporate activities across many sites, the location of "runaway" factories in global peripheries, and the reconfiguration of banking and investment relations—introduced new regimes in global production, finance, and marketing. These new modes of doing global business have been variously referred to as "globalization" by bankers and as "post-Fordism," "disorganized capitalism," and "flexible accumulation" by social theorists.⁹ These terms are also significant in reflecting the new logic of

capitalism whereby “nodes of capitalist development around the globe . . . [have] decentered capitalism . . . and abstracted capitalism for the first time from its Eurocentricism.”¹⁰

Instead of embracing the totalizing view of globalization as economic rationality bereft of human agency, other social analysts have turned toward studying “the local.” They are examining how particular articulations of the global and the local—often construed as the opposition between universalizing capitalist forces and local cultures—produce “multiple modernities” in different parts of the world.¹¹ Arjun Appadurai argues that such a “global production of locality” happens because transnational flows of people, goods, and knowledge become imaginative resources for creating communities and “virtual neighborhoods.”¹² This view is informed by a top-down model whereby the global is macro-political economic and the local is situated, culturally creative, and resistant.¹³

But a model that analytically defines the global as political economic and the local as cultural does not quite capture the *horizontal* and *relational* nature of the contemporary economic, social, and cultural processes that stream across spaces. Nor does it express their *embeddedness* in differently configured regimes of power. For this reason, I prefer to use the term *transnationality*. *Trans* denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *transversal*, the *transaccional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism. In what follows, when I use the word *globalization*, I am referring to the narrow sense of new corporate strategies, but analytically, I am concerned with transnationality—or the condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space—which has been intensified under late capitalism. I use *transnationalism* to refer to the cultural specificities of global processes, tracing the multiplicity of the uses and conceptions of “culture.” The chapters that follow will discuss the transnationality induced by global capital circulating in the Asia Pacific region, the transnationalism associated with the practices and imagination of elite Chinese subjects, and the varied responses of Southeast Asian states to capital and mobility.¹⁴

This book places human practices and cultural logics at the center of dis-

cussions on globalization. Whereas globalization has been analyzed as consisting of flows of capital, information, and populations, my interest is in the cultural logics that inform and structure border crossings as well as state strategies. My goal is to tease out the rationalities (political, economic, cultural) that shape migration, relocation, business networks, state-capital relations, and all transnational processes that are apprehended through and directed by cultural meanings. In other words, I seek to bring into the same analytical framework the economic rationalities of globalization and the cultural dynamics that shape human and political responses. As a social scientist, I point to the economic rationality that encourages family emigration or the political rationality that invites foreign capital, but as an anthropologist, I am primarily concerned with the cultural logics that make these actions thinkable, practicable, and desirable, which are embedded in processes of capital accumulation.

First, the chapters that follow attempt an ethnography of transnational practices and linkages that seeks to embed the theory of practice within, not outside of or against, political-economic forces. For Sherry Ortner, “modern practice theory” is an approach that places human agency and everyday practices at the center of social analysis. Ortner notes that the little routines and scenarios of everyday life are embodiments and enactments of norms, values, and conceptual schemes about time, space, and the social order, so that everyday practices endorse and reproduce these norms. While she argues that social practice is shaped within relations of domination, *as well as* within relations of reciprocity and solidarity, Ortner does not provide an analytical linkage between the two. Indeed, her theory of practice, which is largely focused on the actors’ intentions within the “system” of cultural meaning, is disembodied from the economic and political conditions of late capitalism. She seems to propose a view in which the anthropologist can determine the extent to which “Western capitalism,” as an abstract system, does or does not affect the lives of “real people.”¹⁵ An approach that views political economy as separate from human agency cannot be corrected by a theory of practice that views political-economic forces as external to everyday meanings and action. Our challenge is to consider the reciprocal construction of practice, gender, ethnicity, race, class, and nation in processes of capital accumulation. I argue that an anthropology of the present should analyze people’s everyday actions as a form of cultural politics embedded in specific power contexts. The *regulatory effects* of

particular cultural institutions, projects, regimes, and markets that shape people's motivations, desires, and struggles and make them particular kinds of subjects in the world should be identified.

Second, I view transnationalism not in terms of unstructured flows but in terms of the tensions between movements and social orders. I relate transnational strategies to systems of governmentality—in the broad sense of techniques and codes for directing human behavior¹⁶—that condition and manage the movements of populations and capital. Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality maintains that regimes of truth and power produce disciplinary effects that condition our sense of self and our everyday practices.¹⁷ In the following chapters, I trace the different regimes—state, family, economic enterprises—that shape and direct border crossings and transnational relations, at once conditioning their dynamism and scope but also giving structure to their patterning. These shifting patterns of travel, and realignments between state and capital, are invariably understood according to the logics of culture and regional hegemony. Given the history of diasporan trading groups such as the ethnic Chinese, who play a major role in many of the so-called Asian tiger economies, the Asia Pacific region is ideal for investigating these new modalities of translocal governmentality and the cultural logics of subject making.¹⁸

Third, I argue that in the era of globalization, individuals as well as governments develop a flexible notion of citizenship and sovereignty as strategies to accumulate capital and power. "Flexible citizenship" refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions.¹⁹ In their quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments, and cultural regimes. These logics and practices are produced within particular structures of meaning about family, gender, nationality, class mobility, and social power.

