

Chapter 2

Pursuing Chinese Studies Amidst Identity Politics in Malaysia

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Abstract This chapter seeks to analyze the development of three aspects of Chinese Studies, namely Sinology, China Studies, and Chinese Overseas Studies in Malaysia. Each aspect corresponds to different levels of looking at China: civilizational, state, and ethnic. It also examines how identity politics in Malaysia shapes the development of these fields and how these fields produced different images of China. Sinology depoliticizes China and presents the magnificent Chinese culture as positive element in Malaysian nation-building project. Chinese Overseas Studies decenters China and examines the multiple identities of the Chinese people. China Studies were officially pursued under the agendas of inter-civilizational dialogue and friendship between China and Malaysia.

Keywords Intellectual history • Sinology • Chinese overseas studies • China studies • Malaysia–China relations

Kazuo Ogoura, a past president of the Japan Foundation and an academic, once wrote an article in *The Japan Times* that analyzed the declining trends and challenges of Japanese Studies. He observed that a country's strategic, political, and economic fortunes tend to have a corresponding effect on the foreign studies of such country (Ogoura 2006). In contrast, the rising Chinese political and economic influences have made Chinese Studies to become a prominent field of inquiry in many countries.

Traditionally, Chinese Studies are overwhelmingly concentrated in developed powers such as the United States, Japan, Australia, and Western Europe as well as some major non-Western countries such as Korea, India, Taiwan, Russia, and East

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European countries. However, Southeast Asian countries (with the exception of Singapore and Vietnam), despite having one of the longest historical relationships with China, have been conspicuously absent in the academic studies of China. This is true in Malaysia too.¹

The case of Malaysia is interesting. Chinese population in Malaysia amounted to about 40% just before Malaya received its independence in 1957, and today the figure stands about 25%. In terms of ethnic composition, Malaysia has the largest proportion of Chinese people in its population, with the exception of Singapore, outside of the Greater China (Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao) area. The Chinese people in Malaysia are remarkably resilient in preserving their own language and culture. Hence, Malaysia boasts the most complete Chinese education system (from kindergarten to college) outside of Greater China. It also maintains a large number of Chinese newspapers and other media outlets. Many Malaysians of Chinese descents also do business and receive education in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Mahua literature (Malaysian Chinese literature) has gained attention in the Chinese literary circle. Malaysia is also the first among the ASEAN countries to establish diplomatic ties with the People's Republic, and it was a pacesetter in this sense among the Southeast Asian countries. Furthermore, China is one of the most important trade partners of Malaysia, and both the government and business communities have recognized the importance of studying China for strategic reasons. And yet, ironically, all these supposed advantages count for very little when it comes to making intelligent and informed studies of contemporary Chinese politics, economy, and society.

Perhaps the intellectual paucity will not be that severe if we take into account a broader conception of Chinese Studies. If we define Chinese Studies to include studies of language and literature, Sinology, studies of Chinese Overseas, and not confine it to the social scientific-oriented "area studies" of contemporary China, then the academic record of Malaysia in this regard will appear to be more respectable. This Chapter therefore aims to answer the following questions: how did the different components of Chinese Studies develop in Malaysia? What factors shaped their development? In their encounter with the political, cultural, and academic environments in Malaysia, what choices did Chinese Studies scholars make? How their personal identities play a role? How such identities interact at the level of nation-state construction in Malaysia?

Based on the materials gathered from the interviews with, memoirs of, and memoirs and biographies about the senior Chinese Studies scholars, as well as other publications and documents, this paper will attempt to answer the above-mentioned questions. This paper is divided into three parts. The first is a discussion of the different levels of Chinese studies. The second presents an analytical history of the various components of Chinese Studies in Malaysia. The last offers a conclusion.

¹This paper focuses only on the intellectual development of Chinese Studies at Peninsular, or West, Malaysia.

Chinese Studies: Civilizational, National, and Ethnic Levels

As Prof. Shih Chih-yu has argued, the study of China can be pursued at three levels: civilizational, national, and ethnic (Shih 2014). Each level then corresponds to different aspects of the Chinese Studies field. Civilizational perspective on Chinese Studies stresses the importance of Chinese culture, philosophy, history, classics, literature, arts, etc., where things Chinese worthy of serious scholarship are not confined to the territory governed by the nation-state only. It does not see the state as the most important unit. Instead, examination of the development of Chinese civilization that extends beyond the conceptual constraints of the state seems to be more pertinent. Sinology (*guoxue/hanxue*) perhaps is the best illustration of civilizational perspective on Chinese Studies. Traditionally, Sinology, which was first pioneered in Europe, maintains a certain detachment from active involvement in contemporary developments of China the political entity (Brødsgaard 2008, 35). Firmly grounded in the humanist tradition, its main focus is on the Chinese “high culture,” mostly recorded in texts. The pursuance and study of Chinese texts, language, and culture make Sinologists less reliant on the use of observation or interviews as firm basis for the production of knowledge about China. Field research often is less about interviewing people or participant observation but more about discovering and collecting written materials engraved in various places. Consequently, Sinology can thrive without being able to have access to China, as long as texts are available. Often, its critics charge, but which Sinologists will accept and see as strength instead, that the kind of knowledge about China that is produced under this kind of scholarship is “ideographic,” unable to lend to comparison or generalization.

The next level, China as a nation-state, is best captured by the modern, largely American-developed, social scientific-oriented “area studies” (*quyu yanjiu*). There is no question that area studies flourished under the Cold War context. Supported by generous funding from philanthropy foundations (Rockefeller and Ford) and government (National Defense Education Act), many American universities were happy to establish area studies centers. Grounded in social science disciplines, and believing that theirs were more “scientific” and offer “nomothetic” instead of “ideographic” explanations, area studies developed often time in revolt of the traditional Sinology, Egyptology, Indology, etc. (Pye 1975; Wallerstein 1997). Notwithstanding that many area studies scholars become defenders of the areas they study against US policies toward these areas, the knowledge produced under area studies is generally considered strategically useful by government policymakers. Area studies therefore tend to operate on the basis of nation-state, the primary unit in modern international relations. It incorporates the theory and methodology of the modern social science disciplines: political science, sociology, economics, etc., and often the tension area studies scholars have are with their disciplinary colleagues (Pye 1975; Szanton 2004). Access to the studied area (fieldwork) is crucial, but absent that access, observing, and scrutinizing contemporary documents and state’s policies and actions can also generate knowledge with proper methodological tools.

