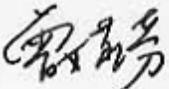


Immigration Industry: Immigration Consulting Firms in the Process of Taiwanese Business Immigration*

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Today various countries actively promote business migration programs to bring in more resourceful immigrants, thereby increasing immigration channels for people with physical capital. How to match the right migrants with the right destinations has become a business niche for private agencies. In this article, the impact of the immigration industry on the immigration process has been analyzed, based on a case study of Taiwanese business immigration. Immigration consultants have facilitated recent Taiwanese business migration by increasing awareness of business migration programs, providing needed assistance and organizing the actual migration process. The involvement of immigration consultants in facilitating the migration of the wealthy class represents one of the outstanding characteristics of the so-called "new Asian migration." Data are mainly from various documentary sources and in-depth interviews with immigration consulting firms.

Recently, the international movement of Asian capital owners and their capital has received great attention in regard to international migration and the global economy. Discussions on the international mobility of capital often focus only on the movement of sums of money. However, as Miles and Satzewich (1990:119) point out, "the export of capital involves not only the movement of money but also the 'agents' of capital, understood to refer to

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both those who own and control capital directly and those who manage in various ways the use of capital." The increasing mobility of capital owners has been partly encouraged by business migration programs in several countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States. New immigration policies have been established to recruit immigrants who have business skills and capital. Business migration programs exemplify such a policy invention, as they make immigrant status available to people who have financial resources and who are willing to invest in host countries. The Asian economic elite has been the major customer for such programs. For example, two Asian countries, Hong Kong and Taiwan combined, represent 63 percent of all business immigrants entering Canada in 1993. "Capital linked migration" from Asia is part of the so-called "new" Asian immigration, a term used to refer to the phenomenon of an increasing proportion of the Asian population with professional skills and physical capital migrating to other countries (Ong *et al.*, 1994).

Taiwanese business owners have been migrating in large numbers in recent years. Taiwan is now one of the top source countries supplying business migrants for many host countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Tseng, 1995; Smart, 1994; Inglis, 1997; Trlin and Spoonley, 1992). The bourgeois emigration from Taiwan is partly pushed by the political uncertainty created by Chinese claims of sovereignty and partly pulled by the global economy. On the one hand, business elites are especially nervous about the implications of submitting to socialist China, and immigration is like buying an "insurance policy" against the uncertain political future. On the other hand, their pursuit of globalizing family-owned businesses has also prompted them to acquire immigrant status in certain countries (Tseng, 1995). Owning a second citizenship thus becomes a desirable strategy, and also provides Taiwanese business people with a second "passport" for easy entrance to foreign countries.¹ However, those who need an immigrant visa may not qualify for immigration under conventional schemes such as family reunification or occupational categories. What they have is capital to exchange for a second nationality. This tendency is well reflected in the title of a series of articles on methods of immigration to some thirty countries: "Choosing Passports With Your Money" (*China Daily*, 14 July 1995:23). According to the Taipei Immigration

¹Taiwan has a formal diplomatic relationship with only a handful of countries. As a result, Taiwanese travelers have to put up with many inconvenient visa-issuing procedures. For example, they have to wait a longer period of time to get visitor visas issued by foreign embassies in Hong Kong. Moreover, they are only allowed to stay for relatively shorter periods of time. Some immigration advertisements include the incentives a foreign passport can offer. One example is the promotion of immigration to Belize, stating one of the advantages of its passport: "Landing visas in 65 countries." As a result, many purchase a second passport partly to make their business trips more convenient.

Consultants Association, there are 29 countries offering business migration programs in Taiwan.

