11

Various Forms of Chineseness in the Origins of Southeast Asian Communism

Kankan Xie

INTRODUCTION

People often see the origins of communist movements in Southeast Asia and the region's overseas Chinese community as closely intertwined. This perception is evident in the cases of densely Chinese-populated areas such as Malaya and Siam (Thailand), as well as places like Vietnam and Cambodia, where China's influence has been historically strong in both political and cultural domains. Admittedly, it is very convenient to connect many Chinese-involved communist activities in Southeast Asia to the emergence of the communist party in China, but the simplistic argument – that Southeast Asia imports communism from China – is severely problematic. While overseas Chinese did play critical roles in many radical movements in Southeast Asia, the diffusion of left-wing ideology and the emergence of the twentieth century communist movements in the region could also be traced to many other sources: the influence of the European colonial powers, the shifting world order shaped by the First World War and the Great Depression, the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution, and perhaps most importantly, the rise of national awareness across the colonized world.

Against this backdrop, the Comintern was established in 1919 in hopes of promoting communist revolutions worldwide. Communism during the interwar period, therefore, tended to distinguish itself from other political movements for its internationalist outlook and organizational framework. In practice, however, the Comintern was often accused of failing to provide useful guidance due to its lack of proper

understanding of local situations. Owing to the similar socio-political circumstances of the colonial and semi-colonial societies, early communist movements in Asia shared many common features. Yet their adaptation of Marxist ideology and tactics to particular circumstances varied drastically from place to place. Both ideology and strategies were always subject to conflicting interpretations and local conditions. Heated discussions focused on the role of the nationalist bourgeoisie in proletariat-led struggles against European imperialism, the position of the supposedly atheist communists in societies where religion functioned as the only force that could unite the masses, the leadership of the minority proletariat vis-à-vis the mass support of the predominant yet mostly uneducated peasantry, and so on. Among these contradictions, the issue of ethnicity, most acutely illustrated by the paradoxical role of the overseas Chinese community, was especially controversial. On the one hand, a large number of politically aware Chinese immigrants, keen to inspire peoples of Southeast Asia to fight for rights equal to those enjoyed by Europeans, were active in introducing China's radical revolutionary experience. On the other hand, as Harry Benda suggests, the notion of a "middle class" is mostly absent within the native populations in the colonial societies of Southeast Asia.[1] Alien elements such as ethnic Chinese shopkeepers and moneylenders have been historically identified as exploiters, not political allies. Therefore, it was the Chinese, rather than "distant European wholesalers or administrators," who were commonly targeted by indigenous radicals in their movements of dissent and rebellion.

This research explores the multifaceted nature of "Chineseness." It could mean China as the source of communist revolutionary inspiration and the Chinese as agents for the spread of Marxist ideology. By using the rise of Chinese communism as the basic template for comparison, this chapter also scrutinizes early communist movements in the Dutch East Indies, French Indochina, and British Malaya. I also compare the three colonial states with Siam, which has never fallen under formal European colonial domination. Instead of following a strict chronological order or investigating events on a country-by-country basis, the analysis is structured thematically by focusing on three different yet interrelated themes: (1) anti-imperialism as a common course pursued by the colonial and semi-colonial East; (2) the embrace of revolution from China; and (3) resistance to Chineseness in various forms of nationalist movements.

UNPACKING "CHINESENESS"

While the very idea of "China" may seem to exist as an unambiguous or unquestionable entity, multiple expressions denote different aspects of China and Chineseness.[2] What makes the study of Chineseness particularly difficult, as Ien Ang observes, is the emergence of a so-called diasporic paradigm. China is no longer an ontologically stable object of study, but something that transcends boundaries in both geographical and cultural senses, as many scholars studying the Chinese diaspora have pointed out. Nor is the content of Chineseness by any means fixed. Instead, it functions as an "open and indeterminate signifier," whose meanings are subject to constant interrogation and renegotiation in different parts of this diaspora.[3] Despite the similarities in their experiences with receiving immigrants from China in different phases of history, the four Southeast Asian states varied considerably with respect to the forms of Chinese political participation in the interwar period. While certain sections of the Chinese diaspora (e.g., some of the local-born "Peranakan," or Straits-born Chinese, in Malay Archipelago communities) were more assimilated into their host societies, and hence more invested in local politics than the sojourners, many more remained primarily concerned with politics back in China. Admittedly, there was never a clear boundary between these two groups. Complex nuances under and across different categories in the rapidly changing political landscape in late-colonial Southeast Asia were characteristic of this period. As Allen Chun notes:

> The transformation of Chinese overseas into "overseas Chinese" (hua-ch'iao) was, then, an expansion of Chinese nationalism abroad that attempted to galvanize Chinese identity from what was once kin-centered, dialect groups into a radically new "imagined community" reeducated in standard Mandarin and the orthodox teachings of Chinese civilization. For Chinese who had not severed ties with their homeland, this new sense of identity could be seen as an extension of a primordial Chineseness. For those whose cultural lifestyles had become largely assimilated or syncretic in nature, this new kind of identity was, instead, a source of alienation.[4]

As far as politics is concerned, the diasporic paradigm has its limitations. The key question, as Philip Kuhn puts it, is to study "the 'others'

whom the Chinese find themselves among."[5] The geographical proximity and the frequent exchange of information between China and Southeast Asia – as well as various networks inside Southeast Asia itself – further complicates the issue. Admittedly, China's geopolitical influence was important to the diasporic communities, but such an influence also went far beyond them. It was not uncommon for native intellectuals to refer to the "Chinese experience" when contemplating issues specific to their own. Likewise, the Chinese intelligentsia was also constantly exposed to ideas from non-Western sources. While China often occupies the centre stage of scholarly discussions on Asian politics, it is severely problematic to adopt a simplistic "center-periphery" framework in which neighbouring countries are seen as passive receivers of Chinese influence, either directly from China or indirectly through the introduction of the Chinese overseas. After all, Southeast Asia is by no means China's periphery. The almost simultaneous rise of communism in China and Southeast Asia during the interwar period is an example that challenges the very fundamentals of such a paradigm.

In *Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center*, Tu Wei-ming challenges the essentialist view that always puts China at the core of its sphere of influence.[6] As more overseas Chinese get permanently settled in their host countries while more Chinese professionals migrate to the West, Tu argues that the diaspora comes to constitute new cultural centers for a renewed sense of Chineseness in the contemporary era. In his concept of "Cultural China," there are three universes: (1) societies in which the ethnic Chinese account for the overwhelming majority, such as mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong; (2) the overseas Chinese communities; and (3) intellectuals who share general interests in the broadly defined Chinese world, which transcends national boundaries and discourses. Although Tu's theory primarily relates to the contemporary era, such a framework is useful in analyzing the multilayered and contested roles of Chineseness in the political turmoil of Southeast Asia during the interwar period. To understand early Asian communist movements, it is essential to grasp at least three interrelated themes, namely (1) the mutual geopolitical influence of China and Southeast Asia; (2) the contradictory roles of the Chinese diasporic communities; and (3) the native intellectuals' attempts to combine communism with nationalist/patriotic/religious traditions, which sometimes entailed an anti-Chinese outlook.

