Chinese Immigrants in Europe
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Chinese Immigrants in Europe

Image, Identity and Social Participation

Edited by
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DE GRUYTER
Foreword by the editors

This volume is largely based on the papers delivered in two sessions of the conference “Chinese Immigrants in Europe: Image, Identity and Social Participation.” The first conference was initiated and organized by Liu Yue and took place from 15 to 16 September 2017 at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou (China). The second one was organized by Wang Simeng and held on 16 August 2018 at The Paris Institute of Political Studies (France). The coastal province of Zhejiang, with the capital of Hangzhou, has been the largest sending region of Chinese emigrants for more than 40 years. The motivation behind organizing the two conference sessions was to make a topical contribution from the two important sending and receiving regions of Chinese international migrants to the research field of (new) Chinese immigrants in Europe and to provide multidisciplinary answers to all relevant open questions. We believe that, by dealing with the current situation of Chinese immigration in Europe and its trends, key insights can be gained in relation to both the target group, and the situation and developmental trends of other (ethnic) minority groups in other relevant European countries.

We would like to express our gratitude to all of the participants at the aforementioned conferences, who provided cutting-edge, inspiring stimuli during discussions, and to all of our authors, who have introduced and discussed this highly complex field of research with their respective professional insights into its various facets.

The research program “Cultural Identities of Young Generations of Chinese Immigrants in Europe” (14CMZ042, 2015–2019), which was funded by the National Social Science Fund of China and led by Liu Yue, laid the foundations for the scholarly framework that enabled the publication of the present volume. The interdisciplinary research program “Chinese of France: Identifications and Identities in Transition” (2018–2020), co-directed by Wang Simeng and funded by the City of Paris, France, has also supported the publication of this book both academically and financially.

We would also like to thank Dr. Anja-Simone Michalski and Dr. Lydia White for their editorial support, and Ms. Meiken Endruweit, Dr. Sandra van Lente and Ms. Sridevi Padmanabhan, who proofread the manuscripts. Without the support of all these participants, it would not have been possible to realize this volume.

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Liu Yue
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Introduction

We are living in a world in which the visible and invisible borders between nations are being shaken at an unprecedented pace. This is due to changing conditions such as economic globalization, international mobility, the transnational circulation of knowledge and practices, and *brain gain* against *brain drain*, supported by national policies. Another traditional reason for the decision to migrate is the unbalanced development of the economic and political situation between the region of origin and the recipient region. Consequently, people are operating in a world where there are far more choices and options available for every important life decision than ever before, and they are much more networked, connected and mutually dependent than even just a few decades ago.

We are also experiencing a wave of international migration, and *the integration* of migrants into their host societies is not always in focus. The *diversity* of migrants, in terms of their external identity and self-image, and their social participation, is increasingly visible. However, this is taking place against the backdrop of being a "normal case" (Bade 2004) for the development of European societies and is continuing to increase within the context of the international trend toward mobility. With regard to the diversity of international migrants, it is helpful to avoid overgeneralized explanations and interpretations regarding the decision to migrate. Instead, we need to develop *differentiated* approaches in order to properly shape a common future for a mobilized and interconnected world.

All over the world, wherever immigration and emigration take place, people are faced with similar or comparable challenges. In this case, the key question in the observation of migration could be formulated as follows: Why do people emigrate to a particular destination? Is the so-called host society willing to integrate immigrants into existing social, economic, political and educational structures? Does the host society have a cultural-psychological structure that is prepared for migrants, or are its efforts to attract immigrants due to social sustainability goals? Are there gaps between the goals of migration and the reality of immigration that need to be covered by the policies, or are they difficult to regulate?

In this volume, we consider *migrants* to be those people who have relocated the spatial focus of their life long term (for more than three months; the duration criterion is related to national contexts). If the change of their life’s focus has taken place or takes place across national borders, they are referred to as international migrants. At a time when it was not technically feasible to spatially change one’s life focus, migration (across national borders) constituted both a fundamental and usually irrevocable change to migrants’ living environments and lifestyles, a forced
affiliation with the target society and a changed relationship with the place of origin. It was a decision that had profound effects not only on the migrants themselves, but also on people who closely associated with them (especially youth and family members) for a longer (sometimes lifelong) period.