Business immigration from Taiwan has been greatly assisted by immigration consultants. For example, officials at the Australian Visa Services in Taipei estimate that in 1996, more than half of all the applicants for business migration programs had been assisted by immigration consultants. The demand for a second citizenship creates a profitable market for those who can help potential migrants identify new immigration channels. Consequently, there are 194 immigration consulting firms in Taiwan in 1996, a threefold increase within a decade. There has also been a steady increase in the number of immigration advertisements in local publications and English business journals such as *Asian Business*, *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *The Economist*. Four major newspapers currently have full-page immigration advertisements in their weekly special sections. These advertisements clearly indicate a trend of Taiwanese relying on commercial agencies for immigration assistance and information. Smart (1995:187) observes a similar development of immigration consultancy firms in Hong Kong, and points out that "these advertisements are marketing tools, symbolic of the qualitative difference between contemporary migration patterns and those in earlier periods." The functions of immigration consultations are varied:

A good consultant won't just fill in forms, but will liaise with the relevant state and local authorities, help with housing and schooling, sort out tax headaches, and provide a back-up service after arrival. (*Asian Business*, September, 1989:31)

The involvement of brokers in the international migration process is no recent phenomenon, as the latter has been a profit-making business for a wide range of middlemen. However, literature discussing the "immigration industry" mainly deals with the involvement of intermediaries reaping profits by playing a crucial role in stimulating labor migration, both legal and illegal (Spaan, 1996; Hugo, 1991; Lycklama, 1989). The involvement of brokers in facilitating the migration of the upper and upper middle class is rarely discussed. Yet, many studies on the new Asian immigration, namely the recent international movement of Asians with skills and capital, confirm that immigration consultants play a decisive role in the process (Smart, 1994; Ho and Farmer, 1994; Chan, 1994). However, the growth of the "immigration industry" is an oft-neglected factor in the expansion of new Asian immigration, and there is a lack of research focusing on why immigration consultants have become indispensable and how their operations have increased the accessibility of immigration channels.

The Involvement of Middlemen

On the surface, there are three major sets of players in the immigration process: those contemplating immigration, the host governments and the home governments. However, there is actually a fourth player in the process: middlemen such as networks comprising kin, neighbors and friends who influence the potential immigrants in their decision to emigrate and where to settle. International migration has been noted as a network-dependent process.² Most movement across national borders, legal or illegal, relies on the existing individual networks or communities in the potential host countries (Light and Bhachu, 1993; Portes, 1995). Social ties transmit information about places of destination and sources of settlement assistance. Massey (1988:396) defines migration networks as "sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin." Once migration networks are begun, migration flows often become self-sustaining, linking migrants and non-migrants in the origin and receiving countries.

Three aspects of the consequences of migration networks have been discussed. First, people provided with such networks are more likely to migrate than those who do not have existing networks (Hugo, 1981; Morawska, 1990). Second, the selection of which destination to emigrate to is influenced by such networks (Greico, 1987). Finally, migration networks reduce the economic risks of immigration and play an important role in the adjustment process (DaVanzo, 1981; Massey, 1988). In sum, migration networks are critical in the process of immigration, settlement and incorporation (Light and Bhachu, 1993).

However, the middlemen are not always supplied by personal networks. The state apparatus in several countries such as South Korea, the Philippines and China have played the role of mediators by providing the necessary assistance in "exporting" their workers. In addition to public authorities which are "non-profit" in nature, immigrants have increasingly relied on commercial organizations to help them reach their destinations. International labor migration has been a profitable business for many private agencies specializing in this trade. For example, in her discussion of the commodification of labor migration, Sassen (1988:50) finds that labor

² Boyd (1989:641-642) argues that studying networks permits understanding migration as a social product. In this view, migrants are neither independent individuals making their decision nor passive agents determined by political or economic parameters. Macro-political and economic structures are channelled through social relationships which influence individuals and groups.

transfers to Saudi Arabia from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan are mainly mediated by private agencies. The distinctive aspect of these agencies is that they are specifically created to influence the migration process. Private agencies are important mainly in the case of temporary labor migration. However, their involvement is not limited to assisting the international movement of laborers; their role in the immigration of professionals and business owners is a recent development. In her study on Hong Kong business immigration to Canada, Smart (1994:103) finds that immigration consultants are critical in helping potential immigrants to finalize their decision on a migration destination. Similarly, in their study on recent Hong Kong immigration to New Zealand, Ho and Farmer (1994:222) argue that the active promotion of a few immigration consultants created New Zealand as an important destination for Hong Kong professional as well as business migrants. How do we account for the increasing significance of immigration consultants in the process of upper and upper-middle class migration? What are the distinguishing characteristics of immigration consultants that are popular in Taiwan?