CONTESTING IMPERIALISM: CHINA AS A FRAME OF REFERENCE

According to orthodox Marxist theories, socialism could be realized only in fully developed capitalist societies in which the working class is politically aware and organizationally strong. For a long time, people believed that the socialist revolution would first take place in highly industrialized Western Europe where capitalism was most developed. Nevertheless, despite Marx's prediction that capitalism would soon collapse because of its intrinsic shortcomings, the imperial powers of the West seemed to have become even more prosperous by the turn of the twentieth century. With the firm establishment of the capitalist world economic system, the possession of colonies contributed to the improvement of the welfare of the European working class, which significantly eased the tension between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Instead of fighting against colonialism through socialist revolution, many social democrats in the West switched their focus to active participation in existing democratic political institutions. The purpose was to serve the "interests and desires" of the European working class. This sometimes meant justifying the possession of colonies and championing the supposedly positive civilizing effect of colonialism.[7] Hence, there was a tendency at the beginning of the twentieth century for the Western European socialist parties to prioritize the European working class over the exploited colonies, despite the fact that capitalism had expanded into less developed parts of the world through imperialism.[8] The colonial problem remained a somewhat peripheral concern until the communists' victory in the October Revolution in Russia, after which Leninist Marxism came to function as a workable theoretical foundation for socialist revolutions in the less developed colonial and semi-colonial East. It was against this backdrop that the Comintern was founded in 1919 to coordinate world communist revolutions against Western imperialism.

With almost no exceptions, scholarly works on the rise of Asian communism usually cover two major interrelated aspects, namely the emergence of communist movements across Asia as an integral part of the Comintern-facilitated worldwide revolution against Western imperialism, and the ways in which an adopted Marxist ideology came to be locally intertwined with indigenous radicalism. In China, the spread of the Marxist ideology in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution coincided with the various socialist currents that

emerged in China's New Culture Movement.[9] With an emphasis on democracy and science, the movement aimed to rescue China from a cultural decay attributed to obsolete Confucius traditions. A resolution of the Paris Peace Conference after the First World War further catalyzed the cultural movement. It stipulated that Germany would transfer its rights over Shandong to Japan. The protest then turned into the highly politicized anti-imperialist May Fourth Movement of 1919. The Chinese intelligentsia was greatly frustrated by the contradiction between the appeals of Western modernity on the one hand, and the fact that Western imperialism had become increasingly aggressive towards the East on the other. As a result, the movement paved the road for the dissemination of Marxist-Leninist ideology under the profound influence of Russia's October Revolution.

As Dirlik suggests, the relationship between the May Fourth Movement in 1919 and the establishment of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1921 was dialectical rather than evolutionary.[10] "The [Communist Party] was founded by radicals who only imperfectly appreciated Marxism as a revolutionary and social theory, and were only tenuously committed to it as a political ideology."[11] Chinese intellectuals' understanding of Marxist theories was relatively shallow at the time. Various strains of socialism prevailed. The foundation of the CPC – which largely transplanted their organizational principles from their Russian Bolshevik counterparts – marked the formal assertion of the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist identity of Chinese radicalism from 1921 onward. This assertion, as Dirlik pointed out, required the suppression of other forms of socialism: Chinese communists showed almost no interest in European Marxist literature, and "the works on Marxism that found their way into China between 1921 and 1927 were almost exclusively of Bolshevik origin." In other words, "Chinese Marxists discovered in Bolshevism an ideology of action that quickly moved them into revolutionary practice."[12]

Unsurprisingly, ideological lines were vaguely drawn in the emerging period of the Chinese communist movement. There was already a well-developed radical alliance, based largely on pre-existing intellectual and personal networks, connecting activists from the Nationalist Party of China or Guomindang (GMD) and beyond, even before there was the communist party. The existing network also laid a solid foundation for the formal alliance of the CPC and the GMD, a form which the Comintern ardently promoted as a workable model for Asian communist revolutions elsewhere. As H.J. Benda remarked in

1966, the dividing line between nationalism and communism was thin in much of Asia.[13] Furthermore, it was the rapid growth of the proletariat in the big cities that enabled the left-leaning intellectuals to push their revolutionary agenda forward. Distinct from the traditional pattern in which intellectuals could only participate in politics by joining the bureaucracy, the Chinese intelligentsia was now in a position to influence politics from the outside. Through their partnership with the working class, the radical intellectuals saw the prospect of approaching China's problems via socialist solutions.

Despite the growing influence of the national capitalists and the working class, Chinese society, like other Asian colonies under the domination of the Europeans, remained overwhelmingly agrarian. In such societies, the emerging nationalist bourgeoisie was either non-existent or too weak to mobilize the masses, who were mostly peasants, to challenge the colonial regimes effectively.[14] The communist movement, chiefly led by left-wing intellectuals with the participation of the urban proletariat, had no better option but to figure out viable ways to work closely with the peasantry. Unlike the semi-colonial society of China, where the confrontation with imperialism was neither direct nor acute, the colonies in Southeast Asia were under the complete control of the European powers. Consequently, the communists' best opportunity, as Khánh demonstrates in his work on Vietnam, could be found at the nexus of the existing anti-colonial or proto-nationalist patriotic movements and the anti-feudal peasant movement.[15] Although communism was ideally supposed to be more "international" rather than "national," in vernacular practice it was wedded with indigenous practices. It often became a form of "folk communism."[16] On the one hand, native revolutionaries adopted communism as a sort of "modernized anarchism." Such an ideology, at once utopian and millenarian, was able to attract the masses by playing a role akin to religion.[17] On the other hand, as Khánh suggests, internationally oriented communism had provided two useful tools to the local anti-imperialist movements. One was intellectual, that is, interpreting local anti-colonial struggles as part of a worldwide revolutionary network; the other was psychological, that is, cultivating the belief among the natives that they were equal to the Europeans.[18]

Like much of China, Vietnam is virtually a mono-ethnic society with a dominant ethnic group that accounts for the overwhelming majority (more than 90 per cent) of the population. With a strong

sense of ethnic self-awareness, Vietnam's national unity was predicated on an established precolonial condition.[19] Khánh identifies Vietnam's anti-colonial struggles as primarily based on its patriotic traditions rather than a rising national awareness. These patriotic traditions emphasize traditional Vietnamese social orders such as ancestor worship and the communal cult. According to Khánh, patriotism is more inward-looking, kinship-oriented, and has a sentimental connotation. The constructed (official) nationalism, by comparison, concentrates on the nation's perceived legitimate rights, and usually only exists in the political expressions of the elites. So ingrained were such traditions within Vietnamese society that anti-colonial struggles could thus be easily translated into patriotic acts or vice versa. In Vietnam's confrontation with French colonialism, indigenous elites with various political orientations could often utilize patriotic traditions to mobilize the masses to achieve their respective nationalist goals.[20] Radical movements, such as the one led by the communists, tended to solidify such patriotism.[21]

