

論 文

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the flow of international migration of highly skilled Chinese personnel is importantly oriented toward Japan. According to the OECD statistics, there are 735,815 highly educated Chinese migrants who had received tertiary education, in the OECD countries by the year of 2001. Behind the United States and Canada, Japan is the third largest country that absorbs highly educated Chinese migrants (Dai, 2012). Chinese migrants are playing an increasingly important role in the Japanese economy. Chinese workers are not only filling dangerous, dirty, and demanding positions, they are also entering advanced fields, working as engineers, and helping Japanese companies tap the Chinese economy. China has become the increasing and largest sources of engineers in Japan. As shown in Table 1, by the year 2010, the number of Chinese registration of “engineer” reached 25, 105, which accounts for more than half of the total number of alien registrations of “engineer” in Japan.

This recent surge in the migration from China to Japan has been the result of inherent supply and demand — growing numbers of Chinese willing and able to go to Japan to work, and an increased appetite on the part of Japanese companies for low cost educated workers who can work smoothly in the Japanese cultural and linguistic environment. Among these immigrant Chinese engineers in Japan, some are educationally channeled international labor migrants. They initially migrated to Japan as college students and then work as engineers in Japan after they graduated from Japanese colleges. They would achieve better integration into Japanese society and obtain better paying jobs as they possess the study experience in Japan (Liu-Farrer, 2009). It is

important to note another type of Chinese engineers in Japan, those who came to work in Japan as the engineer through the human resource company. They are young and highly educated. They are recruited in China by the human resource company and work in Japan as “haken”.² While studying abroad has been the main form of migration of the skilled, this has now been joined by the migration of technical staff who are recruited as haken, and the trend is increasing. It is likely that this natural trend of increased Chinese immigration will continue for the foreseeable future, albeit to a relatively subdued degree amid the recession. However, except for sporadic news stories, there are still few systematic researches on these haken Chinese engineers. Thus this paper hopes to concentrate the research on this group of highly educated haken Chinese engineers, and to make clear how they utilize social networks to make the decision of migration to Japan.

Table 1. Changes in the Number of Alien Registrations of “Engineer” by Nationality

Nationality/Place of Origin	Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total		35,135	44,684	52,273	50,493	46,592
China		17,634	23,247	27,665	27,166	25,105
Korea		6,176	7,733	8,647	8,015	7,050
India		3,279	3,893	4,268	3,925	3,515
Viet Nam		790	1,536	2,229	2,188	2,183
Philippines		1,579	2,004	2,276	2,118	1,968
United States of America		705	760	923	833	789
Malaysia		425	489	570	610	595
France		542	631	706	621	588
Bangladesh		299	393	470	472	466
Indonesia		311	371	436	455	437
Others		3,395	3,627	4,083	4,090	3,896

Source: Japan Ministry of Justice, “Immigration Control 2011,” data section: p114.

While in general there exists a labor market (more or less structured, depending on the country) where supply and demand for labor meet (Guilmoto and Sandron, 2001), a ‘migration market’ scarcely exists, except in a very marginal way. The decision to migrate, especially in regard to international migration, is often made without precise knowledge of the living conditions and employment prospects in the destination area. Thus, at the point the decision to migrate or not is made, the key aspect is the desire to minimize uncertainty. Further, the choice must take into consideration a set of information that is embedded in the social networks of potential migrants. In particular, it

is the analysis of the multiple dynamics of social networks that occurs in the migration decision-making process that allows one to understand the establishment of networks and channels within which individual migration takes place. Thus, I will begin my analysis through a brief review of studies on migration decision making from various disciplines.

The micro-level approach

The migration decision-making mechanism could be studied at an aggregate macro-level, by using census data, or at an individual micro-level. Macro-level studies are superior in describing broad patterns of migration, whereas micro-level studies are superior in explaining migration behavior. The latter perspective is the focus of this paper. The micro-level approach emphasizes the process of migration decision making and not just the numerical count of events. From this vantage point, it is the individual who makes the decision to move or stay based on evaluations of a wide range of factors. The relative importance of such factors may vary considerably among the migration streams in different settings (Lee, 1966; Mabogunje, 1970; Todaro, 1969; Zelinsky, 1971).