Fourth, if mobile subjects plot and maneuver in relation to capital flows, governments also articulate with global capital and entities in complex ways. I want to problematize the popular view that globalization has weakened state power. While capital, population, and cultural flows have indeed made inroads into state sovereignty, the art of government has been highly responsive

to the challenges of transnationality. I introduce the concept of graduated sovereignty to denote a series of zones that are subjected to different kinds of governmentality and that vary in terms of the mix of disciplinary and civilizing regimes. These zones, which do not necessarily follow political borders, often contain ethnically marked class groupings, which in practice are subjected to regimes of rights and obligations that are different from those in other zones. Because anthropologists pay attention to the various normalizing powers of the state and capital on subject populations, we can provide a different take on globalization—one that goes beyond universalizing spatial orders.

Fifth, besides looking at globalization, the point of this book is to reorient the study of Chinese subjects. Global capitalism in Asia is linked to new cultural representations of "Chineseness" (rather than "Japaneseness") in relation to transnational Asian capitalism. As overseas Chinese and mainland Chinese become linked in circuits of production, trade, and finance, narratives produce concepts such as "fraternal network capitalism" and "Greater China," a term that refers to the economically integrated zone comprising China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, but sometimes including the ethnic Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. This triumphant "Chinese capitalism" has induced long-assimilated Thai and Indonesian subjects to reclaim their "ethnic-Chinese" status as they participate in regional business networks. The changing status of diasporan Chinese is historically intertwined with the operations and globalization of capital, and their cultural experiences are the ethnographic ground from which my points about transnationality are drawn.

Sixth, I challenge the view that the proliferation of unofficial narratives associated with triumphant Chinese capitalism reflect insurmountable cultural differences. I argue that on the contrary, discourses such as "Asian values," "the new Islam," "saying no to the West," and "the clash of civilizations" can occur in the context of fundamentally playing (and competing) by the rules of the neoliberal orthodoxy. Despite the claims of some American scholars and policy makers that the emergence of the Pacific Rim powers heralds an irreducible cultural division between East and West, these parallel narratives, I argue, disguise common civilizational references in a world where the market is absolutely transcendental.

Through an anthropology of emigrating families, transnational publics, state strategies, and panreligious nationalist discourses, the following chap-

ters will identify the cultural logics shaping individual, national, and regional relations of power and conflict. But before I turn to these themes, I will briefly review how anthropology and cultural studies have approached the topics that can be loosely gathered under the rubrics of "diaspora" and "transnationalism."

Approaches to Transnational Flows and Diasporas

As the century draws to a close, there is a sense that the world we live in has changed dramatically; it is as if the continental plates of social life are sliding into new and unstable alignments. While sociologists and economists have focused on globalization as changing corporate strategies, anthropologists and cultural theorists are much more concerned about cultural shifts and studies of migrations, diasporas, and other transnational flows. I identify three main directions of inquiry.

U.S.-Centered Migration Studies

Largely an American project but increasingly one that is shared by Europeans, migration studies has recently shifted its focus from assimilation to take into account the global context of border-crossing movements. Migration scholars view transnational processes associated with global conflicts and the world economy as factors that affect the demographic and social composition of the nation-state. They pay attention to domestic attempts at managing the influx of refugees, migrant workers, and foreign capital on the social and political body of the nation. Such perspectives on transnational migrations to the United States are framed in terms of either a world-system theory about exploitative relations between "core" and "peripheral" countries or a neo-classical economic theory of diverse labor supplies flowing toward an advanced capitalist formation.²⁰ Such studies view immigrants (of color) from poor countries as victims of American corporate exploitation as well as racist discrimination. They take the position that immigrant laborers, by making important and diverse contributions to different aspects of American society, deserve help in integrating into mainstream society. Their larger goal is to call upon the state to provide different services to the newcomers and the majority population to treat them with respect and acceptance as loyal Americans. The studies also fend off or criticize American concerns about unchecked immi-

gration and rich countries' porous borders failing to keep out the world's poor. Claims about the weakness of the state in controlling immigration are counterbalanced by the charge that the state supports corporate interests that exploit the cheap labor of vulnerable immigrants.

New anthropological studies have intervened in the migration-studies framework; they focus on the links between transnational migration and political struggles. The authors of *Nations Unbound* make an ambitious connection between the postcolonial predicaments of poor countries, their export of labor to the metropolitan center, and the efforts of poor, exploited immigrants to support "nation-building" projects at home.²¹ Although they are treated as racialized proletarian others in the United States, Haitians, Granadians, and Filipino immigrants are also active in sustaining households at home while engaging in political struggles against corrupt regimes. Poor immigrants are thus converted from being minorities to be assimilated into the host society into being some kind of universalized lower-class subjects who attain subaltern vindication both from struggling against racism in the United States and from transcending class and political barriers in their home countries. Also, in recent ethnographies of Mexican immigration, the focus is shifted from their role as farm laborers in the U.S. economy to their political consciousness of difference, not only from the American majority population but sometimes also from other Mexican collectivities. Michael Kearney explores the construction of a "transnational ethnicity" among Mexicans in California, while Roger Rouse traces the migration circuits and "bifocal" cultural consciousness of Mexican agricultural workers in the United States.²²

However, these ethnographies of migration and identity making in America do not sufficiently deal with the ways in which the subjectivities of majority populations are also being reworked by neoliberalism in the United States. For instance, how are differentiated and competing notions of citizenship in the United States emerging within a dominant frame of American neoliberalism?²³ Whereas the movements of capital have stimulated immigrant strategies of mobility, many poor Americans are unable to respond in quite the same way and are instead "staying put" or "being stuck" in place, especially in rundown ethnic ghettos.²⁴ What are the subjectivities associated with being stuck in particular U.S. contexts? Global capital and population flows have intensified the localization of resident minorities within the reconfigured political economy and have thus reinforced a citizenship patterning of white-

ness and blackness in a more institutionalized sense than has been allowed for in studies of race.²⁵ Indeed, as some of the following chapters will show, the “out-of-placeness” represented by wealthy Asian immigrants in the American ethno-racial order induces a parallel sense of displacement among whites and blacks who have not benefited from globalization.

