Urban migration and gender diversity in Eurasia, 1600–1800

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Generally, historians describe the prototypical migrant as male, single, young, and unattached. Female migrants are often typified as dependent movers who are attached to husband and family and who are more likely than men to move in kin groups and networks. However, as various studies based on historical data have shown, many young women did move continuously and independently to other cities, regions, or countries in search of work.[1]

Increasing attention to female patterns of migration and the role of women in family migration particularly focuses on the case of Europe after c. 1850. Although much less is known about gender differences before 1800 on a global scale, various studies indicate that there was considerable variation in migration ratios and female participation in migrations within Eurasia. Women's participation in urban migration seemed to have been considerably higher in early modern Western Europe than in Ming-Qing China.

This chapter explores gender diversity in urban migration patterns in Western Europe and China between c. 1600 and 1800. Source limitations, uneven historical data, and scholarly emphasis on Europe make it impossible to undertake a comprehensive comparison. Instead, this chapter explores gender differences in urban migration and the explanations for such differences in migration studies. The focus is on Western Europe and China because they represent two world regions which in this period of time enjoyed strong urban economic development, with the rise of large cities, albeit while witnessing divergent degrees of urbanization. The definition of migration used is based on Patrick Manning's cross-cultural migration model, which adopts

1 Donna Gabaccia, "Gender and Migration," in *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*, ed. Immanuel Ness (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), vol. V, 1–5; Suzanne M. Sinke, "Gender and Migration: Historical Perspectives," *International Migration Review* 40 (2006), 82–103; Dirk Hoerder and Amarjit Kaur, eds., *Proletarian and Gendered Mass Migrations: A Global Perspective on Continuities and Discontinuities from the 19th to the 21st Centuries*, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 151–172.

a broad conception of migration, including in principle all moves of settlers, invaders, sojourners, and itinerants.[2]

The first section will briefly look at general patterns of urban migration in Eurasia. The next section will turn to sex ratios in urban migrations in Europe and China between c. 1600 and 1800. The third section will examine various explanations for gender diversity in urban migration in China and Europe. Explanatory factors for variations in female migration ratios include the role of the state, labor market participation, and family systems. Finally, the role of urban institutions will be considered as a factor explaining gender differences in urban migrations within Eurasia.

General Patterns of Urban Migration in Eurasia

During the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, general urban growth within Eurasia was stimulated by agricultural development, the rise of global maritime trade, and consolidation of state power. This urbanization was accompanied by the growth of large cities in Asia, the Middle East, and Western Europe, centers that functioned as international markets and hubs for international trade. The Eurasian pattern of urban migration was characterized by several common features. First, immigration was vital to the urban growth and demographic resilience of Eurasian cities. Due to the so-called graveyard effect – there was no natural growth, as death rates exceeded birth rates – cities needed a constant influx of newcomers in order to sustain their population and to grow. Second, the majority of migrants moved short distances, often driven by poverty, leaving the countryside in search of work in urban communities. Long-distance travelers who moved between cities belonged to the middle-to-high socioeconomic layers of society, such as merchants, artisans, and officials. Third, migrations included various ethnic groups and men as well as women.

Despite these general characteristics, there were also significant differences in urban migration patterns in Western Europe and China. The level and trends of mobility in different parts of Eurasia showed important dissimilarities in the early modern period (1500–1800). A cross-cultural migration method shows that Europe's migration ratios remained stable at a high level during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while China's migration

2 Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013). Although examining in principle all moves, this chapter distinguishes between migrations within a similar cultural space (called home community migration) and migrations that cross a cultural boundary; see Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, "Theorizing Cross-Cultural Migrations: The Case of Eurasia since 1500," *Social Science History* 41 (2017), 445–475.

ratio increased in the second half of the seventeenth century. In the 1600s, Europe and China's cross-cultural migration levels were remarkably similar, fluctuating around 10 percent of their populations. However, due to diverging patterns of urbanization and differences in the proportion of people living in cities, the urban migration patterns of Western Europe and China differed significantly. Whereas the proportion of Europeans migrating to towns increased throughout the early modern period, the degree of urbanization in China decreased over the same period.

