

# WANG GUNGWU

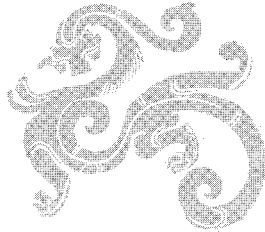
DON'T LEAVE HOME:  
MIGRATION  
AND  
THE CHINESE

- ◆ Describes the massive migrations of the 19th and early 20th centuries
- ◆ Draws from migrant experiences in SEA, other parts of Asia, Australasia and North America
- ◆ Part of a 4-book collection by the pre-eminent authority on China and Chinese diaspora

TIMES ACADEMIC PRESS

*Don't Leave Home:*

# MIGRATION AND THE CHINESE



Wang Gungwu



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# Preface

The exhortation not to leave home was probably common to all agricultural societies. It was never followed to the letter, but the doctrine was certainly favored by heads of peasant families where their men were concerned. For marriageable girls in the countryside, they were unlikely to go far when they married out to another village. Under conditions of war or a major natural disaster, men did have to leave their villages to earn the money needed to keep their family members alive. At such times, governments in China would encourage the peasants to move to a safer or more productive place, or at least persuade some members to leave in order to provide a better life for those who stayed behind. As some of these papers will show, for a country without a tradition of voluntary migration, least of all emigration, a large number of Chinese did move out. The current total of over 25 million Chinese overseas is made up of those who decided to settle abroad together with their families and descendants. That figure does not include the millions who merely sojourned and then returned to China. Most of these were laborers who joined their trading counterparts from the middle of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.

Although there were a few common themes in Chinese migration history, their experiences varied considerably. The major differences stemmed from the changing policies of the host countries, the areas of South China from which most of the emigrants came, the political and economic conditions of China at the time of their departure and when the sojourners had hoped to return, and also the strategies worked out by different migrant communities and their leaders. The essays in the volume draw mainly from the experiences of those who went to Southeast Asia, but deal also with variations which were found among those Chinese who settled down in North America, Australasia and other parts of Asia.

During the past three decades, there has been a considerable increase in emigrant numbers, not only from China itself (whether from Hong Kong, Taiwan or the mainland) but also from the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. While the numbers

are not as large as in the past, the high educational level of the hundreds of thousands who emigrated is unprecedented. The papers collected in this volume include preliminary studies of the present phenomena. They were written largely in the 1990s and have all been published.

*Wang Gungwu*  
*10th June 2000*