

PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP ON OVERSEAS CHINESE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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The objectives of the workshop were delineated by the workshop director. The representatives were to share their research findings as well as those of their colleagues on the various problems of assimilation encountered by Chinese communities in ASEAN countries. It was hoped that this exchange could stimulate proposals for future research as well as for better communal relations.

Fr. Charles McCarthy, workshop secretary made a survey of the distribution of Chinese in Southeast Asia. In order to provide a conceptual framework for the study of overseas Chinese, he discussed the work of Sin-Fong Han. Sin-Fong Han's assumption was that an immigrant group should not be regarded as an undifferentiated mass of people. One must also consider the cultural diversity obtaining from their different places of origin in the ancestral homeland, and the conditions in the host country. His model was presented in the form of an equation: $B = C + c_1, c_2, c_3, c_4, \dots, c_n + L$, where B = Behavior of a particular ethnic group; C = The Great Traditions (ideology, religion, kinship system); $c_1, c_2, c_3, c_4, \dots, c_n$ = The Little Traditions (dialects, subculture, personal aspirations, etc.); and L = Geographical Location (physical, socioeconomic, and political conditions).

Other workshop representatives reacted by saying that dialectical differences must not be overemphasized, and that the L factor, especially as it relates to the relationship between the Chinese community and the host people, might be the more important issue.

Prof. Chinben See citing the work of Prof. Woo Yen of Hoover Institute called for an identification of the social classes to which overseas Chinese belong in Southeast Asian societies. This suggestion would be helpful in delineating their economic role.

Fr. McCarthy stressed that the behavior of Chinese communities is influenced by their social environment, whether rural or urban. The nature of their occupation, according to Dr. Punyodyana, needs to be studied as well. It was mentioned by Prof. Poerwanto that in the case of Indonesia, occupational differences are determined by the location of the communities. There are places where the Chinese are engaged mostly in financing, others where they are involved in activities related to agriculture. Prof. See also cited that until seventy to eighty years ago, most Filipino-Chinese were confined to Manila.

Dr. Png and Ms. Ang agreed that the study of the overseas Chinese as an economic man will help clarify the stereo-type that the community is united and has control of big business in the host society. Other variables that can be considered are the history of Chinese participation in the economy and the effect of local laws on the type of occupations that Chinese go into.

A sociological analysis of their economic role entails an investigation of Chinese proclivity to become shopowners. Such a phenomenon is present, according to Prof. See, among many Filipino Chinese who see ownership of a business concern as a catalyst for

social acceptance. These economic studies will gain insights on how Chinese families were able to establish such big financing institutions as the Bangkok Bank in Thailand and the China Banking Corporation of the Philippines. These studies will also have to look into the extent of mutual help among families and of the control exerted by trade organizations in regulating difficulties within the community.

The Philippines

In his paper, Prof. Lim asserted that there is no communal unity among the Chinese in the Philippines. His findings were based on a study made from 1967 to 1968. There is no common religion or ideology that binds them despite efforts of Chinese schools to inculcate traditional values and loyalty to the Kuomintang. In fact, they generally compete with each other and are divided into factions based on social class and provincial origin. Inter-marriage is largely determined by religion, social position, education, business, and personal compatibility rather than by racial affinity. Places like Chinatown were effects of colonial rule. Residents of these areas express the wish to move out to better places.

What holds factions together is the members' dependence on each other for trade, involving a system of credit, business communication, and information. The propensity to deal with other Chinese is more true of small wholesale and retail companies. Large corporations, which are owned by naturalized Filipinos, do not always observe this preference.

Chinese newspapers and news broadcasts hardly carry significant information for community interest. Prof. Lim's content analysis of the *The Fookien Times*, *The Chinese Commercial News*, *Great China Press*, *Kung Li Po*, and two radio broadcasting stations yielded a very minimal coverage of Chinese news. Rather, they contained information which are also carried in non-Chinese media. However, the Chinese media do serve the function of keeping the Chinese language alive and contribute to some sense of identity.

The so-called proclivity of the Chinese to engage in business is due to their exclusion since colonial times, from agricultural ventures. In recent years, they have not been allowed to engage in professions such as medicine. It is no wonder that business equity and skills predominate in their value system, for they are the values most effectively transmitted by the socializing agencies. Social control is best exercised by the business network, and clan associations perform as mediators in business conflicts.

Life-crisis rituals such as birthday celebrations, baptisms, weddings, and funerals, while they are carry-overs of the practices in the Fookien and Kwantung provinces, have been influenced by Filipino practices. Moreover, the ability to spend for these rituals affirm the celebrant's personal achievement and social status.

