THE CHINESE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: AN INTRODUCTION

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The workshop on overseas Chinese in ASEAN countries has special significance in the light of international events in the region. In establishing relations with the People's Republic of China, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand have modified their orientation towards Chinese nationals residing in their territories. The provisions of the joint communique concluded by Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak and Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai in 1974 states that both governments do not recognize dual nationality. Based on this position, "the Chinese Government considers anyone of Chinese origin who has taken up of his own will or acquired Malaysian nationality as automatically forfeiting Chinese nationality." For those who retain their Chinese nationality, the Chinese government enjoins them "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." It is added that their interests will be protected by China and respected by Malaysia. That policy is consistent with Article 27 of the new Constitution of China (1974) which stipulates that "the state protects the just rights and interests of the overseas Chinese."

In the joint communique signed by Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos and Premier Chou En-Lai, it was agreed that "any citizen of either country who acquires citizenship in the other country is automatically forfeiting his original citizenship." This reference is less specific than the citizenship provisions of the Razak-Chou communique. It is, however, best understood in relation to the policy of the Philippine government to relax its naturalization laws.[1]

The same provisions relating to nationality are present in the communique which was signed July 2, 1975 by Thai Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj and Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai.

These agreements reaffirm China's abandonment of her earlier hopes to use the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia as a fifth column. Stephen Fitzgerald, a well-known specialist in overseas Chinese problems, said that "from many points of view the overseas Chinese were either a liability, an unrewarding responsibility, or at most a dubious asset" (1972: 186-87). The Chinese government has chosen to subordinate the problem to foreign policy demands.

The futility of encouraging subversion by overseas Chinese had been recognized early by the Chinese Communist Party because of the dilemma it posed for the revolutionary movement itself. Fitzgerald (1972: 190) elaborates on this point:

> Overseas Chinese communists face a choice between operating among Overseas Chinese or among the non-Chinese population. If they choose the former, they run the risk of consolidating the movement on a racial basis, which, as the MCP (Malayan Communist Party) discovered, creates barriers to further development and is potentially disastrous for the revolutionary cause. If they choose the latter, they confront the same basic difficulties of communal antipathy or nationalist resentment and suspicion of the Overseas Chinese relationship with China which inhibit any effective political action by Overseas Chinese in the service of China.

However, the commitment to protect the legitimate rights of the overseas Chinese remains the policy of the People's Republic. This commitment was first expressed in an article in *Ta Kung Pao,* published in Shanghai on January 28, 1950:

> Now that the People's Republic of China has been established and diplomatic relations have been opened between the Central People's Government and a number of countries, the more than ten million Overseas Chinese shall not and must not be subject to further abuse (Purcell 1955: 131; Skinner 1951:87).

Ho Hsiang-ning, then Chairman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, urged the *huach'iao* to develop closer ties with the mainland:

> Nobody can sever the bond which ties the Chinese residents abroad to the fatherland. . . Mainland China is the homeland of all Chinese residents abroad (Barnett 1960:172).

In November 1953, a conference was held in Peking, the first of its kind since the socialists came to power in China. Four hundred twelve delegates of overseas Chinese all over the world attended and were assigned 30 seats in The All-China People's Congress (Thompson and Adloff 1955:18). Coordinating Peking's programs among overseas Chinese and their relatives at home were the United Front Department of the Communist Party Central Committee and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (Barnett 1960:190). The Returned Overseas Chinese Associations took care of those expatriates who returned, and maintained communication between them and their dependents who are still abroad. Periodic conferences were called by these organizations since 1956 primarily to strengthen organizational links between Peking and communities overseas. Large-scale propaganda was conducted through personal contacts, the written word, radio and other possible channels. Radio Peking and the New China News Service were the most effective tools in winning the Chinese abroad (Williams 1966:68). After the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1969, however, the Chinese government dismantled its overseas Chinese organizations.