The following observations can be easily confirmed: there is, globally, an increasing pattern of cross-border travel, and the ideas of transnationalism and multiculturalism are advancing in the thinking and behavior of people who value them worldwide. On the basis of this observation, certain atypical questions arise in area migration research: What can be done to make people mobile? What prevents people from being mobile? Considering our own experiences regarding a change of geography and where we live, it is easy to see that, whether we planned to or not, intended to or not, we have had to change our homes so often that living in a single place for the duration of our lives is no longer the norm. The ideal living scenario that was relevant in the past—an individual pursued education, work, started a family and eventually died in the same place where he/she was born—has increasingly become an impossibility for many people. In today’s society, the drive is to be mobile, we are therefore entirely justified to consider ourselves migrants.

Therefore, the perspective of international migrants is an insider perspective that is different from an outsider perspective. The outsider perspective is, in our opinion, characterized by an external point of view observing and investigating migrants, in which the observer does not share comparable experiences with the respondent. In contrast, an insider perspective helps the observer to comprehend, deconstruct and reconstruct the life of the respondent when it is experienced firsthand in a similar way. A good example is that, in many migrant-oriented organizations and institutions, the people involved also tend to have been migrants with similar experiences. They are especially motivated due to their own personal experiences and are able to put themselves in the position in which the migrants find themselves. We are quite pleased that such an insider perspective is present throughout this volume. Almost all our Chinese authors have pursued an important part of their educational training outside China and have experienced or are currently experiencing more stable long-term changes to their life’s focus in European countries. During their stays abroad, they have been in contact with Chinese migrant communities and have witnessed the living situation and problems of people with the same background, to some extent. Themes relating to the image of immigrants constructed in the host society, the identity development of people with foreign roots and social participation of migrants in the host society are therefore not only research questions for them, but have also been a part of their lives. It is precisely this insider perspective, in which we investigate a part of ourselves, that allows the research on various themes to consider the life of
the target group not as a *mere* object of investigation but as a *lively* human phenomenon.

Although the earliest testimonies of Chinese migrants in Europe go back to the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in connection to the trade in goods along the Silk Road, mass migration from China to Europe did not begin until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and migrants’ main destinations were Great Britain and France. After the wave of immigration of Chinese to Europe reached its peak in the first half of the twentieth century, emigration from mainland China stagnated from 1949 to 1978 after the founding of the People’s Republic of China. It was only after the beginning of the Reform and Opening-up Policy in the late 1970s that the possibility of emigration from mainland China increased. From 1978 to 2008, more than 10 million Chinese emigrated (Zhuang 2011, 13), with Europe being the main destination for Chinese who emigrated after 1978. In scholarly discourse, the recent migration wave from mainland China to Europe has received significant attention in a number of publications since the 1990s (e.g. Benton and Pieke 1998; Platonova and Urso 2003; Liu 2005; Johanson et al. 2009; Shen 2010; Latham and Wu 2013 etc.). Although statistical results differ widely due to their methodologies, France and the UK have been undoubtedly the two largest recipient countries for Chinese immigrants since then (Knerr 2015, 10), while Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, etc. have been taking in significant numbers of Chinese migrants as well. This group is known in scholarly discourse as “new Chinese immigrants,” and their number in 2008 is likely to rise to between 2.6 and 3.2 million (Song 2011, 144). Among the new migrants from mainland China to Europe, a noteworthy proportion of emigrants originate from the coastal province of Zhejiang in eastern China.

In this volume, the focus is on two key countries in Europe, Germany and France. Both countries are considered immigration countries, where people with migration backgrounds form a significant proportion of the population. Moreover, the issue of international migration has attracted much attention in and outside these countries in recent years. Germany and France are home to two distinct types of groups of migrants of Chinese origin, both of which share similarities as well as clear differences. Both Germany and France attract a large number of young Chinese students, who in this era, during the search for talent and skilled labor, are often treated in German and French migration policies as potentially highly skilled migrants and have constituted an important proportion of the highly skilled immigrants in both countries for a long time. In

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1 According to statistics from EUROSTAT (quoted in Knerr 2015), in 2015 Chinese citizens in France, the UK and Germany amounted to 250,000, 225,000 and 100,000 respectively.
Germany, the trend has become so stable in recent decades that highly skilled immigrants from China constitute about half of the people of Chinese origin living in Germany, and their number continues to increase (cf. Liu 2018). In France, the first wave of Chinese migrants with no or a minimal level of education came before the First World War (cf. Ma 2012). However, recent Chinese migratory flows into France have diversified. Increasingly, young Chinese are coming to France to pursue higher education and, once they graduate, many of them decide to change their migratory status to become highly skilled newcomers (cf. Wang 2017a).

