

“CHINESENESS” IN MALAYSIAN CHINESE EDUCATION DISCOURSE:  
THE CASE OF CHUNG LING HIGH SCHOOL

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: “Chineseness” in Malaysian Chinese Education Discourse: The Case of Chung Ling High School

The Chinese education issues in Malaysia appear frequently in political discourse, often featuring contentious discussions of language learning and national education policies. Applying an historical approach to contextualize a political discourse, this thesis examines the politics and transformation of Malaysian Chinese education, in microcosm, at the level of a renowned Chinese school, Chung Ling High School in Penang. It explores and maps the question of “Chineseness” through the examination of the history and development of Chung Ling since its establishment in 1917. This thesis also aims to elucidate the complex negotiation between multiple stakeholders of the Chinese community which took place at different historical junctures in a postcolonial and multi-ethnic nation. I discuss memorial activities for two deceased educationists, David Chen and Lim Lian Geok, which have been readapted into contemporary discourse by different factions of educationists to express their dissatisfactions toward state hegemony on education policies. Lastly, I argue that the persistent pursuit of “Chineseness” is counterproductive to the aim of safeguarding interests of Chinese schools within and outside the national education system today.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

I am an alumna graduated from Chung Ling Butterworth School in 2003, and my father, brother, cousins, uncles, granduncles, teachers and friends attended Chung Ling High School since the 1930s. My interest in the history of Chung Ling sparked in 1997, when the school celebrated its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During the week of celebration, I stumbled upon some exhibition materials - an unorganized pile of old school magazines and student publications. The depiction of Chung Ling's pasts was very different and unfamiliar to me, as students of my generation were rarely exposed to the history of the school. I subsequently learned about the 1952 assassination of David Chen, a well-respected principal of the school. My obsession about the complex stories surrounding his death led me to wonder about "what might have happened". In the subsequent years, I stumbled upon more sources on a few unique personalities connected to the school, which are intriguing and fascinating to me. In 2003, an account published by Chin Peng, the de facto leader of now defunct Malayan Communist Party, acknowledged that David Chen's death is connected to the party's decision from top. He further admitted that it was a "mistake" which brought backlash to the party, due to David Chen's personal reputation.<sup>1</sup> How revealing is this assassination about the struggles of Chinese education in the era? David Chen's death unfolds some interesting aspects about political identifications of Chinese community, as well as the language politics in Chinese schools. I feel that such particulars add up to whole picture if understood with the contemporary discourses reflecting the anxiety faced by Chinese educationists in Malaysia.

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<sup>1</sup> See Peng Chin, *My Side of History* (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003).

Like many people in my generation, I am acutely aware of the racial dichotomy between the Malay-Muslims and the other ethnic groups. It was only with the gradual accumulation of age, experience, and exposure that I came to the revelation that much of the racial disharmony and its divisive effects on Malaysian society were results of our race-based political structure. I attended a Chinese national-type primary school which my grandpa used to be a patron for many years before he passed away. Through my formative years, I received an education that was primarily taught in the Chinese language, with majority of students are ethnic Chinese. While I take pride in the language and cultural idiosyncrasies of my education background, I often contemplate on the influence of education system on identity politics and national unity. These fragments of history and social realities raise important questions about the status of ethnic minorities and their perception on culture, identity, class and hierarchy.

With my younger sister's enrolment into an independent Chinese school, I became more attentive about the differences of our education trajectories. Our separate academic experiences determine our access to different education opportunities, and shape our distinct career pathways and perspectives in life. I intend to explore the larger context of such personal dimensions in this project. This thesis is thus placed in a framework rather different from pure academic studies. This project can be seen as my personal meditation on the contentious debate on language politics, education issues and the question of identity in Malaysian Chinese community.

## About the Study

Outside China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, Malaysia has the largest and most extensive Chinese education system. The Chinese sojourners and settlers in Malaya have long established their own schools to educate their children in their mother tongue.<sup>2</sup> The most salient feature of the Malaysian Chinese education is that it is operated by the Malaysian Chinese community within the Malaysian state framework, but is not entirely subordinated under the national education system. The debates on Chinese education in Malaysia appear frequently in both political and social discourse. These debates often feature highly political discussion of language issues and education policies, which are extremely controversial matters in Malaysia, as seen in General Elections. The Chinese community struggle to sustain the Chinese schools within a complex and diverse education system designed for a multi-cultural nation. This thesis hopes to investigate the debate concerning the development of Chinese education in Malaysia, where different factions of Chinese educationists compete to dominate the discourse within a complex postcolonial and multi-ethnic nation.

This thesis examines the politics and transformation of Malaysian Chinese education, in microcosm, at the level of a renowned Chinese education institution, Chung Ling High School in Penang, founded on 9 February 1917. As the first Chinese secondary school in peninsular Malaya, Chung Ling is often regarded as the pioneer and leader

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<sup>2</sup> Prior to the Second World War, Malaya consisted of two entities, namely Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia today. Whenever the term “Malaya” is used as an abbreviation for the Federation of Malaya when discussing events before 1963; it is meant to refer to the peninsular as a whole, including Singapore. “Malaysia” is used when discussing development after 1963 when the Federation of Malaysia incorporating the former Federation of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore was formed. Singapore separated from Malaysia to become a separate political unit in August 1965.

amongst Chinese schools in Malaya, also known for its elite school reputation.<sup>3</sup> My thesis maps the question of “Chineseness” through the examination of history and development of Chung Ling. Chung Ling typifies a classic example of overseas Chinese establishment during the colonial years of British Malaya, which recently transformed itself in the course of the nation-building process of Malaysia.

The account of Chung Ling reveals the complexity of negotiation among the multiple stakeholders of the Chinese community and thus can be seen as a reflection of both representations and political realities faced by Malaysian Chinese at different historical moments. Chung Ling has been receiving substantial attention within the Chinese community due to its historical ties with China as well as its outstanding achievements through many notable alumni throughout its history. Most significantly, Chung Ling was the first school to accept aid from the Malayan government’s Education Department, effectively “conforming” to the national education in 1955. This historic decision made by Chung Ling’s administration provoked the entire Chinese community in Malaya, causing many large-scale student demonstrations that marked a watershed in the development of Malaysian Chinese education.

This thesis is written mainly from a historical perspective. It is my belief that identity politics and discourse are rooted in the pasts of individuals and community. To untangle and locate the core of the discussions on the changing faces of Chinese education, the discussions should be embedded within a historical timeframe in order to give greater depth to the analysis. I am concerned with how recent development of this

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<sup>3</sup> Historically, the students are selected carefully based on results of entrance examination or a nation-wide standardized examination. Thus, the quality of the students and hence the standard of the school are among the highest in Malaysia and it is still regarded as one of the best secondary schools in Malaysia.

discourse was present alone without reference to the past, and I certainly hope to stimulate and raise discussions on the future of Chinese education in mainstream Malaysian society.

### ***Notes on Terminology and Names***

Chinese names, whether of persons or of schools, are retained in the form normally used by the persons or schools concerned where this is known. In cases when this cannot be established, names will be rendered in *pinyin*. Most Chinese words are rendered in *pinyin*, with brief translations where possible. All translations from Chinese sources are original unless specified. Chinese characters for Chinese terms and names will be mentioned in parentheses in its first appearance. Some Malay names will be mentioned after Chinese names for reference purpose.

### ***Literature Review***

To place the history of the school in context, the local history of Penang is essential. Yen Ching-Hwang's *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya 1800-1911*, C. F. Yong and R. B. McKenna's *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912-1949* shed some light on the establishment of schools within the Colonial framework. Khoo Salma's *Sun Yat Sen in Penang* provides a brief overview on the network of the Tongmenghui that led to the formation of Chung Ling.

The historical studies of Malaysian Chinese generally refer to two groups: English-educated Malaysian Chinese whose scholarly perspectives are more influenced by colonial documents; and Chinese-educated authors, who typically draw on sources

produced by Chinese observers. I intend to draw on materials from both groups in order to engage different interpretive questions presented in this account.

Zheng Liangshu's three-volume work on the history of Chinese education is an important source from the perspective of the Chinese community. Zheng's account illustrates the important stages and challenges from the *si shu* (私塾) schooling, to modern Chinese schools embedded in the present-day Malaysian national education system.<sup>4</sup>

Two main sources are available to allow the Chung Ling's history to be pieced together. The first are materials compiled by the school's personnel and alumni association as well as publications, official records, school magazines, reports, interview notes, memoirs and diaries of teachers and students from prewar and postwar eras. The second type of primary source consists of local newspaper articles published in Penang and selected records on the Malaya.

Tan Liok Ee's studies present a comprehensive analytical account of the development of Chinese education from a political perspective. The author focuses on the development of Chinese schools after the Second World War until 1961 – a crucial era filled with conflicting political forces between the colonial power and the local nationalist movements. Her studies show that Chinese education was to remain a central concern in the Malaysian political arena because it was closely linked to a variety of issues affecting

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<sup>4</sup> Liangshu Zheng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi* 马来西亚华文教育发展史 (Singapore 新加坡: Malaixiya Hua xiao jiao shi hui zong hui, 1998).



the Chinese community. These ranged from political status and cultural identity to access to socio-economic opportunities available in Malaysia.<sup>5</sup>

Most existing studies on Malaysian Chinese education concentrate on the history and politics of learning Chinese in the context of ethnic politics in Malaysia. Also known as the “Chinese Education Movement”, the discourse focuses on the preservation of Chinese education and culture, and criticizes the Malaysian state’s unitary education policy and cultural hegemony.<sup>6</sup> My work diverges from these studies on Malaysian Chinese education as I attempt to investigate the role of identity politics in the discourse of Chinese education instead of concentrating on the debate on the right to learn Chinese within school curriculum.

### ***Organization and Outline***

In the first chapter, I will introduce my study by discussing relevant scholarly work, research objectives and organization of this thesis. To provide a historical context for my discussions, this chapter will also sketch the background of Chinese education in British Malaya.

The second chapter traces the less familiar past of Chung Ling’s establishment in Penang, which is connected to overseas organization of the 1911 Revolution. Chung Ling was essentially founded by Sun Yat Sen’s supporters in Penang after his visits. Inspired

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<sup>5</sup> Liok Ee Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, South-East Asian Historical Monographs (Kuala Lumpur ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Kia Soong Kua, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia : A Protean Saga* (Kuala Lumpur Malaysia: United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia, 1985); Qingbao Zeng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu De Kun Jing Yu Chu Lu 马来西亚华文教育的困境与出路* (Taipei: Cai tuan fa ren hai hua wen jiao ji jin hui 财团法人海华文教基金会, 2001); Ting Hui Lee, *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia : The Struggle For Survival* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011).

and influenced by the Chinese nationalist movement in mainland China, the fate of Chung Ling was closely connected to the political developments in China through the turbulent years of the Sino-Japanese war, the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949) and the formation of the People's Republic of China. This chapter also brings the focus to Chung Ling's "glory days" under the leadership of Principal David Chen Chong Ern (*Chen Chongen* 陈充恩; 1900-1952). In his lengthy term of office (1931-1952), Chen embraced ambitious plans for the school. Most notable were his proposition for bilingual education and his emphasis on practical subjects, both of which were known to be exceptionally forward amongst other Chinese schools of that time. As the founding president of United Chinese School Teachers' Association (UCSTA), Chen's policy left significant impact on the development of the Chinese secondary school system in Malaysia.

The third chapter illuminates a crucial turning point in the history of Chung Ling, against the backdrop of decolonization after the Second World War. In the 1950s, Chung Ling was already the largest Chinese school in Malaya and often regarded as the pioneer and prototype of modern Chinese schools in the region. In 1955, it was also the first Chinese school to receive government financial aid. This facilitated its absorption into the national school system, producing the label of "conforming school". This historic bargain marked a milestone in the history of Chinese education of Malaysia, as well as triggering a complicated division within the Chinese secondary school system. As a result, Chinese secondary schools were categorized into two major types: National Type Secondary Schools (NTSS, 国民型中学/*Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan*) and Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (ICSS, 独立中学), which identified those that have remained outside the national education system until today. Chung Ling, and other Chinese

establishments of its type were embedded in the colonial British framework before the 1950s. The discourse on Chinese language and preservation of Chinese identities faced tremendous pressures in the postwar period, especially during the Cold War. During the decolonization period, the tensions rose to another level with plans of localizing and nationalizing education system under a unitary structure. The national education agenda favored English and Malay as medium of instruction, resulting in a dark period of Malaysian Chinese education.

The fourth chapter introduces contemporary discussions surrounding the different challenges faced by NTSS and ICSS; specifically, the repeated occurrence of concerns over “Chineseness” and language policies in the arguments among Chinese educationists network. I am also fascinated by how Lim Lian Geok (*Lin Lianyu* 林连玉; 1901-1985), the most celebrated figure in the history of Malaysian Chinese education, has been persistently invoked in the discourse. Whilst Lim’s life stories are widely circulated and discussed, the present-day Chung Ling community continues to remember a former principal, David Chen, despite the fact that many of them were not even born before Chen’s death in 1952. I investigate these persistent memories by revisiting the dissimilar visions of David Chen and Lim Lian Geok. This chapter attempts to move beyond the historical record, to discuss how these two figures have been readapted in the current politics of Malaysian Chinese education. In this fashion this study goes beyond the excavation of history, to examine contemporary discourse on Chinese education within and outside the present national school systems in the Malaysian state.

In the concluding chapter, I shift focus to the present development of Chung Ling in order to offer a possible understanding of Malaysian Chinese education in the coming

years. The past generations of Malaysian Chinese community strived to protect and preserve a broad sense of Chineseness – although specific understandings of Chineseness differ across time and space. I hope this study serves to reframe the debates concerning Chinese education development, away from a vague focus on Chinese identity.

### **A Brief Background: Chinese Education in British Malaya before 1941**

The establishment of the East India Company factory in Penang in 1786 by Captain Francis Light ushered in the advent of British colonial administration and British-led western enterprise in Penang and subsequently, Malaya. This resulted in the mass migration of immigrant laborers to Penang. The Chinese community, being the largest ethnic group in the city since 1788, was, like other immigrant communities, allowed to administer its own affairs through its headmen in the first twenty-five years of the colony's history.