Significant in the recent agreements signed by China with her Southeast Asian neighbors is the provision that Taiwan is an integral part of Chinese territory. This means that Chinese nationals, who formerly had the protection of Taiwan, automatically become citizens of the People's Republic of China. The lack of cooperation shown by Taiwan in helping solve the question of overstaying Chinese played no small role in ushering in this provision. Taiwan has also been engaged in a campaign to retain the loyalty and prevent the assimilation of Chinese residents abroad. Unlike China, Taiwan has continued the operations of her Overseas Chinese Commission.

Overview

The nature and magnitude of the "Chinese problem" in Southeast Asia have undergone changes, not merely as a result of the evolution in the policies of China but also because of domestic developments that occurred in the different countries of the ASEAN region.

Malaysia

Although *jus soli* is still not accepted in Malaysia (with the exception of the period 1957-1962), citizenship laws have been relaxed. One can acquire citizenship if he is born in the country and one of his parents is a citizen. The special rights of the Malays have been protected. In certain government services, a restrictive quota of non-Malays is imposed. This measure seeks to rectify the imbalance of racial representation in the higher civil services, which has been 60 percent non-Malay. Moreover, it is pointed out that non-Malays have greater opportunities to enter the private sector (Puthucheary 1974:10-11). Another discriminating policy, which paradoxically worked in favor of the Malaysian Chinese, is the priority given to the Malay language. Because the government refuses to assist Chinese-medium secondary schools, the number of Chinese in English-medium schools increased. This gave the Chinese greater opportunities for upward social mobility, since English continued to be

the language of government (Puthucheary 1974:6-7). Moreover, in the segment of the economy controlled by Malaysians (about 61.0 percent is controlled by foreign interest), the Chinese held about 22.5 percent of the total share capital, while the Malays and the Indians held only 1.9 percent and 1.0 percent respectively (Long 1974:2).

History

Many Chinese in colonial Malaya had involved themselves in revolutionary activities. Since it began its organizational work in the 1920s, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) had been 95 percent Chinese and had been directly influenced by China. The overwhelmingly Chinese composition of the Party served to alienate the Malays and deterred the Communists in identifying themselves with the nationalists (Molnar 1963:245; Crozier 1965: 168).

Many factors help to explain why the MCP won popularity within the Chinese community. Many Chinese felt that they were the "have not" segment of the population. Technological advances lessened the demand for Chinese laborers and the Malays enjoyed priority rights, especially in civil service, land ownership, and business (Molnar 1963:252). The Chinese feeling of isolation coupled with their propensity to form secret societies drove them to seek membership in organizations which would represent their interests.

The earliest societies brought by the first Chinese immigrants were offshoots of the *Thian Ti Hui* (Heaven and Earth League), later known as the *Hung Meng* League or Triad Society (Molnar 1963:262). Originally religious or self-help groups, they degenerated into criminal associations. Many of these secret societies were outlawed in 1899.

The Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), which was formed in 1949, became the only spokesman of the Chinese community. Allying itself with the UMNO, the strongest Malayan nationalist party, the MCA agitated for more constitutional rights for the Malayan Chinese. (Parmer 1959:259). It worked for the adoption

of Chinese as one of the official languages and for equal numerical representation in the Parliament, but in vain. Another organization where the Chinese found expression was the Malayan Communist Party. Before the Second World War, it enlisted more than 5,000 members and controlled a mass base of 100,000 in front organizations (Molnar 1963:245). The party expanded during and after the war due to the Communists' active participation in the guerilla campaign against the Japanese. In May 1948, following the two International Communist Conferences held at Calcutta, the MCP started to subvert the economy and the government of Malaya through strikes and terrorism. Consequently outlawed by the government, the MCP leaders fled to the jungle and started a full-scale insurrection. The guerrilla army known as the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) was composed of 6,000 men. It was supported by a predominantly Chinese civilian group, the *Min Chung Yuen Thong*, which was estimated to have had between 10,000 and 100,000 active participants (Molnar 1963:246). The 500,000 Chinese "squatters" living within the jungle area were also an essential source of intelligence and financial support. Chinese newspapers, among which were the *Min Sheng* (Voice of the People) and the *Sin Min Chu I* (New Democracy), began to sound off vituperations against British imperialism. The Chinese schools were also used as recruiting places for prospective Communists (Molnar 1963:255). Several Chinese millionaires residing in Singapore were suspected of having given financial aid to the MCP.

