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Leow Rachel

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Beyond diaspora's horizons: mass deportations to China and an alternative to the diaspora paradigm

Rachel LEOW

Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This essay argues for the need to look beyond "diaspora" paradigms of global Chinese historical experience, and that we may need different metaphors in order to do so. Examining the little-known history of the mass deportation of Chinese colonial subjects from Malaya to China during the Malayan Emergency (1948–60), it reflects empirically on why cases like these necessitate more sensitive approaches to global Chinese experiences which resist the language of race, ancestry, lineage, homelands and origins, and attend instead to history and historical processes: to the silences of the archive and hegemonies which produce racial essentialization; to specificities of place, space and scale; and to rupture, immobility and refusal. It calls instead for the discernment of diaspora's historically constituted horizons—and a historically grounded appreciation of what lies beyond them.

KEYWORDS

Diaspora; arboreal; rhizomatic; Chinese; Malaysia; violence; deportation; race; gender

Introduction

How should we study global Chinese communities? Should we understand them as "diasporic"? Are there meaningful alternatives?

Let me begin with two dialogues.

DIALOGUE 1

During class, Teacher asked: Students, who is a Chinese person?

Many students eagerly raised their hands.

Teacher asked further: Why are you a Chinese person? Who can give me a reason?

Sihua says: I have black eyes, black hair and yellow skin.

Guoqiang says: I write Chinese.

Jiaxin says: Because my father and mother are both Chinese people, I am therefore a Chinese person.

Zilong says: I was born in Hong Kong; Hong Kong is part of China, and therefore I am a Chinese person.

CONTACT Rachel LEOW rl341@cam.ac.uk Murray Edwards College, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DF, United Kingdom

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Teacher smiled and nodded, saying: You have all spoken very well![1]

DIALOGUE 2

Chin Yin Lek: They said I'll have to leave for China on the next ship out of Port Klang.[2] We've got two weeks.[3]

Thoo Kim Thai: That's soon. So soon.

Chin: It'll be an uncomfortable journey. They won't let you buy a separate passenger ticket – you'll have to be in the hold with me and the other deportees.[4] I know it's not ideal, but hopefully the seas won't be too rough. We'll be OK.

Thoo: The baby's due in three months.[5]

Chin: Once we get to Hong Kong we'll try to make contact with some of my grandfather's family.[6] I know we've never met them, but I'm sure they will help look after us.

Thoo says: I'm not going.[7]

Chin says: What?[8]

Dialogue 1 is an extract from a 2016 revised edition of a government-issued textbook published in Hong Kong, for use by primary school students learning Chinese (Yu and Su 2016). It teaches that Chineseness is to be found in a concatenation of shared biological features ("black hair," "yellow skin"), literacy in "Chinese" (*zhongwen*), ancestry ("my father and mother are both Chinese people"), and place of birth ("in China," which here, it insists, includes Hong Kong). Note, on the point of language, that it is written and not oral literacy which makes one Chinese—a more convenient proposition given the enormous oral diversity that exists across China, including Hong Kong, where the dominant spoken language is Cantonese, and not *Putonghua*. Note, too, the unabashedly patriotic names: *Sihua*, "Thinking of China"; *Guoqiang*, "Strong Country"; *Jiaxin*, "Happy family."

Dialogue 2 is what the feminist theorist Saidiya Hartman calls a "critical fabulation" (Hartman 2019): an empathetic reconstruction of a single, elusive historical moment which took place in 1949. As my historical account below suggests, variations of this moment must have happened many times; but unlike Dialogue 1, none of them are easily referenced. It is the story, told to me, of Chin Choon Sang's parents, at a defining moment in their lives.[9] Choon Sang's family were Hakka Chinese tailors in Kajang, an old tin mining town near Kuala Lumpur in what was then British Malaya; they had lived there for at least two generations. Choon Sang, or Victor as he preferred, is himself present in this dialogue: he is the as-yet unborn baby to whom his mother, Thoo Kim Thai, refers. His father, Chin Yin Lek, had been arrested that year for suspected communist activity. Through newly draconian Emergency laws passed in the early months of 1949, this was a sin now punishable by deportation. Held without trial in a prison in Seremban, Yin Lek asked Kim Thai, to whom he'd been married barely six months, to accompany him to China. Her refusal was a forking path in their lives. Yin Lek was eventually deported without her. Separately to his arrest and political activities, he had, it turned out, not been a very good husband; in this regard, his deportation was also an opportunity for Kim Thai to divorce him in practice, if not in law. His passage to China is undocumented, but he must have been sent off before Victor was born, which places him on a ship which sailed during the chaotic waning months of the Chinese Civil War in the summer of 1949. Victor would only meet him again decades later, in the 1980s: remarried, and father to five children for whom Victor was a total stranger.[10] As

for Kim Thai, three months after the forced departure of her husband, in her mother's house in Kajang, she duly gave birth to Victor. But for her momentous and archivally undocumented refusal, Victor would have been born in the new People's Republic of China. Kim Thai never remarried; she died in Malaysia in 2007.

How useful is the term "diaspora" for describing the circumstances outlined in these dialogues? Decades ago, James Clifford suggested that the best way to define a diaspora might be, in fact, to attend to what is *not* a diaspora: to sharpen our analytic claims against its edges (Clifford 1994, 307–8). In this essay, I propose to do just this.

The arboreal diaspora (1): ancestral space–time and the hegemony of roots

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, theorists Deleuze and Guattari (1987) distinguished between two models of knowledge: the "arbolic" on one hand and the "rhizomatic" on the other: or, more simply, the paradigm of a tree versus that of a fungus. One offers a model of vertical growth, and metaphors of roots, trunks, branches and seeds; the other offers a model of horizontal growth, with every new node able to produce an entirely new plant which, without recourse to an original seed, grows from everywhere and has no center. Arbolic thinking, they assert, is "state thought": vertical, linear, hierarchical, territorial, taxonomic, binary, and with a tendency toward homogeneity. Rhizomatic thinking, in contrast, is "nomadic thought": horizontal, non-linear, decentralized, deterritorialized, open-ended, multiplistic, with a tendency toward heterogeneity.