By contrast, in plural societies like Indonesia, where a sense of national unity was non-existent in pre-colonial history, the radical communist movement was based on a different socio-political foundation. Without an overarching ideology that could effectively unite the masses, revolutionary forces in Indonesia fighting Dutch imperialism usually followed three paths. These forces included the Pan-Islamic movement led by Muslim scholars with close connections to the Middle East, the proto-nationalist movement led by the intelligentsia who demanded a higher degree of autonomy and even independence for the colony, and the revolutionary movement brought over by the Chinese population.[22] Quite unlike China and Vietnam, where revolutionary movements were primarily initiated with relatively straightforward political purposes, the early Indonesian organizations were founded not as political parties but as organizations to promote various social and cultural interests.[23] The oldest communist organization in Asia, the Indies Social Democratic Association (ISDA), the predecessor of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), was first founded by European socialists.[24] From the outset, the internationalist outlook of the ISDA distinguished itself from the proto-nationalist organizations of the time. As McVey observes, nationalism in its infancy was attractive only to a small number of people, who were interested in pursuing an uncommitted national movement.[25] Pan-Islamism, by comparison, enjoyed the most substantial mass support within the

indigenous population. Such a factor contributed to the formation of the Indonesian communists' alliance with the Sarekat Islam (SI) – Indonesia's bellwether of modernist Islamic organizations with the most extensive contemporaneous network among the masses – long before the Comintern became an active proponent of the "bloc within" strategy in China.

In some communist parties, certain ethnic groups were overrepresented relative to the surrounding population. This was especially the case of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrant groups in Malaya, Siam, and Cambodia.[26] The emergence of this pattern had to do with two factors: firstly, the relatively early and successful communist movements in the immigrants' ethnic homelands; secondly, the demographics of these groups, which were often more politically mobilized than the resident population. The movements' anti-imperialist slogans were quite attractive to the proletarians among the immigrants, not only because they echoed egalitarian ideals in the colonies, but also because of the rise of nationalist/patriotic movements at home.[27] To the non-diaspora population, however, such movements were usually far less appealing, due to its membership composition and ideological persuasion. Later sections will show that while benefitting from its internationalist approach to colonial problems, communism was, because of its alien quality, vulnerable to the attacks of competing forces.

EMBRACING REVOLUTION FROM CHINA

Formally founded in 1919, the Comintern played a significant role in coordinating the dissemination of communist ideology and providing strategic guidance to communist organizations worldwide. The Comintern gained considerable prestige, at least temporarily, through the implementation of the "looking to the East" strategy in the CPC's formative years in the early 1920s. Although the organization's actual contribution to the rise of Chinese communism is subject to constant debates, the Comintern actively promoted the so-called Chinese model as a viable road for communist movements throughout the colonized world. Due to the obvious geographical proximity and other close connections between China and Southeast Asia, the impact of the early Chinese revolution (not limited to the communist movement) on Southeast Asia was profound. This section explores this influence from three major angles, namely (1) revolution as a transplantable model; (2) China as a center for strategizing the Southeast Asian

communist movements; and (3) the GMD and CPC as active organizers of revolution in Southeast Asia.

(1) Revolution as a Transplantable Model

It was probably not so difficult for Southeast Asian intellectuals to perceive the relevance of the Chinese revolution to their own circumstances. After all, China was a non-European society with a mostly agrarian outlook. Before the emergence of world communist movements in the aftermath of the October Revolution, it was Sun Yat-sen's Xinhai Revolution of 1911, overthrowing China's last imperial dynasty, that most inspired the people of the East. As a result, Sun's socialist "Three Principles of the People" – commonly summarized as nationalism, democracy, and livelihood – gained popularity among the intellectuals seeking "teachers and techniques"[28]

However, the acceptance of Sun's Three Principles in Southeast Asia by no means indicated that the flow of ideas was unidirectional, that is, only from China to Southeast Asia. In fact, the establishment of the ISDA predated both its Chinese counterpart and the Comintern itself. With limited exposure to international elements, the Indies communists were quite successful in adapting Marxist ideology to colonial practicalities, especially with regard to attracting a broad membership regardless of racial background. After the deportation of the key Dutch founding members, the organization went through a relatively smooth transition under its native leadership from a Marxist interest group into a full-fledged and legally recognized political party.[29] To survive the colonial regime's tight control, the PKI members joined the SI but still retained their communist membership. This approach coincided with Lenin's call for communist parties worldwide to build partnerships with bourgeois nationalists in their struggles against Western imperialism. Henk Sneevliet, the Dutch founder of the ISDA who later became one of the earliest Comintern representatives to China, introduced the "bloc within" strategy to the newly founded CPC, which ultimately led to the formation of the first GMD-CPC alliance between 1923 and 1927. Ironically, when the bloc within strategy was temporarily proved successful in China, the Comintern insisted that the PKI should do the same by staying inside the SI. While such an attitude had a lot to do with the heated debate between Stalin and Trotsky over the Chinese Revolution, the Comintern was apparently very unfamiliar with the changing

situation in Indonesia. Unlike its Chinese counterpart, the PKI gradually gained the upper hand in the United Front while the SI declined. The communists now had an opportunity to lead the Indonesian revolution instead of just participating in it.[30] From the Comintern perspective, however, the influence of the GMD-CPC alliance in Southeast Asia was essential. Voitinsky, the head of the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau, wrote in 1924: "There can be no doubt that even the partial victory of Sun Yat-sen over the attempted counterrevolutions in Canton and over their instigators – the Anglo-American-French imperialists – will raise the authority of this party (GMD) in the eyes of the colonial peoples of the Pacific Ocean to a new height and will serve as a stimulant to the liberation movement of these people."[31] The enthusiasm for the Chinese revolutionary model reached a climax during 1925–26 when the GMD National Army launched a successful military campaign against the Western-supported Chinese warlords with the help of the Soviet Union.[32] The Southeast Asian communist leaders increasingly regarded the Chinese revolution as the "center of attraction for the awakening masses of the Colonial East."[33] As McVey observed, the PKI used the events in China to demonstrate that revolution was no longer a distant European affair. "If the anti-imperialist effort could succeed in China, where the interests of so many capitalist nations were involved, then surely it could triumph in the Indies, where only the relatively weak Dutch needed to be faced."[34] Likewise, the Comintern also used the Indonesian movement to justify its China policy when the GMD-CPC United Front came under question towards the end of 1926. When a poorly organized revolt broke out in Java in November 1926, the Comintern conveniently related the largely homegrown event to the Chinese revolution: "That the [Indonesian] revolt should occur just at this time, is doubtless to be attributed in no mean degree to the powerful effect produced by the recent events in China. It is the victories of the Canton army, which have strengthened the confidence of the Indonesian people in their power … The Indonesian revolution will be victorious, just as the Chinese revolution will be victorious!"[35]

(2) China as a Center for Strategizing Southeast Asian Communist Movements

With the success of the GMD-CPC First United Front between 1923 and 1927, China soon became a main focus of the Comintern's efforts

to initiate anti-imperialist revolutions in the Far East. As a result, the Comintern deployed a large number of agents to China and established ground offices in cities such as Guangzhou (Canton) and Shanghai. Not only did such posts become major hubs for communication between Chinese communists and the Comintern representatives, but they also served as liaison centers for the revolutions beyond China's national border. Many leaders of the early Southeast Asian communist organizations either worked at or frequently visited the Comintern organs in China. The linkages between Chinese and Southeast Asian revolutions were by no means trivial. In fact, the Comintern's China offices played a pivotal role in strategizing communist movements, which was most vividly illustrated in the cases of Indonesia and Vietnam.

