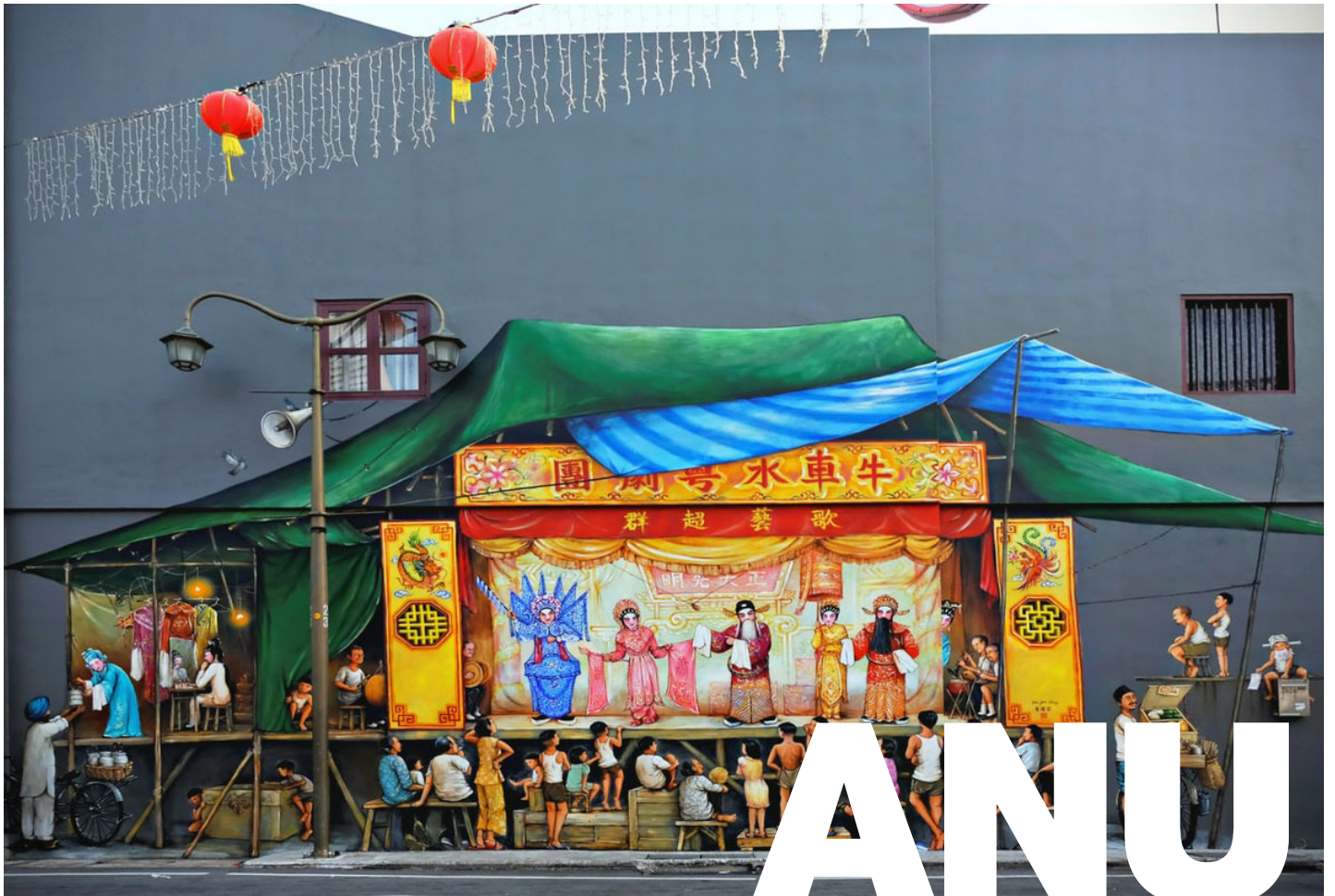




Australian  
National  
University



REASSESSING CHINESE DIASPORA  
FROM THE SOUTH  
HISTORY, CULTURE AND NARRATIVE

15-17 APRIL 2021 | 3PM-6.40PM

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# ABOUT THE EVENT



Image: Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia

For decades, studies of Chinese Diaspora or Overseas Chinese have re-weighted the relative influence, both historical and contemporary, between mainland China and Chinese communities outside the mainland, arguing for how the latter impacted and continue to shape the former. These studies are complicated further by the spectacular transformation of mainland China. Of late, heightened sensitivity over the PRC's global "influence" operations, its attempts to recruit all individuals and communities of Chinese descent to the "China Dream," as well as the trade war between China and America threaten to return the world to what has been called a "new Cold War" situation. With the so-called "rise of China" looming large as a key driver of the changing global order, both the Chinese Diaspora as a group of people and the field of Chinese Diaspora studies are facing a critical moment. Distinctions between *huajiao* (Chinese sojourners residing overseas), *huaren* (people of Chinese descent) and *xin yimin* (new Chinese migrants) become blurred, as the PRC attempts to redefine them homogeneously as *haiwai qiaobao* (overseas compatriots).

The South, namely Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific, has been a key site of Chinese migration and settlement where articulations of Chinese acculturation, hybridity and heterogeneity since the end of the Second World War have set the agenda for the study of Chineseness in general. In the decades following the official end of the Cold War which was accompanied by the disintegration of the bipolar world and accelerated neoliberal globalisation, scholars studying Chineseness have pushed in multiple and sometimes contradictory directions. While the scholarly consensus on acculturation, hybridity and heterogeneity of localised Chinese remain, approaches reaching beyond "the local" and "national" have become dominant. These "transnational" approaches problematise the bounded character and limitations of the nation-state framework, highlighting historical and contemporary flows, mobilities, interconnectivities,

circulations and networks that exist on multiple scales amongst dispersed Chinese communities. Above all, scholars continue to debate and disagree on the relevance and validity of old and new terminology and concepts, especially "Overseas Chinese," "the Chinese diaspora," "Greater China," "Cultural China" and more recently, "the Sinophone world."