According to the German Federal Statistical Office, in 2017, around 19.3 million people (23.6 % of the total population) in Germany either had a migration background or had at least one parent who was not born in Germany. The number of people with a migration background increased by 4.4 % compared to 2016 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018). In 2017, 136,460 Chinese citizens lived in Germany, including some 40,000 for training purposes (BMI 2018, 248). Taking German citizens of Chinese origin (including descendants of the first migrant generation) into account, the total number of people with a Chinese migration background in Germany is estimated to be 150,000 (Liu 2018, 108). Even though overseas Chinese in Germany account for only 1 % of the German population with an immigration background and do not represent an important group among overseas Chinese in Europe, they are representative of the highly skilled professionals who have left China for Europe because of their educational background. For example, 9,652 people from a third country traveled in to Germany in 2017 and, as highly skilled persons, they were granted the EU Blue Card. Their numbers showed a continuous annual increase of about 20 % when compared with 2016 and 2015. Meanwhile, China was, after India, the second largest country of origin of EU Blue Card holders in Germany (BMI 2018, 8).

In France, the number of Chinese migrants in early 2010, excluding their descendants, was estimated to be between 400,000 and 480,000 people, the majority of whom live in the Paris region (Lucchini 2012). According to the 2013 national census, immigrants to France born in China were the fifth largest national group after Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians and Turks, excluding EU citizens (INED 2017). According to the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), in 2015, 7.3 million people born in France had at least one immigrant parent (11 % of the total population), of which 9 % had at least one parent born in Asia (4 % Turkey, 2 % Laos/Vietnam/Cambodia, 3 % other Asian countries). In terms of their age, 73 % of them were under 25 years old (Brutel 2017). The transition of these migrant descendants to adulthood (marked by the completion of their higher education, entry into the workforce
and participation in social life in French society) accounts for the generational shift that is taking place among Asian populations in France.

The research interest in Chinese migrants in Germany is closely linked to the history of Chinese immigrants and sailors at the Port of Hamburg in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century, although the first wave of mass migration from China did not take place until the outbreak of the First World War (cf. Guo and Liu 2016). The parallel development of workforce migrants and student migrants in Germany and the important role of many Chinese intellectuals who stayed in Germany in modern Chinese history have led to previous studies on migrations in the Sino-German context primarily focusing on the Chinese students and intellectuals who stayed in Germany between the late nineteenth century and 1945 (Harnisch 1999; Meng 2005; Ye 2005; Liu and Du 2018). Other studies from a German perspective have dealt with traditional, less skilled migrants such as sailors, street vendors and professionals in the service sector in approximately the same period (Gütinger 2004; Yu-Dembski 2007; Amenda 2011). It was not until recently that researchers became more interested in the social status and social integration of Chinese immigrants in Germany (He 2012; Liu 2018). Despite the importance of the community of overseas Chinese, the development of the identities of Chinese immigrants and their younger generations in cultural interstices are now only starting to be discussed (cf. Liu 2015).

The historical, parallel development of the two immigrant groups mentioned above characterizes the image and determines the social characteristics of Chinese immigrants in Germany compared with other European countries. The period between the end of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of the First World War as well as the periods following the First and Second World Wars, the so-called boom periods, have profoundly affected not only the image of Chinese immigrants in Germany, but also the image of the Chinese in general. The fact that a large proportion of Chinese immigrants were intellectuals has shaped the idea of the Chinese in Germany at the time in a relatively more positive manner than in other European countries (cf. Liu 2018). Among the Chinese who came to Germany after the end of the First World War, there were numerous renowned politicians, scholars, and educators such as Zhou Enlai (周恩来), Ma Junwu (马君武, also known as Künwoll Mahoe) and Chen Yinke (陈寅恪), all of whom played a significant role in modern Chinese history after they returned to their native country.