Microeconomic model of migration decision making

The basic premise underlying most microeconomic models of migration decision making is that an individual migrates in the expectation that he or she will fare better by doing so. Alternatively stated, the economic model posits that a person chooses to migrate if he or she believes the benefits will exceed the costs. Furthermore, considering migration as an investment opportunity suggests that it is reasonable for a person to move even if he or she does not expect earnings to increase immediately afterward as long as the person expects that in the long run he or she will be better off by moving (Goldstein, 1978; Graves, 1979; Sjaastad's, 1962). The most influential and widely used approach in migration is the individual cost-benefit model (Todaro, 1986; Todaro, 1989). The assumption of this model is that migration decisions are based on the calculations of a rational individual who weighs the expected gains (e.g. employment or higher salary) against possible losses (e.g. deportation). The economic perspective treats migration decision making as an investment in human capital. It is restricted to 'economic' costs and benefits, is narrowly defined, and ignores such important considerations as being near friends and relatives. Further, the economic approach is not ordinarily concerned with how people think but with how they act, whereas this paper is quite interested in the expressed perceptions and intentions of individuals. The question of who makes the

decision to move also receives attention, and the people who influence the decision and the decision maker are explicitly addressed in this paper.

Social networks in migration decision making

Much of the literature on international migration and economic sociology has shown that both immigrants and non-immigrants rely heavily on social networks to migrate and find employment (Boyd, 1989; Granovetter, 1974; Grieco, 1987; Gurak and Caces, 1992; Massey et al., 1987, 1999; Portes and Bach, 1985; Powell and Smith-Doerr, 1994; Tilly, 1998; Waldinger, 1996). Social networks have long been identified as crucial to migration flows. Migrants will have recourse to networks at different stages of their migration process, including migration decision making. Some scholars have elucidated some of the social and cultural elements that influence migration decision making in Third World societies (Amin, 1974). They emphasized the function of village and ethnic social networks on the decision making involving moving from village to city. Ritchey (1976: 392) concludes that ‘in general, research does indicate that relatives and friends are the migrant’s major source of information about the receiver area prior to migration.’

The significance of social networks in migration has been discussed by numerous scholars over many decades. Nevertheless the social networks approach leaves some issues unaddressed. Firstly, most migration studies have focused exclusively on the dynamics of kinship and community relations, such as studies on kinship networks (Choldin, 1973) and the association of fellow-townspeople (Ajisaka, 2009; Sasaki, 2012). The so-called strong ties of close relationships and frequent contacts (Granovetter, 1973) that are characterized by a high degree of trust (Tilly, 2007). However, this narrow understanding of social networks neglects the importance and effectiveness of other types of social relations that are not based on kinship or common ethnic origin. Research on the development and role of non-ethnic ties in migration process is rare to see. Thus, this study will pay more attention to the function of non-ethnic ties (especially the alumni ties) in the migration decision-making process. Secondly, there is a tendency within migration studies simply to take networks for granted and there has been little research on how networks are actually formed in practice. Hence this study argues for more attention to the ways in which migrants access, maintain and construct different networks with different type of people. Further, I describe empirically whether and how migrant networks changed over time and what their impacts are for migrants and the

migration decision-making process.

2. The Context

Xu: I just got my first job last week. I decided to go to work in Japan through C Company. I got the job through the recommendation of my seniors. They have been working in Japan through the C Company for two years. They seem to be doing okay in Japan. Well, it's time for a new challenge.

Four years ago, when I was still in China, one of my friends, Xu, told me this before he came to work in Japan through the human resource company. As I know, in the past ten years, to work in Japan as ‘hakenshain’², through a human resource company after graduation from university has become a hot topic among fresh graduates in China. Some of my friends fall into this category themselves, which greatly aroused my interest to make clear this special migration process.

The specific characteristic of this new emerging international migration phenomenon is that these young Chinese graduates come to work in Japan through the mediation of a third party: a human resource company. They have no connections with the Japanese company before they come to Japan. Some of them are not even entirely clear about where they will be working in Japan before they leave China.

Research techniques

This study is based on in-depth interviews in Nagoya in November 2010. Interviewees include one manager of a human resource company and twelve Chinese engineers who work at Denso Corporation and Denso Techno Corporation as ‘hakenshain’ through C Company.

Research targets: ‘C Company’ & migrant Chinese engineers

In this study, I took one of the human resource companies, ‘C Company’, as my research target. C company is a human resource company established in 1999 and headquartered in Nagoya, Japan. It recruits fresh Chinese college graduates with a science or engineering educational background from the 50 best universities in China. Through C Company, these young graduates are dispatched to the host Japanese companies and work as “hakenshain” in Japan. C Company has good cooperative relationships with Japan’s physical and mechanical industries. The cooperative partners of C Company

include some carmakers in Japan, such as Toyota Motor Corporation, Kanto Auto Works, Ltd., Daihatsu Motor Co., Ltd., Denso Corporation, Hino Motors, Ltd. Kubota Corporation. And some Mechanical Equipment Companies, such as Fuji Heavy Industries, Aisan Industry Co., Ltd., Toyota Technical Development Corporation, Yushin Precision Equipment Co., Ltd., and Kikusui Electronics Corp.. Besides, C Company also has the partnership with some other companies that are not parts of the mechanical industries, such as Itochu Corporation, Toyota Tsusho Corporation, Mitsui Kinzoku Trading Co., LTD, Mitsui Bussan Metals Co., LTD, Mitsubishi Corporation, and the like.