Studies of overseas Chinese could not escape *Nanyang*<sup>7</sup>, for it is the venue of emigrant Chinese for many centuries. More than 70 percent of people who identify with Chinese ancestry and live outside of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan are concentrated in Southeast Asia, specifically in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.<sup>8</sup> This emigration has been inseparable from modern Chinese history, in which the fate of these overseas Chinese has been substantially intertwined with the dynastic empire,

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<sup>7</sup> Nanyang 南洋, is typically used to describe the geographical region south of China. Literally means "Southern Ocean", Nanyang came into common usage in self-reference to the larger ethnic Chinese migrant population particularly in Southeast Asia.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others : Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 2.

imperialism, and founding of a nation-state and republic, and the Japanese occupation of China and Southeast Asia.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the immigrant population increased population in Malaya, the need for schools within Chinese settlements was increasingly important. In the early days, private home schooling, *si shu*, was the most common form of education available, followed by a more organized form of education located in ancestral temples, clan, and district associations, usually sponsored by community leaders and limited to selected groups of students from the same clan or district. The first Chinese school in Malaya can be traced back to the year of 1819, with the establishment of the *Wufu Shuyuan* (五福书院) in the state of Penang.<sup>9</sup> The medium of learning was clan dialect and materials were generally classical Confucian teachings adopted from China, such as the Trimetrical Classics, Great Learning, Odes for Children, 100 Surnames, Analects, Mencius, with added study of abacus and calligraphy. This early form of Chinese education was loosely organized, usually in small classes with limited facilities and poor conditions.<sup>10</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup> century military defeat of the Qing government beginning with the Opium Wars and culminating with the Sino-Japanese War, fostered the beginning of modern nationalism, and a reformation of Chinese education. Some scholar-officials, like Kang Youwei (康有为) and Liang Qichao (梁启超), petitioned the Manchu monarchy to reform China through educational reform, among other initiatives. A combination of Chinese classics and modern studies, such as geography, arithmetic, science and physical

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<sup>9</sup> Zheng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi* 马来西亚华文教育发展史, vols. 1, 1–6; 31–33.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, vols. 1, chapter 1.

education, was introduced for the first time to the education system in China. This influence trickled down to the schools in Malaya when Kang and Liang had to flee to Nanyang.<sup>11</sup>

The Chinese schools in peninsular Malaya underwent a transformation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of turbulent years of social and political changes in China. The revolutionary movement led by Sun Yat Sen (alias Sun Zhongshan alias Sun Wen) was a reaction to the Qing government's inability to counter imperialism. The Reform Movement that led to the founding of the Republic of China in 1911 had a profound impact throughout the Nanyang and Malaya. Yen Ching Hwang's study on the 1911 Revolution and the Overseas Chinese explores the environment of Nanyang Chinese during these turbulent years: negotiating multiple complexities as subjects of the Qing court, colonial administrations, and later on, the Republic of China.<sup>12</sup>

Following a policy of divide and rule, the British colonial government had allowed a segregated system of vernacular education to flourish in Malaya until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The British officials were reluctant to provide English education for colonial subjects because the costs would have been enormous. The Chinese schools had autonomous operations and were self-reliant, dependent solely on funding from the Chinese community, leaders and wealthy donors. Generally, the Chinese schools met with little interference from the British colonial government, and were the only major independent school system available other than a small number of English schools.

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<sup>11</sup> For some background on the interaction between Qing government with the education institutions with Malaya, see Lee, *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia*, chap. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ching Hwang Yen, *The Overseas Chinese and the 1911 Revolution: With Special Reference to Singapore and Malaya*, East Asian Historical Monographs (Kuala Lumpur ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

However, the Chinese schools did not receive active encouragement or any financial assistance from the governments of Straits Settlement and the Federated Malay States.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, the colonial government developed a dimmer view of their activities as a heightened political consciousness was found in Chinese schools. When the terms of the Versailles Treaty in 1919 handed over the German concessions in Shandong to Japan, the Malayan Chinese boycotted Japanese goods and the “Peace” celebrations called for by the British colonial offices. When the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement took place in China, Chinese patriotism among the Malayan Chinese population was at its peak – the political and social developments in China sparked a new sense of political identity in the overseas community.<sup>14</sup> The colonial administration swiftly stepped-up its regulation of Chinese schools by introducing the 1920 Registration of Schools Ordinance.<sup>15</sup> As a result, a movement developed within the Chinese community to unite the Chinese schools in order to protect their interests. The colonial government imposed aggressive measures on those Chinese leaders who opposed the regulation, to the extent of sending a few Malayan Chinese Nationalist supporters into exile.<sup>16</sup>

Soon, in 1929, the Republic of China, under the Kuomintang, proclaimed its “Regulations for Overseas Chinese schools”, to assist the promotion of primary and secondary education for overseas Chinese – a gesture to embed overseas Chinese

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<sup>13</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 18–21.

<sup>14</sup> Kua, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia*, chap. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Zheng Liangshu saw the 1920 Registration of Schools as an extension of a previous ordinance to register all Chinese societies and associations, a successful strategy of colonial administration in controlling secret societies and gangs. See Zheng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi 马来西亚华文教育发展史*, vols. 2, 33–35.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, vols. 2, chap. 2.

education into the new nation. The British observed frequent correspondence between China and Malayan Chinese schools, such as appointment of teachers to schools in Nanyang, acceptance of Malayan students into universities in China for tertiary education, and similarities in teaching materials in both locations, among other things.<sup>17</sup>

The Chinese schools in Malaya grew steadily through the 1920s and 1930s, despite having to negotiate among the colonial governments, political forces in China, and challenging local demands. Their effort and struggles met with the toughest obstruction ever when Japan invaded Southeast Asia and occupied Malaya between 1942 and 1945. The Japanese Occupation was particularly hostile toward the Chinese population. During the Sino-Japanese War, most Malayan Chinese schools were either closed down or forced to teach completely in Japanese.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Kua, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia*, chap. 2; Zheng, *Malaxiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi* 马来西亚华文教育发展史, vols. 2, 197–224.

<sup>18</sup> Zheng, *Malaxiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi* 马来西亚华文教育发展史, vols. 2, Chapter 9.



## CHAPTER II

### CHUNG LING AS A PIONEER CHINESE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN MALAYA

#### Early History of the Chung Ling High School in Penang (1917-1945)

##### *Chung Ling and the Turbulent Years in China: 1911-1949*

Between 1895 and 1912, the exiled Sun Yat Sen sailed several times between Asia, America and Europe to campaign for the Chinese Revolution. Sun co-founded the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance or Zhongguo Tongmenghui (中国同盟会) in Japan. In April 1906, the Tongmenghui branch in Singapore was established, and soon became the Southeast Asian bureau or “Nanyang Headquarters” in 1908. From Singapore, the Tongmenghui quickly expanded into British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, with 20 branches and about 3,000 members in the region.<sup>19</sup> The Penang branch of Tongmenghui quickly emerged as the heart of the revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia, under the guidance of Sun and his loyal group of supporters.<sup>20</sup> When the wealthy tycoons, merchants, business and plantation owners were identified as conservative elites with less interest in Sun’s vision of national salvation, the revolutionaries broadened their appeal to lower-middle class overseas Chinese.<sup>21</sup> In 1908, the Penang Philomatic Union (*Bincheng Yueshu Baoshe*, 檳城阅书报社) was founded among the many reading clubs established

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<sup>19</sup> Yen, *The Overseas Chinese and the 1911 Revolution: With Special Reference to Singapore and Malaya*, chap. 2–3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 219–243.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 99–100.

in Malaya by supporters of Sun Yat Sen. It soon replaced Singapore and became the Nanyang revolutionary headquarters.<sup>22</sup>

After the 1911 Revolution, the Tongmenghui was superseded by the Kuomintang (KMT) with branches all over Malaya.<sup>23</sup> The Penang Philomatic Union, with the support from Tongmenghui leaders, was at the forefront of the movement of modern Chinese education in Penang. Many schools were established by the leaders and their network, such as Chung San Primary School (1912), Fukien Girls' School (1920, subsequently known as Penang Chinese Girls School), and Chung Ling High School.

Chung Ling School (*Zhong Ling Xue Xiao*, 钟灵学校) was jointly founded by Tan Sin Cheng, Khoo Beng Cheang, Chu Yeo Aik, Khaw Seng Lee and Lim Joo Teik of the Penang Philomatic Union on February 9, 1917. Chung Ling was originally located at the union's double-storey building at Malay Street, and began with enrollment in primary classes with Wu Yanong (吴亚农) as its first principal. It then moved to Macalister Road, the old bungalow of Xiao Lan Ting Club (小兰亭俱乐部).

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 111–117; Salma Khoo, *Sun Yat Sen in Penang* (Penang Malaysia: Areca Books, 2008), 36–39.

<sup>23</sup> Detailed account on KMT in Malaya, see C. F Yong and R. B McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912-1949* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore, 1990).



**Figure 1:** Chung Ling School at 65, Macalister Road, Penang (before 1935)

An attempt to set up a Chinese high school in Penang, the Hua Qiao Secondary School (华侨中学), was initially well-received by the community, but it closed down shortly after in 1921 due to financial difficulties. The closure of Hua Qiao Secondary School sparked a pressing need for a secondary school in Penang. The Chinese community leaders in Penang met on 11 November 1922 to discuss the possibility of establishing a secondary school, to be supported by donations from the public and managed by a committee elected by the benefactors of the school. Wang Deqing put forth the suggestion to expand the primary school to include secondary education.<sup>24</sup> Chung Ling High School (*Zhongling Zhogxue*, 钟灵中学) started Lower Secondary classes and was inaugurated on 20 January 1923 at the same site. Gu Yinming (顾因明) was

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<sup>24</sup> Chong Leng Yeap, "The Establishment of Penang Hua Qiao High School: An Attempt in Failure 檳城华侨中学的创立：一个失败的尝试," *Asian Culture 亚洲文化*, no. No. 33 (June 2009): 122–131.

recruited as its founding principal.<sup>25</sup> By 1931, Chung Ling started its Upper Secondary division. It was the only Chinese school in Malaya with full complement of both Lower and Upper Secondary classes.<sup>26</sup>

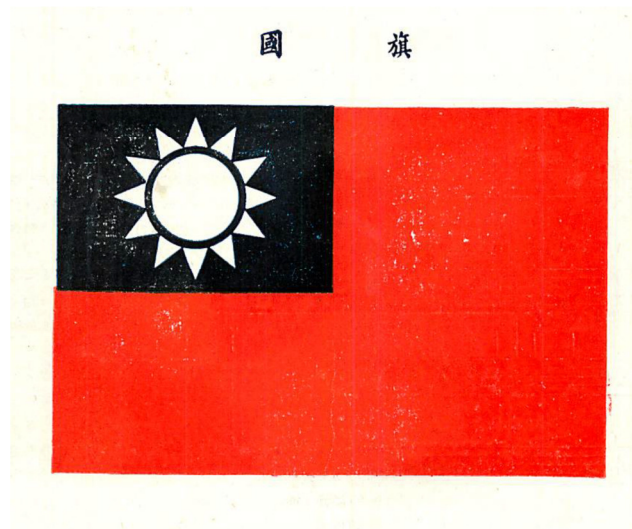
Chung Ling continued its close affiliation with the KMT's Overseas Chinese nationalistic movements. Sun Yat Sen's "Three People's Principles" (*San Min Zhuyi*, 三民主义) – Nationalism, People's Sovereignty and People's Livelihood, was adopted into the curriculum of Chung Ling. The Chung Ling School Magazines before the Second World War demonstrated the Chinese nationalistic elements: photographs of Sun Yat Sen and Chiang Kai Shek were featured; the *minguo* calendar system was employed, and the KMT's flag and logo were highlighted. The school magazines frequently reported the visits of the KMT Consul in Penang and Malaya to the school, and many staff members were closely linked to the nationalistic movements in China.<sup>27</sup> It was apparent that Chung Ling was one of the crucial institutions that propagated a vision of China as a homeland, expressing deep concern about China's future.

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<sup>25</sup> Gu Yinming was a graduate from the Fudan University in Shanghai, an institution that is associated with modern Western teachings. Prior to his attachment with Chung Ling, Gu was an experienced English teacher. He was recognized for laying a unique foundation for Chung Ling's secondary section during its early years, with strong emphasis on English and field studies.

<sup>26</sup> The accounts of the school's history are drawn from Zhong Ling zhongxue 钟灵中学, *Chung Ling School Magazine 《钟灵中学校刊》* (Penang: Zhong Ling zhongxue 钟灵中学, 1938); David Chen, "Zhong Ling Xue Xiao Zhi Shilue 钟灵学校之史略," *Bincheng Yue Shu Bao She Sa Zhouian Jinian Tekan 檳城阅书报社卅周年纪念特刊*, 1938; Rongzhao Chen, ed., *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集* (Singapore 新加坡: Zhong ling zhong xue (Xinjiapo) xiao you hui 钟灵中学新加坡校友会, 2007); Zhongling Ye, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Shi Gao : 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学史稿: 1917-1957* (Singapore 新加坡: Hua yi guan 华裔馆, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> These are apparent from the school magazines before 1942.



**Figure 2:** “National Flag” featured in Chung Ling School Magazine, 1948; this is the flag of Republic of China.



國父遺像

遺囑

余致力國民革命凡四十年其目的在求中國之自由平等積四十年之經驗深知欲達到此目的必須喚起民眾及聯合世界上以平等待我之民族共同奮鬥  
 現在革命尚未成功凡我同志務須依照余所著建國方略建國大綱三民主義及第一次全國代表大會宣言繼續努力以求貫徹最近主張開國民會議及廢除不平等條約尤須於最短期間促其實現是所至囑

**Figure 3 (Left):** Portrait of Chiang Kai Shek (Chung Ling School Magazine, 1948)

**Figure 4 (Right):** Portrait of Sun Yat Sen as the “Father of Nation”, and his last instruction (Chung Ling School Magazine, 1948)

### *Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Japanese Occupation in Malaya (1942-1945)*

After Japan's invasion of China in 1937, Chung Ling and the Penang Philomatic Union became instrumental in mobilizing resources for anti-Japanese resistance. The Management Committee, teachers and students raised funds for the relief movements in China, actively sought donations through public activities, and promoted anti-Japanese propaganda through performance and writings. Several teachers and the principal, David Chen, returned to serve in the national salvation movements as the war intensified in China. Many Malaya-born students followed their footsteps, and joined both the KMT and Communist anti-Japan troops, many of them sacrificed in the war. A tragic outcome of Chung Ling's active participation in the anti-Japan activities was that many staff and students of the school were executed by the Japanese in their "Operation Clean-up" or *su qing* (肃清) during the Japanese Occupation in Malaya (1942-1945). The school was closed throughout the occupation, the facilities encountered tremendous damage: close to 12,000 books in its library vanished, labs were destroyed and school buildings were ruined due to warfare. The Japanese Occupation was immensely destructive to the thirty-year effort of Chung Ling.<sup>28</sup>

When the Second World War ended, Chung Ling went through a challenging period rebuilding the school from scratch. As the Chinese Civil War continued for four more years, the political identifications of teachers and students were also transformed.

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<sup>28</sup> A thorough account on Chung Ling's involvement during the Sino-Japanese war and the Japanese Occupation in Malaya, please refer to Kangding Wang, "Dong Jiao Xue Sanwei Yiti De Kangri Yundong 董教学三位一体的抗日运动 (1937-1945)," in *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 槟城钟灵中学校史论集*, ed. Rongzhao Chen (Singapore 新加坡: Zhong ling zhong xue (Xinjiapo) xiao you hui 钟灵中学新加坡校友会, 2007). There was also a special commemorative magazine honoring the staff and students who died was published in 1947, known as *Bincheng Zhongling Zhongxue xunnan shishen rongai lu* 槟城钟灵中学殉难师生荣哀录.