This symposium aims to offer a platform for a critical assessment of the study of diasporic Chineseness since the end of the war, especially in light of the unsettling developments we are currently witnessing. While the "China factor" preoccupies us in common, the symposium consciously adopts the perspective of the South, seeking to unsettle a China-centric definitive marker of Chinese diaspora and the binary question of "identification with local or China." Zooming out from the ethno-nationalistic focus of the study of Chinese diaspora, this symposium seeks to explore the concrete intellectual and cultural networks, institutions and productions of the Chinese diaspora in the South in historical and contemporary times. It explores new angles of intersectionality in the field, problematises the concept of Chinese diaspora and seeks new theoretical intervention into the study of Chinese and Chineseness in/from the South.

**The three-day conference from 15-17 April will be held online with the exception of the keynote address on 15 April, which will be a face-to-face event with an online option.**

## Registration

Online sessions: <http://bit.ly/2NBhwO2>

In-person keynote address: <http://bit.ly/311m7vK>

# PROGRAM

## THURSDAY, 15 APRIL 2021



### **Keynote Address: 3pm-4:30pm**

**Prof Ien Ang (Western Sydney University)**

*Against Racialized Chineseness: Unsettling Diasporic Identities*

**Moderator: Prof Anthony Reid (ANU)**



### **Panel 1. History and Knowledge Formation: 5pm-6:30pm**

**Dr Sai Siew Min (Independent researcher)**

*Becoming Chinese in the Malay World: colonialism, migration and history in Singapore*

**Dr Rachel Leow (University of Cambridge)**

*Masculinity and race blindness in constructing Chinese migration: The travels of Chen Da in Southeast Asia*

**Assoc Prof Ngoi Guat Peng (Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia)**

*Cultural Diaspora and the Chinese Society: The Southern Perspective of Confucian Education*

**Moderator: Prof Adrian Vickers (Sydney)**



# PROGRAM

## FRIDAY, 16 APRIL 2021



### **Panel 2. Cultural Networks and Linkages: 3pm-4:30pm**

**Dr Beiyu Zhang (University of Macao)**

*Performative Linkages between China and the Chinese Diaspora in Bangkok and Singapore, 1945-1960s*

**Dr Jane Ferguson (Australian National University)**

*Cold War Relations or Celluloid Socialism? A Burmese Filmmaker and his Motion Picture Study Tour to China in 1956*

**Assoc Prof Wasana Wongsurawat (Chulalongkorn University, Thailand)**

*A Century of Royal Patronage: The History of the Chinese Diaspora in Thailand through the Writings of King Vajiravudh Rama VI and HRH Maha Chakri Sirindhorn*

**Moderator: Dr Janit Feangfu (ANU)**



### **Panel 3. Print Culture and Politics: 4:40pm-6:40pm**

**Dr Tom Hoogervorst (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, KITLV)**

*Articulations of Chineseness in the Sino-Malay Print Culture: A Triptych of Self-Criticism*

**Dr Matthew Galway (Australian National University)**

*A Radical 'Homeland Mindset': Mianhua Ribao, Chinese Overseas, and the Stirrings of Cultural Revolution Enthusiasm in Phnom Penh, 1956-1967*

**Dr Show Ying Xin (Australian National University)**

*No more "Miss Nanyang": New Women Monthly, Chinese Diaspora and Communism in Postwar Malaya*

**Mr Ravando (University of Melbourne)**

*Sin Po, China, and Anti-Chinese Violence in the time of the Indonesian Revolution, 1945-1949*

**Moderator: Chan Cheow-Thia (NUS)**

# PROGRAM

## SATURDAY, 17 APRIL 2021



### **Panel 4. Business and Industry: 3pm-4:30pm**

**Dr Jason Lim (University of Wollongong)**

*Chinese businesses during decolonisation and the Cold War, 1950-1975*

**Dr Zhou Taomo (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)**

*Dairy and Diaspora: Southeast Asian Chinese and Agribusiness on Guangming Farm, Shenzhen*

**Dr Pek Wee Cheun (New Era University College, Kuala Lumpur)**

*The formation of a Chinese Tin Mining Territorial Society in Northern Malay Peninsular: Perspectives from New Regional Geography*

**Moderator: Dr Sai Siew Min (Independent)**



### **Panel 5. Literature and Narrative: 4:40pm-6:40pm**

**Dr Hong Lysa (Independent researcher)**

*He Jin's life stories: An 'artless' communist subaltern vs the Singapore state narrative on the Chinese left*

**Dr Chan Cheow-Thia (National University of Singapore)**

*Folding Chinese Diaspora: Fiction, Inter-generationality and the Production of Discrepant Transregionalisms in 1970s Malaysia*

**Dr Mei-fen Kuo (Macquarie University)**

*Reading Joe Tong's personal archives: narrative identity, family strategy and the idea of Chineseness, 1918-1924*

**Dr Josh Stenberg (University of Sydney)**

*Under the Red and White Flag: End of a Southern Experiment*

**Moderator: Dr Fiona Lee (Sydney)**

**Convener: Dr Show Ying Xin (Australian National University)**

*Supported by ANU's Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora (CSCSD), Australian Centre on China in the World (CIW), School of Culture, History and Language (CHL) and Malaysia Institute.*



# ABSTRACTS

## Keynote Address

**Prof Ien Ang (Western Sydney University)**

*Against Racialized Chineseness: Unsettling Diasporic Identities*

In a time of a newly assertive China and corresponding rising Sinophobia, Chineseness has become an increasingly polarising identity marker, both locally and globally. In this presentation, I will argue that this polarization is exacerbated by a racialized understanding of Chineseness – that is, of Chinese people as a ‘race’ – which absolutises the divide between ‘Chinese’ and ‘non-Chinese’ identities. We need to jettison racial thinking to overcome this hazardous dichotomy and to make space for more heterogeneous, hybrid, and unsettling diasporic identities.

Speaker:

**Ien Ang** is a Professor of Cultural Studies and was the founding Director of the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. She is one of the leaders in cultural studies worldwide, with interdisciplinary work spanning many areas of the humanities and social sciences. Her books, including *Watching Dallas*, *Desperately seeking the audience* and *On not speaking Chinese*, are recognised as classics in the field and her work has been translated into many languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Turkish, German, Korean, and Spanish. Her most recent books are *Chinatown Unbound: Trans-Asian Urbanism in the Age of China* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2019, co-authored with Kay Anderson et al) and *Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest* (Routledge, 2016, co-edited with Yudhishtir Raj Isar and Phillip Mar).

