Move Globally, Live Locally: The Daily Lives of Japanese Expatriates in Guangzhou, China

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Abstract In this paper, we describe and analyze the characteristics of the daily activities and living spaces of Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou, China. Our findings are based on data we generated through a survey questionnaire and interviews. As a result of Japanese transnational companies’ intense direct investment in China and the personnel rotation systems within the internal labor market, many Japanese citizens have been relocated to Guangzhou. Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou are mainly managers or technical transferees, middle aged, male, and highly educated. On average, most stay in China for several years, and display the characteristics typical of a sojourner. In contemporary Guangzhou, eight Japanese “agglomeration spots” have been created. Japanese expatriates tend to concentrate in specific apartment complexes or residential lots within these agglomerations. They enjoy high-quality ambiance and spacious rooms with various services. The chief criteria employed when selecting their homes include the quality of the property, convenience in terms of traffic, onsite services and amenities, a beautiful environment, and being located within Japanese communities. The everyday lives of Japanese migrants unfold within a limited territory and these expatriates are relatively isolated from the host society. They shop, dine, and receive various services mainly at familiar Japanese-oriented facilities. They tend to live in their own Japanese-style small communities, without interacting with the host society. The aforementioned findings seem to have much in common with the situation of Japanese expatriates in other cities: residential areas are segregated from local citizens, and the self-sufficient living spaces built for them add to their isolation.

Key words Japanese expatriates, international migration, transnational companies (TNCs), segregation, Guangzhou

Introduction

International migration of highly skilled labor to China

As one manifestation of globalization, international migration is part of a transnational revolution that is reshaping societies and politics around the globe (Castles and Miller 1993). In the last decade, many studies have examined migration flows especially in terms of the international migration of highly skilled labor, which is of great concern to Western societies (Koser and Salt 1997; Iredale 2001). However, while the number of foreigners in China continues to increase with the rise of the Chinese economy, few have shed light on the international migration process in the country (Farrer 2011). According to the official report from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (China), more than 223,000 foreigners held employment passes while working in China in 2009. Most of them were from developed countries such as Japan, Germany, or the U.S., and were either personnel of transnational companies (TNCs) or private entrepreneurs.

In modern China, international migration and expatriates’ communities have appeared in selected coastal cities such as Shanghai, Suzhou, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou. Within the specific areas of these cities, foreigners have developed a whole set of living spaces that to a certain extent, presaged the modernization of China’s urban life. Nevertheless, due to the isolationism of the socialist era, the emergence of international migrants and their spaces was by no means common in pre-reform China. Thus, early studies of international migrants in China were usually driven by Western theories, such as the push-pull framework (Lee 1966), world system theory (Wallerstein 1991; Massey et al. 1993), risk selection (Stark and Taylor 1991), and migrant network theory (Portes 1995).

After market reform, hundreds of thousands of international migrants arrived in China, and state control of foreigners’ lives and work has gradually relaxed. Accordingly, several scholars have set about conducting studies based on empirical surveys. Wu
and Webber (2004), for instance, note the appearance of a “foreign gated community” in Beijing, and link it to the transformation and restructuring of the local sociopolitical and economic context. Li (2008) and Li et al. (2009) argue that in Guangzhou, Africans from sub-Saharan countries have made an ethnic enclave in Xiaoabeiul and complicated relations have developed between the host society and the newcomers.

Some scholars argue that contact zones are constructed in global cities, where subjects that have previously been separated geographically and historically are co-present and the difference is encountered and negotiated. Yeoh and Willis (2005) investigated the difference in the narratives about China and its society between Singaporean and British transmigrants in several Chinese cities as contact zones. While Britons’ attitude toward China and its society were typified into the “culturalists”, the “colonialists” and the “imperialists” rather simply, Singaporeans tried to define the difference between themselves and the local Chinese in more nuanced ways.

Among Chinese mega-cites, Shanghai is the most globalized and a substantial number of scholars has examined the formation of expatriate communities and the social interaction between foreign and native people within the city. Huang and Ning (2008) reported the development of “international communities” in Shanghai, using data from questionnaires and interviews. They found that a diversified system of foreign communities has developed in Shanghai and is presenting a great challenge to local governments. Tseng (2011) argued that even highly skilled migrants could not live in what Castells (2000) called the global “space of flows”. He showed that Shanghai emerged as the most favored anchor point or “space of place (Castells 2000)” for Taiwanese skilled migrants, where both high-level career opportunities and an attractive urban lifestyle were provided.

Farrer (2010) examined Western settlers’ politics to situate themselves in the destination city based on interviews conducted in Shanghai. Their ideal self-image was culturally cosmopolitan, locally integrated, and economically successful. Although foreign settlers did not have legal citizenship, they regarded themselves as important cultural and economic elements of the Shanghai urbanscape and constructed a sense of belonging to the city with the abovementioned self-image. Farrer’s other study (Farrer 2011) was focused on sexual encounters between globally mobile people and the local Chinese. Farrer considered Shanghai’s nightspots as ethno-sexual contact zones where transnational mobile elites competed with each other over ephemeral sexual success mobilizing national, racial, economic and cultural differences.