The rebellion failed and in 1955, its leaders concluded a negotiated peace with the British. There were many reasons for the insurrection's failure. The Chinese character of the movement did not appeal to more than half of the Malay population. There was also the question of strategy and tactics. The Communist leaders tried to follow Mao's strategy to the letter, ignoring its inapplicability to jungle warfare in Malaya (Molnar 1963:264). The effective countermeasures adopted by the British were, furthermore, responsible for its defeat. Under the initiative of Lieutenant-General Harold Briggs,

the Chinese "squatters" were relocated into new villages. This was a great loss to the insurrectionists, who depended much on these "squatters" for supply and information. In 1957, the British renewed their promise of independence on terms suitable to the Malays. Communist claims of British despotism were no longer of any use (Crozier 1965:185). Moreover, the relative prosperity of the tin and rubber industries served to alleviate the economic dissatisfaction the Communists were capitalizing on.

The insurrection lasted for 12 years and the government had to use 49,000 British and 25,000 troops to quell it (Molnar 1963:264). By 1960, the government lifted the emergency restrictions. However, there were still 500 to 550 MCP guerilla members found in the Malay-Thai border by the middle of the year (Molnar 1963:247).

During the first year after the granting of independence, over 800,000 Chinese acquired Malayan citizenship. It was predicted that the voting power of the Chinese would increase steadily, and "undoubtedly Chinese numerical strength and economic power will be gradually translated more effectively into political influence" (Barnett 1960:204). One of Tunku Abdul Rahman's reasons for proposing the establishment of the Malaysian Confederation was to provide for Malay dominance over Malaya's over-populated Chinese segment (Gordon 1966:35). This, however, did not completely solve the problem because, as the Philippine government asserted during the height of the controversy over Malaysia's formation, the leftist-oriented Chinese contingent of Singapore and Sarawak added to that of Malaya would only aggravate the Chinese problem of the Confederation states. Singapore's contribution to Malay-Chinese friction while she was a member of Malaysia and her subsequent expulsion tended to support the Indonesian thesis that Malaysia was a weak multiracial nation (Gordon 1966:35). The dilemma faced by the Tunku during the Malaysian crisis was well dissected by Bernard Gordon (1966:137):

> The Tunku, during the conflict, cannot freely play on the sentiments of his own Malay population, in efforts designed to counter Sukarno's racist and historic appeals, because he must constantly be aware of the internal communal divisions in his own country. Thus, retorts in kind to Sukarno's appeals could lead to even greater Malaysian-Chinese dissatisfaction from the Tunku's leadership than at present.

The anti-Malaysia campaign of Sukarno served to create an alliance between Sarawak's clandestine Communist organization, which is almost 100 percent Chinese, and the Indonesian Army (Crozier 1965:184-85). The Indonesian armed "volunteers" who infiltrated Malaysia at the height of Sukarno's *konfrontasi* policy were often accompanied by Malaysian Chinese guides (Gordon 1966:74). There were persistent Malay-Chinese conflicts which cost many lives. Many Malaysian Chinese harbored great resentment against the special rights enjoyed by the Malays. Malays, on the other hand, feared the growing economic power and population of the Chinese. The presence of a close, predominantly Chinese neighbor in Singapore had a considerable impact on both the Malay and Chinese populace of the confederation.

Recent Developments

The race riots of 1969 were a development that reverberated throughout Southeast Asian nations especially those confronted with racial minority problems. The preceding elections did much to arouse suspicion on both sides. The Alliance Party won the elections with a reduced majority, because the Chinese opposition parties had been able to win the urban and semi-urban seats (Puthucheary 1974:6-7). The Malay section of the Alliance Party, which is still the Party's strongest wing, succeeded in pushing for the "New Economic Policy." It reflected Malays' dissatisfaction with the compromises which the Alliance made with the Chinese and their fear that the new political leverage which the Chinese had might be used against Malay interests. Thus, the constitution was amended to prevent any possible revisions of stipulated Malay privileges, except with the consent of the Conference of Rulers. Secondly,

it was made illegal for persons to discuss these privileges in a manner that would promote inter-racial or inter-class hostility. Another constitutional amendment guaranteed that the student population at the college level must reflect the racial composition of the country's population (Puthucheary 1974:6-7).