Deleuze and Guattari considered arboreal thinking to be an archetype deeply embedded in the Western philosophical tradition—think here of the many arboreal metaphors which pepper modern informational structures, such as the Biblical "tree of knowledge," the Islamic "tree" rooted in the Arab world whose branches spread everywhere, or Darwin's description in the *Origin of Species* of the "tree of life" as a metaphor of evolution. Root metaphors dominate nationalist discourses from British to Quebecois to Basque nationalisms, all of which share "a genealogical form of thought" (Malkki 1991, 27–28). It is striking that arboreal thinking is also ubiquitous in ethnocentric metaphors of the "Chinese diaspora." In this essay I will suggest that diaspora may be an inescapably arboreal concept, and that there is an important politics to be had in seeking out, and making visible, rhizomatic alternatives. Scholars and communities alike speak of family trees and branches, fallen leaves, seeds, and always of roots. A seminal conference on "Chinese diaspora" in the early 1990s proposed the phrase *luodi shenggen* (putting down roots), itself a corrective of another arboreal image: *luoye guigen* (falling leaves return to their roots) (L. Wang and G. Wang 1998). *Shenggen* emphasised "the planting of permanent roots in the soils of different countries," rather than *guigen*, which signalled a moral imperative to return to a diasporic homeland from which one has been temporarily exiled. Both, though, remain root metaphors that arise from biological models of race based on phylogenetic origins. Arboreal imagery dominates the Chinese diaspora, from Tu Weiming's "living tree" of Chinese overseas communities (Tu 1994), to that of the "crippled tree" of mixed-race ancestry, whose progeny become deviants from the Yellow Emperor's anointed lineage (Han 1965). Racial lineage was given political weight from the early twentieth century onward by late Qing thinkers like Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, who, drawing on global circulations of evolutionary science, "reconfigured folk notions of patrilineal descent into a racial discourse" of "yellow" ancestry (Dikötter 1997, 15), and created the historical conditions for the emergence of the *huaqiao* as a transnational racialized compatriot critical to China's future development (Wang 1981).

This is the biopolitics captured in Dialogue 1. It prescribes a capacious ancestral diaspora in which Chinese everywhere, by virtue of their skin and hair colour, parentage and language, may be co-opted into programmes of territorialized loyalty. Dialogue 1 represents one of many examples of the contemporary Chinese party-state's operationalization of ancestral diaspora, and the gradual replacement of class-based identities in the PRC after 1979 with a "blood-based patriotism" shaping the PRC's international politics and propagandizing toward overseas Chinese (Cheng 2019, 28–30). These policies have only deepened in Xi Jinping's China, deeply concerned as it is with questions of history and party legitimacy, especially after the passing of the National Security Law in Hong Kong (Saich 2021). At the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, President Xi's speech on national rejuvenation and the tasks for the future addressed itself not only to a domestic audience, but to "all Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad" and "patriotic compatriots at home and abroad" (Xi 2019).

Critics of the concept of diaspora have long been aware of the risks entailed by an undiscriminating politics of roots, and have sought critical alternatives. One important set of critiques has focused on language and cultural production as principal vectors of difference in understanding global forms of Chineseness, calling forth an entire field of "Sinophone studies" to illuminate the "misconceived category of the Chinese diaspora" (Shih, Tsai, and Bernards 2013; Shih 2010). This has been exceptionally valuable in drawing attention to the multiplicity of Sinitic variants ("dialects" or "topolects") in which Chinese historical experiences have been expressed, and owing to its explicitly counterhegemonic politics of resistance vis-à-vis standard *putonghua*, has also offered a powerful refusal of diaspora as a neo-colonial formation. But in its focus on language and literature, the Sinophone concept is often ahistorical; hamstrung by its dominant characterization as a primarily Sinitic phenomenon, it struggles to accommodate cultural productions about Chinese experiences in non-Sinitic languages, such as creole regional varieties spoken by ethnic Chinese communities in Southeast Asia (Leow 2016; Hoogervorst 2021), or the politics of deliberate disavowal of Sinitic (Ang 2001). In Shih's original formulation, it is also limited by its politics of non-relation with China, which treats the mainland center and Sinophone periphery as mutually exclusive, rather than allowing for the possibility of their entanglement (Wang 2013b; Wong 2018).

Other attempts to highlight the shortcomings of diaspora seek to classify the spatial particularity of Chinese communities' experiences, drawing on terms such as "settled," "localized," "assimilated," "acculturated" and "hybrid" (Skinner 1996). Much of this literature, however, emerged in the postcolonial era, and was marked by nation-building and citizenship. The spatialities they highlight are instinctively national. They operate in an essentially bilateral frame, creating new nation-based essentializations such as "Chinese Indonesians" or "Chinese Americans," and producing the problem of what Sai Siew-min calls "spectrum think" (Sai, this issue). Ironically, such analyses often fuel rather than allay anxieties of citizenship and loyalty. Debates reach a taxonomic impasse: the trap of arbolic thinking. Are these groups China-oriented or local? Chinese or American? Pure or mixed? Perniciously: authentic, or inauthentic? Loyal, or disloyal?

Further interventions, seeking to advance the dialogue, rejuvenate diaspora through an attention to the temporalities of its expression, examining diaspora as a series of moments in which reconnections with homeland take place, and asking why these ties get operationalized and become useful at particular times (Chan 2015; 2018). Temporality offers valuable analytical possibilities for attending to historical contingency and specificity in diaspora formations. But diaspora as time tends to set aside the fact that space matters. In foregrounding diaspora time, it has been impossible to avoid also enforcing homeland space, a narrative act which leaves the spatial imaginary of the "diaspora" and "homeland" undisturbed, and reproduces a formidable chronotope.[11] As Madeline

Hsu observed, "diaspora moments" explicitly select for historical instances of cultural, linguistic and political orientation to the "homeland." In doing so, they do not manage to "set forth a clear methodology [for clearly delineating] between 'settled but unassimilated' Chinese [on the one hand], and counterparts operating diasporically and in orientation to China [on the other]" (Hsu 2019). In this, diaspora time, used without due scholarly care, may risk aligning with the hegemonic "ancestral" biopolitics of Dialogue 1, which so much scholarship has endeavoured to avoid.

The arboreal diaspora (2): ancestral archives and a convergence of patriarchies

We have long known that archives exert power over history and narrative (Stoler 2022). The archives of diaspora, I suggest, further reinforce the ancestral biopolitics that mark "Dialogue 1" through a powerful, arboreal convergence of patrilineage and patriarchies. The connections that bind homeland to emigrant subject are deeply embedded into a patriarchal base of textual and historical records that have tended to underwrite historical studies of Chinese overseas communities, but which have produced what I examine elsewhere as the "patriarchy of diaspora" (Leow 2022). For instance, Chinese genealogical and lineage records are valuable sources frequently used to supplement business histories of families whose lineages form a corporation (Zelin 2005; Kunio 1989). But such records are often products of capital and forms of authority disproportionately available to wealthy, propertied men. Intended to anchor the lineage of the patriarch through time and space, they frequently exclude or omit wives, daughters and the deviant, or include them on condition of their (virtuous) relationship to men (Hui 2018).