The case of Japanese expatriates became an important issue when these expatriates thrived in Europe and North America by way of the “dispatching system” established by TNCs. As we review later, since the 1980s, many studies have been conducted on that topic (Glebe 1986; Hamada 1992; Sakai 2000; Thang et al. 2002; White and Hurdley 2003; Ben-Ari 2003). Japanese workers comprise a significant portion of international migrants to China. According to the Annual Report on Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas, which was released by the Japanese Foreign Ministry in 2010, the total number of long-term residents in China has reached 127,282. During the period 2006–2009, there were 48,146 Japanese long-term residents in Shanghai, representing the largest number of Japanese expatriates in cities worldwide. In the labor market, Japanese citizens accounted for 28 percent of the total foreign employment share in Shanghai, and 29 percent in Guangzhou, in 2007. The Japanese have become one of the largest migrant groups in Chinese major cities. Their activities and living space patterns reflect some of the typical characteristics of international migrants in China.

Among Chinese research projects on population geography, international migration, and economic development, increasing attention has been given to Japanese expatriates (Chen 2001; Fan 2003; Liu and Tan 2010; He and Luo 2007). However, profiling these migrants has been a challenge, especially given China’s strict control over such information. Therefore, we need simple but steady empirical studies for China’s transnational migration at the present stage. What will be the impact of increases in these transnational migrants on destination cities? How will local communities respond? How have communities of expatriates been built?

In this paper, we attempt to understand the characteristics of the activities and living spaces of Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou, China. Prior to the empirical analysis, we review the literature on residential patterns and the everyday lives of Japanese expatriates in selected global cities. We then examine Japanese expatriates’ residential choices, consumption of goods and services, and social interaction with local people. Based on our questionnaire and in-depth interviews, we investigate constraints on their abovementioned activities. Following a description of the direct foreign investment trend, we examine the numbers associated with international migration and the characteristics of the residential distribution of Japanese expatriates in...
Japanese expatriates in global cities

According to the Annual Report on Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas, in October 2009, the number of Japanese nationals living in foreign countries was 1,131,807. Among these, 67 percent (758,248) are "long-term residents" who anticipate returning to Japan while the rest are "permanent residents." Long-term residents are divided into categories according to their type of employment. The largest category is "persons employed in private companies (410,788 people)," followed by "students, scholars, and teachers (173,522 people)."

Each subdivision of "long-term residents" contains "principal" movers and "companion" movers. Male principal movers, who are mostly employed and transferred by Japanese TNCs, comprise 48.7% of all "persons employed in private companies," whereas female companion movers, who are mainly family members of the abovementioned transferees, comprise 30.2% of this group.

Opposite to the male company transferees, many female principal movers migrate abroad independently, finding a job through recruitment agencies that have global service networks (Yui 2009). Although the number of female principal movers in that category has been increasing, their share remains only 7.1%. In association with this, some scholars focused on Japanese youths who moved abroad independently from companies' internal labor market recently (Kelsky 2001; Thang et al. 2002; Nakazawa et al. 2008; Fujita 2009). They move not primarily because they want more economic success or chances to advance their occupational carriers, but because they anticipated new life experience which was absent in Japan or felt antipathy toward outdated cultural norms of Japan. Fujita (2009) called them "cultural migrants" and investigated their formation of transnational identity based on in-depth interviews with Japanese youth in New York and London. The category of this kind of migrants is not clear in the statistics, because they tend to stay abroad as student formally, but actually they work or perform some artistic activities.

Although new types of Japanese expatriate such as "cultural migrant" have emerged, men who have been relocated by Japanese TNCs and their concomitant family make up a major constituent of Japanese expatriates so far. The characteristics and conditions of everyday life for Japanese expatriates in various cities have been investigated as an issue concerning the international migration of highly skilled labor, a prominent research target for population geographers.

London and Düsseldorf were major destinations for Japanese migrants during the post-war era. Both cities experienced the fastest growth rates of their Japanese population during the 1980s. Although the number of Japanese expatriates has remained stagnant since the early 1990s, many Japanese people still live in these cities; there were 8,187 in Düsseldorf and 26,965 in London in 2009.

By analyzing the population trend, residential distribution, real estate market, labor market, and their interaction with the host society, White and Hurdley examined the fundamentals of Japanese expatriates' lives and the impact of the increase in their numbers on the local communities in London (White 1998; Hurdley and White 1999; White and Hurdley 2003; White 2003). Reflecting the active direct investment of Japan, Japanese companies have established many branch offices and subsidiaries, and thousands of employees have been dispatched to the UK office since the 1980s (White 2003). The distribution of the Japanese population within London is very different from that of other foreign-born or ethnic groups. Japanese people tend to concentrate in neighborhoods populated by people with high socio-economic status (Hurdley and White 1999).

Thus, a real estate sub-market specializing in Japanese expatriates has emerged in London, in which Japanese estate agents act as key gatekeepers. Japanese TNCs have made efforts to enclose their transferees in typical Japanese communities and to control their life circumstances by means of influencing and intervening in the activities of the estate agents. White (2003) argues that Japanese TNCs have fostered the creation of Japanese communities by ensuring that all that is needed for the Japanese way of life is available within the communities, and as a result, Japanese expatriates are deprived of the opportunities to integrate into wider London society. In reality, the daily needs of Japanese expatriates are significantly different from those of other groups in London, and are difficult to obtain from anywhere other than near the Japanese communities.