Prof. Lim observed that efforts to educate the Chinese on Philippine laws, culture, and language are lacking. This is largely the fault of the Chinese schools. As a result, many Chinese become easy prey of corrupt officials.

He also observed that there is a difference in attitudes and aspirations between the younger and older generations of Chinese. The young ones, who were born and had grown up in the Philippines, find themselves close to Philippine society and values, and tend to attach less significance to ancestral rituals.

Dr. Png expressed surprise over the gap that exists between the Chinese and Filipino communities. Perhaps greater efforts should come from both to understand and accept each other. Dr. Punyodyana said that if the Philippine-Chinese are willing to pay the price of cultural integration, as did the Thai-Chinese, they must do away with Chinese schools.

On a separate question, i.e., the method of determining the size of past Chinese populations, Prof. See said that records in Chinese organizations and cemeteries are not an accurate measure — membership in organizations was arbitrary, and remains of the dead were sent back to the mainland before the Second World War.

Ms. Teresita Ang of *Pagkakaisa sa Pag-unlad* presented her annotated bibliography of selected works on the Philippine Chinese. Having chronologically arranged the studies, she noted the improvement in the research methods since Weightman's historical study in 1960. She also observed that there was heightened interest in the so-called Chinese problem since the announcement of eventual recognition by the Philippine government of the People's Republic of China.

Ms. Ang discussed government researches on the subject of Chinese involvement in trade and commerce. Recently, registration of Chinese residents had been intensified. But the most extensive studies have come from the academe. The Chinese issue has been made the subject of graduate papers in the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, and the Philippine Women's University. Interestingly, the books that have been written on the subject were done mostly by American and other foreign scholars, most notable of whom were Wickberg, Weightmann, McBeath, Amyot, Tilman, Omohundro, Doeppers, and Blaker. Recently, works have been undertaken by Filipinos and Filipino-Chinese, such as Rodolfo Bulatao, Benito Lim, and Antonio Tan. Ongoing studies of graduate students deal with such topics as facts and myths about Chinese economic dominance, choice of careers and motivation among Chinese youths, and the problem of Chinese schools.

Many of these studies have been responses to crisis-events, such as the passage of the retail trade law, the 1971 Constitutional Convention, Chinese-school legislation, and the announced plans to recognize China. These studies however, have barely scratched the surface, especially in terms of concrete proposals to bridge the gap between the Chinese and Filipino communities.

There are associations which interest themselves in the community. The Federation of Chinese Chambers of Commerce keeps files of clippings from Filipino and Chinese newspapers. Although it has announced its intention to organize a research office, it has not done

any sustained research and has not released findings for public reference. The *Pagkakaisa sa Pag-unlad* has a small research library which houses clipping files, data papers, journals, and books. It has come up with two monographs, authored by Chinben See and Fr. McCarthy, respectively. The third monograph, being edited by Fr. McCarthy, was still in press at conference time.

Ms. Ang proceeded to analyze the content of the more scholarly works. Blaker wrote on political dynamics, Tilman on attitudes, McBeath on political integration, Doepper on the relationship between ethnicity and class structure, and Omohundro on the Chinese business community. These studies reflect an increasing understanding of the peculiar problems of the local Chinese. There has been a corresponding improvement in research methods. For example, scholars have realized that the Bogardus scale for measuring inter-ethnic social distance is inapplicable to Philippine society. In this cumulative scale, which is based on American social patterns, one variable leads to another, e.g. residential preferences imply marital preferences. The Bulatao study was an attempt at devising survey techniques which address themselves to the unique attitudinal patterns of Filipino society.

In the discussion that followed, Dr. Villacorta supported Ms. Ang's position that more active efforts should be made by both communities to understand and accept each other. Fr. McCarthy and Dr. Png suggested that more scholars should engage in policy-oriented research which will constructively influence national decision-making.

Indonesia

Dr. Poerwanto observes that the Chinese have not been integrated into Indonesian society. In terms of citizenship, approximately 250,000 overseas Chinese in Indonesia are citizens of the People's Republic of China. (Diplomatic relations with China, however, were suspended in 1965.) About 1,250,000 are "stateless" because they are neither citizens of

Indonesia nor the People's Republic of China; approximately 1,500,000 have become Indonesian citizens. It is difficult to discern the sociopolitical orientations of the Chinese — whether their sympathies lie in the mainland, Taiwan, or Indonesia.

Another way of classifying the Chinese is according to ethnicity of parents and by place of birth. The *Peranakan* were born in Indonesia and are of mixed parentage. The *Totok* are pure Chinese whose parents migrated from the mainland.