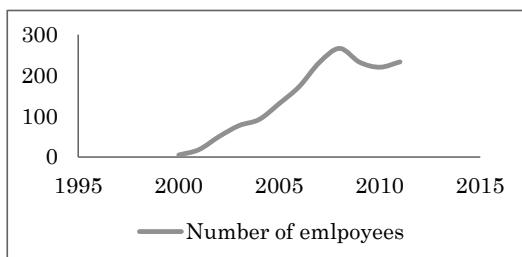


Figure 1. Annual Variation in the Number of Chinese Engineers in C Company:
2000-2011

The above figure shows the annual variation in the number of Chinese engineers in C Company from 2000 to 2011. By 2011, C Company has recruited a total of approximately 233 Chinese graduates to work in Japan since its establishment in 1999. It's to be noted that there are only five employees in C Company in the year 2000, while the number of employees increases year by year, and it peaked in 2008, which reached 266. Due to the 2008-2012 global recession, the number came down to 220 in 2010. However, it rebounded somewhat after the year 2010. Moreover, most of these Chinese engineers graduated from famous universities in China (see Figure 2).

According to the data that was collected in 2010, among the Chinese graduates that are recruited by C Company, 41% of the total graduated from Shanghai Jiao Tong University, which is a famous science and engineering university in China. Besides, Donghua University, Tongji University, Central South University, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, and Tsinghua University also hold a certain proportion. It

should be noted that most of these universities are well-known universities which hold an advantage in the education of science and engineering.

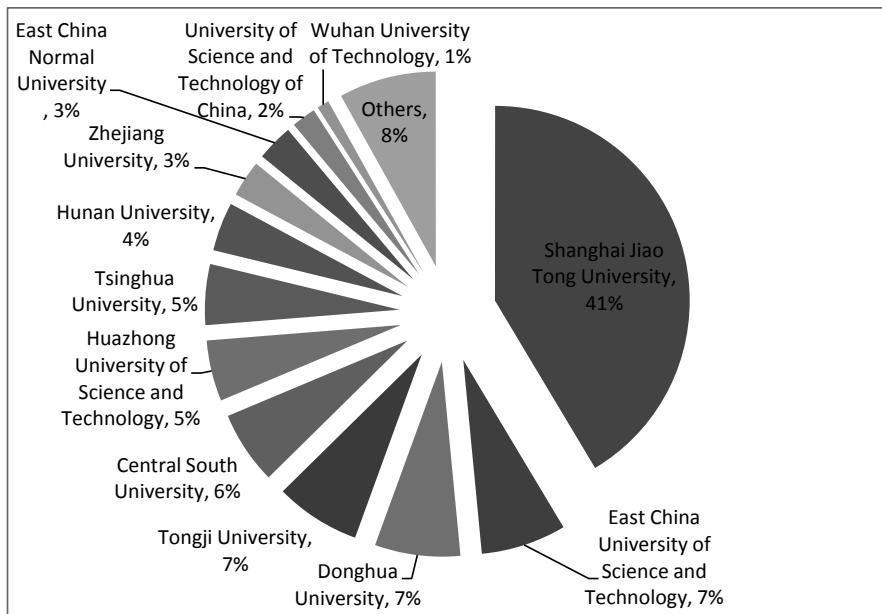


Figure 2. Chinese engineers in C Company Classified by Their Alma Mater, 2010

Furthermore, these Chinese graduates are good at English. All of them pass the CET-6, which is the top level of the college English test in China. Also, some of them hold an associate degree of Japanese major. Before they come to work in Japan, they would receive a 3-6 month training that is held by C Company, including the language training of spoken Japanese and professional training such as: CATIA/CAE⁶ learning (see Figure 3, Figure 4). It's to be noted that the CATIA and CAE are some kinds of computer software to aid in engineering tasks.

The interviewees in this study also include twelve migrant Chinese engineers (see the Appendix for sample characteristics). All of them were born in the 1980s and came from various parts of rural and urban China. Ten of them are males, while only two are females. Moreover, all of the respondents are highly educated. They possess at least a

bachelor's degree, while some of them have master's degrees. In addition, most of them have worked in Japan for a long time, and half of them get married during their stay in Japan³.

