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SOJOURN Symposium

On *Echoes from the Sino-Burmese Borderlands: Untold Stories of Overland Chinese Migrants During the Cold War* by Wen-Chin Chang. Harvard University Press, 2025.

Review essays by Masao Imamura and Lau Ting Hui, with a reply from Wen-Chin Chang.

Keywords: Borderland, Cold War, Burma, Chinese migration, Middle Ground, Existential Anthropology.

Review Essay I: Masao Imamura

Wen-Chin Chang's *Echoes from the Sino-Burmese Borderlands* offers a rare history of the Cold War as it was lived across families, border crossings, clandestine economies and competing regimes of loyalty. Based on decades of fieldwork, interviews and archival research, the book reconstructs histories that are difficult to recover from state archives alone. Its protagonists include Yunnanese migrants, Kuomintang intelligence agents, former participants in the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), muleteers, traders, teachers, students, refugees and bereaved kin. The empirical richness of the book is unmistakable, but its conceptual productivity, I argue, lies in a tension that Chang does not fully resolve. She invokes the middle ground to describe the persistence of flexible borderland life, yet her narratives repeatedly show that world being narrowed, militarized and remade by the modern territorial state. This review asks whether the book is best understood as an ethnography of a persistent middle ground or as an intimate history of its gradual disappearance in what Heonik Kwon (2010) has called the other Cold War.

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The book is divided into two parts. The first, "Political Trajectories", traces the lives of individuals shaped by the rivalry between the Taiwan-based Republic of China and the People's Republic of China as it played out in Burma between Kuomintang intelligence operatives and the CPB. The second part, Economic and Socio-Cultural Trajectories, turns to mule transport, cross-border trade and Chinese education. Across these chapters, Chang shows how overland Chinese migrants inhabited a world in which Burma, China, Taiwan, local ethnic armed organizations and transnational commercial networks all intersected. She is especially effective in reconstructing family histories and life trajectories that would otherwise remain nearly invisible. As in her previous monograph, *Beyond Borders: Stories of Yunnanese Chinese Migrants of Burma* (2014), the stories of Chinese Muslim families are particularly valuable; such histories are rarely available in this degree of ethnographic detail.

The spatial concept Chang uses to organize this world is the middle ground. Although Chang draws most directly on C. Patterson Giersch's work on the Yunnan frontier, the term carries a longer historiographical lineage. Richard White's classic *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (1991) analysed a world of accommodation, misunderstanding, negotiation and violence among Indigenous peoples, Europeans, empires and republics in the Great Lakes region. White's study helped inspire a broader literature on Asian frontiers and borderlands, including Jonathan N. Lipman's *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (1997), Giersch's *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (2006) and James C. Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (2009). These works differ in their arguments and regional concerns, but they share an interest in zones where sovereignty was fundamentally partial, overlapping and negotiable. In such spaces, people moved among authorities, translated across cultural worlds and made use of the incompleteness of state power.

Chang asks whether something of this middle ground persisted in the Sino-Burmese frontier into the late twentieth century (p. 340).

Her stated answer, presented in the conclusion, is a qualified yes (pp. 341–42). She stresses the continued importance of ethnolinguistic affinities, commercial networks, religious ties, political loyalties and family connections that extended beyond the territorial state. She also emphasizes the persistence of mobility and mediation, both of which had deep historical roots in the overland trade between Yunnan and Burma. In this reading, the Cold War did not simply destroy older borderland practices; it forced them to adapt under new political conditions.

Chang's empirical materials, however, also permit a different interpretation. The book repeatedly shows mobility becoming more clandestine, dangerous and politically charged during and after the Cold War. Cross-border movement did not disappear, but it increasingly took the form of smuggling, espionage, flight, military logistics or illegal migration. Older practices of mobility and mediation survived, but survival is not the same as continuity. In Chang's own narratives, the middle ground appears less as a stable social order than as a shrinking repertoire of practices under pressure from the modern territorial state, military campaigns, intelligence networks and border securitization.

