ABSTRACT

Recent literature on new Taiwanese-Chinese immigrants to Western countries has focussed on those who have arrived since the late 1980s — but may not be staying permanently in their host countries — and have adopted a transnational residence pattern which requires them to engage in two or more social fields. Using autobiographical interviews, the author reconstructs the lives of early Taiwanese-Chinese immigrants in three different cities in Canada, and in Guam, an Unincorporated Territory of the US located in the insular western Pacific region. The three major research themes in this study pertain to reasons for and processes of migration, lived experiences, and self-identity. For this study, 46 Taiwanese-Chinese immigrants (24 in Canada and 22 in Guam) were selected from the available samples in the two respective regions where the author conducted extensive fieldwork in 2008-2011. Arriving mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, the early Taiwanese-Chinese immigrants to Canada and Guam survived various hardships, worked or established businesses from which they earned a steady income. Diligence, ingenuity and perseverance, as well as skills in entrepreneurship and social capital brought from Taiwan, served them well in their achievements in their new home countries in Canada and Guam. As young, well-educated university graduates or professionals at the time of immigration, sometimes re-migrating from another country, they developed significant language competency, social skills, and local knowledge in Canada and Guam. Having a strong sense of belonging, and identifying with the countries they have moved to, most of the Taiwanese-Chinese of Canada and Guam who took part in this study have become “permanent settlers” and some have even retired and remained in their host regions enjoying the multi-cultural environment. The current inquiry provides a timely case study of the meaningful diversity that is present among Taiwanese-Chinese permanent settlers, who are different from the transnational or circular migrants commonly found in the last three decades.