However, Martin (2007) drew a different picture of the socialization of the Japanese in several UK cities including London, based on long term participatory observation. She argued that Japanese housewives make the most of their husbands' overseas transfer as an opportunity to experience a life in a different culture. The UK, where their children could learn practical English, was the most appreciated destination. They formed good relationships with the host communities, which served as a foundation...
of positive image of Britons toward Japan. According to Martin's study, these Japanese housewives keep in touch with the UK after their return to Japan and some of their children choose to stay or return to the UK to enter its prestigious educational institutions.

The composition of the Japanese population in London is now changing. A downward trend in the number of company-oriented transferees is discernible, whereas the rate of educational/scientific research-oriented immigrants is increasing. Some Japanese, including “cultural migrants,” live in London with little or no relationship to Japanese companies or Japanese housing markets. They display different patterns of behavior as compared to company movers: they appreciate London's attractiveness as a global city and try to enjoy various opportunities within it (White 2003).

The number of Japanese expatriates in Düsseldorf also followed the trend of increases in population accompanied by the establishment of Japanese branch offices and subsidiaries. Glebe (1986, 2003) examined the residential patterns and discussed the reasons for the segregation of the Japanese in Düsseldorf. Although there appears to be no discrimination on the part of the host society, the Japanese are extremely concentrated within several prestigious residential areas. The largest cluster of Japanese residences in the city is located on the east side of the central business district (CBD) near Japanese-oriented infrastructures such as Japanese kindergartens, schools, and shrines, and a self-sufficient Japanese community has formed there. Another area near the central business district has a high percentage of Japanese because a large number of expatriates initially settled in hotels there for several weeks before finding their own houses.

Because Japanese transferees and their family members expect to return to Japan someday, they tend to be reluctant to form relationships with members of the local society and endeavor to maintain their “Japanese” lifestyle while living in a temporary diasporic situation. Glebe (2003) called this inclination “re-territorialising Nippon’ abroad,” referring to Appadurai’s notion of “ethnoscape” (Appadurai 1990). Düsseldorf also receives contemporary Japanese expatriates who have moved independently from Japanese companies, however, this group is much smaller than the group that heads to London.

For Japanese TNCs, Singapore was once a production site in a developing country, and then become a bridgehead for penetrating the emerging markets of Southeast Asia. In 2009, Singapore had 21,868 Japanese expatriates most of whom are transferees and their relatives, although there are also many locally hired Japanese workers, mostly young women, in the Singapore offices of Japanese companies (Thang et al. 2002; Nakazawa et al. 2008).

According to Ben-Ari (2003), Japanese expatriates tend to consider the head office in Japan to be the center—both organizationally and mentally—and branches or subsidiaries in foreign cities as the periphery. They consider working in Singapore, or elsewhere abroad, a mandated experience tolerated in order to reach a higher position in the organization. Japanese expatriates in Singapore are apprehensive that being abroad may weaken their relationship to the center of the organization, which may not be ideal for the future of their career. They are also afraid to “go native” and thus make efforts to maintain their uniquely Japanese demeanor, language and attire. In reality, many Japanese expatriates in Singapore return to Japan after a stint of three to five years.

To enhance competitiveness within the Japanese educational system, Japanese expatriates arrange for their children to receive a Japanese-style education. From kindergarten to high school, Japanese children in Singapore can receive an education that follows official Japanese guidelines. Moreover, special curriculums for Japanese students are available even in some international schools. This also suggests that Japanese expatriates and their families in Singapore do not accept assimilation with the host society, but rather, retain Japanese cultural values.

Studies of Japanese expatriates by Chinese scholars have just begun, although they are few in number and most of them still remain preliminary overviews.

Liu and Tan (2010) introduce the dynamic distribution of Japanese migrants in China and all over the world. Although the USA is the greatest destination for international Japanese migrants, since the beginning of 1990s, the number of Japanese expatriates has been increasing in China. About 80% of Japanese migrants move to China as a result of a personnel transfer between offices of the same company. Liu and Tan (2010) conclude that so far, most Japanese in China are sojourners and there is little possibility that the number of Japanese permanent residents will increase.

He and Luo (2007) examine the profile of Japanese expatriates based on statistics obtained from the Exit-Entry Administration Bureau of the Shanghai Public Security Bureau. In 2005, there were about 29,000 male and 15,000 female Japanese expatriates in Shanghai. The Japanese population was larger than that of any other nationality and comprised 25% of all foreign residents in
Typical Japanese expatriates in Shanghai are economically active people from the 20s to 40s, employees of non-Chinese companies, companion family members, or students.

Statistics on migrations are still rough and inadequate in China. This has severely restricted the advancement of quantitative research, whereas some qualitative research paved a new path towards understanding the Japanese in Chinese cities. Preliminary research by Chen (2001) on the cultural activities of Japanese immigrants in Shanghai during the early twentieth century provides insight into migration studies. Although Chen's study is a historical one, contemporary researchers should appreciate its value because it focuses on the configuration of the living space of Japanese migrants and the local context. In terms of contemporary studies, Fan (2003) serves as a useful reference. The study focuses on the daily lives and work ethos of the Japanese in China who were not transferees but rather locally hired staff. Fan (2003) states that these Japanese workers display different attitudes towards work from those who are working in Japan: the competitive condition of the labor market in China made them less cooperative, less group-oriented, and less diligent.