This point matters because the middle ground is more than a place where multiple cultures, languages and ethnic groups meet. It refers to a zone of negotiated plural authority. Chang's book describes, by contrast, a space increasingly shaped by nation-states, insurgencies, surveillance, prisons, intelligence operations and fenced borders. The people in this book continue to cross borders, trade across borders, educate children across borders and maintain families across borders, but they do so in a world where such practices have become decisively risky. The clearest image of this enclosure is from Chang's own experience. In Lweje, she crosses into Burma through a gap in a collapsed bamboo fence, timing her movement to the relaxed surveillance of periodic market days, when Chinese guards permitted informal crossings that the letter of the law did not (p. 265). It is a small, almost incidental scene, but it is the middle ground enacted rather than described: porous infrastructure, personal

discretion by border officials and a rhythm of exception tied to local custom rather than state calendar. Chang then notes, in a footnote to this same passage, that by 2020 the Chinese government had replaced that bamboo fence with a two-thousand-kilometre barbed-wire barrier, built explicitly to "stem human trespassing" during the Covid-19 pandemic (p. 265n18). The two halves of the page do not sit easily together. The fence Chang walks through and the barrier that replaces it occupy the same stretch of border, separated by less than a decade. Read this way, the passage is not simply an illustration of border hardening; it is a record of the middle ground's disappearance, witnessed from inside the practice itself, by the one person in the book positioned to notice both what the crossing once permitted and what replaced it.

For this reason, the book may be read somewhat differently from its own conclusion. Chang's narrative powerfully illustrates the disappearance of the middle ground as a normal condition, even as her conclusion continues to emphasize its persistence. Her micro-histories suggest, despite her stated conclusion, that the ongoing conflicts in Myanmar are better understood less as struggles within an enduring middle ground than as struggles after its enclosure.

If Chang's narratives complicate the middle ground as a spatial frame, they also complicate the Cold War as a temporal frame. The subtitle identifies the book as a study of overland Chinese migrants during the Cold War. This is accurate, but also somewhat limiting. The Cold War is too narrow a frame for at least two reasons. First, the central conflict between the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China did not end with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Second, the civil war in Myanmar also remains unresolved.

Here, Heonik Kwon's notion of the other Cold War is useful. Kwon (2010) uses the term to draw attention to conflicts in which global ideological rivalry became entangled with civil war, postcolonial state formation, family division, ancestral memory and the unresolved aftermath of mass violence. Korea and Vietnam are central to his work, but Chang's book demonstrates that the Sino-

Burmese borderlands also belong in this comparative category. In this region, the Cold War was not merely a geopolitical structure imposed from above; it entered family histories, schooling, migration routes, trading networks, military service, religious practice and the care of the dead.

Indeed, Chang's work has a remarkable methodological affinity with Kwon's scholarship in intimate history. In works such as *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* (2008) and *After the Korean War: An Intimate History* (2020), Kwon shows how civil wars and geopolitical conflicts divide kin, unsettle ritual life and continue to inhabit domestic and moral worlds long after formal hostilities have ceased. Family histories become one of the principal sites through which the Cold War is lived, remembered and transmitted. Chang's book does something quite similar. Its strongest pages are not those in which it invokes abstract philosophical concepts, but those in which it patiently reconstructs how families endured violence, separation, imprisonment and exile.

This is also where Chang's conceptual apparatus seems less persuasive than her empirical materials. She draws on existential anthropology, Agamben's bare life, Camus and the language of absurdity. Discussing the shadow economy of border trade, for instance, she writes that residents' "economic agency to make a livelihood despite their bare-life condition amid constant political instability and material shortages had supported the trading operations" (p. 275). The sentence is symptomatic of a broader mismatch: the same border traders it describes as living a "bare-life condition" are, in Chang's own account, canny operators who read checkpoints, time their movements to market days, cultivate relationships with officials on both sides and organize collective strategies to keep contraband moving. Agamben's bare life names a condition stripped of political standing, reduced to sheer biological existence outside the polity; the people in this passage are, if anything, doing an unusual amount of political and economic work inside a fractured but real social order.

An intimate history of the other Cold War therefore offers a more productive frame for the book than bare life alone. Chang's materials

are less concerned with the philosophical problem of sovereignty than with the practical and moral question of how families endure long, protracted wars. How do people preserve family ties when states collapse or divide? How do they mourn when bodies, graves and memories are scattered across borders? How do they trade, travel and worship when ordinary mobility has become illegal? These are the questions that Chang's stories answer most powerfully.

The book may thus be read as an intimate history of borderland life in the twilight of the middle ground. It shows how older practices of mobility, mediation and flexible belonging survived under conditions that made them increasingly dangerous and unstable. It also shows how the Cold War entered the everyday domains of social life: kinship, memory, school, food, remittances, burial and obligation to the dead. Chang's contribution lies in preserving these fragile histories with extraordinary patience, respect and care. If the book does not always provide the macrohistorical or theoretical architecture that its materials invite, it nevertheless gives future scholars an indispensable archive from which such analysis can proceed.