Compared to other world regions, China had the largest cities from the Tang (618–907) through the Qing (1644–1912) dynasties, but a significantly lower degree of urbanization. Around 1800, approximately 13 percent of the inhabitants in European cities were born outside the city. The numbers were even higher for northern Europe, where approximately 30 percent of the urban population originated from rural areas or other cities. In some rapidly growing cities, such as Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, the proportion of migrants among the population was much higher. Economic historian Jan de Vries estimated that around 10 percent of the rural population in northern Europe moved to the city at some point in their lives. From the sixteenth century onward, the level of urban migration was lower in Ming-Qing China than in early modern Europe, largely because urbanization had declined in China after 1500. Urban historians generally recognize that urbanization rates in Europe were about twice those of China. Estimates by migration historians indicate that around 1800 only 3 percent of the Chinese people were concentrated in urban centers. This urbanization gap was related to low wages in Chinese cities compared to those in European cities, which made it less attractive for Chinese people to migrate from rural areas to the city.

Estimates of the mobility gap between China and Europe before 1800 have recently been modified. The estimate is now that urban migration rates in China between 1650 and 1700 were surprisingly high, and comparable to those of Europe. Only after 1750, and particularly after 1800, did the gap between Chinese and European urban migration rates increase dramatically. Overall, in Europe, urban and seasonal migrations were more important than in China. Whereas in China more than half of migrants moved to peripheral areas, in Europe the large majority of migrants moved to cities (excluding the movements of soldiers).[3]

3 Tingwei Zhang, "Chinese Cities in a Global Society," in *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T. LeGates and Frederick Stout, Routledge Urban Reader Series, 6th ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 590–598; Jan de Vries, *European Urbanization, 1500–1800* (London:

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Urban migration patterns in Eurasia between 1600 and 1800 showed another important difference between Western Europe and China. The proportion of women moving to cities appears to have been considerably higher in early modern Western Europe than in Ming-Qing China. The lack of solid and comparable source material makes it impossible to present hard data and compare sex ratios on a global scale. Most evidence on sex ratios among migrants is based on Western Europe and the Americas after 1800.

Although it is hard to quantify the proportion of women among migrants in Western Europe, scholars are in agreement that in the early modern period short-distance migration was a normal part of the life cycle for both men and women. In addition, most migrants were young and unmarried, aged roughly between fifteen and twenty-five. The large proportion of migrants residing in Western European towns and cities – on average 30 percent of the urban population – included many women. The lack of systemic and complete sources presumably led to systematic underestimation of women's proportion among urban migrants in Europe. Migration historians base their reconstructions on sources that tend to underrepresent the extent of women's migration, such as the registration of brides and bridegrooms. Several studies on Dutch towns indicate that the number of female migrants was higher than migration studies assumed. For instance, by the late sixteenth century most of the housemaids in the Dutch textile city of Leiden were immigrants, and migration studies indicate that in seventeenth-century Amsterdam probably half of all migrants were women. Most of these female migrants moving to Western European towns were single women who had left their place of birth alone without the company, protection, and assistance of parents or other family members.[4]

Women's participation in urban migration appears to have been considerably lower in Ming-Qing China. As earlier, very few single women in China moved to cities, Chinese male migrants often married local women of their

Methuen and Co, 1984), 175–207; Adam McKeown, "A Different Transition: Human Mobility in China, 1600–1900," in *Globalising Migration History: The Eurasian Experience (16th–21st Centuries)*, ed. Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, Studies in Global Migration History (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 293.

4 Dirk Hoerder and Leslie P. Moch, eds., *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996); Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen, and Marijke Huisman, eds., *Women of the Golden Age: An International Debate on Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland, England and Italy* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994); Erika Kuijpers, *Migrantenstad: immigratie en sociale verhoudingen in 17e-eeuws Amsterdam* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005).

new place of residence. Like European major commercial cities, Chinese cities had a large underclass that included many male and female beggars and refugees. Red-light districts in Chinese cities, particularly port towns, also attracted women from rural areas who found work as prostitutes or courtesans. Still, the largest-growing group of outsiders in Qing China cities consisted of unmarried males (*guanggun*). The unbalanced sex ratio in Chinese cities was in part related to the widespread practice of female infanticide, whereas unequal sex ratios in Western European cities were characterized by a surplus of single women.[5]