Indonesia

Indonesian Chinese are either foreign (People's Republic of China or "stateless") or Indonesian citizens, either *Totok* (Chinese-oriented) or *Peranakan* (Indonesian-oriented). Most of the *Peranakans* were born in Indonesia and have mixed parentage. The *Totoks* are usually foreign citizens and generally are "stateless," because they do not claim citizenship of the People's Republic of China, with whom Indonesia suspended diplomatic relations after the 1965 abortive coup (Tan 1974:13).

In 1965, when there were 2,800,000 reported Chinese in Indonesia, 1,300,000 were citizens, 1,100,000 owed allegiance to the mainland Chinese government, and 400,000, who were supporting Taiwan, were "stateless."

History

Due to the preferential treatment accorded the Chinese by the Dutch and their unrivalled control of the economy, increase of anti-Chinese grievances among the Indonesians grew during the colonial years. They also served as scapegoats for repressed anti-Dutch feelings. The *Sarekat Islam,* which was the first Indonesian party of a genuinely nationalist character and of mass proportions, started as a trade association formed by Javanese *batik* merchants in 1909 in an effort to abate Chinese domination of the country's trade and commerce. As early as 1911, anti-Chinese riots had broken out (Mintz 1959:176-77). There was inter-ethnic strife during the Japanese occupation. After the war, resentment among the natives intensified when many Chinese sided with the Dutch in the revolutionary struggle (Mitchison 1963:63; Skinner 1963:113-14). Some Indonesian army leaders referred to this alliance whenever they

launched an anti-Chinese campaign. In June of 1946, 6,000 Chinese accused of collaboration with the Dutch were murdered, and their homes burned in the Tangerang area. Incidents of a similar nature occured over the next four years (Mitchison 1963:63).

In Southeast Asia, the Indonesian government was probably the most harsh in restricting its Chinese businessmen from entering numerous occupations and business, and expropriated much of their property. Some Chinese families were shipped out in overcrowded boats. This elicited strong protests from both Peking and Taipei. The only mitigating factor in Indonesia's "iron-hand" policy was Sukarno's fraternal relations with Mao's regime. Nonetheless, Indonesian leaders withstood diplomatic pressure from Peking and had considerable freedom in restricting the Chinese community. They succeeded in committing China to recognize the Indonesian nationality of the country's naturalized citizens of Chinese ancestry — thereby solving, at least legally, the dual nationality problem.

A survey conducted in 1957 showed that the China-oriented *Totok* youth (descendants of unassimilated Chinese immigrants) had the following orientations: 43 percent Communist or pro-Communist, 28 percent mildly pro-Peking, 6 percent neutral or equivocal, 5 percent mildly pro-Taipei, and 19 percent Kuomintang or pro-Kuomintang (Skinner 1951:113-14). In examining surveys of this sort, however, one must take into consideration the obvious fact that the Chinese residents would naturally be defensive and cautious in making pronouncements about their political affiliations.

One of the charges aired by the Army against the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was its defense of Chinese interests in the country (McVey 1964:182). There were claims that the PKI was financially backed by the bulk of the Chinese community which in turn exerted much influence in the Party's policy-making.

Recent Developments

The nationalistic Suharto regime seems to wield a stronger hand in regulating the activities of the Indonesian Chinese. Hugh and Ping-Ching Mabbett (1972:11) describe the situation in the following terms:

> Assimilation is both the official goal and the goal espoused overwhelmingly by Chinese prominent in Indonesian public life. The alternative argument, that for retaining cultural distinctiveness as another of Indonesia's many peoples, remains identified with the Indonesian Communist Party's position before the 1965 Gestapu coup attempt and accordingly suffers from the prevailing anti-communist climate.