**Japanese Expatriates in Guangzhou**

**The rise of foreign direct investment (FDI) and international migration to Guangzhou**

Market reform and “opening-up” policies have stimulated the rapid and sustained growth of foreign direct investment in some coastal cities in China. Guangzhou, which is adjacent to Hong Kong and Macao, is typical of this trend. With its advantageous location, Guangzhou has attracted a large number of foreign-investment enterprises. Especially after China’s entry into the World Trade Organization, the increase of foreign direct investments in Guangzhou has become apparent. From 2000 to 2007, the number of foreign-owned enterprises grew significantly from 2,620 to more than 6,100, and the share of foreign-invested enterprises rose from 32 percent to 69 percent (Figure 1). The number of Japanese-funded enterprises also increased from 105 in 2001 to 320 in 2007, with the amount of Japanese investment increasing from USD1.78 billion to USD7.41 billion (Figure 2). In recent years, many world-famous companies such as automobile giants Honda, Toyota, and Nissan; electronic and digital device producers Panasonic, Sony, Canon, and Ricoh; electronic device manufacturers Mitsubishi, Sanyo, and Hitachi; foodstuff enterprises Nissin, Meiji, and Ajinomoto; and producers in other categories such as Nippon Oil (ENEOS), and Nippon Paint have set their regional headquarters or subsidiaries in Guangzhou. With the expansion of these companies, more and more highly skilled Japanese migrants have moved to Guangzhou with their families and formed Japanese expatriate communities.

Owing to the incompleteness of China’s data collection system, available statistics may not accurately reflect the number of Japanese citizens living in the city, however the upward trend is obvious. From 1995 to 2009, the number of Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou rose from 802 to 6,080. The annual rate of increase amounted to 20 percent on average, and even over 30 percent per year after 2000 (Figure 3). Most of these Japanese citizens are managers or technical staff sent by Japanese companies, living in Guangzhou with their family members.

**Residential distribution of Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou**

Most Japanese expatriates reside in the central part of...
the city (Figure 4). According to the data sourced from particular real estate agents, the eight agglomerated areas of Japanese citizens are identified as: Huadu, Guangyuanlu, Huanshidong, Tianhebei, Zhujiang New Town, Ersha Island, Panyu, and Zengcheng (Table 1).

Huadu is located in the northern part of Guangzhou City. More than 100 Japanese live in rental apartments furnished with full service facilities. The convenient traffic conditions and beautiful scenic environment are features attractive to expatriates.

Guangyuanlu is located at the foot of Baiyun Mountain, one of the most famous mountains in Guangzhou, and faces a vast forest park. Villas and mansions with easy access to the highway entrance provide a luxurious and convenient life. There are about 100 Japanese residents in this area.

Huanshidong is situated in the northwestern part of the CBD. Because of the agglomeration of the consulates of European countries as well as that of Japan, this area has become a traditional residential district for foreigners; many staff members of diplomatic institutions live here. One interesting fact is that recently, African traders from sub-Saharan countries have created an ethnic enclave in part of this area called Xiaobeilu (Li 2008; Li et al. 2009). They have developed complicated transactional relationships with the host society and with other...
Figure 4. Spatial distribution of the agglomeration of Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou.

Table 1. General Information of the agglomeration areas of Japanese expatriates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Residences</th>
<th>Japanese Population</th>
<th>Evaluation of Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huadu</td>
<td>Junwei Plaza, Yinyan Mansion, Agile Garden (Huadu)</td>
<td>Over 100</td>
<td>Traffic convenience, beautiful scenic environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guangyuanlu</td>
<td>Huijing Newtown, Forest Hill</td>
<td>About 100</td>
<td>Easy access to highway entrance, forest park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huanshidong</td>
<td>Taqin Garden, Guangyi Mansion, Jincheng Garden, Garden Hotel, Guangdong International Hotel, Yuanyang Commercial Mansion</td>
<td>Over 200</td>
<td>Long migration history, improved facilities, and infrastructures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tianhebei</td>
<td>CITIC Plaza International Apartment, Yuwa Mansion, Tianyu Garden, The Concordia, Huiya Garden, Metro Paradise, Xiehe New World, Qiaolin Garden, Hilton Sunshine, Green Garden, Yashen Mansion</td>
<td>Over 1,000</td>
<td>CBD with location advantage and developed facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhujiang Newtown</td>
<td>Galaxy Garden, Poly Champagne Garden, Zhujiang Villa, New World International Residence, Babylon Luxury, Central Park View, Twin City International Service Apartment, New City Coastal Garden, Han Palace, Clifford Mansion, The Caesars Palace, Fucheng Garden</td>
<td>About 400–500</td>
<td>New CBD with location advantage and developed facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ersha Island</td>
<td>Oakwood Golden Arch Residence, New World Casa California, New World Villa, South China Salon, Hongcheng Garden</td>
<td>Over 100</td>
<td>Beautiful environment and advanced facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panyu &amp; Zengcheng</td>
<td>Clifford, Riverside Garden, Phoenix residential area</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Construction of metro lines, foreigners’ communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

groups of newcomers. The Japanese reside in two types of residential blocks: rental apartments and residential hotels. With a long history of foreign settlement, the area is equipped with full amenities and service facilities, where one can find Japanese-style restaurants and bars. The convenience offered by the closeness of various department stores, shopping malls, and restaurants has attracted many Japanese migrants. More than 200 Japanese reside in this area.