Records emanating from the contemporary Chinese state have also attended lavishly to the doings of men. The reform-era Party's efforts from the 1980s onward to manage China's post-Cultural Revolution historical consciousness unleashed a wave of local gazetteers, oral history compilations, *qiaoxiang* histories and other acts of state-sponsored record creation (Fromm 2019). Although state-sponsored, records like the *wenshi ziliao* offered new opportunities for surfacing diverse voices and agendas at multiple local, regional and national levels; yet in the case of *huaqiao* history, they have frequently supported the documentation of "exemplary leaders" of overseas Chinese communities. This has tended to produce valuable but overwhelmingly male histories of the Chinese overseas as wealthy, China-oriented neo-mandarins: merchants, philanthropists, revolutionaries, and patriarchs.[12] An exemplary case is the rubber tycoon Lee Kong Chian, whose biographical record benefited from the Deng-era enthusiasm for documenting leaders of overseas Chinese communities. Local publishers from his *qiaoxiang* in Nan'an county (Fujian) have sought, through major publishing efforts, to elevate him as a leading entrepreneur, philanthropist and exemplary *huaqiao* in the historical record to attract wealth and investment from Nan'an kinsmen all over the world (Huang 2009). The well-documented become, inevitably, the overstudied. Such records are further supplemented by the practice of record-creation by commercial patriarchs themselves, through the act of autobiography and memoir as a bid to shape their own legacies. Examples abound of histories of overseas Chinese male "successes," be they tycoons of transnational capital like Tan Kah Kee, Robert Kuok and Dhanin Chearanavont, each of whom have produced legacy memoirs of their own, or "hybrid" Chinese men like Lim Boon Keng, who is endlessly discussed and disproportionately visible in historical accounts of overseas Chinese.

A third source of archival patriarchy is found in European colonial states, which have historically reinforced elements of indigenous patriarchy to shore up their own power. The archival effects of this are most visible on the bodies of Chinese women in colonial Southeast Asia. Dutch and British colonial states have supported Chinese "customary" patriarchal practices, and enforced the

regulation of sexuality, prostitution, venereal disease and trafficking, generating a vast archive of gendered vice (Chang 2021; Seng 2018). Consequently, where Chinese women are studied at all, they tend to appear in the register of the deviant, trafficked and disempowered—notwithstanding a handful of welcome exceptions attuned to the gendered differences in women's historical experiences of mobility.[13] Yet it is undoubtedly the case that bringing women into view fundamentally changes our understanding of migration and dynamics of settlement (McKeown 2010). Far more attention needs to be paid to the gender of Chinese migration beyond the lenses of custom, illegality and vice. The deep patriarchy of Chinese diaspora is another indication, I suggest, of its "arboreal" nature. It is why looking beyond diaspora requires, in central and critical ways, looking beyond men.

How to look beyond diaspora

It is possible that the concept of "diaspora," no matter how its usage is qualified, will remain simply unable to accommodate the plurality of Chinese historical experiences while avoiding the difficult politics which bedevil its usage. Metaphors, after all, do matter (Landau, Robinson, and Meier 2014). The problem may be embedded in the Greek etymology of the word: things which are scattered (*speirein*) and dispersed (*diaspeirein*) must, seemingly, be scattered from some original place—as leaves must fall from a tree—and so retrieved and returned to that original place. "Diaspora," to put it in Deleuzean terms, may be an inescapably arbolic concept. It casts China's history in global terms, but at risk of inadvertently reinforcing precisely the kind of hegemonic essentializations that many warn against. How should we navigate such temptations while giving due historical attention to those for whom the chronotope of "homeland" orientation is either a non-issue, or constitutes part of an actively harmful or traumatic politics? What possibilities are there for a rhizomatic, rather than arbolic, approach to Chinese historical experiences?

If metaphors matter, perhaps we need new ones other than those supplied by trees. The mushroom, and its root-like structures of thread-like, rhizomatic filaments known collectively as "mycelia," has furnished a surprising range of conceptual challenges across a wide range of disciplines. The anthropologist Anna Tsing drew on both its literal and figurative qualities to offer a radical rethinking of capitalism (Tsing 2015). The biologist Alan Rayner suggested that the whole field of biology could have been different had it taken the mycelium and its mushroom fruitbodies as the prototype or metaphorical framework of the living organism, rather than the Darwinian "living tree," which has limited biologists' thinking to a world of origins, speciation, typological essentialism, taxonomy and classification (Rayner 1997; Ansell-Pearson 1999).

Diaspora, too, is burdened by arbolic thinking: its taxonomies, origin stories and essentialisms. This essay experiments instead with rhizomatic thinking in the study of global Chinese communities, proceeding from the metaphor of the mushroom, rather than the tree. Against arbolic thinking, it calls for foregrounding historical processes of becoming, emergence, and ecologies of encounter, rather than privileging biological taxonomies, typological essentialism and racial reproduction.[14] It asks us to pay attention to homes, not homelands—to spaces of *fruiting*, not *rooting*.[15] In light of the constitutions of archive power, we need to be methodologically unfilial: to insist on seeing beyond the archive's patriarchies and patrilineages, especially where a focus on the "uterine family," or the archive's silences, bring other historical dynamics and trajectories into view.[16] Mindful of the fractious politics of calling something diasporic, this essay seeks to articulate the

constitution of diaspora's horizons, as well as what lies beyond them entirely. It gestures toward the worlds of mycelia and the mushrooms they fruit on the forest floor, amidst the tree roots and fallen ancestral leaves.

On the horizons of diaspora: aliens, returnees, and the dispossessed

To help us rethink global Chinese historical experiences in light of mushrooms rather than trees, let us return to Dialogue 2. The deportation to the People's Republic of China of thousands of ethnic Chinese during the early years of the Malayan Emergency (1948–60) is an extraordinary event that defies many of the critical characterizations of "diaspora." It highlights the layers as well as arbolic limits of diaspora as a productive concept for understanding such a historical moment, and underscores the opportunities of a rhizomatic approach to global Chinese historical experiences.

Chin Yin Lek (see Figure 1) was one of thousands of ethnic Chinese who were deported from Malaya to China between 1948 and 1953, under a policy known in its more formal parlance as



Figure 1. Thoo Kim Thai (left) and Chin Yin Lek (right). Photograph used with permission from the late Victor Chin Choon Sang.