Cultural Globalization

But major anthropological accounts of transnationalism have been consumed less with migrants and their reception in host countries and more with issues of cultural flows and the social imaginary in a transnational world. For years now, anthropologists and others have argued that despite the widespread dissemination of the trappings of globalization—world markets, mass media, rapid travel, and modern communications—cultural forms have not become homogenized across the world.²⁶ The dispersal of Coke, McDonald’s Restaurants, and American TV soap operas to villages in West Africa or to Cairo, Beijing, or Sydney is not bringing about a global cultural uniformity; rather, these products have had the effect of greatly increasing cultural diversity because of the ways in which they are interpreted and the way they acquire new meanings in local reception or because the proliferation of cultural difference is superbly consonant with marketing designs for profit making.²⁷ The rapid circulation of images, knowledges, and peoples has unraveled our more usual understanding of cultural production and reproduction within conventional political and cultural boundaries. In a world reconfigured by transnationality, how are anthropologists to handle the issues of instability, uncertainty, and flux in cultural reproduction and identity formation?

The most articulate proponent of what might be called “cultural globalization” is Arjun Appadurai, who states that his work deals with “a theory of rupture that takes media and migration as its two major and interconnected diacritics and explores their joint effect on the work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity.”²⁸ Appadurai borrows from Benedict Anderson’s argument about the critical role of “print capitalism” in generating “imagined communities” of nationality in the modern era.²⁹ He theorizes the ways modern travel and electronic media mediate the production of cultural identity, locality, and the “virtual neighborhood” in a transnational era.³⁰ Coining terms such as “ethnoscapes,” “ideoscapes,” and “mediascapes,” Appadurai highlights the tensions between the irregular and fluid shapes of

population flows and communities of imagination that cut across conventional political and social boundaries.³¹ By sketching in the deterritorialized conditions of imaginative resources and practice, Appadurai poses the problem of uncertainty in cultural reproduction outside the nation-state and stable cultural landscapes.

But the very suggestiveness of Appadurai’s formulation begs the question of whether imagination as social practice can be so independent of national, transnational, and political-economic structures that enable, channel, and control the flows of people, things, and ideas. For instance, he ignores the fact that nations and states are still largely bound to each other, and he ignores the need to consider how the hyphen between the two has become reconfigured by capital mobility and migration. What are the structural tensions between a territorially based nation and a “deterritorialized” one? Furthermore, his accounts of cultural flows ignore class stratification linked to global systems of production. He makes no attempt to identify the processes that increasingly differentiate the power of mobile and nonmobile subjects. Indeed, he ignores the political economy of time-space compression and gives the misleading impression that everyone can take equal advantage of mobility and modern communications and that transnationality has been liberatory, in both a spatial and a political sense, for all peoples.³² This assumption is belied by a recent United Nations human-development report that the gaps between the rich and the poor within and between countries are at an all-time high. An official remarks, “An emerging global elite, mostly urban-based and interconnected in a variety of ways, is amassing great wealth and power, while more than half of humanity is left out.”³³ When an approach to cultural globalization seeks merely to sketch out universalizing trends rather than deal with actually existing structures of power and situated cultural processes, the analysis cries out for a sense of political economy and situated ethnography. What are the mechanisms of power that enable the mobility, as well as the localization and disciplining, of diverse populations within these transnationalized systems? How are cultural flows and human imagination conditioned and shaped within these new relations of global inequalities?

Besides the poor, women, who are half of humanity, are frequently absent in studies of transnationalism. Ethnographies on the feminization of labor regimes instituted by global capital were among the first to consider the reproduction of gendered inequalities across transnational space.³⁴ These

works are seldom considered in masculinist studies of globalization, except to be mentioned in connection with the survival of third-world "patriarchy" in "small family firms" linked to flexible accumulation.³⁵ Again, the global-local dichotomy seems to suggest that third-world cultures merely accommodate global labor processes rather than participate actively in reciprocal production and reproduction of capital accumulation.

Feminist travel writing also underplays the intertwining of material and symbolic processes in translocal gender systems.³⁶ For instance, Inderpal Grewal traces the gendered construction of racial hierarchies in colonial India through the writings of British and Indian women traversing the British Empire.³⁷ For the contemporary period, Cynthia Enloe sketches in the broad outlines of transnational gender systems sustained by consumption and tourism, while Caren Kaplan has considered how the Western imaginaries of travel are highly gendered.³⁸ Such studies of imaginative gender geographies are innovative and are more important for claiming feminist global perspectives from the Western vantage point than for capturing the lived realities and localized subjectivities in those other places.