In this context, Almut Hille’s contribution to this volume presents evidence for the image of Chinese immigrants constructed through literary productions depicting Chinese migration to Germany and Switzerland since the twentieth century. These images were developed in close relation to Chinese intellectuals who studied and lived in Germany at the time. The lives of Chinese migrants in Europe were particularly marked by the student struggles and political
activists in China. The images of Chinese migrants that were conveyed were impressive and influential, because they were not only constructed from a foreign point of view, but also largely characterized by the self-perception of the student migrants.

The fact that Chinese immigrants in Germany came from highly skilled backgrounds played a particularly active role in their political participation, which is confirmed by Guo Yi’s paper, focusing on Chinese immigrants since the 1980s. It asserts that the political participation of Chinese immigrants living in Germany, most of whom are new immigrants, is much more active compared with many European countries, and that German-speaking Chinese are more involved in grassroots political processes. Guo notes that Germany, as an important destination for the new wave of Chinese emigration, is providing a positive example of how to increase Chinese migrants’ awareness of political participation. Here, highly skilled Chinese migrants who have earned university degrees in Germany play a major role.

However, the traditionally less-skilled migrants who came to the country alongside highly skilled migrants cannot be disregarded. They are still a crucial part of the group of Chinese migrants in Germany. The living situations of these two groups have developed in parallel, and little research has been conducted on them so far. In her article, Zhao Jing delves into the role that existing transnational connections play in the migration process of Chinese immigrants to Germany, taking into account the fact that the overseas Chinese are not considered a homogeneous group. With the statement, “the migrants root their roots,” she observes and stages the living environment of Chinese immigrants in different places throughout Germany through knowledge, actions and emotions. She primarily deals with the first generation of Chinese immigrants.

On the French side, the first mass immigration of Chinese migrants is related to the history of recruiting Chinese workers at the frontline or in industry during the First World War. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, migration flows from mainland China halted for a long time. South-East Asian immigrants with Chinese roots formed the main proportion of ‘boatmen’ who immigrated to France in the 1970s and 1980s. This phase of migration history in relation to China has already been the subject of numerous publications (cf. Guillon and Taboada-Léonetti 1986; Live 1991; Costa-Lascoux and Live 1995). As China introduced the Reform and Opening-up Policy at the end of the 1970s, which continued into the 1980s and even more intensively in the 1990s, a growing number of Chinese emigrated to France not only from the historically largest regions of origin such as Fujian, Guangdong and Zhejiang (cf. Ma Mung 1999; Béja and Wang 1999; Poisson 2004; Auguin 2009), but also from other major Chinese regions, including the northern parts of China severely affected by
the economic reform and rising levels of unemployment (cf. Cattelain et al. 2005; Lévy and Lieber 2009).

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the migration routes that the Chinese have taken to France have diversified even more, with the consequence that Chinese migrants in France have become more heterogeneous. China has recently become the second largest country of origin for foreign students in France after Morocco, and studying is considered the most important reason for migrating to France. The massive arrival of students, skilled workers and professionals in France is subject to increased research interest (cf. Wang 2015; Li 2019; Guiheux and Wang 2018). Other recent research has increasingly dealt with subject-specific perspectives in political science, sociology and geography, such as political participation and collective mobilization (Wang 2000; Chuang 2015; Wang 2017b), ethnic entrepreneurship and associations (Chen K. 2016; Li 2017), sexuality, marriage and intimacy (Chen T. 2016; Lévy 2016; Wang 2017c), intergenerational and family relationships in terms of social mobility and solidarity (Wang 2012; Wang 2014; Wang and Schwartz 2016).