"repatriation." It was intended to serve as one of several measures for expunging "undesirable" elements of Chinese resident communities suspected of supporting an armed insurrection led by the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM). The scheme was formally discontinued in 1953, and replaced with the far better known mass resettlement programme which corralled some half a million Chinese people in Malaya (some 10% of the total population) into new, semi-militarised encampments known as "New Villages," and domesticated them into conditional citizenship (Tan 2020). The New Villages scheme is widely credited by counterinsurgency scholars as responsible for "winning" the war against communism. Yet despite the formal end of the repatriation scheme, thousands more continued to be deported after 1953, throughout the period of decolonization, as the country shook off formal British colonial rule in 1957 and assumed full federal form in 1963 through the incorporation of North Borneo and Singapore. Reliable figures are difficult to obtain, but estimates up to 1955 range between 20 and 35,000, amounting to 2–3% of the Chinese population in Malaya, which suggests the overall figures up to 1963 must be much higher.[17] In all, we can identify 11 pre-1949 and 38 post-1949 batches (*pi*) of deportees. The last of these, though called the "38th batch," was in fact comprised of multiple smaller batches of battle-hardened CPM members who had been arrested and imprisoned, sometimes for many years, before being deported in small, "voluntary" (*ziyuan*) groups between July 1959 to November 1963 (70ZNZJ 2018, 32–34).[18]

The targeting of the CPM, for historical reasons, made deportation in the Malayan case a highly racialized endeavour. Founded in 1930, the CPM had been conceived as the Southern Seas branch of the Chinese Communist Party, and its membership was dominated by ethnic Chinese. Banishment was used as a tool for getting rid of so-called "aliens" who had been convicted of various misdemeanours, from petty theft all the way to political subversion, disturbances to public order, and secret society membership. By the 1930s, it was frequently being deployed against Chinese criminals and political subversives. After the war, a period of open front politics demonstrated the anti-colonial ambitions of a robust and well organized CPM; looking everywhere across the region, the British in 1948, supported by an increasingly paranoid American administration, saw an upsurge of communist-led militant rebellions against colonial rule from the Viet Minh in Indochina and Pathet Lao in Laos to the Hukbalahap in the Philippines and the PKI in Indonesia. In this febrile postwar period of labour unrest, anticolonial politics and radical journalism, banishment appeared an attractive, quick solution. Throughout 1946–47, the Malayan government had attempted to use banishment on convicted criminals, but these attempts were frequently checked, and debated furiously in private and in public.[19] There had been (at least by official count) 193 such banishments in 1947, and all of those cases would have been referred to the Colonial Office in London (Hansard 17 November 1948; Hack 2015). When the Emergency was declared in June 1948, it freed the colonial government of many such encumbrances. In the name of suppressing communism, the full weight of the colonial state could be brought to bear on radical politics and its protagonists with relative impunity. New regulations were hurried through the legislature within months, notably ER17C (25 November 1948) and ER17D (10 January 1949), allowing for individual and collective detention with a view to repatriation—with increasingly cursory legal review, without referral to London, and in the case of 17D, explicitly denying the right of objection or appeal.[20]

The targets of these new regulations were to be "communists" and their supporters in the rural countryside; the justification, that they were "alien." Yin Lek, like many other Chinese targeted for deportation in this early period, was by no common sense measure an "alien": with both parents born in Kajang, including a Catholic mother, he had never known any other place. Plans in

1945–46 to grant citizenship based on local birth under a utopian postwar scheme, the Malayan Union, had failed, and the federal citizenship which replaced it in early 1948 laid much stricter rules for qualifying as a citizen.[21] Even then, Yin Lek would have met the conditions of dual parentage and birth (if not, given his politics, the more discretionary condition of "good conduct"), had he managed to figure out how to apply for it. As it were, many Chinese Malayans like Yin Lek became aliens by default, and thus, deportable.[22] The line of defense of the deportation scheme taken by an embattled Colonial Office in early 1949 was that the troubles of the Emergency were caused by a small number of bandits, "most of them Chinese born outside Malaya," who sought to overthrow the Government by force (TNA CO 717/168/4). But in reality, little of this parentage seems to have been known for certain—or further complicated by the issue of imperial citizenship, since ethnic Chinese born in the Straits Settlements were technically British subjects, and thus, undeportable. While available data are incomplete, a perusal of banishment lists does suggest a persistent epistemic uncertainty of the state archive regarding the origins of detained rural squatters: "birthplace not known," "birthplace not corroborated," "n/a," or simply blank cells. A few samples I tabulated from précis lists of detained rural Chinese squatters being recommended to the Federation Executive Council for deportation in early 1949 are suggestive. Compilation of 195 individual backgrounds from an undated précis (but likely from late 1948) shows 80 were listed as born in China (40%), of whom 11 claimed to have mothers in Malaya, and 13 of whom had local wives. A greater percentage, 48% or 92 of them, claimed to have been born in Malaya, with 51 claiming to have mothers in Malaya, and 16 with local wives. In this case, "most of them" were Chinese born in Malaya, though under federation law, were still legally "aliens."[23]

Nor is it especially clear that they were "communists." Undoubtedly, deportation successfully targeted CPM members; the leader of the CPM Chin Peng wrote ruefully in his memoirs many years later of the immense damage done to the party by the repatriation scheme (Chin 2003, 223–25). Recollections of former CPM members indicate that deportation sometimes enabled party ideologues to regroup in China under CCP direction (Lin 2001, 269–70). Some seamlessly joined the People's Liberation Army or the Chinese Communist Party itself; others contributed to Overseas Chinese Affairs work in the PRC. In some cases the deported were retrained and clandestinely re-deployed to Malaya or other parts of Southeast Asia for further revolutionary work, or obtained forged passports enabling their return.[24] These were prospects of which the British were cognisant, and fearful.[25] But beyond the nucleus of true believers or the unambiguously criminal was a much larger penumbra of the loosely entangled or plausibly innocent. Like many others, Yin Lek had participated in anti-Japanese activities before the war, but Victor is hazy on his political activities after 1945, and thought it possible that petty enemies of his father sold him out in exchange for the hefty rewards given for information about potential communists. Lord Mancroft, during a furious debate in the House of Commons on the implementation of 17C, said that upon speaking personally to some of the men caught up in the recent raids, he had found little ideological about them: "few of them, I suspect, know as much about dialectical materialism as do your Lordships" (Hansard, 10 November 1948).

Nevertheless, the accumulation of the detained in prisons far outstripped the speed with which the government was able to deport them. By the end of 1948, there were nearly 2,000 designated communist sympathizers in detention, but only a couple of hundred had been successfully deported under 17C by January. Prison congestion was undoubtedly one reason for the passing of the more draconian 17D in January 1949, which enabled the government to carry out with greater speed, and more impunity, mass detention and repatriation of inhabitants of a particular settlement or area, as well as their dependants and families. In April 1949, High Commissioner

Henry Gurney was adamant: "without repatriation to China we cannot win the present conflict in Malaya."[26] Up until that point, deportations had been taking place at a rate of about 4–500 a month. Gurney's target, by his own admission, was to achieve 2,000 deportations a month.[27]

