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# On the Global South and Sinophone Literature

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This article aims to initiate academic discussion about the correlation between the Global South and Sinophone literature. The article is divided into three sections. First, this article explores how the discourse of the Global South corresponds deviates from Third World theory by illuminating the potentiality of the Global South nation-states in confrontation with the neoliberal world order dictated by the Global North. Second, this article provides a historical overview of Chinese diaspora in relation to the development of the so-called Nanyang discourse in the South Seas and the southern narrative in Taiwan from the imperial and colonial era to the present. Third, this article surveys five recent research essays on Sinophone literature in the Global South in an attempt to explore different dimensions of the field. All in all, this article brings into focus a wide range of critical topics related to Malayan Communism, Taiwan's settler colonialism, cultural hybridity, and Austronesian cultures and peoples, thus stretching the horizons of Sinophone studies within the framework of the Global South.

This article investigates the development and spread of Sinophone literature within the context of the Global South and further promotes the evolving discourse of the Sinophone South.[1] In recent years, Sinophone studies, an emerging interdisciplinary field, has become a hub for intense academic discussions and exchanges. As Howard Chiang and Shu-mei Shih make explicit in the introduction to *Sinophone Studies Across Disciplines: A Reader*:

> There have been vibrant debates at the definitional and conceptual level about critical issues and standpoints, such as the mis/uses of the diasporic framework (diaspora as history versus diaspora as value), the difficulty of overcoming compulsory Chineseness, the strength and pitfalls of language-determined identities, imperial and anti-imperial politics, ethnoracialized assimilationism and the self-determination of minority peoples, place-based cultural practices, the dialectics between roots and routes, and the question of (de)politicization, among others. (2024, 1)

This highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of the Sinosphere, with debates centered around critical theoretical issues such as identity, diasporic frameworks, and the interplay of politics and cultural practices. To examine Sinophone studies through the lens of Global South theory, it is essential to foreground the ways in which these debates intersect with sensitive political agendas and broader structures of power. From a Global South perspective, Sinophone studies might be interpreted as a site where tensions between imperial and anti-imperial politics manifest, particularly as they pertain to China's positioning as both a global power and a target of geopolitical scrutiny. The critique of "compulsory Chineseness," for instance, can be understood as a challenge to the state-centric and hegemonic narratives imposed by China, aligning with the Global South's resistance to universalizing or homogenizing frameworks imposed by dominant global powers. Furthermore, the emphasis on the self-determination of minority peoples and place-based cultural practices resonates with Global South theory's advocacy for localized and decolonized epistemologies. This suggests that Sinophone studies not only interrogates the legacies of Chinese imperialism but also navigates the tensions arising from Western media and academia that often seek to instrumentalize critiques of China to further their geopolitical goals.

At the same time, the field's exploration of language-determined identities and ethnoracialized assimilationism can be seen as part of a greater effort to dismantle essentialist understandings of culture and identity, which is central to the decolonial ethos of Global South theory. However, these dynamics also risk being co-opted by anti-China discourses that oppose one form of hegemony but might inadvertently reinforce another by supporting neoliberal or neocolonial interests. In this regard,

the development of Sinophone studies reflects a rich interplay of critical theory and political praxis, but it must remain vigilant against becoming a tool for reinforcing new forms of imperialism. Connecting its debates to Global South theory underscores the necessity of navigating these challenges while centering the voices and experiences of marginalized communities. With this critical view, this article examines how Sinophone studies reacts to emerging transnational trends in the twenty-first century and explores Sinophone literary expression in the Global South and beyond.

