

Transpacific China in the Cold War

A conference presented by the Institute for Historical Studies
at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center, Room 202
The University of Texas at Austin

April 18-19, 2013

This conference brings together an international, interdisciplinary grouping of scholars from Hong Kong, Taiwan, England, the US, and Canada to consider new research highlighting cultural and social productions emerging from diasporic Chinese amidst the political fissures of the Cold War. We plan to publish an anthology of our reframing of this era through an academic press.

This conference explores the Cold War politicization of overseas Chinese communities extending from Hong Kong to Taiwan, the U.S., and Southeast Asia through cultural, refugee, and exchange programs intended to divide them into either the communist or "free" world in terms of allegiance but also mobility. As with other parts of the globe, these communities expanded with influxes of many refugees leaving newly Communist areas. For example, by 1952 over 40 percent of Hong Kong's population consisted of escapees from the Communist revolution of 1949.

These communities became important sites of cultural Cold War production in the global contest for the "hearts and minds" of Chinese people throughout the Pacific region. Refugee relief outreach, educational programs, and cultural products such as cinema, popular literature, and print journalism with political aims emerged from both the PRC and Taiwan as well as US-supported organizations based in Hong Kong and Chinese communities in American and Southeast Asian cities. Through such programs and activities, both Communist and "free" world powers courted the support of overseas Chinese by representing the superiority and superior inclusiveness of their respective political and economic ideologies--hence the themes of intimacy but also of alienation--as many ethnic Chinese found themselves unable to conform or adjust.

Both sides tried to demonstrate political, social, and cultural commensurabilities to populations of refugees who oftentimes were traumatized by their loss of home, families, and friends and took a while in order to re-establish, if at all, a new sense of rootedness and belonging. Bringing together literary, cultural studies, and historical scholars from the US, Canada, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, this conference tracks the reconfiguration of Chinese diaspora across the Cold War's bifurcated politicization of mobility, cultural flows, and the politics of options for resettlement that produced new formations of ethnic and national identity, community, and transnational activity so characteristic of the twenty-first century world.

Convened by [Madeline Y. Hsu](#) (UT Austin), [Poshek Fu](#) (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), [Hon-ming Yip](#) (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

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