Since 2010, academics have been increasingly addressing the issues facing the Chinese in France from Chinese perspectives. Against the background mentioned above, the two articles by Wang Simeng and Li Yong offer a contemporary basis for the discussion of the topic that they further explore. Wang Simeng provides insight into the diversity of living conditions and the transnational practices of highly skilled Chinese migrants in Paris, examining three aspects: career choices, marriage behavior and political participation. As actors moving between the local and the global, these highly skilled Chinese immigrants intimately perform transnationalism in the economic sector and also engage in it in terms of political engagement and participation. Some of them enter into standard professions and others undertake emerging but not undisputed activities as daigou (代购). Regarding political requirements and participation, these highly skilled migrants experience political resocialization processes, and those trained in the social sciences and humanities in particular position themselves as global citizens, linking different national political spaces. Finally, these highly skilled migrants display certain special behaviors when it comes to the choice of their spouse compared to other members of the Chinese population in France. More engaged in binational relationships, the behavior of women migrants differs to that of men due to the transnational matrimonial market as well as gendered family and marriage norms in Chinese society. The research illustrates the manner in which the group in the study shape not only the economic sector, marriage market and political space in their host society, but also in China, their country of origin, through the processes of globalization and transnationalization, employing various transnational practices.
Li Yong examines young, highly skilled people from China living in France and shares their reflections on international mobility and work experiences through the angle of their subjective perception of an “identity crisis” in the wake of their graduation. Regarding the causes of the “doubled” identity crisis, he points out that a proper positioning of identity in the interstices between Chinese and French societies is difficult to find in today’s context of rapid social change in China. His contribution echoes that of Wang Simeng in the sense that, as she shows, some young highly skilled Chinese decide to become daigou because they feel “economically downgraded” and like they are experiencing an identity crisis compared to their peer group who stayed in China.

From a geographical perspective, Li Zhipeng uses the example of Chinese immigrants from Wenzhou, one of the most representative regions of origin for Chinese migrants in the Zhejiang province since the 1980s, to investigate the Chinese diaspora’s economic and political links with France as the receiving country and China as the country of origin. Because the Wenzhou community is characterized by the specificity of its foreign Chinese entrepreneurial organization, according to Li, the economic activities of the Wenzhou diaspora are always linked to the economic development of the Wenzhou region and are closely connected to the economic development of transnational networks with different hubs within the diaspora from Wenzhou.

In spite of the fact that France is now one of the largest host societies for Chinese migrants in Europe, and although a number of descendants of Chinese immigrants have actively participated in the political realm in recent years, Chinese migration still receives scant attention in scholarly debate. Liu Ruoxi’s research focuses on the career decisions and development of the second generation of Chinese immigrants in France. It also analyzes the factors influencing the deviation of the group’s career paths from that of their parents from the perspective of structural integration.

In addition to discussions of important, topical themes related to Chinese migrants in the two major host European countries Germany and France, two articles on Chinese immigrants in the UK and Russia provide additional, valuable insights into the lives of Chinese immigrants elsewhere in Europe, developed through encounters between ancient and new dynamics. Tu Mengwei and Daniel Nehring deal with the moral grammar of new, young Chinese immigrants in the UK who have emigrated as single children for reasons of family piety. Compared with migrants from China in the last 150 years, who emigrated in order to survive and to improve their lives and those of the whole family, this represents a widening of emigration motives, in which children of wealthy families migrate in order to study abroad. Additionally, new aspects of intergenerational relationships emerge during the transnationalization of the family and of individual life journeys. This
article echoes the two contributions on highly skilled Chinese migrants in France, given the similarity of Chinese immigration histories in the UK and France.

Lü Yunfang draws attention to another, new extension of the emigration route from China to Europe. In her article, Lü details how a group of migrants from Jian’ou, a city in the north of the historical province of origin for Fujian’s emigrants, found and anchored new international business opportunities in a new migration destination, Moscow. On the one hand, there are similarities in behavior and thoughts regarding family and kinship relations with the former migrant population from Fujian through their activities organized in associations, community and entrepreneurial networks, but, on the other hand, there is evidence of a new kind of integration, which is particularly pronounced in the new generation of migrants.

Another way of analyzing identity development in the younger generation of Chinese immigrants is from outside the host country. This is the analytical angle adopted by Cao Xu. Drawing on participant observation and interviews, he examines the development of cultural identity among young foreign students engaged in international study and exchange programs at Zhejiang University, who are from the descendant generation of Chinese migrants in Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Denmark. Although this should not be understood as a representative study of the descendants of Chinese migrants in Europe, the relationship between cultural identity and the personal life plans of immigrant children who have come to study in China (to embrace their root culture) provide valuable insights.