Lee Ting Hui investigates how the Chinese schools in Malaya were tangled in the British colonial environment in which Chinese nationalism or patriotism functioned, causing a subtle shift in the post-war era. The colonial government allowed the Chinese schools plentiful freedom to raise funds for the relief movements in their homeland, however the schools' increasingly radical attitude came to their attention.<sup>29</sup> This was particularly apparent during the post-war periods when question of local identity was raised together with new political consciousness.

When the Japanese invaded Malaya, the British began to mobilize the Chinese, including the schools, to help with the counter-assault. The British government also asked a renowned pro-Communist philanthropist in Southeast Asia, Tan Kah Kee (*Chen Jiageng*, 陈嘉庚), to support the war against Japan.<sup>30</sup> Many Chung Ling students were deeply motivated by the Communist agenda, and joined the armed struggles of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army and Malayan Communist Party against the Japanese. Some of them died during the struggles. Many of them continued their activism after the war.<sup>31</sup>

The Chinese schools in Malaya in the days before the Second World War were part of the educational institutions of China. Institutions such as Chung Ling were deemed instruments of Chinese nationalism. In the post-war years, many Chinese schools like Chung Ling were sympathetic toward the Communist Party of China. Eventually a

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<sup>29</sup> Ting Hui Lee, "The Anti-Japanese War in China: Support From Chinese School in Malaya in 1937-41," *Asian Culture*, no. No. 17 (June 1993): 140-148.

<sup>30</sup> Detailed account on the Communist Struggles took place in both Malaya and Singapore, see Ting Hui Lee, *The Open United Front : The Communist Struggle in Singapore, 1954-1966* (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Wang, "Dong Jiao Xue Sanwei Yiti De Kangri Yundong 董教学三位一体的抗日运动 (1937-1945)," 334-351.

different political nature evolved among the students and led them to become involved in a Communist rebellion against the colonial government. It was noticed that the Communist influence has infiltrated the Chung Ling students during the turbulent pre-occupation years.<sup>32</sup> As the Civil War in China intensified, it was undoubtedly influential amongst the Chung Ling students, invoking divisions between CCP and KMT sympathizers. Internal division and conflicts occurred quietly within the school. A new dynamic was observed, especially when the People's Republic of China was born in 1949.

### **David Chen and the Glory Age of Chung Ling (1931-1952)**

In the early history of Chung Ling, David Chen was a prominent figure who brought significant progress through his visionary policies. During his tenure, he won great respect and admiration from his fellow colleagues and students for his exceptional leadership qualities, impeccable integrity and groundbreaking yet pragmatic approaches to education.

David Chen was from Suzhou and graduated from the University of Nanjing (formerly also known as Jinling University) in 1926 where he read arts and education. Prior to his appointment as principal of Chung Ling, he taught in his alma mater in Suzhou, and later served as head of English at Zhonghua School at Billiton in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia during Dutch colonization). He was a patriot, a religious Methodist and a loyal supporter of the KMT.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Khoon Choy Lee, *Zhui Xun Zi Ji De Guo Jia : Yi Ge Nan Yang Hua Ren De Xin Lu Li Cheng 追寻自己的国家：一个南洋华人的心路历程*, Chu ban. (Taipei Shi: Yuan liu chu ban gong si, 1989), 66–70.

<sup>33</sup> Zhong Ling zhongxue 钟灵中学, *Chung Ling School Magazine 《钟灵中学校刊》 复兴第三号, 三十周年纪念特刊* (Penang: Zhong Ling zhongxue 钟灵中学, 1948), 63.



In 1931, the Management Committee of Chung Ling employed David Chen as principal through the former Chinese Consul in Penang, Yang Nianzu (杨念祖).<sup>34</sup> Chen remained as principal of the school for the next 20 years, except for a brief interval of two years (between April 1939 to September 1941) during which he returned to China to serve as the general director of Kunming National Zhong Zheng School of Medicine (昆明国立中正医学院) and later as the first principal of China Air Force Junior School (中国空军幼年学校)<sup>35</sup>. In September 1941, he returned to Chung Ling upon invitation by the Management Committee and continued his effort in Chung Ling's early development and growth.

During the Japanese Occupation of Malaya (December 1941 to August 1945), Chung Ling was suspended and went through the darkest period in its history. David Chen was high on the "wanted" list of the Japanese Military Police due to his connection to the Kuomintang, but he eluded arrest by posing as a farmer with this family in Cameron Highlands.<sup>36</sup> The school was closed until the Occupation ended, after which Chen swiftly resumed his post and embarked on a challenging period of rebuilding the school in the aftermath of Second World War.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See Chen, "Zhong Ling Xue Xiao Zhi Shilue 钟灵学校之史略." Yang helped to facilitate Chen's appointment but extent to which KMT was involved with the recommendation and selection of candidate was unknown. See Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> In fall 1938, Kuomintang Government's Ministry of Education moved Zhong Zheng School of Medicine to Kunming, Yun Nan in view of worsen Sino-Japanese war. Zhong Zheng Preparation School (中正预校) in Sichuan was known as Kuomintang Air Force Junior School (空军幼年学校), set up by the Nationalist government in 1939 to train resistance air force personnel.

<sup>36</sup> David Chen, "In Hiding," *Chen Chongen Xiaozhang Yu Nan Wushi Zhounian Jinian Zhuanju 陈充恩校长遇难五十周年纪念专辑*, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> More details on the Japanese Occupation era and rebuilding process, please see Chapter 1.



**Figure 5:** David Chen's Portrait (Chung Ling School Magazine, 1951)

David Chen's dynamic leadership was one important factor in Chung Ling's steady growth. Chen set out to turn Chung Ling into the premier Chinese school in Malaya since he was appointed the principal. He spent his first three years developing the school's physical facilities: a science lab, for example, was built in the school in 1932, officiated by a Straits Settlement officer who was overseeing Chinese Affairs, Victor Purcell. Purcell praised Chung Ling for producing students with the highest standard in Malayan Chinese education institutions.<sup>38</sup>

Given the limited facilities for secondary education in other Malayan states, Myanmar, Thailand, Sumatra and other neighboring regions, Chung Ling's enrolment

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<sup>38</sup> *Kwong Hwa Yit Poh* 光华日报, April 8 1932.

increased rapidly as many students came from outside Penang to study at the school.<sup>39</sup> Thus, an immediate expansion of the facilities was needed to cope with the increased number of students.

The Management Committee of Chung Ling supported Chen's plan to expand the school, and formed a special committee of twelve to embark on this ambitious project. With support from wealthy benefactors, community leaders and alumni, the Management Committee purchased an 11-acre site in Kampong Bahru, Ayer Itam and started a two-year construction project at a cost of over \$300,000.<sup>40</sup> On September 29, 1935, Chung Ling officially relocated into the spacious new buildings. The new site contained multiple facilities including a multipurpose hall with capacity of one thousand people, a stadium with multiple sports amenities, a football field, a new hostel, library, labs and classrooms.<sup>41</sup> As such, Chung Ling became one of the schools with top facilities in Malayan states and Southeast Asia at that time. These buildings, together with later extensions, still house the Chung Ling High School today. Throughout the 1950s, the Chung Ling school hostel housed over 300 students as students from outside Penang continued to come to Chung Ling.<sup>42</sup>

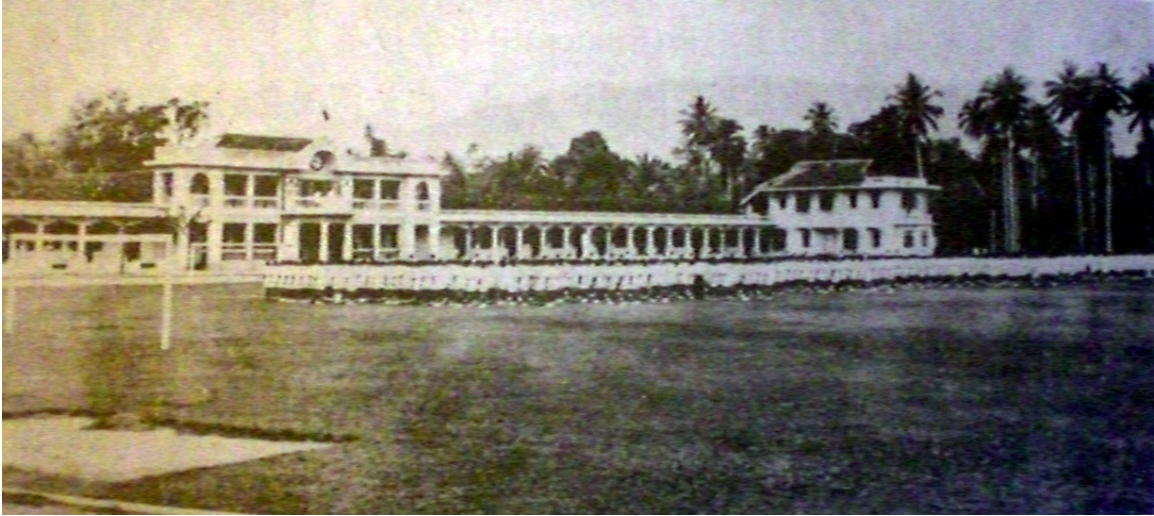
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<sup>39</sup> Ye, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Shi Gao*, 45.

<sup>40</sup> Kim Hong Tan, *The Chinese in Penang : A Pictorial History* (Penang: Areca Books, 2007), 189.

<sup>41</sup> Detailed records of the expansion project were captured in school magazine (1935-6); also see Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 12-13; David Chen, "The Secondary Education in England 英国的中等教育," *Chen Chongen Xiaozhang Yu Nan Wushi Zhounian Jinian Zhuanju 陈充恩校长遇难五十周年纪念专辑*, 2003, 216-218.

<sup>42</sup> Ye, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Shi Gao*, 49.



**Figure 6:** Chung Ling High School's New Buildings, Kampong Bahru, Penang (1935)

### *Bilingual Policy*

In addition to expanding the facilities, David Chen aspired to improve the overall quality of education provided by the school. He enforced enrolment and requirements based on performance in key subjects. He also introduced a subject committee across teachers to coordinate syllabus and course design.<sup>43</sup> In 1935, Chung Ling introduced upper secondary class (Form 4) for the first time. Most Chinese stream schools followed the so-called 6-3-3 system found in China: the students spent six years in primary school, three years in lower secondary school and another three years in upper secondary school.<sup>44</sup> David Chen also recruited many new teachers with bachelor and graduate degrees from Chinese and foreign universities.<sup>45</sup> Chen decided that students in upper

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 43–50.

<sup>44</sup> Paul M. F. Chang, *Educational Development in a Plural Society: A Malaysian Case Study*, Singapore: Academia Publications, c. 1973, p. 19. The 6-3-3 system was adopted so the Chung Ling graduates can continue their education in China.

<sup>45</sup> Ye, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Shi Gao*, 45–6.

secondary class should attain a standard of English equivalent to that of Standard Eight in Cambridge Certificates. Special classes in English were introduced the next year to help Chung Ling students achieve this goal. In the same year, seven Chung Ling students sat for the Junior Cambridge examination syllabuses.<sup>46</sup> Chung Ling subsequently adopted most Cambridge syllabi in 1937, and revised course planning to integrate both Chinese and English teaching materials.<sup>47</sup>

Chen's policy marked a progressive shift to using English texts as well as using English as a medium of instruction. To upgrade the standard of teaching in English, Chen sent seven of the school's staff to be trained in English Normal classes in 1947. Chung Ling was the only Chinese school with a complete provision of lower and upper secondary classes. In 1950 its secondary enrolment alone was more than double that of the second largest Chinese secondary school, the Confucian High School in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>48</sup> By the 1950s, the Upper Secondary classes in Chung Ling were using English textbooks for all subjects except Chinese language and literature.

The bilingual policy which David Chen introduced in Chung Ling may have been modeled after some secondary schools and universities in China which were founded and operated by missionaries, such as University of Nanjing where Chen had studied.<sup>49</sup> Chen's policy was a rational and pragmatic way of adapting a Chinese school to fit the demands of the Malayan situation, providing the graduates wider education options and better career prospects in a colonized multi-ethnic society. Chen pursued policies that

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<sup>46</sup> Detailed account on significant policies in the school is recorded in Chung Ling School Magazine (1938).

<sup>47</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 14-17.

<sup>48</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 217.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

were intended to make Chung Ling graduates the equal of graduates from other leading English stream schools, an exceptional move amongst Chinese schools in the 1930s. During that era, the most obvious disparity between Chinese stream schools and English stream schools was that the former did not yield recognized qualifications for employment compared to those students who attended English stream schools with Cambridge Certificates.<sup>50</sup> Secondary school graduates with Senior Cambridge certificates could be employed in the Civil Service and had better chances of getting a university education. The latter consideration became very important after 1949 when the University of Malaya was established and henceforth became the cheapest and most accessible higher education institution. Moreover, Chinese school students from Malaya simply could no longer attend universities in China after the Communist victory in 1949.<sup>51</sup> Chen wanted Chung Ling graduates to have the opportunities for tertiary education and careers that were not normally available to Chinese school students in those days.<sup>52</sup> The success of Chen's policy can be gauged by the fact that by 1950s Chung Ling counted among its alumni a Harvard PhD who later served as a professor in Singapore, a reputable medical professor, a secretary general of ASEAN, and a judge sitting on the Singapore high court.<sup>53</sup>

Chung Ling was regarded by colonial officials as a model for the other Chinese schools. This was especially true after the Second World War, when the British wanted

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<sup>50</sup> Paul M. F. Chang, *Educational Development in a Plural Society: A Malaysian Case Study*, Singapore: Academia Publications, c. 1973, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> It was generally known to be difficult to enter China from Malaya after 1949, since the British was a strong ally of the Western anti-Communist bloc.

<sup>52</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 214–216.

<sup>53</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 19.

English to become the main medium of instruction within the Malayan system of education. Official reports often gave Chung Ling special attention. For example, the 1949 *Annual Report on Education* described Chung Ling as ‘an exceptional school’ which has ‘demonstrated what can be done in Chinese schools by using English as the medium of instruction for certain subjects and by successfully preparing boys of its secondary department for the Senior Cambridge as well as the Chinese school leaving examinations.’<sup>54</sup> Parents pressured Yuk Choy School in Perak to follow Chung Ling’s example. Chung Ling continuously exerted influence when their students and staff went on to teach in other schools. For example, Wah Lian School in Taiping adopted a bilingual policy after a former Chung Ling teacher became its principal. Chung Ling was consistently cited as a model when the Education Department began pressurizing other Chinese schools to promote higher standards of English and to prepare their students for the Senior Cambridge examination in the early 1950s.<sup>55</sup>

David Chen tried to exploit this high official regard for Chung Ling for the school’s benefit. In August 1951, Chen specifically mentioned the fact that Chung Ling was ‘setting a pattern in Chinese Middle school education for the other schools to follow’ when he wrote to the Senior Inspector of Schools to appeal for a special increase in aid to the school. This was needed because, of the seven teachers the school had sent for Normal Training in English in 1947, four had been lost to English schools which paid higher salaries. Chen pleaded that it was absolutely essential for him to retain the other three. The three teachers had been “instrumental in building up the English department of

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<sup>54</sup> Malayan Union, *Annual Report on Education*, 1946, p. 80.

