

## “Nation-state” in transnational migration

Xiaojian Zhao

Partly to distance themselves from the field of Asian Studies and to overturn negative stereotypes that society at large has imposed on Asian Americans, Asian American studies scholars have generally emphasized their inquiries in the context of United States. Beginning in the 1990s, the internet, cell phones, and frequent air travel started making the world a smaller place and invited scholars to rethink the past from a global perspective. Integrating transnational and diasporic perspectives in their research, scholars in recent years focused on the transnational social space occupied by Chinese migrants. This type of research has greatly enriched our understanding of Chinese Americans and their communities. At the same time, however, there is also a concern that a transnational lens underestimates the importance of nation states. Comparing my own research on immigrants from Fujian and Zhejiang to the United States with studies on Chinese immigrants in other parts of the world, this paper examines the role of nation states in Chinese migration. It looks at nations from the perspective of migrants, illuminating the ways that migrants negotiate national boundaries. What does the world outside their homeland look like to those who want to venture out? Why did some Chinese select North America while others chose Europe, Australia, South America, and Africa? And what role does the receiving country's policy play in shaping migration flow? Analyzing the opportunities and limitations that different nations present to Chinese immigrants of varying socioeconomic backgrounds, the paper addresses a multitude of issues concerning global economy and global migration.

Xiaojian Zhao received a PhD in U.S. history from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1993. She is professor in the Department of Asian American Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, where she has taught since 1994. She is the author of a number of book projects, including *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family, and Community, 1940 to 1965* (winner of the History Book Award from the Association of Asian American Studies), and *The New Chinese America: Class, Economy, and Social Hierarchy*.