Echoes from the Sino-Burmese Borderlands is therefore most valuable as a moving account of what happened as that middle ground was transformed by the other, long Cold War. Its stories echo because they preserve not only what people endured, but also the worlds that made such endurance necessary.

Review Essay II: Lau Ting Hui

Echoes from the Sino-Burmese Borderlands is a remarkable achievement. With extraordinary ethnographic and historical depth and breadth, Wen-Ching Chang brings to life the dynamic and turbulent worlds of Chinese migrants along the China-Burma border during the Cold War. Through finely drawn accounts of merchants, intelligence workers, teachers and other borderland figures, Chang captures the complexity and texture of lives shaped by shifting political regimes, ideological struggles and geopolitical upheavals. In doing so, the book offers a powerful alternative history of the

Cold War—one that foregrounds the everyday lives of ordinary people and reveals how geopolitics was experienced, negotiated and transformed on the ground. The book will be of interest to a wide range of scholars, including scholars of Cold War history, existential anthropology, migration and mobility, Chinese studies and Zomia and borderlands studies. More broadly, it offers a compelling account of how people build meaningful lives amid displacement, uncertainty and political constraint.

The book develops this alternative Cold War history in two parts. The first part traces the political trajectories of Chinese migrants across the borderlands. Centring the experiences of people who worked in intelligence units affiliated with competing political forces—the Kuomintang, the Chinese Communist Party and the CPB—Chang shows how shifting allegiances, ideological conflicts and state rivalries shaped not only individual lives but also intimate and familial relationships. The second part of the book turns to migrants' economic and social trajectories. Through her examination of cross-border trade, internal tensions among Yunnanese communities in the diaspora, inter-ethnic relations and the vital role of education and Chinese-language schools, Chang demonstrates the ingenuity and resourcefulness with which migrants sustained their communities and created possibilities for survival and continuity across political and territorial boundaries.

Each chapter takes individual biographies as its point of departure. Through these life histories, Chang illuminates the broader political forces of the Cold War while keeping individual lives, relationships and struggles with the nation-state at the centre of her analysis. Chapter 3, for example, shows how people were compelled to make difficult choices in order to survive while still attempting to preserve their humanity under conditions of great uncertainty. The chapter focuses on Ma dage, a Yunnanese Muslim who became involved in intelligence work for the Kuomintang. For Ma dage, espionage was motivated less by ideological conviction or political loyalty than by the need to secure a livelihood amid profound uncertainty. Chang carefully traces how he navigated competing centres of power,

cultivated relationships and sought to remain faithful to his religious commitments. Ma dage's story reveals the distance between official political ideologies and the beliefs and concerns that organized people's everyday lives. Ideological categories were often imposed from above, forcing people to navigate political demands they had not chosen. Decisions that appeared to express loyalty or conviction could instead arise from coercion, necessity or the simple struggle to remain alive. Chang's sensitive account resists judging such choices according to fixed political categories and instead reveals the moral complexity of survival under conditions in which no decision was entirely free.

I was particularly moved by chapter 5, "Women Warriors". The chapter not only reconstructs the life of a woman whom Chang refers to as Pan dajie but also reveals how people record, reinterpret and make sense of their own histories through fictionalized autobiographies and storytelling. Pan dajie narrates aspects of her biography through the moving story of Hong, a Chinese migrant who flees to Burma to join the CPB and, at the age of fourteen, arrives at a CPB prison to work as a warden. There, she develops a distinctive and profound relationship with Tao, a prisoner of Chinese descent from Burma. Their story brings the gendered dimensions of political struggle vividly into view. It shows how youthful ideological commitments could override familial attachments, while also tracing the forms of kinship, friendship and sisterhood that emerged across official political boundaries. For Hong, through whom Pan dajie narrates her own history, the relationship with Tao unsettles ideological certainties and awakens her to the human costs of the political cause she serves. The chapter struck a chord with me because it captures the pain and confusion of navigating such uncertain times as a young person. It also shows how decisions made and relationships formed in youth can continue to haunt a person for many years, even when those choices were shaped by political structures and circumstances far beyond the individual's control. By attending to these enduring emotional and moral consequences, Chang reveals how history persists not only in public events and

political institutions, but also in memory, regret, attachment and the stories people tell about their younger selves.