The purpose of this article is to discuss business migration from Taiwan and the role of immigration consultants in stimulating this movement. It discusses how they influence and facilitate business migration from Taiwan, and points out some implications of their involvement for migrants. I have two specific arguments. First, I argue that business migration programs have reinforced the potential immigrant's dependency on private agencies in the immigration process. The growth of the immigration consulting business is a logical consequence of the inception of business migration programs.

Second, as Hardie's (1994) Hong Kong study suggests, through migration advisers (a term he uses to refer to what I call immigration consultants), potential migrants develop new understandings of what it means to migrate. Similarly, I argue that by creating a new immigration ideology, immigration consultants provide potential migrants with new ways to understand their migration decision, particularly in legitimizing their decision to immigrate.

Data

The empirical evidence for the following discussion is based on a study of Taiwanese business migration conducted between 1995 and 1996. The data have been collected from in-depth interviews with immigration consultant firms and a content analysis of reports and advertisements in newspapers/magazines. From our interviews, we identified several common features owned by these firms. First, the business owners are most likely "return"

immigrants from the host countries they specialize in. Second, many immigration consultants were previously international business consultants who assisted business people in identifying investment opportunities such as real estate across borders. Some of them were international trading firms which could easily establish overseas connections with attorneys, investment firms and accountants in assisting customers to successfully emigrate.

In the first stage of research, we collected and analyzed journalistic accounts and newspaper advertisements related to business migration programs. Newspaper and journal files were mainly from three major newspapers (*United News, China Daily, Free Daily*) which offered weekly commercial special sections for immigration information. We also analyzed 30 issues of *Emigration Express Magazine* (Yi-Ming-Kuay-Dee) covering the period 1993-1996. It is Taiwan's only monthly magazine devoted exclusively to immigration problems. At the same time, we participated in various immigration consultants' public sessions to familiarize ourselves with important issues. During these public sessions, we had brief conversations with potential immigrants and managers from various consultant firms. In the second stage, with assistance from the Taipei Immigration Consultants Association, we selected 40 firms related to business migration programs to conduct interviews. We categorized 99 immigration consultant firms in Taipei into two types based on the countries they promote business immigration to: the "classic" type (the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) versus newly emerging host countries (Belize, Costa Rica, Namibia, Jamaica, Panama, etc.). Within each category, twenty firms identified as active during the period of our research were selected. We had a higher success rate in getting interviews from firms belonging to the "classic" category (75 percent response rate), but a much lower rate in the newly emerging type (only 25 percent response rate).³ In the end, twenty-two firms were interviewed.

Purchasing Citizenship

To analyze the involvement of immigration consultants, we must first step back and understand the commodification of business immigration channels. In the 1980s, a global immigration market where nation-states com-

³The reason for the low response rate in the second category is related to the nature of the business migration programs they are promoting. First, many business migration programs offered by these countries are monopolized by certain firms. Therefore, they consider the subject a business secret and therefore refused to be interviewed. Second, some of these programs are short-term. Certain business consultant firms simply disappeared after the end of these programs. Third, some business programs lack clear guidelines which gives consultant firms great room to manipulate the promotion. Some refused to be interviewed possibly to avoid troubles arising from the interview.

peted with each other to attract potential business immigrants emerged. Through their immigration policies and offers of economic opportunities, host countries competed for the human and physical capital of potential migrants (Borjas, 1990). Under this scheme, residency in certain countries was gradually treated as a privilege available to the skilled, educated and well-off. "High quality" immigrants are defined more and more by physical capital, a process which we can conceptualize as the commodification of immigration channels.