In the colonial period, the Chinese occupied a social position higher than that of the Indonesians. By 1925, they had become equal to the Europeans in almost all aspects. They became dominant in business and trade. As a result of these social developments, mutual suspicions evolved between the Chinese and indigenous communities.

It is necessary for the achievement of assimilation, according to Dr. Poerwanto, for both parties to be receptive and tolerant of each other. He adds that more opportunities for social interaction should be created.

Thailand

Dr. Punyodyana discussed the Chinese problem in his country and the salient points of the annotated bibliography of Ms. Parichart Sukhum who failed to attend the workshop. He reviewed the findings of his study, *Chinese-Thai Differential Assimilation in Bangkok: An Explanatory Study*, which was published by Cornell University in 1971. In that study, he measured external uniformities of Thai and Chinese behavior as manifested in their speech, occupation, education, religion, and marriage and family practices. He also measured the extent to which the Bangkok Chinese have adapted to their "subjective frame of reference," i.e. their attitudes, the language, customs, and institutions of Thai society.

The respondents were sampled from three groups: (a) Chinese in trade and commerce; (b) Chinese students; and (c) Chinese employees in

the government service. The cultural and social channels of integration themselves served as the indicators: (a) the use of Chinese and/or Thai and attitudes towards these two languages; (b) participation in and attitudes towards Thai education; (c) religious practices and attitudes towards the Thai and Chinese religions; (d) occupational affiliations, preferences, and attitudes; (e) actual behavior and attitudes towards interpersonal association, including choice of friends; and (f) family and marriage practices and attitudes towards Thai-Chinese intermarriage.

Dr. Punyodyana found that social integration and social assimilation go hand in hand. Unlike in Western societies, where physical traits are major obstacles to assimilation in Asian societies cultural and social differences are the more important hindrances to the process. He observed that assimilation, in Thailand has been facilitated by similarities in race, language, religion, and diet.

Despite these positive factors, there are still roughly about 450,000 alien Chinese in the country. One reason could be that the practice of maintaining a sizeable number of aliens has been a source of supplementary income for many corrupt officials. There were instances when quotas of naturalized citizens were distributed to officials.

Naturalization laws were revised in 1911, and presently, the *jus soli* principle applies. Naturalization comes after a five-year residency. One must know the Thai language, pass an examination on elementary education, and must not have violated laws.

Dr. Punyodyana thinks that more efforts should be taken to naturalize all Chinese residents in Thailand. They should, however, be allowed to retain their cultural identity. Forcing "Thaification" leads to psychological problems that are reflected in many inter-group conflicts.

According to Dr. Punyodyana most of the studies in Thailand on overseas Chinese are not empirical, but descriptive studies of laws. These prove to be more objective. There are

two masteral theses submitted to Chulalongkorn University which are of scholarly value: one is a study of the ethnic identification of second-generation Chinese-school pupils; the other deals with value differentiation among the local Chinese. The main problem in studying Chinese communities is the identification of "alien" features of such communities, since they are successfully integrated into Thai society. Existing studies generally fall under one of three categories: (a) general observation of the assimilation process; (b) survey of patterns and rates; and (c) psychological tests of identification and values of younger-generation Chinese.

He suggested that scholars may want to research on the occupational distributions of the local Chinese, the policies for hiring them, and business transactions of the community. For the latter subject, banks and economic institutions may be sources of data. He cited the work of N.A. Simoniya, also published by Cornell, which analyzed the Chinese community in Southeast Asia from the framework of the class structure.

Singapore and Malaysia

Dr. Png enumerated the different responses of minority groups to majority groups: assimilation, pluralization, and segregation or secession. In a nation like Singapore where the population is not only multi-racial but multi-lingual and multi-cultural as well, the approach that must be used is accommodation. It is the intermediary stage between assimilation and pluralization. The approach takes the form of developing national values and beliefs as opposed to sectarian interests. At the same time, there must be tolerance and acceptance of the linguistic, cultural, and religious differences of the four component races.

A predominating factor in the approach of Singapore to integration is her Malay environment. The government pays most attention to the Malays who are the dominant race in West Malaysia. The Malays being the indigenous people of the Malay archipelago, Malay was

adopted as the national language of Singapore. The national anthem is only sung in the Malay language. In practice, English and Mandarin are the principal working languages.

Because the Malays lag behind the other ethnic communities, the government assists in their social upliftment. Practically all Malays who are admitted into the universities and colleges receive free tuition, a privilege not given to non-Malay students.

An indirect means for breaking down racial and class barriers is the compulsory three-year military service for men between the ages of 18 and 40. This period of national service contributes toward the development of a common identity through a common military and social experience.