The question is how such a fundamental divergence in the participation of female urban migration patterns in early modern Western Europe and Ming-Qing China can be explained. Three major factors helped to produce this discrepancy: state formation, the nature of labor markets (free and unfree), and the working of family systems. The following sections will explore the possible relationship between these factors and differences in urban migration and gender diversity between China and Europe.[6]

State Formation

The role of the state in territorial expansion and colonization of land was an important determinant in migration flows within Eurasia. The Chinese, Ottoman, and Russian empires systematically colonized areas and moved peasants, soldiers, nomads, slaves, and war captives to different parts of their empires. (See Chapters 3 and 23 in this volume by Alessandro Stanziani and Suraiya Faroqhi, respectively.) Although the geographical scope of the expansion and the way in which the colonization took place differed significantly, early modern European and Qing Chinese colonization both involved extensive civilizing missions in the conquered areas. There were also differences. Whereas European colonizers operated outside Europe in overseas territories and in continuous competition with each other, the Ming and Qing rulers centrally organized military operations within Asia.

5 Craig A. Lockard, "Chinese Emigration to 1948," in *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*, ed. Immanuel Ness, vol. 5 (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); James K. Chin, "Junk Trade, Business Networks and Sojourning Communities: Hokkien Merchants in Early Maritime Asia," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 6, 2 (2010), 157–215; William T. Rowe, "China: 1300–1900," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, ed. Peter Clark, Oxford Handbooks Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 310–27.

6 Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, "Measuring and Quantifying Cross-Cultural Migrations," in *Globalising Migration History: The Eurasian Experience*, 3–54.

The Ming-Qing central states sent millions of peasants to frontier areas in the north and west of the empires in order to conquer and incorporate these areas. These military actions were justified by the state as moral acts bringing peace, order, and civilization to uncivilized poor peripheral areas. Between 1400 and 1800, the Chinese state incorporated the southwest frontiers, including Guizhou, Yunnan, and the southern part of Sichuan, making them an integral part of the Chinese empire. The colonized southwest regions were transformed from rural and sparsely populated areas into commercial regions with urban centers that were populated predominantly by people from outside the region. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Qing state enhanced its ability to expand its territory and to centrally control the multiethnic parts of the empire. In 1638, a Court of Colonial Affairs was established to specifically administer peripheral areas that the state claimed as an integral part of the empire. The expansion policies of the Qing state were accompanied by large migration flows of Han Chinese to the frontier areas and forced movements of ethnic groups over great distances. From 1680 to 1850 at least 12 million people migrated from various parts of China to the frontier areas.[7] (See Chapter 11 in this volume by Peter Perdue.) At the same time, European colonialism before 1900 led to various types of both free and forced migration: labor migration within the colonized regions; migration of settlers, soldiers, bureaucrats, and clergymen/women who moved from their homeland to the colonized territories; and forced overseas movements of slaves and laborers.

What gendered migration patterns emerged from state-led movements in Qing China and Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Being a crucial part of the Qing's expansion aspirations, colonization was the most prominent type of Chinese migration between c. 1650 and 1850. In contrast, labor migration was the most dominant type of migration in early modern Western Europe, especially if we include the many soldiers and sailors serving in the armies. The composition of Western European armed forces differed significantly from the military in Qing China. European soldiers and sailors were young, predominantly single, male labor migrants who intended to travel temporarily (within northern Europe) to earn wages and who moved without their families. Qing soldiers on the other hand, were

7 William T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, History of Imperial China (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009); Michael G. Chang, *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring and the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680–1785*, Harvard East Asian Monographs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 20–22.

elite troops (the Banners) in service to the Qing state and who inherited their positions and had special privileges and obligations. These soldiers were no labor migrants, but state servants who were not supposed to mingle with the local populations. As a separate class of so-called martial lineages, they lived with their families in walled areas within cities or in frontier settlements, and moved as complete households to different parts of China. In addition to the banner troops, there were soldiers serving in the Green Standard Army, who were often recruited among the local populations. Recruited much like the soldiers and sailors in Western Europe, the Green Standard Army soldiers were also labor migrants. But like the soldiers of the elite troops, their service was for life and they, too, were often transferred to frontier garrisons, sometimes with their families. Whereas the state-led movements in early modern Europe almost exclusively involved men, the state-led migrations in Qing China involved many women as part of the army households.