Where were these ethnically Chinese "aliens" of unverifiable birth and parentage to be deported to? "Repatriation" was the term formally used to refer to these expulsions, which signals their diasporic framing by the colonial state as a "return" to a putative ancestral home. Colonial officials frequently spoke of the need to repatriate the "hard core of intractable communities" back to their "home country" (TNA CO 717/117/5). To them, this meant "China." The majority of deportees were sent to the southern Chinese ports of Haikou, Shantou, Xiamen and Guangzhou. But China in 1949 was in transition, and the question of where to send them had become both urgent and increasingly complex. The ongoing civil war in China between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party (1946-49) had torn the country apart; by 1949, it was in its endgame. In the month that 17D was passed, Chiang Kai-shek resigned as president of China; by the end of January 1949, Beijing was under communist control, as would be Shanghai by May. By August, Swatow, one of the two main ports by that time to which deportees were being shipped, also fell; watching the inevitability unfold with a mounting sense of doom, Gurney wrote that "deportations should continue to the last possible moment."[28] The eighth batch of deportees departed for Swatow on the S. S. Anhui on 21 August, just ten days before the British consulate there was forced to close. By the time of the formal declaration of the founding of the People's Republic of China in October, formal deportations had all but ceased completely, and would only be resumed with any measure of diplomatic normalcy the following November, when the port of Swatow was re-opened. Over that long, difficult year, an increasingly desperate colonial administration continued to beg and petition counterparts in Hong Kong to take deportees, offering to bear all associated costs, and machinating a range of schemes—including, shockingly, the suggestion to simply dump detainees on an "open beach somewhere on the Chinese coastline"—to no avail.[29] Detainees swelled Malayan prisons as well as the makeshift detention camps created to house them; by May 1950 there were nearly 11,000 detainees in carceral limbo, increasing at a rate of 350 a month.[30] Some had been detained without trial for over two years.

The division of China into the PRC and ROC and the political upheaval which surrounded that process bedevils the task of connecting the story of the deportations in Malaya to the continuation of their journey in China. It also greatly complicated the question of which "homeland" the Malayan Chinese were to be "repatriated" to. When they landed in Chinese ports, the majority of repatriates were collected and processed by the reigning central authority at that time, and underwent screening and "political review"; but the shifting sands of the civil war's endgame meant this task was fraught with complexity. Even before the formal declaration of the Emergency, a significant number of Chinese deported from Malaya would have been politically sympathetic to the Communists; consigning them to any place in which the KMT were the authorities in charge often placed them in great danger. Recollections from former deportees suggest this fate was widely known and feared. Zhao Huihuang, an ex-MPAJA member, testifies that he was detained without trial in August 1947 and deported to Xiamen, where the KMT were at that stage still in charge. He was tortured in a KMT prison and only released when the communists took Xiamen in December 1949 (Li 2009, 212–13). Li Junzhe, a CPM sympathizer, recalls the terror he felt during his detention in the Taiping prison in Ipoh of the prospect of being deported to the ROC rather than the PRC (Li 1996, 315–16). The challenge of where to deport non- or anti-communist Chinese who could not be safely sent to the PRC after 1949 opened up vistas of diplomatic complexity, and undoubtedly, also caused countless and unrecoverable personal tragedies.

When the communists came to power, they inherited the problem of administering this influx of what were, effectively, political refugees. Malayan deportees were the principal stimulus for the PRC directive on 12 June 1950, "Properly Resettle the Refugees, Leave Not A Single One Displaced," which laid out the scope of the problem and importance of resettling them, defined principles of resettlement, and set aside funds earmarked for carrying these processes out (GPA 1951; Dong 2017, 8; Zhang 2018, 35). Foremost among PRC prerogatives for deportee resettlement was the principle of "Having a Hometown to Return To." If a given deportee's ancestral hometown was known, that is there they would be sent. Of the first 1,384 people arriving in Swatow after it reopened in 1950, 902 were classed as having hometowns to which they were "returned" (Zhang 2018, 35)—without much regard for how alien such places would have been to people who had never set foot in China before. It is unclear whether Yin Lek "had a hometown to return to," or whether he was settled according to other principles; in any event, Victor says that he eventually made his way to Hong Kong where he redeployed his clothes-making skills into setting up his own business.

It is striking that these and other PRC policies towards the returnees reflect as much of a "diasporic framing" as that adopted by the late colonial state in Malaya. When the lawyer D. N. Pritt raised an objection to the British House of Commons in February 1948 about the use of banishment in Malaya as a legal instrument for enacting political outcomes, the Colonial Office minister David Rees-Williams replied sanguinely: "Deportation is not, after all, a punishment. It amounts to no more than a free passage to the banishee's own country" (*Singapore Free Press*, 13 February 1948). We have seen the shortcomings of this attitude in the way the colonial state constructed a legal dependency between alienness and deportability. But the views expressed by the head of the PRC's Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission He Xiangning, were not dissimilar. Early CCP attitudes to receiving *nanqiao* (refugee-returnees) were shaped by New Democracy and the policy of *youdai* (special treatment) towards the overseas Chinese, aiming to incorporate the *huaqiao* into their vision of socialist transformation (Lim 2019). He Xiangning spoke of the deportees as "persecuted returning Chinese compatriots," and expressing the hope that, once returned to their rightful home, they can "overcome all difficulties and engage in production and study under the guidance of [the Party]" (*Nanfang Ribao*, 25 December 1950). Though this solicitous attitude would change drastically later, in these early stages, Malayan Chinese deportees were treated as a community of "co-ethnic" returnees loyal to China, and provided with meals, clothes, subsidies and job seeking help (Ho 2013; Su 2015). Deportees were occasionally mobilized to demonstrate their common mission with the CCP, for instance in state-sponsored rallies staged throughout major cities in China in November and December 1950 (ROCFAB 1951, 26). In short, the Chinese state sought to portray the returnees as loyal diasporic descendants, casting *gui* as a "moral geography" of return (Peterson 2012, 131–32), and this aligned perfectly with the British colonial state's justification of its profoundly illiberal forced migration policy by portraying the targets of this policy as aliens. Together, "aliens" and "returnees" constitute two sides of the same coin of Chinese non-belonging. In the official view of both states, the deported Chinese in Malaya were simply "going home," mutually constructed as returning to the diaspora's rightful homeland.[31]

We should not overlook the violence—both physical and epistemic—involved in framing these deportees as diasporic. Both states regarded those Chinese who did not fit the imperatives of the diasporic homeland as category errors, which necessitated new, sometimes violent, territorializing solutions. In the PRC, deportees "without homes to return to" increasingly tested the new Chinese state's administrative capacities. Malayan deportees were the principal stimulus for the creation of

the PRC's first Overseas Chinese Farm (OCF), the Xinglong OCF, established on 13 October 1951 in Wanning in Hainan by the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee.[32] Over the next two decades, deportees along with other types of "returnees" were re-territorialized into many more of these Overseas Chinese State Farms across Guangdong, Fujian and Hainan. Many of these began as rural encampments built for the purpose of housing, containing and segregating—rather than assimilating—these displaced Chinese populations (Tan 2010). In British Malaya, the undeportable were incarcerated, or "resettled" into the New Villages, with longstanding consequences for the political demography and human geography of Malaysia (Nonini 2015). Both the OCFs and the New Villages were disciplinary, territorial solutions to the perceived problem of diasporic populations. Both screened their residents for political suitability, criminality, and the value to the state of their labour. Both spaces produced and perpetuated differences between its residents and the surrounding populations, and subjected them to regimes of mobility regulation and various forms of discrimination (Ho 2013; Tan 2012; 2020). When Hannah Arendt wrote in 1951 that camps of one kind or another had become "the routine solution for the problem of the domicile of the 'displaced persons,'" "the only practical substitute for a nonexistent homeland" and the "only 'country' the world had to offer the stateless," she was not thinking of the displaced Chinese in migrated purgatory between China and Malaya, though that makes her observation no less discerning (Arendt [1951]1966, 279, 284).

