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Regulating Transnational Flows of People: An Institutional Analysis of Passports and Visas as a Regime of Mobility[1]

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This article challenges the widely held "mobility thesis" by examining the current regime of mobility in regulating transnational flows of people—namely, passports and visas—from an institutionalist perspective. An institutional device linking individuals to the state, the passport is a manifestation of both citizenship and sovereignty. As such, the passport has to be situated in a broader international context in which "organized hypocrisy" (Krasner 1999) underlies the principle of sovereignty. Furthermore, through the "rite of institutions" (Bourdieu 1991), the passport provides foundations for identification, classification, and trust for individuals. The Taiwan passport provides vivid illustrations of how identification, classification, and trust have been breached by organized hypocrisy and how such a breaching has been experienced by individual citizens. However, it is also shown that some capable individuals, through the leverage of their economic power, are able to circumvent or even take tactical advantage of the current system. The political overtone of the Taiwan passport has exposed the nature of the regime of mobility that has often been depoliticized and undertheorized. Just as passports issued by different states are of different values, there has been an inequality of mobility structured by power asymmetries and economic inequalities in the world system. Such an inequality of mobility may have become enlarged under the impact of globalization but has gone mostly unnoticed. Individuals may try to increase their mobility through various economic means, but differentiated access to mobility may have further reproduced and enhanced unequal social, economic, and political relations.

Key Words: globalization, citizenship, sovereignty, institutional aspects of identity politics, Taiwan (the Republic of China)

One of the defining features of our global age, it is asserted, is an unprecedented high degree of mobility. As Arjun Appaduarai (1996) has idiomatically put it, transnational flows of people, money, images, technologies, and ideas have constitute what he calls "ethnoscapes," "financescapes," "mediascapes," "technoscapes," and "ideoscapes," respectively. In a similar fashion, scholars writing on (post)modernity and globalization have used terms such as "liquidity," "fluidity," "mobile subjects and objects," or "flux" to capture the nature or key transfor-

mations of our age (Bauman 2000; Beck 1999; Hannerz 1992; Lash and Urry 1994; Urry 2000). While some hail the increased mobility of subjects and objects in the brave new world, which entails the liberation from bonds with localities, groupness, and communities, some consider it potentially hazardous, hence posing new problems to the existing political order. It is generally assumed that we now live in a turbulent world in which the state is gradually losing its capacities in regulating these transnational flows (Joppke 1998; Rosenau 1997; Sassen 1996) and that we are moving from a "national" to a "post-national" model of citizenship (Soysal 1994). In terms of border controls some draw on the increasing number of passport unions or harmonized visa policies to argue that the state is gradually loosening up its border controls, or that state's efforts in controlling its bounded territoriality have proven to be ineffective or futile[2] (O'Byrne 2001; Salter 2003).

While most literature takes the (hyper)mobility as given, this article does not. Sharing common concerns with other authors in this issue, this article calls into question the widely held "mobility thesis," which posits that people and things are "freer" to move around the globe than before. The question is not so much about the overall rise or decline of mobility, but how such mobility has been formed, regulated, and distributed around different regions and areas and how the formation, regulation, and distribution of such mobility are shaped and patterned by existing social, political, and economic structures of the contemporary world.

Indeed, transnational flows of people, capital, services, information, etc., do not take place in a vacuum; instead, most of them are channeled through institutional conduits of various sorts. For one thing, people are considered more mobile than before, as the distance, volume, and frequency of their traveling has become much higher than was possible before. However, not everybody can move across national boundaries with equal freedom, nor can people go wherever they want, as transnational flows of people are usually found potentially disturbing to the existing social and political order established and maintained by modern nation-states. Previous studies on this phenomenon, therefore, tend to be concerned with international migration, citizenship, and nationality (e.g., Castles and Davidson 2000; Cornelius et al. 1992; Soysal 1994). But behind these apparent issues, there are some problems more fundamental to the transnational flows of people. For instance, when national borders are crossed, the following questions immediately ensue: Who can be admitted into a country and who cannot? For how long is one allowed to stay? Is s/he entitled to reside, work, or enjoy other entitlements during her/his stay? On a theoretical level, we may formulate the question more generally: On what criteria do the state officials make the decision about admission? What kinds of practices does the state exercise in order to regulate these transnational flows of people? What are the effects and consequences of these practices? And, finally, how do people respond to these institutional practices?

To explore the answers to the above questions, this article chooses passports and visas as a strategic site of investigation. The aim of the study is modest and exploratory. Passports and visas form what I call "a regime of mobility" that has

been specifically designed by the state to control the movement of people. Through examining the practice surrounding passports and visas, we can better understand how the state exercises its control over the transnational flows of people and we can see how and why these flows are being regulated and constrained.

In terms of theory, the study takes an institutionalist approach to echo the recent development in related fields (Brubaker 1996; Brubaker and Cooper 2000). As passports and visas are major institutional devices for the state to regulate flows of people, an institutionalist approach will well suit our purpose of inquiry.[3] Methodologically speaking, this study focuses on institutional analysis substantiated by ethnographical data, which stands close to Dorothy Smith's (1987) notion of "institutional ethnography." On the one hand, it tries to identify and analyze a complex of patterns forming part of the ruling apparatus, organized around the distinctive function of passports and visas; on the other hand, through ethnographic data, it is shown how social relations mediated through institutions are actually experienced by individuals, thereby providing us with insights into how passports and visas as a regime of mobility "actually" work. The case I shall focus to investigate is the passport of Taiwan, which has rare and somewhat "exceptional" qualities with a political overtone not often seen elsewhere. It is a "pathological case," so to speak, that can be diagnostic to our system and help to shed new light on our understanding of how the system works in a "normal" situation.[4]

In the following, I shall first develop an analytical framework from an institutionalist perspective to investigate passports and visas as a regime of mobility. Next, I shall examine issues surrounding Taiwan's passport to illustrate some of the features of this regime of mobility. In the concluding section, I shall discuss inequalities of mobility and their social, economic, and political implications.

Theorizing the passport and visa regime: An institutionalist account

Sovereignty and citizenship: Linking individuals to the state

Until recently, the passport has been a marginal concern in most disciplines. It is so partly because the passport does not play a significant role in our daily life and partly because it is a system that lacks symmetric standardizations. As a result, passports and visas have received scant scholarly attention, not only in the social science but also in international law (Turack 1972). However, they have received increasing interests in recent years and there have emerged systematic investigations into the passport and visa issues (Salter 2003; Torpey 2000). This tendency is quite understandable in the current trend of globalization. Passport and visas used to play merely a marginal role in daily routines of ordinary people; however, as border-crossing has become commonplace in recent years, passports and visas are now playing an increasingly significant role to a spreading number of individuals.