Finally, the use of the term ‘Chinese immigrants in Europe’ for the group under consideration in this volume should by no means be understood as an attempt to standardize a diverse and multidimensional community. On the contrary, the discussions in this volume strive to promote relative and differentiated perspectives, which have been realized thanks to insights gained from different approaches. Emerging aspects and patterns from other host regions with new Chinese immigrants in the EU such as Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Eastern European and Scandinavian countries, where the models of existence and social integration of Chinese immigrants have become serious societal issues (see Thunø 2007; Johanson et al. 2009; Li 2013; Wang and Le Bail 2016) are areas for future research.

Bibliography


Chinese immigrants in Germany
Abstract: The present essay examines literary discourse regarding Chinese migration to Germany and Switzerland in the early and late twentieth century. The analysis begins by examining reports by Joseph Roth and Anna Seghers from the 1920s and 1930s as well as Anna Segher’s novel Die Gefährten of 1932, followed by reports and memoirs of Chinese migrants such as M. Tseng Ching, Feng Zhi and Han Sen from the 1930s. Following this, the analysis shifts its focus to the 1980s and 1990s, when a new wave of migration from China took place. This wave finds itself represented in the characters in the book published by Wei Zhang Zwischen den Stühlen: Geschichten von Chinesinnen und Chinesen in der Schweiz in 2006. The literary characters in the narrative volume Nachtschwimmen im Rhein (2008) and the novel Die chinesische Delegation (2007) by Luo Lingyuan also reflect the migrations of the time. Finally, this research examines questions of belonging, loss or gain of home and language, and political or professional commitment in the literary texts as well as descriptions of everyday life in big cities like Berlin to reveal narratives around Chinese migrants in the early and late twentieth century.

1 Frühe Beobachtungen: Joseph Roth und Anna Seghers

Eine erste Welle chinesischer auch temporärer Migration nach Deutschland gab es im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert. Student*innen und Künstler*innen, aber auch Kaufleute, Arbeiter*innen sowie politische Aktivist*innen kamen ins Land und zogen vorrangig nach Berlin und in die anderen größeren Städte wie Hamburg oder Leipzig. In Berlin war es der wohlhabende westliche Stadtbezirk Charlottenburg, in dem Student*innen und Künstler*innen bevorzugt lebten, in der Nähe der 1884 gegründeten Technischen Hochschule, der 1920 gegründeten Hochschule für Politik, der 1875 gegründeten Hochschule für die Bildenden Künste, die seit 1902 in einem Gebäude am Steinplatz untergebracht war, und der Chinesischen Gesandtschaft am Kurfürstendamm. Gleichzeitig entstand rund um den Schlesischen Bahnhof (der heutige Ostbahnhof) im Stadtbezirk Friedrichshain im ärmeren Berliner Osten ein Quartier der kleinen Kaufleute, Laden- und Restaurantbesitzer*innen, das auch als Gelbes Quartier bezeichnet

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Über die gemeinsame Textarbeit mit Schü Yin reflektiert Anna Seghers in einem als *Kleiner Bericht aus meiner Werkstatt* im September 1932 in der Zeitschrift des Bundes proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller Deutschlands *Die Linkskurve* veröffentlichten Dialog.1 Deutlich wird, dass Schü Yin, die die


Gleichzeitig sollten die Leser*innen sich möglichst genaue Vorstellungen von den Verhältnissen vor Ort machen und nachvollziehen können, dass „in Shanghai eine andere Aktion [geschieht] als in Berlin, und Janshupou [...] anders aus[sieht] als der Wedding“:


(Shü Yin und Seghers 1932)

Hinter dem Namen der Figur und (Mit-)Autorin Schü Yin verbirgt sich die politische Aktivistin Hu Lanqi (auch Hu Lan Hsi), eine enge Freundin von Anna Seghers in Berlin. Sie war im Laufe der 1920er Jahre in China zunächst in der

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2 Vgl. Wagner 1996.