A non-racial issue came up concerning the wide gap between occupational opportunities available to English-trained segments of the population, and those open to the Chinese-trained. To narrow the gap, the government adopted a bilingual policy and equal employment opportunities. It recognized and improved Nanyang University, which uses Chinese as the principal medium, and absorbed more Chinese-trained graduates into the public sector.

Commenting on the integration of the Philippine Chinese, Dr. Png observed that the major obstacles seem to be the Chinese schools and kinship organizations, which prolong the process of acculturation. More involvement in those organizations which promote more inter-ethnic contacts should perhaps be encouraged among the Chinese.

Regional Significance

The impact of overseas Chinese in the foreign relations of Southeast Asia was reviewed by Dr. Lau. Because of its immediate relevance, the communique, which was signed the previous week by Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai and Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, was discussed. In that agreement, the concept of dual nationality was not recognized. Those who opt to retain Chinese

nationality will receive the protection of China and their status will be respected by Malaysia. It is obvious from this provision that China subscribes to the *jus soli* principle as opposed to Taiwan which follows the *jus sanguinis* principle.

Another important provision is that related to mutual respect of each other's sovereignty. The two governments "consider all foreign aggression, interference, control and subversion to be impermissible" and "hold that the social system of a country should only be chosen and decided by its own people." Dr. Lau observed that the provision implies that Communist movements are an internal problem and will not be the concern of China, as the Indonesian movement was in 1965 and the Burmese movement was in 1967.

The precedent-setting communique also contains the clause that the People's Republic of China is recognized by Malaysia as "the sole legal government of China" and that Taiwan is "an inalienable part of the territory of the People's Republic of China."

The other representatives inquired about the policies of Malaysia towards those who would opt to retain their Chinese nationality. Would their stay in Malaysia be limited? Will they be allowed to openly adopt the ideology of China? What action will China take in case of grievances reported by her nationals residing in Malaysia?

Dr. Lau replied that there are at least 220,000 stateless Chinese in Malaysia. If they were to retain their Chinese nationality, this would mean that there would be 220,000 citizens of the People's Republic of China within Malaysian territory. Prime Minister Razak was quoted as having said that China will issue them Chinese passports. Nonetheless, the legal technicalities will be resolved when the exchange of ambassadors takes place.

Dr. Lau also anticipated other complications. The issue of the stateless Chinese is tied up with the future of family units and the economic position of the overseas Chinese. It is conceivable that within the same family, there

would be members who are local citizens, Chinese nationals, and stateless persons. He said that it becomes more imperative for Southeast Asian governments to consider relaxing their citizenship laws.

With regards the ideological issue, the communique enjoins Chinese nationals "to abide by the law of the Government of Malaysia, respect the customs and habits of the people there and live in amity with them." While the Chinese embassy in Burma extended protection to Chinese-Burmese in 1967 at the height of the Cultural Revolution, Dr. Lau stated that it is difficult to predict how the Chinese embassy in Malaysia would behave in case problems arise concerning the Chinese in Malaysia. We can only fall back on the provision on non-interference in the domestic affairs of both communities.

At this point, the conclusion of the Australian scholar, Stephen Fitzgerald, was cited. It was his contention that overseas Chinese are more a liability and, sometimes, an embarrassment than an asset to China. Some workshop delegates inferred that the Chinese government might find it wiser to repatriate overseas Chinese who retain their Chinese citizenship, than to allow them to reside abroad. The idea of using them as the fifth column has long been shelved by the Chinese government.

The body concluded that the Malaysian experiment will be the first test of the policies of legal assimilation and accommodation with China. It was also the consensus that alongside efforts to relax citizenship requirements must come active programs to culturally integrate the Nanyang Chinese, so that their loyalty to their host nations will further be cemented.

Topics for Future Research

Each delegate was asked to give his reactions to the workshop, to propose topics for future research, and to share information about institutions that can assist in cross-ethnic research.

General satisfaction was expressed by all delegates over the results of the workshop. The

foreign delegates thanked De La Salle University for having invited them and given them the opportunity to imbibe new information about the overseas Chinese. Fr. McCarthy explained some of the difficulties encountered before the workshop, most of which involved the problem of communication due to mailing problems in the region. Dr. Villacorta thanked the delegates and especially acknowledged the valuable assistance extended De La Salle by the *Pagkakaisa sa Pag-unlad*. Ms. Ang, Prof. See, and the association's staff were instrumental in the smooth operations of the workshop and in looking after the foreign delegates.