<sup>55</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 216–217.

the Chung Ling High School to its present position of pre-eminence among Chinese schools”. Chen’s request for more government aid to keep the teachers was granted by the Education Department.<sup>56</sup>

### *Education Vision, Network and Leadership*

David Chen was not just an ordinary educator: he understood the challenges of overseas Chinese education to survive independently outside state framework while embedded within colonial structure, and endeavored to provide leadership through his exceptional vision. On top of his effort in shaping Chung Ling as the premier Chinese school in Malaya, Chen also played an influential role in improving the overall quality of Chinese education in the region. While Chung Ling was already a pioneer among Chinese schools, Chen saw the need to modernize Chinese education through collaboration with colonial offices in Malaya as well as uniting with other educationists to form a greater support network for each other. During his term of office, he established relationships with Chinese schools in Southeast Asia and often utilized his holidays to visit other schools to learn about their development and updates.<sup>57</sup>

His role grew in August 1934 when a meeting was held by the Chinese Consulate with all principals of Chinese schools in Penang and Kedah states. A committee of eleven was elected to study the issues and concerns of Overseas Chinese Education. David Chen was nominated to help standardize the curriculum for Chinese schools.<sup>58</sup> David Chen led

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>57</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 61.

<sup>58</sup> Ye, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Shi Gao*, 45.



a group of school principals to Nanjing and Shanghai to observe the development of local primary and secondary schools in 1937. He was then invited to address the Penang Teachers' Association to share an insightful overview on education in China.<sup>59</sup> Chen presented a brief history of modern education development as part of the Republic's New Culture. He delivered this speech at the peak of the Sino-Japanese war, highlighting how the Japanese invasion in China had damaged major institutions and caused the standstill of almost all educational enterprises.<sup>60</sup> The event as such did not just demonstrate Chen's effort to connect with non-Chinese stream schools led by the colonial office, but also indicated Chen's ability to influence perceptions of Chinese schools in general.

The Federation of Malaya and Singapore government set up a consultative committee on Chinese education (华校咨询委员会) in 1948, on which David Chen and other school principals were key members. One of the first important tasks attempted by the committee was to review and standardize Chinese text books for upper secondary section. Chen was of the opinion that the Chinese syllabi should be revamped radically, considering recent developments and other practical concerns. He proposed the task should be led by specialists who would consider both history and geography of China and the Malayan situations as part of the syllabus. In 1951, Chung Ling's teachers pioneered an effort to edit and publish its own Chinese textbooks, integrating both Chinese classical studies and modern language components. This effort is a pragmatic adaptation to

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<sup>59</sup> President of Penang Teachers' Association was Mr P.F. Howitt during that time, the speech was delivered on July 15 1938,

<sup>60</sup> David Chen, "Education in China in the Recent Past," *Chen Chongen Xiaozhang Yu Nan Wushi Zhounian Jinian Zhuanju* 陈充恩校长遇难五十周年纪念专辑, 2003.

counter learning difficulties amongst students, as well as improving Chinese teaching in general.<sup>61</sup>

David Chen also contributed greatly to lobbying for Chinese school graduates to be accepted into University of Malaya after its establishment in 1949. On May 22 1950, he attended a consultation meeting held by the University of Malaya to discuss qualification of Chinese school applicants. Chen submitted a memorandum to the University of Malaya during this meeting, proposing that Chinese school graduates should be given equal opportunity to attempt entrance examinations. He went further to demand that Chinese school graduates with excellent achievement in Senior Cambridge Examination should be accepted into the university irrespective of their performance in English subjects. Chen proposed for those students to complete additional credits in advanced English upon admission. Chen's proposal highlighted the need for more Chinese school graduates to receive tertiary education within Malaya. Many prominent Chung Ling alumni furthered their education in University of Malaya in the following decades, and contributed to the society across different arenas.<sup>62</sup>

In March 1951, Chen visited England with then Management Committee member, Zhong Sen (钟森). After several months of research on the English secondary education system, he published his observations and thoughts in a lengthy article.<sup>63</sup> He pointed out some critical challenges of Malaysian Chinese Education, and proposed some concrete

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<sup>61</sup> For more details on Chinese textbook related matters, see Ye, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Shi Gao*, 45.

<sup>62</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 95-96.

<sup>63</sup> Chen, "The Secondary Education in England 英国的中等教育." (Published originally in *Nanyang Siang Pao* 南洋商报, October 4 1951)

solutions: firstly, to upgrade physical facilities in order to strengthen modern science education; secondly, to reform the remuneration scheme for Chinese school teachers through a structured compensation program in order to resolve retention issues commonly faced by Chinese schools; lastly, to create a wholesome education system, balancing both academic training and character building.<sup>64</sup>



**Figure 7:** David Chen (*left*), Wu Teh Yao (*right*) and Zhong Sen (*middle*) in England (1951)

To materialize such missions, Chen and his team of teachers introduced extra-curricular activities and sports into Chung Ling's syllabus. Chen also introduced a series of campaigns to cultivate moral and disciplinary values among teachers and students.<sup>65</sup> This

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 46–109; 203–283.

could be seen from Chen's introduction of *The Ten Commandments of Chung Ling* (钟灵中学学生的十大信条), which articulated an ideal ethical code for students:

Students are well-disciplined.  
Students respect their elders.  
Students are sincere.  
Students are hardworking.  
Students are courteous.  
Students are courageous.  
Students are clean.  
Students are friendly.  
Students are optimistic.  
Students are self-improving.<sup>66</sup>

David Chen was also aware of the political progress of Malaya within the high tide of decolonization in the early 1950s. He envisioned that Malaya would gain independence and would thus soon need much young talent in its nation-building path. To this end, Chen advocated reassessing the functions of education to consider the practical concerns of the nation. Chen repeatedly emphasized the importance of reviewing and modifying the secondary syllabus in order to upgrade natural science education, as well as to increase English and Chinese language proficiencies among graduates. Most significantly, he also proposed to prepare graduates without the opportunity to pursue tertiary education for commercial and technical career pathways.<sup>67</sup> Chung Ling officially introduced a commerce stream into its upper secondary division in 1950. Chen perceived that Southeast Asia was already the heartland of overseas Chinese business, so the offering of relevant courses such as accounting, typing, and business

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<sup>66</sup> The Ten Commandments are also referred to as “Article of Faith” on Chung Ling High School’s website ([www.clhs.edu.my](http://www.clhs.edu.my)); At present, the Ten Commandments are still cited extensively in school publications, student guide book and exercise booklets.

<sup>67</sup> Chen, “The Secondary Education in England 英国的中等教育”; Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 97.

studies in school was both timely and pragmatic.<sup>68</sup> Students of the commerce stream were required to acquire London College of Commerce (LCC) certification. Chung Ling was a pioneer in accomplishing such progressive educational reform among other Malayan schools.<sup>69</sup>

In the 1950s, Chung Ling was already the premier Chinese school in Malaya. On top of Chen's effort in shaping Chung Ling's future, he also played an important role in the formation of Penang Chinese School Teachers' Association (CSTA), and the United Chinese School Teachers' Association (UCSTA). He was elected as the first president of UCSTA when Penang CSTA was chosen to be the first Presiding Unit of the UCSTA. In his short tenure as the president of UCSTA, he aimed to advance the status of Chinese education in Malaya, as well as to improve the welfare of all Chinese school teachers.<sup>70</sup>

David Chen's term of office came to a dramatic end when he was assassinated on February 4, 1952. His term as the first president of UCSTA sustained for less than two months. Chen was accorded a funeral by the community in recognition of his deeds and achievements during his service for Chung Ling.

Waung Yoong Nien, who had taught in Chung Ling since 1937, became David Chen's successor after his eventful death. Waung remained in this position until his retirement in 1970. Waung continued Chen's ambitious plan to rapidly expand the physical facilities. He oversaw large-scale construction to fruition in 1954, which included a dining hall with a capacity of 800 people, a new hostel building to house 500

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<sup>68</sup> David Chen, "序", *Zhong Ling zhongxue 钟灵中学*, *Chung Ling School Magazine 《钟灵中学校刊》* 复兴第三号, 三十周年纪念特刊, 63.

<sup>69</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 槟城钟灵中学校史论集*, 93-04.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-99.

students from outstations, as well as expansion and renovation projects for office, library and labs. Like his predecessor David Chen, he was also president of the Penang CSTA for several years.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Waung Yoong Nien (汪永年) was born in Shagnai in 1905. He obtained double-degree in arts and law. He came to Malaya in 1938 and joined Chung Ling as teacher. During the Japanese Occupation in Malaya, Waung was also hiding as a farmer in Cameron Highlands. He was appointed Head of Curriculum in 1946; after David Chen's assassination, he was appointed Acting Principal and later as principal in 1956. See Ye, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Shi Gao*, 117–118.

**CHAPTER III**  
**CHUNG LING AND DECOLONIZATION IN MALAYA: A HISTORIC**  
**BARGAIN**

**The Dilemma of “Conforming Schools”**

*Decolonization and Chinese Schools*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the British colonial administration introduced the conception of the Malayan Union to unify the Malay Peninsular under a single government so as to simplify administration and ensure military security.<sup>72</sup> The proposed union would transfer the sovereignty of the sultans to the British crown and absorb the autonomy of individual Malay states unto itself. Most significantly, under the Malayan Union, the non-Malays would enjoy the same privileges as native Malays, such as obtaining citizenship. Although the Malayan Union treaties were signed by all sultans, there was strong opposition from the Malays to the provision. Soon after the Malayan Union was introduced, Malay organizations quickly organized into a mass movement that astounded British officials in 1946 – the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) was established to spearhead the opposition. The Malayan Union and the formation of UMNO marked a watershed in the history of Malay national consciousness that ignited a growing sentiment of Malayanization.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The Malayan Union was a federation of the Malay states and the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca. In pre-war years, British control over Malayan peninsula was segregated between many Malay Monarchs with different legislatures, judicial systems, police forces and civil services. Singapore was excluded from the Malayan Union because the British still considered it as an important naval and military base.

<sup>73</sup> Detailed accounts on British planning for the Malayan Union, see C.M. Turnbull, “British Planning for Post-war Malaya”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 5, 2 (1974): 239-54; Mohammed Noordin Sopiee,

In March 1948 the Federation of Malaya officially replaced the Malayan Union. With the Federation agreement, the sovereignty of the Sultans was restored, state governments regained jurisdiction over some important areas such as land. Special rights for Malays were reinstated and Malay was recognized as an official language alongside English. Of special relevance to this discussion was the subtle shift in the power dynamic: henceforth in all their political decisions in the peninsular, the British had to consider Malay opinion, as represented by UMNO, before that of any other community.<sup>74</sup> Tan Liok Ee's study has shown how this new political climate after the Second World War was complicating the planning of national education controlled by the British, and left Chinese schools 'paradoxically confronted by the threat of exclusion from the national system of education being proposed by the British'.<sup>75</sup>

The British colonial government started to reorganize the education system to serve as the crucible of the nation building process when decolonization after the Second World War was deemed inevitable. Within such political circumstances in Malaya, the political and national orientations of the Chinese schools were becoming increasingly incompatible with the local development. Immediately after the Second World War, the KMT rekindled its ties with the Chinese school network through rehabilitation effort. In addition, the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) also resumed its activities, and soon rose in rebellion to seek independence through armed struggles. The CPM had always had links with the Chinese Communist Party, and such development caused further

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*From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysian Region, 1945-1965*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1976, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Lee, *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia*, 45-51.

<sup>75</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 42.



unease in the ruling circles in the peninsular.<sup>76</sup> As the struggle intensified, the authority proclaimed a state of Emergency in the country and banned all radical organizations. The communist uprising brought great suffering to the Chinese schools in Malaya: many suspected Chinese individuals were detained, punished, and deported throughout the period. Many Chinese schools were closed down. The government also introduced the Registration of Schools Law in early 1950.<sup>77</sup> Discussions about localizing the Chinese schools and reorienting them away from China and toward Malaya, began to surface.

In July 1951, the British colonial government promulgated the Barnes Report. The report recommended the establishment of a single-type national primary school open to students of all races. This recommendation was underpinned by the objective to build a common Malayan nationality by reorganizing the existing segregated schools on a new inter-racial basis. The national schools were bilingual schools that used Malay and English concurrently as the main media of instructions.<sup>78</sup> The Barnes Committee was formed by a group of European officials and Malay educationists, and was criticized by the Chinese community for its lack of consultation and representation.<sup>79</sup> Prior to the Barnes Report, the Central Advisory Committee on Education produced a proposal by M.

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<sup>76</sup> The CPM had been a wartime ally of the British, and helped organized resistance against the Japanese. The CPM was outlawed and continued its armed struggle from jungle bases, and heavily influenced the Chinese community to support them. Detailed accounts on CPM and the Emergency, see Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Masked Comrades: A Study of the Communist United Front in Malaya, 1945-1948*, (Singapore: Times Books International, 1979) and C. F Yong, *The Origins of Malayan Communism* (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1997).

<sup>77</sup> Zheng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi* 马来西亚华文教育发展史, Vol.3, 70–77.

<sup>78</sup> Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Committee on Malay Education* (Council Paper No. 23 of 1951); usually referred to as the Barnes Report.

<sup>79</sup> For more responses and critiques on the Barnes Report by Chinese community, see Liangshu Zheng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi*, Di 1 ban. (Jilongpo: Malaixiya Hua xiao jiao shi hui zong hui, 1998), Vol.3, Chapter 11.

R. Holgate, known as Holgate Report. In this report, it was suggested that English should be used as the only medium of instructions in secondary schools. The Holgate Report received strong opposition by the Malay and Chinese communities, thus it was subsequently rejected.<sup>80</sup>

Witnessing the many lopsided policies being proposed in the face of education restructuring by the colonial government, a need to unite all CSTAs at the district and state levels was deemed crucial in safeguarding the interests of Chinese education. In August 1951, all CSTA representatives in peninsular Malaya met in Kuala Lumpur to discuss implications and responses to the Barnes Report. In this meeting, the Malacca, Penang and Kuala Lumpur CSTAs were tasked to draft a charter for an umbrella organization. The UCSTA was finally established in December 1951 to garner the support of the Chinese school teachers and the Chinese community in relation to educational matters.<sup>81</sup> As stated in its Inaugural Manifesto, UCSTA aimed to promote Chinese culture and defend Chinese education, to improve Chinese education through co-operation with the government, and to safeguard the interests and improve the working conditions of the Chinese School teachers.<sup>82</sup>

The reorganization of the education system was complicated when the Fenn-Wu Report, led by two experts recruited from the United States, Dr. William Fenn and Dr.