The Chinese empire controlled migration flows of men and women in another way. In order to serve the Qing state, families of banner troops and other armies were often coerced to move long distances. Chinese residents were also forced to move to fulfill the state's civilizing aspirations in conquered areas, or to prevent collaboration of inhabitants with populations (the Ming) that were hostile to the Qing. Such relatively coerced migrations involved complete households and the transfer of millions of women within the Qing empire. Movements of families were also encouraged by the Qing state in the form of subsidies, tax breaks, or access to land. At the same time, rulers of the empire imposed numerous regulations to restrict migration in some areas, and such restrictions involved predominantly limits on family migration and the migration of women. Between c. 1680 and 1860 the Qing state introduced rules prohibiting Han Chinese from moving to Manchuria, sometimes allowing men to move, but banning family migration. From 1684 the state allowed only men to move to Taiwan, mainly as seasonal laborers, while prohibiting the emigration of women or families. Similar large-scale migration restrictions or state-led coerced movements did not exist within Western Europe, although coercion was more common in movements to Europe's colonies.

To summarize, state-controlled migration played a more prominent role in Qing China than in early modern Europe, leading to large-scale, sometimes forced, migrations of women as part of military households, on the one hand, and to systematic restriction of female migration to some areas, on the other hand. The forced family migrations included movements to cities in frontier areas. State-led migration in early modern Western Europe

predominantly involved the movement of young single men, and rarely the migration of women, either single or as part of a household. Hence, the role of the state in migration flows does not seem to account for the larger share of women in urban migration flows in Western Europe compared to China.[8]

Labor Market Participation

The degree of labor market participation offers a second explanatory factor for the variation in women's share in urban migration within Eurasia. Around 1600, major parts of Eurasia had well-developed labor markets that were largely monetized. Independent labor of peasants and craftsmen existed alongside wage labor and unfree labor through serfdom, slavery, and other forms of coerced labor. All over Eurasia free migrations to urban centers were more important than unfree labor migrations. Women's share in free labor varied strongly within Eurasia, showing a much lower participation of women in labor mobility and urban migration in China than in Western Europe.

Early modern Western European labor markets were characterized by a constant flow of male and female laborers who moved from rural areas to towns, involving particularly female domestics, male artisans, wage laborers, and skilled experts.[9] Various studies on early modern migration have demonstrated that European single women responded to the demand for urban domestic servants, and they often moved without their families. Women were the majority in most Western European cities, and a large proportion of them were short-distance migrants who found domestic positions in households and businesses or work in the textile industry, retail, or outside the home in services such as washing, starching, and mending. Like their male counterparts, female migrants mainly worked in sectors where the demand for labor fluctuated strongly. Labor historians have pointed to a general underestimation of women's share in early modern urban labor markets, arguing that women's work was often not registered as such. In urban economies with a high level of proletarization, an important part of the work was carried out as unpaid, often invisible labor by women.

8 Steven B. Miles, *Chinese Diasporas: A Social History of Global Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 63; Anne Winter, "Population and Migration: European and Chinese Experiences Compared," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, 403–420.

9 Leslie P. Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 14–15; Ariadne Schmidt, "The Profits of Unpaid Work: 'Assisting Labour' of Women in the Early Modern Urban Dutch Economy," *The History of the Family* 19 (2014), 301–322.

Compared to early modern Western Europe, Qing Chinese women's labor participation and their subsequent share in labor migration was much lower. Family members working or staying away from the family home were almost always males. Although family migration was common in some cases, most diasporic trajectories were formed by the migration of male merchants and laborers who responded to the demand for labor in the Qing frontiers and in Southeast Asia. Chinese overseas migration is often labeled as the merchant pattern, as overseas Chinese migrants were predominantly male merchants and artisans moving to ports and trading cities. After arrival these male migrants commonly became part of the large emigrant communities in maritime cities.