## Panel 1: History and Knowledge Formation

**Dr Sai Siew Min (Independent researcher)**

*Becoming Chinese in the Malay World: colonialism, migration and history in Singapore*

This paper addresses a neglected history of intertwined connections between Chinese migration and European imperial formation in the Malay world using Singapore as a focal point of discussion. Branching out from a treatment of historiography in contemporary Singapore, the paper highlights limitations in current approaches to “Chinese migration” and most crucially, related concepts that appear to function on a global scale, in particular, the “Chinese diaspora.” Instead, this paper argues that the coloniality of migratory Chinese-ness is best discussed using “the Malay world” to map a region-specific and trans-ethnic history of Chinese-ness in the country. Using the Malay world as method and conceptual scaffolding helps us contextualize Chinese migration to Singapore within historic patterns of movement, settlement and identity formation in a region disrupted and re-reorganized fundamentally with European imperial formation during the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries. This approach un-ravels an implicit nationalist framing of diasporic Chinese-ness and serves to critique efforts in myth-making about Chinese-ness as well as arguments drawn on assumptions about Chinese exceptionalism.

Speaker:

**Sai Siew Min** is a Taipei-based Singaporean historian who researches Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia with a focus on imperial formation in Southeast Asia, the cultural politics of colonialism and nationalism, language, race and Chineseness. She is a founder member of the s/pores collective. Her essays on historiography in Singapore have appeared online in *s/pores: new directions in Singapore Studies*. Her academic writings have appeared in the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. She is also co-editor of the book *Reassessing Chinese Indonesians: History, Religion and Belonging*.



**Dr Rachel Leow (University of Cambridge)**

*Masculinity and race blindness in constructing Chinese migration: The travels of Chen Da in Southeast Asia*

Chen Da was one of the pioneering Chinese sociologists of the 20th century. In his early career, he produced several classic studies of Chinese emigrant societies that remain methodologically exemplary, and gained Chen recognition as a foremost scholar of Chinese overseas, labour issues and population. His writings were part of a larger wave of interest in the 1920s and 30s of Chinese intellectual interest in the Nanyang, and of the systematic writing of diasporic Chinese communities into the Chinese ethnonationalist imagination. This paper explores Chen's corpus of work, highlighting the blindspots of race and gender in Chen Da's sociological investigation of emigrant Chinese communities. In tracing his travels through Borneo, Siam, the Dutch East Indies and the Malay peninsula, it shows how, at each stage, his investigations, networks and the connections he made with his local informants offered an understanding of the world beyond a patriarchal, patriotic Chinese diaspora that he declined to explore fully. The world which Chen moved in, carefully gathering social facts, was resolutely male, and in spite of the region's ethnic heterogeneity, resolutely Chinese. The paper offers an intimate window into the conceptual work that went into constructing the "Nanyang huaqiao" as a masculine Chinese diaspora, in spite of the fragmentary social formations, alternative intellectual orientations and other complex social facts which Chen encountered in the realities of the South Seas.

Speaker:

**Rachel Leow** is Senior Lecturer in Modern East Asian History and Fellow in History at Murray Edwards College at the University of Cambridge. She completed a PhD in history at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, and a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University. Her book, *Taming Babel: Language in the Making of Malaysia*, won the Harry J. Benda 2018 Prize in Southeast Asian studies. Other writings have been published in academic venues, including *Modern Asian Studies*, *Journal of Social History*, *Itinerario* and *Journal of Asian Studies*, as well as in literary and popular venues such as the *Mekong Review* and the *LA Review of Books*.

**Assoc Prof Ngoi Guat Peng (Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia)**

*Cultural Diaspora and the Chinese Society: The Southern Perspective of Confucian Education*

During the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the Qing dynasty's Consuls to Singapore, such as Zuo Binglong and Huang Zunxian, vigorously promoted Confucianism. They develop a model for the dissemination of Confucianism outside of China, which allowed Confucian education to serve as a basis for the construction of cultural subjectivity and cultivation among the Chinese diaspora community. Confucianism in this period was more focused on the emotions of statism and cultural nationalism. After 1949, some important Confucian scholars such as Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi and others moved to Hong Kong. The New Asia Academy, where they were based, had created a new form of Confucian education outside of China. From there, diasporic Confucianism had developed a "de-statist" context and horizon. The intrinsic meaning of cultural nostalgia and "the drifting away of Chinese nation's flowers and fruits" (hua guo piao ling 花果飄零) have therefore transformed the patterns and contents of Chinese Confucianism. If we were to pursue the contemporary significance of Confucian education in Singapore, it is necessary to trace it back to the establishment of Nanyang University in the 1950s - its development since then, after the university's closure in the 1980s and even until today. How does contemporary Confucian education absorb and transform diasporic Confucianism at different stages in responding to the needs of Chinese society in Singapore? This article adopts the perspective from "here and now" to explore the reception of Confucian education in Chinese society in Singapore. It discusses the Confucian consciousness in diasporic Chinese society and the relationship between ethnic Chinese and Confucian education. Drawing from the author's personal teaching experience on Confucianism in Singapore, the article reflects deeply on the possibility of transforming diasporic Confucianism into a manifestation of the modernity of cultural thoughts.

Speaker:

**Ngoi Guat Peng** is Associate Professor at the Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia (Chinese Program). She received her PhD from the School of Arts and Social Sciences of the National University of Singapore. Her research interest includes Chinese intellectual history, Neo-Confucianism and the history and literature of Malaysia and Singapore. She has published a monograph entitled *Unity of Jun Dao and Shi Dao: The Discourse of "Unity of Three Teachings" in Late Ming Period* in 2016 and a collection of essays called *Malaysian Chinese Literary Criticism* in 2019.