As John Torpey (2000) has pointed out in his groundbreaking work, the history

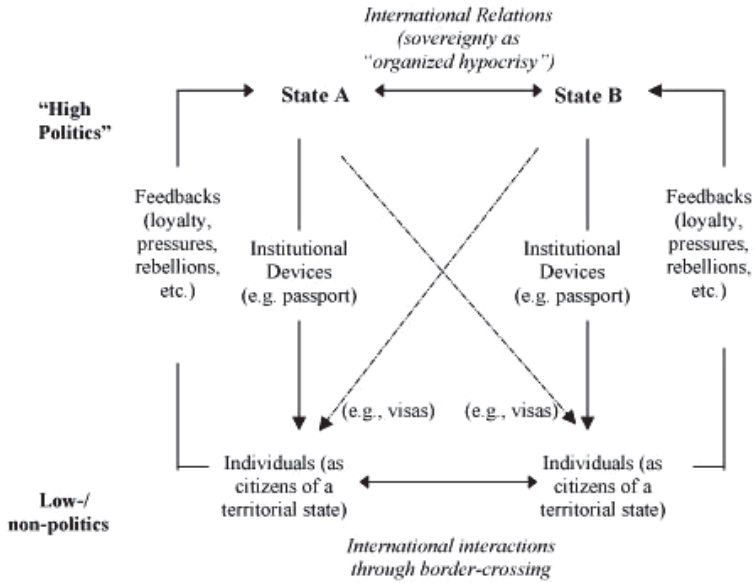

Figure 1. An analytical framework of passports and visas as a regime of mobility linking individuals to states.

of the passport has been intertwined with the formation and development of modern nation-states since the French Revolution. As an institution, passports and visas are important for the nation-state to demarcate its territorial boundaries and to control the movement of people, including both citizens and noncitizens. Moreover, the passport and visa system, which calls for the need of international coordination, was not fully developed until the First World War, under the framework of the League of the Nations. It thus follows that passports and visas cannot be studied alone; rather, they have to be situated in the broader context of international relations.

Seen together, the passport and the visa are institutional devices that link the state to individuals, behind which state sovereignty and individual citizenship are signified, respectively. Such relationships can be shown schematically in Figure 1. On the top of the figure is what is usually called "sovereignty." A concept central to international relations and widely used in political language, sovereignty implies that the state has the ultimate authority over its territory, and that none of other counterparts outside this territory should intervene the internal affairs of such a state. However, as Stephan Krasner (1999) has bluntly pointed out, such a commonly held principle of sovereignty is in fact built on what he calls "organized hypocrisy." The interstate system is neither anarchical, as conceptualized by real-

ism, nor fully institutionalized, as often assumed by neoliberalism. There have been cultural idioms and institutional scripts for the states—thus is the postulate maintained by institutionalist theorists and analysts—but the degree of institutionalization has never been so high as assumed by those theorists and analysts. Laws, agreements, and norms have been violated from time to time, as "logics of consequences" can override "logics of appropriateness" in various occasions. State sovereignty, after all, is nothing more than organized hypocrisy.

Moreover, hypocrisy is not merely a major organizing principle behind state sovereignty; rather, through the agency of a variety of intersecting institutions, organized hypocrisy has had profound (but mostly unrecognized) impact upon our everyday life and daily routines. As Figure 1 shows, on the level of high politics, the two states (state A and state B) grant each other recognition of sovereignty through organized hypocrisy. Through the mediation of institutional effects, the impacts of organized hypocrisy may "trickle down" to the lower level, which consists of fields and spheres that have been characterized by different theoretical perspectives as "private sectors," "civil society," or "life worlds" constituted by individuals. If we use the term "politics" in its narrowest sense by confining it to practices and activities directly pertaining to the state (as is in "high politics"), then most affairs on this level are usually considered low- or nonpolitics. On the other hand, there are feedbacks from the lower level to the higher one, which respond to the state with legitimacy, loyalty, pressures, rebellions, etc. To the other (alien) state, individuals may react with conformity, resistance, or defiance. This we shall discuss later at further length.

Viewed from this framework, passports and visas are an institutional interface that links macro structures (the state) and micro actors (individuals) to each other. As Salter (2002: 8) puts it, "passports can be seen as part of the larger discourse of sovereign statehood and the life-world of international relations that the state engenders." As such, the passport bears dual significance. On the one hand, it embodies the sovereignty of the issuing state; on the other hand, it signifies the citizenship (in terms of legal status) of the bearer. Deficiencies in state sovereignty may lead to inconvenience in using the passport for individual citizens; conversely, disrespects to the passport might well be considered harmful to state sovereignty or doubts in an individual's citizenship. On this nexus, sovereignty and citizenship imply each other.

The visa, in turn, is an accompanied practice with the passport, through which the state can maintain control over the openness/closure of its territory. Again, it is an institutional device that links the state to individuals—but this time not individuals of its own, but of foreign regimes. For this reason, the link is either directly or indirectly affected by the relations between the two states (see Figure 1 for an illustration). This manifests itself in practices such as visa agreements or harmonized visa systems among a selective group of states. For instance, citizens of the Schengen states do not need a passport or visa to cross the internal border, while holders of a Schengen visa may freely enter the signatory countries without apply-

ing for multiple visas. However, the Schengen visa itself is not applied to all other countries without discriminations; some countries are even excluded from its applicability.

Generally speaking, the state may reject issuing visas to certain foreigners for various reasons, but only in a few particular occasions is such a rejection considered harmful to the sovereignty of the foreign state thus concerned. A state can refuse to admit a foreigner into its territory based on individual considerations without necessarily offending the state behind this alien person. However, if such a rejection is based on a systematic misrecognition, derecognition, or discrimination against the travel document an individual holds, it may be considered a serious problem. For instance, after the 9/11 attack, the United States government took particular precautions against the visas issued to citizens from the Islamic countries that were considered to be associated with terrorist activities. Such precautions were seen as an insult not only to the individuals, but also to other states and/or communities thus involved.

Figure 1 shows only a simplified model between two states, but it can be generalized in a multistate system as well. This model is important for us to understand how passports and visas work. As will be made clear below, relations between two states, as well as relations between the state and individual citizens, are crucial to the practice of passports and visas as a regime of mobility. To be sure, hypocrisy is marked by inconsistency where there is always potential contradiction between what is said and what is done. This is observed not only on the state level, but also on the individual level in Figure 1. However, since the individual level is often seen as "nonpolitical" or "low-political," what individuals experience in the passport/visa practice tends to be depoliticized. In fact, the liberal–egalitarian doctrine "all men and women have equal rights" commonly assumed is as hypocritical as the principle "all states are sovereign." This can be clearly observed in the practice of passport, which identifies, classifies, and evaluates people along the line of "trustworthy vs. untrustworthy." We shall examine how this process takes place in the next section.

From "rites of passage" to "rites of institution:" Identification, classification, and trust

> "You ought to have some papers to show who you are." The police officer advised me.
> "I do not need any paper. I know who I am," I said.
> "Maybe so. Other people are also interested in knowing who you are."
> (B. Traven, *The Death Ship*, quoted in Marx [2001: 300])

The above conversation in Traven's *The Death Ship* actually takes place in our daily routines. Despite that a woman or man knows who s/he is, when encountered by a stranger, s/he needs a piece of paper—and not just any piece of paper, but one

of a trustworthy kind—to convince others who s/he really is.

