The Chinese diaspora is arguably one of the oldest and largest diasporas in world. In the present day, more than 45 million people in the world outside China can trace their ancestry to China, and many of them have ancestors originating from Guangdong Province. With a rising China, there has been a resurgent interest in the study of Chinese diasporic communities and the expansive, multi-layer networks linking Chinese-descent individuals and organizations to their ancestral homeland China. Of the existing literature on China’s relations with Chinese diaspora, Yow Cheun Hoe’s book stands out as a major contribution to our understanding of how qiaoxiang areas have evolved in China’s history and how they have varied from one to another. The book traces the historical trajectories and geographic patterns of diasporic formation and diaspora-homeland interactions and examines the impacts that have been present in or absence from native places and ancestral lands. The study focuses on Guangdong, a province in China that has a long history of emigration and has witnessed many outflows of migrants to other countries as well as inflows of resources and ideas from abroad through diasporic networks. Yow has framed Guangdong as qiaoxiang, a Chinese term that literally means a homeland for sojourners but invites various interpretations and discourses in regard to the identity politics of Chinese diaspora, and he offers solid case studies on the formation and transformation of qiaoxiang in China.

To begin, Yow has produced a careful categorization of qiaoxiang and Chinese diaspora, which are often too diverse to allow for gross generalization. He maintains that Chinese diasporic communities differ in orientation, mentality, and identity and that their connections to the ancestral homeland vary in content and volume. He explicitly refutes essentialism and reductionism, arguing that the increasing economic engagement of Chinese diasporic communities with China has less to do with primordial sentiments toward qiaoxiang and patriotism in regard to China than with business calculation and economic rationale. In this study, Yow compares and contrasts two Cantonese-speaking areas in Guangdong Province — Panyu and Xinyi — to underpin the patterns and linkages through which qiaoxiang areas have changed over time and diverged across space. To deepen yet further our insight into the sophistication of Chinese diasporic involvements in China, Yow differentiates Chinese diaspora into three broad groups, those resettled in Southeast Asia, North America, and Hong Kong. The findings illuminate the hierarchy of powers and politics of these different diasporic groups in relation to Guangdong qiaoxiang.
This book has a total of eight chapters, addressing ideas, concepts, and phenomena revolving around *qiaoxiang* by examining Guangdong in general and zooming in on Panyu and Xinyi in particular. In Chapter 1, the introduction, Yow reviews existing academic works on *qiaoxiang* and recasts the questions in relations to Chinese business networks, transnationalism, and Greater China on a local, national, and global scale. He highlights the importance of distinguishing analytically between overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) and Chinese overseas (*huaren*, people of Chinese descent outside China) and between Chinese overseas and Hong Kong compatriots. In *qiaoxiang*, it is also important to distinguish between returnees from overseas (*guiqiao*) and families of Chinese overseas (*qiaojuan*) and to pay attention to past and present *qiaoxiang* regarding historical and institutional changes. Obviously, these analytical distinctions are necessary, for they help reveal how the twists and turns of Guangdong and China in the global and local webs of powers and politics affect the ways in which Chinese diaspora interacts with the ancestral homeland.

Chapter 2 is a historical overview of how emigration and diaspora have constituted Guangdong as a *qiaoxiang*. It is clear from the account that Guangdong’s most significant diasporic communities were established in Southeast Asia, North America, and Hong Kong. Also, it is remarkable that there have been three major forms of diasporic involvement — remittances for family expenses, donations for public welfare, and investments for business purposes. To facilitate the examination, Yow divides the evolution of *qiaoxiang* into three stages: before 1949, 1949-1978, and 1978 to the present. He points out that in general most *qiaoxiang* areas shared similar patterns and experiences of migration, development, and transnational practices before 1949 and between 1949 and 1978. In particular, these *qiaoxiang* areas flourished due to the constant influx of remittances, but subsequently floundered because of China’s isolation from the world. Since China’s opening and economic reform that took off in the late 1970s, *qiaoxiang* areas have gone along disparate socio-economic pathways, which are shown in the cases of Panyu and Xinyi.

In Chapter 3, Yow unfolds his case studies by taking a close look at the Panyu and Xinyi diasporas in Singapore and Malaysia. The findings reveal that people of Panyu and Xinyi origin are no different from the majority of ethnic Chinese in the two countries as well as in other parts of Southeast Asia, whose political loyalties have shifted from China to their respective nation-states of residence and whose families have sunk local roots. Striking roots in the diaspora greatly weakens ties with China. Compared to Hong Kong compatriots and their own North American counterparts, Chinese diasporas in Southeast Asia are less than enthusiastic about extending diasporic provisions to their native places and ancestral homelands in China.