At the ethnic level, the people themselves become the object of research. The vast Chinese diaspora has created the field of “Chinese Overseas Studies” (*haiwai huaren yanjiu*) in many countries, including Southeast Asia. The relationship between this field and China, however, is a bit more complicated. The Chinese diaspora has been a phenomenon for at least hundreds of years historically, but it only became a “research” topic when the Chinese presence was perceived to be an “issue” that needed to be dealt with. Many pioneers of this field hence were colonial administrators, who needed to understand and document the political, cultural, social, and economic dynamics of the Chinese people under their territory. Indigenous writings also sometimes described the Chinese, but often in worrying and xenophobic terms. The officials and scholars from China, who for a long time did not care about these overseas migrants, however came to see them as coethnic forces that could contribute to China’s struggle or modernization in the modern era. Their studies of overseas Chinese communities henceforth were shaped by the nationalist agenda. For the ethnic Chinese themselves, they also developed a sense that they should preserve their history, identity, and culture through studies of their own communities. More significantly, many of them naturally pondered the issue of political loyalty toward China, local, or colonial authority. Finally, there were the professional studies from the academia, which did not really develop until the post-WWII era (Wang 1998, 4–6, 2002, 61–67). The different agenda henceforth resulted in different emphasis in the research of this field. Some may emphasize the political and economic connection between China and Chinese overseas, some may see the Chinese overseas culture and society as a substitute for studying China, while some others may approach this field from the perspective of interethnic relations in the local society. In the first case, studies of Chinese overseas overlap with China Studies as it touches upon an aspect of foreign relations of China, and how Chinese overseas make an impact within China. In the second case, the field complements Sinology, or could be seen as a way to understand the Chinese world. In the third case, not much connection to China is related, and sometimes, inaccessibility to Chinese language is not even considered an obstacle.

Chinese Studies in Malaysia

Malaysia is an ambitious project that attempts to forge a nation-state (what kind of nation-state it should be can still generate no consensus) out of three major ethnic groups (in west Malaysia only): the majority Muslim Malays and the substantial Chinese and Indian minorities, who share cultural and ancestral ties with two large Asian civilizations and states (China and India). In addition, Malaysia also has British colonial influences. To a large extent, Malaysia is a site of civilizational encounters (Malay, Islamic, Chinese, Indian, and Western). However, this also makes the Malay majority to be suspicious of the Chinese and Indian minorities as conationals of foreign countries. In the case of China, the suspicion was even more pronounced because of the anticommunist stand the government maintained and the

affinity between the Malayan Communist Party and the Chinese Communist Party. At the same time, ethnic politics inevitably permeates into various spheres of life, including academia. While many of the Chinese and Indians are keen to protect their own culture, education, and ethnic identity, substantial Malay opinions are that the country is a Malay-majority state so these minorities should accommodate and eventually assimilate into the Malay culture. Since the 1970s, the New Economic Policy of the government in overall has been to provide affirmative action to the majority Malays, strengthen Malay political power, and emphasize Malay culture and language. All these factors made the development of Chinese Studies not a simple matter of intellectual pursuits by individual scholars only, and to a large extent, it interfaces with the identity politics in Malaysia.

In the following, this paper will discuss the developments of Sinology, Chinese Overseas Studies, and China Studies (corresponding to the civilizational, ethnic, and nation-state levels, the order between the nation-state and the ethnic level is changed because of the affinity between Sinology and Chinese Overseas Studies in Malaysia).

Sinology at the Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya

The Department of Chinese Studies at the University of Malaya was established in 1963. Reportedly, when the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur planned to appoint an acting head for the new Department of Chinese, it did not want anyone from either the People's Republic or Taiwan, due to political reasons (Franke 2013, 296).² Instead the University approached Wolfgang Franke, an eminent German Sinologist, who was unwilling to pursue research in the politically charged environment in both the People's Republic and Taiwan as well; hence conducting research with a substantial Chinese surrounding could only be materialized in Southeast Asia (Franke 2013, 295, 362).

The Department of Chinese Studies was not set up as a typical department of Chinese that focuses only on language and literature. Instead, it was designed to be a multidisciplinary department focusing on all aspects of Chinese society and culture, or in short, a Sinology department. The model of scholarship that Franke established left an intellectual legacy in the Department, including the strong emphasis on researching the local ethnic Chinese community in Malaysia, especially its cultural aspects. In a short essay written to envision the character of the department, he wrote:

²A reviewer of the early draft of this paper also pointed out that traditionally the Chinese Studies departments of the universities under British colonial influence tended to be headed by a non-Chinese Europeans.

[...] It is obvious that Chinese Studies in Malaysia will have to pay special attention to the Chinese living in this country and to their background. Anyone engaged in Chinese Studies in this country should have at least a basic knowledge of the history and the actual conditions of the Chinese in Southeast-Asia. Moreover, there is in this country an almost unique opportunity to do practical field work in research into Chinese traditions which are to a large extent still alive. Gradually the University of Malaya may become a center for the study of and research into Chinese and Chinese civilization in Southeast-Asia. Its facilities for research into Chinese language, literature, history, archaeology, sociology, economics and so on may well attract scholars from all over the world (Franke [1963] 1989, 573).

In the subsequent 3 years, he published his first pieces on studies in Chinese overseas, including issues of Chinese education, and began the collection of Chinese epigraphic materials, in addition to carrying out his professional interest in Ming history. Note that in his vision, “Chinese and Chinese civilization” is the focus, not China the state. Franke was an apolitical scholar; he kept a distance from both the People’s Republic and Taiwan, while ascertained the values and contribution of Chinese civilization. Given the political sensitivity at that time, this model of heavily humanity-based Chinese Studies scholarship was considered most appropriate in the Malaysian context.

The first department head, Prof. Ho Peng Yoke, was originally a physicist, but eventually developed his interest and made his career in the history of Chinese science, the highlight of which was to become a collaborator with Joseph Needham and director of the Needham Research Institute. Ho was instrumental in putting together a star-filled faculty at the Department, recruiting some of the best European and Taiwanese Sinologists. At the same time, he was also a high-society intellectual who enjoyed good relationship with the establishment. After the 1969 racial riots,³ the Malaysian government suspended democracy and enacted emergency rule. A National Consultative Council was established to offer opinions to government about how to improve national unity after the racial riots, and Ho was invited to be a member of that Council. After the emergency ended in 1971, he was even offered a cabinet post (which he declined) (Ho 2005b, 93–95). Ho therefore could not be unaware of the sensitivity of racial issue in Malaysia, and how scholarship can become a cultural bridge.