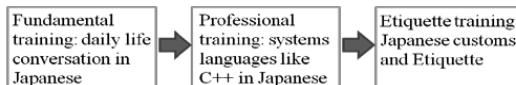


Figure 3. Language and Etiquette Training

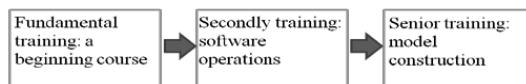


Figure 4. CATIA/CAE Training

The recruitment process: to work in Japan as 'hakenshain' through a human resource company

Unlike some migrant Chinese engineers who are recruited by Japanese companies directly as formal workers, my research subjects are those who came to work in Japan through the mediation of a human resource company. Thus, it is important to figure out the exact relationship among Chinese engineers, C Company, and Japanese host companies. Specifically, under the system of labor dispatchment, these migrant Chinese engineers sign an employment contract with the human resource company and C Company. As employees of C Company, they are dispatched to Japanese host companies that are in collaboration with C Company (see Figure 5).

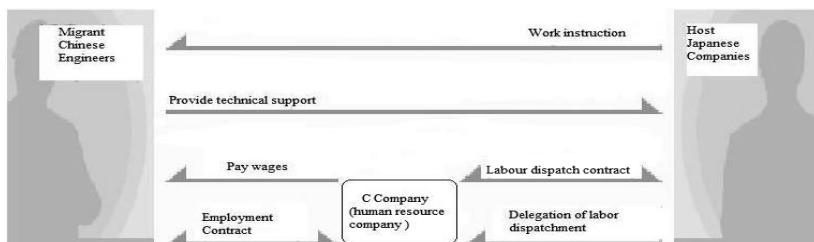


Figure 5. The Relationship among Chinese Engineers, C Company, and Japanese Host Companies

The form and nature of this kind of labor dispatchment determines the special relationships among migrants, the human resource company, and Japanese host companies, which implies a greater degree of uncertainty when migrants are making the migration decision. Further, to lessen the uncertainty under this migration process, migrants will employ much more complicated social networks.

3. How Migrants Cope with Uncertainty by Employing Social Networks

The migration decision-making unit

The identification of the fundamental decision-making unit is basic to an understanding of the internal dynamics of migration decision making. It is assumed that this unit is the household, defined as one or a group of persons who traditionally live together in a single unit of housing. An individual living alone thus comprises the smallest unit, his migration decisions affecting only himself. The respondents in this case fall into the latter category: the individual decision-making unit. In other words, these migrant Chinese engineers are fresh graduates, and most of their decisions affect only themselves.

Moving beyond the microeconomic analysis

As far as migration is concerned, microeconomic behavioral theory assumes that any micro-level decision maker periodically gathers all available information in order to compare the relative costs and benefits of moving to another location (Fischer et al., 1997). Potential migrants weigh the relative costs and benefits of going or staying and of moving to a certain destination at a given time according to their individual preferences. They are supposed to decide rationally, to make a decision in favor of the alternative that maximizes individual utility or quality of life. In addition to the economical cost-benefit calculation model, this study goes further to discuss the uncertainty that exists both in the

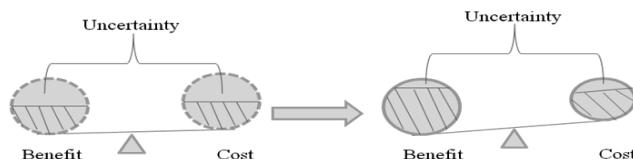


Figure 6. Migration decision making as a process for reducing uncertainty

migration costs and benefits. Specifically, it suggests that migration decision making is primarily a process for minimizing the uncertainty embedded in both the costs and benefits (See Figure 6).

The migrant, more than an economic person: the internal dynamics of migration decision making

Moving beyond the economic micro-migration model, I explore dynamic aspects of the individual migration decision. Specifically, I discuss the role of social networks in migration decision making within the framework of an uncertainty minimization model. Further, I attempt to examine in more detail the change of network ties potential migrants employ in the decision-making process. As shown in Figure 7, the internal dynamics of migration decision making, I attempt to find the mechanism that causes migrants to move under uncertainty. Different from the rational economic model, this framework pays special attention to how migrants make decisions regarding migration and discusses the function of social networks in a more detailed way in this process. More concretely, this model considers migration decision making as a process to minimize uncertainty through migration information gathering and filtration. In particular, clarifying the source of the information and the way potential migrants obtain this information becomes particularly important, because potential migrants need effective information to decrease uncertainty. Thus, I will examine all of the social networks, including the organizational ties and interpersonal ties that migrants employ for information gathering and filtration.