Foreign domestic capital, i.e. that which is in the hands of Indonesians of Chinese descent (non-*pribumis*) is, nonetheless, regarded by the government as an asset that can be utilized for development. In keeping with this policy, foreign domestic capital is not allowed to be transferred abroad. However, an unanticipated development came up: the *cukongism* practice – a partnership between Chinese entrepreneurs *(cukong)*, and high civilian and military officials. The former provide capital and entrepreneurship, while the latter provide name and protection. Indonesia does not have a monopoly of this practice, which finds itself duplicated in most of Southeast Asia. Responding to the irregular arrangement, the government urged in 1972 the non-*pribumis* to sell half of their stocks to *pribumi* (indigenous) entrepreneurs. The move was aimed at redressing the economic imbalance caused by Chinese economic domination. Most Indonesians, both indigenous and Chinese, agree, that despite this incentive and the provision of credit on easy terms, the *pribumis* lack the entrepreneurial skills and control of the marketing network (Tan 1974: 21). The problem is still unresolved. It does remind policy-makers, however, that not all segments of the population can be satisfied. Either the racial minority is made to sacrifice for the common good, or the indigenous majority which have long been economically deprived – though not always due to the conscious exploitation of a foreign group – will remain in a state of discontent.

Philippines

The 1973 Constitution of the Philippines states that "a female citizen of the Philippines who marries an alien shall retain her Philippine citizenship, unless by her act or omission she is deemed, under the law, to have renounced her citizenship." This provision was not in the old Constitution and has clear implications to the provision in Section 1:2 of the new Constitution and Section 1:3 and 4 of the old Constitution which accord citizenship to those whose fathers or mothers are Filipino citizens.

The naturalization process has recently been cleared of stringent provisions. The 1939 Naturalization Law requires that the applicant "own real estate in the Philippines worth not not less than five thousand pesos, or must have some known lucrative trade, profession or lawful occupation." Since aliens are barred from acquiring land except through inheritance, the law unwittingly reserved naturalization to the wealthy few who were engaged in big business. This factor resulted in "a rate of legal assimilation that is only a minor fraction of the natural increase in the resident alien Chinese population" (Golay, *et al.* 1969:50).

History

As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the Chinese have had trade and social relations with the Filipino population since pre-hispanic times.[2]

The relationship between the two communities has been generally friendly, and many heroes and prominent professionals claim to be of Chinese descent. However, since colonial times, the Chinese have been favorite scapegoats for economic and political ills of society. Indeed, there were concrete cases of scandals involving the Chinese.

In 1948, the immigration quota racket, where some senators and congressmen sponsored Chinese immigrants for a certain fee, was exposed (Locsin 1949:3). Two years later, another lucrative racket was discovered, this time involving the illegal admission of Chinese not only as temporary visitors but as Filipino citizens (Tutay 1953:6).

These anomalies produced the problem of 2,700 overstaying Chinese. This issue was long unsolved because of Taiwan's refusal to accept deportees other than those convicted of subversion.

There were previous attempts to link the Chinese to the local Communist movement. A wealthy merchant, Co Pak, was charged with financing an entire guerrilla unit of the Huk army (Molnar 1963:322). Other Chinese businessmen were implicated in Communist Party records captured by the government (Molnar 1963:327).

The Chinese community was also the subject of a retail-trade nationalization law which was passed in 1954. It requires that all retail businesses owned by aliens be liquidated prior to the death or retirement of the present owners or, in the case of partnerships and corporations, prior to 1964 (Barnett 1960:204). In 1960, a law which Filipinized the rice and corn industry was passed.

Recent Developments

In anticipation of the establishment of diplomatic relations in China, President Ferdinand Marcos issued Letter of Instructions No. 270, which relaxed the naturalization procedures of aliens in the Philippines (Philippines Daily Express 1975a:7). In that directive, a committee, which consisted of the Solicitor General, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, and Director-General of the National Intelligence Security Authority, was created to submit recommendations on applications for naturalization by decree of qualified aliens. These recommendations were carefully considered, after the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce, Inc. and the Filipino-Chinese Amity Club looked into the difficulties being encountered by the poorer Chinese in obtaining naturalization (Philippines Sunday Express 1975:3; Philippines Daily Express 1975b:1, 6).