## The Transition from the Third World to the Global South

To unpack the complexity of Sinophone literature in the twenty-first century, this article deems an extensive investigation of the historical and theoretical foundation of the Global South as a necessity.[2] Twentieth-century politics saw a conceptual transition from the Third World to the Global South. The term "Third World" was first coined by Alfred Sauvy in the French magazine *L'Observateur* in 1952, when the Cold War was at its height (Wolf-Phillips 1979, 105). Differentiated from the "First World" of democratic Western countries and the "Second World" of communist states, the "Third World" has long been a loosely structured notion that encompasses "the world's most impoverished countries in Africa," conflict-ridden countries in "Central America and the Caribbean," "oil-rich nations of the Middle East," and "Newly Industrialising Countries" (Chant and McIlwaine 2009, 8). This controversial conceptualization of the Third World has led to rethinking and redefining non-Western and non-communist nation-states in the postcolonial era, or in a larger sense, in the age of globalization. As the term is normally associated with developing countries, it carries a strong sense of hierarchy and a negative, if not discriminatory, view of nation-states that fail to reach a higher standard of living. Moreover, the original categorization of the Third World does not offer an up-to-date account or reflect the progress achieved by certain states. Given its limitations and controversies, the term "Third World" has been gradually replaced by "Global South."

Since the 1970s, the Global South has been the locus of a significant theoretical discourse, thanks to the foundation laid by the Bandung Conference in 1955, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964, and the Tricontinental Conference in 1966. Whereas the Global North represents the previously defined First World as well as a large part of the Second World, the Global South is made up of developing countries from the Third World category that do not properly fit into either the capitalist or socialist model. While still carrying the baggage of the Third World, the Global South discourse helps address the emergent economic and political difficulties experienced by certain nation-states in response to contemporary international

relations in the context of globalization. According to Glyn Williams, Paula Meth, and Katie Willis, "Within the Global South today are emerging superpowers and failed states, the world's fastest-growing economies and the vast majority of the global poor" (2014, 3). In the face of fierce competition from the Global North, Global South states have been held back by the existing capitalist framework, which has led to the uneven distribution and allocation of resources around the world. As the United States and Europe possess the majority of capital, what is left for southern states is very limited. This situation is unlike the practices of imperialism and colonialism from previous centuries. For this reason, Arif Dirlik highlights that it is important to "practice autonomy of nation and region, which in turn calls for a global institutional arrangement that respects and supports such autonomy, rather than subject it to the subversions of supposedly universal neoliberal market principles" (2007, 16). Consequently, the Global South has become "an entity" that is "invented in the struggle between imperial global domination and decolonial forces which resist global designs through their emancipatory articulations" (Slovic, Rangarajan, and Sarveswaran 2015, 2). Global South states have been seeking opportunities to make themselves heard in order to challenge the oppressive capitalist system and negative stereotypes imposed on them.

Shifting topics, one has to bear in mind that the Global South, in the words of Sinah Theres Kloß, "is not an entity that exists *per se* but has to be understood as something that is created, imagined, invented, maintained, and recreated by the ever-changing and never fixed status positions of social actors and institutions" (2017, 1). This newly created North-and-South divide can be misleading in certain scenarios. The South underscored here is a fluid concept that blurs geographical borders between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. As Dirlik asserts, "its geography is much more complicated than the term suggests, and subject to change over time; so that the 'South' of the contemporary world may be significantly different in its composition and territorial spread than the South of the early 1970s, or the colonial South of the immediate post-World War period" (2007, 13). Although China and the Middle East are located in the Northern Hemisphere, they are included in the Global South. Other notable examples include Australia and New Zealand, which are considered part of the Global North though they are in the Southern Hemisphere. It is intriguing to examine how geographically northern and southern countries mix and mingle in relation to the North-and-South division. This intricate divide corresponds to developing links among all nation-states in the global network. On the surface, the grouping of the Global South countries is not very different from the earlier hierarchical design, as these Southern states are economically and politically disadvantaged from the perspective

of the Global North. In reality, the Global South has "emerged as a label that sought to overcome pejorative references such as Third World and was linked to processes of decolonization and nation-building" (Kloß 2017, 3). Therefore, the "South" as a whole is enabled to initiate a negotiation with the "North" and to demand its own inclusion in major decision-making processes across the globe. Hence, the new North-and-South distinction goes beyond traditional geographical categorization and deserves further discussion from sociopolitical and economic perspectives.