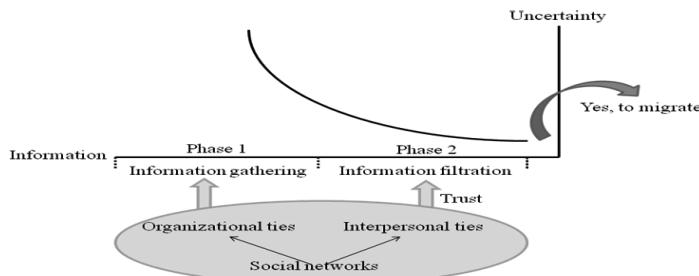


Figure 7. The Internal Dynamics of Migration Decision Making

3.1. Uncertainty (migration under uncertainty: ‘try your luck’)

First and foremost, migration decision making is characterized by incomplete, deficient, or nonexistent markets in an environment marked by uncertainty and high costs of information. Uncertainty about the future makes potential migrants consider migration as some kind of ‘try your luck’ or ‘wait and see’ at the very beginning of the migration decision-making process.

Ji: At first, I was suspicious of C Company because it is an unknown human resource company, and I had never heard about it. My parents are also worried about me. They were afraid that C Company would be a scam company. Also, I’m a little worried about living overseas since I have no confidence in adapting to the new life in Japan.

Liu: To work overseas means that I choose a highly uncertain future. I would lose some opportunities in China if I go to work in Japan. I would also lose some effective personal networks in China if I stay in Japan for a long time. Actually, I’m not sure whether I can do well in Japan.

The above narrative profiles show that two types of uncertainty enter into the migration decision in this case. First, current conditions in the destination region may not be observable, such as the unknown work and life conditions in Japan. Second, the future evolution of conditions in both the origin and destination regions may be unknown. For most of the potential migrants, prevention against uncertainty, rather than maximization of their income, is the central principle that directs the strategy of the actors.

3.2. Information Gathering

The importance of information in determining migration behavior has been recognized. Many social scientists have noted that information flows affect both the migration decision-making process and the actions stemming from that process. Geographers have done much of this work, concentrating on determining the effects of the spatial flow of information on the destination choices of migrants. However, the concept of information is much broader than simple information about alternative locations available to prospective movers, and its other dimensions are also important. This study classifies the different levels and quality of information embedded in the social networks and discusses

the means to obtain information. The following narratives show how these migrant Chinese engineers gathered their information when making the decision to migrate.

Lin: I attended the campus lecture that was held by C Company. I got some information about the recruiting process. I confirmed this information with the school counselor who is responsible for career guidance of the graduates. Of course, I also thoroughly studied the employment contract before I signed it.

Lu: I searched the Internet for information on Japanese host companies that cooperate with C Company. Most of them are top 500 enterprises. I have to get some information from their homepages; well, you know, I did not have any contact with the Japanese host company before going to Japan. Also, one of my classmates gave me more information about the recruitment process. He has already signed the contract with C Company.

Liang: I got some information about C Company and life in Japan through a predecessor who has worked in Japan through C Company for two years. He suggested that I join the QQ group⁴ that is shared by nearly 80 employees of C Company who have already worked in Japan. They usually post blogs and recent photos on the Internet. Thus, I can see their work and life situations in Japan through the QQ group.

Chen: My sister-in-law has worked in Japan through C Company for three years. Of course, she gave me a lot of useful information, including about the working atmosphere in the Japanese host company and what I should pay attention to when dealing with C Company.

The above quotations show the source of the migration information. Specifically, to learn more about C Company and life in Japan, most of the migrant Chinese engineers employed social networks to collect migration information. They resorted to various routes, such as the Internet, the written contract, the instructors, relatives, friends, predecessors, and classmates. Potential migrants can get online information about C Company and work life in Japan through the employee blog and QQ group discussion. In addition, they can see photos and notes about work and life situations in Japan.

3.3. Information filtration

In the information filtration process, potential migrants attempt to activate more social

networks, especially interpersonal ties, to confirm the reliability of the migration information they gather. To the potential migrants, some information is trustworthy, while other information could not be trusted. Liang argues that it is dangerous to fully believe the information C Company offered during the campus lecture. Although the company trumpets its commitment to provide overseas employment opportunities, it gives an ambitious explanation on the form and nature of labor force dispatchment. Consulting a predecessor is a better option than attending the campus lecture.

3.4. Social networks: the significance of organizational and interpersonal ties in the pre-migration networks

Social networks have long been identified as crucial to migration flows. Much of the literature on international migration and economic sociology specifically focuses on the role of interpersonal ties in influencing migration and economic action, such as finding employment (Poros, 2001).

Distinguishing between the types of social ties in the pre-migration networks of migrants is important to understanding how people migrate. Much of the literature on international migration and economic sociology has shown that migrants rely heavily on interpersonal ties to migrate and find employment (Granovetter, 1974; Grieco, 1987; Gurak and Caces, 1992; Massey et al., 1987, 1999; Maritsa, 2001). Interpersonal ties are typically defined in terms of friends, relatives, or neighbors (Krackhardt, 1992). However, these definitions might be ambiguous. For example, a workplace friend might be quite a different kind of tie from a childhood friend and thus would provide different kinds of information or resources. Distinguishing ties based on the channel through which they are related helps to correct for some of these ambiguities.