Indeed, the presumption that "one needs a document to convince others of who s/he is" is widely assumed, almost automatically, in the passport practice. Everyday at the immigration checkpoints around the world, passengers are expected to present their passport or other equivalent document to the inspector in order to prove who they "really" are.[5] The process of passport inspection at the checkpoint is not dissimilar to the "rite of passage" famously formulated by Arnold van Gennep and later by Victor Turner (1969).[6] At the first phase, a passenger is detached from her/his original position in the previous social structure—be s/he a home-returnee or a visitor. During the inspection process at the immigration checkpoint, s/he is put in a liminal stage—albeit rather short in a normal situation—during which questions regarding her/his identity and future fate (who s/he is, whether s/he can be admitted, for how long, etc.) are pending. After a decision is made, s/he is assigned once again to a certain social position in a new structure in the receiving country—as a citizen, a legal resident, an alien visitor, a deportee, etc.

As Heyman (2004) and Gilboy (1991) have shown in their ethnographic studies, the actual inspection process at the checkpoint is much more complicated than ideally sketched above, while the passport (and visa) is by no means the sole basis on which a decision is made. Indeed, the passport (or its equivalent) is merely a necessary but not sufficient condition to be admitted into a country, but this sheer fact has already pinpointed the centrality of institutionally supported documents in identification. During this rite of passage, the passport has performed the kind of social magic characterized by Pierre Bourdieu as "rites of institution:"

> The act of institution is thus an act of communication, but of a particular kind: it signifies to someone what his identity is, but in a way that both expresses it to him and imposes it on him by expressing it *in front of everyone and thus informing him in an authoritative manner of what he is and what he must be* (1991: 121, italics added).

In other words, identity is about *both* self-recognition *and* recognition by others (Berger and Luckman 1967: 132; Calhoun 1994: 20). It is precisely such a "social magic" that the passport performs in the "rite of institution" at the border.[7]

Moreover, institutions classify people and things (Douglas 1986: 91–110). As the passport signifies sovereignty and citizenship, its significance in the global classification scheme cannot be overemphasized:

> From a global perspective, to be sure, citizenship is virtually universal. In this perspective, *citizenship is an international filing system, a mechanism for allocating persons to states*. The citizens of a given state comprise the fraction of the world population that "belongs" to that state, rather than to some other state. In a world divided among exhaustive and mutually exclusive jurisdictions of sovereign states, it is axiomatic that every person ought to have a citizenship, that everyone ought to belong to one state or another (Brubaker 1992: 31, italics added).

By bestowing citizenship on individuals through the passport, the state has power-

fully shaped the self-image of individuals within its territory (Krasner 1988) and this self-image is then to be presented in front of others in an authoritative manner through the performative magic of institutions. It is through the mediation of state's institutions that "national affairs" have been turned into "personal matters" and that "national identity" has been conflated with the identification with the state. When one travels overseas, s/he must present her/himself as a national—or rather, a citizen—of a certain nation-state by showing a passport to the authority of another nation-state.[8]

As previous studies have pointed out, inspectors at the borders rely heavily, although by no means solely, on paperwork to categorize people and commodities crossing the border (Gilboy 1991; Heyman 2001; see also Heyman 2004). By providing the identity information of the holder, the passport performs the function of classification at the same time. People are "classified," in its dual sense, according to their nationality, ethnicity, and so on, so that the classification of "desirable vs. undesirable" and "trustworthy vs. untrustworthy" can be made immediately. Such a classification, then, forms the foundation of decision as to whether the passport holder should be admitted or not. Since the primary inspectors have to make a decision under time pressure—normally within two to three minutes—the passport becomes an important document that state officials tend to rely on, behind which hidden assumptions and cultural/ethnic stereotypes are then generated (Gilboy 1991).[9]

The third "social magic" that the rites of institutions perform is trust. Previous studies on the passport regime can largely be characterized by what I call the "surveillance perspective"—that is, the passport, along with the visa system, is an institutional device by the state to enhance its surveillance over the move of the people, whether of its citizens or of foreigners (Torpey 2000; also cf. Giddens 1985; Kumar 2000). It is certainly true that there are strong motives of surveillance behind state's efforts to monitor the movement of people, but surveillance need not be the only focus of our inquiry. In fact, official documentations such as passports and visas bear other facets of significance that have not been fully explored. It is the institutional basis of trust (Zucker 1986) that I shall focus on here.

As pointed out by scholars in various fields, institutions provide ontological, cognitive, and normative bases for our society (Berger and Luckmann 1967; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Douglas 1986; Scott 1994). In the modern world, most of these institutions are ultimately intertwined with the national state (Meyer et al. 1987, 1997; Thomas et al.1987). The widely circulated story of French peasant Martin Guerre testifies to such a need—but surely the case can be reversed in a certain way.[10] Arnaud du Thil could easily claim to be Martin Guerre by merely forging an identification card, but still, it is the official documentation onto which people bestow their trust and good faith.

Transnational flows of people imply that people are crossing national boundaries on a much more frequent and regular basis than before. Under such circumstances, people have much higher chances of encountering a person from a distant

location beyond the national boundaries. In such a globalized world, how do we maintain our trust in other people in our daily life and where does this trust come from? How can we be assured the man whom we met at the airport, on the street, or in a shop, who claims to be Martin Guerre of France, is not actually another Arnaud du Thil?

It is often said that, due to globalization, there are an increasing number of institutions—such as international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs)—that are emerging as alternative sources to provide trust; however, in effect and in the last analysis, it is the nation-state that remains the major provider of institutional trust (cf. Meyer et al. 1997). In an international or transnational context, official documents such as passports or birth certificates often have "high truth claim" regarding one's citizenship and nationality (Anderson 1998: 69). In this sense, institutions of the nation-state provides with us what Anthony Giddens (1991) has called "ontological security." As Wang (2002) has pointed out, citizenship is now both *modus operandi* and *opus operatum* in the contemporary world of nation-states. Our ontological security sometimes needs to be endorsed by bureaucratic and juridical apparatus, which is when state's documentation such as the passport and the visa is considered of high truth value. In this light, passports and visas, by signifying one's legal status in an official document, provide the institutional foundation of trust during international or transnational encounters.

As the passport can be said to be ubiquitous nowadays, it would appear somewhat curious that there is a lack of standardized symmetric patterns in the passport and visa practice (Mongia 1999: 527). However, if we consider it from the framework in Figure 1, it becomes quite understandable. Passports and visas are heavily influenced by the relations between two states, which, in turn, are structured by larger political and economic relationships in world polity. As a result, the institutional process of trust, identification, and, above all, classification associated with the practice of the passport is heavily influenced by the state, the relationships between states, and the symbolic image of the collective community (the "nation") behind such a state. When presenting a passport to the inspector at the checkpoint, people find themselves being identified, classified, and evaluated by the inspector according to the state (and nation) behind such a piece of document.