The book's final ethnographic chapter, chapter 9, "Pursuit of Chinese Education", provides a fitting conclusion by drawing together a theme that runs throughout the book: the central role of Chinese education and schools within Chinese migrant communities. The chapter recounts the stories of the much-loved Principal Huang and Bao dajie, whose movements took them in different directions across the borderlands. Born in Yunnan, Principal Huang escaped to Burma after he was classified as a "rightist" during Mao's rule and was targeted at struggle meetings. Subsequently, he settled in Burma and founded a school there. Bao dajie, on the other hand, left Burma in pursuit of a Chinese education in China before eventually returning to Burma for marriage. The chapter shows how educational institutions serve as important sites for the reproduction of political ideology and cultural identity. At the same time, Chang demonstrates that people's convictions and life trajectories can never be reduced to formal instruction or ideological indoctrination. Education, in other words, both reproduces ideology and boundaries and creates possibilities that exceed it.

Throughout the book, I was struck by the forms of what SJD Lipura (2022) has termed "fringe capital" that these Chinese migrants possessed. Those best able to survive were often those who could adapt to changing circumstances, speak multiple languages, cultivate relationships across political divides and navigate shifting political winds with flexibility and discernment. Ma dage, for example, drew on considerable political acumen to negotiate competing demands and multiple allegiances without becoming fully reducible to any one of them. Principal Huang's wife, whom Chang respectfully addresses as Shimu, is especially illuminating in this regard. Despite having received no formal education, Shimu possessed the linguistic abilities, cultural acuity, diplomatic skill and practical judgement necessary to manage the school within a complex borderland setting and ensure its survival even after her husband's death. Principal Huang's school succeeded not simply because it transmitted Chinese

education, but because Shimu's practical knowledge and relational expertise enabled the institution to take root in local life. Chang thus shows that survival in this borderland depended not only on formal education or political affiliation, but also on flexible, embodied and socially cultivated capacities that were often acquired through life in the borderlands.

As a scholar of these highland borderlands, I was particularly drawn to Chang's close attention to the lived stakes of political history and to the existential dilemmas faced by the people whose lives she traces. While much scholarship on the borderlands between China and Southeast Asia has examined the political dynamics of border-making, state formation and mobility, Chang deepens these conversations by asking what such processes mean for the people who must live through them. Her existential anthropology approach reminds us that borderlands are not merely analytical or geopolitical categories, but inhabited worlds in which people struggle to sustain relationships, commitments and meaningful lives amid profound uncertainty. Chang's book makes an important contribution by illuminating the deeply personal and relational stakes of surviving the political upheavals of the borderlands.

More broadly, the book makes an urgent intervention at a time of rising authoritarianism, heightened surveillance, intensifying geopolitical polarization and the hardening of nation-state borders. Drawing on C. Patterson Giersch's (2006) concept of the "middle ground", Chang illuminates the complex entanglements that persist across political divides: linguistic exchange, cultural intermixture, mutual dependence, friendship and other forms of intimate connection. In an era of escalating geopolitical tensions, the book offers a powerful reminder of the absurdity of attempts to divide deeply interconnected lives into neat national and ideological categories. Chang shows how borders can never fully contain the relationships people forge across them, nor erase the intertwined histories and shared worlds that make such relationships possible.

One of the book's particular strengths lies in the moments when Chang reflects on her own efforts to sustain relationships,

follow up on interviews and navigate the difficulties of conducting research across political and geographical divides. These moments powerfully place her within the analysis: she, too, is engaged in a form of "middle ground" work, building and maintaining relationships across boundaries of place, history and political affiliation. They also open a promising avenue for further reflection on Chang's own ties to Yunnan, which she briefly mentions in the chapter "Women Warriors", and her position as a Taiwan-based scholar. Yet even as Chang keeps herself largely in the background, her commitment to sustaining these relationships remains palpable and deepens the care with which she presents the lives of her interlocutors. It is a form of ethnographic attentiveness and responsibility to which all ethnographers should aspire.

Echoes from the Sino-Burmese Borderlands is a beautifully written book that honours the lives of people in the borderlands and offers an important intervention for the world we live in today. By tracing how individuals and families navigated war, migration, ideology, surveillance and shifting national boundaries, Chang reveals both the violence of geopolitical division and the enduring relationships that exceed it. Her attention to biography, memory and storytelling gives uncommon depth to the history of the Cold War, while her commitment to the voices of her interlocutors makes the book as ethically compelling as it is analytically rich. At a moment when borders are hardening and political differences are increasingly cast as absolute, Chang's account reminds us that human lives remain entangled across such divides. This is a generous, moving and significant book that deserves to be widely read.