The first person to develop this connection was Henk Sneevliet. As the founder of ISDA, he was forced to leave the Indies by the authorities in 1918 for inciting Indonesian workers to agitate against the Dutch colonial regime. After attending the Comintern's Second World Congress in 1920, Sneevliet was sent to China to coordinate the establishment of the CPC, and later, the formation of the first United Front between the GMD and the CPC. During his stay in China from 1921 to 1923, Sneevliet apparently maintained close contact with the Indies communist leaders. While copies of communist newspapers were continuously sent to Sneevliet, articles of the deported ISDA veterans also occasionally appeared in the major communist publications such as *Het Vrije Woord* and *Soeara Ra'jat*. Many of the Indonesian communist leaders reportedly visited Sneevliet in Shanghai en route to Moscow. As McVey observes, the contact between Shanghai and Indonesia peaked during Sneevliet's tenure. The PKI was no longer loosely connected with the rest of the communist world.[36]

Tan Malaka was another prominent figure of the PKI who spent an extended period in China. After the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) appointed him as the supervisor to oversee the communist movements throughout Southeast Asia, Tan Malaka arrived in Guangzhou in December 1923, where he chaired the labour office of the Comintern for over a year. Like Sneevliet in Shanghai, Tan Malaka was able to send his directives to the PKI from abroad thanks to the ease of communications among Asia's port cities.[37] In June 1924, the Pacific Transport Workers Conference convened in Guangzhou in the hope of "catalyzing the development of the movement among a group of workers most susceptible to radical

organizations and also improving international connections in the area."[38] Alimin and Budisutjitro joined Tan Malaka to represent the PKI at the conference. Although the Guangzhou Bureau was ultimately abandoned in 1925, Tan Malaka played a critical role in connecting the labour movements in the Far East during his stay in China.

Interestingly, there was a period in 1924–25 when the PKI had two overseas bases led by its two prominent leaders: the European PKI office led by Semaun and the Guangzhou office headed by Tan Malaka. The two offices "had virtually no direct contact" with each other besides the Comintern channel in Moscow."[39] However, when the Dutch communists proposed to shut down the base in Guangzhou, Semaun insisted that both the Dutch and Guangzhou connections were crucial. Guangzhou was important because there were a large number of ethnic Chinese proletarians in Indonesia whom the PKI should bring under its influence.[40] As the colonial government carried out more stringent measures against communism, Darsono, a PKI representative in Moscow in early 1926, proposed to organize the Indonesian movement in China: "We would like to have a party conference called somewhere abroad, preferably in China … By organizing some sort of a center in China which will strengthen the Party Central Committee inside the country [*sic*], because when the comrades feel that they have a party leadership outside they will be more enthusiastic and the situation will be improved."[41]

A similar pattern was also evident in the more successful case of Vietnam. Disillusioned with reformism and Wilsonian idealism in the early twentieth century, Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), the most prominent figure in the Vietnamese communist movement, was exposed to Marxist theories during his stay in Paris in the early 1920s.[42] In 1924, Nguyen Ai Quoc came to China from Moscow with a vision of launching two revolutions in Vietnam: a political one that aimed to fight for national independence and a social one targeted at returning the land to the tiller.[43] Primarily based on the organizational structure of Tam Tam Xa, a group of Vietnamese quasi-intellectuals living in southern China, Nguyen Ai Quoc established the Communist Youth Corps (CYC) and its mass organization the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth Association (*Thanh Nien*, or Youth) in Guangzhou. The *Thanh Nien* headquarters in Guangzhou served as the single most important center for Vietnamese revolutionary activities from 1925 to 1927. The offices had a wide variety of functions, which included hosting revolutionaries, organizing theoretical

and practical training, publishing propaganda and educational materials, and planning clandestine activities.[44] Within two years *Thanh Nien* had developed into a full-fledged communist organization. Although the GMD-CPC split in 1927 led to the inevitable destruction of the Vietnamese communist headquarters in Guangzhou, there was little doubt that *Thanh Nien* laid a solid foundation for the development of the Vietnamese communist revolution. As Khánh noted: "In 1925 Marxism-Leninism was only one of many political theories, including those of Gandhi, Sun Yat-sen, Piłsudski, introduced to Vietnam; by the end of 1927, it had become a leading ideology with an organizational home. From that time on, communism remained an integral part of Vietnamese nationalism."[45]

(3) The GMD and CPC Activities in Southeast Asia

The Chinese revolution of the early 1920s appeared "communist" in the international arena despite the more dominant role of the nationalists. The Comintern's deep involvement in the Chinese revolution, exemplified by the bloc within strategy that encouraged the CPC to work within the GMD's organizational framework, was among the many factors contributing to such an impression. With Moscow's support, the GMD-led Chinese National Army made successful military advances against the northern warlords, which generated a robust revolutionary momentum from 1923–27. As soon as the GMD-CPC alliance collapsed in 1927, however, the GMD purged CPC members relentlessly in the following years. The CPC's very survival was placed in jeopardy. Given the chaotic political situation in China and the relatively limited strength of the CPC in the years before the Second World War, the degree to which the CPC penetrated into Southeast Asia as an independent organization – rather than as a faction within the GMD-CPC alliance – was questionable. By contrast, with its extensive overseas network inherited from its predecessor *Tongmenghui*, the GMD spearheaded the dissemination of China's revolutionary ideologies all across Southeast Asia. As Grigory Voitinsky, the head of the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau, wrote in 1924: "The news of the reorganization of the GMD has penetrated into the French colony of Indochina, the American colony of the Philippines, the Dutch colony of the Malay Archipelago, reached Singapore, Malaya, and India. At the Pacific Transport Workers' Conference in Guangzhou in June of this year delegations from almost

all these areas saluted the GMD, although to some extent they tended to idealize its program and activities."[46] With rare exceptions, such penetrations were often carried out through the channels of overseas Chinese in areas where the latter were numerous. Such efforts were consistent with the GMD's nationalist approach to winning over the hearts and minds of the overseas Chinese. The practice was made possible by China's nationality law, which followed the principle of *jus sanguinis* (right of blood). According to this principle, "every legal or extra-legal child of a Chinese father or mother, regardless of birthplace" would be automatically regarded as a Chinese citizen.[47] Consequently, while new immigrants to Southeast Asia remained Chinese citizens, those locally born (possessing a citizenship other than Chinese) also had the right to reclaim their Chinese nationality. As McVey notes, "the presence of a large and rapidly expanding Chinese minority in Indonesia naturally had considerable bearing on the usefulness of the Chinese example to the PKI." The Chinese community in the Indies "had supported the GMD from its beginnings and followed the revolution with great interest."[48]

