

Diaspora's Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration. By SHELLY CHAN. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018. xiv, 264 pp. ISBN: 9780822370420 (cloth, also available in paper and as e-book). doi:10.1017/S002191181800102X

Shelly Chan's *Diaspora's Homeland* bridges the literatures on the overseas Chinese, Chinese Americans, and modern Chinese history to ask the question, "How did Chinese emigration change China?" In this elegantly wrought and eloquently argued book, Chan revisits a familiar story—the emigration of an estimated twenty million Chinese in the century from 1840 to 1940—with fresh eyes, making the argument that the idea of China as a homeland and its emigrants as a diaspora were mutually constitutive.

Chan traces the Chinese diaspora through a series of what she calls "diaspora moments," historical junctures when the time and space of the nation collided with the time and space of diaspora communities, themselves fragmented and embedded in local, particular, and familial systems. In doing so, she challenges the fixity and coherence of both nation as core and diaspora as periphery. In keeping with Chan's examination of categories, she consciously retains—without italics—the key words of her study in Chinese: *zuguo* as the "ancestral homeland," *huaqiao* as the overseas Chinese, *Nanyang* as the southern seas of Southeast Asia, the Maoist categories of *qiaojuan* as domestic dependents of *huaqiao* and *qiaofu* as their wives, and *guiqiao* as the returnees to the People's Republic.

The diverse case studies of *Diaspora's Homeland* illustrate how emigration was simultaneously networked and fractured. The first chapter is a diplomatic history of the Qing court's lifting of the emigration ban in 1893. Tracing the ban's prehistory from Western discourse of the free Chinese emigrant to the Qing's investigation into the coolie trade, Chan argues that emigration forced the empire to act as a nation-state. The second chapter is an intellectual history of the first scholarship on the Chinese overseas. Conducted by intellectuals and with the support of the Guomindang government, research produced in the 1920s and 1930s adopted both Western and Japanese colonial ideas and framed the Southeast Asian diaspora as a form of settler colonialism. The third chapter is a biography of Singapore-born Xiamen University president Lim Boon Keng, who attempted to revive Confucianism as a scientific "religion," thereby suggesting the Straits Chinese as forces of modernization.

The final two chapters join the literature of the People's Republic of China as history. They use local archives to examine the relationship between *huaqiao* and the families they left behind, and between the *guiqiao* and the state agents in charge of "overseas Chinese work." On the *qiaojuan* and *qiaofu*, chapter 4 shows how the People's Republic gave such families special privileges and tried to preserve overseas marriages, making wives intermediary agents between the diaspora and the socialist state. Chapter 5 studies the returnees from Southeast Asia who settled on state farms and in overseas Chinese "new villages," demonstrating that by 1960 individuals once exempt from class categories were vilified as double-natured, perhaps worse than even domestic "capitalists."

Recent scholarship has framed the Chinese diaspora as global history, as in Adam McKeown's 2001 study of Peru, Chicago, and Hawaii.¹ In an examination of mass migration primarily focused on Southeast Asia, Philip Kuhn suggested that we understand the

¹Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

Chinese family as existing in “both a continuum of space and a continuum of time,” linked across locations and through generations, the latter reinforced through ancestral rituals and the labor that provided for one’s heirs.² To these interpretations, Shelly Chan contributes the idea of the diaspora itself—not simply individual families—having a temporality of its own. In Chan’s *Nanyang* cases, for instance, members of the diaspora were a potential vanguard: “incomplete colonists” who could help complete the nation (p. 50) and modern Chinese who could become “exemplars of progress” (p. 90). In her examples from socialist China, those with diasporic links or the returnees themselves existed outside of socialist time, exempt from immediate “liberation” until a 1960s turn when “the temporary status of huqiao had expired … [and] they became part of China’s past ended by the Communist Revolution” (p. 179). Thus Chan’s provocative framing of “diaspora time” forces us also to rethink national time. No longer a fixed, central core progressing through linear time, in its confrontation with the diaspora “the nation is multispatial, polyrhythmic, and always incomplete” (pp. 194–95).

Framed around moments, *Diaspora’s Homeland* is not meant to be exhaustive. Nonetheless, its cases are mostly representative, reflecting the experience of indentured workers in late Qing times, intellectuals in the Republican era, and emigrant families in the People’s Republic. The less representative case may be the story of Lim Boon Keng. One wonders—between his isolation at Xiamen University and ignominious fate under Japanese collaboration—how much his version of Confucianism resonated. Another challenge of disparate histories is to incorporate multiple literatures; in this way chapters 4 and 5 might benefit from more engagement with recent scholarship on marriage and sexuality in the late Republic, for example.³ Similarly, the Communist Party’s use of capitalist wives as intermediaries bears strong resemblance to its cooptation of *qiaofu*.⁴ Such links, however, are only further evidence of the diaspora’s ties to the nation, a mutual relationship that Chan demonstrates with meticulous research and analytical rigor.

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As its title suggests, *Merchants of War and Peace* brings into focus the roles of British private merchants in Canton and the knowledge they produced in the making of the First

²Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), 25–26.

³Zhao Ma, *Runaway Wives, Urban Crimes, and Survival Tactics in Wartime Beijing, 1937–1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

⁴Christopher R. Leighton, *The Revolutionary Rich: Political Fortune and Red Capitalism in China, 1949–1979*, forthcoming.