Since its launch as an interdisciplinary journal by Indiana University Press in 2007, *The Global South* has been addressing various issues and challenges pertaining to the Global South discourse. As Alfred J. López breaks the ground in the inaugural issue of the journal,

> The global South ... marks the mutual recognition among the world's subalterns of their shared condition at the margins of the brave new neoliberal world of globalization. The global South diverges from the postcolonial, and emerges as a postglobal discourse, in that it is best glimpsed at those moments where globalization as a hegemonic discourse stumbles, where the latter experiences a crisis or setback. (2007, 1)

López advocates and praises a two-step process for implementation by Southern nation-states that first requires the recognition of one's "global subaltern" identity. Mutual recognition among these subalterns can then be introduced and validated. The sophisticated process of mutual recognition produces an agency that discloses and critiques the pitfalls of neoliberalism in the age of globalization. Instead of allowing the Third World and the Global South to prosper and catch up with their counterparts, the neoliberal trend has turned promises into failures in its attempt to recreate a new world order of economic integration. In the face of setbacks, Global South states are tasked with battling marginalization and exclusion and thus must reposition themselves in the postglobal context. This new strategy is reflected in the ongoing campaign of South-South Cooperation (SSC), which is used by Southern countries "as a tool in their counter-hegemonic movement" against "neocolonialism, Western imperialism, unilateralism, hegemonic power, and foreign intervention" (Altinbaş 2013, 31). The current world order has drawn fine lines between those who benefit from the neoliberal capitalist system and those who suffer from it.

Although power dynamics can still be observed among the wealthy and developed Global North countries, those in the Global South are poor and marginal states. Therefore, SSC has become a necessity for collaboration among Southern countries

and has led to greater impacts on international relations and the global market. For example, the current SSC model has created "the increased inflow of resources to African countries from the major Southern countries" as "India and China started working out on cordial relationships and began their South-South multilateral cooperation initiatives that confronted both opportunities and challenges" (Sesay, Olusola, and Omotosho 2013, 106). This "global shift in production and manufacturing" has been "altering the economic geography of the world" while the power of the Global South is on the rise (Gray and Gills 2016, 558). Therefore, the concept of the Global South can be understood as one of self-empowerment and a practice of cooperation, departing from its subaltern position in confrontation with the dominance of the North in the postcolonial and, more importantly, global world. However, one must recognize that a limitation of SSC is the impossibility of eliminating political tensions and cultural misunderstandings among the Southern nation-states. While China is often identified as an important economic partner of many Southern states, its long-standing cultural hegemony may undermine Sinophone articulation from overseas Chinese communities, which will be a major concern in the next section.

## An Overview of China and the Sinophone South

This article explores the positioning of Sinophone literature within the context of the Global South, emphasizing China's inescapable role in this scholarly discourse. Since its rapid economic development in the 1980s, China has become a leading country in the Global South and, thus, a pivotal player on the global stage, bolstered by its burgeoning military influence. Despite these accomplishments, China's financial involvement in Africa and other parts of the Global South has been controversial. The strategy behind China's involvement is grounded in its vision of deepening its influence in the Global South, identifying itself as a partner with shared experiences under colonialism and development challenges. The China-Africa partnership, often presented as an example of South-South Cooperation, reinforces this narrative and portrays China as an ally rather than an external actor. However, this approach masks deeper power asymmetries. While some of these SSC initiatives provide short-term economic benefits to recipient nations, they risk creating dependency and exacerbating debt vulnerability. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's global infrastructure and investment strategy aimed at enhancing regional connectivity and expanding its economic reach, has in particular raised these concerns because its projects often come with conditions that fortify China's influence and prioritize its strategic interests. This raises questions regarding the extent to which such partnerships truly embody the principles of equitable collaboration within the Global South.