Author's Response: Wen-Chin Chang

I am very grateful to *SOJOURN* for organizing this symposium on my new book. My special thanks go to the two reviewers, Masao Imamura and Lau Ting Hui, both excellent scholars of borderlands studies in the region under discussion. As a writer, I understand that once a work is published, it ceases to belong solely to the author and may therefore be interpreted by readers in diverse ways.

Different ways of understanding and interpretation can enrich a work, while they may also diverge from the author's intended path. Both reviewers are appreciative of the book's focus on individual lives and its value in highlighting an obscure history, but they differ in their analyses of the work's conceptual and theoretical application.

Lau applauds the offer of a powerful alternative history of the Cold War that illuminates the complexity and texture of lives shaped by changing political regimes, ideological strife and geopolitical transformations. She identifies with the use of existential anthropology for exploring the human condition with respect to existential dilemmas, choices and struggles without being judgemental. Moreover, the stories in the book echo her feelings and experiences from her youth. For an author, such acknowledgement is greatly rewarding as it affirms the fundamental values of humanity embedded in the book—love, friendship, freedom and faith. These common values across different societies not only supported my ethnography but also led me to reflect on my own life experiences and family history during my research.[1]

Imamura's review, while affirming the book's merit in offering a rare history of the Cold War, poses several challenging questions regarding my application of two concepts—"middle ground" and "bare life"—and my existential anthropology approach. He feels Heonik Kwon's (2010) "the other cold war"[2] could have been used to present an ethnography of an intimate history rather than that of a persistent middle ground. His proposal is inspiring, but somehow it also deviates from my original intention. In terms of intimate history, my book does share an orientation with Kwon's works on how the Vietnamese and Koreans were deeply affected by the Cold War. I have quoted his *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* (2008) in my introduction. Nevertheless, when Kwon writes about the other cold war, he is critical of Cold War historiography, and engaging in such criticism is not the purpose of my book. I completely agree with him that Cold War effects on the West and the Third World were disparate and that the human dimension, tied to local history, should be accentuated in research. In line with him, apart from addressing Cold War confrontation, I have integrated the civil wars of China and Burma and Burmese decolonization and state formation to frame

the complexity of the political structure concerned. I acknowledge the value of Kwon's works and find his critiques of mainstream Cold War studies and postcolonial and cultural discourse refreshing. However, I also greatly appreciate the accumulated endeavours of different disciplines. Although my book is centred on individual lives, I also refer to works of geopolitics.

While writing this book, my primary concern lay not only in the impact of Cold War entanglements on individual lives, but also in taking a longue durée perspective to comprehend Yunnanese mobility and their inhabited world in transition. I should say that I see myself more as a researcher in borderlands studies than in Cold War studies. I ask: "What has changed and what hasn't" (p. 340)? My application of "middle ground" is based on this motive. I do not consider it only as a spatial concept like Imamura does. For me, it also embraces a temporal dimension and requires inspection of the interplay of related elements during a process.

C. Patterson Giersch (2006, p. 3) states:

> A better way to define frontier … is as a territory or zone in which multiple peoples meet; at least one group is intrusive, the others indigenous. After analyzing the political and cultural institutions of intruder and indigene alike, the historian examines the evolutions of their political, economic, and social interaction. Implicit in this approach is the realization that change takes place within a historical context influenced by local actors, and not just by imperial statesmen and colonial officers in remote capitals.… These interactions were rarely one-sided affairs in which the intrusive society immediately conquered or displaced the indigenous. Instead, the frontier often became—however temporarily—a "middle ground" in which newcomers and natives each adapted to the other even as they sought to use or manipulate each other. Such contact produced new or modified institutions and customs that drew from the traditions of multiple cultures.

In short, a middle ground is a place of "fluid cultural and economic exchange where acculturation and the creation of hybrid political institutions were contingent on local conditions" (Giersch 2006,

pp. 3–4). Giersch's interpretation of the concept corresponds with Richard White's original proposal, which underlines it as "the place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the non-state world of villages" (1991, p. x). Accordingly, while applying this concept to highlight the complex political environment in which my research subjects were situated, I am keen to examine not only political interactions but also economic and sociocultural exchange.