By commodification, I mean that immigration visas are ever more available to people who have financial resources and are willing to invest in host countries. Foreign residency is becoming a marketable item with price tags depending on the host country's position in the world system; residency in core countries costs more than that in other countries. Various kinds of business migration programs are typical of such commodities. The scheme to attract capital investments in exchange for immigrant status has created a shortcut for host countries to plug into a "global capital supply system." The degree of commodification differs according to the host country's policy to recruit business migrants based on permanent or short-term considerations. Business migration programs aiming at integrating immigrants socially as well as economically are less commodified than those designed to minimize the active involvement of immigrants. In some cases, the host country designs a complex program to engage the active involvement of potential immigrants in business investment, with the intention to recruit business skills as well as physical capital. In this sense, residency is not merely a commodity because it still has the attachment of the community. In other cases, even when potential immigrants never show up in the host country, as long as they deposit the required lump sum of money, they can virtually buy their second passport.

To understand the commodification of business immigration, we also have to know the characteristics of Taiwanese business migrants. They have been found to be highly mobile, tending to send their family to settle in the host country, while still maintaining their business operations in the home country, and constantly moving between the two (Waldinger and Tseng, 1992; Richmond, 1995; Chan, 1992). With Taiwan's economic growth rate at around 6 percent, its economy is perceived to be more prosperous than the "new world." Therefore, there is a consensus among business immigrants that it makes more economic sense to retain their businesses in the homeland. According to several studies, Taiwanese immigrants are especially interested in programs requiring less involvement in the host country. For example, a great majority of Taiwanese business immigration to Canada is through the investor program which requires no management commitment from the applicants (Wong, 1993). To match this peculiar demand, various countries have created deposit-type investment immigration programs (such as buying government bonds or depositing cash in local banks *etc.*)

which require minimal or no management time from investor-immigrants. Taiwanese business migrants consider their immigration as a one-time deal with host countries, and they tend to minimize their obligations toward the host countries.

Immigration: A Profitable Niche

The commodification of immigration policies together with immigrant visa-buying behavior offers the background for the growth of the immigration industry in business migration. From our data analysis, we find that immigration consultants specialize in promoting business migration programs. In this context, the increasing reliance on commercial agencies as mediators for business immigrants can be accounted for by the following reasons.

First, business migration programs offered by various countries make the potential immigrant's decision on a migration destination a very complex matter. The decision depends on the immigration selectivity of the host country and the applicant's ability to mobilize his or her human and physical capital. A potential immigrant who is unqualified for one program may be qualified for another. Therefore, immigration consultants are needed first to sort out the match between immigration programs and potential immigrants. Their critical role in the very first stage of immigration confers on them the privilege to access first-hand information, with updates on new investment opportunities and changes in regulations supplied by both private agencies and governments from host countries. Access to new information, in turn, enhances private agencies' professional authority.

Second, investment projects related to business migration often involve professional knowledge on legal, financial and investment details which are usually unavailable to applicants from their social networks. Immigration consulting firms equipped with these related specialists — immigration lawyers, investment specialists and accountants — are in a good position to give expert advice. One consultant observes:

Most of my clients rely on us to advise them on which venture capital funds to invest. A lot of them do not have enough English proficiency to understand the contents of the contracts and memoranda. We have our representatives in Canada to collect information regarding the operation and fiscal prospects of individual investment funds (Interview 17-5).

Another consultant points out another aspect of investment behavior that requires planning:

Those who can migrate through investment are usually people with assets and high income. They have to think about the taxation implications of emigration. Taxation systems in most host countries are complex and virtually every form of income is subject to tax, including worldwide income. Therefore, these business migrants have to plan along with specialists to evaluate their investments in the very early stage of their immigration (Interview 15-3).

Third, business immigrants have less personal and/or communal networks to overcome settlement and incorporation problems. Unlike immigrants via family reunification channels who have existing networks to facilitate the newcomers' adjustment in the host society, business immigrants are likely to be pioneers. Their need for professional services after arrival is therefore greater than others. Since business migration programs offer immigration options to people without overseas connections, many are first-generation immigrants. For example, in New Zealand, the third most favored destination for Taiwanese business immigration, only three percent of Taiwanese immigrants reported that they have relatives in New Zealand (Trlin and Kang, 1992).