The epistemic violence of this diasporic framing may be, in some respects, more consequential for its invisibility. Since the 1990s, Chinese-language memoir and oral history accounts from deportees identifying as former CPM members have begun to surface, buoyed by the end of the Cold War and the formal end to the communist insurgency in 1989, as well as a renewed interest in the fading memories of a passing generation.[33] These have been supplemented by a renewed drive by the PRC to fold overseas Chinese into state-sponsored historical narratives. As PRC scholars frequently observe, all public archives are assembled by the state bureaucracy, so thoroughly that even ordinary people "learn how to tell the stories of their lives within the master narrative of the party" (Wemheuer 2016, 140). Published returnee oral histories are routinely compiled by Overseas Chinese Affairs branches or history societies in Guangdong or Fujian provinces. They tend either to visibilize stories of Chinese returnees in the narrative idiom of heroic, grateful or voluntary return, or to discipline these sources' silences about more problematic experiences, especially those of persecution during the Cultural Revolution. Thus for instance, Li Zhenguo, a Malayan repatriate of the Xing Long OCF, recalls weeping in relief upon arrival at his new accommodation, and contrasts the "persecution" he faced in Malaya under the British with the "care" he experienced under the CCP resettlement scheme; while, Li Qingquan, another Xing Long OCF resident, says only of the 1960s that the difficulties he faced during that period never derailed his belief in the CCP, since he continued to trust that the "misunderstandings" around his status and treatment would eventually be cleared (Li 2016, 51; Lin and Lin 2008, 148–49).

CPM memory sources are also just as complex; marked by profound personal and familial traumas, they are further complicated by the trauma of national dispossession. Individual CPM memories, and the experiences of anti-Japanese and anti-colonial struggle they express, have largely been disowned from mainstream narratives of Malaysian national history and social memory, since communists are regarded as national traitors. At the same time, as *guiqiao*, they are incorporated into state historical narratives in China as "second-class" or "classed Other" subjects, always only conditionally enfranchised within the PRC according to the degree of their patriotism and ideological suitability (Wang 2013a, 70). These twin dispossessions have marked deportees' memories with

emotional burdens of martyrdom and nostalgia, both of which create compensatory distortions. To compensate for their disavowal from Malaysia, CPM memory sources emphasize their martyrdom, and personal sacrifice for the Malayan anti-colonial cause: they seek vindication through recognition that their blood spilled for the independence of Malaysia too, and speak stoically of their struggle without regret. But CPM deportees are further burdened with the need to also compensate for their dependence on China's largesse in taking them in. Many enthuse about their newfound patriotism for China, and, to fall in line with political imperatives of the day, may have felt compelled to harden their ideological positions to align more clearly with communist party principles upon arriving in China than they may have had on leaving Malaya. Despite the fact that many of them were born in Malaya, memoirs published half a century later lean narratively into the diasporic framing of their life histories, writing of China as *zuguo* (homeland), describing their repatriation as *huiguo* (returning to China) or *guiguo* (returning to the homeland) (see, eg. 21OF). Shaped by the trauma of their historical circumstances, these oral histories reflect memories pressured into certain tropes subordinated to nation-state prerogatives, and thus reinscribe their own diasporic nature under hegemonic conditions.

Looking beyond diaspora's horizons: refusal, agency and immobility

How should we look beyond the horizons of diaspora? To answer this, we need to return to Dialogue 2 with an eye not to our male protagonist Yin Lek, but to his left-behind wife, Kim Thai. Between them, I suggest, runs an edge against which we might sharpen our understanding of what is, and is not, diasporic.

As with numerous "lost lives of women" (Lipscomb 2021), the archives say almost nothing about women like Kim Thai. It is why Dialogue 2 is necessarily a fabulation, even if grounded in suppositions available through archival work. The problem of sources is compounded in the case of these deportations. Over the decades of repression around communism in Malaysia, vanishingly few have dared to speak of their experiences, for fear of reprisal or stigma. Those who have, such as CPM members, have only felt able to speak up with the bravery of the wronged; owing to their criminalization and the struggles they have already endured, they have little to lose in speaking up, and much in the way of legacy and vindication to gain. "Who knows," others say, hesitating, "one day the government might use our interviews against us" (Tan 2012, 111). The most silent of all in the story of Malaya's deportations are Chinese women like Kim Thai: the dependants who were left behind.

In the parlance of the repatriation scheme, families of the detainees were categorized as "dependants" or *jiashu* by the British, and eventually as *qiaojuan* by the Chinese (Shen 2010). Because detainees were largely (though not exclusively) male, dependants were largely female, or else the elderly or young. These constituted a significant proportion of the deportations to China. As a Chinese report published in 1953 indicates, of the 15,569 deportees received and processed in Guangdong to December 1952, 469 were MCP members, 509 were New Democratic League members, and 2,302 were classed as trade unionists—which left 9,720 people, or roughly 62%, who "did not participate in any activities," and were likely dependants (GPA 1953). But dependants who refused to accompany their deported relatives are almost entirely unstudied, and for the most part, unknowable through state archives. This is unsurprising, since they are uninteresting to both the PRC and Malaysia: the former, because they did not move to China, did not enter into the remit of the PRC and cannot be pressed into the chronotope of diasporic return; the latter, because they largely became citizens by virtue of their choice to remain.

We have few reliable figures for the number of dependants who accompanied the deportees, but those which exist are revealing about the act of refusal. On the eve of Swatow's reopening in November 1950, authorities estimated that there were some 4,000 detainees and 8,000 dependants awaiting deportation to China, or roughly two dependants for every one detainee. But when Swatow re-opened, the first batch to be returned to China on 16 November 1950 contained 693 repatriates, of which 505 were detainees and only 188 dependants, or 0.37 dependants per detainee. Subsequent batches exhibited a similar ratio, consistently less than one dependant per detainee for the first six months of the resumption of traffic. The batch which departed on 22 April 1951 was even more unbalanced: just 30 dependants in a deportation group of 513, or 0.06 dependants per detainee. In fact prior to the scheduled deportation, 40 of the detainees refused to get onto the awaiting boat: the dependants they'd asked to accompany them had not been located or collected. That shipment was fraught with drama: extra security had to be provided at the request of the ship's captain to restrain passengers from going overboard in desperate attempts at escape or suicide, from abject terror of being sent to China, or grief from being compelled to leave without their wives, children or family. Even with all the security precautions, one male detainee, Chee Chen Tiong, managed to jump overboard when the ship was in the Straits of Malacca, and was presumed drowned. In the figures I have, the rates of deported dependants never reached 2 per detainee. Several batches which departed in the summer of 1951 had around 1.7–1.8 dependants per detainee, and the main difference there appeared to be the fact that those sailings were permitted to tranship through Hong Kong, which was widely perceived as being a more desirable place to be sent than the PRC. After the batch which set sail on 19 May 1951 landed at Hong Kong for transhipment to Canton, Canton authorities insisted that after this voyage, repatriates should not be allowed to transship but to go straight through to Canton. On the next sailing, direct to Canton, the ratio of dependants to detainees was back down to 0.88.[34]