The above system, however, is not watertight, nor are individual travelers, be they of native or foreign origins, inactive recipients of state power. There have been numerous attempts by individuals to bypass, circumvent, temporize and take advantage of such a system. While some of these attempts are legal, some are not. To illustrate how passports and visas as a regime of mobility actually work and how individuals experience and respond to such a regime, we now turn to the case of the Taiwan passport,[11] one that a fuss has been made over by people both inside and outside of Taiwan. Our focus of inquiry, then, will shift from "how the state regulates flows of people through passport/visa measures" to "how passports and visas are actually used by individual travelers when they cross the border." It has to be noted, however, that all materials presented below are for the heuristic pur-

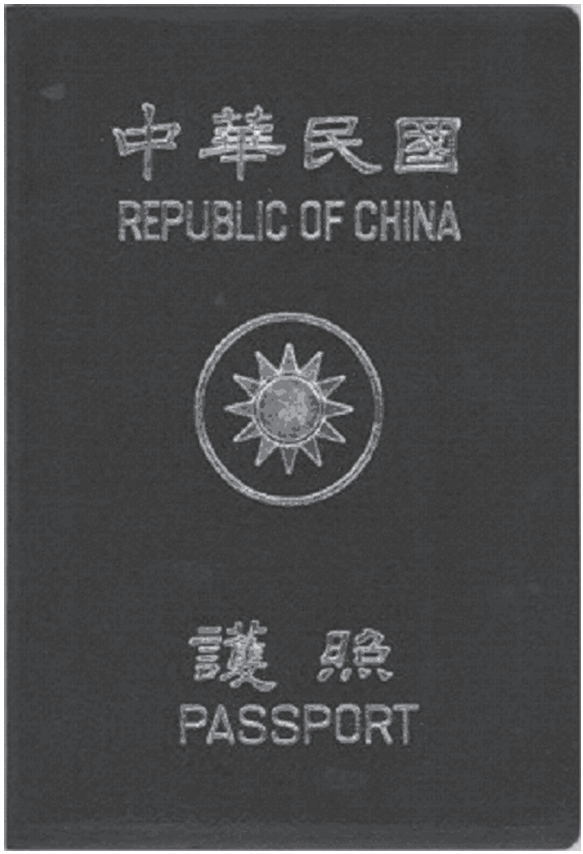

Figure 2. An old version of the ROC passport.

pose only. In other words, by illustrating these cases and stories, I do not imply that *all* Taiwanese people holding the Republic of China (ROC) passport have undergone similar difficulties. Instead, what is implied here is simply that, in a scenario in which a dubious passport or visa is concerned, we can clearly see how institutional foundations of identification, classification, and trust are systematically breached and how people react to mend such a breaching.[12]

The "passport problem" in Taiwan

The passport as a breached institutional device and a contested terrain

The passport of Taiwan can be said one of rare exceptions in the world. It is con-

sidered "rare" and "exceptional" here in at least two senses. First, with its national title "the Republic of China" (ROC hereafter), Taiwan is rarely recognized as a sovereign state. Officially speaking, most countries in the world recognize only "the People's Republic of China" (PRC), seeing Taiwan's ambiguous international status as merely an "internal affair" of China.[13] As a result, the passport issued by the Taiwanese government is not considered a "valid" official document. Second, since the passport of Taiwan bears only its national title on it—namely, the "Republic of China," a title rarely known to outsiders—without any words indicating "Taiwan," it has caused great confusions to outsiders (see Figure 2). These two rare and exceptional features of the Taiwan's passport have caused troubles of various kinds when one travels with such a document.

Indeed, Taiwan's neither/nor status—neither a state, nor a non-state; neither China, nor non-China—is the very product of organized hypocrisy among strong powers in world politics. The passport, to a certain extent, reflects such organized hypocrisy. In the recent decade, disputes and controversies surrounding the ROC passport have been numerous; some of them were publicly exposed, some of them individually experienced. Most of these discussions proceeded with a political overtone. The materials I shall draw upon include in-depth interviews with frequent individual travelers and travel agents, visa service providers, reports in major newspapers, and travel notes by popular writers. These instantiations should not be seen as sporadic anecdotes only; rather, they reflect systematic patterns of the mobility regime surrounding the Taiwan passport. The major difficulties and troubles one may experience in using the ROC passport can be grouped into two kinds: one is misrecognition, and the other is difficulties in obtaining visas from other countries.

Misrecognition

Since the state of Taiwan is unrecognized by most other states in the world, its authorization of citizenship/nationality is held in question as well. Worse yet, as the ROC passport indicates not "Taiwan" but "China" to be the holder's nationality, it is widely acknowledged that Taiwanese travelers overseas are often mistaken for Chinese citizens (Hu 2003). Troubles concerning passports and visas are often ridiculed when people talk about Taiwan's awkward international status and dubious national identifications. We can find abundant illustrations of such embarrassing, sometimes humiliating, experiences in the works by famous writers such as Long Ying-tai (1996), Kuling (1992), and Chen Fang-Ming (1989). Interestingly enough, most of the incidents concerning misrecognition took place in Europe, many of which are in the Schengen area. One of my interviewees, who has been a frequent international traveler for years, complained:

> I think very few [foreign] people can distinguish between "the Republic of China" and "the People's Republic of China." To most foreigners (Europeans), this distinction is simply incomprehensible (Interview LL1, 6/5/2002, Taipei).

Indeed, to most people in Taiwan, such a complaint reveals nothing new. In newspapers and mass media, we find no shortage of reports about how Taiwanese travelers have been mistaken for Chinese citizens and how they encountered difficulties, misunderstandings, or discriminations due to such misrecognition. There are two general patterns of misrecognition. On the one hand, many Taiwanese travelers were treated as "liars" or suspects of smuggling since their passports were considered a "forgery" of the Chinese passport. On the other hand, however, if the authenticity of the passport is not questioned, then it was the traveler's identity that becomes suspicious to inspectors. Since the nationality indicated on the Taiwan passport shows merely "China" without referring to "Taiwan" anywhere in the document, these travelers from Taiwan were held as citizens of the PRC who "faked" being Taiwanese. In the worse cases, some immigration officers insulted the travelers by saying that these passports were "garbage" (Hong and Hou 2003), while using the Taiwan passport has been characterized as nothing less than "a third-class national" (Long 1996). In a newspaper article that calls the people to replace the ROC passport, a pro-independence activist protests:

> The "ROC" passport can neither "protect" nor "take care of" us; every country takes it as the passport of "pseudo China," daring not stamp directly on it. They even use despising eyes, along with attitudes of treating cheaters, to keep precautions against fake Chinese nationals. Using it has absolutely no dignity at all. Remembering the whole tourist group being frisked and stripped down to the underpants? What was that for? Because of that "China," people thought [by mistake] that the group was from China[14] (Zhu Meng-xiang 1997).

Sometimes, bearing an unrecognized passport is considered even worse than having no passport at all. An illustration can be found in the writing of Huang Zhaotang, an exiled activist of Taiwanese nationalism who lives in Japan with no passport. A typical "stateless" person who does not belong to any state, Huang recalls:

> Once I went to Brazil. I had no passport but only a travel document issued by the Japanese government. On the same flight there were many Taiwan passport holders. At the Immigration Office I had no problems at all, but those from Taiwan were undergoing various sorts of purposeful difficulties. Seeing that, I was thinking: "How could people lead a life with dignity in that circumstance?" (Quoted in Wu Jin-fa 1989: 295–296).