Furthermore, most countries offering business migration programs lack established Taiwanese communities. For example, there are Taiwanese communities in countries such as the United States and Canada. But Taiwanese presence is still limited in Australia and New Zealand, and there are even fewer Taiwanese in countries such as Costa Rica, Gambia, Jamaica and Singapore. Without an established ethnic community, newcomers will need professional assistance in almost every aspect of life and work. Immigration consultants often have their contact agencies in destination countries that assist business migrants on arrival and facilitate their adaptation. Consequently, dependency on personal networks is greatly reduced. It is important to note, however, that immigration consultants and personal networks might work side by side and are significant factors in different aspects of the migration process. In labor migration, for example, migration agents may be part of potential immigrants' social networks. In a study of the involvement of brokers in the process of Javanese illegal migration, Spaan (1996:93) finds that these migration agents are social network members, usually political or religious leaders in the village known to potential migrants. The types of agents facilitating business migration are different: they are professionals and they usually do not come from potential immigrants' pre-existing social networks.

From the above discussion, we can see how business migration programs have encouraged potential immigrants to rely on formal organizations instead of personal networks in the process of immigration. Therefore, the growth of the business migration market has directly stimulated the increasing significance of private agencies in the immigration market, and the booming consultant businesses have further helped promote business migration programs.

Hardie (1994:54-55) makes a differentiation between two types of immigration advisers, the servers and the sellers, which I find very useful in discussing the distinctive nature of immigration consultants in Taiwan. Hardie uses the term, "servers," to refer to those advisers who offer general assistance to potential migrants (*i.e.*, immigration attorneys), while "sellers" refer to those who are selling a particular migration strategy in finding ways to migrate. I argue that consultants who specialize in business migration programs are typical of the "seller" type of consulting agencies. The immigration consultants involved in business migration often sell particular immigration packages to potential immigrants. A typical example are those consulting agencies involved in selling immigration-related investment funds from Canada. These consultants charge both potential migrants for services and investment syndicates for selling their funds. In other words, they charge both ends of the emigration chain. As a result, business migration programs are marketed for people who might otherwise qualify for other immigration channels. One consultant states:

As immigration consultants, we prefer to promote the business migration channel more than others because it can bring us higher profit. On the one hand, we charge more for customers migrating through business programs. We also obtain commission from venture capitalists for selling their projects. On the other hand, people unqualified for other immigration channels are now turning to business migrations programs. The customer base has been enlarged. As a result, immigration consultant firms tend to encourage their customers to apply for business migration, even though they are actually qualified for other channels such as skill-based categories (Interview16-1).

Creating a New Immigration Ideology

On the surface, the role of immigration consultants in the business migration process is to match demand and supply, as a consultant points out:

Among potential immigrants, the host government, and immigrant consultants, there is a triangular relationship. Our clients want to

emigrate, the host country needs investment capital, and we want to make money by matching them (Interview 7-4).

However, in this section, I argue that the role of immigration consultants is not only as middlemen who match demand and supply: they create the demand and supply. The role of agents of immigration commodities can be compared with real estate agents who manipulate the demand and supply of the housing market by devaluing certain communities to discourage demand or gentrifying certain communities to create demand. Immigration consultants often create demand by emphasizing negative local factors to encourage people to exit.⁴ However, more interestingly, they also create demand by removing immigration stereotypes and by offering legitimacy for migration behaviors. The international migration of the economic elite is usually perceived as unpatriotic by the general population in Taiwan and carries certain social stigma. Many immigration advertisements attempt to transmit "politically correct" immigration ideology, as the following advertisements suggest:

"To emigrate doesn't mean leaving your homeland forever. Immigration in modern times is extending your life space, it is not to retreat. It is obtaining insurance. It doesn't mean that you are afraid; it is an active decision and not a passive response." (Advertisement by Righteous Immigration Services, Taipei Immigration Consultants Association, Third Anniversary Special Report, 1995)

"In today's global village where national boundaries have lost their significance, you shouldn't confine yourself to a single locality. To emigrate is to become a truly international citizen." (Advertisement by Transport Immigration Inc., Taipei Immigration Consultants Association, Third Anniversary Special Report, 1995)

"Immigration does not entail giving up what you have now, rather it is opening up your future. As a business owner, you may want to keep your home base in Taiwan, without denying the possibility of immigration." (Trans-Asia Business and Immigration Consulting Inc., 1996 brochure)

⁴ For example, when China launched several military exercises to threaten the first presidential election in Taiwan in March 1996, immigration advertisements cited all kinds of unconfirmed sources to make the situation look more dangerous.

The above examples basically transmit an ideology of internationalism with an emphasis on local roots at the same time. Internationalization is also emphasized by these two immigration consultants:

When economic activities become increasingly internationalized, business people have more opportunities to travel around the world. They have more choices on where to invest their money, to sell their products, and to settle their family. Many of them choose to immigrate simply because they want their children to acquire a cross-cultural and bilingual background which will serve them well in the future global village (Interview 10-3).

Technology has changed our perceptions of time and space. Our movement across borders has become ever easier. Today's immigration is much more extensive. I don't see a great distinction between immigrants and travelers. Immigrants are travelers with two passports (Interview 1-5).

All in all, consultants have promoted immigration by giving their customers a new perspective on international migration, with an emphasis on greater mobility. From interviews and advertisements, the message stresses the contrast between old immigrants and new immigrants. The latter are those who tend not to settle permanently in one locality; they have more locational choices. It is hard to assess how much this propaganda has worked in encouraging migration. However, it is important to note that immigration consultants are sought out not only after one has made a decision to migrate, but also before deciding to migrate. To enlarge their customer base, consultants continue to hold public sessions, lectures and even tours to convince people that they should migrate, and that migration is a pro-active choice. In many situations, immigration consultants have to change people's ideas about migration:

Generally speaking, the attitude of people outside Taipei toward the migration option is less open. For example, we found that in Kaohsiung, older generations have many incorrect ideas about immigration. Therefore, people there are very concerned about what their parents and relatives would think about their migration behavior. They would probably be condemned of deserting their family and homeland. Therefore, we have to provide them with new ways of viewing migration. We usually need to communicate not only with the potential migrants but also with their entire

family. We have to provide them with a longer-term vision (Interview16-5).

Creating Immigration Commodities

Besides creating the demand in the market, consultants can increase the supply (*i.e.*, immigration commodities) by encouraging more countries to offer business migration programs. As a matter of fact, they are the invisible hands behind various countries' business migration programs. According to the president of the Taipei Immigration Consultants Association:

A great number of consultant firms were established simply because they have helped certain countries create a business immigration provision in order to sell it to the Taiwanese. There are so many people demanding immigrant status and there are not enough host countries to satisfy this demand. If these consultant firms are to make money, they have to create more options. Every year there are all kinds of new countries joining the game. Some remain in the market, while others may drop out after they have collected a certain amount of capital investment (Interview 12-4).

However, only one of the consultant firms we interviewed was willing to talk about its involvement in the process of creating an investment immigration program in one of the African countries:

After Namibia became independent in 1990, it was in great need of foreign investment capital. We saw the opportunity. Utilizing our existing contacts with their government officials, we successfully convinced them to offer business migration programs to attract Asian capital. We ended up helping them to design their business migration regulations based on our knowledge of the immigration market. As a result, we have exclusive access to this country's investment immigration plans. We have maintained a close and stable relationship with the government. As a matter of fact, we are the Taipei representative of the Namibia Far Eastern Fund Investment Ltd. Therefore, our clients are better serviced. For us, since this is our monopoly product, we can control the price (Interview7-5).