## Panel 2. Cultural Networks and Linkages

### Dr Beiyu Zhang (University of Macao)

*Performative Linkages between China and the Chinese Diaspora in Bangkok and Singapore, 1945-1960s*

From the post WWII to much of the Cold War era, diasporic Chineseness in Southeast Asia was entangled with multiple forces that came along with decolonization, racial and communal struggles, anti-communism and nation-building. Existing scholarship on postwar diasporic Chineseness has been preoccupied with the ways in which the Chinese presence were dealt with arduously by host societies, either through assimilation or suppression. However, taking a bottom-up perspective viewed from the everyday practices of the diasporic subjects in the immediate postwar era, I argue there was a re-assertion of Chineseness through performances that included dances, choruses, musicals and traditional dialect theatre. Importantly, I argue the re-assertion was made through a performative linkage that connected the “bifurcated” homeland (as contested by the Nationalist-KMT and the Communist China) and the diaspora into meaningful relationships. Chinese Theatre troupes and performers endorsed by competing regimes (Taiwan and Beijing) conducted diasporic tours to articulate different meanings of Chineseness. In the Cold War battle for hearts and minds, diasporic performances and tours were not just a mirror of cultural changes, but significant role player in the homeland-diaspora interactions. The article locates the performative linkages in two scenarios: 1. the communist-affiliated theatre troupe Zhong Yi and its performing tours from 1946-1949; 2. the experiences of a Taiwan folk dancer Li Shu-fen and her dancing legacy in Singapore and Bangkok in the 1960s. The two diasporic societies—Bangkok and Singapore—were treated as important contact zones in which different performative discourses were appropriated, shaped and re-articulated both by the diasporic Chinese and respective nation states. This article initiates an important dialogue among theatre/performance history, Chinese diaspora and Cold War Culture. It proposes a “performative” turn in the Sino-Southeast Asian interactions, which has been rarely studied with necessary empirical and theoretical vigor.

Speaker:

**Zhang Beiyu** obtained her PhD degree in the History Department in National University of Singapore. She worked as a Post-doctoral Fellow funded by the Macau Talent Program in the University of Macau from 2018-2020. Her research interests include Cultural History of Chinese Diaspora, Sino-Southeast Asian Interactions, Global History, Ethnomusicology in Asia. Her recent monograph is published by Routledge, *Chinese Theatre Troupes in Southeast Asia: Touring Diaspora 1900s-1970s*.

### Dr Jane Ferguson (Australian National University)

*Cold War Relations or Celluloid Socialism? A Burmese Filmmaker and his Motion Picture Study Tour to China in 1956*

The Burmese government in the Parliamentary Democracy years (1948-1962) actively supported its national film industry as a way to build patriotism in the newly independent nation. The Southeast Asian country was also the first non-communist nation to establish diplomatic relations with China, and this would later partially involve Burma’s film industry. Chinese diplomatic visits to Rangoon included entourages of Chinese film stars. Some Burmese films, namely those that dealt with themes of peasant struggle, were adapted for the Chinese market. In turn, the Chinese government organized a study tour for 15 Burmese filmmakers to visit the filmmaking studios at major cities in China. One of the participants on a 1956 tour was Burmese director Shwe Done Bi Aung, one of the most famous at the time. He later published a magazine feature about his trip, and described the various stops, dinners, shows and film studio tours in Beijing, Shenyang, Chungking and Shanghai. Shwe Done Bi Aung summarised some of his discussions with Chinese filmmakers including issues about filmmaking, approaches, resources and cultural difference. Although Shwe Done Bi Aung himself made Burmese remakes of Hollywood movies, how he narrates his trip to China and establishes cultural boundaries between Burmese and Chinese audiences merits consideration. While we might look at these film study tours as an early example of a PRC attempt to build an ideological connection with a Southeast Asian ally through film practices, this article will describe these interactions from the point of view of Burmese participants, who have their own perceptions of collaboration and cultural boundaries.

Speaker:

**Jane M. Ferguson** is Senior Lecturer in Anthropology and Southeast Asian History at the Australian National University. She has written on issues of ethno-nationalism, insurgency, Burmese film history, airlines and unpopular culture. She is the author of the book, *Repossessing Shanland: Myanmar, Thailand and a Nation-State Deferred* (2021).

**Assoc Prof Wasana Wongsurawat (Chulalongkorn University, Thailand)**

*A Century of Royal Patronage: The History of the Chinese Diaspora in Thailand through the Writings of King Vajiravudh Rama VI and HRH Maha Chakri Sirindhorn*

2021 marks the centenary anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party and the 140 birthday of King Vajiravudh Rama VI of Thailand. It is interesting to note that the CCP was established during the sixth reign and has its centenary anniversary in the tenth reign, only two years after HRH Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the younger sister of King Maha Vajiralongkorn Rama X and the highest ranking member of the family after the monarch himself, was presented the 'Friendship Medal' by President Xi Jinping himself in the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 2019. Vajiravudh and Sirindhorn happen to be the most prolific writers of the Chakri Dynasty in the past century. They also both happen to have a keen interest in China. Vajiravudh's claim to fame was his infamous newspaper article, "Jews of the Orient," published in 1914, followed by a slew of mostly anti-Chinese propaganda writing. Sirindhorn made the top-10 list of China's best friends by popular vote in 2009, and as above mentioned, received the 'Friendship Medal' a decade later. As different as the attitudes of the two seem to be towards China, their keen interest in this country stem from the same root cause. That is, the sizable and significant ethnic Chinese community in Thailand and its tendency to be influenced by developments on the Chinese Mainland. This study provides a comparative view of the development of the relationship between the monarchy and the Chinese diaspora in Thailand through the lens of Vajiravudh and Sirindhorn's writings on China and Chinese-ness through the century of the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party.

Speaker:

**Wasana Wongsurawat** is associate professor of history at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Her research interests include modern Chinese history, history of China-Southeast Asia relations and the history of the Chinese diaspora. Her first monograph, *The Crown and the Capitalists: The Ethnic Chinese and the Founding of the Thai Nation*, was published by University of Washington Press in 2019.