What do these figures tell us? One clear observation we can make is that dependants did not unequivocally follow their deported spouses or family members to China. This was a problem known to the colonial administration from the start of the Emergency. ER17C explicitly allowed for the "repatriation" of individuals, but also defined their dependants, who would be compelled or invited to go with them. The challenges this posed rapidly became clear. "It is impracticable (for lack of accommodation) and undesirable to keep inhabitants [of raided areas], including women and children, in detention for several months while each individual case is reviewed separately," Henry Gurney complained to the Secretary of State in January, several weeks after 17C was passed. "[Dependants] are now in many cases reluctant to follow their husbands and fathers to China. Since these people cannot be allowed to remain here with the danger of becoming a charge on public funds and also for humanitarian reasons, I see no alternative to compulsorily repatriating them as well."[35] These difficulties stimulated both the amendment made to 17C on 22 January 1949 giving powers to order dependants to leave, as well as to the passing of the far more sweeping 17D, which included dependants in its powers of mass repatriation (*Nanyang Siang Pau*, 24 January 1949; *Straits Times*, 28 February 1949).

Little can be known comprehensively about the dependants who, despite all this, chose to stay behind. The archival silence that arises from their refusal and immobility is particularly absolute, since many of them severed connections with China and any relations they had in China. Given the scale of the deportations, many Chinese families in Malaya will have been touched in some way, either directly or at a remove, by them. Many directly involved have died without ever articulating the stories of their choices. The story of Chinese dependant refusal is not diasporic

but mycelial: it is predicated not on diasporic return and (re)connection, but on a forking of paths, of resolute disconnection, and a branching of hyphae from which something new grows, without recourse to an original seed. It is also a story of explicit rejection of the arbolic insistence by both PRC and Malay(si)an state narratives on diasporic ancestry, racialized loyalty and the moral imperatives of roots and return. It is an elusive history, one which emerges on the fringes of newspaper reportage, in snapshots and passing observations in CPM memoirs, in mute statistics of departure and refusal in arboreal archives. For instance, one of the shipments from Batch 38, departing on the Norwegian vessel Fuying on 19 September 1958, is substantiated from CPM memoirs which record the names of the men who were deported on it, but not those of the sixty (likely largely female) dependants who left with them, nor the sixty-odd further dependants who were originally meant to leave with them, but who changed their minds at the last minute (*Nanyang Siang Pau,* 18 September 1958; Huang 2000; Peng 2000). Newspaper reports record the mute presence of wives and mothers of the deported, standing at the docks to watch the ship's departure; two women, a wife and mother-in-law of one of the deportees on the Fuying arrived too late to say goodbye, and refused to give their names to the inquisitive journalists (*Singapore Free Press*, 18 September 1958). Hong Jianhua, whose memoir mostly focuses on his imprisonment for anti-British organization in Chinese middle schools, tells an anecdote in passing of his conversation with a fellow detainee, who was arrested shortly after he was married, and whose wife and new-born child refused to accompany him when he was deported: another unnamed Kim Thai (Hong et al. 1998, 45–46).

Countless other families have been torn apart by this fateful branching. Sim Chi Yin, a Chinese-Singaporean descendant of a deportee, tells the extraordinary story of her grandfather Shen Huansheng, and her grandmother Loo Ngan Yue, the wife he left behind. No doubt owing to his political sympathies with the Malayan communists, Shen died at the hands of the KMT in 1949; left behind, Loo Ngan Yue raised five children, severed ties with China completely, and died decades later in Malaysia.[36] Fan Yijin, the famous journalist and media figure in China, born in Malaya in 1946, had a father Fan Liansheng who became involved with anti-Japanese activities, and after the war remained involved with union and anti-colonial strikes. On 12 August 1948 he was imprisoned for "supporting the CPM" and deported with his family ten months later, in June 1949. Fan Yijin, just 3 at the time, was on that ship. He recalls being squeezed into a dark corner along with his mother and his grandmother, who had her arms wrapped around an urn of his grandfather's remains, which they were bringing back to the village in Dapu, Guangdong. Fan Yijin's life and successes in China are well documented, but Fan Liansheng had two other children apart from Fan Yijin: a younger son and another daughter, both of whom were left behind in Malaya. Many years later Fan Yijin tried to locate his siblings, but was only able to track down his younger brother; his sister had vanished entirely (Ma 2018, 76–78).

A lost sibling; a left-behind wife; a mute descendant of this traumatic severance. Each represents not a diasporic connection but an edge. They represent a divergence of fates which need to be understood historically, and at scale—not racially, linguistically, nor in the hegemonic but limited chronotope of "diaspora." For all its caveats, the diaspora paradigm visibilizes racial ancestry, political Sinocentrism, and the collapsing of both time and space to privilege the global and transhistorical dimensions of the great Chinese "living tree." This essay asks for a different approach: one which strives to make empirically visible the hegemonic or traumatic horizons of diaspora, and the complex, mycelial spaces of Chinese experience which lie beyond them. Diaspora is most productive where it illuminates, and is historically sharpened against, that which is not diasporic. In some ways, this is a matter of social justice. Attending to the mycelial pathways out of diaspora

may become increasingly critical in an age of rising state-driven PRC ethnonationalism, in which the many historical distinctions among plural ethnic Chinese communities, which have grown like mushrooms from Vancouver and Prato to Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur, will come to matter more and more.

