

## **On the issue of Chinese migration to Russia's Far East**

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**Abstract:** The article is investigated modern problems of Chinese migration to the Russian Far East. The author explains their source and strives to demonstrate their own point of view according to this aspects of problem.

**Keywords:** Chinese migration, their influence to the Russian Far East region, economy and social structure of Russia.

One of the main demographic characteristics of the Far East is a small population of the given area in comparison with its area (36.4% of the Russian Federation). Over a long period the Chinese border territories in the North-East of China were very poor. In 1996 in order to develop the economy in these regions, the State Council of the People's Republic of China decided to make some of the Northeast and Northwest border towns free economic zones like Chinese coastal cities (Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, etc.). In free economic zones frontier trading companies performing import and export transactions with Russia were created. The purpose of this work is to distinguish the features of Chinese migration to the territory of Russia's Far East. [1]

This trade was carried out mainly in two main forms:

1. In the form of retail trade, in which citizens of China were engaged in the 20-kilometer border area on the territory of Russia. Generally there were basic products (fruits, vegetables, food, clothing, shoes, electrical appliances).
2. In the form of wholesale trade, which is prosecuted by Chinese companies, registered in the free trade zones. [2]

Gradually, the frontier trading companies, using the imperfection of Russian legislation, priced out their Russian partners and having branched out at the Russian side, thus expanding their presence in the Russian territories. Labor shortages in sector of the economy where it is necessary to perform manual painstaking job, was tangible in the Far East as early as the 1980s. When it was known about the Chinese diligence, their unpretentiousness to living conditions, the ability to work more than is necessary by the legislation, and the consent to a small salary, employers began to prefer the Chinese labor force to the guest workers from the CIS countries. That is why the Chinese labor force in the Far East is currently prevailed by the quantity of the labor force from other countries.

Since 1994, the unemployment rate in the Far East has become socially significant phenomenon. Therefore, since the second half of the 1990s, imports of Chinese labor force began to decline. However, in the 1990s, there was a contradictory situation in the villages of Priamrye and Primorye: in spite of the high level of unemployment (24%), many farms, both collective and individual, hired not local people, but the Chinese, who were leased vacant lands for handling. But recently the Chinese frontier trade experience showed that it is still cheaper to import fruits and vegetables from China than to grow them in the Far East, even with the help of Chinese growers. Therefore, in the south of the Far East the number of recruited growers began to decline. [6, p.288]

According to experts, Chinese migration to Russia took place in three stages:

- I. (1992-1994) – the Chinese came mainly in Primorye to work at constructions and farms.
- II. (1994-2000) – a period of an uncontrolled Chinese migration. In addition to small undertakers and labor force from the PRC, there was a peak of Chinese students' staying in Russia in 1994. According to some sources, there were 1200012 people.

### III. (2000-2010) – the beginning of a controlled migration a period. [4]

The bulk of Chinese migrants enter Russia through three main border crossing, where there are the largest free trade zones on the Chinese territory. They are Manchuria (Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region) – Zabaikalsk (Chita Region), Heihe (Heilongjiang) – Blagoveshchensk (Amur region) and Suifenhe (Heilongjiang) – Grodekovo (Primorye).

Trade takes a leading place in the employment structure of Chinese citizens. It is noted the sharp decrease of the PRC citizens engaged in the sphere of catering, and the growth of those, who engaged in the traffic sphere. Thus, according to the summary data of the Office for immigrants, in 2010 the leading spheres of employment of Chinese citizens were construction (23.7%), industry (18.2%), agriculture (6.3%) and general commercial activities (9 %). [5, p.16]

The history of the formation of trade migrations is very characteristic for the development of Chinese migration on the territory of Russia. In the border regions the Chinese enterprise has taken a form of «transnational national market», that is the market, where the social structures, crossing geographical administrative boundaries, form. Migrants, involved in the process of formation of transboundary market – both Chinese and Russian, concern with members of the community to which they originally did not belong. Geographically «transnational markets» are in the border settlements in both countries. Within these zones distribution networks of transboundary market are created. Meanwhile, the Chinese have limited contact with the host society and in most cases prefer to communicate with the Russian inhabitants through figureheads. It is possible that the reason for this is not only a linguistic barrier, but also xenophobia<sup>1</sup> from the Russian population.

The problem of the Chinese in Russia is that for the purpose of benefit they are looking the most low-price ways of solving problems, sometimes going beyond the law. With the help of the Russians there is often the export of forest, trepang, rare species of fish and skins of wild animals. Also counterfeit alcohol is smuggling. There is also a threat to the life and health of the Russian population in the Far East, which is primarily due to the poor quality of products imported from China. Products with no permit and under false documentation recently brought to the Russian market and realized there. Sometimes the product marking falls short of legal requirements. It happened that production itself was counterfeited, but it was sold under the corporate certificate. Often the production was exported in violations of Chinese legislation, that is under forged Chinese certificates. Unfortunately, the Russian representatives still do not exactly know how the real certificate, issued by the PRC sanitary services, should look. The reason for this situation is not Chinese enterprise, but Russian reality. The low buying power of the Russian population makes them purchase the cheapest products, despite the poor quality. It is known that Russian markets provided the Chinese with the forged certificates, Russian intermediaries («bricks») transported through the border products of low quality, and the directors of warehouses and markets carefully protected warehouses from the visits of Sanitary and Epidemiological Inspectorate.

In conclusion it may be said that the Chinese in Russia's Far East are the phenomenon of economic commutation. They inhabit in Russia from 10 to 11 months a year and return to China on the vacation. The labor shortage has made the authorities of the Far East import cheap labor from China, and the lack of essential goods has caused the Chinese business in the region. Over 20 years of Chinese enterprise in Russia, they have found their niche and successfully do business.

There is no idea of «Chinese Diaspora» in the Far East. It is connected with a sense of temporary stay of Chinese in Russia, the proximity of the Chinese border and less educated Chinese people, arriving in Russia.

What are the positive aspects of the Chinese presence in Russia's Far East?

- Filling market with consumer goods and food.
- Filling of job vacancies in industry and services.
- Price competition and reduction of the cost of the goods at the local markets.
- Chinese investments in Russian real estate.

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<sup>1</sup> **Xenophobia** is a dislike or fear of people from other countries or of that which is foreign or strange. Some definitions suggest xenophobia as arising from irrationality or unreason.

- Filling of the federal and local budgets at the expense of tax levies of traders at the markets and enterprisers, as well as customs duties.
- Promotion of the Far East tourist industry.

The Chinese are law-abiding citizens by nature. Therefore, if it is to regulate the legislation of the Russian Federation, improve the work of law enforcement and custom authorities, it will significantly reduce corruption and underground Chinese enterprise.

According to Chinese sociologists, the birth rate in China will begin to decline from 2020-2050 years, which is likely to entail the termination of Chinese labor migration from China abroad.

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