Tianhebei is situated in the northern part of the central city, which is the original CBD in Guangzhou and is famous for its highly concentrated offices and commercial buildings. With upgraded road infrastructures and service facilities, Tianhebei has attracted 20 headquarters of the world’s top 500 TNCs, as well as the consulates and embassies of Sweden, Belgium, Malaysia, Finland, Italy, Singapore, and others. Tianhebei is the most popular district among Japanese and most densely inhabited, housing over 1,000 Japanese residents. The most popular residential building is the CITIC Plaza International Apartments, which is a 38-storey residential hotel with excellent services and facilities. More than 600 people live there, most of whom are senior staff members working in Japanese or Korean enterprises.

Zhujiang Newtown is a newly planned sub-center of the Guangzhou metropolitan area and hosts 400–500 Japanese expatriates. Its western region is under construction to establish a hub of finance and business administration, and in the east, a cluster of quality condominiums. Japanese expatriates mainly live in condominiums located on the east side.

Ersha Island is an islet of the Pearl River, with a breathtaking environment and high-class amenities, such as a concert hall and art museum. Villas with small gardens are typical of residences there, which appeal to senior staff members of TNCs and local enterprises. There are over 100 Japanese residents there.

Panyu and Zengcheng constitute the suburbs of Guangzhou metropolitan area. Stimulated by urban expansion, many real estate developers have launched their projects in Panyu, including Clifford and Riverside Garden, which are popular residential neighborhoods among the Japanese, people from the Middle East, and Latin America. Additionally, dozens of Japanese residents have settled in the Phoenix residential area of Zengcheng, which is located in the east of Guangzhou.

Despite being relatively small as compared with the populations of Shanghai and Beijing, the growth of Japanese communities in Guangzhou has become increasingly notable. The three major agglomerations of Japanese migrants in Guangzhou are Huangshidong, Tianhebei, and Zhujiang Newtown. Huangshidong is a traditional foreigners’ residential area, whereas the other two are new settlements that emerged during the 1990s. They have become core areas that strongly attract the Japanese in Guangzhou.

**Characteristics of Japanese Expatriates in Guangzhou**

**Data and methods**

What kind of people are Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou? What are the characteristics of Japanese living spaces in Guangzhou? What are the features of their social networks? Are they open to members of local societies or exclusively Japanese? To answer these questions, we conducted a survey of Japanese expatriates living in Guangzhou using a questionnaire and interviews.

A questionnaire-based survey was conducted in August 2008. First, we distributed the questionnaires to Japanese expatriates living in representative accommodations: the Garden Hotel and Guangdong International Hotel in Huangshidong, and the CITIC Plaza in Tianhebei. The questionnaire’s inquiries covered their living conditions, daily consumption, commuting, education of their children, and their social interaction. Totally, 30 questionnaires were distributed and 16 valid answers were collected. Then the same questionnaires were circulated to 18 members of the Association of Japanese Women, and all of them were collected and valid. Thus, we obtained 34 completed questionnaires in total.

In addition to the questionnaire-based survey, we carried out semi-structured interviews which included such topics as employment, housing, ordinary activities, social interaction, and degree of satisfaction in Guangzhou City. In October and November 2008, we interviewed six Japanese residents of the Garden Hotel and Guangdong International Hotel, three of whom were also respondents to the abovementioned questionnaire survey. In order to eliminate gender imbalance as well as to obtain extra information about the lives of Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou, supplementary interviews with eight members of the Association of Japanese Women were conducted in April 2009. All the women were also respondents to the questionnaire and lived in the CITIC Plaza. In total, 14 Japanese expatriates were interviewed (Table 2). The questionnaire-based survey and the interviews were not based on random sampling procedure. Of course, there were other types of Japanese
expatriates than we could survey and interview, and we might have overlooked some important difference within the group of Japanese people living in Guangzhou. Therefore, our study could only be a preliminary one, but we believe that we obtained some invaluable information about the objective conditions and subjective experience of Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou.

First, let us observe the profiles of the questionnaire respondents (Table. 3). There were 14 male respondents, and 20 female respondents. The female respondents are divided into two types. The first type is a full-time housewife living with her husband who is a transferee of a Japanese enterprise or a Japanese official. This type of women is said to be a “trailing spouse” with her husband and classified in the statistics on Japanese nationals overseas as a “cohabitation family.” The other type of women is an independent mover who aims to work or study overseas. The respondents of the former type were 18 people while those of the latter were as few as 2 people.

As shown in Table 2, most respondents were in their 30s or 40s. All but one holds an undergraduate or higher degree, and 88 percent are married. They usually live with two or three family members, that is, their Japanese spouse and their children. All unmarried people chose to live alone, and no one shared the rent with others. This situation is different from that of unmarried Japanese women working in Singapore who often share a flat (Nakazawa et al. 2008).

The most common jobs that were reported by questionnaire respondents were those related to the manufacturing sector (Table 4). In terms of the respondents’ positions, the two major categories were managerial and technical. Those who were dispatched from Japan by Japanese businesses amounted to 14 people, while two were locally employed.
Among the questionnaire respondents, 71% have lived in Guangzhou for over a year, 65% have lived in China for over four years, and 15% have lived there for less than one year. In contrast, almost all the respondents, except the housewives, have long-term work experiences in Japan; 94% have even worked in Japan for more than 10 years. The majority studied overseas in the early years, such as China, the UK, and the US; they are highly educated professionals in various fields.