Diasporas and Cosmopolitanisms

Works best described as "diaspora studies" look at the subjective experiences of displacement, victimhood, cultural hybridity, and cultural struggles in the modern world. These works have been inspired by Paul Gilroy's new take on the African diaspora, as well as by the heterogeneous nature of black identity and cultures in different sites of dispersal and dissemination.³⁹ The writings of Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and others associated with British cultural studies are ultimately a historical reconstruction of the Atlantic as a zone of movement, connection, and complex structures of subordination wherein "a plurality of antagonisms and differences are distinctive features of black diasporan cultures."⁴⁰ This focus on the chronotope of movement and cultural contradictions within diasporan populations influenced the conceptualization of *Ungrounded Empires*, a volume on modern Chinese transnationalism that I edited with Donald Nonini.⁴¹ But in contrast to the bipolar formulation of the black diaspora, we show that multiple geographies were and continue to be engaged by ethnic Chinese whose earlier diasporas are continually evolving into a network of family ties, kinship, commerce, sentiments, and values spread throughout regions of dispersal and settlement.

However, the influence on American cultural studies of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England, with which Hall and Gilroy are associated, has generally been limited. American studies of diasporan cultures have tended to uphold a more innocent concept of the essential diasporan subject, one that celebrates hybridity, "cultural" border crossing, and the production of difference. In the United States, the conjuncture of postcolonial theory and diaspora studies seems to produce a bifurcated model of diasporan cultures. Some scholars dwell on narratives of sacrifice, which are associated with enforced labor migrations, as well as on critiques of the immorality of development.⁴² Others, who write about displacements in "borderland" areas, emphasize subjects who struggle against adversity and violation by affirming their cultural hybridity and shifting positions in society.⁴³ The unified moralism attached to subaltern subjects now also clings to diasporan ones, who are invariably assumed to be members of oppressed classes and therefore constitutionally opposed to capitalism and state power. Furthermore, because of the exclusive focus on texts, narratives, and subjectivities, we are often left wondering what are the particular local-global structural articulations that materially and symbolically shape these dynamics of victimhood and ferment.

Academic interest in how diasporas shape racialized, gendered, sexualized, and oppositional subjectivities is often tied to scholars' attempts to shape their own cosmopolitan intellectual commitment.⁴⁴ James Clifford is broadly concerned with the varied formation of cultural subjectivities in and through itineraries formed by the "detours and returns" that pass through intellectual salons and international hotels, as well as more humble ones formed by the "routes/roots of tribes, barrios, favellas, immigrant neighborhoods." His term "discrepant cosmopolitanisms" takes in all kinds of classed subjects whose specific histories and range of cultural practices evince "traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling," but Clifford is most interested in the multiply displaced writer meditating on political injustices encountered in travel.⁴⁵ Similarly, Bruce Robbins focuses on the cosmopolitan subjectivity of worldly, progressive intellectuals who are firmly anchored in their own societies but whose minds roam the world and whose political consciousness is shaped by the dialects of local interest and global vision.⁴⁶ Both Clifford and Robbins seek to link the study of cosmopolitanism with their belief in the cosmopolitan individual as a well-informed, politically progressive modern subject

(whose precursors are two displaced Polish intellectuals, Joseph Conrad and Bronislaw Malinowski). This move reflects the desire to retrieve the intellectual's public role in the making of "internationalist political education" and thus of late modern cultures.⁴⁷ There is of course no necessary connection between the study of diasporan subjects and a cosmopolitan intellectual commitment, but cultural theorists appear to believe there is.⁴⁸

Indeed, since the term cosmopolitanism has most recently been associated with those elite Western subjects who were the fullest expression of European bourgeois culture, capitalism, and colonial empires, we need to identify a kind of progressive cosmopolitan intellectual who, according to anthropologist Paul Rabinow, is "suspicious of sovereign powers, universal truths . . . moralisms high and low," as well as of his or her "own imperial tendencies."⁴⁹ As Rabinow notes, a "critical cosmopolitanism" combines "an ethos of macro-independencies with an acute consciousness . . . of the inescapabilities and particularities of places, characters, historical trajectories, and fate."⁵⁰ Such "inescapabilities and particularities" of displaced peoples are seldom captured in cultural-studies accounts, which seem primarily concerned with projecting the cosmopolitan intentions of the scholar.

The cultural-studies focus on diasporan cultures and subjectivities then seeks in the off-shore experiences of labor migrants, and in the worldly ruminations of intellectuals, the birth of progressive political subjects who will undermine or challenge oppressive nationalist ideologies (and global capitalism?). The new interest in diasporas and cosmopolitanism registers a special moment in interdisciplinary studies that seeks to invoke political significance in cultural phenomena that can be theorized as resisting the pillaging of global capitalism, as well as the provincialism of metropolitan centers. What is missing from these accounts are discussions of how the disciplining structures—of family, community, work, travel, and nation—condition, shape, divert, and transform such subjects and their practices and produce the moral-political dilemmas, so eloquently captured in these studies, whose resolutions cannot be so easily predetermined.

These three approaches—(trans)migration studies, globalization as cultural flows, and diaspora studies—have much to recommend them, especially for furnishing useful concepts and opening up a whole new critical area for anthropological research and theorizing. There are differences in their methods and frameworks, but there is also a surprising degree of agreement