The migration of male family members was a family strategy for socioeconomic advancement or survival, and a practice that was common among all social layers. Income from long-distance traders, shop owners, apprentices, and artisans, but also manual laborers, itinerant peddlers, and beggars, could help sustain the family as an economic unit. Such family strategies were not different in early modern Europe, but in China labor migration to support the family was limited to men. While Chinese husbands and fathers moved to cities in search for work, wives and children remained in their homes. In the European life cycle, women moved from rural areas to cities to work outside their family home in domestic service; in China, female labor outside the house was considerably less customary. The export of male labor reinforced the Chinese gendered division of labor. While men earned an income away from home, women stayed at home fulfilling all sorts of productive, reproductive, and managerial tasks. Historians have described the family economic system in Ming and Qing China as a system that was built around male migration and female domestic labor.

Immigrant communities in Chinese cities in the Qing period reflect the typical Chinese male migration pattern. Whereas early modern European cities were characterized by a surplus of women, Chinese migrant cities harbored far fewer women than men. Large commercial cities, such as Guangzhou and Yangzhou, were multiethnic places with many immigrant communities, in which male sojourners, merchants, and commoners formed the core population. The formation of neighborhoods and associations in Qing Chinese commercial cities mirrored this male immigration pattern. Male immigrants formed neighborhoods along ethnic or occupational group lines, and they set up so-called *huiguans* (often described as guilds), native-place associations that served male travelers, sojourners, and merchants and that became powerful organizations in urban society.

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Whereas immigrant women occupied a large proportion of the urban labor markets in early modern Europe, Chinese women were much less active in the urban economy. European urban economies attracted many female migrants who found work as spinners and weavers in the textile industries. Chinese women's labor contributed to the production of textiles as well, but their spinning and weaving activities commonly took place at home and in rural areas. Skilled urban weavers who produced for urban markets were mainly men, while women were unskilled handicraft workers in peasant households. Women near Yangzhou were spinning and weaving in such small quantities that they hardly contributed to the urban economy. The labor of Chinese women predominantly took place indoors and out of sight, not outside the home in the form of wage labor or gainful employment.[10]

The typical male migration pattern did stimulate female urban migration in a particular way, however. As men commonly moved to urban centers without their wives and families, male migrants pursued sexual relationships with women in the destinations to which they migrated. Red-light districts in commercial and maritime cities attracted single female migrants who earned a living as prostitutes, courtesans, or entertainers. Female urban immigration was also stimulated by the practice of selling and buying women as concubines or second wives. As a typical sojourner city, in which presumably non-natives outnumbered locals, Yangzhou was a lively marketplace of sexual services and wife selling. The women who either voluntarily found work as prostitutes or courtesans, or who were bought by merchants and officials as second wives, came from outside the city. Yangzhou's sexual industry may have been exceptionally large, but immigrant prostitutes and concubines were common in all large Chinese cities under the Qing.[11]

It is important to note that gendered labor patterns were not static, and women's roles and labor opportunities may have changed in the early modern period as a result of commercialization and monetization. Several historians have pointed to the impact of the growth of large cities throughout the late Ming and mid-Qing period on gender ideologies and women's roles. Changing intellectual ideas about gender may have resulted in increasing

10 Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

11 Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, The Princeton Economic History of the Western World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 102–103; Bonnie G. Smith, *Women's History in Global Perspective* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Matthew H. Sommer, *Polyandry and Wife-Selling in Qing Dynasty China: Survival Strategies and Judicial Interventions* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

activities of women in textile workplaces and a greater emphasis on companionship in sexual relationships between men and women. Recent scholarship advises caution in the assessment of changes in gender ideologies and their impact on women's lives between the late Ming and mid-Qing eras.[12]

In sum, the degree of female labor market participation can in part explain the divergent patterns of women's share in urban migration of Western Europe and China. In early modern Europe, migrant women formed a large share of the urban economy, in which they commonly worked as domestic servants or textile workers. Chinese urban labor markets, on the other hand, predominantly engaged male migrants and rarely women except in sexual services, concubinage, and wife selling.