Another step taken by the government to hasten the assimilation of Filipino-Chinese was the Filipinization of all schools. This was a timely action inasmuch as Chinese schools had served as a cultural barrier preventing the inte-

gration of the Chinese youth (McCarthy 1974:19-21).

Thailand

The largest minority group in Thailand is the Chinese, who compose 3.4 million or 8.9 percent of the total population. Despite the close cultural and racial affinity between the Chinese and the Thais, there are still about 400,000 Chinese who are not naturalized (Punyodyana 1974:8).

The process of assimilation has been expedited by the policy of limiting the number and operation of Chinese schools. Every year, Chinese primary and lower secondary schools are converted to Thai schools. Those which are not converted are required to hire Thai headmasters and more Thai than Chinese teachers (Punyodyana 1974:13).

The Nationality Act, which is based on the principles of both *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*, specifies the requirements for naturalization, among which are good conduct and command of the language. In practice, however, applicants have encountered problems with some agencies (Punyodyana 1974:16).

History

Thailand was the first to impose restrictions against the Chinese before the Second World War. These restrictions became more severe when, after the war, suspicions about their leftist leanings began to surface. The Chinese Communist Party in Thailand had been operating since 1946 and until 1950 had increased in prestige and power. In July 1948, Marshal Phibun Songkhram estimated that there were about 50,000 Chinese Communists (Skinner 1957:322-23). The first federation of labor organizations in Thailand, the Central Labor Union (CLU), was controlled by the Chinese Communists; the rank and file members were Chinese (Wilson 1969).

Marshal Phibun expressed alarm when the Chinese Communists became involved in a "Thai autonomous area" in the provinces bordering Thailand and when Pridi Phanomyong,

a pro-Chinese prime minister whom Phibun replaced, reappeared in Peking and talked to the Thais over the radio. In 1953 and 1954, there were strong fears about the spread of a Communist-inspired "Free Thai" movement in North Thailand. Conscious of the danger posed by the economically powerful Chinese, Phibun closed several occupations to the Chinese and enjoined the Thais to patronize only Thai goods. The alien registration fee was increased twenty times so that the poorer Chinese could not afford to pay. An officially-sponsored anti-Chinese campaign had begun (Mitchison 1965:60-61).

Despite this past history of severe local restrictions on the Chinese residents, several factors led to a hastening of Chinese assimilation in Thailand. First is the compatibility between Chinese and Thai cultures which have no major cultural barriers in contrast to Moslem areas. Secondly, Thai citizenship laws are based on *jus soli* (except for a brief period, 1953-1956, during Phibun's purge on the Chinese). The Thais, furthermore, have banned all Chinese-run schools above the primary school level. This policy has worked towards faster assimilation (Barnett 1960:207). The strongest single force toward assimilation, according to Richard Coughlin (1960:191), comes from the government through its various laws regarding education, citizenship, vocations, and land ownership.

Recent Developments

Despite attempts to close down Chinese schools which had mushroomed at the end of World War II, there are still about a hundred of them in Thailand.

Moreover, there still exist legal barriers to citizens of Chinese parentage. They are not allowed to enter the police and armed forces, or to purchase land. Although those born in Thailand are expected to adopt Thai names, they are usually given surnames which are readily identifiable as originally Chinese. This practice makes them easy victims of unscrupulous agents of the government. However, the recognition of China by Thailand will certainly hasten the realization of legal reforms affecting the Chinese.

Singapore

Singapore is a test-case on how a Chinese majority formulates a policy towards ethnic minorities. Dr. Png Poh-seng, the Singaporean delegate to the workshop, states that of his country's population of 2.1 million, 75.5 percent are Chinese, 15.0 percent are Malays 7.0 percent are ethnic Indians or Pakistanis, and 2.5 percent are other ethnic group (Png Poh-seng, 1974). The Chinese population is divided into dialect-groups and between those who have been to English-medium schools (the English-educated) and those who have been through Mandarin-medium schools or the Chinese-educated (Lau Teik Soon 1974:3).