Ho had always insisted upon the view that studies of Chinese science can meaningfully gain much from the studies of Indian science and of Islamic science (and vice versa) and that the West should have a greater understanding of the scientific achievement of the East. By such understanding of different cultures and traditions of science, human conflicts, either at the world scale or in Malaysia only, could be reduced (Ho 1994, 2005a, 2009, 19–23). In his own work he documented the numerous cases of transmission of scientific knowledge between China, the Islamic world, India, and other places. For example, in tracing the development of alchemy in ancient China, he wrote that “alchemy did not develop in splendid isolation in China. It should be looked upon as part of the world enterprise of early

³In the general elections in May 1969, the ruling coalition suffered significant setbacks, and afterward racial riots and violence erupted in Kuala Lumpur and other places.

chemistry that resulted in the birth of modern chemistry in Europe” (Ho 2007, 125). The ultimate superiority of Western civilization was demonstrated in advances in science and technology when Western and non-Western civilizations encountered centuries ago. Hence, exploration of common ancient achievement in science among the major non-Western civilizations perhaps could foster significant intercivilizational understanding, interethnic harmony, and even economic achievement:

Asia has produced three great cultures that influenced the development of science in Europe in the past, namely Chinese, Hindu, and Islamic, in alphabetical order. The consciousness of its own heritage has greatly stimulated the Chinese to participate as a full member of the global community of scientists and technologists of today, and we all witness the remarkable economic growth of China in the past decade. Similarly, we can now see the same to be happening in India. Malaysia is a country where all three great cultures meet. Perhaps some attention given to the study of science and technology aspects of its heritage would stimulate more interest among its people in science and technology leading to a greater economic growth—at the very least the sharing of common heritage would go a long way to promote harmony and goodwill among people of the three different cultures that would be fundamentally even more important than economic growth itself (Ho 2005a, 18).

Scholarship, therefore, could be seen to facilitate significant interethnic and intercivilizational understanding that would be vastly important to the nation-building project in Malaysia.

Ho Peng Yoke’s chairmanship of the department was succeeded by his doctoral student, Prof. Ang Tian See, whose doctoral dissertation at the University of Malaya was praised by Needham as on par with or even exceeding those of Cambridge University (Ho 2006, 13). Ang’s greatest scholarly achievement was in the history of Chinese science and mathematics; he also once worked with Needham, but his interests also extended beyond that. The courses he started or taught included classical Chinese literature, modern Chinese literature, and Mahua literature (Khor and Chia 2006). After Ho and Ang, however, the strong beginning of research into the history and philosophy of Chinese science at the department sadly did not sustain itself. After all, this field requires combination of scholarly expertise in both humanistic and hard science knowledge, a rarity in many instances.

Without the history of Chinese science to serve as a cultural bridge, the Sinology at the Department turned toward a much more Sino-centric orientation. After Ho and Ang, the two other eminent scholars of the department were Prof. Tay Lian Soo and Prof. Lim Chooi Kwa. Together with Ho and Ang, they are pioneers of Malaysian Sinology; as many of their students (and students of their students) become academic members of other Malaysian universities and colleges that have Chinese Studies departments or programs.

Tay Lian Soo studied and received his Ph.D. from National Taiwan University, and his teachers included eminent Sinologists like Tai Ching-nung, Ch’u Wan-li, Yeh Chia-ying, Wang Shu-min, and others. Hence, unlike Franke, Ho, and Ang, Tay could be said as the first one to inherit directly the finest tradition of Chinese scholarship. He made his career in studies of Classical Schools (*zhuzixue*), especially the Legalist school of thought, textual criticism (*jiaokanxue*), authentication

studies (*bianweixue*), and historical studies of the Malaysian Chinese society and education. Tay's Sinology is notable for its comprehensive treatment of a particular topic or subject. He once commented that there are two kinds of Chinese Studies/Sinology, one that clarifies the Classics, covering highly specialized fields such as bibliography, textual criticism, authentication studies, annotations—the purpose of which is to ascertain the authenticity of the author, date, and content of the Classics, while the other analyzes the Classics, develops and examines their philosophical system and historical context (Tay 1993, VII, 2008, 332). The first kind of Sinology was crucial because many nongenuine writings had been attached to different versions of the Classics, the clarification of which would then lay the foundation for a more accurate assessment of the Classical thinkers in the second kind of Sinology. In his own work on the thinkers of the Legalist school (Tay 1993, 1998), he applies this kind of approach and achieves recognition from the Sinology's circle.

Tay Lian Soo spent 17 years in Malaysia before he departed for a professorship in Hong Kong. He was deeply involved in the affairs of the Malaysian Chinese community, such as overseeing the revision of Chinese language and literature textbooks for the Chinese secondary schools, founding the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Association, and, perhaps the most important for scholarship, pioneering several important works in the history of the Malaysian Chinese society, including a four-volume history of Chinese education. Trained as a Sinologist, Tay could have chosen to focus exclusively on classical Sinology. However, his extension from classical Sinology to Malaysian Chinese studies is both driven by his love of and his mission to preserve and spread Chinese culture. Interestingly, he saw that there was an inherent tension for both fields to be housed within a single department. In his words,

For the Malaysian Chinese community, Chinese Studies department and Malaysian Chinese studies are both important. The former is the birthplace of our culture, the source of our civilization, ethics and morality, and without it, our culture will decay. The latter is our shelter and foothold, which we must understand, in order to know the past and predict the future, and chart our future steadfastly (quoted in Mao 2002, 226).

In another instance, he argued,

[The purpose] of Chinese Studies department is to study Chinese literature, history, and philosophy, and through this study, we will be able to know Chinese culture, absorb its essence as the foundation for us (the Chinese people) and for Malaysian society...If subjects of Malaysian Chinese studies become the main theme [of the department], then I will not agree. Think about it, how long a history the Malaysian Chinese people have? What is the essence?...When the curricula of the Chinese Studies department become all about Malaysian Chinese Studies, is it still Chinese Studies department (Tay 2008, 329)?