Residential selection

Japanese residents live in apartments with hotel-like services or in garden villas with beautiful greenery and excellent facilities. From dozens to over 100 Japanese families often live together in one building, forming a homogeneous population group.

The CITIC Plaza International Apartments is a good example of this type of building. It is located in Tianhebei Road, which is a typical site reflecting some of the characteristics of Japanese residential space. The Japanese residents of the CITIC Plaza are mainly senior staff members of Japanese TNCs and their family members. They share and maintain the same Japanese culture, values, and lifestyle, and establish social networks among themselves. Japanese expatriates have formed a homogeneous and isolated community in relation to the host society.

The Plaza consists of two 38-floor apartments located in the east and west towards CITIC Plaza called “CITIC I” and “CITIC II.” The majority of its dwellers are Japanese, Korean, and people from Hong Kong; nearly 600 Japanese live in the apartments. High-quality ambiance and complete service facilities provide the residents with a convenient and comfortable life. A unit with three rooms, plus a dining room and kitchen, equipped with air-conditioners, TVs, washing/drying machines, and a refrigerator, with a beautiful view is popular among families of Japanese expatriates; and a luxury that only the highest social strata of Chinese families could afford.

The apartments run a strict monitoring and security system on the first floor; visitors must undergo specific procedures and receive confirmation from the security management staffs. These measures weaken the connection with the host society and exacerbate residential segregation. Isolation from the host society is underpinned by the exorbitant rents. In “CITIC I,” the monthly rent of one room amounts to 17,000 yuan (about 2,500 USD) (123 m²–136 m²) to 24,000 yuan (about 3,500 USD) (160 m²–183 m²); in “CITIC II,” the rent ranges from 9,000 yuan (about 1,300 USD) (123 m²–136 m²) to 13,000 yuan (about 1,900 USD) (160 m²–183 m²). On average, the rent of each square meter is over 100 Yuan, as compared to the rent of existing houses (not newly built) in Guangzhou of only 30 yuan/m². The extremely high rentals present an obstacle that keeps local people from moving into these apartments.

As for the problem of exorbitant rents, ID 2 (See Table 2) said, “Housing rent in Guangzhou is not that high compared with that in other cities in Japan such as Tokyo.” The reality is that Japanese companies usually provide housing allowance for their staff members, making the expenses affordable.

In addition to the quality of a property, Japanese expatriates consider some location and environmental factors when they choose their residences. Four major factors were detected in our questionnaire survey and interviews: The Japanese prioritize traffic convenience, onsite amenities and services, beautiful environments, and location within Japanese communities.

The Japanese are very sensitive as regards these factors. ID 2 wrote on the questionnaire sheet, “The government should do more to improve the efficiency of transportation.” ID 10 stated a similar sentiment more concretely, “A subway should be constructed immediately.”

Few Japanese expatriates obtain their own car in China because they anticipate going back to Japanese several years later. Traffic congestion and bad driving manners in Guangzhou city are notorious. Many Japanese companies prohibit the Japanese transferees from driving a car to avoid the risk of traffic accidents. Japanese expatriates and their families rely on public transportation unless they are provided a company car with chauffeur. Thus, the improvement of the city’s public transportation is a common requirement of the Japanese in Guangzhou.

In terms of infrastructures, Japanese expatriates

Table 4. Occupational status of economically active respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public official</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Engineer and technical expert</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service trade</td>
<td>General affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric communication</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Questionnaire survey.
consider accessibility to specific commercial institutions important. According to ID 1, Japanese expatriates prefer Japanese and western style supermarkets, such as JUSCO, Walmart, Carrefour, Parknshop, and others, to local shops or markets. They enjoy going to Japanese-style restaurants, which are not evenly distributed within the City. Location bias towards such shops and restaurants influence the residential choices of Japanese within the City. ID 9 said, “The air and river pollution in Guangzhou are similar to those in Japan several decades ago.” Tap water cannot be drunk directly and noise pollution is serious. Actually, not many neighborhoods in Guangzhou appeal to Japanese expatriates.

Shopping and dining

The daily necessities are mainly purchased in Japanese, western, and Hong Kong style supermarkets (Table 5). Some use a group purchasing system to obtain some types of goods. The Japanese in Guangzhou especially favor JUSCO stores, which are located on Tiyuxi Road in the Tianhe District, and in China-plaza in the Yuxiu District. JUSCO provides abundant Japanese goods and the layout of the shop floor follows the same style as those in Japan. With no language barrier and a convenient shuttle bus service, JUSCO has become the first choice of Japanese people in Guangzhou.

On the safety of Chinese food, ID 2 said, “The Japanese pay much attention to food security. We do not trust the stuff in local supermarkets.” It is generally true that the Japanese suffer apprehension about the security of Chinese food. However, based on the questionnaire, we learned that local Chinese supermarkets make up a fair proportion of their daily choices. Among the 34 respondents, 10 said that they purchased some daily necessities at a local supermarket, and some respondents claimed that they even chose informal markets.

Most Japanese carry clothes from Japan or complete their purchases in western and Hong Kong stores; only a few buy clothes from local shops. Some long-term residents in Guangzhou buy clothing from wholesale markets. They acquire the latest information about specific shopping places through media such as “Whenever,” a magazine targeted to Japanese in Guangzhou, or through Chinese acquaintances. This may indicate that the Japanese have been gradually integrated into the host society, developing sense of trust.

