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At Home in the Chinese Diaspora

Memories, Identities and Belongings

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Preface

The journey to this book has been a long and pleasurable one indeed. It first began when Kuah-Pearce organized a panel on ‘Power of Memories: Negotiating Belongingness in the Chinese Diaspora’ for the Third International Convention of Asian Scholars, held in Singapore in 2003, where several of us presented papers addressing the issues surrounding memories, sense of belonging and identity in the Chinese diaspora. Subsequently, the editors discussed the possibility of working on a book project on this topic. We invited various scholars to participate in this project and we have been privileged that they have taken up the challenge of writing for this project.

In this book project, we have tried to bring together various issues and interrogate the debates regarding how memory, identity and sense of belonging helped shape migrants’ understanding of self, the diasporic community(ies) and the wider society in which they lived, as well as to account for the local and transnational challenges they faced in their daily lives. We looked at issues of how memories were reproduced, how they served as social and cultural capital, how they created tensions and conflicts and how memories changed and impacted on the individuals and communities across generational bars. We also explored the role of place in situating memories and how the media, films and music portrayed and reinforced the understanding of identity.

We are very grateful to our contributors who have taken the time to write and contribute to this edited book. Without their contributions, this book would not have taken shape, especially in its present form. Both editors have worked hard on this book, especially AD who undertook to contact the publisher and carried out editorial work on the chapters. We would also like to thank Md. Nazrul Islam for his assistance with the index.

Our efforts were made especially difficult as the editors and contributors were scattered across the globe. While the Internet and email made the completion of this project possible, the editors managed to work through the themes and details of the book early on in Hong Kong before AD returned to work in Vietnam. For this reason, our special and heartfelt thanks go to the contributors for their patience and persistence.

There are also many people we would like to thank for helping to make this book project a pleasurable endeavour. We would like to thank Jill Lake at Palgrave Macmillan for her support, patience and confidence in
us and our project. AD would also like to express his gratitude to Lydia (Chuen Tai) Ngai and his children for emotional and other support. KP would like to thank her husband and daughter for their emotional support and trust in her ability. Lastly, as most of the contributors are transnational migrants and part of one diaspora or another, we dedicate this book to all migrants and hope that this book resonates within the memories of their own experiences.

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