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NO PLACE LIKE HOME?
THE EXPERIENCES OF SOUTH-EAST ASIAN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND AND THEIR RE-ENTRY INTO THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in Sociology at Massey University, Albany

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2002
This thesis on the experiences of Southeast Asian tertiary international students and their re-entry into their countries of origin falls broadly into three parts. The first part examines the political and philosophical background of export education in New Zealand; the second part examines the perceptions of and about international students in New Zealand; and the third part examines returnees’ experiences of re-entry. It charts the shift in education policy from the Colombo Plan through to neo-liberal government policies and current government policies. It identifies and analyses the perceptions of and about Asian migrants and students in New Zealand, historically and contemporarily. It identifies the re-entry transitions, particularly as experienced through disenfranchised grief and changing worldviews. It argues that these transitions challenge returnees’ notions of self-identity, self-narrative, and ontological security. In particular, it argues that returnees’ sense of ‘home’ is disrupted and challenged and that a sense of homelessness is a defining feature of the re-entry experience. It is argued that home can be defined beyond geographical boundaries, transnationally and through computer mediated communities. The difficulties of re-entry can be mediated someway through self-reflexive preparation and social support in returnees’ countries of origin. Together, these can lead to re-entry being an ultimately positive and enriching experience.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A thesis of this kind, covering three years and as many continents, has drawn on the hospitality, support, and advice of many people. To a large extent, without these people this thesis would not have been possible and while their ideas and support have informed this thesis, the responsibility for what is written herein is ultimately mine.

Thanks first must go to Leiton Chinn and David Broughton who suggested I undertake this thesis in the first instance and for their ongoing encouragement thereafter.

Graeme Murray, Iris Lee, Rubee Yee, Lian Hong Lim, and Andrew Lim provided useful contacts for my fieldwork, while my travel agent Lesley Masters was extremely patient with my constantly changing itinerary. A number of people throughout Asia and Europe were particularly hospitable. I particularly wish to thank in this regard: James Durbin, Andrew and Lilian Lim, Leo Ann Mean, Leo Deng Han, Tim Jeffries and Sarah Graydon, Lore Kelling and family, Ler Eng Keong, Ian Smith and Fiona Barnard Smith, Robin and Anne Stewart, and Dennis Wong.

I also valued discussions with many others in the UK and Asia about the issues surrounding international students and re-entry. To this end, I wish to thank Lalage Bown, Tim Clifford, Mary Denyer, Mike Hill, Stephen Castles, Elizabeth Elks, Allan Harkness, Russell King, Lian Kwen Fee, Lynn Jamieson, Steve Nicholls, Beatrice Merrick, Sandra Morris, David Pickard, and Steven Vertovec. In giving a seminar of this research at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford, I benefited greatly from comments arising from that presentation and subsequent discussions with faculty and students.

Others have also provided valuable support, comment, and encouragement, by way of suggestions, book lending, and acting as sounding boards. They include: Duncan Campbell, Lisa Chinn, Alister Hendery, Alan Jamieson, Michael McCool, David Pearson, Lorna Revis, Elaine Scott, Matthew Scott, Julia Sich, Lester Taylor, Colleen Ward, and Laura Wheeler.
Jonathan Boston, Peter Butcher, Jane Kelsey, Peter Lineham, Terry McGrath, and Malcolm McKinnon read various chapters and provided helpful comments and criticisms.

The staff of the libraries of Massey University, the Alexander Turnbull Library, and the School of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oxford were also helpful.

This thesis was funded in part by the Asia 2000 Foundation, the Massey University Doctoral Scholarship and the Massey University Graduate Research Fund (2001). At Massey University, both Viv McGuire and Lorraine Scott were patient and extremely helpful administrative staff, while Gillian White kindly provided me with an office at Massey’s Wellington Campus during 2001. This research has also been approved by the Massey University at Albany Human Ethics Committee (Protocol 01/005).

Thanks also are due to my research assistants, Karl Palmer and Adrienne Thompson, and especially Jamie Martin, whose constant friendship and good humour was often well-timed and always greatly appreciated.

Special thanks are due also to Terry McGrath, for his ongoing support and encouragement, and, along with his wife Jenny, their hospitality during my visits to Palmerston North.

My parents, Helen and Peter, and my sister Amanda provided valuable support and encouragement. Those with whom I have flatted have had to live with my distraction and absent-mindedness, but have also provided warm friendship and helped to create my own place like home. I particularly wish to acknowledge Andy Morrison, Pete Le Cren, and Virginia Stevenson.

Special thanks also go to my supervisors Paul Spoonley and Warwick Tie, who provided astute comment, good humour, patient suggestions, and sound advice. They ensured that the process of the PhD was not only bearable, but also thoroughly enjoyable.

Finally, thanks are well deserved to those returnees who told me their stories, many of which were deeply personal and honest. As with them, I hope that their stories, as read through the pages of this thesis, help others also seeking out their own place like home.
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