## Panel 3. Print Culture and Politics

**Dr Tom Hoogervorst (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, KITLV)**

*Articulations of Chineseness in the Sino-Malay Print Culture: A Triptych of Self-Criticism*

This study examines the positionality of Chinese communities in the Netherlands Indies (Indonesia) from 1901 to 1942 as seen through the prism of Chinese-authored publications in Malay. While modern Sinophone newspapers appeared in the archipelago from the 1900s, the majority of ethnic Chinese in the Indies – in particular the local-born and acculturated Peranakan community – had developed literacy in Malay, the archipelago's lingua franca. They established a flourishing printing industry in this language by the early twentieth century. The "Sino-Malay" literary and journalistic productions therefore offer revealing glimpses into discussions of belonging that, from the late-colonial period onwards, preoccupied Chinese-descended communities worldwide.

Amidst a vibrant academic debate on the competing terminologies that can best describe Chinese-Southeast Asian experiences (diaspora; Overseas Chinese; Sinophone; hybridity; creolization; etc.), this study calls attention to the ways urban Indies Chinese verbalized their position and especially the terminology they employed to do so. It traces a range of words denoting China, Chineseness, "purity", indigeneity, acculturation, and loyalty to the Republic of China, examining how they emerged, evolved, and faded. I compare this nomenclature to that of other migrant communities in Indonesia, Chinese-descended groups elsewhere in Southeast Asia, and contemporary scholars. As I will show, conceptualizations of Chineseness existed in Southeast Asia from early-modern times onwards, despite a considerable ethnolinguistic diversity within the macro-group constructed as "Chinese" (唐人). Nevertheless, a widely shared national awareness only became commonplace in the early twentieth century. It was tightly connected to developments in China and Malaya, which eventually culminated in the Chinese Revolution in 1911. As a result, Indies Chinese became more political and more chauvinistic in their written publications, strongly affecting the language they used to describe their experiences of liminality.

Speaker:

**Tom Hoogervorst** is a historical linguist employed at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV). His current research examines the plurilingual printing culture of Indonesia's urban Chinese in the late-colonial period, focusing on their newspapers, novels, and poetry written in vernacular Malay. He is also interested in language contact between Sinitic varieties and local languages of Southeast Asia.

### **Dr Matthew Galway (Australian National University)**

*A Radical 'Homeland Mindset': Mianhua Ribao, Chinese Overseas, and the Stirrings of Cultural Revolution Enthusiasm in Phnom Penh, 1956-1967*

The prevailing scholarship on 1960s Cambodia has thus far only devoted a few short paragraphs to the Cultural Revolution's impact on Cambodia. Some scholars have claimed that radical thought from China did not resonate with Cambodian progressives, whereas others have not consulted the relevant Chinese-language sources to link the Cultural Revolution to Phnom Penh's radical 1960s. This study shines overdue light on the factors that drove Cultural Revolution fervor to spread first among Cambodian overseas Chinese (huaqiao), then among China-curious Khmer activists who joined the Khmer Rouge. I examine the memoir of Vita Chieu (Zhou Degao, 1932-), the acting president of Sino-Khmer Daily (Mianhua ribao) and a CCP intelligence officer for the Central Investigation Department (Zhongyang Diaochabu), which was responsible for intelligence in embassies around the world. A popular newspaper among Cambodian Chinese, Sino-Khmer Daily was the official propaganda outlet (shishi tingmin yu Zhongguo dashiguande xuanchuan meiti) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Embassy in Phnom Penh until 1967. In this capacity, it published Chinese-language articles and disseminated information on PRC support for, and fraternal relations with, neutral Cambodia. By the early 1960s, warm PRC-Cambodia relations increased the newspaper's popularity. This paper claims that as readership increased, so too did fanaticism for the Cultural Revolution. My goal is therefore to track how Chieu's intelligence and investigative work, the rising popularity of Sino-Khmer Daily, and the emergence of a pro-China friendship association, intertwined to spur Phnom Penh's radical urban culture before the Khmer Rouge ascendancy in 1975.

Speaker:

**Matthew Galway** is a Lecturer of Chinese History at the Australian National University. He previously taught Asian History at the University of Melbourne (2019-2020), and was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley (2017-2018). His research focuses on Maoist China and the rise of Maoist movements globally. He is the author of *The Emergence of Global Maoism: China and the Communist Movement in Cambodia, 1949-1979*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming in March 2022), and has forthcoming articles in *The Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* and *The Journal of Twentieth Century Communism*.

### **Dr Show Ying Xin (Australian National University)**

*No more "Miss Nanyang": New Women Monthly, Chinese Diaspora and Communism in Postwar Malaya*

The "Malayan Spring" (1945-1948), coined by writer Han Suyin, was a period seen as the golden age of Chinese Malayan literature. Soon after the war, hundreds of literary works were published, newspapers and magazines mushroomed and remained until the launch of the anti-communist Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) by the British. Among them was a Malayan women magazine in Chinese-language, *New Women Monthly* (henceforth "NWM"), founded in Singapore by women rights activist and editor Shen Ziju on Women's Day in 1946. Both Shen and her husband Hu Yuzhi were underground Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members who came to Malaya in the early 1940s with specific "tasks". In Malaya, they were known as members of the China Democratic League (CDL), one that worked closely with the CCP. The left-leaning NWM covered various genres and topics, including social commentaries, reports on women movements in various towns in Malaya, interviews with women leaders and lower-class workers, articles on reproductive and parenting knowledge, as well as creative literary works. In its early issues, it also featured articles written by local-born women leaders of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) – showing the close relationship between members of the MCP and CDL during that time. This paper examines the less-explored field in Chinese diaspora studies - the writings of diasporic Chinese women themselves especially in a time of turmoil. By analysing NWM editors and writers' views on Malayan women's responsibilities in society and nationalist movements, this paper shows how Chinese women were caught between the different revolutionary ideals in Malaya and China, both in political and gender terms. It then examines the editor Shen Ziju's fierce critique on "Miss Nanyang" (Nanyang xiaojie), a term she referred to the educated women in Malaya who were not ready to devote themselves to political and women's movements. The paper considers NWM as a unique feminine space during the intensely politicized period, in which women writers, elites and non-elites, came together to imagine and narrate the role of "new women" in the new society.