As China elevates its status in the international network, its stringent governance over special administrative regions such as Hong Kong and increasing impact on overseas communities have also sparked major concerns that have become an integral topic in discussions of international relations and political science. To fully engage with the complexities of Sinophone studies and its connections to broader geopolitical and cultural dynamics, it is essential to explore the experiences of communities situated at the intersection of contested borders and shifting notions of identity. Inspired by Global South theory, this article adopts the Southern discourse as a critical lens to understand these dynamics, particularly in the contexts of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and beyond, where histories of migration, displacement, and transnational connections reveal layered and often conflicting relationships between local regimes, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and global political forces. This perspective not only illuminates the neglected histories of China but also expands the scope of Sinophone studies by situating it within the extended narrative of the Global South.

In literary and cultural representations of the Sinophone South, the Nanyang, also known as the South Sea, is more than a historic maritime route chronicling Chinese voyages to Southeast Asia. The term represents an otherworld that is often idealized and exoticized by Chinese essentialists, who tend to promote a fixed, homogenized vision of Chinese culture rooted in tradition and national pride. Conversely, Chinese migration and settlement in the Nanyang have given rise to new academic discourses. Brian Bernards characterizes the Nanyang as "a creole New World of settlement and … upward mobility for Chinese emigrants speaking different languages and arriving at different historical moments over many generations" (2015, 197). Bernards's characterization of the Nanyang underscores its significance as a liminal space where diverse linguistic, cultural, and historical threads are intertwined. This observation challenges the monolithic notion of Chineseness by highlighting how migration and settlement in Southeast Asia have produced hybrid identities and localized cultural practices.

Furthermore, the Nanyang's creolization reflects broader patterns within the Global South, where histories of colonization, trade, and migration have shaped pluralistic societies. This observation invites a reassessment of Sinophone studies to account for the fluid and transformative nature of identity formation across communities. The Nanyang is not merely a repository of Chinese cultural continuity; it is a dynamic landscape in which intersecting influences generate new modes of cultural expression and belonging. To engage with literary and cultural representations of the Nanyang, it is critical to move beyond static or nostalgic portrayals and embrace its complexity as a space of cross-cultural interaction. Such an approach not only

enriches our understanding of the Sinophone South but also contributes to the evolving discourses on migration, the diaspora, and the cultural politics of the Global South.

In addition to the Nanyang, Taiwan has significantly contributed to the discourse of the Sinophone South. Historically, Taiwan was part of southern China's periphery, serving as a frontier where waves of migration and cultural exchange occurred. Its southern location relative to the Chinese mainland positioned it as both a site of marginalization and a gateway to maritime exchanges with Southeast Asia. This geographical and cultural linkage reinforces Taiwan's connection to the Sinophone South, especially when considered in tandem with the historical southward migration of Han settlers and their adaptation to the island's diverse environment. During the Japanese colonial period (1895–1945), Taiwan was embedded within the imperial imagination as part of Japan's southern expansionist campaign. Positioned as a southern colony, Taiwan's inclusion in the empire of Japan situated it alongside Southeast Asian territories. The Japanese rule of Taiwan points to the island's role in the global colonial discourse and thus underscores its geographic importance and cultural richness in the Sinophone South.

Recently, research on Taiwan's Indigenous[3] communities has greatly reinforced the link between the island and the expansive Austronesian-speaking world, which spans the Pacific and Indian Oceans. As the origin of Austronesian migration, Taiwan is integral to the cultural and linguistic heritage of vast regions, including Southeast Asia, Oceania, and Madagascar. This deep connection marks Taiwan as a critical node in the Austronesian family, and thus Taiwan offers a unique perspective on how Indigenous studies can intersect with the Global South. The island's Indigenous heritage, often overlooked in Chinese mainland narratives, enriches its engagement with the Southern discourse by situating Taiwan within a broader network of Indigenous nations. The dynamic between Han Taiwanese settlers and Indigenous peoples in Taiwan is further complicated by the increasing number of migrant workers and new immigrants from Southeast Asia and other regions, including foreign brides (and foreign husbands) and their children. In this sense, Taiwan's Southern identity emerges as multifaceted, which not only shapes Taiwan's cultural and historical self-conception but also creates opportunities for the island to meaningfully contribute to heated discussions and interrogations of (post-)colonialism, migration, and cultural hybridity in the Sinophone South.