Family Systems

Family systems may be a third important explanatory factor for variation in migration patterns of men and women within Eurasia. Women's proportion in the urban labor market and their likelihood of moving to cities were largely related to the level of freedom in relation to inheritance and marriage practices. Differences in family systems within Europe may have led to important divergences in the movements of women and their likelihood of leaving home.The absolute nuclear family signified relative freedom to choose a marriage partner and relatively equal inheritance laws, while the authoritarian family featured impartible inheritance and exogamous marriages arranged by the parents. In the latter system, family ties are strong, and children live at home until marriage; in the absolute nuclear system, weak family ties are reflected in a relatively early age of leaving home, a relatively long period of independence before marriage, late marriage, and high percentages of single people and of one-parent families. The absolute nuclear family system in northwestern Europe gave women more opportunities to work outside the home and enhanced their freedom to move independently.[13]

12 Rubie S. Watson and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, eds., *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*, Studies on China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 204–230; Phillip C. C. Huang and Kathryn Bernhardt, eds., *The History and Theory of Legal Practice in China: Toward a Historical-Social Jurisprudence*, The Social Sciences of Practice (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 29–50.

13 Manon van der Heijden, "Explaining Crime and Gender in Europe between 1600 and 1900," in *Women's Criminality in Europe, 1600–1914*, ed. Manon van der Heijden, Marion Pluskota, and Sanne Muurling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Thomas Kuehn, "Gender and Law in Milan," in *A Companion to Late Medieval and Early Modern Milan: The Distinctive Features of an Italian State*, ed. Andrea Gamberini, Brill's

Whereas the absolute nuclear family was common in early modern northwestern Europe, the absolute authoritarian family system was more often found in Ming and Qing China. The two family systems strongly influenced women's migration patterns. The average age of marriage in Qing China was much lower, and after marriage family ties remained stronger than in early modern Western Europe. In the northern regions of Europe, young people became servants in another household before marriage, and they started independent households after marriage. In China, marriage remained a contract between families and was aimed at continuing the father's family name and securing care for parents. The authoritarian family patterns made the household composition in Qing China more extensive and complex than the small nuclear households in Western Europe.[14]

In both Qing China and northwestern Europe, migration was part of family strategies and connected to the nature of the family system. Whereas in early modern Europe both young and women moved outside the home to find work, often at nearby locations, in early modern China it was predominantly men and rarely women who left home to provide for family income. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, migration as a family strategy increasingly became embedded in the Chinese family system, which strengthened concepts of native place and gender hierarchy. In order to maintain family stability during the absence of husbands and fathers, women and especially wives became the hub of the family and those who kept family ties strong. Migration policies of local governments suggest that family migration did exist but was considered an emergency measure rather than an ongoing practice.[15]

In sum, early modern societies in China and Europe both represented patriarchal cultures in which women were subordinate, but due to women's earlier marriage in China than in Europe and a greater emphasis on native and kin relations, women seem to have had less freedom of movement in

Companions to European History (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 406–431, esp. 416; Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., *Women in the Streets: Essays on Sex and Power in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 37; Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, New Approaches to European History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

14 David Sven Reher, "Family Ties in Western Europe: Persistent Contrasts," *Population and Development Review* 24 (1998), 203–234; Theo Engelen and Arthur P. Wolf, eds., *Marriage and the Family in Eurasia: Perspectives on the Hajnal Hypothesis*, Life at the Extremes, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2005); Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

15 Susan Naquin and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

China. In early modern Europe, short-distance migration of young female family members was part of the life cycle and a common family strategy; in China, female labor migration was not customary, because the export of male labor and the attachment of women to the house was part of the family strategy.

Urban Citizenship and Access to Institutions

Not only did state-led movements and family strategies either stimulate or inhibit female urban migration, women's migrations were influenced by attractions present in urban communities. Urban citizenship and access to urban institutions were crucial in attracting migrants to cities and determining the mode of rural-urban migration.