The CPC, unable to export a "revolutionary model" of its own, was more active in establishing communist organizations appealing to the overseas Chinese community, especially in places where substantial native-led communist movements were non-existent. Malaya and Siam are two typical cases that reflect such a pattern. Local communist branches such as the Siamese Overseas Chinese Communist Party and the South Seas Communist Party were founded in Siam and Malaya respectively, both in 1927, under the auspices of the CPC.[49] In Cambodia, the participants in the country's early communist movements were also predominantly Chinese and Vietnamese.[50] Although these communist organizations often hoped to attract supporters regardless of ethnic background, they soon developed their strongest mass support in the immigrant communities. In their attempts to reach out to non-Chinese communities, the "Chinese" outlook would almost always supersede the organizations' class-based "communist" inclinations. While working at the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau, Nguyen Ai Quoc criticized the CPC cadres in Malaya for being "out of touch with the real mass elements," as the latter "failed to recruit other races besides Chinese."[51] The CPC cadres faced many difficulties, such as language barriers, in attracting non-Chinese followers.[52] Beyond such practical problems, the problem was closely intertwined with many socio-economic issues caused by the colony's ingrained

racial segregation. According to Tan Malaka, Chinese people in Malaya were politically more aware and had a better understanding of the economic situation because of their greater exposure to commercial activities in the urban environment.[53] Additionally, "being Chinese" and "being proletarian" often appeared incompatible to locally born populations, which made the overwhelmingly "Chinese" communist party unappealing.

Due to the GMD's nationwide purge of CPC members, many Chinese communists fled to Southeast Asia after 1927. The 1930s saw a rapid growth of clandestine communist activities in spite of the tight surveillance of the colonial regimes. As a result of the Japanese aggression in China, the rise of Chinese nationalism provided a favourable condition for the China-oriented communist movements overseas. In Malaya, for instance, the communists gained substantial support by actively participating in the National Salvation Movement. The party established numerous open and underground organizations that aimed not only to recruit new members but also to exert broader influence to the diaspora community under the banner of fighting against the Japanese.[54] As Cheah put it, "the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) had become a paradox – an Overseas Chinese party oriented toward China and the CPC but trying to lead a Communist revolution in the multiracial society of Malaya."[55]

RESISTING CHINESENESS IN VARIOUS FORMS OF NATIONALISM

In spite of its internationalist character, communist revolution in Southeast Asia often took a nationalist route.[56] While nationalist discourse commonly associates struggles for independence with fighting against foreign domination, communists often take more radical approaches against foreign capitalists' exploitation of the indigenous population. "Foreignness" is a highly slippery concept. Its interpretation, therefore, is constantly subject to political manipulation. The controversies over the presence of the Chinese are no doubt integral to the identity politics of Southeast Asia. At the risk of oversimplifying, the Chinese are simultaneously victims (along with the homegrown population) of Western domination and beneficiaries of processes of colonization, through which the Chinese gained a relatively superior economic position. They are, paradoxically, both colonizers and anti-colonialists.

There were two principal reasons for the rise of resistance to Chineseness. Firstly, in plural societies such as Indonesia and Malaya, the Chinese account for a (sizable) minority of the total people. Chinese are commonly stereotyped as exploiters of the locally-raised population. As a result, rejecting Chineseness in nationalist movements was an indispensable part of the agenda of anti-colonialism itself. Secondly, the Chinese presence has also been quite strong in largely mono-ethnic societies such as Vietnam and Siam due to the geographical proximity. The resistance against the Chinese offers a useful way of stimulating anti-imperialist patriotism, such resistance is also essential to the processes of identity-making that lead to the formation of nation-states. It is also worth noting that there are no clear dividing lines between the two patterns. Various forms of resistance against the Chinese and "Chineseness" are often closely connected. While communism was adapted to suit political needs in distinct local contexts, the intricate inter- and intra-racial networks further complicated its dissemination, which added irresolvable contradictions to the anti-imperialist struggles across Southeast Asia.

(1) The Dilemma of Overseas Chinese

While the Chinese Revolution appealed to Southeast Asian communists, they were not thereby committed to embracing the Chinese model wholeheartedly. Admittedly, the Chinese revolution was particularly inspiring to the Southeast Asian communists as it served as evidence that Marxism-Leninism could work in non-European contexts and largely agrarian societies. In the meantime, however, the fact that the success of the revolution belonged to "the Chinese" made communism less attractive to some of the indigenous population. After all, "the communist paradise so close at hand is a *Chinese* paradise."[57]

In the Dutch East Indies, the PKI leadership was reluctant to develop a working relationship with the Indies Chinese community, which was considered economically well-off and ideologically attracted to communism because of the ongoing revolution in China. Understandably, the PKI would enjoy enormous benefits if it succeeded in bringing Indies Chinese under its influence. However, the PKI also feared that its close association with the Chinese would jeopardize the party's mass support, especially in rural areas where the Chinese were often stereotypically seen as ruthless moneylenders or exploitive

businesspeople.[58] Although the PKI eventually pursued an implicit policy of working with the Chinese, their connections remained weak throughout the first phase of the party's existence before the colonial government crushed it in 1927.[59] Admittedly, excluding the Indies Chinese from the PKI activities would go against the party's non-ethnicity-based Marxist ideology. Beyond the pure ideological consideration, however, it was the prospect of drawing material support from the Chinese business community that propelled the PKI to make such a move. Furthermore, the PKI leadership believed that the Indies Chinese press, with its sympathetic view of the local revolution, would be useful for propaganda purposes.[60] The PKI appointed Chinese executive members to represent some of the party divisions and recruited Chinese workers to its affiliated unions. It also launched campaigns to show its moral support for the Chinese revolution and to provide symbolic financial aid to China's disaster relief efforts.[61] The party leadership hoped, vainly as it turned out, to receive mutual support from the Indies Chinese community.[62] So China-oriented were most of the Indies Chinese that the level of enthusiasm for participating in a radical Indonesian revolution within the Chinese community was low. Only a handful joined the party, while the majority opted to stay out of the movement. Many of the Chinese spurned any involvement in the domestic politics of the Indies. It might endanger their business and livelihood under the strict Dutch surveillance.[63]