Grounded in my interlocutors' narratives, I have underlined the overwhelming structural violence as well as ongoing human struggle against it. With respect to the middle ground effect, I draw a distinction between Burma and Yunnan. Whereas Burma's borderlands still featured both tension and collaboration among multiple political entities and sociocultural institutions, the situation in Yunnan was different. The Chinese state applied suppressive policies to monitor diverse ethnic groups and indoctrinate them in Chinese nationalism. We may say that the middle ground effect ceased to exist, politically. However, we still observe that "there remained a small degree of flexible implementation of local cadres on account of personal connections or for the sake of personal interest" (p. 341). In addition, my stories illustrate reciprocity based on kinship, ethnolinguistic ties, commercial networks and religious affinities across borders. I thus suggest that "although 'persistent frontiers' did not persist in the same way as during the imperial times, they did not completely disappear" (p. 341).

In other words, I recognize that the borderlands within China as middle grounds have nearly come to an end, politically; but cultural and economic exchanges have carried on. I consider that the presentation of my interlocutors' stories constitutes "an alternative Cold War history of the Sino-Burmese borderlands", one characterized by "continuity and rupture in terms of borderland configuration" (p. 345), politically, economically and socioculturally.

Will the middle ground effect completely cease to exist in this frontier zone following the hardening of state control? Maybe yes, maybe not. Researchers must carry on their fieldwork despite

increasing obstacles. Although the Chinese government has constructed barbed-wire barriers along the border, these do not entirely halt illicit flows, including smuggling of consumer goods, drugs, timber, rare earths, gold, gemstones, rubber, humans and capital (Zhang 2024). It is interesting to point out that some of these illicit flows, such as the smuggling of rare earths, are in the interest of the Chinese state, whereas others are not, particularly human trafficking and the money laundering associated with cyber scams. A range of forces still intersect with one another in the region—different levels and units of state authorities, local ethnic armed organizations and criminal syndicates. The key issue in researching these complex scenarios hinges not on determining whether this frontier as a middle ground continues or survives but on providing a detailed description and analysis of how the process develops.

I use Agamben's "bare life" to emphasize the impact of catastrophic violence on ordinary lives in China and Burma. However, as stated in the introduction, I do not take up his path of ontological explanation. Rather, "I shift from a lens on sovereign authority and look at my research subject's life experiences and their creative agency in responding to structural impacts" (p. 21). This shifted orientation is in line with the core concern of existential anthropology, which examines human conditions in concrete situations and the reactions of individuals to the external world. It emphasizes that no matter how harsh one's situation is, one is not a mere victim without the will to act. Notwithstanding this emphasis, it is not a philosophy of blind optimism. In contrast, it sees life as an endless process of struggle. Although the stories of "canny operators" (Imamura's term) do not suggest a bare-life condition, they lived under the threat of imminent death even if they avoided the fate of the many others who perished during their journeys. As I remind readers in the book, those I interviewed were the survivors. In each chapter we encounter deaths—the deaths of Principal Yang, Chen dashu's colleagues, two rebel soldiers in Ma dage's story, Wang dage's comrades, their enemies, Pan dajie's comrades, their enemies, her own brother and Tao, muleteers, petty traders, drivers, Principal

Huang and Bao dajie's brother. Moreover, think of the millions of deaths during the Cultural Revolution and during endless Burmese civil wars. Their deaths still haunt the survivors and should not be overlooked.

My use of "an alternative Cold War history" (instead of "the other cold war") on the one hand stresses its status as an understudy in comparison to the mainstream Cold War historiography. On the other hand, it invites scholars of the region to explore the histories of other ethnic communities during the same period. Stories have lives of their own and reveal many faces. While writing these stories, I encountered some of them. Despite my explanation, I am fully aware that the stories I have written may be interpreted in different ways by readers.

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NOTES

1. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge an inadvertent error in my book. Regarding my family roots, I do not have ties to Tengchong. My ancestors were from Fujian who migrated to Taiwan during the Qing dynasty. The word "also" in the fourth sentence on page 169 should be removed. It will be corrected in a later edition.
2. Kwon uses "the other cold war" (in lowercase) to stress that "Cold War" (in uppercase) used as a label to denote an era glosses over the uneven realities of tension and violence in different parts of the world. However, I agree with Andrew Preston in a book review that all historical labels are created with ideological motivations and cannot precisely define an entire era of history. Yet, "they provide an easy, understandable and roughly

accurate shorthand to refer to a large and complex period of time" (Preston 2011, p. 1250–51).

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