Despite the example of himself who made huge achievements in both fields, Tay is very adamant and clear that classical Sinology should remain the core of the Department because it is where the finest Chinese culture can be learned, whereas studies of Malaysian Chinese should assume a more peripheral status, a vision departed significantly from Franke's vision.

There is no question that Tay identifies strongly with Chinese culture and civilization ever since his youth (Tay 2013, 1). However, there is also without a doubt that he identifies closely with Malaysia too. He was once asked why he wanted to go back to Malaysia after his Ph.D. from National Taiwan University: he could have gone to more advanced centers of Sinology rather than returning to a rather “backward” academic environment in Malaysia. Tay’s answer was straightforward: “I am a Malaysian” (Tay 2013, 5). Tay could not see how Chinese culture could become an obstacle for nation-building in Malaysia. On the opposite, he argues that Chinese culture in Malaysia could be a constructive partner with other cultures in shaping a new Malaysian culture, and that the long history of Chinese culture has already proved that Chinese culture historically has always welcomed exchanges and interactions with other cultures (Tay 1999, 140–141). Unfortunately for Tay, his service at the University of Malaya also coincided with the rise of the pro-Malay New Economic Policy in the 1970s and 1980s, where most Chinese began to feel the pressure of marginalization in politics, culture, and business. The nation-state project began to take a turn toward a Malay-centric nationalism. Assimilationist pressures started to build up. It was only in the early 1990s that such pressure, to a certain degree, relaxed. As the best Sinologist in Malaysia, he felt terribly painful for such a state and felt compelled to respond, even if it was to no avail. Tay’s scholarship, in this sense, was conceivably also driven by a sense of crisis for the identity and culture of the Malaysian Chinese.

The last of the four, Prof. Lim Chooi Kwa, was a doctoral student of Ang, and hence, by extension, a grand student of Ho. However, Lim’s style of scholarship was much more similar to Tay rather than Ho. Lim’s primary area of scholarship is classical Chinese literature, and secondary is studies of Malaysian Chinese community. He served as the principal editor of *A History of Malaysian Chinese* and *A New History of Malaysian Chinese*. In explaining his turn toward studies of Malaysian Chinese, he mentioned how being a Malaysian Chinese, being a scholar teaching at the Department of Chinese Studies, he was obliged to contribute to this area of scholarship (Lim 2013, 9). Much like Tay, Lim’s love for classical Chinese literature was natural, while his interests in the studies of the Malaysian Chinese community were fostered within the environment in Malaysia [in fact, most Malaysian staff at the Department are, on the one hand, Sinologists or literary experts, and on the other hand, assume a research area in Malaysian Chinese studies (Wong 2005)]. Lim also mostly published in Chinese, and was actively involved in the affairs of the Chinese community. After his retirement from the University of Malaya, he continued to serve as the director of the Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies and the head of the Chinese Studies department in a new university.

As much as Sinology would want to stay out of politics, it does have political relevance in a multiethnic Malaysia. From Wolfgang Franke, Ho Peng Yoke, and Ang Tian See to Tay Lian Soo and Lim Chooi Kwa, seemingly the Department of Chinese Studies went through a transformation from a hopeful participant in the Malaysian nation-building project to a defensive articulator for Chinese culture in the face of the assimilationist pressure generated from the new Malay-centric nation-state. This could be illustrated best by contrasting Ho Peng Yoke and Tay

Lian Soo. Ho was a noticeably cosmopolitan scholar and was well acquainted with the university authorities, the establishment, even with the Malaysian royalty. Tay, a master Sinologist whose achievement was on par with Ho, his reputation within Malaysia however basically was confined within the Chinese-speaking community. He probably was on no friendly terms with the establishment too, and had to stand to guard the Chinese culture from being attacked and assimilated. The type of scholarly training one received played a role here, but it seemed that to a large degree, the changing context of identity politics in Malaysia has also been determinative of such transformation. On the other hand, the civilizational focus of Sinology depoliticizes China in the sense that it does not have to deal with the real communist giant that posted a security threat to the country but only a noncontroversial “China” that exists in classics, arts, history, and literature.

Studies of Malaysian Chinese Community

Chinese Overseas Studies (with a strong focus on the Chinese in Malaysia) can be said to form the main bulk of Chinese Studies in Malaysia. The number of scholars who have participated in this field is indeed large, and covers a diverse range of subjects. So in this section we can only selectively discuss a number of representative individuals and groups. Its history is long as well, extends to pre-independence days. One pioneering scholar (also a colonial administrator) was Victor Purcell; his *The Chinese in Malaya* and *The Chinese in Southeast Asia* remain as classic works in the English language. In the Chinese language stream, there was the “Nanyang Studies” (*Nanyang yanjiu*) group. “Nanyang Studies” refer to an early generation of scholars, who were concentrated in the South Seas Society (*Nanyang xuehui*), founded in 1940. The society boasted eminent scholars such as Hsu Yun Tsiao, Chang Lee Chien, Yao Nan, and others. Often their work was not on the Chinese community per se but focused on the history of the Southeast Asian region and its people. This group of scholars mostly came from southern part of China, and also inherited from China the “frontier history” (*bianjiangshi*) and “China-foreign communication history” (*Zhongwai jiaotongshi*) scholarships. In its early years, the scholarship undoubtedly adopted a China-centered perspective toward the studies of “Nanyang.” It was even originally considered as a branch of Sinology, because many historical materials pertaining to Southeast Asia can be culled from classical Chinese historical works (Lew 2013, 12–22). But as more scholars developed “Nanyang consciousness,” their scholarship was driven in part to make the Chinese readers more aware and conscious of the importance and relevance of “Nanyang.” In the context of political independence in the 1950s, it also promoted a sense of nationhood.