Notes

1. Yu and Jieyu 2016, 33–34. Original text:
   上課時，老師問：「同學們，誰是中國人？」大部分同學都舉起了手。
   老師又問：「為什麼你是中國人？誰能說說理由？」
   思華說：「我有黑眼睛、黑頭髮和黃皮膚。」
   國強說：「我寫的是中文。」
   家欣說：「因為我的爸爸、媽媽是中國人，所以我是中國人。」
   子龍說：「我在香港出生，香港是中國的一部分，所以我是中國人。」
   老師微笑著點點頭，說：「大家都說的好！」
2. A major port on the west coast of peninsular Malaysia, where this dialogue is set.
3. By early 1949, this was the standard turnaround time for processing deportees. Memoir literature and oral sources suggest that at times the period of notice given could be as short as two hours; see eg. YNSJ 2018.
4. Deportee memoirs often attest to the challenging conditions on deportation vessels, eg. Chen 1989, 32–33; Ma 2018, 76–77. Deportees were not permitted to have normal passenger tickets, and were often transported in locked rooms in a ship's hold. Dependants of deportees were also not typically permitted to purchase normal tickets, since the colonial administration preferred to keep detainees and repatriates separate from ordinary passengers; see Singapore to Foreign Office, 24 October 1950, The National Archives (henceforth TNA), DO 35/2920.
5. The unborn baby in this dialogue is my informant, Victor Chin Choon Sang.
6. It is unlikely that Yin Lek was deported to Hong Kong. By summer 1949, Hong Kong authorities were refusing deportees from Southeast Asia owing to the immense influx of refugees from mainland China; see correspondence at TNA CO 537/4774 and TNA CO 537/6038. However, many deportees at the time would have hoped, if they had to be deported, to be sent to Hong Kong, so I have reflected that sentiment in this dialogue.
7. Kim Thai's refusal is attested to by Victor, who also told me that she was encouraged in this decision by her mother, Wong Ying, to whose house in Kajang Kim Thai fled after Yin Lek was arrested.
8. I have fabulated Yin Lek's incredulity. See below for the concept of "critical fabulation."
9. My interview, Chin 2021. Chin died unexpectedly on 14 November 2022, aged 73; I did not have the opportunity of another conversation with him.
10. After a period of strict proscription of foreign connections during the 1960s, regulations began to be relaxed from the early 1970s, and Chinese in the PRC with immediate relatives overseas were permitted to travel to seek family reunions in Hong Kong or Macao. Zheng 1995, 45–46.
11. I am grateful to Sai Siew-min for pushing me to articulate this point, and for her reminder of Bakhtin's chronotope, see Bakhtin 1981, 84–85. A fuller articulation would warrant a separate treatment.
12. Nonini 2015. For a recent study of Chinese capitalism with the apologia that it is "explicitly about patriarchy," see Hamilton 2021.
13. See contributors to this issue; also, Fan 2005.
14. Eg. Sai, this issue.
15. See eg. problematics of homeland articulated in Han 2019; Wang 2018.
16. See, for instance, on the uterine family, Wolf 1972; on critical reinventions of lineage, Seng 2017; on silence, Leow 2012; and below.
17. Hack 2015, 628, relying on British sources, estimates that 29,287 Chinese were repatriated between 1948 and 1955. On the other hand, ROCFAB 1951 estimates some 35,000 between June 1948 and August 1950. A greater number appear if we take into account the deportations which occurred after Malayan independence in 1957.

18. A set of changes in PRC policy prevented Malayan Chinese from being deported against their will after 1955, but in practice many of those deported in these latter batches were simply recorded as being "voluntary," or else presented with a menu of such unpalatable choices that they would choose voluntary repatriation. For instance, Zhao Yaoqiang, aged 15 at the time of his expulsion, was given the choice between a lifetime of restricted residence under constant police supervision in Malaya, or voluntary repatriation to China, and chose the latter, see YNSJ 2018b.
19. Hansard 4 June 1947, 29–30 October 1947, 12 November 1947, 2 February 1948; *Straits Times*, 15–21 September 1947.
20. Low 2014. Clauses disallowing objection or appeal: Emergency Regulations of the Federation of Malaya No. 10 of 1948, Regulation 17D, TNA FO 371/75934.
21. To qualify for federal citizenship before 1952, both parents had to be born in the Federation and to have lived there for 15 years. Citizenship by application was also allowed if the applicant had themselves been born in the Federation and resident for eight of 12 prior years, or not born there but resident for 15 of 20 years. In the latter cases they also had to be of good character and show proficiency in spoken English or Malay. These conditions made citizenship deliberately difficult to obtain (Carnell 1952).
22. Just 350,000 Chinese achieved citizenship through this route, out of a total population of two million, until conditions of parentage were relaxed in September 1952. On the construction of deportable subjects, see De Genova 2002.
23. "Persons Recommended for Banishment," n.d., HSL.054.018, HSL. My figures are corroborated (to the extent possible) in a similar tabulation of places of birth from Li 2009–11 conducted by Fujio Hara.
24. For instance, ten returnees with forged passports were arrested in Johor Bahru in May 1951(*Straits Times*, 17 May 1951).
25. The risk of deportees being retrained and "used against us" was one of the main motivations for the British to avoid deporting those they regarded as their most "hardcore" party members, see eg. correspondence at TNA CO 537/7274; FO 371/83542. For these, the British established institutions for "rehabilitation," such as the Taiping Rehabilitation Camp.
26. Memorandum on repatriation to China, 31 May 1950, TNA FO 371/83542.
27. Gurney to Secretary of State, 7 January 1949, TNA FO 371/75934.
28. Gurney to the Secretary of State, 15 August 1949, TNA FO 371/75948.
29. For the suggestion for this act of human fly-tipping see DO 35/2920. Other schemes included attempts to locate alternative islands on which to house prison overflow, ranging from North Borneo and the Cocos Islands to Vanikoro, Utupua or even the east coast of Africa.
30. Report, 5 October 1950, TNA DO 35/2920.
31. I explore this issue in my film: Leow 2021. For a characterization of Southeast Asian Chinese returnees as loyal descendants, see Zhang 2006.
32. This was the first farm established by the PRC, though it was not the first overseas Chinese farm: as with many PRC state institutions, they were inherited from KMT predecessors before surpassing them in scale. (Han 2018; 31)
33. Lin 2001; Peng 2006; many individual accounts available on 21OF; eg. Huang 2000; Peng 2000; Su 2015.
34. Data synthesized from: 70ZNZJ 2018, TNA CO 537/7273, RMRB 9 July 1951.
35. Gurney to Secretary of State, 7 January 1949, TNA FO 371/75934.
36. Sim Chi Yin tells her story in Leow 2021, and in her art and research, Sim 2021.

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Special terms

putting down roots	落地生根
falling leaves return to their roots	落叶归根
all Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad	海内外中华儿女
patriotic compatriots at home and abroad	海内外爱国同胞
Properly Resettle the Refugees, Leave Not A Single One Displaced	好好安置难侨，不使其流离失所
Having a Hometown to Return To	有家可归
refugee-returnee	难侨
special treatment	优待
persecuted returning Chinese compatriots	被迫害回国的侨胞
without homes to return to	无家可归
homeland	祖国
returning to China	回国
returning to the homeland	归国
dependants	家属

Notes on contributor

Rachel Leow is an associate professor in modern East Asian history at the University of Cambridge. Her first book, *Taming Babel: Language in the Making of Malaysia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), dwelt on issues of knowledge production, language, ethnicity, and race-making among Malay and Chinese communities in colonial and postcolonial Malaysia. Her new research seeks to outline a critical social and intellectual history of Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and highlights the inadequacy of Sinocentric and "diasporic" perspectives in understanding them.

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