in their hopes and biases for the future. For instance, we see a break between those who use a political-economic framework to assess the impact of transmigration on host and home countries and the other two approaches that focus almost exclusively on the cultural, imaginative, and subjective aspects of modern travel and interconnections. The rift is wide enough for Marxist-oriented models to tend to map rather mechanistic relations of "the world system" onto their data on migration flows, while neglecting to convey the varied cultural expressions and handling of such relationships. In contrast, anthropologists who are solely concerned with cultural phenomena tend to brush aside political-economic systems and celebrate cultural difference, hybridity, and the social imaginary, which display "native" inventiveness, and sometimes resistances, to homogenizing trends. Seldom is there an attempt to analytically link actual institutions of state power, capitalism, and transnational networks to such forms of cultural reproduction, inventiveness, and possibilities.⁵¹ This is a significant problem of method because it raises hopes that transnational mobility and its associated processes have great liberatory potential (perhaps replacing international class struggle in orthodox Marxist thinking) for undermining all kinds of oppressive structures in the world. In a sense, the diasporan subject is now vested with the agency formerly sought in the working class and more recently in the subaltern subject. Furthermore, there are frequent claims that diasporas and cosmopolitanisms are liberatory forces against oppressive nationalism, repressive state structures, and capitalism,⁵² or that the unruliness of transnational capital will weaken the power of the nation-state.⁵³ Indeed, some claim that a "postnationalist order" is emerging "in which the nation-state is becoming obsolete and other formations for allegiance and identity have taken place."⁵⁴ In such formulations, freedom from spatial constraints (or "time-space compression," in David Harvey's term) becomes a form of deterritorialized resource that can be deployed against the territorially bounded nation-state.

But while such tensions and disjunctures are at work between oppressive structures and border-crossing flows, the nation-state—along with its juridical-legislative systems, bureaucratic apparatuses, economic entities, modes of governmentality, and war-making capacities—continues to define, discipline, control, and regulate all kinds of populations, whether in movement or in residence. There are diverse forms of interdependencies and entanglements between transnational phenomena and the nation-states—rela-

tions that link displaced persons with citizens, integrate the unstructured into the structured, and bring some kind of order to the disorderliness of transnationalism. In our desire to find definite breaks between the territorially bounded and the deterritorialized, the oppressive and the progressive, and the stable and the unstable, we sometimes overlook complicated accommodations, alliances, and creative tensions between the nation-state and mobile capital, between diaspora and nationalism, or between the influx of immigrants and the multicultural state. Attention to specific histories and geopolitical situations will reveal that such simple oppositions between transnational forces and the nation-state cannot be universally sustained.

Rethinking the Cultural Logics of Globalization

Only by weaving the analysis of cultural politics and political economy into a single framework can we hope to provide a nuanced delineation of the complex relations between transnational phenomena, national regimes, and cultural practices in late modernity. I go beyond the classical formulation of political economy as a domain of production and labor that is separate from society and culture—a mode of thought that has greatly influenced studies that attempt to assess the effects of capitalism on society. Because I view political economy as inseparable from a range of cultural processes, I share Arturo Escobar's critique of the Marxist code of signification, which constructs "economic" men and women [who] are positioned in civil societies in ways that are inevitably mediated, at the symbolic level, by the constructs of markets, production, and commodities. People and nature are separated into parts (individuals and resources), to be recombined into market commodities and objects of exchange and knowledge.⁵⁵ But we can reject this essentializing and homogenizing narrative about capitalist culture without throwing out an analysis of political economy.⁵⁶ An understanding of political economy remains central as capitalism—in the sense of production systems, capital accumulation, financial markets, the extraction of surplus value, and economic booms and crises—has become even more deeply embroiled in the ways different cultural logics give meanings to our dreams, actions, goals, and sense of how we are to conduct ourselves in the world.⁵⁷ Indeed, this book seeks to explore the multiple uses of the notion of "culture" in contexts of transnationality induced by the operations of global markets. The following chapters

will discuss (1) the cultural logics of governmentality in the production of subjectivities, practices, and desires; (2) the cultural specificities of how capitalism operates among "Chinese" fraternal networks and publics across the Asia Pacific region; and (3) the deployment of "culture" or "civilization" by Asian governments and capitalists to implement new forms of governmentality and to resist American hegemony. But let me draw out these themes in relation to the ethnographic contexts of my investigation.

Transnational Processes Are Situated Cultural Practices

Transnational processes are situated cultural practices, so that the cultural logics of governmentality and state action in Asia Pacific countries are rather different from, say, those in a former world power such as England. Whereas in England, the effects of globalization may appear to threaten that country's economy and cultural identity, in Asia, transnational flows and networks have been the key dynamics in shaping cultural practices, the formation of identity, and shifts in state strategies.⁵⁸

The case of the overseas Chinese is a particularly rich and complicated one for discussing transnationalism because not only have Chinese diasporas and their relationships with China and host countries historically been salient, but there is a huge body of scholarship concerning overseas Chinese, especially in Southeast Asia. Indeed, the transition to modernity in the Asia Pacific region was significantly marked by the ways in which the regional networks of diasporan-Chinese traders both transgressed the colonial administration of European "spheres of influence" and at the same time converged with colonial capitalist production and commercial systems.⁵⁹ Their family and trade enterprises both linked and transgressed the colonial prototypes of Southeast Asia nation-states, and they evolved over time with the transition from mercantilism to subcontracting to late capitalism. By the 1970s, diasporan Chinese "have come to play nodal and pivotal roles in the emergence of the new, flexible capitalism of the Asia Pacific region."⁶⁰ In a departure from the norm in post-World War II developmental states in, say, Latin America, Chinese economic and social networks introduced Southeast Asian subjects as key players in the Asia Pacific region and in the cultural work of producing alternative visions of Asian modernity.

New strategies of flexible accumulation have promoted a flexible attitude toward citizenship. For instance, Chinese entrepreneurs are not merely en-

gaged in profit making; they are also acquiring a range of symbolic capitals that will facilitate their positioning, economic negotiation, and cultural acceptance in different geographical sites. I argue that in a transnational context, there must be social limits to the accumulation of cultural capital, so that ethnic Chinese who are practicing strategies of flexible citizenship find greater social acceptance in certain countries than in others.