Akin to the DEI case in which the communist party mainly comprised the locally born, parties with predominantly Chinese membership faced similar difficulties in building a mass base that could stretch beyond ethnic boundaries. As mentioned earlier, the CPC facilitated the establishment of some Southeast Asian communist parties under the tutelage of the Comintern. With their Chinese outlook, such organizations were usually efficient in obtaining mass support within the overseas Chinese community but were not successful in influencing the non-Chinese population. A striking example of this pattern is the communist movement in British Malaya. The CPC cadres penetrated into the colony – with its vast community ties to the Chinese mainland – with relative ease, and quickly established an organizational framework. After the completion of this groundwork, however, the Malayan communists found themselves struggling with an unresolvable dilemma, namely the incompatibility of various streams of anti-colonialist nationalism. The MCP's membership primarily consisted of the overseas Chinese, more preoccupied with the liberation of China

than the independence of Malaya. Catalyzed by the Japanese aggression in China, the nationalist movement of the diaspora community reached its peak in the 1930s. Meanwhile, the Malay and Indian communities had their own definitions of national liberation. Besides a vaguely articulated anti-British imperialism, there was an absence in Malaya of a necessary ideological common ground upon which a national unity could be achieved. Communism, now appearing to be overwhelmingly Chinese, was not attractive enough in the ethnically segregated plural society of Malaya. Although the MCP soon noticed the situation and did make attempts to bridge this ethnic division in its recruiting, its inability to distinguish loyalty to China from loyalty to Malaya hampered its efforts to make meaningful changes.[64] It was not until the eve of the Japanese invasion in 1940 that the "All-Races Democratic United Front" was finally established. Unsurprisingly, however, the organization failed to make any visible change to Malaya's intrinsically ethnicity-based political environment.

(2) Resistance against the Chinese and the Identity-Making Process in Nationalist Movements

Anti-colonialism, or the resistance against foreign domination in general, often traces its origin to a specific place's precolonial past. With the rise of nationalist sentiment in the colonies, the discourse of the precolonial past became relevant again to people's imagination about national liberation. Such imagination, as Benedict Anderson famously noted in *Imagined Communities*, is essential to the identity-making process that leads to the formation of nation-states.[65] Anti-imperialist struggles against the Europeans thus curiously paralleled other forms of anti-foreign resistance that existed in the discourse of the pre-colonial period. Historically, the Chinese presence in Southeast Asia has been robust and lasting, which inevitably lead to the existence of a sort of patriotism based on anti-Chinese traditions. While Southeast Asian nationalists obtained inspiration from the Chinese revolution, non-communist forces were wary of the danger of a radicalism they associated with "Chineseness." Within communist groups, too, besides embracing the Chinese revolutionary models, there was also a tendency to reject the Chinese influence by adopting more radical approaches. Such paradoxes were most evident in Siam and Vietnam, where the dominant top-down "official nationalism" played a critical role in resisting "Chineseness."[66]

As in Malaya, the followers of early Thai communist movement were also predominantly overseas Chinese. Due to the general lack of interest in Marxist ideology among the Western-educated elites, it was primarily the immigrant groups, rather than the Western-educated intellectuals, who introduced communism into the country.[67] Moreover, as conservative royalist elites monopolized the cultural and political life of the country, they were able to "put up a double-layered cultural resistance to foreign radical ideas through the conservative ethno-ideology of Thainess and the anti-socialist hegemony of the ancient Thai utopias."[68] Consequently, the emergence of anti-communism ironically predated the spread of communism.[69] The royalists occupied a privileged vantage point in defining pure "Thainess," an essentialist nationalist stance designed not to fight against colonialists or neighbours, but to resist the growing Chinese influence in the first half of the twentieth century.[70] As a result, communism, imbued with a strong sense of "Chineseness," became increasingly regarded as being "non-Thai." However, a group of Lookjin (Thai-born Chinese) communists gradually bridged the gap between the foreign Marxist-communist ideology and the Thai people. This was not only made possible by their successful efforts at translating Chinese communist publications into the Thai language; the process also involved the Lookjin communists' thorough conversion – linguistically, occupationally, and socially – to "Thainess."[71] The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) at its inception also encountered difficulties in attracting non-Chinese followers, which was similar to the problem facing their Malayan counterparts. However, they managed to overcome this problem by integrating themselves into the orbit of the indigenous Thai cultural system – in other words, by eliminating "Chineseness" from communism. The new version of communism was able to survive the government's strict surveillance and harsh repression over time under the guise of Thai culture.[72]

The elimination of "Chineseness," albeit following a different pattern, also took place in the Vietnamese communist movement. According to Khánh, an important feature that distinguished the Vietnamese revolution from other parts of Southeast Asia was the notion of patriotism. Patriotism is distinct from the typical form of nationalism mainly because of its strong sense of ethnic self-awareness, which already existed in the pre-colonial era. Such patriotism tended to emphasize the traditional Vietnamese social order, which included both a form of ancestor worship reminiscent of that of the Chinese

and a native form of communalism.[73] Although the term "patriotism" did not appear in the Vietnamese language until the turn of the twentieth century, ethnic self-awareness was well grounded in the Vietnamese pride over "pursuing a political destiny separate from that of China." Anti-Chinese figures in historical discourse were highly regarded.[74] Therefore, "defeating the superior Chinese" constituted an integral part of the Vietnamese patriotic tradition. The elimination of Chineseness, or more precisely, demarcations from Chinese models, was important in Vietnamese anti-colonial struggles. Such demarcations included those separating the French-educated intelligentsia from the Chinese-educated Confucian gentry; the reformers from the French collaborators; the radicals in southern China from the gradualists; and so on. As the revolution became increasingly radical, the new generations always managed to find original paths compatible with local circumstances. This pattern is best illustrated in the party reorganization in the aftermath of the *Thanh Nien* disintegration, which could be partially attributed to the GMD repression of the Chinese communists after the breakup of the GMD-CPC Alliance. A schism emerged within the Vietnamese communist movement, as the young communists criticized the older generation for not being revolutionary enough. With the decline of the China-based leadership, the younger generation in Vietnam started to steer the party's political priority away from national independence and towards European-style class struggles.[75] To a large extent, this shift of focus showed that the Vietnamese communist movement had transformed itself from something derivative of the Chinese revolution into an entirely self-run project. As Benda remarks, the "homegrown" Vietnamese revolution is among the most impressive communist movements, as evident in its growing independence from "communist monolithism." As he remarks, "the 'best' communists are obviously nobody's puppet."[76]