Speaker:

**Show Ying Xin** is a postdoctoral fellow at the Malaysia Institute, Australian National University and lecturer at ANU's School of Culture, History & Language. Her current research project looks at writings and polemics of Sinophone/Chinese community in the making of Malaya during the Cold War. She co-edited (with Ngoi Guat Peng) *Revisiting Malaya: Uncovering Historical and Political Thoughts in Nusantara* (2020). She is also the translator of Singapore writer Alfian Sa'at's short stories collection *Malay Sketches* to the Chinese language.



### Mr Ravando (University of Melbourne)

*Sin Po, China, and Anti-Chinese Violence in the time of the Indonesian Revolution, 1945-1949*

The Indonesian Revolution years of 1945-1949 are considered the most violent eras in modern Indonesian history. Taufik Abdullah describes the period as 'multi-complex,' as it was not merely a period of decolonisation, but also a time of "revolution full of social tensions and political conflicts between social classes." During this period, violence erupted unexpectedly in many parts of the country. The main cities of Java and Sumatra became scenes of countless kidnappings, disappearances, shootings, thefts, street fights, and murders, with former Dutch internees systematically attacked and fired upon. Meanwhile, Leo Suryadinata describes the Indonesian revolutionary period as the genesis of modern anti-Chinese movements in Indonesia when "the government had changed and were now in the hands of the 'indigenous' population, but the economic factor, at the root of past conflicts, remained."

This paper will examine a series of anti-Chinese violence in Java and how *Sin Po*, the most prominent Chinese-Indonesian newspaper, portrays and presents the massacre to the worldwide audience. While Indonesian nationalist papers, such as *Merdeka*, *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, or *Soeloeh Merdeka*, often cornered and blamed the Chinese population for those violent incidents, only a few newspapers strived to investigate the incident from a different angle, and *Sin Po* was one of them. Moreover, this paper will also analyse China's response, who considered Chinese Indonesians as their citizens based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. When violence against Chinese reached its culmination, the Chinese Consuls in Jakarta also proposed some measures to protect Chinese in Indonesia. One of them was to encourage the formation of Chinese security forces.

Speaker:

**Ravando** is a PhD candidate in History, in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies (SHAPS) at the University of Melbourne. His thesis examines the Chinese-Indonesian newspaper *Sin Po* (1910–1965) as a lens to explore the political movements and transnational connections of Chinese-Indonesian society in colonial Indonesia. He is the author of *Perang Melawan Influenza: Pandemi Flu Spanyol di Indonesia Masa Kolonial, 1918–1919* which examines the Spanish Flu pandemic in colonial Indonesia.

## Panel 4. Business and Industry

### Dr Jason Lim (University of Wollongong)

*Chinese businesses during decolonisation and the Cold War, 1950-1975*

Current history of the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia are largely caught up with the political dimensions of decolonisation and the Cold War. We are familiar with how the Chinese in Southeast Asia were ostracised and discriminated in some countries during the decolonisation process, and perceived to be fifth columnists for both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan after 1949. However, we know less about how Chinese businesses in the region, with many in existence for decades, adapted to the changing times. How did Chinese businesses respond, for instance, to the closure of the China trade after 1949? How did Chinese merchants respond to anti-Chinese discrimination in several Southeast Asian countries? How did Chinese merchants show their loyalty to the emerging postcolonial state in Southeast Asia when they had expressed overseas Chinese nationalism before World War II?

My paper is a preliminary enquiry into the challenges faced by overseas Chinese businesses during the period of decolonisation and the Cold War. It looks beyond the cultural determinism that has been used in a study of overseas Chinese businesses such as the role of traditional Chinese business practices and Confucianism. It uses some materials that I have collected in Singapore and Canberra during the time of an international travel ban. The paper uses these materials to look at changing times through the eyes of the overseas Chinese merchants. In addition to trade embargoes and racial discrimination, these materials show how Chinese merchants in Southeast Asia learnt to adapt to the changing political and international situation.

Speaker:

**Jason Lim** is Senior Lecturer in Asian History at the University of Wollongong. He had previously worked as an oral history interviewer at the National Archives of Singapore, and as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the National University of Singapore. His research interests are on Southeast Asia during the Cold War, and overseas Chinese history in that region (with particular focus on Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam).

**Dr Taomo Zhou (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)**

*Dairy and Diaspora: Southeast Asian Chinese and Agribusiness on Guangming Farm, Shenzhen*

Today, Shenzhen, located in Southern Guangdong Province of China and immediately north of Hong Kong, has attracted international attention as the Silicon Valley of the East. Its neighbor, Dongguan, has also gained considerable recognition as China's manufacturing hub. Sandwiched between these two high-profile cities, the Guangming Farm is probably known only to serious foodies in the Pearl River Delta. Its famous "three treasures" — fresh cow milk, pigeon meat and sweet corn—are drastically different from high-tech electronics but equally alluring to consumers. Initially established in 1958 by the Agricultural and Reclamation Department of Guangdong Province (广东省农垦厅), the Guangming Farm served as an agricultural production base along the Kowloon-Canton railroad to supply fresh produce to the then British colony of Hong Kong. The farm had been a "melting pot" where "indigenous" Cantonese and Hakka villagers intermingled with "south-bound" Communist Party Cadres (下放干部), "sent-down youth" (知识青年), as well as ethnic Chinese deported from Malaya in 1949, pressured to leave Indonesia in the 1960s, and expelled from Vietnam in 1978-1979. In particular, the last group of Chinese refugees from Vietnam, whose number exceeded the existing population on the farm, radically changed the local demographic and economic structures, social dynamics and culinary landscape.

