

# Book Review

*Migration in the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia, and the Cold War*

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Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019

xiii + 318 pp. \$43.95

ISBN 978-1-50173993-4 doi:10.1017/S030574102000082X

Taomo Zhou's pioneering work examines the ethnic Chinese population in Indonesia from 1945 to 1967 and how their lives intersected with Cold War politics. She puts forward three specific arguments. First, Zhou rejects "the widely circulated assertion that the suffering of the ethnic Chinese after the September Thirtieth Movement was a fitting retribution for Beijing's alleged sponsorship of a 'Communist coup' in Indonesia." Second, she states that "despite the convergence of strategic interests between Beijing and Jakarta in the early 1960s, governmental relations inevitably intersected with communal politics and ethnic tensions." Third, "the Chinese community in Indonesia was divided along battle lines of the Chinese Civil War" (pp. 4–5). These arguments are well supported in the chapters that follow.

Chapters one and two outline the ways that the Chinese Nationalist and Communist parties each engaged with overseas Chinese. Zhou highlights how this engagement affected "ordinary" Chinese men and women. For example, she discusses the murder of Wu Qinming, which "demonstrates the level of the Chinese Nationalist Party's penetration into Chinese society in the [Indonesian] archipelago" (p. 23). This story and others show how the Indonesian government resisted Taipei's and Beijing's attempts to have jurisdiction over ethnic Chinese.

The two chapters that follow pick up on this theme by considering the diplomatic and communal battle between Taipei and Beijing over Chinese in Indonesia. Zhou highlights the ways that Taipei and Beijing competed for influence. The government in Taiwan used "backdoor diplomacy" to improve bilateral relations. For instance, Taipei sent diplomat Chen Kewen to Indonesia to explore "the possibility of placing pro-Taipei Chinese under the protection of consulates of countries friendly with the ROC or UN agencies in Indonesia" (p. 56). Chen's trip and other diplomatic efforts by Taipei failed to bring about great change and were met with serious backlash from the Indonesian government.

Meanwhile, the 1955 Bandung Conference marked a turning point when Beijing portrayed itself as nonbelligerent, in contrast to Taiwan. Mao Zedong argued that pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese in Indonesia "should remain low-key about their political orientation" (p. 71). The Chinese Communist government also used a combination of moral and material aid to Indonesia to suppress Kuomintang- and US-backed rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi. In addition, Taipei and Beijing competed for the allegiance of Chinese in Indonesia through propaganda, civic organizations and education. Zhou shows that through these actions the People's Republic of China (PRC) made itself the more palatable China to both the Indonesian government and the Chinese population in Indonesia.

While Taipei and Beijing competed for influence in Indonesia, anti-Chinese sentiment was on the rise. During the 1950s and 1960s, the *Pribumi* (native, non-Chinese Indonesians) viewed ethnic Chinese with suspicion, paradoxically portraying them as "devout Communists and shrewd businessmen" (p. 114). This anti-Chinese sentiment

culminated with Indonesian President Sukarno's 1959 decree, which targeted Chinese-owned businesses and resulted in 102,000 ethnic Chinese leaving Indonesia for the PRC.

Zhou demonstrates that, by the 1960s, Indonesia and the PRC formed an uneasy alliance, rooted in Beijing's support of the *Konfrontasi* – a campaign in Borneo to thwart the creation of Malaysia. Although the status of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia remained precarious, Jakarta and Beijing prioritized anti-imperialism. The 1965 September Thirtieth Movement marked yet another turning point in Sino-Indonesian relations, when the Indonesian population blamed Beijing for the assassination of six senior anti-Communist generals in Indonesia. The Chinese Nationalists took this opportunity to try to normalize ties with Indonesia. Nevertheless, Zhou argues that by 1969 “Taipei had to face the reality that, despite the Suharto regime's vehement anti-Communist stance, Indonesia continued to regard ‘the Communist bandits’ as ‘China’” (p. 190).

The book concludes by exploring the lives of Chinese who “returned” to mainland China. Returnees struggled to adapt to life in a socialist system, which required learning to speak in socialist language and using coupons and certificates to purchase goods. As in other parts of the book, Zhou deftly uses stories from individuals to add a human dimension to the difficult and complicated process of resettlement in China.

Overall, Zhou's source base is impressive. She draws on documents from 12 archives and has conducted many oral history interviews in mainland China, Hong Kong and Indonesia. It might have been interesting if the author had interviewed Chinese who migrated to Taiwan from Indonesia, but it is understandable that this was beyond the scope of her project. All in all, these sources shed new light on the diasporic experience of Chinese during the Cold War.

*Migration in the Time of Revolution* is well written and would appeal to both general and scholarly audiences. Zhou makes important contributions to the fields of Chinese studies, Asian and Cold War history and migration studies. Moreover, given the moderate length of the book, it would be easily accessible to undergraduate and graduate students. *Migration in the Time of Revolution* will likely remain an authoritative work for years to come.

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