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<sup>80</sup> Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Committee on Malay Education* (Council Paper No. 29 of 1950); usually referred to as the Holgate Report.

<sup>81</sup> Details on the formation of the UCSTA, see Jiaozong Jiaoyu Yanjiu Zhongxin 教总教育研究中心. *Jiaozong 33nian 教总 33 年*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: UCSTA, 1987, 6-13

<sup>82</sup> The Inaugural Manifesto of UCSTA, from Jiaozong Jiaoyu Yanjiu Zhongxin 教总教育研究中心. *Jiaozong 33nian 教总 33 年*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: UCSTA, 1987, 12-13

Wu Teh Yao, was released shortly after the Barnes Report.<sup>83</sup> The Fenn-Wu Report supported the teaching of English and Malay in all schools, but was also sympathetic towards Chinese education. The report also went against the “restrictive imposition of one or two languages”, and tried to demonstrate how multilingualism could contribute effectively towards building up a Malayan citizenry. In essence, the Fenn-Wu Report called for Chinese schools to be supported in evolving into “truly Malayan schools” and be “equal partners with other schools” in the nation building process for the Federation. The Fenn-Wu Report also called for the government to increase its subsidies to Chinese schools by 100 percent in 1952 and by another 100 percent in the following year.<sup>84</sup> It is also worth noting that, Dr. Wu Teh Yao was an alumnus of Chung Ling who spent his formative years in Penang prior to his education and career abroad.<sup>85</sup> As part of their survey leading up to the completion of the report, the Fenn-Wu Committee visited Chung Ling and found that the Upper Secondary classes were already using English textbooks for all subjects except Chinese language and literature.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> William Fenn was an American educationist with extensive experience in China, he spoke fluent Chinese and taught in many Chinese universities; Wu Teh Yao was an official from the United Nations at that point.

<sup>84</sup> Federation of Malaya, *Report of a Mission Invited by the Federation Government to Study the Problem of the Education of the Chinese in Malaya: Chinese Schools and the Education of Chinese Malaysians* (Council Paper No. 35 of 1951), henceforth referred to as the Fenn-Wu Report.

<sup>85</sup> Wu Teh Yao graduated from Chung Ling High School in 1936. Under the recommendation of Principal David Chen, he was admitted to Nanking University (now known as Nanjing University) for a course of Bachelor of Arts. He then attended Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University; Wu obtained a doctoral degree in political science from Harvard University in 1946. He joined the United Nations and participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. See *40th Anniversary Souvenir Magazine 1965-2005*, Singapore: Chung Ling High School Old Boys' (Singapore) Association, 2005, 35

<sup>86</sup> Fenn-Wu Report



**Figure 8:** The Fenn-Wu Committee visited Chung Ling in 1952

The divergent findings and proposals of the two reports placed the British colonial government in a difficult position. Therefore, the Central Advisory Committee on Education (CACE) was formed to examine two reports. The CACE Report favored the establishment of national schools recommended by the Barnes Report. Soon after the report was submitted, a legislation followed to cover all aspects of education policy in the Federation and endorsed the establishment of national schools. The legislation was termed as the 1952 Education Ordinance.<sup>87</sup>

The opposition climaxed in November 1952, when representatives of UCSTA and school management committees met together with those from the Malayan Chinese

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<sup>87</sup> For events surrounding the reports and Education Ordinance 1952, see Lee, Ting Hui. *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia : the Struggle for Survival*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011, chapter 2.

Association (MCA) to tackle issue of the new salary scheme for Chinese school teachers. Tan Cheng Lock, then president of MCA, took a bold position on Chinese education for his party by emphasizing that ‘a man’s native speech is like his shadow, inseparable from his personality’. He then stated that the MCA would fully support the development of Chinese education in the Federation.<sup>88</sup> A very significant event to emerge out of the turmoil was the agreement to set up a joint organization of the three parties to work for a better protection and advancement of Chinese education. In April 1953, the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee (MCACECC) was established to request the revision of clauses in the 1952 Education Ordinance that were deemed harmful to Chinese education. The MCACECC also asked the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), a political party which represented the interests of the Indian community, to join hands to combat the Education Ordinance.<sup>89</sup> Tan Cheng Lock also presented a Memorandum on Chinese Education in the Federation of Malaya to the high commissioner in May 1953.<sup>90</sup> In August 1954, The United Chinese School Committee’s Association (UCSCA) was born in the turmoil of the 1952 Education Ordinance. Efforts by the British colonial government to establish national schools that used Malay and English as media of instruction to serve as the crucible of the nation building process were strongly contested by Chinese educationists affiliated to both UCSTA (*Jiao Zong* 教总) and the UCSCA (*Dong Zong* 董总). Together, they are popularly known as the acronym of *Dong Jiao*

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<sup>88</sup> Tan Cheng Lock, “Speech to Chinese Teachers’ Conference”, November 9, 1952. *Tan Cheng Lock Papers*, ISEAS, Singapore, TCL 26.14

<sup>89</sup> Lee, *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia*, 66–69.

<sup>90</sup> Tan Cheng Lock, *Memorandum on Chinese Education in the Federation of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur: Art Printers, 1954

*Zong* (董教总) thereafter. The two associations assumed the role of a pressure group to safeguard the rights of the Chinese to propagate their language and culture through the provision of Chinese mother tongue education.

### **Chung Ling as the First “Conforming School”: Pioneer or Traitor?**

1955 was a crucial year in the Malayan political sphere as the local leaders were paving paths for self-governance. Fifty-two out of a total of 92 Federal Legislative Council seats were open for elections for the first time by the colonial administration.<sup>91</sup> The Alliance, a coalition of UMNO, MCA and MIC, won majority seats in the elections held on 27 July 1955 and formed the first locally elected government.<sup>92</sup> Prior to the elections, the Alliance discussed some difficult issues in order to reach compromises – education was undeniably one of the heated topics. The Alliance leaders met with UCSTA and UCSCA to understand their positions concerning Chinese language and education.<sup>93</sup>

A month after the elections, the Razak Committee was appointed to examine the existing education policy of the Federation and to formulate suitable alterations.<sup>94</sup> While

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<sup>91</sup> More discussions on Malayan self-governance and 1952 election are available on K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965); For detailed discussion on MCA’s involvement in 1952 election and after, see Chapter 7-8 in Pek Koon Heng, *Chinese Politics in Malaysia: A History of the Malaysian Chinese Association*, East Asian Historical Monographs (Singapore ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>92</sup> The Alliance (Perikatan) was a political coalition in Malaya founded in 1951. The Alliance is credited with winning Malayan independence from British rule on 31 August 1957 and the formation of the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963. Barisan Nasional (National Front; commonly abbreviated as BN) formed in 1973 as the successor to the Alliance.

<sup>93</sup> Detailed discussions on how education issues are crucial in the Malayan politics, see Kua, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia*; Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*.

<sup>94</sup> The Razak Committee was named after Dato Abdul Razak Husein, then Minister of Education who headed the committee.

the Razak Committee was progressing in its discussions and research, there was a concurrent development between the Alliance government and the Colonial Office to reach consensus towards independence. The Razak Report, accepted by the Legislative Council in May 1956, recommended providing vernacular education at the primary level, while secondary level would use English and Malay. Essentially, the Razak Report urged the formation of a single system of national education with single system of evaluation for all. It was also made explicit that there was an eventual objective of making Malay the main medium of instruction:

“...the ultimate objective of educational policy in this country must be to bring together the children of all races under a national education system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction”<sup>95</sup>

The Razak Report left many points of ambiguity for interpretation. It did not address the medium of instruction in the long term although it recommended vernacular secondary schools begin conforming to the national policy by first adopting a shared curriculum. The report also recommended the completion of Malayan Certificate of Education (MCE) as mandated examinations for all secondary school graduates; however the language in which these examinations were to be conducted was not specified.<sup>96</sup>

### ***The First National Type Secondary School***

In Chung Ling, David Chen’s policies were continued after his death by his successor and long-term colleague, Waung Yoong Nien. Waung aspired to make Chung Ling the equal of the Penang Free School, the oldest and the best known English

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<sup>95</sup> Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Education Committee 1956*, Kuala Lumpur, 1956. Cited henceforth as the Razak Report.

<sup>96</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 176–177.

secondary school in the country. From Chen and Waung's perspectives, it was not essential for a Chinese school to teach entirely in Chinese.<sup>97</sup> In their view, the mission of Chinese education was to produce students with good academic and career prospects. In addition, schools should preserve Chinese cultural values, and continue to teach Chinese language and literature. Chung Ling's long tradition of using English could be traced back to Gu Yinming's time as its first principal for secondary section (1923-1927).<sup>98</sup> The emphasis on English and other practical subjects was continued and thrived during David Chen's term of office.<sup>99</sup> Chen and Waung had both received bilingual education in China. As discussed previously, bilingual policy in Chung Ling was proposed during David Chen's term of office. Chen set his eyes on modernizing Chung Ling to be on par or even better than English schools. He maintained a good relationship with the colonial office and attempted to set Chung Ling as the pioneer in modern Chinese education.<sup>100</sup>

As part of Waung's ambition to grow the school to compete with other English schools, one important strategy was to employ more graduate teachers. This required substantially higher expenditures for teachers' salaries than could be sustained by the public donations model. Waung felt that the constant need for the Chinese school

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>98</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>99</sup> For Gu Yinming's policies and contribution to Chung Ling, see Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 7-8.

<sup>100</sup> Chen's relationship with the British officers from colonial office was apparent from his close involvement in several efforts promoted by the Federation government, such as reassessing and revising text books with Malayan outlook for Chinese schools. The school was frequently visited by colonial officers; for instance, Victor Purcell (then Straits Settlement Chinese Affairs Officer) officiated the school expansion in 1932, and M.G.L. Bayliss (then Head of Education in Penang) helped with planning of Chung Ling's new building in 1950s. See *Chen Chongen Xiaozhang Yu Nan Wushi Zhounian Jinian Zhuanju 陈充恩校长遇难五十周年纪念专辑*, 2003, 217-218.



principals and teachers to be involved in donation drives was a drain on their time and energy.<sup>101</sup>

The series of events leading up to Chung Ling's "conforming" to the new education policy could be traced back to a year before the Razak Report was released. The colonial government had offered full assistance to Chung Ling and ignited a controversial uproar within the Chinese education network. On 6 July 1955, Waung Yoong Nien made a sudden announcement to the staff and students of Chung Ling that its Management Committee was negotiating for the increased aid from the government which was usually given to English schools. Three days after Waung's announcement, Ong Keng Seng, the chairman of Chung Ling's Management Committee issued a press statement to explain that the school had been approaching the Education Department for more aid since January 1953 due to financial difficulties. The press statement also mentioned that Chung Ling was being considered as a "special case" due to its reputation. The announcement and decision came as a surprise because both Waung and Ong had been closely involved in the MCACECC's unsuccessful discussions with the colonial government to increase aid to Chinese secondary schools. Waung was then the president of Penang CSTA, while Ong was the chairman of Penang CSCA – both were aware of the MCACECC and UCSTA's position. The announcement indicated that Chung Ling was striking out on its own and breaking ranks with other Chinese schools.

The students responded to the announcement immediately, by setting up a committee to survey student opinion and submit a memorandum to the Management Committee. The students also volunteered to pay higher fees to help the school with

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<sup>101</sup> Ye, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Shi Gao*, 122.

financial need, urging the school not to receive special aid from the colonial government. They argued Chung Ling should not abandon other Chinese schools, but rather, should demonstrate “a commitment to defend Overseas Chinese education’s survival”.<sup>102</sup> The teachers in Chung Ling also submitted a separate memorandum to the Management Committee, urging it to stop any negotiations with the colonial government.<sup>103</sup> The controversy intensified when twelve students from various Chinese secondary schools in Penang were arrested on 12 August, seven of whom were from Chung Ling. The reason for their arrests was known to be their possible involvement in “subversive activities”.<sup>104</sup> Thousands of students in Chung Ling refused to take their examinations after the arrests were made public, signaling serious tensions between the authorities and students.<sup>105</sup> Tan Liok Ee’s research revealed content from a confidential report written by the Superintendent of Chinese Schools on these arrests made to serve as a warning to other students. The operation was code-named “Liberty Lightship”, directed by the Special Branch of colonial administration to investigate radicalization of Chung Ling students. The Director of Education issued a circular to all schools advising against their admission to schools after they were expelled.<sup>106</sup> All this was not public knowledge during that time.

As stipulated in the 1952 Education Ordinance that was still in force during 1955, “conforming schools” were required to use either English or Malay as the medium of

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<sup>102</sup> Zheng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi* 马来西亚华文教育发展史, Vol. 3, 399–400.

<sup>103</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957* 槟城钟灵中学校史论集, 40.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 402.

<sup>105</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957* 槟城钟灵中学校史论集, 403–404.

<sup>106</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 220.

instruction.<sup>107</sup> In 1950s, Chung Ling was already using English for mathematics and science subjects for lower secondary classes; while history, geography, and civics were being taught in Chinese. Its upper secondary division was using English for all subjects apart from Chinese language.<sup>108</sup> Several implications of becoming a “conforming school” included making it compulsory for students to sit for Cambridge School Certificate examination by 1957, as well as complying with various government specifications on fees, syllabuses and curriculum, number of classes, and age limits of students.<sup>109</sup> The government would also influence the recruitment of staff, which was not to be restricted only to Chinese. Also, the staff would be placed in the New Salary Scheme determined by the government.<sup>110</sup> Waung, Ong and Chung Ling soon became targets of criticism after the announcements were made. Many Chinese educationists and newspapers criticized the move as a “sell-out”<sup>111</sup> Although Waung assured the teachers and students that Chung Ling would retain its curriculum and administrative practices with the additional aid, the teachers and students felt that this meant the school would lose its “Chinese identity”.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 62–63.

<sup>108</sup> See Chung Ling School Magazines (1948-1955)

<sup>109</sup> The Chinese schools in general had never limited students by age nor had they ever rejected students for being ‘too old’.

<sup>110</sup> For a fuller discussion on staff salary in discussion, see Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 63–76.

<sup>111</sup> The word, *chu mai* (出卖), was observed repeatedly throughout commentaries; also see Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 364–446; Zheng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi 马来西亚华文教育发展史*, Vol.3, 392–442.

<sup>112</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 222.

In August 1955 the Alliance government had decided to silence the controversy by announcing that the issue of full assistance to Chung Ling had been set aside, as elections were approaching.<sup>113</sup> As mentioned earlier, the need to address the issue of national education policy was tackled by the Razak Committee. The proposals in the Razak Report were implemented rapidly soon after its release. On 22 June 1956, Dato Abdul Razak had decided that Chung Ling would be the first Chinese secondary school to receive full assistance because it conformed with the criteria listed in the new education policy.