Food, according to anthropologist Tan Chee-Beng, serves as a medium of common identity and shared culture. For the "returnees" (归侨) who were born overseas but ultimately migrated to and resettled in the People's Republic of China (PRC), the unique taste of Southeast Asian cuisine is a particularly poignant reminder of their past lives.[1] This paper uses food as a thread to tell the stories of the "repatriated" Southeast Asian Chinese, whose life experiences were shaped by and also helped shape the development of animal husbandry and agriculture on the Guangming Farm, the development of Shenzhen, and, more broadly, Reform and Opening in China. In the early 1980s, the inflow of technology and capital from Hong Kong, Southeast Asia and Europe stimulated the production of "modern" food items on Guangming. Through an agreement with the Vitasoy of Hong Kong, Guangming supplied 80% of the fresh milk consumed in the British colony.[2] Meanwhile, enthusiastic investors from the Chinese communities in the Philippines brought advanced machinery, management styles and marketing strategies for pig farming to Guangming. In the mid-1980s, the farm achieved significant financial success by occupying a large share of the burgeoning, high-end market of frozen and processed pork, particularly Western cold cuts, which were exclusively catered to five-star hotels in Canton and Beijing. While the returnees participated in industrial-scale production of these "Western," "modern" food items for economic profits, they continued the production and consumption of "Southeast Asian," "traditional" food in their private spheres for socialization purposes. Some returnees have run mom-and-pop cafes which offered low-cost, hand-made Vietnamese food such as rice rolls, spring rolls, and pyramid rice dumplings for more than three decades. These less commercialized food items carry important symbolic meanings and function as the glue that held the community together. The narrow space of the coffee shops also serves as the main area of socialization on the farm. However, with the progression of urbanization, agriculture and animal husbandry sectors are in the process of being relocated from Shenzhen to inland Guangdong. As the returnees age and their descendants identify more as "Shenzheners," the Southeast Asian culinary legacies are also fading away.

Speaker:

**Taomo Zhou** is an Assistant Professor at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She specializes in modern Chinese and Southeast Asian history. In particular, her teaching and research interests focus on the nexus of geopolitics and migration in the twentieth-century. Taomo received her Ph.D. in History from Cornell University. Taomo's first book, *Migration in the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia and the Cold War* (Cornell University Press, 2019) is selected as one of the Best Books of 2020 by Foreign Affairs and receives an Honourable Mention for the Henry J. Benda Prize from the Association of Asian Studies.

**Dr Pek Wee Cheun (New Era University College, Kuala Lumpur)**

*The formation of a Chinese Tin Mining Territorial Society in Northern Malay Peninsular: Perspectives from New Regional Geography*

From the mid-19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, due to the development of the tin mining economy, Chinese towns began to appear in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. These Chinese towns may seem to exist independently, but in fact they could be regarded as a whole. Chinese mining towns started in Larut area in northern Perak and extended further south to the Kinta Valley area. These towns were interconnected and had created an area of human geography which I called the "Chinese tin-mining region of Northern Malay Peninsular", one that was formed by a high degree of connectivity and homogeneity in terms of internal ethnic composition, social relations, economic and cultural formation. This spatial unit based on socio-economic relations can be regarded as the "Region" in New Regional Geography or the "Territorial Society" in Historical Geography. This social space was essentially made up by the Chinese social network, the tin mining resources and the tin economy. This article will discuss the formation of this region from the perspective of geography. Firstly, it examines the process of regionalization in which Larut became a hinterland for Penang due to the discovery of tin mines and the flow of personnel, technology, commodities and capitals. In addition to the macroscopic view of the regional relationship, this article also investigates the production of tin mining in order to understand the functional division of labour in different places in Larut, presenting the process of regionalization in its different scales. Secondly, it discusses how this social model of Larut was expanded and duplicated in the Kinta Valley, making up a few more similar Chinese societies and Chinese towns. Obviously, several reasons contributed to the expansion, including historical contingency, the discovery of other tin resources, changes in the administrative system, the expansion of capitals, production technology and manpower, among others. Lastly, this article will also juxtapose the official archives with local Chinese resources to present the dynamics of regionalization from Larut to Kinta, by using case studies of Chinese secret societies, capitalists, folk beliefs and social organisations as examples.

Speaker:

**Pek Wee Chuen** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature cum Department of Southeast Asian Studies of New Era University College, Malaysia. He obtained his PhD in Geography from the National Taiwan Normal University in 2016 and his dissertation explored the interaction between society and economic activities particularly in the early Chinese tin mining frontier of Malay Peninsula. He is particularly interested in topics such as Historical Geography, Toponymy and also Diasporic Chinese Studies.

## Panel 5. Literature and Narrative

**Dr Hong Lysa (Independent researcher)**

*He Jin's life stories: An 'artless' communist subaltern vs the Singapore state narrative on the Chinese left.*

Singapore as a nation-state stands out with its majority ethnic Chinese population, whose migrant forebears arrived with European colonial rule. The successor government to the colonial state has retained its framework of racialised governmentality. The PAP narrative as being savior of the country from violent takeover by chauvinistic communist proxies of China continues to be reinforced as its foundational myth. He Jin (Lim Kim Chuan, 1935-2019) was a life-long Communist Party of Malaya member. He was among the Chinese middle school students who were committed to remaining in Singapore/Malaya after 1949 and pushed politics to the left in postwar anti-colonial tide. They aspired to creating a local Malayan/Singapore literature growing out of experiencing and understanding of the conditions of the oppressed. He Jin's stories sketched students deciding between fighting for revolution in China, or for Malaya; bent on eliminating the great economic and social divides; fostering class solidarity against individualism. Such publications were quickly banned. His Selected Short Stories were published only in 1999, a decade after the Hadyai Peace Agreement. His second short stories collection appeared in the same year. It featured the lives of the ordinary foot-soldiers in his military unit and surviving in the jungle warfare. It included stories critical of some unit leaders' mistreatment of their subordinates. Sinophone writers have critiqued He Jin's works and other CPM writings as documentary records masquerading as artful writing. To a historian however, He Jin's stories bear testimony to the lives of his comrades and of himself--Chinese-speaking youths in a Singapore at political crossroads in the 1950s. They defy the cardboard cutouts presented by the behemoths under which he lived--the post-colonial nation state, and the CPM itself.

Speaker:

**Hong Lysa**, a historian, is co-author of *The Scripting of a National History: Singapore and Its Pasts* (2008), and co-editor of *The 1963 Operation Coldstore in Singapore* (2013); *The May 13 Generation: The Chinese Middle Schools Student movement and Singapore Politics in the 1950s* (2011) and *Poh Soo Kai, Living in a Time of Deception* (2016). She is a founder member of the electronic journal *s/pores: New Directions in Singapore Studies* which commenced publication in 2007.

