

China Research Seminar Series (Lent 2021)
FAMES, University of Cambridge

**Reclaiming Autonomy
and Diplomatic Agency**
*China and Indonesia in the
Emergence of
Post-War Asia, 1940–50*

Dr Vincent K.L. Chang
(Leiden University)



5pm (London time), 10 February, 2021 (Wednesday) via Zoom (pre-registration required)

Please register in advance for this seminar:

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJItcOuopj8vGNYoovFNeFRgahJVIlusKCqy](https://zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tJItcOuopj8vGNYoovFNeFRgahJVIlusKCqy)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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Abstract

Most studies of contemporary China and Indonesia, and of their relations, take 1949 as their starting point. However, the relationship between these two newly independent states did not emerge from a historical vacuum, and to fully understand its complex trajectory their pre-revolutionary dealings must also be considered. This presentation shifts the focus to World War II and its direct aftermath, when Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists were leading China's state-building efforts and Indonesia was a colony under Dutch colonial rule and Japanese wartime occupation. By introducing two little known cases of wartime and early post-war regional diplomacy, this presentation sheds new light on the complex and multifaceted transitions that both states went through between 1940 and 1950 as they evolved from passive actors and rule-takers to increasingly pro-active, independent and effective agents of their own destinies. The analysis shows that China's relations with smaller states are critical for understanding the structural changes that underpinned its incipient rise during this momentous decade.

Speaker Bio

Vincent K.L. Chang is a lawyer and a historian of modern China. He currently serves as a lecturer of modern Chinese history and international relations at Leiden University and as a fellow of the LeidenAsiaCentre, having previously taught at the History College of Southwest University and the Law College of Chongqing University, China. His research focuses on World War II and the post-war period, diplomacy, and historical memory. Chang has authored key publications on modern Sino-Dutch and Sino-Indonesian relations, including *Forgotten Diplomacy: The Modern Remaking of Dutch–Chinese Relations, 1927–1950* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) and 'Revolution and Recognition in Post-War Asia: Restoring Missing Links in the Establishment of Indonesia–PRC Relations, 1949–1950' (*Journal of Contemporary Asia*, July 2020).



A 1932 Japanese map of the Dutch East Indies