CONCLUSION

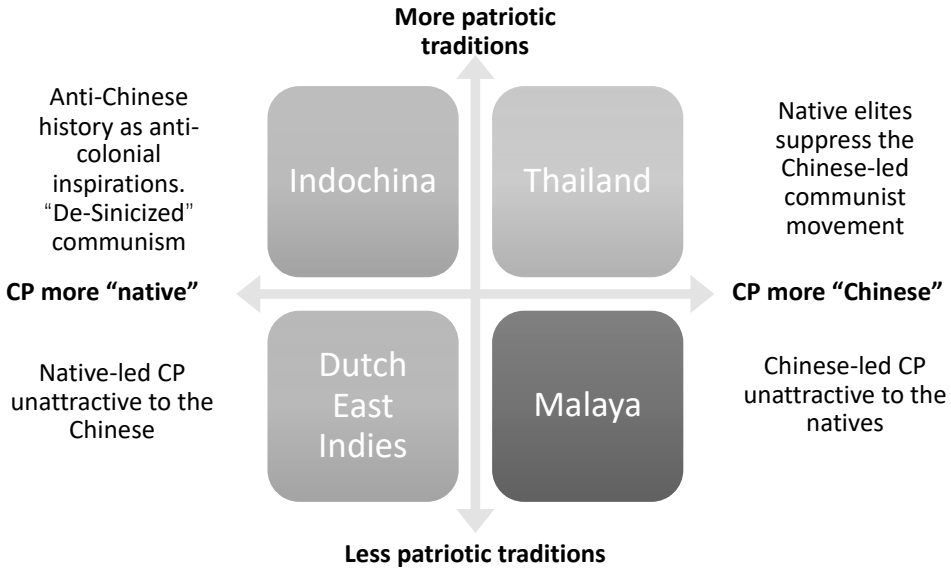
In his 1956 essay on Southeast Asian communism, Benda points out that postwar scholarly writings tended to overemphasize Chinese leadership and the Chinese communist model in Southeast Asia, partially because of the CPC victory over the GMD in 1949, which "heightened its prestige."[77] Although it is debatable whether Benda's claim is still valid today given the sea changes over the past six decades, the themes of "Chinese leadership" and the "Chinese communist

model" remain relevant to the discussions of Southeast Asian communist movements.

By comparing Siam, British Malaya, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies, this paper shows that the representations of China, Chinese, and Chineseness in the origins of Southeast Asian communist movements vary drastically from one another (see figure 11.1).

First, the Chinese revolution is a natural frame of reference for anti-imperialist struggles in Southeast Asia. Keen to resist foreign domination, the new generation of Asian radicals considered communist theories. Thanks to their greater access to Western education, many intellectuals approached national liberation through socialist struggles. With the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Marxism-Leninism started to exert a profound influence all over the world, which inevitably ignited anti-imperialist enthusiasm in the East. China was among the first countries in Asia to receive this impact and graft it on to the country's nationalist movement. Revolutionary Leninism was gradually accepted as the standard form of communism in Asia, as it effectively provided both theoretical guidance and organizational strategies for fledgling communist movements in societies in which capitalism had not yet fully developed.

Secondly, China was a major source of revolution that the Southeast Asian communists could embrace. As a non-European and largely agrarian society, China shared many similarities with Southeast Asia in terms of politics, social structure, and cultural values. The achievements of the Chinese revolution, especially those characterizing the years of the First GMD-CPC United Front under Comintern tutelage, were both inspirational and instructive to Southeast Asian radicals desperately in search of viable paths for their own movements. The Chinese revolution served as a potentially transplantable model in the eyes of Southeast Asian communists; it strengthened their belief that communism could work. As the Comintern paid close attention to the Chinese revolution, China also functioned as a hub of communication and a center for strategizing Southeast Asian revolutions. Many Southeast Asian communist leaders either worked at or frequented the Comintern offices in China, which provided vital connections to the rise of communist movements in their home countries. To win over the hearts and minds of the vast overseas Chinese population, many GMD and CPC organizations managed to expand in Southeast Asia. However, their inability to work beyond ethnic boundaries constrained the level of influence that such branches could exert.



Finally, the notion of Chineseness was extremely ambiguous in the Southeast Asian context. The rise of communism further complicated this situation. Communists necessarily worked with various contradictions inherent to the unique economic and socio-political positions of the overseas Chinese. On the one hand, the native-led communist movements were reluctant to absorb Chinese followers, as the latter's bourgeois image could endanger the former's mass base in the proletariat and the peasantry. On the other hand, the Chinese-led communist movements also had enormous difficulties in attracting participants beyond the Chinese community, since such movements were usually imbued with a strong sense of nationalism oriented towards China. Moreover, resistance against the Chinese influence has been an integral part of the Southeast Asian discourse of patriotism and official nationalism. Due to the "Chinese" outlook of the communist movement, anti-communism was essential to the royalty-monopolized identity-making process of Thainess in Siam. In Vietnam, by comparison, the young communists' departure from the "Chinese revolutionary model" was not only critical to the party's sustainable development but also consistent with Vietnamese patriotic traditions, in which anti-Chinese struggles were central to the formation of the Vietnamese national awareness.

Primarily written on the basis of nation-states, the Cold War scholarship on Southeast Asian communism often pays little attention to movements crossing geographical and political boundaries. Among the handful of books that engage in comparative studies, historical depth has sometimes been compromised.[78] Is it possible to study the rise of Southeast Asian communism comparatively under an overarching theme? Christopher Goscha's work on the Southeast Asian networks of the Vietnamese revolution presents a possible new direction. In the same vein, issues surrounding "Chineseness," rather than just the Chinese networks, are worthy of more careful investigations. While scholars have laid solid foundations in the fields of communism, nationalism, and Chinese diaspora studies in Southeast Asia, many important questions remain unanswered. For instance, why was communism, in theory based around class, in practice so often framed by race, religion, and cultural resentment? Why did the native-led communist movements fail to converge with the ones led by the Chinese? Generally speaking, Southeast Asia has been receptive to foreign influences throughout history. While many world religions have found ample spaces to thrive, why has communism been so thoroughly eradicated with only a few exceptions (and what about the exceptions)? There remain many conundrums to grapple with in the complicated and contentious history of communism in Southeast Asia.

NOTES

1 Harry Benda, "Communism in Southeast Asia," in *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1972), 51–2.
2 Allen Chun, "Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity," *boundary 2* 23, no. 2 (1996): 111.
3 Ien Ang, "Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm," *boundary 2* 25, no. 3 (1998): 225.
4 Chun, "Fuck Chineseness," 124.
5 Philip Kuhn, *Chinese among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 4.
6 Tu Wei-ming, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (1991): 1–32.
7 For a more detailed discussion of such kinds of view held by social democrats, see McVey's analysis of H. van Kol, the leader of the Dutch Social

Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP). Ruth McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), 4.

8 Ibid., 1–4.

9 Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 10–11.

10 Ibid., 11.

11 Ibid., 255.

12 Ibid., 269–70.

13 Harry Benda, "Reflection on Asian Communism," in *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1972), 261.

14 The nationalist movement led by the urban bourgeoisie did gain considerable strength over the following years, especially during the period of Japanese occupation. As this chapter mainly concerns the origin of the pre-war period, the analysis here does not include a detailed discussion of such movements.

15 Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 23.

16 Benda, "Reflection on Asian Communism," 260.

17 Ibid., 259.

18 Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism,* 55.