From various journalistic accounts, at least two other countries' business migration programs have been heavily influenced by Taiwanese

immigrant consulting firms. One case involved the Commonwealth of Dominica, which started an investment migration program aimed at attracting foreign investment in tourism by offering citizenship to investors. According to a journalistic investigation, a Taiwanese immigration consultant had a big hand in designing the program (*Business Weekly*, 24 June 1996:86-88). The program ended with a change in political leadership. The newly elected prime minister opposed the investment migration program. In his campaigns, he had fliers, "Dominica For Sale," which attacked the idea of luring investments in exchange for citizenship (*Economic Daily*, 24 January 1995:14). Another example is Palau Island, a newly established nation, whose government previously signed a contract with a Taiwanese immigration consultant firm to develop a real estate project in which investors would purchase property in exchange for residency. This program was also halted with a change in political leadership (*China Daily*, 18 September 1995:24; *United News*, 11 September 1995:25).

Several common features are suggested by these cases. First, these programs have been specifically designed by private agencies and were directed at the Asian immigration market. Second, the involved consultant firm has the exclusive right to sell this immigration product. Third, the development of such programs is contingent upon political leadership which can bring political liability to concerned authorities.

How have agencies affected the immigration market? Are they simply matchmakers between demand and supply? In this section, I argue that immigration consultants manipulate demand and supply to their benefit. On the demand side, they often encourage new segments of the population to emigrate, especially those who lack existing overseas connections, by offering assistance in finding a suitable destination and investment to back up settling services. Moreover, by promoting new concepts of immigration, immigration consultants attempt to remove ideological barriers against immigration in order to expand the demand for immigration. On the supply side, immigration consultants are directly involved in the process of creating business migration programs of newly emerging immigration host countries.

The Alliance between the State and Immigration Consultants

In this final section, I would like to focus on the close ties of immigration consultants with the Taiwan state government. In an interview with an official from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the state bureau in charge of immigration and emigration, it was stressed that immigration consultants had a significant role in assisting Taiwan maintain formal as well as informal relationships with countries in the Caribbean, a region where Taiwan has

been actively establishing or retaining official relationships.⁵ Taiwan has usually provided foreign aid as one strategy to gain support.⁶ In recent years, Taiwan has preferred to invest in constructing industrial districts (export processing zones), with the intention of helping the region to attract capital investment from Taiwan and increase local employment opportunities. This opportunity is most attractive to small and medium-sized Taiwanese manufacturers wanting to relocate production to lower their labor costs and to avoid Taiwan's more demanding environmental standards. One incentive host countries offer for such business investments is to confer immigrant status to investors. This combination of industrial relocation and immigration of business owners has inevitably involved immigration consultants, who are critical players in recruiting business immigrants under these schemes:

The reason why countries in the Caribbean region have become a favorite destination for Taiwanese business immigration has a lot to do with our government's foreign aid to this region. For example, this year (1997) our government has helped construct five industrial zones in Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The officials of the Ministry of Economic Affairs have contacted us to help identify appropriate business owners to set up manufacturing there. Recently, we have just organized a group of 20 business owners to visit the sites (Interview 3-3).

Thus, state and immigration consultants facilitate the migration of small business owners and the relocation of their industries. I found that an immigration consulting firm is listed among the board of directors of Overseas Investment and Development Corporation (OIDC), a semi-official agency through which Taiwan provides financial support for overseas investments. This is perhaps one of the strongest signals of the alliance between the state and immigration consultants in the process of supporting Taiwanese business investments overseas. We interviewed this firm and they told us:

⁵Taiwan is officially recognized only by a handful of countries. In recent years, Taiwan has been very aggressive about joining the United Nations. To win more support from the international community, Taiwan has been trying to establish official relationships with countries in the Third World.

⁶This strategy has been called "money diplomacy" by critics.

We have been consulting many business owners who wish to relocate their manufacturing base and also to immigrate. The opportunities in the Caribbean are great for them. They can relocate their factories to the export processing zones, which are actually built by our government, and also obtain an immigrant visa. For example, the OIDC is constructing an export processing zone in Panama. We are part of this corporation. We play the role of soliciting business people to go (Interview 11-5).