“Nanyang Studies” flourished from 1930s to early 1970s (apart from the interruption of the Pacific War), and was mainly based in Singapore’s Nanyang University (1955–1980). It was a strongly history-based discipline; almost all scholars affiliated with it were historians, with some exceptions in political science

or sociology. From the 1970s onward, “Nanyang Studies,” together with the Nanyang University itself, experienced gradual decline and eventual demise. Hereafter, two trends emerged. First, the baton of the study of Chinese overseas in this region was passed to the Chinese Studies departments in other universities, most importantly at the University of Malaya and National University of Singapore. We have already discussed the Department of Chinese Studies above. Second, the legacy of “Nanyang Studies” was carried on by a number of history graduates of Nanyang University, and among those from Malaysia, they included Prof. Yen Ching-Hwang, Prof. Yong Chin Fatt, and Mr. Lee Yip Lim. They would however shift the focus of historical writing. Remember that “Nanyang Studies” was regionally focused; it was not focusing on the Chinese *per se*. However, after 1970s, Chinese historical writing from Singapore and Malaysia began to focus mostly on the Chinese overseas in the region (Lew 2013, 153–154). The demise of “Nanyang Studies” and the rise of “Ethnic Chinese Studies” in Malaysia and Singapore also signified a trend, in which locally born scholars of Chinese descent, in facing the emerging assimilationist pressure in the context of the 1970s and 1980s, naturally paid more attention to their coethnics. It was, in short, a scholarship turning to the “struggle for the subjectivity of the Chinese people” (Lew 2013, 155, 179).

A brief account of the intellectual history of a fine product of “Nanyang Studies,” Yen Ching-Hwang, will illustrate the way scholarship interacts with identity politics. Yen started as a hopeful history student at Nanyang University. He excelled in Chinese history, but he had been conscious of the necessity of doing more studies of Malaya, especially with the impending independence of the state from colonialism, turning against the advice of a professor (not in the “Nanyang Studies” group) who prodded him to focus on history of China (Yen 2008, 46–47). Nevertheless, his interests in Chinese history remained, so naturally he concentrated on the history of Chinese overseas in the region—intersecting the histories of both China and Malaya. His first book traces revolutionary activities of the Overseas Chinese and their contribution to the success of Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary movement in toppling the Qing dynasty. In the last words of this book, he wrote that “... [if]... the Overseas Chinese were to be termed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen as ‘The Mother of the Revolution,’ then the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya deserve to be honoured first and foremost” (Yen 1976, 318). In this sense, he was affirming the importance of Sun Yat-Sen’s overseas revolutionary activities and establishing the subjectivity of the Overseas Chinese in shaping historical events at the same time. Yen was particularly uncomfortable with the new trend of some revisionist scholarship (in the US predominantly) since the 1970s that downplayed the role of Sun Yat-Sen (and by implication the importance of overseas Chinese) and the 1911 Revolution. Years later, he continued to assert that “when the 1911 Revolution is viewed in its totality, the Overseas Chinese did play an important role in the movement leading up to the overthrow of the Manchus” (Huang 2011, 95–96). In this sense, Yen was insistent on establishing the subjectivity of the Overseas Chinese vis-à-vis China itself.

After his Ph.D., he gained an academic position at the University of Adelaide in Australia. Free from the government’s constraints in Malaysia, he could have

pursued more China-related topics hereafter, but he chose to remain in the field Chinese Overseas studies, mainly because it remained a “niche area” (Yen 2008, 111–112, 2012, 9–10). In the 1970s, however there was an encounter that made him decide to adopt Australian citizenship. He was attending an international conference in Canberra and met a Malay scholar from Malaysia. Naturally they were chitchatting until the subject turned into Yen’s research area. The Malay scholar was irritated and angered that Yen was doing research related to China and Chinese Overseas, implying that Yen was still only interested in things China and not being conscious about or politically loyal to the Malaysian nation. Yen was surprised that a Malay intellectual could hold such views, when all the while in his career he had been conscious not to adopt a China-centered framework and stressed the importance of Overseas Chinese on their own right. He was afraid that the academic environment could be too politicized that he decided to settle down in Australia for good (Yen 2012, 24–25), although he continued to maintain close ties to Malaysia. He also started to see his scholarship on Chinese history in Malaysia as politically relevant. The government’s national archive has not preserved much of the historical records of the Chinese people, which could be alleged as a deliberate policy to neglect the historical contribution of Chinese to this country under the pro-Malay ethno-nationalist agenda, in which the historical subjectivity of the Malays as the master of the land has to be well established in the national historiography. In Yen’s own words, “I see this as a crisis for the Malaysian Chinese community” (Yen 2008, 249). His historical writing therefore is actually politically important again in establishing the subjectivity of the Chinese people, this time vis-à-vis Malaysia.

Another giant in Chinese Overseas Studies from Malaysia is no doubt Prof. Wang Gungwu. Wang grew up as “an insider in China’s ‘great tradition’.” During his formative young adult years, he experienced firsthand the disintegration of the British Empire and Republican China and the political problems associated with it in Malaya, which shaped his “lifelong pursuit of the big questions: how do civilizations fall apart and recreate order from chaos and how do people’s identities change as they adapt to changing circumstances?” (Vogel 2010, vii, viii)

This Chapter wishes to highlight that Wang, despite now maintaining some kind of distance from Malaysia, Singapore, and China to assert his disinterestedness for the sake of professionalism in scholarship, once closely identified with Malaysia. When he was just back from London, fresh with his Ph.D., and given the option to continue teaching at the University of Malaya’s campus in Singapore or the newly established branch at Kuala Lumpur, he opted for the latter. He said, “That was a clear indication that my real identity lay in the new country that was being established” (Wang 2010, 26). When the proposal of Malaysia (merging of Malaya with Singapore, Brunei, Sabah, and Sarawak) was materializing, he mobilized his colleagues to come up with a volume on Malaysia, showing his desire to use scholarship to contribute to the nation-building project. He was a founding member of University Socialist Club when in Singapore, and later the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysia’s People Movement Party), a party that advocated for democratic socialism and multiculturalism. He did not envision his departure from the University of Malaya, and Malaysia the country, to be permanent. He originally

planned to conduct several years of scholarship in Australia under a “no-pay leave” scheme and came back. However, he ultimately had to resign, and took up Australian citizenship, due to factors from the university and the government, not his own preference. He once received government’s permission to visit China, but his second request was turned down by the Home Affairs Minister, who suspected him, because of his Chinese background and his short stint in left-leaning politics, that he probably was a communist sympathizer (Wang 2010, 45–47).

Wang Gungwu is well known for his writings on “multiple identities,” especially applied to “the complex and changing identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese as they related to China, to their local regions within China, and to the country where they lived,” and through his scholarship, his belief “that people of diverse heritages could enrich local cultures while being loyal citizens to their nations” (Vogel 2010, ix). The personal episode described above hence reminded us once again the relationship between the personal and the political in shaping the intellectual project of this eminent scholar.

