

*Diaspora's Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration*. Shelly Chan. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-8223-7054-3.

How did global migration change China? In *Diaspora's Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration*, historian Shelly Chan shows the transformative impact of Chinese emigration and *huaqiao* (Chinese diaspora or overseas Chinese) on the formation and development of modern China at different historical moments in the past two centuries. Whereas existing studies had privileged spatiality and chiefly understood diaspora as dispersed communities, Chan has reconceptualized diaspora as fragmented, multiple, and transnational temporalities (11-12). Chan introduces two key concepts: “diaspora time” and “diaspora moments.” “Diaspora time” describes the migrant experience and its impact on individuals, families, and communities while “diaspora moments” emerge when diaspora time intersected with other global, national, and local temporalities, leading to significant political, social, cultural, and institutional changes in modern Chinese history.

The book's main body is chronologically organized into five chapters, each focusing on a particular diaspora moment. The first diaspora moment was when Qing China attempted to protect its indentured emigrants by creating new agencies and rules, which contributed to the formation of Chinese sovereignty. The indentured labor migration also enmeshed Qing China into the global system, which was increasingly dominated by capitalism and imperialism. In the next two diaspora moments, Chan shifts our focus to Southeast Asia. Chapter 2 focuses on the historical and geographical studies about the *Nanyang* Chinese (Chinese diasporas in Southeast Asia) by Chinese scholars at the *Huaqiao*-founded Jinan University in the 1920s and 1930s. Heavily influenced by Western and Japanese discourses, the “Jinan intellectuals” who had been moving across maritime Asia reframed Chinese migration to Nanyang as incomplete settler colonialism and portrayed the *Nanyang* Chinese as an important bridge to China's modernity.

Chapter 3 discusses the life stories and writings of Lim Boon Keng, a Singapore-born Chinese who served as president of another *Huaqiao*-founded institution, Xiamen University, in the 1920s. Lim revamped Confucianism by drawing strength from Western ideologies such as Darwinist racial ideology and the science of evolution. While Lim's leftist contemporaries such as Lu Xun condemned Confucianism as the barrier to modernity, Lim reinterpreted it as "modernizing, secular, and rational" (105). The last two chapters look into diaspora moments in Mao's China. Chapter 4 centers on how the connection between gender and emigration influenced China in the 1950s. The Communist land and marriage reforms initially attacked "overseas Chinese landlords" and "overseas Chinese marriages" as anti-socialist. However, to sustain remittances, the socialist state encouraged women to stay in their overseas marriages; women began to occupy the position of "intermediaries between *Huaqiao* men and the state" (16). The final chapter focuses on how the socialist state reintegrated *guiqiao*, Chinese returnees from Southeast Asia, in the 1950s and 1960s. Although by the late 1950s, government officials tolerated *guiqiao*'s transnational nature, in the 1960s, they increasingly regarded *guiqiao*'s overseas past as insidious threats to socialism.

Reading this book was a humbling process for me. The author mines exciting and diverse archives in both English and Chinese spreading across seven countries and regions. Chan's interpretation of these primary sources is meticulous and thought-provoking. For example, in Chapter 4, Chan's attentive eye to the reconfiguration of gender politics in the diaspora moment helps us rethink the women's liberation in socialist China in light of the legacy of global migration. Moreover, Chan's juxtaposition between migration histories and the national chronology is not to downplay the role of the state but to locate China in the "the webs of entanglements and interdependence where it has belonged" (185-186). The book has

convincingly shown that diaspora does not necessarily exist as the periphery to the homeland, but as important participants in shaping China's modernity at certain moments of global history.

Nonetheless, three questions linger with me. First, although Chan attempts to bring together the separate histories of modern China, overseas Chinese, and Chinese Americans, the bulk of the book focused on the dynamics between overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and China (except for Chapter 1). Second, what leaves me hanging is the author's rationale for solely focusing on the diasporic intellectual history in the Republic of China. It seems to me that before these encounters, the birth of the Republic of China from the 1911 Xinhai Revolution presented a more salient and impactful diaspora moment. The revolution that overthrew Qing's rule was primarily funded by Chinese diasporas in the Americas and Southeast Asia. Sun Yat-sen, a global-trotting exile and the Republic of China's founding president, is regarded as the Father of modern China by the Chinese. Not even a single mention of these events makes me wonder if the challenge to national chronology can be occasionally counterproductive. Third, in chapter 5, I wish the author had discussed how or if the special treatment to wealthy returnees in Guangdong province foreshadowed China's transition to post-Socialism since this particular region was also the testing ground of Deng Xiaoping's "opening up and reform." The influence of this diaspora moment seems to have gone beyond the socialist era.

These quibbles aside, *Diaspora's Homeland* makes a much-needed contribution to global China studies by illustrating the role of temporality in the dynamics between the homeland and Chinese diaspora. The audience of China studies, global migration, world history, and even Asian American studies will find the book informative and stimulating. I also find the sparkle in the epilogue's discussion of the emerging diaspora moment against the backdrop of neoliberal globalization and China's global rise. According to Chan, in this diaspora moment, China's

urbanization temporality met with its diaspora temporality, constituting a contrast between rural domestic migrants relegated to second-class citizens, and elite returnees from the West (known as *haigui* in Chinese). The two kinds of interrelated mobility in the context of global capitalism prompt Asian Americanists to attend to the transnational positionality of Chinese American model minorities, many of whom came to the U.S. as class-privileged students, immigrated as skilled professionals, and then moved back to work in China as *haigui*, temporally or otherwise. Further studies need to flesh out how this diaspora moment has transformed the socialist China into a neoliberal state and thrust China into the center of global capitalism. In this sense, *Diaspora's Homeland* also bodes well for bringing together global China studies and Asian American studies through the potent though contested notion of diaspora.

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