ABSTRACT

In the mid-nineteenth century, and especially after the mid-nineteenth century, owing to the political, social and economic instability of China, the abolition of the Negro slavery system and the economic attractions of Americas and Southeast Asia, a large number of Chinese labourers migrated to those countries to search for better living. Among these labourers, only a small proportion was "free labourers" while many were "contracted labourers" (credit ticket labourers or "piglets"). Whatever they were, the lives of these labourers were generally extremely miserable. They were exploited and maltreated by their employers, and were persecuted, discriminated against, and even killed by the local people. However, in spite of being badly treated, Chinese labourers contributed positively to the economic development of the concerned countries and were an asset to the progress of those nations.

Structurally, this academic exercise is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is a brief introduction of the topic. Chapter two, which discusses the reasons causing the Chinese people to migrate, is subdivided into two parts: (a) the factors that encouraged the Chinese to migrate will be explained and (b) the obstacles that prevented them from leaving their homeland will be examined. Chapter three deals with the immigration policies of the Ch'ing Government before and after 1860 and the background that gave
rise to the Chinese free and contracted labourers. Chapter four consists of two parts: (a) the general situation and the number of Chinese free labourers and (b) the general situation and the number of contracted labourers. Chapter five is a brief discussion of the proportion of the Chinese female emigrants to male emigrants in the case of Singapore and peninsula Malaya and the problems that arose from the imbalance of sex ratio. Chapter six is an assessment of the contributions of the Chinese labourers to the economic development of the concerned countries.