While there are limits to their social mobility in the West, the growth of ethnic-Chinese networks and wealth in Asia has given rise to a narrative of Chinese triumphalism that celebrates a myth of fraternal solidarity across oceans.⁶¹ But discourses about the neo-Confucianist basis of Asian capitalism have not gone unchallenged by Muslim leaders in Southeast Asia, who promote a counterdiscourse about a new Islam friendly to capitalism. At a broader regional level, East Asian and ASEAN countries often take a common moral stance—saying no to the West—to the epistemic violence wrought by neoliberal orthodoxy, but at the same time, they disguise their own investment in the rationalities of global capitalism.⁶² Globalization in Asia, then, has induced both national and transnational forms of nationalism that not only reject Western hegemony but seek, in panreligious civilizational discourses, to promote the ascendancy of the East.

→ *New Modes of Subjectification—Flexibility, Mobility, and Disciplines*

Transnational mobility and maneuvers mean that there is a new mode of constructing identity, as well as new modes of subjectification that cut across political borders. Scholars look at the problematic nature of identity in late modernity largely in terms of mass consumer culture and the disorienting sense of displacement. Recent studies identify different modalities of flexibility associated with innovations in American culture and practice. For instance, scholars note that flexibility has become a household word that refers not only to the workaday world but also to the ways in which we consume commodities and organize our lives in late modernity. In his stunning thesis on contemporary culture, Fredric Jameson argues that relentless commoditization has led to the proliferation of cultural forms extolling fragmentation, (re)combinations, innovation, and flexibility in literature, art, architecture, and lifestyles—all variously expressing the “postmodern logic of late capitalism.”⁶³ In the worlds of medicine and business, Emily Martin notes that “immune systems thinking,” which idealizes flexibility, has pervaded the

areas of body management, health, and corporate organization, thus shaping the ways in which Americans constitute their subjectivity.⁶⁴ In the heart of Silicon Valley, Judith Stacey observes that the upheavals wrought by the computer industry have induced the formation of flexible, “recombined” families.⁶⁵ While there appear to be different sources and domains for the rise of flexible concepts and practices in modernity, they all point directly and indirectly to the workings of global capitalism. But there has been little or no attempt to consider how different regimes of truth and power may set structural limits to such flexible productions and subjectivities.

My book will explore the flexible practices, strategies, and disciplines associated with transnational capitalism and will seek to identify both the new modes of subject making and the new kinds of valorized subjectivity. Among transnational Chinese subjects, those most able to benefit from their participation in global capitalism celebrate flexibility and mobility, which give rise to such figures as the multiple-passport holder; the multicultural manager with “flexible capital”; the “astronaut,” shuttling across borders on business; “parachute kids,” who can be dropped off in another country by parents on the trans-Pacific business commute; and so on. Thus, while mobility and flexibility have long been part of the repertoire of human behavior, under transnationality the new links between flexibility and the logics of displacement, on the one hand, and capital accumulation, on the other, have given new valence to such strategies of maneuvering and positioning. Flexibility, migration, and relocations, instead of being coerced or resisted, have become practices to strive for rather than stability.

Flexible citizenship is shaped within the mutually reinforcing dynamics of discipline and escape. While scholars of globalization have dealt with identity in terms of juridico-legal status, the disciplinary norms of capitalism and culture also constrain and shape strategies of flexible subject making. In other words, how can we combine the insights of Marx and Foucault in our understanding of subject formation? How are the strategies of capitalist exploitation and juridico-legal power (Marx) connected with the modes of governmentality associated with state power and with culture (Foucault)? Indeed, even under conditions of transnationality, political rationality and cultural mechanisms continue to deploy, discipline, regulate, or civilize subjects in place or on the move. Although increasingly able to escape localization by state authorities, traveling subjects are never free of regulations set by state power,

market operations, and kinship norms. For instance, in different countries, schemes of ethnic and racial differentiation that define individuals as “Chinese,” “Muslims,” and so on both discipline and normalize their subjectivities as particular kinds of citizens, regardless of their mobility. The requirements of capital accumulation compel behavior and plans that privilege business-driven travel, family relocation, and the manipulation of state controls.

The identity of traveling Chinese subjects, however, does not merely reflect the imperatives of mobile capitalism or attempts to deflect state disciplining; it is also shaped by the powerful effects of a cultural regime that defines what it may mean to be Chinese in late modernity. Among overseas Chinese, cultural norms dictate the formation of translocal business networks, putting men in charge of mobility while women and children are the disciplinable subjects of familial regimes.⁶⁶ Over the past century, Chinese emigration to sites throughout the Asia Pacific region, including North America, has entailed localizing the women at home, where they care for their families, thus freeing the men to work abroad. While the sojourning men may themselves have been treated brutally in diaspora by the colonial powers, they also exerted patriarchal power over their wives in China. In many cases, the men had two (sometimes more) transnational families—one located in China, the other(s) in diaspora. The “China wife” and the “Singapore wife” represent the two female poles of an extended family strung across oceans—a situation that has endured through the eras of colonialism, revolution, cold war, and the New World (dis)Order.⁶⁷ Today, transnationalism has prompted a revival of the sojourning practice: Elite Hong Kong executives who jet all over the world sometimes transfer their families to “safe havens” in California, where the wives care for the families while earning residency rights. In some cases, the peripatetic father has set up another family “back home” in Hong Kong or China. The ungrounded personal identities of traveling men, and the new fixities of the Asian national elite emphasis on “Asian values,” are the varied cultural logics produced by the encounter with globalizing trends and challenges.

