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# Global Displacements and Emplacement: The Forced Exile and Resettlement Experiences of Ethnic Chinese Refugees

## *Introduction*

绪论

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Forced migration and refugee experience are neglected aspects in the study of Chinese migration. While the subject of Chinese migration has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years, to date nearly all of this attention has been directed toward understanding the voluntary movement of people in relation to economic opportunities, diasporic networks, and the forces of globalization. This approach has contributed greatly to the understanding of migration motives and patterns. However, it overlooks the fact that many, perhaps most, of the ethnic Chinese who have migrated across national borders since the Second World War have done so in the context of war, revolutionary upheavals and discriminatory legislation and practices aimed specifically at Chinese minorities. Scholars have recently begun to examine in detail the vast scale and tremendous suffering experienced by hundreds of thousands of Chinese war refugees during the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-45) (MacKinnon 2008, Schoppa 2011). However, the movement and experiences of ethnic Chinese refugees on a global scale in the period since 1945, in the twin contexts of the Cold War and an expanding international refugee regime, is a subject that has so far received almost no scholarly attention.

The essays that comprise this special issue of the *Journal of Chinese Overseas* aim to overcome this gap in the existing literature. The essays were commissioned for an international workshop held at the National University of Singapore during October 2012. The objective of the workshop was to widen

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and complicate scholarly understanding of the motives and processes of Chinese migration by viewing it through the lens of forced migration and refugee experience. With this goal in mind, the workshop organizers — Elaine Ho, Laura Madokoro and Glen Peterson — set about identifying an international group of scholars working on various aspects of forced migration involving ethnic Chinese populations in different parts of the world, as well as in China itself. Workshop participants gathered at the National University of Singapore for two days of intense discussions. The essays presented here represent one of the focal points of our workshop discussions: large-scale refugee migrations *out of* as well as *into* China during the decades from 1945 through the early 1980s. Indeed, three of the five papers presented here — the ones by Chan, Ford and Han — focus on refugee populations *inside* the People's Republic of China, a subject that has so far received very little attention from China specialists and refugee scholars alike.<sup>1</sup>

The Cold War context is essential for understanding not only the genesis of refugee movements into and out of China in the decades following the Second World War but also the particular ways in which nation-states and the “international community” responded to the problem of Chinese refugees. The lived experiences and future prospects of Chinese refugees were shaped regularly, and often decisively, by the distinctive geopolitical agendas advanced by states and international agencies during the historical period of the Cold War. The establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, accompanied by the flight of the former Nationalist government to Taiwan, was greeted by growing anxiety in the international arena, especially on the part of the United States which, as Madeline Hsu's essay aptly demonstrates, sought to stem the ‘red tide’ by responding to refugee resettlement in strategic ways.

In a parallel set of events, the newly established PRC found itself forced to grapple with an influx of refugees on its own soil during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Discriminatory legislation and policies targeted at ethnic Chinese minorities in the postcolonial states of Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, the former Federation of Malaya and Vietnam (but also Burma, the Philippines and elsewhere), forced many of these Chinese populations to seek refuge in the PRC. They were part of a much broader movement of diasporic descendants (Tsuda, 2009; Ho, 2013) who made their way to the People's Republic for a wide variety of reasons, including patriotic fervour, ideological commitment, educational opportunities and, in the case of the refugees described above, out of compulsion and lack of alternatives. Despite their multitudinous motivations and diverse backgrounds, all of these diasporic descendants were regarded — and

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1 A second set of essays focusing on different issues will be published in *Modern Asian Studies*.