The distinctive urban citizenship of European cities and towns has been the subject of continuing debate in comparative research on European and Chinese cities. In short, the notion of European urban citizens, as opposed to Chinese subjects, entailed mutual obligations and continual negotiations between civic groups and local governments regarding citizen's rights and institutions and processes of inclusion and exclusion. European urban citizens could develop common policies and institutions of their own that were not subject to the directives of a central government. The distinction between European citizens and Chinese subjects should be problematized, however. We tend to overestimate the impact of institutions in European history, while overlooking informal and formal ways of negotiation in China. In addition, citizenship arrangements in European towns varied greatly across countries and time periods, and access to urban institutions was often limited to certain groups. Thus, historians may generally agree that European urban communities were characterized by numerous civic institutions that empowered citizens, but we should be wary of generalizing about a China–Europe dichotomy with regard to the notion of citizenship. Looking at what cities have to offer in terms of rights and services may help us understand why people settled (permanently) in urban centers and the extent to which migrants depended on ethnic or kin networks when migrating and resettling.[16]

Two analytical models arise, one called full citizenship and the other ethno-national. The full citizenship model is found in early modern European

16 Maarten Prak, *Citizens without Nations: Urban Citizenship in Europe and the World, c. 1000–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–23; Hilde De Weerdt, "Considering Citizenship in Imperial Chinese History," *Citizenship Studies* 23 (2019), 256–276.

cities in which urban institutions offered citizens support for poor relief, regulation of the labor market, and a shared public sphere, which transcended ethnic or kin ties. In this inclusive model, migrants had relatively high access to urban services and rural-urban links were weak. In the ethnonational model, access to urban services is institutionally segregated along ethnic and religious lines, and immigrants nurture strong ties with their place of origin. The latter may have existed in Ming and Qing China, and would explain why most migrants would group in so-called *huiguans*, the ethnic associations that were strongly tied to the home village.[17]

It is important to note that there were many differences between Chinese cities, and strong native-place relations did not always stand in the way of a common urban identity. The example of Yangzhou shows that different groups of migrants developed different types of identity. While some immigrant groups maintained strong native-place ties and identified themselves through ethnic-kin relations, other immigrants did develop a common identity through multilingual merchant networks. The European urban ideal of citizenship and corporate institutions that supported the interests of citizens was more diverse in practice as well. In reality, a large proportion of the population in urban communities were not formal citizens, and most migrants were to a large extent excluded from civic institutions. At the same time, it was possible for newcomers to gain access to urban provisions, such as guilds and poor relief, and some became part of the urban elite with relative ease. In early modern Amsterdam, the authorities gave outsiders access to their welfare system, because the benefits of including poor immigrants and their contribution as workers to the economy outweighed their cost. Recent comparative work on citizens argues that urban associations like craft guilds were less exclusionary of migrants than is often assumed.[18]

Overall, compared to European cities, settlement practices of Chinese migrants were more focused on kin and native-place ties, and their pattern of integration was less institutional. The exclusion of migrants in Chinese cities from urban institutions and the focus on kin and native-place ties may have

17 Leo Lucassen, "Population and Migration," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, 664–682.

18 Marjolein 't Hart and Manon van der Heijden, "'City Air Sets You Free': Autonomy and Rivalry in the Early Modern Netherlands," in *Living in the City: Urban Institutions in the Low Countries, 1200–2010*, ed. Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, Routledge Studies in Cultural History (New York: Routledge, 2012), 63–83; Marc Boone and Maarten Prak, eds., *Individual, Corporate and Judicial Status in European Cities (Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period)* (Leuven: Garant, 1996); Manon van der Heijden, *Civic Duty: Public Services in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

hindered them from settling permanently in cities. In European cities, migrants had better access to urban institutions and networks and they focused less on their home village, which made it more likely that they would settle permanently in the town they moved to. The exclusion of rural migrants from urban institutions did not apply to the state-led movements, both in the Ming-Qing period and thereafter, where migrants in the military often settled with entire households as a separate class that enjoyed rights and privileges upon arrival.