Contrary to highly abstracted discussions of translocal gender systems, this work embeds the changing dynamics of gender relations in the imperatives of family, capitalism, and mobility. Family regimes that generally valorize mobile masculinity and localized femininity shape strategies of flexible citizenship, gender division of labor, and relocation in different sites. Transnational publics based on ethnicized mass media, networks of Asian profes-

sionals, and circuits of capital add a geometric dimension to Asian male mobility, power, and capital vis-à-vis women, not only in the domestic domain but also in transnational production, service, and consumer realms. New regimes of sexual exploitation—keeping mistresses, pornographic culture, prostitution—proliferate alongside translocal business networks. There are, however, ideological limits to masculinist representations of capital, not only from other emergent ethnic groups seeking alternative images of Asian entrepreneurialism but also from the American public, which is highly ambivalent about the influx of a new breed of affluent Asian immigrants. The Asian masculinist quest for global power and visibility clashes with the Western fear of being invaded—materially and symbolically—by Asian corporate power.

Postdevelopmental State Strategy: Zones of Graduated Sovereignty

Transnationality induced by accelerated flows of capital, people, cultures, and knowledge does not simply reduce state power, as many have claimed, but also stimulates a new, more flexible and complex relationship between capital and governments. The term *transnational* first became popular in the late 1970s largely because global companies began to rethink their strategies, shifting from the vertical-integration model of the “multinational” firm to the horizontal dispersal of the “transnational” corporation. Contrary to the popular view that sees the state in retreat everywhere before globalization, I consider state power as a positive generative force that has responded eagerly and even creatively to the challenges of global capital. Asian tiger states have evolved by aggressively seeking global capital while securing their own economic interests and the regulation of their populations.

There are grounds for identifying a postdevelopmental state strategy whereby governments cede more of the instrumentalities connected with development as a technical project to global enterprises but maintain strategic controls over resources, populations, and sovereignty. For instance, tiger economies such as South Korea and Malaysia have shifted from the state nurturing of domestic industries to a dependence on global capital and have thus become vulnerable to conditions shaped by financial markets. While Asian economic liberalism resists market dictatorship, Asian leaders negotiate different kinds of partnerships with global capital and, at the same time, let market rationality dictate their cultural regulation of society—especially of

the middle classes, which are critical to development. Furthermore, countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia have responded to market demands and political resistances through a strategy of graduated sovereignty that subjects different segments of the population to different mixes of disciplinary, caring, and punitive technologies. Postdevelopmental strategies—whereby there is a decline in the state control over the technical project of development and an increase in the pastoral regulation of the population—are the pragmatic responses of developing economies to the challenges of globalization.

Zones of variegated sovereignty proliferate alongside moves toward greater regionalism as panreligious nationalisms seek to integrate nation-states in a loose web of cultural kinship and political culture. Ideological tensions between two major forms of governmentality are expressed in neo-Confucian discourses and claims about “the New Islam,” narratives that are by and large shaped by nationalism driven by the imperatives of liberal economic competition. The phenomena associated with transnationality—mobile capital, business networks, migrations, media publics, zones of new sovereignty, and triumphant Asian discourses—all compel us to rethink the categories of the nation-state, culture, identity, and modernity in terms of their reciprocal production and reproduction in the new forces of global capitalism.

Anthropology has a special contribution to make to our understanding of transnationality, but perhaps we have been held back by the “macro” scope of the phenomenon and by a false sense of what constitutes the global and the local.⁶⁸ In this work, I try to show how our cultural insights and our attention to everyday practice and the relations of power can illuminate how the operations of globalization are translated into cultural logics that inform behavior, identities, and relationships. We have perhaps also been restrained by our tendency to self-critique and by the postcolonial critique that attributes all modes of domination to the West (colonialism, “the empire,” Western capitalism, cultural imperialism) without paying close attention also to emergent forms of power and oppression that variously ally with *and* contest Western forces.⁶⁹ Anthropological knowledge is valuable precisely because it seeks to grasp the intertwined dynamics of cultural and material processes as they are played out in particular and geographic locations as part of global history. Because our focus is primarily on human agency and imagination, we pay ethnographic attention to how subjects, in given historical conditions, are shaped by structures of power—colonial rule, cultural authorities, market

institutions, political agencies, translocal entities—and how they respond to these structures in culturally specific ways. Because we do not see culture as somehow separated from “rational” institutions such as the economy, the legal system, and the state, we are able to trace the cultural logics that inform different approaches—at the personal, community, national, and regional levels—to the processes of modernity and globalization. Anthropology, then, can provide a different, more ethnographically grounded and nuanced perspective to the universalism and homogeneity claimed by Western theory.

Thus, new narratives of Asian modernity, spun from the self-confidence of vibrant economies, cannot be reduced to a pale imitation of some Western standard (for instance, full-fledged democracy combined with modern capitalism). Ascendant regions of the world such as the Asia Pacific region are articulating their own modernities as distinctive formations. The historical facts of Western colonialism, ongoing geopolitical domination, and ideological and cultural influences are *never* discounted (only minimized) in these narratives, but they should nevertheless be considered alternative constructions of modernity in the sense of moral-political projects that seek to control their own present and future. Such self-theorization of contemporary non-Western nation-states, while always in dialogue and in tension with the West, are critical modes of ideological repositioning that have come about with shifting geostrategic alignments.