Needless to say, when this offer was received by the Management Committee of Chung Ling, Waung and Ong were criticized again. The Management Committee of Chung Ling attempted to defend its rationale for accepting the full assistance given by the government. In a long statement issued by Ong Keng Seng, he explained that the decision was unanimous within the Management Committee itself, pointed out that Chung Ling had been practicing the bilingual policy initiated by David Chen for more than two decades, and received great achievement.<sup>114</sup> Waung on the other hand, was cast as the villain by the teachers, students, community and his fellow colleagues at Penang CSTA. Many critical statements were made against him, attacking him as a man who had betrayed the cause of Chinese education.<sup>115</sup> Waung later resigned from his position as president of the Penang CSTA and UCSTA.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 225–226.

<sup>115</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 364–446.

<sup>116</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 226–227.

### *The 11.23 Student Protest and Its Aftermath*

The complex controversy about Chung Ling accepting government aid should also be understood alongside the history of radical political activism in Malaya.<sup>117</sup> After David Chen's sudden assassination in February 1952, there had been four other killings involving Chung Ling teachers and students.<sup>118</sup> Two youths were arrested and charged; another ex-student of Chung Ling, who was identified as an active member of the Malayan Communist Party in Penang, shot himself after being chased by the police. The government claimed to have clamped down a Communist cell in March 1953, and arrested some leaders who were believed to be responsible for the deaths.<sup>119</sup> After Chen's death, the school management was especially concerned about the increasingly radical activities among students. Waung and the Chung Ling Management Committee hoped for the government to be more involved in tightening the surveillance on political activism, which was believed to be a serious problem beyond the school's control.<sup>120</sup> This is potentially why Waung and the Management Committee started collaborating more closely with the colonial offices, and later took in British advisers such as Baxter and

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<sup>117</sup> For a comprehensive discussions on the Malayan Communism and radical activism, see Yong, *The Origins of Malayan Communism*.

<sup>118</sup> A Chung Ling teacher, Boey Eng Eng, was shot dead in October 1949; In October 1951, Tan Chong Gak, who was the acting principal then, was killed; another two Chung Ling students were also died between 1950-1952. See Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 227.

<sup>119</sup> *Chen Chongen Xiaozhang Yu Nan Wushi Zhounian Jinian Zhuanju 陈充恩校长遇难五十周年纪念专辑*, 41-112.

<sup>120</sup> Waung and his disciplinary team were imposing very strict restrictions on student activities, as seen in the school magazines (1953-1955); also see discussions in Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 227-228.

Fisher Short.<sup>121</sup> Eventually, Waung and the Chung Ling Management Committee were convinced that receiving assistance from the government would be a rational step to gain better control over the students.

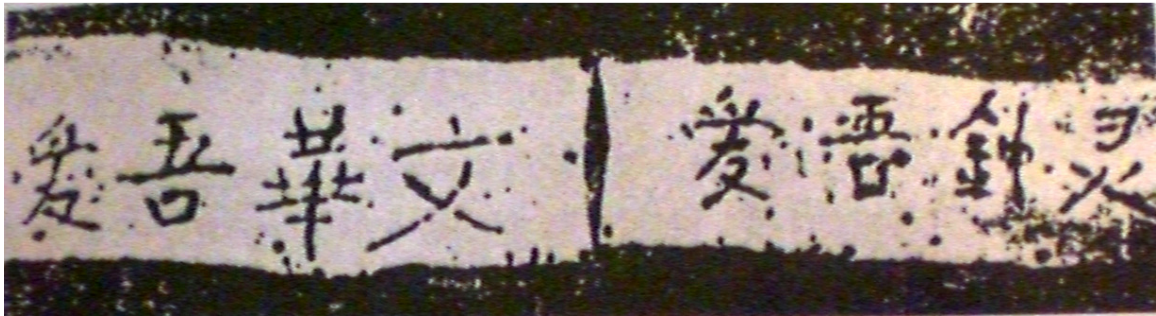
On the morning of 23 November 1956, a major student demonstration was declared to boycott classes, against the school authorities on the issue of special aid and multiple other issues: rights to hold class meetings which were removed; general anger toward Waung, discipline master and the British advisor; and harsh punishments on students who broke the rules concerning student activities such as closing down the student publication, *Xuebao* (学报). The riot police were called in and fired a few rounds of tear-gas at the students, and an immediate search of the school premises was done by Special Branch. The school was closed under Emergency Regulations for several days and was guarded by police and riot squad team. This brutal crackdown on student protests was an unfortunate event spinning out of control, when the authority was clouded with suspicion about the student activism.

The Management Committee members and teachers were unhappy with the hasty and violent suppressions done by the police and riot teams, resulting chaotic situations in school for weeks – in particular, hundreds of outstation students were forced to leave their hostels without places to go. In an open letter to the public issued two days after the demonstration, the students expressed their anger and shame at the manner in which Chung Ling had “betrayed the cause of Chinese education”. Two well-respected Chinese teachers in Chung Ling were dismissed by the Management Committee after they

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<sup>121</sup> Baxter was commonly known as Bai Luosan (白乐山), referring to the staff list in the 1953 Chung Ling School Magazine; Fisher-Short was appointed as “education adviser” to Chung Ling on 5 September 1955 to replace Baxter – both were paid from Federal Funds.

expressed sympathy with the students, and publicly criticized the school management for being harsh and unjust. The November 23 demonstration at Chung Ling became widely known as “11.23 student demonstration”, and sparked a series of student movements throughout the 1950s.<sup>122</sup> Sixty-eight Chung Ling students were expelled from the school after the 11.23 event. Which upset many other students and the public. On April 2 in the following year, the students organized a joint boycott with other Chinese secondary schools in Penang, which was cracked down in another round of fierce suppression by the authorities.<sup>123</sup>



**Figure 9:** The students hung up cloth banner with the characters “Love our Chinese Language, Love our Chung Ling” written in blood drawn from their fingers (1956)

Disturbed by the escalation of the events, the Chung Ling’s board of directors and benefactors met on April 30 to reconsider the school’s position. At the same time, they were also informed that a letter was received from the Education Department stating that all funds paid by the government must be refunded if the school decided to withdraw

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<sup>122</sup> All related movements were recorded in this recent publication done by the former activists, see Wenbo Zheng, ed., *Er Shi Shi Ji Wu Shi Nian Dai Xue Sheng Yun Dong Shi Liao Hui Bian : Ji Nian 1957 Nian “11.14” Quan Guo Hua Xiao Xue Chao Wu Shi Zhou Nian* 二十世纪五十年代学生运动史料汇编：纪念1957年“11.14”全国华校学潮五十周年 (Kuala Lumpur 吉隆坡: Quan Ma Hua wen zhong xue sheng han wei Hua jiao yun dong wu shi zhou nian gong wei hui 全马华文中学生捍卫华教运动五十周年工委, 2010).

<sup>123</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 槟城钟灵中学校史论集*, 428–429.

from the previous agreement.<sup>124</sup> Amidst the messy developments of 1956, the director for education, E.M.F. Payne, issued a circular to all Chinese secondary schools on December 29, informing them of the twenty conditions that entitled full assistance as “National Type Secondary Schools”, advising them to follow Chung Ling’s footsteps.<sup>125</sup>

UCSTA, UCSCA and the MCACECC stepped in to counter Payne’s offer and called such offer and urged Chinese schools not to accept the conditions. Just before the issues were to be resolved officially, Malaya became independent on August 31, 1957. The Alliance government, like the colonial administration, urged the Chinese schools to conform to the conditions which were not much different from Payne’s stipulations. The administration intended for Chung Ling to be the prototype for other Chinese secondary schools.<sup>126</sup> Chung Ling, the biggest, and the most prestigious Chinese secondary school officially became the first to be absorbed into the government’s National Type Secondary School (NTSS) structure. Subsequently, more Chinese schools followed Chung Ling’s example and convert to NTSS, subsequently in 1961 a total of 54 NTSS were found in Malaya.<sup>127</sup>

Chung Ling’s conversion to NTSS in 1956 is still remembered with bitterness by the expelled students and UCSTA leaders.<sup>128</sup> The Chung Ling events were certainly an instrumental victory for the British officials in the Education Department. Regardless of

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<sup>124</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 235.

<sup>125</sup> Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 372–382.

<sup>126</sup> Zheng, *Malaixiya Hua Wen Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Shi 马来西亚华文教育发展史*, Vol. 3, 418–433.

<sup>127</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 275.

<sup>128</sup> Apparent in recollections, memoirs and critiques recorded in Chen, *Bincheng Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Xiao Shi Lun Ji, 1917-1957 檳城钟灵中学校史论集*, 362–446; Zheng, *Er Shi Shi Ji Wu Shi Nian Dai Xue Sheng Yun Dong Shi Liao Hui Bian*.



what one's judgment might be on the Chung Ling's episode, we must not forget that the school was also trapped in the global Cold War climate. The British colonial office was closely monitoring radical actions in Malaya and Singapore, and deliberately singled out Chinese schools in their clampdown on Communism and other leftist activities.

In retrospect, the controversy over Chung Ling not only illustrates historical significance in the development of Chinese education in Malaysia, it also demonstrates the anxiety and dilemma faced by the Chinese language learning and education in general.

Tan Liok Ee has aptly pointed out the underlying paradox of such debate between

“Conforming Schools and the other schools that refused to conform:

Can the Chinese schools bring their students into the educational main-stream which is essential for their socio-economic advancement and still uphold the use of Chinese as the medium of instructions when that is not an official language of the country? The crux of the dilemma is: social mobility versus cultural attachments.

Chung Ling had opted for bilingual policy since the 1930s, evidence of its acknowledgement of this dilemma. In the 1950s, the Chung Ling's leadership was labeled as “collaborationists”, working with the colonial government against the interests of Chinese education.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 236–237.

## CHAPTER IV

### LOCATING “CHINESENESS” IN MALAYSIAN CHINESE EDUCATION

#### Chinese Education in Plural Society: The Struggle for Survival?

In the contemporary discourse of Chinese education in Malaysia, the question of “Chineseness” is still a haunting theme. The question of Chinese identity is continually being raised, indicating an unresolved problem in defining the nature and characteristics of this attribute. As Wang Gungwu has aptly pointed out, it is a peculiarly difficult challenge, for the overseas Chinese “have never had a concept of identity, only a concept of ‘Chineseness’, or becoming Chinese and of becoming un-Chinese”.<sup>130</sup> Many theoretical concerns have been raised in the field of Chineseness or Chinese identity studies.<sup>131</sup> There is also extensive scholarship explaining the diversities found among the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia or Malaysia specifically, as the varying degrees of cultural identification juxtaposing the national identities.<sup>132</sup> Certain scholars problematize the approaches to overseas Chinese identity studies, by proposing transnational

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<sup>130</sup> Gungwu Wang, “The Study of Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia,” in *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese Since World War II*, ed. Jennifer Cushman and Gungwu Wang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>131</sup> For a fuller discussions on Chinese identity and its theoretical framework, see Rey Chow, *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); Adrian Chan, “On Being Chinese,” in *Power and Identity in the Chinese World Order: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Wang Gungwu*, ed. Gungwu Wang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003).

<sup>132</sup> For instance, Jennifer Cushman and Gungwu Wang, *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese Since World War II* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988); Leo Suryadinata, *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians* (New York; Singapore: St. Martin’s Press; Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1997); Wang, “The Study of Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia.”

frameworks to transcend ethnicity literature, filling the gaps in postcolonial studies and cultural politics.<sup>133</sup>

For the discussions in this thesis, I would like to employ a loose definition of “Chineseness” to contain the subjects of my studies, as well as widening the space to approach the issue of Malaysian Chinese education. This is not to suggest a negligent attitude toward the pioneers in these studies, rather, a conscious choice to reframe the discussions in the contexts that are useful to my studies. “Chineseness” in the following pages encompasses elements of Malayan/Malaysian national and local identity, communal identity as well as cultural identity. Chineseness referred to here, is as ambiguous as the state of mind characteristics of Chinese ethnicity, and even the imaginary Chinese civilization in the past – which are not bounded by the sovereign nation state of China or Malaysia. In the course of my research on Chinese schools, the word “Chineseness” appears as a vague identification on a variety of items, including Chinese ancestry, the usage of Chinese language, Chinese school leadership, Chinese cultural celebrations among others.

A case in point is the fracas over the future of Chinese education discussed in my previous chapters, which arose when the “conforming schools” proposals surfaced during the nation-building era. The issue was arguably the most heated debate in terms of mobility and fear of losing “Chinese identity” and Chineseness if a Chinese school was to

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<sup>133</sup> Relevant studies can be seen in Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini, eds., *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (Routledge, 1996); Allen Chun, “Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity,” *Boundary 2* 23, no. 2 (1996): 111; Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: the Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

accept the conforming conditions.<sup>134</sup> This self-orienting effect inclined the Chinese schools to view any substantial changes to their common practices as threats. In 1957, primary schools teaching in Chinese were absorbed into the national education system along with those teaching in Malay, Tamil and English, as a compromise for national integration. These primary schools shared common syllabi, although not common language.<sup>135</sup> The secondary schools teaching in Chinese faced a dilemma when the 1961 Education Act promulgating the Rahman Talib Report was announced, stipulating that partial government aid should cease from 1 January 1962 while full assistance will be given to those converted to National Type Secondary Schools (NTSS).<sup>136</sup> While Chung Ling and 53 other Chinese secondary schools had little choice but to comply with the NTSS terms due to multiple considerations, some Chinese secondary schools rejected the terms and remained as private Chinese secondary schools.<sup>137</sup> Since the 1970s, the UCSCA actively drew together these 37 private Chinese secondary schools on the peninsular and another 23 schools from Sabah and Sarawak existing outside the national education system to work more closely together. Today, the 60 of them are known under an organized system of Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (ICSS), known as *duzhong* (独中).<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> This anxieties are apparent, as it was repeatedly mentioned in the essays and critiques compiled in Jiaozong Jiaoyu Yanjiu Zhongxin 教总教育研究中心, *Jiaozong 33nian 教总 33 年* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: UCSTA, 1987).

<sup>135</sup> Kua, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia*, 83–86.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 6.

<sup>137</sup> For list of NTSS, see Malaixiya Hua xiao dong shi lian he hui zong hui 马来西亚华校董事联合会总会, *Dong Zong 50 Nain Te Kan : 1954-2004 董总 50 年特刊: 1954-2004* (Kajang, Selangor: Malaixiya Hua xiao dong shi lian he hui zong hui 马来西亚华校董事联合会总会, 2007), 1079–1081.

<sup>138</sup> *Du zhong* is an abbreviation of *duli zhongxue* 独立中学.

The NTSS used English as their main medium of instruction after converting from Chinese-medium teaching schools under the 1961 Education Act. In 1976, the NTSS converted for second time to become institutions which used Malay as their main medium of instruction. Subsequently, in 1996, they were asked to change the title “National Type Secondary Schools” (国民型中学/ *Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan*) to “National Secondary Schools” (国民中学/ *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*) – a policy which stirred up a commotion within the Chinese education network. Many of the schools protested against the change of name.<sup>139</sup> Today, there are more than 110, 000 students and 7,000 teachers in the 78 NTSS throughout Malaysia.<sup>140</sup> Although these schools are still able to provide Chinese lessons and Chinese literature lessons to some extent, the government has been neglecting the development of the schools, especially in the deployment of funds and Chinese language teachers. The appointments of principals and teachers who are not literate in Chinese to NTSS are also regarded as the government’s effort to dilute the Chinese characteristics of these schools.<sup>141</sup>

On the other hand, situations in the ICSS are not all rosy. Funding and sufficient enrolment of students continue to be a regular problem. The managements of the schools are constantly challenged with financial limitations, which take up excessive energy and time to seek for public donations. The teachers’ salaries and welfare are also lower than

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<sup>139</sup> Lee, *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia*, 231–232.