Paradoxically, the Taiwan passport is regarded by many as "more useful" than the Chinese passport. Many western countries welcome Taiwanese visitors more than they do those from the PRC, as the latter have often caused problems concerning smuggling and trafficking in Europe and the Americas alike in the recent decade. The problem, then, lies in misrecognition. Taiwan passport holders tend to find themselves discriminated against when they are mistaken for citizens of the PRC, but once the inspector realizes that they are actually from Taiwan instead of China, they might receive better treatments (Hu 2003).

One has to note, however, that I am not making a political statement regarding Taiwan's international status, nor am I suggesting that Taiwanese people are entitled to better treatments simply because they are economically better off than the PRC. Rather, what I would like to expose is the very hypocritical nature of categorization and classification embodied in the passport practice. According to the logic of appropriateness, the PRC citizens ought to have better access to visas (and admission) than holders of the Taiwan passport, since the latter is rarely recognized as an official travel document due to Taiwan's lack of international recognition as a sovereign state. However, in reality the situation is the opposite. Since Taiwanese visitors have left fewer records of illegal entries and since Taiwanese visitors tend to have stronger purchasing power, they usually receive better treatments at the immigration checkpoint (provided that they are not misrecognized).

Troubles with visas

Since the ROC passport is not officially recognized by most other states, many countries do not issue their visas by directly stamping on the passport. Instead, they issue a separate piece of paper to be attached to the passport, so that *de jure* recognition can be avoided. When the ROC passport holders enter these countries, immigration officials of these countries stamp on that particular piece of paper in lieu of "real visas." In some cases, the officials will retain the piece of paper when the traveler leaves the country, so that no official record will be traced on the passport, as if the traveler has never been to the country. Again, this practice is to avoid leaving any record of *de jure* recognition, which is an illuminating instantiation of organized hypocrisy shown in Figure 1. Since State B does not recognize State A, such non-recognition has affected its visa policy toward citizens of State A. The visa ought not to be shown in the passport, along with other official documents, issued by State A; otherwise it will violate the principle of nonrecognition. Thus, even though a visa is issued nonetheless, it has to be issued on a separate piece of paper, so that no official records will be shown on the passport issued by State A. Such a pretentious—or one is tempted to call it "hypocritical"—practice has caused repugnant feelings from time to time. A popular writer and TV show host criticizes it in a sarcastic tone:

> Most nations do not even issue visas to us [directly]. Some visas have to be acquired through the agency of Hong Kong, and some European nations even issue "political refugee's visa" to Taiwanese travelers—we are even inferior to Hong Kong, which is "utterly not a nation!" (Kuling 1992: 3–4).

In addition to the sentiments of national dignity, some people take it rather personally. During my interview, a frequent individual traveler complained:

> For us travel lovers, we'd like to collect visa stamps as many as possible. It is not only a record of where you have been, but also like a habit of collecting things. But when you travel to these countries, you don't have any record left and you can collect

> nothing. It's really a nuisance! (Interview LL1, 6/5/2002, Taipei).

But the problem is not merely this. More troubles are yet to come during their itineraries when such kinds of visas are actually used. She recalled:

> Because Taiwan is not recognized as a country, the visas we get are different from others' from time to time. For instance, the Turkish visa looks just like a piece of Xerox paper. It makes me feel quite humiliated. . . . [When I was on the road,] I took the bus from Greece to Turkey, and you know what? The bus was delayed for over twenty minutes simply because of [the visas issued to] the two of us, my company and me. The visas on our passports looked so different. [The inspector] simply stared at the piece of the paper and asked: "Is this a real visa?" Because we applied for the visa in Taiwan, and because [the inspectors] had never seen things like this, they thought it was a forgery. Finally they got someone more experienced to check the document, and he said he'd seen such a kind of thing before, so they let us in after all. But the passengers on the bus were all delayed for almost half an hour, and then they'd keep asking us: "Which country are you from?" "What's wrong with your visas?" "Why did it take so long?" It's very humiliating (Interview LL1, 6/5/2002, Taipei).

The inspectors at the Greek checkpoint did not mean to humiliate my interviewee, I believe. It turned out to be a humiliating experience, mostly because the officials had never seen such a thing before; in other words, they could not put in their trust on a dubious travel document, which, in turn, was considered a forgery.[15] In this case, we see the breaching situation of an abnormal visa has caused repugnant feelings to both the passport bearers and to the inspectors. And not only them—even the passengers on the same bus were affected and it was deemed desirable to return to a more "normal" visa situation.

Again, the trust bestowed on the truth-value behind such an official document was breached due to the organized hypocrisy regarding Taiwan's international status. The inspectors did not mean to "make trouble" for those particular travelers, but they simply could not bestow their trust in a seemingly forged paper that they had never seen before. This distrust, in turn, caused existential anxieties, to put it in Giddens's term again, to those passport bearers. The scenario also reminds us of one basic but often overlooked fact: the passports and the visas people have are of very different values.[16] A United States or a British passport can be more useful (and hence more "valuable") in crossing certain borders than many other passports. Bacharach and Gambetta (2001) have pointed out that the central problem of trust lies not in the act of trust itself, but the "secondary problem of trust"—namely, whether we can trust the *signs of trustworthiness* we are confronted with prior to our decision to trust. In this light, passports and visas are indeed "signs of trustworthiness" that constitute the basis for trust. This explains why there have been forged or stolen passports in the black market at a remarkable price and why passports—along with citizenship or residence rights they implies—have been commodified in the migration market.[17]

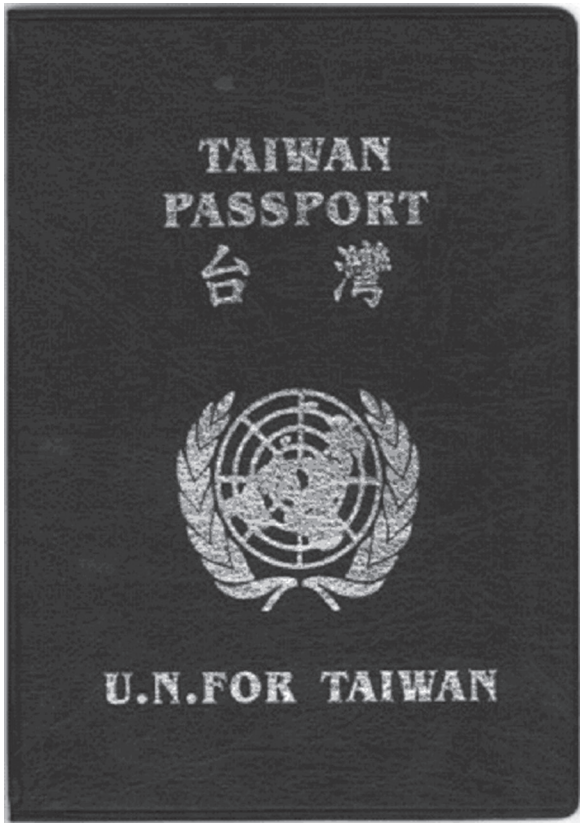

Figure 3. A self-made jacket for the ROC passport showing "Taiwan" on the cover; a campaign slogan "U.N. for Taiwan" is shown at the bottom (courtesy of Wei Er-lang).