As mentioned before, the Department of Chinese Studies has long been a center for studies of Malaysian Chinese in addition to the “Nanyang Studies” group, and after the latter’s demise, it could even be considered as the main force in the field. We have already discussed Franke, and Tay’s contribution to Malaysian Chinese Studies in the previous section. Mostly, but not always, this tradition is an extension of Sinology. There is another stream within the Department, which also focuses on cultural persistence and adaptation, but takes a different approach, and was started by Prof. Tan Chee-Beng (he spent 4 years at the Department of Chinese Studies, and later he moved to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, at the University of Malaya). The difference between Tan and the earlier Sinology stream at the Department is that Tan and his followers are much more sociological, focusing on observing actual behaviors, through the ethnographical method, while the Sinology stream relies mostly on cultural relics and texts for studying the preservation and change of Chinese culture in Malaysia.

Tan was trained as an anthropologist. His first book is a study of the Baba Chinese community in Malaysia. Baba Chinese are a type of Peranakan (indigenous) Chinese who experienced significant acculturation with the dominant ethnic group, but who have not lost their Chinese identity and become assimilated. Through natural acculturation (meaning without political pressure), these Chinese borrowed and adopted from the Malays certain cultural practices as their own, including most importantly language (with modifications), resulting in a new kind of ethnic category, the Baba Chinese. The natural tongue for Baba Chinese is therefore Baba Malay, but the loss of Chinese language does not constitute the loss of their Chinese identity (Tan 1988). Acculturation goes hand in hand with the persistence of identity. From here, and drawing from the theoretical perspective of Frederick Barth, Tan contended against the use of fixed, objective markers (such as language) as a standard for asserting ethnicity and identity, especially in a multi-ethnic society. Nevertheless, he also does not totally dismiss the importance of these objective markers, for they continue to be the “emotional” and “conservative” elements in identity formation. What is crucial, however, is that with the subjective

component of identity, these objective markers serve as “indicative” rather than “definite” factors (Tan 1988, 3–4). Identity formation and maintenance is therefore not static but dynamic.

In a sense, his anthropology has the effect of de-essentializing Chineseness. Tan would later broaden the theorization of comparative studies of Chinese communities into what he calls the “Chinese ethnographical field of research,” in which the Chinese people worldwide is seen as an ethnological field, shaped by different political, economic, and historical contexts in different countries, and respond differently in their patterns of cultural reproduction and adaptation (Tan 2004). The “Chinese ethnological field” thus facilitates comparative studies of different Chinese communities. The concept actually denotes a certain “decentering” of China as well, in which Chinese in China (and different regions of China too) is treated not as the standard in which Chinese communities in other places are measured against, but only one group of Chinese community in the world.

Tan’s anthropology complements his activist side. During his university days, he was already an activist sort of student, fighting for the use of Chinese language in universities. However, by his own account, anthropology has significantly influenced his views about Chinese and interethnic issues in Malaysia. He suggested that the issues of Chinese community should be understood and viewed from the perspective of the whole Malaysia rather than just from the Chinese community only. Tan joined and participated in ALIRAN, a liberal NGO in Malaysia that envisions a deracialized Malaysia. He was no friend to the pro-Malay agenda of the government and a harsh critic of the disastrous effect of ethnonationalism on scholarship in university campus (Tan 2013, 12–13, 15, 16), but he also saw some of demands of the Chinese educationalists as unhealthy essentialization of the Chinese people, and as contributing toward patterns of not genuine multiculturalism but a form of “particularist multiculturalism,” in which “diversity may be stressed at the expense of unity” (Heywood 2007, 324–325) and civic cohesion. He suggested that while it was perfectly legitimate for the Chinese to protect their rights, it was however incorrect to fight the government’s racist policy with Chinese own terms of racialism (“Lizhi de xunmengzhe: Tan Chee-Beng” (A Rational Dream Pursuer: Tan Chee-Beng) 1989, 6). This put him at odds with some of the Chinese educationists and got him into fierce debates, which was one factor that contributed to his eventual departure from Malaysia and taking up a job at Chinese University of Hong Kong, where he felt that he needed not be “reminded of the ethnicity” issue (Tan 2013, 14).

Finally, there is the stream of Malaysian Chinese Studies that does not look into too much the relationship between Malaysian Chinese and China. The focus is on Chinese as one of the ethnic groups in multiethnic Malaysia, and how this group differs from other groups in terms of political and economic activities, and how it interacts with other groups. Because of its heavily local focus, it can be said to have more association with Malaysia Studies rather than Sinology or China Studies. This does not mean that knowledge about or connection with China is totally absent, but it does mean that China connection is not the starting point of analysis here, and is often not required. Often in this stream of scholarship we can see more

non-Chinese-speaking scholars (English-educated Chinese or non-Chinese) contributing. Examples of which include Prof. Edmund Terence Gomez, who study Chinese business activities, Prof. Lee Kam Hing, who has written on patterns of Chinese political participation in Malaysia, and others (Both Gomez and Lee are attached to the University of Malaya).

While it seems that the University of Malaya has been the center for all kinds of Chinese Studies in this country (which is true), increasingly more institutions are setting up Chinese Studies departments and start making contribution to scholarship. It should also be mentioned here that the subfield of Malaysian Chinese studies is not an exclusive province of scholars attached in universities. The Center for Malaysian Chinese Studies (*Huashe yanjiu zhongxin*), a research center established and financed by the Chinese community in 1985—amidst the Chinese rising sense of crisis because of the government’s pro-Malay agenda—has been formed for the purpose to act as some sort of “think tank” for the Chinese people, in addition to its role as a resource center. Although started with an ambitious agenda, its researches into Malaysian Chinese subjects eventually focus on three areas: cultural and historical issues (studies and collections of materials pertaining to the Chinese settlement history), social-economic issues (Chinese demographic patterns, Chinese education, Chinese “New Village”), and interethnic relations (Voon 2011, 35–36).