### **Dr Chan Cheow-Thia (National University of Singapore)**

*Folding Chinese Diaspora: Fiction, Inter-generationality and the Production of Discrepant Transregionalisms in 1970s Malaysia*

Contrary to its areal marginality in many other disciplines, Southeast Asia has been central to the global remapping of modern Chinese literary studies since the mid-2000s. Of crucial significance to the new cartography is the literary formation of Malaysia, whose boundaries extend beyond that of the geopolitical entity bearing the same name. Though Malaysian Chinese-language literature has been lauded as a specimen of “transnational literary production par excellence,” scholars have primarily devoted attention to the Malaysia-Taiwan itinerary, at the expense of analyzing overlapping scales of transregionality in a single locale. To demonstrate how regions are differentially nested in the Malaysian Chinese cultural context, this paper examines the short story “Father,” which features dissimilar representations of existential drift across two generations of Chinese migrants in West Malaysia at the end of China’s Cultural Revolution. Ultimately, their incompatible ideas about settling down in the postcolonial Southeast Asian nation is reconciled by a common yearning for forms of dwelling strongly connected with land. Written by Xiao Hei with no sojourning experience abroad, the tale interweaves the layered sentiments arising from an elderly migrant’s intended return to mainland China and his son’s rural-urban migration on the Malay Peninsula. By highlighting tropes of transport—including the automobile, the train, and the ship—that indicate varied folds of translocal dynamics that jointly style imaginaries of Chinese human mobilities at a specific historical juncture, I show how discrepant regionalisms can operate in simultaneous textual registers to illustrate the entanglement of modern subjects with non-national structures of feelings.

Speaker:

**Chan Cheow Thia** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Chinese Studies at the National University of Singapore. His main areas of research include Sinophone literature (focusing on the literatures of Singapore and Malaysia), diaspora studies, and Southeast Asian studies. He is currently completing a book manuscript provisionally entitled “Malaysian Crossings: Place, Language, and the Worlding of Modern Chinese Literature.”

### **Dr Mei-fen Kuo (Macquarie University)**

*Reading Joe Tong’s personal archives: narrative identity, family strategy and the idea of Chineseness, 1918-1924*

The problem with the unclear meaning of Chineseness is that emigrants had multiple, ambiguous and hybrid identities. Particularly while it was at the time such meaning itself had rapidly changed through various cultural practices of the communities in China in the 20th century. This paper will explore how, and with what difficulties, do we measure the idea of Chineseness as it related to the sense of identity and belonging. The personal archives of Joe Tong including home letters and photos during the interwar period in Australia provides an opportunity to reveal a young emigrant’s idea of Chineseness. Reading Joe Tong’s private records, we can see how an Australia born Chinese young man chose to represent himself and the communities in which he worked and studied to his family in China, how he reflected on family matters and affairs affecting China, and the decisions he made of an emigrant focussing on family future life that was both transnational and patriotically Chinese. It could say that the personal archives of Joe Tong reflect the story told about strategies of life choices in relation to family, groups and values. Reading the personal archives as a special kind of story—a story about self in the world, the idea of Chineseness thus had been evolved in making meanings of local life into a bigger story. The paper will conclude that the idea of Chineseness does not say much about the real China but it had politicalised emigrant’s life story.

Speaker:

**Mei-fen Kuo** is a Lecturer at the Department of Media, Communications, Creative Arts, Literature and Language, Macquarie University, where she teaches and researches in the area of modern Chinese history with a focus on diaspora identity and transnational mobility. Her books include *Making Chinese Australia: Urban Elites, Newspapers, and the Formation of Chinese Australian Identity, 1892–1912* (Monash University Press, 2013) and *Unlocking the History of the Australasian Kuo Min Tang 1911–2013* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013) with Judith Brett. She had engaged in several projects since 2009, including “Unlocking Australia’s Chinese Archive: The political organisation and social experience of the Chinese Australian community, 1909-1939”; “Asia-Pacific Philanthropies: Transnational networks, anti-colonial nationalism, and the emergence of modern Chinese philanthropy, 1850-1949” and “Enterprising Chinese Australians and the diaspora networks, 1890-1949”.



**Dr Josh Stenberg (University of Sydney)**

*Under the Red and White Flag: End of a Southern Experiment*

Sumatra-born author Hei Ying is best remembered today for the short fiction he wrote and published in Shanghai in the 1930s as a very young man. On the basis of that work, he is usually categorized as belonging to New Perceptionism, a literary tendency which focused on cosmopolitan, urban life and use stream-of-consciousness techniques. Reissues since the 1980s and contemporary attention in both Chinese and English continue to present him mostly in the context of Shanghai "modern metropolitan fiction." This is only one side of Hei Ying, whose literary career spanned more than a half-century and half-a-dozen milieus. In the same years and in the same Shanghai journals where he published his urbane, cinematic fragments of Shanghai, Hei Ying also sketched (predominantly Chinese) life in Southeast Asia of the 1930s and 1940s. But when his writing as a young man was distinguished by experimentation and literary ambition, his later works turned toward a standard social realism, filled with heroic Communists and nefarious KMT operatives. This was most evident in his late novel, *The Women who Drifted Abroad*, which he wrote after more than three decades in the PRC, but it was explicitly signalled in his 1951 novella *Under the Red and White Flag*, a scarcely veiled account of communal struggles in Jakarta in the new Indonesian republic. This presentation argues that Hei Ying's shift, beginning with this novella, can emblematises a larger dynamic: the submission of Sinophone Southeast Asian subjects to the stark dichotomies of PRC identity, a process which many *guiqiao* underwent and which continues to represent the struggle between the monolithic and the multiple ways of viewing 'being Chinese.'

Speaker:

**Josh Stenberg** is a Senior Lecturer in Chinese Studies at the University of Sydney. He is the author of *Minority Stages: Sino-Indonesian Performance and Public Display* (U of Hawaii, Press, 2019) and the translator or editor of four books of contemporary Chinese fiction.



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