Seeking for solutions: efforts by the state and by individuals

The "name rectification" and "adding Taiwan to the passport" campaigns

Recently in Taiwan, there have been a number of efforts to solve or circumvent these "passport problems." As a matter of fact, the passport has been a site of contestation for nationalist politics for years. Some activists of the Taiwan Independence Movement, who insist that the national title should be "Republic of Taiwan" instead of "Republic of China," produced self-made passport jackets that put "Taiwan" on the front (Figure 3). Some of them even produced passport themselves, changing the national title to the "Republic of Taiwan." Interestingly enough, some bearers of this passport were able to use it to obtain visas from other coun-

Figure 4. The passport of the "Republic of Taiwan" issued by an independence movement organization (source: http://www.republicoftaiwan.org).

tries successfully, as the immigration officials were apparently fooled for not knowing its "official validity" (Figure 4).

To many outsiders who are not familiar with Taiwan's situation, it appears quite puzzling why the ROC government cannot simply put "Taiwan" on the passport, nor can they understand why such a simple act should have caused such a big fuss. The answer, once again, lies in organized hypocrisy. If the word "Taiwan" is put on the passport, it implies that Taiwan is an independent sovereign state. Although *de facto* Taiwan can be said to be sovereign, *de jure* it is not and neither the PRC nor the United States would be happy to see that Taiwan is *de jure* recognized as a sovereign state. In other words, under the organized hypocrisy in high politics, the mere act of putting "Taiwan" on the ROC passport would become an international affair that may incur political storms from both inside and outside. The situation persisted even after the pro-Independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government assumed power in 2000. After rounds of debates and under the enor-

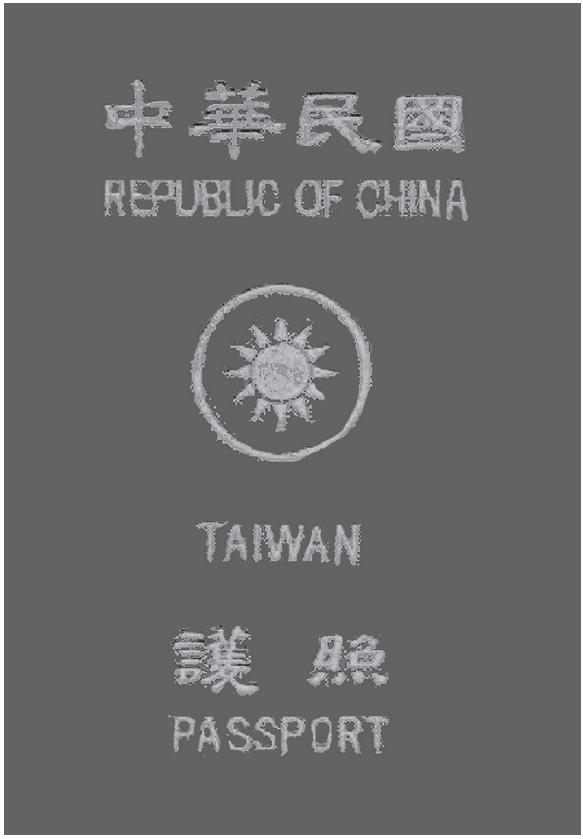

Figure 5. The new version of the ROC passport, with "Taiwan" added to the cover.

mous yet conflicting pressures from both within and without, in September 2003 the ROC government finally resolved to issue a new version of passport with the word "Taiwan" added to its cover (Figure 5). This simple act, again, has aroused fervent debates within Taiwanese society and hostile criticisms from the PRC and it was believed that Washington had been consulted before the decision was made (Zou 2003).

Self-help strategies by individuals: "visa companies" and getting a second passport

The difficulties in getting certain visas have bred commercial interests for a new trade. Since applying for visas from certain countries is quite difficult for Taiwanese people due to ROC's unrecognized international status, there has emerged a new highly professionalized business that helps customers to obtain visas from

certain countries that Taiwanese citizens can hardly get. This business is quite different from what is known as "visa service" in North America. In the latter case, the agents merely act as a proxy for the customers to apply for a visa; in the former case, however, the agents try every possible means for their customers to obtain a visa on the unrecognized ROC passport. In many cases, such kind of visa is impossible to get in Taiwan through formal channels.

To understand how this business works, I interviewed the founder of the Formosa Visa Company,[18] one of the leading firms in this trade. The following is a snatch of conversation between him and me:

> The founder (F): Name a country and I can immediately tell you its visa requirements. Let's say nothing of the US or European countries; they're too common. Let's say, Belarus, Ukraine, Congo, Algeria . . . you name it. Some small countries you may have never heard of, but I can tell you how to get a visa from them.[19] That's our profession.
> Interviewer (I): Any country?
> F: We can't guarantee that we can get the visa for you all the time, but I can assure you that over 95% of our cases are successful.
> I: How did you do that?
> F: There's no secret behind it; we're all legal.
> (Through his explanation, I realized that the passports are sent overseas, mostly to Hong Kong or Bangkok. Combined together, these two cities have embassies or consulates of most countries around the world. Sometimes, the passports are sent to Beijing for a visa.)
> I: Do they [consulates in Beijing] accept applications from Taiwan?
> F: Some of the consulates told us they didn't recognize Taiwan's passport, so we threw the ball back to them: "But didn't you acknowledge that Taiwan is part of China? If you issue visas to the PRC citizens, why can't you issue visas to people who live in Taiwan?" They can hardly refute us.
> I: But how about the reactions from the PRC officials? Do they agree?
> F: Well, this is a very sensitive issue, you know. We have to keep it very low-key. If there's trouble, we'll tell them the same thing: "Aren't you saying that Taiwan is part of China? We are compatriots, right? If so, why can't I apply for a visa from a foreign consulate, just like a usual PRC citizen does?" Again, they can hardly refute it (Interview TV1, 4/11/2002, Taipei).

The regime of mobility and enclosure has thus created a market in which access to mobility is commodified. Visas are differentially priced, following the market law: the harder to get, the higher the price. Toward the end of our conversation, the founder added: "To be frank, as a businessman, I'd rather see the state's borders becoming tighter and the visas hard to get. It's very simple: the harder it is [to get a visa], the more money we can make; otherwise, we can make no money!"

On the other hand, since the ROC passport is not very convenient for international travel, particularly to those frequent travelers, one way to bypass the problem is to get another passport. There also are commercial firms that specialized in

helping customers to get another passport. The purpose is not, or not merely, to emigrate to another country, but to get a second "better" passport. For richer ones, they are able to get United States, Canadian, or Australian passports; for those who cannot afford such an amount of investments, they simply "purchase" passports from some poorer countries such as Belize and Tonga. Passports from different issuing authorities are indeed of very different values, values not only symbolic but also pecuniary, as reflected in their market prices. As a matter of fact, "getting a second passport" is not a new phenomenon peculiar to Taiwan; there have been businesspersons and entrepreneurs from western countries who are motivated to obtain another passport to increase their global business opportunities (cf. O'nes 1990). However, the motive and the significance of getting a second passport for Taiwan passport holders have been quite different. In addition to rich political and symbolic meanings, it means the increase of "mobility" in a dual sense: an "upward mobility" in the social stratification of the world (becoming a citizen of a stronger state such as the United States or Canada) and the increased mobility in crossing most borders around the world.