<sup>140</sup> Facts and figures by the Council of SMJK Principals Malaysia are retrieved from “Current Status”, *SMJK Education Portal*, accessed May 1, 2012, [http://smjk.edu.my/smjk\\_status.php](http://smjk.edu.my/smjk_status.php)

<sup>141</sup> Lee, *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia*, 231–232; Tianqi Shen, “Huawen Zhongxue Gaizhi 华文中学改制,” in *Dong Zong 50 Nain Te Kan : 1954-2004 董总 50 年特刊: 1954-2004*, ed. Malaixiya Hua xiao dong shi lian he hui zong hui 马来西亚华校董事联合会总会 (Kajang, Selangor: Malaixiya Hua xiao dong shi lian he hui zong hui 马来西亚华校董事联合会总会, 2007), 423–428.

average teachers in public schools, regardless of their qualifications.<sup>142</sup> Graduates from the ICSS have been decisively marginalized by the national education system: their graduation certificates and are qualification of the Unified Examination Certificate conferred by the UCSCA were not recognized; the graduates were also not eligible to apply to public universities and colleges, and can only resort to private colleges or overseas institutions for tertiary education.<sup>143</sup>

### *The “Hua Zhong” Incident*

The Chinese education movements reemerged in the 1970s, as a response to ethnic polarization and an increasingly tense political atmosphere of state repressions. The *Dong Jiao Zong*, as the defender of Chinese education, since the 1960s, continues to fight until today for Chinese to be recognized as an official language, contesting Malay cultural and language hegemony. The *Dong Jiao Zong* also assumes the role to safeguard interests of ICSS, and is deeply involved in the ongoing struggles to sustain operations and policy-making.<sup>144</sup>

On a separate trajectory, the NTSS are constantly caught in a tight spot between the government’s intentional negligence and misunderstandings from the Chinese

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<sup>142</sup> Kua, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia*, 181–185; Malaixiya Hua xiao dong shi lian he hui zong hui 马来西亚华校董事联合会总会, *Dong Zong 50 Nain Te Kan*, 181–190.

<sup>143</sup> Lee, *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia*, 232–233; Kua, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia*, 113–114.

<sup>144</sup> A detailed account of this development is outside the scope of this thesis, few important anthologies and studies are available. Details about “Chinese Language Movement” as well as the UCSCA and UCSTA’s development, see Jiaozong Jiaoyu Yanjiu Zhongxin 教总教育研究中心, *Jiaozong 33nian 教总33年*; Malaixiya Hua xiao dong shi lian he hui zong hui 马来西亚华校董事联合会总会, *Dong Zong 50 Nain Te Kan*; Malaixiya shao shu min zu mu yu jiao yu yan tao hui. and Kia Soong Kua, *Malaixiya Shao Shu Min Zu Mu Yu Jiao Yu 马来西亚少数民族母语教育* (Selangor, Malaysia: Dong jiao zong jiao yu zhong xin 董教总教育中心, 2003).

community which looks upon them as “traitors” and “turncoats” after decades.<sup>145</sup> Out of discontents and frustrations, the Council of SMJK Principals in Malaysia was formed in 1994 to unite all NTSS (SMJK in Malay) in Malaysia to promote the cause of the 78 NTSS. The Council has been actively lobbying for NTSS to receive more funding, as well as aiming to strengthen the positions of NTSS.<sup>146</sup> In 2004, then president of the Council, Madam Yang Lizhao<sup>147</sup>, proposed to rename the Chinese name of NTSS from “Conforming School” (*Gaizhi Zhongxue* 改制中学) or “National Type” (国民型中学), to “Chinese Language School” (*Huawen Zhongxue* 华文中学, acronym 华中). This announcement provoked a heated debate and objection from the other faction of Chinese educationists, particularly the *Dong Jiao Zong*, protesting that calling NTSS as *Hua Zhong* is confusing their agenda and separate identity, since NTSS lack Chineseness. The criticism was mainly directed toward the eroding Chinese characteristics since adoption of national curriculum and bilingual (or even trilingual) administrative languages – signs of “lack Chineseness”.<sup>148</sup> Despite the objections, the Council persisted on naming the website and education portal as *Hua Zhong* Net (华中网) until today. The incident suggests that the differentiation amongst Chinese educationists and leadership network is

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<sup>145</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3; also see a feature article “华社不关注，政府少照顾，国民型中学如弃婴”，*i-Sinchew 星洲互动*, November 18, 2010, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://www.sinchew-i.com/sciWWW/node/184304?tid=654>

<sup>146</sup> See “Current Status”, *SMJK Education Portal*, accessed May 1, 2012, [http://smjk.edu.my/smjk\\_status.php](http://smjk.edu.my/smjk_status.php)

<sup>147</sup> Madam Yang was formerly the principal of Penang Chinese Girls’ School.

<sup>148</sup> This incident can be observed from commentaries on Chinese media, such as: “改叫华中就可以了吗?”, April 11, 2004, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://fuhaw.blogkaki.net/viewblog-1837>; Tan Ai Boay 陈爱梅, “是馬來校學生?”, *i-Sinchew 星洲互动*, May 10, 2007, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://search.sinchew-i.com/node/62619>; “华教人士：国民型中学叫中学 国民型中学称国中”, *Sinchew Daily 星洲日报*, June 1, 2007, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://mykampung.sinchew.com.my/node/808>.

fundamentally an ongoing challenge since the 1950s. The debates about whether or not *Hua Zhong* should be accepted as part of Malaysian Chinese education system, is essentially an unresolved and extended issue in the postcolonial era.<sup>149</sup>

### **David Chen and Lim Lian Geok: Different Visions, New Relevance**

The history of the Chinese in struggling for a legitimate place in the country (then Malaya) and the history of Chinese education movement cannot be divorced from the work of this man, Lim Lian Geok.  
*The Star*, December 23, 1985

He (David Chen) had done much for Chung Ling and for Chinese education in this country. Although we have lost him, his work in the field of education will remain.  
Ong Keng Seng, February 8, 1952

The ongoing tensions between the two main factions of Chinese Secondary Schools can be traced back to different positions and visions held by Chinese educationists in the past. The debate on Chineseness has always been related to the teaching of Chinese language in Chinese schools. To illuminate this observation, I hope to move beyond the limited contexts of pasts, by engaging in the discussion of memory and adaptations. To this end, I attempt to compare how David Chen and Lim Lian Geok, two crucial leaders of UCSTA, are being remembered by different factions of Chinese educationists and their respective networks. The memorial events related to these two figures will be discussed to present how their past visions and positions are gaining new relevance in the contemporary discourse of Malaysian Chinese education.

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<sup>149</sup> The debate can also be seen from commentaries such as Nan Fang Ke 南方客, “国民型中学的困境”, *i-Sin Chew 星洲互动*, November 18, 2010, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://opinions.sinchew-i.com/node/16532?page=9>; “改叫华中就可以了吗?”, April 11, 2004, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://fuhaw.blogkaki.net/viewblog-1837>



The 1950s and early 1960s were crucial periods in the educational development of Malaysia, which involved the restructuring of the ethnic-based segregated school systems instituted by the British colonial government. This process of restructuring was to facilitate the transition from colonial rule to self- government. It had profound impact on the development of Chinese education as far as the roles of education as a tool for nation building and as a means of social mobility was deeply concerned. David Chen and Lim Lian Geok were both important figures in UCSTA history: both leaders attempted to safeguard the educational interests of Chinese Community. David Chen's term as the founding president of UCSTA lasted for about a month, with his tragic assassination right before a Penang CSTA meeting on February 4, 1952.<sup>150</sup> Chen did not live long enough to witness the Malaysian independence and many other key events in the education development, but his visions for Chinese education were different from his successors such as Lim Lian Geok, who was president of UCSTA from 1954 to 1961.

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<sup>150</sup> See Chapter 2.



**Figure 10:** A rare picture of David Chen (*right*) and Lim Lian Geok (*left*) at UCSTA Meeting (1951)



**Figure 11:** UCSTA Inaugural Committee in 1951. David Chen as the first president (*seated, fourth from the left*), and Lim Lian Geok was also one of the key leaders (*seated second from the left*).

Many years after their passing, David Chen and Lim Lian Geok are still celebrated, but by different fractions of the Chinese community today. Their visions, ideas and thoughts were also widely discussed and remembered. This phenomenon is particularly intriguing because Chen and Lim's representations are still engaging with contemporary discourse about Chinese education in Malaysia. Physical and non-material reminders of their former glory still remain at the heart of the community, and these visible markers have created a strong impression on the consciousness of living people who are fighting for the Chinese education issues. I wish to examine the visions of David Chen and Lim Lian Geok in relation to the Chinese educational development. Firstly, I discuss their attitudes towards the establishment of national schools as the crucible of nation building. Secondly, I explore their positions on bilingual policy as well as preserving Chinese as the main medium of instruction—a heated debate which was not only tied to the Malaysian nation building process but also the educational mobility of the students. Specifically, the notion of Chinese identity will be inspected in the discussion on bilingual education among Chinese educationists.

Lim Lian Geok passed away on December 1985 at the age of 85. A funeral committee was set up, and soon decided that Lim Lian Geok would be the first Chinese Malaysian to be accorded the honor of lying in state at the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall in Kuala Lumpur for the public to pay their last respects. His coffin was escorted to the cemetery by tens of thousands of mourners, forming a five kilometer long procession on street. For 25 years after his death, Lim continued to be bestowed the epithet *zu hun* (族魂), the soul of the community. Lim's appeal for Chinese education and an anthology of his poems and speeches were published and studied by scholars and the public. In

1987, the anniversary of his passing has been institutionalized as the “Festival of Chinese Education” (华教节). A non-profit foundation was set up to continue his vision for a more inclusive education system in Malaysia, known as LLG Cultural Development Centre. A musical theatre performance on Lim’s life story was commissioned as a remembrance of his mission as a leader of the Malaysian Chinese community.<sup>151</sup> Lim was known for his lifetime mission of fighting for a legitimate place for the Chinese language and the Chinese schools. The government, however, saw him as a separatist and Chinese chauvinist, decided to revoke his citizenship and teaching license in 1961.<sup>152</sup> The Chinese community is still remembering this bitter past of oppression today; many years after the incident, community leaders have been calling for the government to reinstate Lim Lian Geok’s rights as a teacher and Malaysian citizen. In December 2011, the Dong Jiao Zong called for the current government to rehabilitate Lim Lian Geok’s citizenship on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary after his citizenship was revoked. Lim’s memorial events have been persistently used as a platform to express dissatisfactions toward the state hegemony in education policies today. The iconic image of Lim ultimately reemerged as a symbol used by newly organized community members to protest against political dominance and

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<sup>151</sup> Studies on Lim Lian Geok’s life story, sacrifices and contributions are extensive, mostly in Chinese and published by UCSTA, UCSCA and organizations in similar network. See Kia Soong Kua, *Lim Lian Geok : Soul of the Malaysian Chinese* (Selangor: LLG Cultural Development Centre, 2010); Ya’ao Li, *Zu Hun Lin Lianyu Xu Bian 族魂林连玉续编* (Kuala Lumpur: Lin Lianyu ji jin 林连玉基金, 2005); Malaixiya hua xiao jiao shi hui zong hui 马来西亚华校教师总会秘书处, *Lin Lianyu Xian Sheng Rong Ai Te Ji 林连玉先生荣哀特辑* (Kuala Lumpur: Lin Lianyu ji jin wei yuan hui 林连玉基金委员会, 1986); Yanzhuang Sun, *Lin Lianyu De Zheng Rong Sui Yue 林连玉的峥嵘岁月* (Kuala Lumpur: Lin Lianyu ji jin; Da ma yong lian hui 林连玉基金; 大马永联会, 2001); Liangshu Zheng, *Lin Lianyu Ping Zhuan 林连玉评传* (Selangor Malaysia: Lin Lianyu ji jin 林连玉基金, 2005); Malaixiya Hua xiao jiao shi hui zong hui., *Zu Hun Lin Lianyu 族魂林连玉* (Kuala Lumpur: Lin Lianyu ji jin 林连玉基金, 1991); Wenhui Liao, *Hua Jiao Li Shi Yu Ren Wu Lun Ji 华教历史与人物论集* (Petaling Jaya: Ce lue zi xun yan jiu zhong xin 策略资讯研究中心, 2007).

<sup>152</sup> Kua, *Lim Lian Geok*.

Malay special rights, calling for a nation to acknowledge the political and cultural equality of all races.



**Figure 12 (Left):** Lim Lian Geok’s memorial garden (2011)

**Figure 13 (Right):** An arm band worn by attendees to Lim Lian Geok’s memorial service, pleading to rehabilitate the citizenship for the “Soul of the Malaysian Chinese” after 50 years.<sup>153</sup>

Similarly, David Chen has been recognized by many for his contribution in improving the status and quality of Chinese education in Malaysia. His term of office came to a dramatic end when he was assassinated on February 4, 1952. He was shot dead at the steering wheel of his car by a cyclist, while he was about to preside over a meeting of the Penang CSTA. Chen’s body was brought from the hospital to the main hall of Chung Ling High School where it laid in state. On February 7, he was accorded a grand funeral in recognition of his deeds and achievements during his service for Chung Ling, tens of thousands attended his funeral service, among his mourners were some of the high-ranking officials from colonial offices, representatives from other schools, community members, thousands of alumni, colleagues and students. A procession formed

<sup>153</sup> Both photographs were reposted from a blog, accessed May 1, 2012, [http://amadeusbv.blogspot.com/2011/12/blog-post\\_18.html](http://amadeusbv.blogspot.com/2011/12/blog-post_18.html)

by 5,000 people followed the hearse before it made its way to the Western Road cemetery, final their last homage to the respected educationist. A special supplement on Chen's death in Chung Ling's School Magazine of 1952 paid tribute to him as "a martyr of overseas Chinese education".<sup>154</sup> In 1955, Chung Ling's alumni formed a committee to build a memorial garden around his grave to commemorate his devotion to education. Each anniversary of his death, the school sends representatives to pay respect at the graveyard. In 1961, a new housing area next to Chung Ling High School was named after David Chen, officiated by the Penang mayor and representative of Chief Minister. On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of David Chen's death, Chung Ling published a special magazine to recount his contributions for both Chung Ling and the Chinese education system.<sup>155</sup> In many statements and speeches published during David Chen's memorial services after 60 years, he was remembered as an educator with exceptional vision –specifically, his emphasis of bilingual policy (Chinese and English) was repeatedly mentioned. The NTSS schools such as Chung Ling, were unsatisfied with their present condition of Malay language as the primary medium of instruction. Unlike the alumni in the past, the graduates of Chung Ling today could not attend overseas colleges and universities directly with the standard national qualifications, without completing additional pre-university programs or external English examinations.<sup>156</sup> Many alumni criticized Chung Ling today has regressed from the glory days during David Chen's years. David Chen's

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<sup>154</sup> Zhong Ling zhongxue 钟灵中学, *Chung Ling School Magazine* 《钟灵中学校刊》 (Penang: Zhong Ling zhongxue 钟灵中学, 1952).