Among the topics for future studies which were proposed were the following:

1. Identity problems and social values of Chinese University students;
2. Curriculum change and educational techniques that will promote integration;
3. Comparative study of the marketing expertise of Chinese and indigenous businessmen;
4. Survey of the educational achievement of Chinese university graduates;
5. Regional (Southeast Asian) consciousness of overseas Chinese;
6. Impact of changing family patterns on Chinese communalism;
7. Primary areas of conflict between the Chinese and local communities;
8. Extent of Chinese participation in the local economy;
9. Brain drain of overseas Chinese;
10. History of government approaches to local Chinese; and
11. Comparison of constitutional, statutory, and case laws on citizenship in different countries in Southeast Asia.

The delegates exchanged information on research opportunities in their own countries. Dr. Benito Lim mentioned fellowships available in the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies (formerly Asian Center) of the University of the Philippines, as well as in the Institute of Philippine Culture of the Ateneo de Manila University. Dr. Png talked about professorial

exchange that is encouraged by the University of Singapore. Dr. Lau named the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies of the same university as a particular venue for research on the problem to be undertaken by Asian scholars. The International Development Research Center funded by the Canadian government and based in Singapore was also mentioned.

Dr. Punyodyana cited, among others, the Thailand Information Center and the Institute of Asian Studies of Chulalongkorn University. Dr. Poerwanto said that the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (LEKNAS) of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), which is headed by Dr. Mely G. Tan, engages in cross-cultural research. Prof. See, who was with Academia Sinica in Taiwan, stated that research opportunities in his center are limited.

Asked about the Bureau of Asian Affairs, Fr. McCarthy said that the body actually is connected with the Jesuit order and is meant to assist Jesuits in their missionary work. He welcomed, however, foreign scholars to keep in contact with *Pagkakaisa sa Pag-unlad*, which has always been helping researchers, local and foreign alike, in their search for data and research contacts. Dr. Villacorta added that Ford Foundation in Asia has a Southeast Asian fellowship program which supports cross-national research and professorial exchanges among Southeast Asian universities.

Dr. Peter Rose, an invited observer, talked about the Center of International Relations at the University of Denver's Graduate School of International Studies. Dean Robert Good of that Center did research on race relations in Zambia and Rhodesia; studies on the Asian situation would be welcome.

Prof. See suggested that the body start to plan joint research ventures. Dr. Punyodyana felt, however, that the delegates must first review and assimilate what had been taken up in the workshop, and survey what is left to be studied in their own societies before they could arrive at proposals for collaborative studies. The other delegates agreed with the latter suggestion and promised to maintain their communication

with each other. They said that the publication of the workshop materials would be the first big step towards acquiring an overall picture of the research done on overseas Chinese in the region.

Another subject that came up was the possible problems which foreign scholars would meet in researching on the Chinese problem. In Malaysia, there are certain government restrictions concerning studies on racial relations. In Indonesia, as elsewhere, there is the difficulty of winning the confidence of Chinese respondents if one lacks knowledge of the Chinese language. Prof. Lim agreed that most Chinese are reluctant to provide information about their community and to give opinions on government policies. It was, of course, stressed that knowledge not only of Chinese but also of the local language is desirable in conducting research in another country.

In ending the workshop, the conclusions of the delegates were summed up as follows:

1. There is still a dearth of data on the Chinese due to diverse obstacles coming from both the Chinese and the host communities.

2. Of crucial benefit to the cause of inter-racial understanding is accurate information on the actual participation of the Nanyang Chinese in the economy. Again, research on the subject is hampered by inaccessibility to authentic data.

3. Much of the research done on the Nanyang Chinese is prompted by curiosity and reactions to crisis-events, rather than from the genuine desire to facilitate integration. More

policy-oriented studies must be undertaken for greater effectivity.

4. The eventual establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China by Southeast Asian governments makes the local Chinese issue a more urgent concern of policy-makers in the region. It calls for a prompt and realistic appraisal of the problem and far-seeing solutions that would best transform the so-called Chinese problem into a national asset.

5. Much remains to be done to remove legal and cultural barriers to the assimilation of the Chinese into their adopted societies. Assimilation being a two-way process, prejudices must be shed off by both the Chinese minority and the indigenous majority.

6. Social distance among the two ethnic groups is not necessarily a product of different cultural backgrounds, as both have been exposed to the same environment and have experienced similar socialization processes. What accounts for social distance is cultural perception, i.e. the particularistic attitude that the two groups are different and must remain separate. This alienation is, unfortunately, reinforced in their educational experiences. There is, therefore, a greater demand for scholars and educators to erase existing misconceptions through active involvement in scientific research, curricular development, and if possible, national decision-making. This task does not only base itself on intellectual integrity but also on moral obligation, as racism has long been an anachronism.