Japanese expatriates in Guangzhou eat out infrequently. According to the questionnaire survey, 38% of questionnaire respondents prefer to eat at home and the rest go out to dinner once a week or less on average. Japanese-style restaurants are a favorite choice when they do eat out. Due to the scarcity of Japanese ingredients and good Japanese chefs in Guangzhou, some Japanese even go to Hong Kong once a week to enjoy Japanese food, because many Japanese restaurants are located there.

| Table 5. Major shopping and dining places of Japanese expatriates |
|-----------------|---------|
| **Daily necessaries** |          |
| Japan supermarket | 21      |
| Local supermarket  | 10      |
| Western and Hongkong supermarket | 9 |
| Informal market | 7       |
| Telephone shopping | 6      |
| Internet shopping | 2       |
| Bring from Japan | 2       |
| **Clothing** |          |
| Bring from Japan | 26      |
| Western and Hongkong department | 11 |
| Free market | 11      |
| Local shops or department | 6 |
| Internet shopping | 4       |
| Other | 3       |
| **Dining** |          |
| Japanese style restaurant | 25     |
| Chinese style restaurant | 17    |
| Western style restaurant | 6      |
| Others | 17      |

Note: multiple answers of 34 respondents. Source: Questionnaire survey.

Education, health care, and other daily activities

The Japanese expatriates who move to Guangzhou with their family appreciate that the Ministry of Education of Japan set up the Japanese school. It consists of primary and junior high school, registers over 400 students and 40 teachers who come from Japan. Its curriculum system is the same as that in schools in Japan. However, some respondents indicated that they are anxious about their children’s academic ability because there are few private preparatory schools (jyuku) suitable for Japanese children in Guangzhou. The respondents were also concerned about differences in the system of high schools and universities between China and Japan. Contrary to the UK case informed by Martin (2007), Japanese expatriate families usually send their children back to Japan after junior high school, for educational achievement in China is not highly valued in Japanese society.

A respondent said, “It’s not easy to adjust to the manner toward patients in Chinese hospitals.” Most of the respondents choose Japanese-oriented private clinics for medical care. Several dental and medical centers are located in the CITIC plaza building, and there are four or five clinics nearby “CITIC I” and “CITIC II.” The respondents do not participate in China’s insurance
system. An intermediary medical supporting institution known as “WellBe” pays fees and other medical care expenses, and the accounts are later settled by international insurance companies.

Japanese people tend to go to barber shops or beauty salons run by Japanese or those related to the Japanese. That way, they feel free to communicate with the staff because they speak Japanese fluently. However, Japanese-oriented salons are significantly more expensive than local ones.

A self-contained or self-sufficient economic service network, which we will call Japanese ethnic businesses, has been built around the Japanese communities in Guangzhou. It consists of a set of service and retail facilities such as supermarkets, restaurants, schools, clinics, and barbershops, and most of them have Japanese origins: some are subsidiaries of Japanese companies and some are set up by Japanese businesspersons in China. The unique characteristics of Japanese consumption patterns promote further development of Japanese ethnic businesses, while self-closed living spaces within a kind of ethnic enclave have formed, which requires little interaction with the host society. Although Japanese communities make up only a tiny fraction of the whole landscape of Guangzhou, they serve as essential foundations for the everyday lives of Japanese expatriates who are the driving force behind the activities of Japanese TNCs—a mainspring of the thriving Guangzhou economy.

What Hampers the Social Integration of Japanese Expatriates

Language barrier

There are multiple Japanese social circles formed through relationships among colleagues or teachers and parents, and those based on hobbies, neighborhoods, and birthplace linkages (Kenjinkai). These loosely knit groups play an important role in active communication among Japanese people. However, the ties between the Japanese and the local people or the host society are relatively weak.

Language is a primary barrier to communication between Japanese expatriates and the local people. Most respondents indicated that 80% of their friends are Japanese and no more than 20% are Chinese. This shows that their social networks are mainly Japanese-oriented and that they seldom interact with local people unless it is necessary on business occasions or in their daily lives. They communicate with the local people only when they shop, take taxis, or do some required daily activities. Even then, communication is not necessarily required. Japanese residents usually show taxi drivers a note that states the address of the place they want to go to without saying anything to the driver.

Most of the respondents indicated that the language problem is frequent and inevitable in their daily life. Poor communication is also problematic in workplaces and on official occasions. ID 4 stated that he had difficulty in adjusting to his new job position due to the language problem. According to China’s policy, the length of the stay of foreigners in China should be no more than one year. Unexpected passport checking on the street bothers the foreigners in China. When they immigrate or expand the length of their stay, a cumbersome process of visa application is necessary. ID 10 experienced great inconvenience while going through visa formalities that provide no inquiry services in the Japanese language.

Because of their language problem, Japanese expatriates cannot obtain enough information to encourage them to engage with local society. Their isolation is also a factor of the circumscribed living space provided to Japanese expatriates.

Daily path constraints for the wives

Many of our questionnaire respondents and interviewees were Japanese women, most married to the employees of Japanese companies relocated to Guangzhou. Although some Japanese housewives want to work out of the home, that hope is seldom realized due to strict restrictions on foreign employment in China.