Interpersonal networks, which are commonly cited in network and migration literature, include relationships to kin, friends, and community (Maritsa, 2001). In contrast, organizational ties, which are typically weak in Granovetter's sense, exist when individuals are embedded in organizations or institutions. Further, organizational ties refer to the mediating structure of the organization, whereas colleges, coworkers, supervisors, and even friends, family, and acquaintances relate to each other.

To illustrate what kind of relationships make up social ties, what kind of information passes through those ties, and, most importantly, how networks change

during the different phases of the migration decision-making process, one typical profile of a migrant Chinese engineer and his social networks is presented in the following figure.

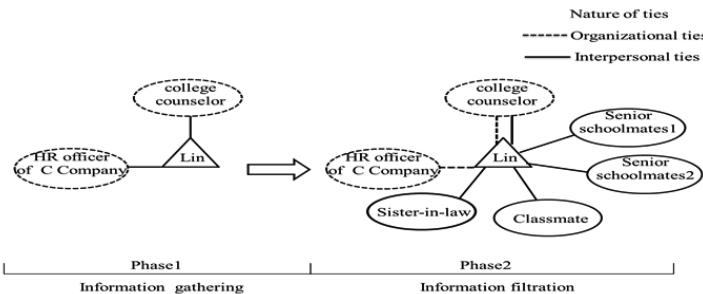


Figure 8. Lin-achieved Networks⁵

As shown above, Lin utilized two kinds of social ties when making the decision to migrate: organizational ties and interpersonal ties. The social ties Lin relied on changed according to the two phases. In particular, Lin primarily used organizational ties in the information gathering phase. He first attended the campus lecture held by C Company and obtained some information from the HR officer. He also called the HR officer to request further information. He then visited the college counselor, who is the career guidance counselor for the graduates. As Lin visited the counselor's office many times to request information about C Company and other employment opportunities, he became familiar with the counselor. At the same time, the ties between Lin and the counselor further developed into a combination of organizational ties and interpersonal ties. Lin affirmed the reliability of C Company from the counselor. The counselor told him, 'Well, the boss of C Company is your alumni. He seems to have recruited a lot of graduates from our department in the latest years. Some graduates of our school have already worked in this company. I can give you their contact information.' Through the introduction of the college counselor, Lin asked for advice from a senior schoolmate who had worked in Japan through C Company for three years. Both the college counselor and the senior schoolmate functioned as the reassuring medicine for Lin. Moreover, the information passed through these ties helped Lin to make a decision about C Company and the overseas job.

Moreover, one of Lin's classmates is also considering joining C Company. 'Study or work abroad would be a good experience for career development,' the classmate stated. Another interpersonal tie is Lin's senior schoolmate who was recently recruited by C Company. She shared information about the recruiting process with Lin and encouraged him to join C Company, 'Come on, let's go give it a try. It's not a bad choice; at least it's better than the low-wage employment in China', she told him. Both Lin's classmate and senior schoolmates influenced his motives for migration because working overseas together with friends or predecessors give job candidates a sense of reassurance. Further, Lin's sister-in-law shared a great deal of information on the working and living situations in Japan, which greatly eased Lin's worries. Furthermore, the location of acquaintances in the host society encourages and directs migration by increasing the potential migrant's awareness of conditions and opportunities there. Moreover, it helps potential migrants feel safe and comfortable.

In the case of Lin, he first gathered migration information through organizational ties. However, organizational ties alone would likely not have sufficed to encourage his migration and employment. Thus, he had recourse to use interpersonal ties, especially the alumni networks (such as his relationship with classmates and senior schoolmates) to filter the information gathered. Fortunately, both interpersonal and organizational ties assisted Lin in meeting the requirements for entry into Japan as an engineer and provided him with personal needs, such as giving him a better understanding of conditions in the host society. It should be noted that if migration information is first channeled through organizational ties, potential migrants will fall back on interpersonal ties to confirm whether the information is trustworthy. However, if migration information is obtained from interpersonal ties at the very beginning, potential migrants will make the decision much more quickly. Some of them would no longer depend on organizational ties. Liang asserted, 'A senior schoolmate of my college has worked in Japan for four years. I joined C Company through his introduction. Actually, I never attended the campus lecture held by C Company because my senior schoolmate could give me more detailed and realistic information.'

3.5. Trust (due to imperfect information)

It is argued that trust enables people to deal with their ignorance of the future so as to act

in a purposeful, goal-driven fashion even in the face of radical uncertainty. As previously mentioned, potential migrants activate and arrange both organizational networks and interpersonal networks to verify the reliability of migration information in the migration decision-making process. Basically, information is important for coping with uncertainty. However, it should be noted that the validity of the information is not potential migrants' primary concern. It is from whom the information is obtained that receives their attention. In other words, for potential migrants, the nature of social ties is important for understanding the reliability of the migration information.