The field of Chinese Overseas Studies is looking toward Chinese and China at the ethnic level, and in the context of Malaysia, identity politics inevitably intertwines heavily with scholarship. Sometimes it serves as a motivator, other times it interferes in the scholarship. For “Nanyang Studies” scholars, raising the awareness of the Chinese readers regarding their own place of residence has been a leitmotif. For scholars such as Yen Ching-Hwang, affirming the subjectivity of the Overseas Chinese and recognizing their historical contribution to China (and Malaysia) are important. Similarly, for scholars working at the Department of Chinese Studies and the Center for Malaysian Chinese Studies, Chinese Studies is often pursued with the aim of emphasizing Chinese contribution to Malaysia so that it will not be implicitly “disremembered” by the Malay-centered ethno-nationalist historiography. For Wang Gungwu, the efforts to document and analyze the variability of “Chineseness” of the Chinese Overseas aim to dissuade those who hold the myth of a unified Chinese diaspora serving the interests of China, while for Tan Chee-Beng, the “de-essentialization” of Chineseness and the “decentering of China” in his “Chinese ethnographical field of study” complement his desire for a genuinely multicultural Malaysia.

China Studies

Finally, for the last component of Chinese studies—the modern, social science-based “area studies”—the contribution from Malaysian scholars remains wanting. The reason is obvious. Chinese communist victory in 1949, its support for

revolutionary communist parties in Southeast Asia, together with the presence of a large number of Chinese people (many of them still held China-centered worldview at that time) in Southeast Asia, created fears among local indigenous elite that Chinese communities would simply become the extension of the communist giant. Unlike the United States, where academicians were encouraged to study their enemies (this is, after all, one *raison d'être* of “area studies”), generations of scholars were discouraged from studying communist China, fearing that studying a country will become advocating the interests of that country. As Myron Weiner has pointed out, “empathy,” a quality sought and admired by area studies scholars, could be seen as being apologists or advocates of the regimes of the areas they study (Weiner 1992, 3) by the powers that be, and Malaysian government is no exception in this regard. The embargo imposed on the materials published in China, and the travel ban, made any serious attempt at China Studies in Malaysia impossible (Voon 2005, 121–122).

However, the Cold War ended, and Malaysia signed a peace treaty with the Malayan Communist Party in 1989. Beginning in the 1990s, travel ban to China was lifted. Malaysia-China ties began to grow significantly, while the government had by then greater confidence in the political loyalty of the ethnic Chinese. Researching China was no longer a taboo, although still a sensitive topic. In as early as 1990, a course on contemporary China was offered at the Department of Chinese Studies at the University of Malaya, by Prof. Voon Phin Keong, a geographer, and by Tan Ooi Chee, a Sinologist. The course, however, was unsustainable, due to the lack of students' interests (Voon 2013, 6). In 1996, a more serious attempt was made, in regard to the establishment of a Department of East Asian Studies. The department was set up under the context of the promotion of Confucian-Islamic dialogue (as part of larger civilizational dialogue), an agenda pushed by the then Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and some Malaysian intellectuals in response to Samuel Huntington's “clash of civilization” thesis (in addition to the department, a Center for Civilizational Dialogue was also established). The department incorporated three components: China Studies, Japan Studies, and Korea Studies. The idea was to integrate the studies of three Confucianist societies as part of the Confucian-Islamic dialogue (Obaidallah 2012, 48) under the overall civilizational dialogue agenda. A preexisting Department of Japanese Studies was merged into this new department, but the Department of Chinese Studies, owing to its ties with the Chinese community in Malaysia, cannot be merged, as the loss of the Chinese Studies department would be seen as a political issue. The first department chair, Prof. Voon, to avoid competing with the existing Department of Chinese Studies, designed the China component to be more reflective of China's contemporary developments. Courses on contemporary China's politics and economics were henceforth offered in this department. However, due to the lack of real China Studies scholars, the staff members in the China Studies component in the Department of East Asian Studies were still mostly Sinologists with ties to the Chinese Studies department, including Prof. Obaidallah Mohamad, a rare Malay Sinologist originally teaching at the Chinese Studies department, and Prof. Hou Kok Chung, a student of Tay Lian Soo.

As a product of “civilizational dialogue,” the Department of East Asian Studies however seemed to be not very well equipped to become a base for “area studies.” Much of its content appears to be still oriented toward the humanities rather than social sciences. The next attempt at China Studies was the establishment of the Institute of China Studies (ICS) at the University of Malaya in 2004. Like the previous attempt, its creation also involved a political heavyweight, this time the then Deputy Prime Minister (and later Prime Minister) Abdullah Badawi, and it is actually also the first of its kind in Malaysia as well, an “area studies” center devoted to a specific country. In a visit to China’s Xiamen University in 2003, Abdullah suggested that an ICS be established at the University of Malaya, while a corresponding institute of Malaysian studies at Xiamen University would also be established, to showcase the friendship and mutual learning and understanding of both countries. An ambitious proposal for the ICS was submitted, involving the study and research of almost all aspects of contemporary China (Obaidellah 2012, 48–50), regardless of the fact that there were simply not much scholarly expertise available in Malaysia to realize such an ambitious goal. A Sinologist and the previous head of the Department of East Asian Studies, Prof. Hou Kok Chung, was appointed as the first director of the ICS.

In his interview, Wang (2007/2010) did not give quite high a chance for China Studies to flourish in Malaysia. He suggested that the cautious attitude from the government side, which remains wary that the ethnic Chinese develop too close the ties with China, a scenario that Singaporean government would not have to worry, could be the main reason. In short, identity politics impedes the development of China Studies in Malaysia.

However, although Wang’s observations might be true at a deep psychological level among some Malay ultranationalists, there are some other factors in play here, and identity politics also impacts in a different, subtle way. First, the underdevelopment of China Studies may have to do with the nature of area studies, grounded in social science disciplines. The serious underdevelopment of social sciences (only a few Malaysian universities offer true social science programs) means that the few Chinese-speaking graduates in social sciences (or humanities as well) are therefore more likely to focus on issues pertaining to Malaysia and Malaysian Chinese rather than a foreign country.

Second, the model of area studies scholarship that originates from the west has a strong calculative and utilitarian character. Malaysia, in its own self image as a site of civilizational encounter, may echo the views of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a classist scholar, who, in attacking the “manipulative” agenda of the social science-based area studies, argues that “you cannot understand persons if you treat them as objects. You misinterpret a culture if you approach it in order to manipulate it. A civilization does not yield its secrets except to a mind that approaches it with humility and love” (quoted in Wallerstein 1997, 212). The impact of identity politics therefore plays a more subtle role, in the sense that showcasing intercivilizational dialogue and Malaysia-China friendship is an important impetus pushing the development “China Studies” in Malaysia as a way to demonstrate to the ethnic Chinese community that as much as the government maintains a pro-Malay policy,

it is not a racist regime and values very much intercivilizational, and by implications, the domestic interethnic harmonious relations. Understanding China ironically is not necessary the most important consideration for the official push for China Studies in Malaysia.