Immigration Without Pain?

In today's Taiwan, it is indeed hard to imagine what the process of immigration would be like if there were no immigration consultants. Without them, the following trends are likely to take place. First, there would be fewer Taiwanese business migrants. The services provided by immigration consultants have made immigration channels more accessible to people who do not have sufficient language and professional knowledge to prepare themselves to go through application procedures, or who do not have overseas connections from which to gain information regarding the choice of destination. Second, there would be fewer emigration destinations for Taiwanese. To monopolize the immigration market, immigration consultants have continued to work with a wide range of host countries to provide business migration programs. Consequently, several countries have joined the growing list of receiving countries for Taiwanese business immigrants, thereby expanding the destinations for Taiwanese emigrants. Third, even countries which have already established their programs can become popular destinations for Taiwanese emigrants through the promotion efforts of immigration consultants. Business migration programs have to be promoted in the market, something host governments cannot do without inviting criticisms for "peddling" immigrant visas. They need middlemen in sending or host countries to perform this role.

These speculations should not be taken to suggest that consultants are always beneficial to potential migrants, the host countries or the sending countries. The heavy involvement of consulting firms in the migration process also has drawbacks. First, the migrants' dependent position allows considerable room for consultants to manipulate the immigration process. Not only are high service fees demanded by the consultants, but even worse, potential migrants are sometimes abandoned. Consultant misconduct has often been reported. Some have helped fake the documents needed to qualify the applicants. Some have taken clients' money and disappeared. There has been a large number of potential migrants who made an investment but were not interviewed for immigration (*China Daily News*, October 30, 1996:3). A self-help organization, the Emigrant Rights Protection and

Promotion Association, has even been formed to protect their rights as "consumers." Second, the involvement of immigration consultants tends to alienate potential immigrants from host countries. Consultants will often promote certain countries not because they think the potential migrants might socially and economically fit in the host environment, but because they consider the programs "affordable" by potential migrants. In some cases, they have promoted emigration to certain countries because their programs confer more economic benefits such as commission fees for selling investment funds. Finally, in many cases, there has been a gap between the goals of business migration programs and the intentions of potential immigrants (Swan *et al.*, 1991). Many business immigrants do not intend to make a long-term commitment to the economic development of host countries. The abuse of business migration schemes has often occurred (*Emigrant Express Magazine*, February, 1994:36). Sometimes, the involvement of immigration consultants can further deepen such gaps by making business immigration highly commodified. Through market promotion, potential migrants may feel that they are buying immigration commodities, that they have paid the price to get in, and therefore will try to minimize their obligation toward the host country.

Sassen (1988:50) argues that compared to the earlier phase of international migration, there is a growing tendency to treat immigration as a commodity, a point I agree with. In this article, we can see that immigration policy has become more and more based on "economic efficiency." Conventional channels such as family reunification are considered inefficient because the system cannot choose the "quality" of potential immigrants; policy makers in various countries have thus been very interested in initiating business migration programs to bring in resourceful immigrants. How to match the right migrants with the right destinations has become a business niche for private agencies. Consultants have facilitated recent Taiwanese business migration by increasing awareness of business migration programs, providing needed assistance and organizing the actual migration process. The involvement of immigration consultants in facilitating the migration of the wealthy class represents one of the outstanding characteristics of the so-called "new Asian migration." However, there is a need to further investigate how pervasive the involvement of immigration brokers is in other Asian countries such as Singapore and South Korea, two countries where a great number of the middle-class is taking the step to migrate. In other words, it would be interesting to know whether or not the phenomenon is Asian or specific to Taiwan or Hong Kong. In general, research on new Asian immigration tends to focus on their impacts on the host countries, with little attention on the migration process occurring in the context of sending societies. Hopefully, this research on immigration consultants has shown the significance of paying attention to both ends of the migration flow.

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