I have chosen to examine the everyday effects of transnationality in terms of the tensions between capital and state power because there is no other field of force for understanding the logics of cultural change. I focus on the agency of displaced subjects and attempts by the state to regulate their activities and identities as a way to explore the new cultural logics of transnationality. The pressures to cope with the contradictions between cultural homeland and host country, the governmentality of the state and the disciplining of labor markets, and the politics of imposed identity and the politics of self-positioning reflect the logics and ambivalence that flavor the cosmopolitan Chinese subjectivity. As a “Chinese” person whose primary frame of cultural identification is insular Southeast Asia, not China, I write as a diasporan subject moving in tangent to the claims of the home country, always poised to discern the governmentality of the state, culture, and capital and to struggle against submitting fully to any.

My larger goal is to redirect our study of Chinese subjects beyond an

academic construction of Chineseness that is invariably or solely defined in relation to the motherland, China. Those of us outside China have been regarded as “a residual China” or as minorities in host countries, that is, as less culturally “authentic” Chinese.⁷⁰ Rather, I argue in this book, the contemporary practices and values of diasporan Chinese are characteristic of larger questions of displacement, travel, capital accumulation, and other transnational processes that affect large numbers of late-twentieth-century subjects (who are geographically “in place” and *displaced*). Over the past few decades, the multiple and shifting status of “Chineseness” has been formed and embedded within the processes of global capitalism—production, trade, consumption, mobility, and dislocation/relocation—and subjected to various modes of governmentality that fix them in place or disperse them in space. According to Ien Ang, “‘Chineseness’ has become an open signifier,” acquiring meanings in dialectical relation to the practices, beliefs, and structures encountered in the spaces of flows across nations and markets.⁷¹ There is an ever growing pluralization of Chinese identities, and people in mainland China, no less than diasporan subjects, are finding their division by gender, sexuality, class, culture, aesthetics, spatial and social location, politics, and nationality to be extremely meaningful.⁷² By exploring experiences of some Chinese cosmopolitans, this book seeks as much to illuminate the practices of an elite transnationalism as to subvert the ethnic absolutism born of nationalism and the processes of cultural othering that have intensified with transnationality. My anthropology is thus situated obliquely to the hegemonic powers of Home and Exile. By oscillating between Western belonging and nonbelonging, and between the local and the global, anthropology as a mode of knowledge can provide a unique angle on new cultural realities in the world at large.

Part 1 begins with a criticism of the ways in which we construct knowledges about non-Western societies within unifying models of modernity and the postcolonial. New geopolitical configurations, I argue, require anthropologists and other scholars to shift from their vantage point of viewing the rest of the world as peripheries or sites for testing models crafted in the West. The rise of the Asia Pacific powers—China and the Southeast Asian tiger economies—are the ethnographic contexts for exploring alternative visions of modernity that both engage and challenge the West. Chapter 1 charts a post-Maoist modernity by analyzing changing modes of regulations and culturalist

narratives. I argue that China’s partial adoption of Southeast Asian models of development, together with its growing connections with overseas Chinese, has led to claims of a Chinese modernity that resolves the problem of de-racination. Chapter 2 takes a closer look at the tensions between the imagined community of the nation-state, which is territorially bounded, and that of the transnational community, which is open ended and therefore undermines the control of the state. Discourses about the moral economies of Asian countries both regulate citizens at home and construct a new hierarchy of relations between nation-states in the region.

In Part 2, I discuss how various regimes represented by the nation-state, the market, and the family provide the cultural logics that shape the migration strategies of Chinese elites bound for North America. Chapter 3 recasts Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of different forms of capital within a transnational framework of cross-cultural travel and encounters. I maintain that in translocal strategies of accumulation, the migrant’s ability to convert economic capital into social prestige is limited by the ethnoracial moral order of the host society. Chapter 4 discusses the governmentality of overseas-Chinese kinship and interpersonal relations (*guanxi*) as habitus that are instilled by regimes of accumulation, dispersal, and localization in the diaspora. A central practice in these regimes is the search for flexible citizenship whereby affluent migrants seek different locations for economic gain or political security and at the same time retain their flexibility to circumvent their disciplining.

Part 3 explores the new transnational publics created by intensified mobility, the mass media, and capital flows. I view translocal ethnic-Chinese publics as fields of power relations “media-tized” by modern communications and travel. Chapter 5 draws on news reports, academic books, films, and ethnographic research to trace the logic of family romances surrounding Chinese capitalism. By interweaving private sentiments and public politics, the romance of traveling men reveals the political unconscious and regulatory forms of gender under late capitalism. In chapter 6, transnational publics—based on the mass media and professional and capital circuits—are viewed as norm-making systems that, through images and information, structure the cultural life of transnational Chinese in Asian and American contexts.

Part 4 outlines the post-cold war contours of cultural politics across the Asia Pacific region. American anxiety over an emergent Asia, represented by the Chinese economic giant, has made Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civiliza-

tions' thesis influential in North American narratives about trade issues and human rights in Asian economies. Chapter 7 exposes Huntington's thesis as a postmodernist revival of American orientalism. I challenge his argument about unbridgeable civilizational differences by identifying a logic of post-Enlightenment economic rationality in the Asian tiger economies. Taking liberalism as a practical form of government rather than as a doctrine, I suggest that state regulation of the middle classes, translated into cultural terms, follows the rules of liberal economics. My final chapter deals with how the art of government, strained by the condition of transnationality, has to further stretch the bounds of political economy. Shifts in the relationship between governmentality and sovereignty have produced zones of differentiated sovereignty. Some of these zones are seedbeds for counterpublics that seek to articulate visions outside the structures of state and capital.

PART 1

Emerging Modernities