The impetus for China Studies henceforth came from top political leadership and was organized in a top-down fashion. Although created with ambition, there actually was limited understanding of what “area studies” kind of scholarship would entail. Library holdings, which have not had much contemporary China-related material to start off, have to expand significantly. Foreign experts, in view of the lack of such experts in Malaysia, need to be recruited for the long term. In short, significant and necessary investments had to be taken, which had not happened in Malaysia. Instead, Sinologists trained in the humanities, who of course had deep “love and humility” toward the Chinese civilization, were appointed to lead China Studies. Although competent scholars in their own field, they were however clearly uncomfortable with the requirements of the “area studies” scholarship. Furthermore, once these departments and institutes were set up, there were no sustained interests from the government anymore.

A brief contrast with the cases of Singapore and Vietnam is instructive here. Singapore understands the strategic significance of the rise of China to a small developed country surrounded by developing countries, and invests whatever that is necessary, including recruitment of foreign experts, to build up China Studies, mainly housed in the East Asian Institute, which has since emerged as the major China Studies center in Asia. Vietnam, like Malaysia, had to rely on the humanities-trained Sinologists to understand China (see the article by Shih et al. in this special volume). But Vietnam, eager to learn and emulate China’s success in economic reforms, is serious about understanding China, and its Sinologists were consistently utilized and mobilized in such a way. In contrast, the intercivilizational dialogue and Malaysia-China friendship agendas continue to encourage the continuous focus on the highlights of Chinese civilization, which would be helpful for domestic identity politics as well, and ironically have not much encouraged the serious pursuit of understanding the real contemporary China, including all its follies and achievements.

Notwithstanding the underdevelopment of China Studies in Malaysia, some researches have been done, mostly regarding the impact of China’s economic rise and China’s foreign policy in regard to Malaysia or Southeast Asia, since these are most pertinent to Malaysia, and not much on domestic China. Incidentally, researches on China’s economy or foreign policy toward Southeast Asia to a certain extent can take place without significant use of research materials published in China, so the lack of academic resources about contemporary China may not be a significant obstacle. Often, these scholars’ interests in China are ephemeral; their real interests lie in the overall economic and security issues. Other than that, China Studies remain mostly a field undertaken by ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. In this sense, it is also easy for a Chinese-dominant field to be seen as not “Malaysian” enough, and hardly be able to gain more support from the establishment (Tan 2013, 16).

To conclude this section here, despite the growing importance of China to Malaysia, China Studies in Malaysia have not developed as much as Sinology and Chinese Overseas Studies, and often the official push for the development of China Studies is couched not in terms of understanding China objectively and strategically but for the purposes of intercivilizational dialogue or friendship with China. Research topics pertaining to contemporary China hence often involve China's economic and foreign policy impacts toward Malaysia and in the region. Identity politics shapes the *problematic* of the research in a more subtle way, and it also prevents the field from getting more establishment support and recognition.

Conclusion

As Shih-yu Chih has argued, the intellectual identity of a scholar denotes a certain choice that could be profoundly political, not just personal. In the case of Chinese Studies, to study China as a civilization, nation-state, or ethnic group, and from what position such choice is made, consciously or unconsciously, may involve social and political contestations and negotiations over how China the object and scholars the subject should be defined and seen in different contexts. We can discuss the *problematic* of the different components of Chinese Studies and their relations to identity politics in Malaysia and the China image they help construct in the following Table.

Levels of studying China	Fields in Chinese studies	Problematic	Image of China
Civilizational	Sinology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercivilizational understanding • Intrinsic values of Chinese culture for Malaysia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magnificent Chinese culture • Depoliticized China
Ethnic	Chinese Overseas Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing the Subjectivity of the Chinese • Hybrid identities of Chinese • Variability of Chineseness among Chinese overseas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentered China
State	China Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malaysia–China friendship and intercivilizational dialogue • China's economic and foreign policy relationship with Malaysia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economically powerful and friendly China

Sinology and studies of Malaysian Chinese community are able to develop more successfully in Malaysia, in which case China is basically approached at the civilizational and at the ethnic levels. The civilizational perspective on China depoliticizes China, taking away the sensitive question of how to deal with the

threatening communist giant and its relationship with the Chinese population in the country. As a largely humanities-based discipline, it ironically has a very pragmatic and strategic value for the Chinese community here, as it presents the splendiddness of Chinese civilization as part of the common non-Western civilization in which the multiethnic Malaysia can draw strengths from. In the more pro-Malay period after the implementation of the New Economic Policy in the 1970s, it stresses and defends the intrinsic values of Chinese culture and civilization.

The ethnic perspective on China decenters China and focuses on the Chinese people outside of China, who vary in terms of different degrees of political, economic, and cultural relationship with China and their residing countries. The diversity and variability of the Chinese people become one of the themes as it serves to protect the Chinese from being seen as simply the extension of China. Often the identities of the Chinese are shown to be complex and hybrid, in order to assert that Chinese can be citizens politically loyal to the authority of their residing countries while remain culturally distinct. Much scholarly writings have also stressed the historical subjectivity of the Chinese as well.

The state perspective on China fails to develop in the Cold War years because of political sensitivity. After the Cold War, the rise of an economically powerful China, which has become one of Malaysia's most important economic partners in the world, did propel the government to pay more attention, but the main impetuses still came from agendas such as intercivilizational dialogue or Malaysia-China relationship, which originated from top political leadership. Such agendas show that the Malaysian government maintains friendly ties with China and appreciates its civilizations, and by implications it values and appreciates the Sino-Malay ethnic friendship and Chinese culture at home, notwithstanding its ethnic preference policy. These agendas however did not necessarily have the urgency to understand China objectively and accurately. The field also fails to attract non-Chinese; it is still mostly scholars of ethnic Chinese descent who are working on China Studies. In Malaysia, this could be seen as not multicultural enough to garner greater support from the establishment.

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