Dr. Png (1974) describes his government's minority policy as one of "gradual integration of heterogeneous people and not a policy of forced assimilation of minorities." He adds:

> To create a Singapore identity and to forge a nation out of diverse racial and cultural groups necessitates the nurture and development of national values as opposed to sectional and group interests. At times national interest must override sectarian interests and national values supersede sectarian values.

The government provides education in four official languages, viz., English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. Parents are free to choose the language to be used as the medium of instruction. A second language is required: either Malay, Chinese, or Tamil for the English-medium schools; and English in the non-English medium schools (Soon 1974:5).

History

Since the founding of Singapore in 1819, it has attracted large numbers of Chinese. The influx, either from Malacca or directly from China, in the mining areas started in 1839 and was heaviest in 1850 (Hall 1964: 749-50). Aside from being tin miners, the Chinese also engaged in agriculture and business.

Until 1930, there were no restrictions on Chinese immigration. From 1931 to 1933, a

quota system was established under which the monthly number of immigrants was reduced to 1,000. In 1934, the number was increased but the old, unrestricted policy was not restored (Hall 1964: 751).

By 1941, Singapore as well as Penang was predominantly Chinese. This fact was responsible for Singapore's non-inclusion in the Malayan Union in 1946. The Chinese population (then 45 percent of the combined population of Malaya and Singapore) would have outnumbered the Malays who composed only 43 percent (Hall 1964: 841-42). Singapore was later included in the Malaysian Federation, but political and racial problems eventually forced her to secede from the Federation and declare herself as a separate nation.

Recent Developments

By 1972, there were problems concerning non-English schools. They lacked textbooks for the teaching of science and technical subjects and those that were being used were poor and obsolete translations of English textbooks (Lau Teik Soon 1974:6).

As regards employment opportunities, the Chinese and Malay-educated found themselves occupying the lower and middle ranks of government service, while the English-educated were in the higher levels of all occupations. (Lau Teik Soon 1974:11). The present system of education seeks to redress this imbalance. It has adopted English as the medium in mathematics and the sciences, while either Malay, Chinese or Tamil will be the medium for the study of other subjects.

Assimilation: A Two-Way Process

Wang Gungwu of the Australian National University observed that there exist three political groupings among Chinese minorities. Group-A Chinese identify themselves with China and maintain links directly or indirectly with her. Group-B Chinese are those who generally find the necessity of being loyal to the host countries but who retain their family and community affiliations. Group-C Chinese

identify themselves politically with the host countries (Soon 1974:10).

The majority of the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, according to Professor Wang, belong to group B (Tan 1974). The particularism of this group has made it difficult for national communities to assimilate them.

The move of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand to relax their citizenship requirements is a big step towards effectively bringing the Chinese community into the mainstream of these nations' culture and politics. However, it is merely a part of the whole process of assimilation. Legislation will not guarantee harmonious relations between the Chinese and the non-Chinese majority. As the host peoples are beginning to open their minds, the challenge is also posed to the Chinese minorities to signify and demonstrate their willingness to embrace most of the traditions and institutions of their adopted home, and to sacrifice much of their cultural separateness. What remain now are active, joint efforts on the part of the ethnic communities towards constructive harmony, rather than an attitude of tolerant coexistence.

Notes

At the time he directed the Workshop, Wilfrido V. Villacorta was Chairman of the Department of Social Sciences, De la Salle University.

1. For a discussion see the following 1975 issues of the Philippines Daily Express (April 23, May 4, June 20, and July 10), and of the Philippines Sunday Express (May 4).

2. For works on the history of the Chinese in the Philippines see Tan (1972), Wickberg (1965), Ginsburg (1970), Amyot (1973), Ch'en Ching-ho (1968), Felix, Jr. (1960-1969). On the evolution of laws affecting the Philippine Chinese, see Golay (1969), Fonacier (1949), Peck (1967), Espina (1965), Hernandez and Domingo (1970), Velayo (1964).

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