Nowadays, it has become a common practice among Taiwanese people (particularly businesspersons) to acquire a second or third passport in order to facilitate their international travels. As the passport signifies both state sovereignty and individual citizenship, getting a second passport bears some political implications as well. In this regard, the passport means nothing less than a political talisman for individuals. Since Taiwan's political future is uncertain and is particularly dependent on the power politics between the PRC and the United States, there have always been worries about political instability. A second passport may insure that there is another place to flee should Taiwan be threatened or even overtaken by the PRC by force.[20]

It has to be noted that most of these self-help practices are formally legal. Unlike those attempts known as illegal—such as smuggling and forged passports—these efforts are largely made through legal institutional channels. However, I am not suggesting that these "legal" practices of circumventing, or even taking tactic advantage of, the current institutions are morally "better" or more desirable than illegal ones. Rather, what I intend to highlight here is the *economic power* that enable certain people to do things through legal channels. Put more specifically, Taiwanese travelers in general can well afford the high price of legal entry. They are either able to pay extra costs for visas hard to acquire or to pass the thresholds (mostly economic ones) to obtain a second passport that can afford them higher degrees of mobility.

Conclusion

In the above, I have developed an analytical framework from an institutionalist perspective to investigate passports and visas as a regime of mobility. Through examining issues pertaining to the problematic Taiwan passport, I have also dem-

onstrated that mobility is structured by, but does not necessarily correspond to, political and economic inequalities in the world system. The political overtone surrounding the Taiwan passport has exposed a few natures of the current regime of mobility that has often been depoliticized and undertheorized.[21] In a globalized world in which transnational flows of people become phenomenal, it is increasingly likely that the passport serves as a presumed official document of identification worldwide. In a sense, this has enhanced the linkage between individuals and the state. In addition to the apparent function of identification, the passport bears the imprints of class and classification in the world system that are transmitted to individual passport holders. A dubious passport, moreover, may breach the institutional foundation of trust and thus cause great troubles to its bearer.

The Taiwan passport also raises the question concerning unequal degrees of mobility. The "mobile subjects," as conceptualized by theorists such as Scott Lash and John Urry (1994), may not be as "mobile" as they imagine. In addition to the widening gap between the mobile global elite class and less mobile local class (Friedman 2002), there also exists inequality in freedom of movement between different passport holders. In this seemingly "borderless" world, the state still plays an active role in regulating transnational flows of people. Through the worldwide expansion of institutions by the nation-state (Meyer et al. 1997) and in accord with the advance to surveillance technologies, the state may have become craftier in regulating these transnational flows. As other authors in this issue have idiomatically put it, the image of the "global space of flows" is, in the last analysis, "a gated globe" (Cunningham and Heyman 2004).

On the other hand, individuals are not merely docile recipients of such a disciplinary regime, to put it in Foucauldian terms. They do not lose their agency, although, under the current system, room for maneuvering is rather limited. Besides conformity, they may react to the system in various ways, ranging from breaking the law (illegal entry by forgery or smuggling), resistance (the "WSA passport" being one of the examples[22]), to taking tactic advantage of the current system. The visa companies and the practice of obtaining a second passport are two common strategies seen in Taiwan. However, individuals' capabilities in these strategic actions are, to a great extent, differentiated by their economic capacities as well. In such a circumstance, differential access to mobility may have increased the inequality of mobility, which, in turn, reproduces the pre-existing unequal social, economic, and political relations.

In the age of globalization, people tend to believe that freedom of movement, just like freedom of speech and of other kinds, should be a part of basic human rights. Indeed, with the expansion of harmonized visa and passport unions such as the Schengen Agreement, more and more people are enjoying a greater degree of freedom in crossing borders, but perhaps only at the cost of the relatively decreased mobility of others. We may take Schengenland as an example. The Schengen Agreement is often hailed as an institutional breakthrough in facilitating international

mobility, but this is quite misleading. The seemingly inclusive Schengen Agreements are actually exclusionary to outsiders, while the abolition of internal barriers has been achieved at the cost of building higher barriers at the external frontiers. In practice, people are classified into four categories according to Schengen: 1) nationals of the Member States; 2) nationals of a third country for whom the Schengen visa is exempt; 3) nationals of a third country for whom the Schengen visa is required; and 4) nationals of a third country to whom the Schengen visa does not apply. In the fourth category, nationals of such countries are not even qualified to apply for the Schengen visa; instead, they have to apply for multiple visas for each country they intend to visit. Although the list of countries in each category varies from one Member State to another, it has nonetheless created, in collective efforts, a hierarchical distinction of a racist kind that distinguish people between "desirables/the trustworthy" and "undesirables/the untrustworthy" (Bhavnani 1993). In effect, institutional arrangements such as Schengen have been criticized for merely build up a "Fortress Europe" in which new boundaries are defended by new rhetorics of exclusion (Stolcke 1995).

To illustrate this, we may take the analogy of tuition waivers. The practice of tuition waivers does not mean that going to college is free of charge. It would be foolish, if not obviously wrong, to predict that going to school will be free in the future simply because we have witnessed some students not paying tuitions for their courses. Tuition waivers are granted only to those "good," sometimes privileged, students. Most students, however, are "mediocre" or simply not so lucky to have the privilege and they all have to pay a price for going to school. Even in an extreme case, where going to school is made completely free, there are still youngsters who are deprived of the chances of going to school at all. Through the educational system, the inequalities between the privileged and underprivileged may be reproduced and hence persist. Similarly, the view that national states matter to a lesser extent, that we are moving from a national toward a postnational model, may hold true only for those of privileged class or from privileged countries. For most people around the world, they are still paying the price for being the subjects—citizens, that is—of a particular nation-state. The passport and visa system has testified to this.

As Kumar (2000: 20) puts it, "For those who live in affluent countries, the passport is of use for international travel in connection with business or vacations. In poorer nations of the world, its necessity is tied to the need for finding employment, mainly in the West." Kumar's argument may not hold true everywhere, but he reminds us of one basic fact: the passports and visas we hold in our hands when crossing borders are of significantly different values. They mean different things to people from different parts of the world. The postnational argument posits that the old model of citizenship is changing or diminishing, but our cases have demonstrated to us that the old model not only works well, but is also being entrenched perhaps more deeply than before.