Another notable scholarly contribution to the discourse of the Sinophone South is made by Angelina Y. Chin (2023), who retells a history of China through the lens of Hong Kong. Chin argues that Hong Kong is part of "the larger Southern Periphery, where individual lives and notions of citizenship, home, and borders were constantly

challenged by the effects of policies and political campaigns of the PRC, local regimes, and the Cold War" (2023, 6). Locating Hong Kong and the Southern Periphery within the context of the Global South offers an insightful vantage point for understanding the interplay of marginality, resistance, and global power dynamics. The Southern Periphery, as described, functions as both a literal and metaphorical borderland—a space where the legacy of Chinese imperialism, the policies of the PRC, and the political mechanisms of the Cold War converge to create a complex web of resistance and allegiance. Chin's analysis of the Southern Periphery offers a thought-provoking perspective on the histories and identities of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, and southern China. By emphasizing their shared colonial pasts and their roles as refuges for political dissidents, Chin accentuates the distinct but interconnected experiences that set these regions apart from China proper. Chin's approach challenges the conventional view of Hong Kong as an isolated colonial city and instead situates it within a much larger regional context. This transition in perspective reveals how administrative borders often fail to capture the complexity of political and cultural exchanges during periods of upheaval. By extending its analysis beyond individual cities or regions, the Southern Periphery framework illuminates the shared historical forces that help define the relationship between these territories and the PRC.

Chin offers one particularly poignant observation: "Even after Hong Kong's return to the mainland in 1997, the excitement of 'homecoming' to the motherland did not increase for the majority of the local residents … the sense of frustration and helplessness grew among Hong Kong residents as their local democratic advancement was stalled by the CCP" (2023, 13). This quote encapsulates the unresolved issue of Hong Kong's position as a liminal space, caught between British colonialism, Chinese nationalism, and a local identity shaped by fear and resilience. While Chin adeptly investigates Hong Kong and its contemporary struggles, further explorations can focus on the roles of the diaspora and transnational connections in shaping its cultural and political consciousness. If Hong Kong was the intercultural gateway during the Cold War, its networks of emigrants and returnees have continued to serve as conduits for ideas and dissent. For example, the persistence of protests and demands for autonomy in the 2010s might be partly traced to these global networks, where exiled or diasporic Hongkongers continue to shape discourses on democracy and resistance. This dynamic complicates the binary narrative of Hong Kong as merely a "periphery" of larger powers, instead positioning it as a global nexus of identity formation.

It is worth considering that Hongkongers' "sense of frustration and helplessness" not only fosters local identity but also challenges simplified historical narratives imposed by Beijing or even by colonial nostalgia. Diaspora literature, oral histories, and

digital archives from Hongkongers worldwide reveal how these traumatic memories resist hegemonic narratives. They keep alive an alternative history intertwined with activism. In this regard, Hong Kong serves as a site of Cold War–era ideological struggle and as an active participant in the global dialogue about postcolonial sovereignty and rights. The stalled decolonization process reflects the definition of decolonization in Hong Kong, which extends beyond historical narratives and into contemporary debates over education, media, and linguistic policies, as well as the city's complex status as a site of cultural convergence and political contention in the Sinophone South.