Figure 5 shows the daily path of a typical Japanese migrant housewife. Housewives share a very similar time-space structure in their daily activities. They prepare breakfast and lunch for the family in the morning and engage in sports, learning, and other activities until lunch. They go shopping with friends in the afternoon and have dinner with family members in the evening. They watch TV and enjoy some free time after dinner. With very few exceptions, the radius of their living space is smaller than 1 km. Several factors constrain their ability to extend their living space.

Few Japanese can speak Chinese fluently; therefore, there are not many chances to obtain useful information about everyday life from local people. Formal institutions such as the Japanese consulate emit little practical information geared toward the daily lives of expatriates in Guangzhou. It is natural that Japanese wives tend to flock in circles of Japanese friends or join the Women’s Association to ease the frustration brought about by
living life as strangers to each other. Japanese housewives tend to act on precedent: they usually decide where to go shopping or which clinic to choose according to the word-of-mouth communication with friends. They often go shopping or for tea together. The negative image of Guangzhou City is also considered an obstacle in daily activities. For example, as an interviewee confessed, the public security anxiety in some parts of Guangzhou City and the anti-Japanese sentiment of the Chinese affect the routes and planned activities of the Japanese.

Second, as previously mentioned, a self-enclosed living space with various convenient support systems has been built and reduces the necessity of visiting unfamiliar places in the City. The shuttle bus system is symbolic of the situation. Japanese residents who live in particular apartment buildings can take specified shuttle buses to JUSCO stores. The shuttle buses have their own travel time, origin, and travel route to JUSCO along which they stop at designated shopping spots at fixed times. The passengers are generally all Japanese, with little change in the composition of riders.

These constraints make the activity patterns of Japanese wives monotonous and similar to each other.

Conclusions and Implications

In this paper, we investigated the characteristics of the daily activities and living spaces of Japanese expatriates
in Guangzhou, China. Our data was derived from our original questionnaire-based survey and interviews.

The population flow from Japan to Guangzhou is an example of the international migration of highly skilled labor. Along with the rapid economic growth and flourishing of Japanese direct investment in China, more and more Japanese TNCs are dispatching their employees to Guangzhou. Japanese expatriates in the city are mainly managers or technical staff who are transferred by their companies, middle-aged, male, and highly educated. On average, they remain in China for a few years and display the characteristics of a typical sojourner.

In contemporary Guangzhou, eight Japanese “agglomeration spots” have been formed. Japanese expatriates tend to concentrate in particular apartment complexes or residential areas. They enjoy high-quality ambiance and spacious homes with various services. The chief criteria in selecting their residential locations include the quality of a property, traffic convenience, onsite amenities and services, beautiful environments and location within Japanese communities. The everyday lives of Japanese migrants unfold within a limited territory and these expatriates are relatively isolated from members of local communities. They shop, dine, and receive different services mainly at familiar Japanese-oriented shops and facilities. They tend to live in the area where Japanese are concentrated, and lack interaction with the host society.

The abovementioned findings seem to have much in common with the situation of the Japanese expatriates in other cities: residential areas are segregated from the local citizens and self-sufficient living spaces are built. In the final section of this paper, we conceptualize the underlying context of this situation.

We assume two factors that separate the Japanese from the host society. The first one is called “active isolation,” referring to the proactive formation of communities designed for the Japanese in an unfamiliar environment. The housing quality, environment of neighborhood, commercial, and transport infrastructure in a foreign city cannot satisfy the needs of the Japanese expatriate. It is difficult for some Japanese to accept local lifestyles, cultural norms, and national characteristics. Most of the Japanese expatriates are transferees who are dispatched to foreign countries within the companies’ internal labor markets. They are sojourners in nature: they usually stay in the foreign tenures for a few years and expect to return to Japan. Their desire for more agreeable living spaces amenable to Japanese sensibilities and their self-awareness of the transient nature of their post, serve as forces that spatially segregate and socially isolate them from local people. As the number of Japanese working in foreign cities grows due to increasing globalization, more self-organized Japanese-oriented communities/spaces are built, which are mostly funded by Japanese capital.

The second factor is called “negative isolation,” which refers to separation caused by the obstacles to social integration that are difficult to overcome. As one interviewee pointed out, the anti-Japanese sentiment held by the Chinese citizens may influence the configuration of activity space carved out by Japanese expatriates. Various restrictions serve as major obstacles to integration with the host society. The language barrier is a more serious problem in non-English speaking societies than in English speaking societies. It impedes the Japanese expatriate from establishing a local network and accessing firsthand information from the local people. The result is that Japanese expatriates tend to configure their daily activities based on limited and biased information obtained from a static network comprised only of other Japanese people.

Both the processes of “active isolation” and “passive isolation” are at work in Guangzhou. Up until this point, Japanese expatriates have tended to separate themselves from local people spatially and socially. However, Japanese expatriates have not had a long presence in Guangzhou. In London, a group of Japanese have emerged who are independent of traditional expatriate communities and actively interact with local people, but this occurred several decades after the intensification of Japanese direct investment.

The lives of the Japanese in Guangzhou may change in time and some early signs of this change were discerned in our study. In addition, we could not obtain enough information on the lives of other types of the Japanese expatriate than company transferees and their spouses. The difference of daily lives and process of socialization between groups of Japanese expatriates in Chinese cities remains an important research target in the future.

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References


— 15 —

(C) written in Chinese

(CE) written in Chinese with English abstract

(E) written in Japanese with English abstract