<sup>155</sup> *Chen Chongen Xiaozhang Yu Nan Wushi Zhounian Jinian Zhuanju* 陈充恩校长遇难五十周年纪念专辑.

<sup>156</sup> Many overseas institutions do not enroll students with the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM, also known as the Malayan Certificate of Education) qualification immediately, mainly because the examinations are conducted in Malay language instead of English.

past image has been readapted in contemporary discussions as a mode of expressing the discontent of the people who mourned his death.

In Wang Gungwu's classification of Chinese living in Southeast Asia, he identified three main groups: Group A Chinese who identified with Chinese nationality; Group B pragmatic Chinese citizens who are focusing on practicalities and are more ambiguous about their national identification; and Group C creolized Chinese who are assimilating well with local society who had stop looking at China in their political and social identifications.<sup>157</sup> Follow this framework, a local-born Peranakan leader like Tan Cheng Lock, who spoke little Chinese and received his education in English will be regarded as Group C.<sup>158</sup> While David Chen, Waung Yoong Nien and other "pro-conforming" leaders in favor of collaboration with the Anglo-Malay administrations, could well be considered as part of the Group B. The Group B Chinese are typically favored and targeted by the colonial government for collaboration, whom views are usually conflicted with Group A Chinese. Tan Liok Ee's analysis on Lim Lian Geok's articulations of his orientation and perception about Chinese education suggests that Lim is considered as Group A Chinese. This can be seen from how Lim objected to the proposal on textbook adjustment which China was not the focal point, and up until 1954, the UCSTA under his leadership wanted holidays to celebrate the birthday of Sun Yat Sen and another one to honor Confucius.<sup>159</sup> Lim spent his life fighting for a legitimate

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<sup>157</sup> Wang, "The Study of Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia," 1–22.

<sup>158</sup> Tan Cheng Lock (陈祯祿) was a key public figure who devoted his life to fighting for the rights and the social welfare of the Chinese community in Malaya. Tan was the founder of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), which advocated his cause for the Malaysian Chinese population. For an account on this contributions to Chinese education, see Liok Ee Tan, "Tan Cheng Lock and the Chinese Education Issue in Malaya," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19, no. 1 (1988): 48.

<sup>159</sup> Tan, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945-1961*, 96–101.

place for the Chinese language, the Chinese schools and Chinese culture within the boundaries of a young nation-state – which ended up oppressed by the government, with this citizenship revoked in 1961.<sup>160</sup>

Unfortunately, David Chen passed away before the critical changes in Chinese education took place in Malaya, and there is no way to ascertain whether he would be supporting the idea of conforming Chinese schools to the conditions that developed in the nation-building process. Based on Chen's exceptional trajectories of implementing bilingual policy, as well as his abilities to work with colonial offices due to familiarity with their culture and practices – we can potentially infer that a different bargaining dynamic might have developed, if Chen was representing UCSTA in the 1950s. While speculations as such are meaningless, the linkages and discontinuities between Chen and Lim's leaderships are still relevant to the sphere of Malaysian Chinese education today.

We ought to remember that representations of David Chen and Lim Lian Geok involve acts of reinterpret their ideas and attitudes at particular times were readapted into contemporary discourse by various leaders and groups. Representations of them are thus acting as powerful vehicles in shaping perspectives and influencing actions of the contemporary Chinese community. Their different viewpoints and positions for Chinese education recreate new visions for different factions of Chinese educationists, as they echo current social and political concerns. Images and narrations of historical figures such as David Chen and Lim Lian Geok, in whichever forms they emerge, will continue to offer lessons and resources to Chinese community, as they continue fighting for the future of vernacular education in Malaysia. Their positions on the establishment of

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<sup>160</sup> Kua, *Lim Lian Geok*.



national schools as the crucible of nation building were perhaps different, but both were concerned about the elevation of Chinese language and culture - which was not only tied to the nation building process but also the educational mobility of the students.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Education planning in a multi-ethnic society is an extremely challenging task. To fully grasp the complex issues concerning preservation of languages and culture through education, one cannot ignore the historical origins of such complications. The British colonial administration propelled a dualistic system of education in which a small number of elites were brought together in the English schools sponsored by the government, while the masses were segregated in vernacular schools funded by the community. The seed of separatism in Malaysia was sowed in the education system long ago and extended its way into current challenges decades after independence. The system of multiple language schools also mirrored the political realities in which different ethnic groups were compartmentalized in political structures divided by racial differences.<sup>161</sup>

The complex global political climate during the Cold War also complicated the matter, when the British colonial government was pressured by its alliance to crack down on the suspected supporters of Communists in the colonies as the Cold War became increasingly intense globally. The unique historical circumstances placed the Chinese schools in a difficult position. Their survival faced difficult challenges outside and within Malaya since their political inclination and loyalty were deemed highly suspicious by the authorities. Such historical nuances were strategically prolonged in the present discourse dominated by the state to continue marginalize the vernacular schools, especially the Chinese schools.

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<sup>161</sup> Here I refer to the existing race-based political parties in Malaysian political space.

After independence, the Malay frustrations over lack of progress in their pursuit of Malay special rights were conflicting with the increasingly vocal demands by Chinese on equal rights, language and education issues. The pre-independence compromise between different parties in the Alliance coalition was eroded. As Heng Pek Koon pointed out, the Chinese challenge to Malay political dominance under this climate led to the racial riots of May 1969. In the aftermath of racial riots, the Malaysian New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced as a socio-economic restructuring affirmative action program launched by the government to appease the Malay discontents, which trickled down to education policies subsequently.<sup>162</sup> Decades after independence, the Malaysian government, on top of its efforts to assimilate vernacular education into a unitary form of national education system, is constantly edging out Malaysian Chinese education with different tactics. Motivated by the supremacy and pride in Malay language and culture, the nation adopted Malay as the main medium of instruction in 1976, while preserving English as a secondary language subject. The bilingual policy that flourished under the Anglo dominance during the colonial era was readjusted to a trilingual policy in NTSS and ICSS, with Chinese as the mother tongue, Malay as the official national language, and English as a secondary language. In NTSS, the Chinese language classes have been toned down to accommodate the policy and to lessen the burden on students – as a result, the status of Chinese language has been weakening in the curriculum.

Today, the Malaysian Chinese education of different factions is again facing significant challenges for the maintenance of Chinese as the medium of instruction. In 2002, the Ministry of Education introduced English-language instruction for mathematics

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<sup>162</sup> Heng, *Chinese Politics in Malaysia*, 3; 263–264.

and science in all primary schools, including vernacular Chinese schools. The government's reason for reintroducing English as the medium of instruction is based on the belief that it is essential to master English within a highly competitive global economy.<sup>163</sup> Malaysian education policies were criticized as piecemeal and unplanned. A renowned Malaysian social critic and author, Bakri Musa, voiced his critical views about the policies of glorifying the Malay language:

In the decade following Merdeka, at the height of nationalism and pride in country and culture, a generation was wasted in the relentless pursuit of the national language. The dreams and hopes of thousands of young Malays were crushed when they discovered that their hard earned certificates were worthless.<sup>164</sup>

Ironically, Bakri Musa's apprehension about the functionality of Malay language as the main medium of instruction echoed the unsettled reservations of Chinese educationists. Chinese education is essentially linked to access to education opportunities and social mobility, which coincided with the socio-economic and political transformations in Malaysian society. The relentless pursuit of Chinese language as the primary medium of instruction in schools should not be justified by the mere emotionality of Chineseness or the attachment to the past. Eventually, Chinese educationists will have to meet the litmus test: Can Chinese education provide access to public education opportunities and financial aid? Are the students of Chinese schools having greater social mobility in a globalized world? Are the teachers of Chinese schools treated well, and effectively providing quality education?

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<sup>163</sup> Lee, *Chinese Schools in Peninsular Malaysia*, 226–227.

<sup>164</sup> M. Bakri Musa, "An Education System Worthy of Malaysia: Chapter 7: Strengthening the Schools (Cont'd)", December 6, 2006, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://www.bakrimusa.com/archives/an-education-system-worthy-of-malaysia-46>

## Chung Ling among Others

Chung Ling, the oldest Chinese secondary school in Malaysia, went through substantial changes during the British colonial era, the nation-building era, and since independence. Originally established as a Chinese Nationalist extension outside of China, Chung Ling was the boarding school for patriotic overseas Chinese youth. As time went by, Chung Ling's management, leadership team, teachers and students had to adapt to rapid changes in Malaya, maneuvering between increasing controls imposed by the colonial government. As colonial subjects, David Chen and his peers did not stop making Chung Ling a top-notch education option for Chinese in Malaya and Southeast Asia. Chung Ling's bilingual curriculum design, school culture, teachers, and facilities were among the most outstanding ones in Malaya. Its autonomous nature, with strong support from the Chinese community, allowed space for steady growth even after the Japanese Occupation. Chung Ling undeniably made adjustments to meet new political realities during decolonization: they viewed Malaya as a country which had been developed through the combined effort of native people and newcomers like Chinese and Indians. Their attachment to "China's culture" would need to make space to embrace local Malayan culture in order to cope and continue to mature.

The Chung Ling school anthem, sung by thousands of alumni across the world, acutely exemplifies such evolution. An old version of the Chung Ling anthem dating back to the 1930s, with lyrics written by the respected Chinese teacher Wang Qiyu, asserted to "advance the sojourners, educate our new youth with the Three People's Principles" (提高侨化, 作育新青, 主义彻三民). The choice of vocabulary of "temporary sojourners" and outright association with the Chinese nationalist agenda of

*San Min Zhuyi*, demonstrates that the Chung Ling back then was not completely attached to a Malayan locale. In 1962, to meet with the new Malayan scenario, the school changed the line into “celebrate the communion of cultures, cultivate the best talents for a new nation” (交流文化，咀华含英，亲爱作新民), amended to fit into the new conditions after *Merdeka*.<sup>165</sup>

鐘靈中學校校歌 汪起予詞

嶺巒屹屹 華裔林林 何以進文明  
 二十世紀學術競爭 豈敢後他人  
 提高僑化作育新青 主義徹三民  
 努力創造奮志前程 吾愛吾鐘靈  
 豐舍矗立 嘉木成陰 時聞誦聲  
 秩秩信條煌煌校訓 在實踐躬行  
 提高僑化作育新青 主義徹三民  
 努力創造奮志前程 吾愛吾鐘靈

**Figure 14:** Chung Ling School Anthem, as seen in the School Magazine (1948)

<sup>165</sup> *Merdeka*, means the independence of Malaya. Reference on the lyrics changes in the school anthem are from Ow Chong Ming 欧宗敏, “某些历史片段在流连—钟灵文物馆史料整理随感”, *Kwong Hwa Yit Po 光华日报*, August 16-17, 2007.

In 2001, when I was a student in the Chung Ling Butterworth Branch, the management announced a minor edit to the anthem: the mention of “Twentieth Century” (二十世纪) was replaced by “Twenty-First Century” (廿一世纪). The Chung Ling school anthem made ways for new realities arise with time – these nuanced alterations signify that Chung Ling *does* evolve with time, and will continue to transform despite what happened in the past.

When the 1961 Education Act prohibited students above the age limit to continue their education in schools, Chung Ling’s management set up an independent entity, known as Chung Ling Independent School, to continue to provide education as needed by excluded students. The Chung Ling Independent School is also part of the 60 NTSS existing outside the national education system today. In the 1970s, there was an urgent need for a Chinese school to be built in Butterworth, due to the enlarged population. The Chung Ling management set up a committee and lobbied for an approval by the government. After ten years of effort, Chung Ling Butterworth High School was established as a coed school founded in 1986.<sup>166</sup> As mentioned earlier, largely due to the bilingual policy adopted during David Chen’s years, many Chung Ling alumni were able to take opportunities to continue their tertiary education in English-speaking nations and eventually many of them migrated abroad. Consequentially, a global alumni network was built over years across many global cities in Europe, North America, China, Australia, Singapore and Thailand. The Chung Ling alumni are known as important patrons of the schools, and constantly provide financial support to the school operation and expansion

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<sup>166</sup> Chung Ling High School in Penang remains as a boys’ school until today. The recent developments of Chung Ling are retrieved from school’s website, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://www.clhs.edu.my/history.php#jump>

projects.<sup>167</sup> However, the situation in Chung Ling should not be taken as sole representative of the current conditions of other NTSS. Many NTSS in other states, especially those with a less Chinese population, face difficult challenges, abandoned by both the national education system and Chinese community. The government constantly marginalizes the NTSS by not allocating funding equal to other national schools. In addition, new NTSS schools, expansion projects and relocations rarely obtain approvals from the authority.<sup>168</sup> On the other hand, the Chinese community is reluctant to render more support, for they consider these schools as lack Chineseness and view them as inadequate to represent the Chinese educational needs.

Chineseness, in the nexus of Malaysian Chinese education, is a concept in motion, constantly being constructed, remolded, and redefined along with the unfolding of identity politics. It is challenging to pin down the concrete values of such a conception surrounding a complicated education system with long history. Malaysian Chinese education was tangled and folded into the politics of different cultures of authority, first British administration, and then the Malay-dominated government. It is also worth noting that it was caught in the internal conflicts between different factions of Chinese educationists and their different perspectives, as well as constantly hijacked by politicians' agendas. Just like the politicking, the differing views and perspectives between NTSS and ICSS witnessed in the subtle contentions on display of Chineseness are distracting

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<sup>167</sup> As an example, a comprehensive survey on Chung Ling alumni is available in Kangding Wang, *Zhong Ling Zhong Xue Si Bai Xiao You Ren Sheng Zhi Lü* 钟灵中学四百校友人生之旅 (Singapore: Ren wen chuang yi chu ban she 人文教育出版社, 2002).

<sup>168</sup> These challenges are apparent and persistent through many decades. Referred to the news archive available on UCSCA's website, accessed May 1, 2012, [http://www.djz.edu.my/resource/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=110:2010-10-08-05-56-01&Itemid=89&layout=default](http://www.djz.edu.my/resource/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=110:2010-10-08-05-56-01&Itemid=89&layout=default)



the community's attention away from the practical challenges faced by both types of schools.

Whether another historical moment in Chinese education will unfold in the political development of Malaysia depends on how the present challenges can be dealt with carefully by the people – this time, not limited to the Chinese educationists, but including a larger group of Malaysians who are frustrated with the practical education issues, linked to socio-economic advancement and mobility of the majority.

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