The experiences of individuals in the Sinophone South mirror struggles common across the Global South against imposed binaries of belonging and othering. These communities' contested identities disrupt rigid state borders and expose the inadequacies of nationalist and colonial frameworks in capturing the lived realities of diasporic and transnational populations. Moreover, the geopolitical significance of the Sinophone South underscores its role in the global system as a site of both transformation and resistance. As the PRC extends its political control and cultural influence over these territories, external forces from the West leverage their strategic importance in political campaigns. This dynamic is a key concern for the Sinophone South, as regions are exploited by global powers while also creating spaces for translocal practices. Situating the Nanyang, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other southern entities within the overarching framework of the Sinophone South not only addresses the neglected histories of China but also enriches our understanding of diverse Sinophone communities by foregrounding the voices and experiences of those who inhabit the margins of empires and nation-states. This approach challenges us to rethink conventional narratives of belonging and governance and to embrace the complexities of borderland identities on the margin or outside of the Chinese mainland.

## Sinophone Literature in the Global South: From the Past to the Future

This final section builds on the previous discussion of the evolving Southern Sinophone articulation dedicated to literary works produced by Chinese-speaking communities, whether in the diaspora or within regions where Chinese is a dominant or significant language. In rethinking literary production in the Sinophone South, it closely engages with current scholarship covering diverse topics, such as Chinese Malaysian literature, Taiwan literature,[4] Austronesian languages, the Sinophone/Xenophone divide, and settler-colonial criticism. To deepen this exploration, this section turns to a critical analysis of how these themes manifest in specific regional contexts and offer new insights into the intersections of language and identity. In "Feng he Malai shijie: Wang dahai haidao zhiyi de huayi fengtuguan" (Wind and the Malay world: Sinophone/

Xenophone terroir in a desultory account of the Malay Archipelago), Ko Chia Cian (2021) analyzes the traditional Chinese writing of the Nanyang and the Malay Archipelago in light of the Southern narrative in response to a framework that foregrounds southward maritime expansion, cross-cultural encounters, and the formation of diasporic Chinese identities in the eighteenth century. Ko's research illuminates the early phase of Sinophone literature in the Global South by examining the nuanced dynamics between Sinophone and Xenophone literary frameworks, particularly as they relate to the unique cultural and historical landscapes of the Malay Archipelago. These two terms, Sinophone and Xenophone, represent distinct but overlapping ways of engaging with language, identity, and place in literature. Sinophone refers to Sinitic-language expression produced outside of mainland China, often shaped by local histories, colonial legacies, and cultural hybridity, while Xenophone foregrounds writing from the position of linguistic and cultural estrangement and emphasizes the experience of otherness and exile. In this light, the Sinophone and Xenophone frameworks help map out "the contact zone between Chinese and the Malay world through a perspective based on the voyage to and life experience in a foreign land" (Ko 2021, 49). While the Sinophone aspect of the Malay world reflects the Chinese diasporic experience rooted in Chinese language and cultural memory, its Xenophone counterpart points to the otherness of external languages and cultures, emphasizing hybridity and cross-cultural interaction. In Ko's analysis, traditional Chinese writings from the Nanyang region blend these perspectives and showcase how the Sinophone imagination adapts to the multiracial and multilingual milieu of the Malay world. This fusion has created a cross-cultural literary mapping that bridges the diasporic Chinese identity with the transformative influence of the Malay Archipelago's diverse cultural landscape. This dual engagement allows these writings to move beyond a singular cultural narrative and present a hybridized vision that reflects the complexities of the Malay Archipelago as a site of transcultural interaction.