The question is whether the relatively open access to urban institutions in European cities applied to migrant women as well, and whether this factor can in part explain the gap between migration of Chinese women and European women in the period between 1600 and 1800. The answer is not straightforward, and is primarily based on the available information on migrant women's access to urban institutions in early modern Europe. Due to their structurally subordinate position, women were generally excluded from urban institutions such as the craft guilds. The exclusion of women from the incorporated trades greatly diminished the work opportunities of women in general and migrant women in particular. For that reason, female migrants often ended up in the lower, poorly paid, and insecure parts of the labor market, as textile workers and domestic servants. However, urban institutions in Europe were attractive to migrant women too. Despite the efforts of craft guilds to restrict women's work, women were not completely excluded from the corporate world. Mixed-gender craft guilds did exist and allowed women to become apprentices and members, particularly in retail. In exceptional cases, such as the French seamstresses in the eighteenth century, women established their own guilds.

Urban governments had various motives to open the labor market for women and to give them access to institutions. In times of economic growth, cities needed highly skilled and unskilled labor. In the Dutch Golden Age (1580–1650) cities actively recruited migrants to meet the demand for labor. Female textile workers in the city of Leiden predominantly came from outside Holland. In other European cities, craft guilds incorporated women as well, and often for the same reason: by incorporation they gained control over the rapidly growing female labor force. Incorporation of women was regarded as a source of social stability in urban environments that were increasingly characterized by a surplus of women.[19]

19 Ariadne Schmidt, "Women and Guilds: Corporations and Female Labour Participation in Early Modern Holland," *Gender & History* 21 (2009), 170–189; Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, "Employment, Education and Social Assistance: The Economic Attraction of Early Modern Cities," in *Living in the City*, 84–102.

Female migrants may also have been attracted by another institution that European cities offered: the urban welfare system. Urban authorities were well aware of the difficult situation of single migrant women; it motivated their willingness to entitle such women to poor relief. In Holland, migrants were usually entitled to receive poor relief only after a period of six to eight years' residence, but single migrant women did receive poor relief as well. The inclusion or exclusion of migrants from public support was determined by practical considerations based on poverty and need, demand, and available budget. Research on female migration movements from the German town Husum to Amsterdam shows that migrant women were especially attracted to the city because of its beneficial system of poor relief. Although most women probably came to Amsterdam seeking work, others were attracted by the charity system that included generous poor relief and free medical care. Migrant women seemed to be very well informed about the relatively open access to the urban institutions, which may have been an important consideration in moving to the city.[20]

Conclusion

This chapter explored gender diversity in urban migration patterns in Western Europe and China between c. 1600 and 1800. Source limitations, uneven historical data, and scholarly emphasis on Europe make it difficult to undertake a comprehensive comparison, but based on the extensive literature on global migration patterns, it is possible to draw some tentative conclusions. Due to a high degree of urbanization in Europe, the majority of migrants moved to cities, while in Ming-Qing China more than half of the migrants were moving to peripheral areas. In addition, the proportion of women moving to cities appears to have been considerably higher in Western Europe than in China. Whereas in Europe cities were characterized by a surplus of women, Chinese cities featured high concentrations of unmarried men (in part related to the widespread practice of female infanticide).

The divergent patterns of women's share in urban migration patterns in Western Europe and China can be explained by various factors. First,

20 Ingrid van der Vlis, *Leven in armoede: Delftse bedeelden in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2001); Ariadne Schmidt and Manon van der Heijden, "Women Alone in Early Modern Dutch Towns: Opportunities and Strategies to Survive," *Journal of Urban History* 42 (2016), 21–38; Lotte van de Pol and Erika Kuijpers, "Poor Women's Migration to the City: The Attraction of the Amsterdam Health Care and Social Assistance in Early Modern Times," *Journal of Urban History* 32, 1 (2005), 44–60.

the degree of female labor market participation played an important role. Whereas Chinese urban labor markets predominantly employed targeted male migrants and rarely women, in Western Europe migrant women formed a large share of the urban economy. Second, the divergent family systems of early modern China and Europe led to different family migration strategies. Due to women's earlier marriage and a greater emphasis on native and kin relations, Chinese women were more attached to the house and, in contrast to male labor export, female labor migration was not customary. European women seemed to have had more freedom of movement in Europe than in China, because short-distance migration of young female family members was part of the life cycle and a common family strategy. Finally, the high share of women in urban migration in Europe can in part be explained by the relatively open access to institutions in Western European cities. Although access to urban institutions was more evident to male migrants, migrant women, too, seemed to have been attracted by services offered by urban institutions.

Further Reading

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