Mr. Ji is now a 'hakenschain' working in an auto company in Nagoya. He contended, 'In 2006, through a senior schoolmate of my college, who had worked here for two years, I persuaded my father to let me go. Having predecessors in Japan reduced my anxiety about working overseas. I trusted them to help me. If they were not in Japan—well, it could have been more difficult to make a decision'.

Another interviewee expressed, 'To be honest, I did not trust C Company so much at first because I had never heard about it before, and it is quite a small company. Also, I used to worry about working as a "hakenschain". However, I trusted my senior schoolmate who has been working in Japan through C Company for two years. He told me that employees in C Company are all highly educated like me; some of them graduated from top colleges in China. So I finally contracted with C Company and came to work in Japan'.

People who have been working in Japan through C Company serve as conduits for job candidates to learn about overseas jobs, and highly educated immigrants finally make the decision to trust C Company. Almost all of the interviewees made a final decision to work in Japan through C Company based on the information offered by previous graduates, who were his or her friends, family members, or classmates who have been working in Japan through C Company. It is worth noting that information can reduce uncertainty but can never eliminate it altogether. Thus, trust functions to help potential migrants make the decision to jump over to the new world. In this case, trust primarily comes from non-ethnic ties, especially the alumni ties.

4. Conclusion

Making a decision to move and then actualizing it are both affected by constraining and

facilitating factors that inhibit and enhance the ability of the actor to reach his or her intended goal. Both the character of the migration decision making and the ability to carry out the decision are also related to personal characteristics of the actor (including the ability to accept risks and to adjust to new environments) and the social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the individual and the family. Moreover, rather than isolated agents, people are linked to one another through social networks. These connections have a ponderous effect on migration. Thus, the decision-making process and the ability to actualize decisions are affected by social networks that surround the individual. Specifically, the central way social networks shape migration decision-making is to reduce the uncertainty for individuals by circulating information among potential migrants.

In my efforts to demonstrate that social networks are essential elements for understanding migration decision making, I examine in more detail the content and change of social networks in the whole migration decision-making process. Specifically, I consider migration decision making as a process for minimizing uncertainty. Further, I separate this process into two phases: information gathering and the information filtration process. I also incorporate organizational ties and interpersonal ties to model the internal dynamics under this process. I give special attention to the content of social ties and how potential migrants activate, arrange, and rearrange social networks in different phases of the migration decision-making process, which allows us to look at what kinds of relationships make up social ties and what kind of information passes through those ties.

In this case, dense networks of composite organizational and interpersonal ties were crucial to transmit migration information to the potential migrants. It is known that organizational ties play a critical role in controlling the process of selectivity for recruits, especially for recruited professionals. However, in this case, potential migrants seem to depend more heavily on interpersonal ties than on organizational ties, although organizational ties more or less work in the information gathering process. Potential migrants go further to activate interpersonal ties for verifying the information gathered through organizational ties. It is important to note that unlike most of the previous studies that emphasize the functions of ethnic networks, this study argues that the non-ethnic networks can also be important resources for the migrants, especially for the

highly educated migrants. In this case, although potential migrants utilize both the kinship networks and alumni networks, they seem to rely more on the alumni networks when they do the migration decision-making. In other words, alumni networks functions predominately in such kind of international *haken* recruitment process. It helps potential migrants to filtrate the migration information and thus enhance the decision-making process. Further, it should be noted that migrants access, maintain and construct social networks with different type of people in different ways. Thus, even people who graduated from the same colleges hold different types of social networks and its transformation in the receiving society would also be different, which requires further discussion.

More concretely, social networks figure importantly in long-distance migration, especially in the specific case of transnational migration that is mediated by a human resource company. Without formal and direct connections with the host society, migrants particularly rely on social networks to make their migration decision during the early stage of migration. It is well documented that social networks can reduce migration uncertainty. Previous migrants have to sign a contract before going overseas. One uncertainty faced by these highly educated Chinese immigrant workers is the unknown work conditions in Japan. However, if the job is mediated by trusted social networks, they can make a decision much more quickly to migrate to Japan. Thus, I contend that in the migration decision-making process, social networks function primarily as trusted networks.

Despite the above findings, considerable work remains to be done to clarify the continuity of social networks before and after migration. How do migrants selectively maintain and reconstruct social networks after entering the host society? The basic question asks whether transnational migrants sustain social networks, especially the alumni networks brought from home and whether they construct new social relations at their destinations. Moreover, what is its relation with identity construction and adaptation of migrants in the host society?