To tackle the critical topic of Sinophone literature in the Global South, E. K. Tan (2021) introduces a new paradigm for the Global South in relation to the ongoing development of Sinophone literature as world literature in his article "Worlding Sinophone Malaysian Literature: Towards a Paradigm of the Global South." Tan closely investigates "the viability of a Sinophone Global South paradigm that could offer insights to how issues of global capitalism and indigenous sovereignty are cogently discussed" (2021, 154). Tan summarizes and explains "worlding" and how it is connected to decolonial practices through which the Third World is being deconstructed and reconstructed in the global network. The term "worlding" refers to the process of situating a body of literature within a broader transnational and

cross-cultural dialogue, moving beyond the boundaries of localized or national frameworks to emphasize interconnectedness in history and culture as well as global systems of power, resistance, and exchange. Tan uses "worlding" to demonstrate how Sinophone Malaysian literature transcends its specific historical and cultural contexts while still maintaining a strong sense of locality. In light of the Global South paradigm, Sinophone Malaysian literature carries the potential to challenge Eurocentric and Sinocentric models of literary analysis. Instead of viewing Sinophone Malaysian literature as a derivative of Chinese literary traditions or as confined to a Southeast Asian regional identity, Tan frames it as part of the larger network of Global South cultures. This insight helps one reexamine the concepts of minor, minority, and marginal literatures.

Tan (2021) examines the geopolitical transition from the Third World to the Global South and the twenty-first century rise of South-South Cooperation, which has contributed to the remaking of the world order. This new strategy poses a radical challenge to Euro-American modes of knowledge and further facilitates the negotiation between the Global South discourse and Sinophone studies. Tan closes his article by using the novels of Sinophone Malaysian writer Chang Kuei-hsing 張貴興 as a case study. Tan provides a new lens for viewing Sinophone literature in response to the Global South paradigm. His engagement with current scholarship and sophisticated literary interpretation has aptly paved the way for scholars who share common interests in the field.

In a similar vein, Carlos Rojas adopts the angle of the Global South in probing the double complexity of the historical Malayan Communist insurgency depicted in *Qunxiang* (*Elephant herd*; 2006) by Chang Kuei-hsing through the lens of Priscilla Wald's analysis of "outbreak narrative" (2021, 126). Rojas cleverly uses Steven Soderbergh's 2011 film *Contagion* as an entry point for a sophisticated reading of Chang's novel. Rojas posits a provocative parallel between the fictitious virus in the film and the novel's representation of Malayan Communism. The virus can be originally linked to the Global North, and Communism travels from the North (China) to the South (Sarawak). Rojas emphasizes the distinctive features of Malayan Communism as portrayed in Chang's novel through accounts of animals like elephants and crocodiles, which relate to the novel's multiethnic picture of the local community. Rojas not only showcases the subtle connection between China as a political and cultural agent and Sarawak as a multicultural Malaysian state but also prompts other critics to rethink the geopolitical discourse of a Global South that includes China and Malaysia. The South is a relative concept in that North-and-South and South-and-South entanglements

are notable phenomena that have been seen across the globe. In this case, Rojas's "immunological" interpretation sheds new light on the academic discussion of Sinophone Malaysian literature.

While Nanyang literary writing occupies a significant place in Sinophone articulation, a new Southern discourse highlighted by Tsai Lin-chin helps reinstate Taiwan literature as a crucial aspect of Sinophone studies by decentering Sinocentric frameworks and affirming Taiwan's plural cultural identity. In "Xinnanfang lunshu: Bangcha nuhai yu dingju zhimin pipan" (New Southern discourse: The Pangcah Girl and settler colonial criticism), Tsai (2021) rethinks the encounter between Han Chinese immigrants and Indigenous Taiwanese through the lens of settler colonial criticism. Following Raewyn Connell's "southern theory," Tsai argues that "it is exactly the settler colonial structure in Taiwan, as well as its convergence with the US during the Cold War era, that forecloses its possibility to partake in the discussion of the Global South" (2021, 80). Tsai uses Gan Yaoming's novel *Bangcha nuhai* (*The Pangcah girl*; 2015) as the entry point into a critical examination of the new Southern discourse of Taiwan literature. According to Tsai, the Lintienshan forestry area of Hualien, the major setting of Gan's novel, has become "the South" within Taiwan. For the past one hundred years, Lintienshan has served as a symbolic site where people of diverse ethnic backgrounds gather and where various colonial powers are inscribed. For Tsai, the problems endured by Indigenous people and low-class Han Chinese settlers in Lintienshan poignantly showcase the neoliberal exploitation of the land and people living there, thus creating a new possibility for Taiwan's Southern discourse.