Notes

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1. All Chinese names and characters are romanized in *pinyin*, unless there is a common usage that has gained wide popularity (e.g., Taipei). To follow the convention in Taiwan, however, a dash is inserted between the second and the third characters of the given name where applicable.
2. Borders, conceived broadly in this article, refer not only to physical lines of territorial boundary between two states, but also to ports of entry, as discussed by Heyman (2004). As civil aviation becomes a popular means of mass transportation, airports have become important sites where border-crossing is monitored and controlled by the state.
3. This development is in line with the revival of scholarly interests in institutionalism in the past decade. Due to the limit of space, I shall not get into the theoretical details of institutionalism. For a sketch, see DiMaggio and Powell (1991), Thomas et al. (1987), and Meyer et al. (1997).
4. The theoretical leverage of a "pathological case" was first brought up in Durkheim's (1982) classical methodological essay and further elaborated in Wieviorka (1992). The term "pathological" is used here without moral judgment.
5. There are, of course, some alternative documents of identification and we shall not lose the historical view that the passport as a travel document has had many different variations. See Turack (1972) and Caplan and Torpey (2001).
6. Salter's suggestive title on the passport, *Rights of Passage* (2003), hints the connection between the two, although he did not thematize the pun in his book. However, one has to be cautious when making such a connection, as the "rite of passage" at the immigration checkpoint does not usually imply a *communitas* that Turner discussed in his formulation.
7. As an official document of identification, the passport certainly bears other functions that are not performed at the border. These accompanied functions of the passport (for instance, as a proof of age when buying alcohol or as a proof of citizenship for the entitlement to healthcare) are instantiations of institutional trust that I shall deal with in a later section.
8. Under such a classification system created by the nation-state, stateless people are found to be merely "exceptional" and are deprived of many privileges (Brubaker 1992: 157–158; Weis 1979). However, even in such an "exceptional" situation, a passport is nonetheless deemed necessary, thus the invention of the Nansen Passport, issued specifically to stateless persons.
9. Heyman (2004) has provided ethnographic details concerning how these presumptions and stereotypes are generated in actual encounters, which involve not only a documentary check, but also verbal exchange and judgment from appearance.
10. The legend goes that a man named Arnaud du Thil assumed the identity of a Martin Guerre in a French village in 1556. As there were no identity papers to refer to, du Thil was able to make people believe in his identity as Martin Guerre by merely showing familiarity with Guerre's past and he even lived with Guerre's wife for several years before being discovered. See Fahrmeir (2001: 218–219).
11. There is a problem concerning nomenclature. As will be made clear below, the national title of Taiwan being the "Republic of China" (ROC), it will be more appropriate to use "ROC passport," but apparently not "Chinese passport." "Taiwanese passport" may appear grammatically better, but

it implies that Taiwan is a sovereign nation-state, which may sound problematic to many. In the following, I shall use the more awkward "Taiwan passport" and "ROC passport" interchangeably.

12. On the implicitly assumed foundations of trust in daily life, Harold Garfinkel (1963) has done a classical study on trust through his somewhat controversial method of "experimental breaching." The case of Taiwan discussed below resembles the breaching of trust in Garfinkel's study, with only a major difference: in Garfinkel's case, trust is intentionally breached by the researcher, whereas in the Taiwanese case, trust is unintentionally (and sometimes unwillingly) breached by passport holders. However, in both cases, strong repugnant feelings have been incurred and through both cases we can better see the implicit ground of trust that have otherwise gone unnoticed in daily routines(see discussions below).
13. For those who are not familiar with the Taiwan–China issue, a brief historical sketch can be helpful. Formerly known as "Formosa" to westerners, the island of Taiwan was made a province of the Chinese Empire by the Qing Dynasty in 1885 and was later ceded to Japan in 1895. After Japan's defeat in World War Two, Taiwan was once again turned over to the then Chinese government, namely, the *Kuomintang* (KMT) regime, in 1945. Four years later, the ruling KMT lost the civil war to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and took refuge in Taiwan. The CCP founded the People's Republic of China (PRC) and has later become the recognized state of China, whereas the exiled KMT regime, insisting on the national title of the "Republic of China" (ROC), had continued ruling Taiwan until 2000, when it was voted down in the presidential election. While both the PRC and the ROC are competing to claim their sovereignty over Taiwan by drawing on legacies of Chinese history, a third claim is made by Taiwanese nationalists (usually known as the Taiwan Independence Movement), who insist that Taiwan should become an independent nation that has nothing to do with China. As the PRC has replaced the ROC to represent the China in the United Nations since 1971, most nations nowadays recognize only the PRC, assuming Taiwan as a province of China regardless of the fact that the PRC has never had control over the island. For further reference on Taiwan's ambiguous and abnormal status, see, for example, Copper's revealing title: *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* (1999); for international legal terms, see Henckaerts (1996).
14. What Zhu refers to here is a Taiwanese tourist group being detained and frisked in Australia, as they were suspected to be a group of swindlers. A similar scenario also took place in Austria. The incident made headlines in major newspapers and was portrayed as Taiwanese travelers being intentionally discriminated against in European countries.
15. Indeed, the incident reported here is by no means accidental. Many ROC passport holders encounter similar situations at the Greek–Turkey border, as is reported by my interviewees including individual travelers and tourist groups. Long Ying-tai, a best-selling writer from Taiwan, has also provided a vivid illustration of a similar scenario when she crossed the Greek–Turkey border by ship. For a discussion of Long's case, see Wang (2000).
16. That the passports issued by different states are of different values should be understood not only in their varying degrees of mobility, but also in their "truth values." In some cases, the "truth value" of the passport is questioned even if the passport itself is authentic, since its "breeder document" can be false (Salter 2003). For instance, Canadian passports are often scrutinized closely since some of its breeder documents—birth certificates from churches—can be easily forged. I thank one of the reviewers for bringing this to my attention.
17. On the commodification of residence rights, see Tseng (1997).
18. A pseudonym to protect anonymity.
19. Here comes an irony: the only few countries with which Taiwan has diplomatic ties (twenty-seven in total, as of March 2004) are also "small countries," mostly in Africa and Latin America, that are unknown or unheard of to many Taiwanese people. The Taiwan passport does not have much trouble when used in these "small countries."
20. In fact, the volume of emigrants from Taiwan has been, to a certain extent, an indicator of political instability. A most recent instantiation is the 1996 missile crisis when the PRC exercised missile tests perilously close to the island in an attempt to intimidate the people in Taiwan. The number of emigrants during that year rocketed, while many of my informants told me that they got their second passports during that period. However, holding a second passport has become a political issue, as it has been debated in nationalist politics. People with high nationalist sentiments tend to

criticize those who hold a foreign passport as "unpatriotic," "opportunistic," or even potentially treacherous.

21. The passport problem of Palestinians has some parallels to Taiwan's, although the nature of the problem and the issues involved are quite different. I have not seen any systematic study on this issue thus far, but one can find no shortage of reports concerning passport and visa problems on web sites such as the Palestine Monitor (www.palestinemonitor.org). I thank one of the reviewers for bringing up this issue.
22. The WSA passport forms another interesting case of contrast here. The passport is issued by World Service Authority, founded by Gary Davis, a former fighter pilot in the United States Air Force who was captured in a mission during World War Two. Davis renounced his American citizenship after the war and declared himself a citizen of the world. The WSA passport is officially recognized only by a handful of countries (fewer than ten), but it has been successfully used (on a case-by-case basis) to pass immigration checkpoints in over 150 countries. For more information, see www.worldservice.org

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