Moreover, as migration networks or channels are the most solid support for migration, migrants will have recourse to networks at different stages of the process. Specifically, trust explains why social networks matter in the migration decision-making process. However, after migrants enter the host society, social networks may primarily be

other kinds of networks, such as support networks. Different kinds of social networks function according to the different phases of migration. In addition, social networks may not only be powerful conduits for migration information but they may also transmit values and cultural perceptions in the host society. The enlargement and enrichment of social networks in the host society remains to be studied.

Notes

- 1 The concept of decision making is used in its most general form to refer to the formation of an intention or disposition that results in a migration behavior; the decision itself is sometimes conceptualized as being composed of two parts: the decision to move or stay and the choice of one destination among various alternatives. This study focuses on the decision to move or stay.
- 2 ‘Haken’: There are two types of employees in many Japanese firms. One is the regular full-time employee, called ‘seishain’(regular workers); the other is the temporary worker, called ‘haken’. The respondents in this study fall into the latter category. It should be noted that our research targets, Chinese engineers refer to haken Chinese engineers.
- 3 It should be noted that all job candidates are single young graduates before they move to Japan. Some of them married during their stay in Japan. Their marriage partners include Chinese and Japanese.
- 4 The QQ group is similar to MSN, which is used only in China. The website part of the QQ network hosts online communities and offers Web pages, hosted images, and a message board. Members of QQ groups can use and contribute to message boards, document folders, photo albums, and list pages.
- 5 Lin’s achieved networks are the most typical example in my study. Among the twelve cases, ten of the respondents fall into this category. The other two employed interpersonal ties during the very first information gathering phase, which is shown in Figure 6.

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Abstract

This study seeks to enhance understanding about the role social networks play in migration, how they are used and activated, and how they transform during different phases of the migration decision-making¹ process. In particular, it treats migration decision making as a

process primarily for minimizing uncertainty. It also seeks to untangle the multiple dynamics of social networks that occur in this process. Further, it treats migration decision making as a behavioral process and attempts to present how migrants engage in migration decision making. Specifically, different from the economic model, this study is quite interested in the expressed perceptions and intentions of migrants. Attention is placed on the question of who makes the decision to migrate. The study explicitly addresses the people who influence the decision and the decision maker. Using the case of Chinese engineers' migration to Japan, the life histories of these migrants illustrate that social networks, especially the alumni networks apparently function to remove or decrease uncertainty and thus shape the migration decision-making process. In particular, alumni networks are powerful conduits for migration information, while trust structures the content and formation of migrant network ties.

Keywords: uncertainty, information, trust, alumni networks, Chinese engineers

Appendix

	Year of birth	Sex	Native place	Education	Marital status	Experience in Japan
1	1980	male	Urban,eastern China	Bachelor degree majoring in Mechanical Engineering, Shahai Jiao Tong University	married	More than eight years work experience in Densotechno, Nagoya
2	1982	male	Urban,eastern China	Bachelor degree majoring in Computer Science, Shanghai Ocean University	single	More than six years work experience in Densotechno, Nagoya
3	1981	male	Rural,eastern China	Master degree majoring in Computer Science, Shahai Jiao Tong University	married	More than five years work experience in Denso, Nagoya
4	1982	female	Urban,eastern China	Bachelor degree majoring in Computer Science, Tongji University	married	More than four years work experience in Denso, Nagoya
5	1982	male	Rural,central China	Master degree majoring in Computer Science, Zhejiang University	married	More than four years work experience in Denso, Nagoya
6	1983	male	Rural,eastern China	Bachelor degree majoring in Mechanical Engineering, Shahai Jiao Tong University	married	More than four years work experience in Denso, Nagoya
7	1983	male	Rural,southern China	Bachelor degree majoring in Materials Science and Engineering, Shahai Jiao Tong University	single	More than four years work experience in Denso, Nagoya
8	1984	female	Urban,eastern China	Bachelor degree majoring in Mechanical Engineering, Shahai Jiao Tong University	single	More than three years work experience in Densotechno, Nagoya
9	1988	male	Rural,central China	Bachelor degree majoring in electrical engineering and automation, Huazhong University of Science and Technology	single	More than one year work experience in Denso, Nagoya
10	1988	male	Rural,central China	Bachelor degree majoring in electrical engineering and automation, University of Science and Technology of China	single	More than one year work experience in Denso, Nagoya
11	1986	male	Rural,northern China	Bachelor degree majoring in Mechanical Engineering, Zhejiang University	single	More than one year work experience in Densotechno, Nagoya
12	1987	male	Urban,eastern China	Bachelor degree majoring in Mechanical Engineering, Tongji University	single	More than one year work experience in Densotechno, Nagoya