Taiwan's Southern discourse refers to a cultural and geopolitical orientation that historically centers on the island's Japanese colonial legacies, maritime connections to Southeast Asia, and its positioning within the Global South. However, this discourse can be further enriched if one takes into account the Austronesian experiences represented in Sinophone literature, which is the subject of Chen Chih Fan's (2021) "Yi Nandao weiming: Yuanzhuminzu wenxue zhong de rentong zhengzhi yu daoyu xiangxiang" (In the name of "Austronesian": A case study of identity politics and insular imagination on Taiwan Indigenous literature). Since the 1990s, Austronesian cultural discourse has been working hand in hand with Taiwan's nation-building campaign, gradually earning its place in political and public arenas. In Chen's view, "the polyphonic quality within Taiwan Indigenous literature reveals not only subjective differences between Austronesian peoples, but also the development of ethnic politics and national governance in Taiwan for enriching Austronesian discourses" (2021, 110). Chen highlights Indigenous Taiwanese writers' understanding of Austronesian peoples

and cultures and examines Syaman Rapongan's *Dahai fumeng* (*The drifting dreams on the ocean*; 2014) to explore the profound relationship between Indigenous Taiwanese and Austronesian peoples. As Chen argues, the connection between Syaman Rapongan and Austronesian peoples is not based on their similarities in terms of race, appearance, skin color, and language but rather on the shared common ground of perceiving and understanding the ocean. Chen's study extends beyond the conventional boundaries of Austronesian cultures concerning linguistic and cultural heritage. It pinpoints the significance of fostering a collective "we-group" among Austronesian peoples, which represents the experience and practice of the "Southern" imagination positioned at the crossroads of multiculturalism and globality.

This article has surveyed the theoretical discourse of the Global South and scholarship on Sinophone literature by historicizing and contextualizing multicultural communities in Southeast Asia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and beyond. To encourage further discussion, we raise this question: In what ways can Sinophone literature be used as a tool to critique or interrogate the dominant narratives of globalization, colonialism, and nationalism in the Sinophone South? The fresh perspectives on the Southern discourse in Sinophone literature are vital for answering this question and introducing a blended reading strategy in the academic arena. A product of cultural hybridity, Sinophone literature brings to light both local and global characteristics that coincide with the transnational network of contacts and conflicts. Through a broad view of Sinophone literature in the Global South, this article has prompted thought-provoking queries relating to Indigeneity, minorities, creolization, South-South Cooperation, and the North-and-South divide. As the fine line between the Global North and the Global South is blurred, Sinophone literature creates a special space that accommodates multiple voices and further raises local awareness and involves a series of intercultural dialogues. This article embraces the plurality of the Sinophone discourse in postcolonial and global contexts with the hope of showcasing new directions and paradigms while refining and redefining the concept of the Sinophone South in the twenty-first century.

## Notes

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[2] Part of this article is adapted from the Chinese-language introduction of the special issue (no. 51) titled Global South and Sinophone Literature, which was published by *Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities* in July 2021.

[3] The capitalization of "Indigenous" reflects a recognition of the term as a proper noun denoting the collective identity and shared experiences of Indigenous peoples worldwide. This practice is grounded in respect for the sovereignty and distinct cultural identities of Indigenous communities.

[4] Taiwan literature, rather than Taiwanese literature, is the preferred term in academia because it encompasses the island's diverse literary production across languages, ethnicities, and historical periods, including works in Mandarin, Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka, and Indigenous languages, as well as those shaped by Japanese colonial and postcolonial legacies.

## Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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