19 Ibid., 32.

20 Ibid., 27.

21 Ibid., 34.

22 First published in 1913, Lenin's "The Awakening in Asia" refers to a "Chinese revolutionary movement" that was most likely the Xinhai Revolution in 1911, which overthrew China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing. Also see McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 7.

23 Ibid., 22.

24 The ISDA was founded by Dutch socialist Henk Sneevliet in 1914.

25 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 64.

26 See Christopher Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885–1954* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999), 64–96; Anna Belogurova, "The Chinese International of Nationalities: The Chinese Communist Party, the Comintern, and the Foundation of the Malayan National Communist Party, 1923–1939," *Journal of Global History* 9, no. 3 (2014): 447.

27 Although technically Thailand was never a formal colony, it had many similar experiences in its confrontation with European colonialism. See Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a*

Nation (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009); Tamara Loos, *Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

28 Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 36, 53.

29 The Dutch colonial authority's attitude towards the Indies communist party was quite ambivalent. While recognizing the party's legality, the colonial government also kept a tight surveillance on the communist activities. The leaders of the communist organization were constantly subject to arrest, investigation, and banishment. For more detailed analysis, see McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, xii.

30 Ibid., 83.

31 Ibid., 224.

32 The Northern Expedition officially started July 1926. Although Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the GMD after Sun Yat-sen's death, already begun to double his party alliance with the communists, the First United Front did not break up until 1927. By defeating the Northern warlords, the Northern Expedition ultimately reunified China in 1928.

33 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 350.

34 Ibid., 229.

35 Semaun, "The Rebellion in the Dutch East Indies," *International Press Correspondence,* 2 December 1926, 1438, as quoted in McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 350. Interestingly, the PKI's official history of the 1960s talked about the influence of the Chinese revolution in a very different fashion. Instead of giving credit to the Comintern policy, the author emphasizes the Indies Chinese, who actually did not play a big role in the Indonesian revolution until much later: "The surging revolution in China, namely the Northern Expedition of the Revolutionary Army from Canton with the aim of defeating the warlords, exerted impact on the movement in Indonesia through the democratic-minded Chinese people there. The Indies Chinese thereby participated in the revolution and the struggles for independence in Indonesia." See Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), *Pemberontakan nasional pertama di Indonesia, 1926 (The First Nationalist Uprising of Indonesia, 1926)* (Djakarta: Jajasan Pembaruan, 1961), 47.

36 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 203.

37 Ibid., 210.

38 Ibid., 216.

39 Ibid., 214.

40 "Report of Comrade Darsono to India Sub-Secretariat," 6 May 1926, in Partai Komunis Indonesia, and Komintern (PKI), Archief Komintern

– Partai Komunis Indonesia (AKPKI), Folder 2, ARCH01744, International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam, Netherlands.

41 "Questions and answers to Comrade Darsana's Report," 6 May 1926, in PKI, AKPKI, Folder 2, ARCH01744, IISH.

42 Sophie Quinn-Judge, *Ho Chi Minh: The Missing Years: 1919–1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 42.

43 Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism,* 64.

44 Ibid., 66–8.

45 Ibid., 88.

46 Voitinsky, "The Kuomintang and the Communist Party in the Struggle with Imperialism," *Novyi Vostok,* no. 6, 1924: xxvi. See McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 224.

47 The Qing Dynasty enacted China's first nationality law in 1909 but was overthrown in 1911; however, the new nationalist government adopted its 1909 nationality law and retained the principle of *jus sanguinis*. In 1929, the GMD regime passed a new law on citizenship, which reaffirmed the principle of *jus sanguinis*. The Chinese nationality law conflicted with the laws of many colonial states, which followed the principle of *jus soli* (right of soil). In the case of the Dutch East Indies, although the two sides signed the Consular Convention of 1911 which limited the jurisdiction of Chinese consuls, the ambiguities over the national status of the local-born Chinese remained till the early independent period. See Donald Willmott, *The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia, 1900–1958* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University, 1961), 30–3.

48 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 224.

49 For the origin of Siamese communism, see Kasīan Tēchaphīra, *Commodifying Marxism: The Formation of Modern Thai Radical Culture, 1927–1958* (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2001), 22; for the establishment of the South Seas Communist Party, see Cheah Boon Kheng, *From PKI to the Comintern, 1924–1941: The Apprenticeship of the Malayan Communist Party; Selected Documents and Discussion* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1992), 14.

50 See Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930–1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 8; Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution*, 83–8.

51 Cheah, *From PKI to the Comintern,* 15.

52 Belogurova, "The Chinese International of Nationalities," 46.

53 "Tan Malaka on Communism in Malaya, 1925," in *Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence*, October 1926, CO 273/535, the National Archives (TNA), London. Also see Cheah, *From PKI to the Comintern*, 50–1.
54 Akashi Yōji, *The Nanyang Chinese National Salvation Movement, 1937–1941* (Lawrence: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas, 1970), 20–1.
55 Cheah, *From PKI to the Comintern*, 40.
56 Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, xx.
57 Benda, "Communism in Southeast Asia," 61.
58 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 225.
59 The PKI leaders in Moscow addressed the importance of working with the Indies Chinese several times in early 1926, but such a policy had never been sufficiently implemented as the party was already in deep crisis due to the authorities' crackdown. The failed revolt at the turn of 1926 and 1927 further exacerbated the situation, which led to the party's final collapse. For the Comintern discussions on working with the Indies Chinese, see Alimin, "Discussion at the Meeting of the Indonesian Sub-Secretariat," 29 July 1926, in PKI, AKPKI, Folder 2, ARCH01744, IISH.
60 Alimin, "Discussion at the Meeting of the Indonesian Sub-Secretariat."
61 "Report of Comrade Darsono to India Sub-Secretariat," 6 May 1926, in PKI, AKPKI, Folder 2, ARCH01744, IISH.
62 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 226–7.
63 Ibid., 229.
64 Cheah, *From PKI to the Comintern,* 31.
65 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 9–36.
66 Contrary to the top-down "official nationalism" which is usually defined by the ruling elites, there is also what Benedict Anderson called vernacular nationalism, which is constructed bottom-up through means such as modern education system or print media, etc. See also Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, xiv.
67 Kasīan, *Commodifying Marxism*, 6.
68 Ibid., 3.
69 Ibid., 13.
70 Kasīan argues that the Thai version of official nationalism was not racism per se but an ethnicizing discourse. Ibid., 16, 189.
71 Ibid., 24–5.
72 Ibid., 199.
73 Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 27.

74 Ibid., 28.
75 Ibid., 114–15.
76 Benda, "Reflection on Asian Communism," 255.
77 Benda, "Communism in Southeast Asia," 59.
78 Examples include: Justus Maria van der Kroef, *Communism in South-East Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Colin Mackerras and Nick Knight, *Marxism in Asia* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1985); Jack Henry Brimmell, *Communism in South East Asia: A Political Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); Frank N. Trager, *Marxism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Four Countries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).