

【Special Feature Articles: *Chao Foon Magazine* and the Chinese Publication Network  
in East and Southeast Asia during the Cold War】

## Development of Textbook Supply Networks Connecting Singapore and Hong Kong

Shinozaki Kaori<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This paper examines the formation of a publishing network connecting Singapore and Hong Kong in the 1950s and the 1960s by focusing on textbook supply networks. Specifically, it clarifies (1) the formation of a textbook supply network from Hong Kong to Singapore, (2) the development of the network in other literary fields, and (3) its subsequent development. The focus was on textbooks because their publication and sale led to the establishment and business expansion of bookstores in the Chinese language publishing industry, including in Hong Kong, Singapore, and China, which became a basic infrastructure to support literary activities.

The supply of textbooks from Hong Kong to Singapore has been documented in the history of individual bookshops, such as the Shanghai Book Company (上海書局) (Chen, 2012; CUHK Library, 2014) and the World Book Company (世界書局) (CUHK Library, 2013). This paper presents a comprehensive overview of the history of individual bookstores by supplementing this information with newspapers published in Singapore.

Chinese schools and textbooks in Singapore and Malaya/Malaysia<sup>2</sup> have been part of the national education system since the 1950s. Singapore established an English-centred national education system; however, until the mid-1980s, Chinese schools constituted a part of the national education system. Chinese schools were closed in late 1980<sup>3</sup>, but the bilingual education policy of making English and the mother tongue compulsory was implemented,

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<sup>1</sup> 篠崎香織 Faculty of Foreign Studies, University of Kitakyushu.

<sup>2</sup> Malaya refers to today's Peninsular Malaysia. In Malaya, the Malayan Union was established as a British colonial administrative unit in April 1946, and the Federation of Malaya was established in February 1948. After 1946, Singapore was separated from Malaya and became a sole British crown colony. Malaya became independent from the United Kingdom in August 1957 and formed Malaysia with Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak in September 1963. Singapore separated from Malaysia in August 1965.

<sup>3</sup> In Singapore, approximately 100% of the students enrolled in elementary schools chose English schools in 1984, and since 1987, all primary schools have become English schools (Tanaka, 1987: 103-105).

and the Chinese language continues to be a compulsory subject for most Chinese students. In Malaya/Malaysia, a Malay-centred national education system was constructed, but schools teaching in Chinese and Tamil also became part of the national education system in primary education.

This paper consists of five chapters. Chapter I overviews that Singapore became a centre for supplying textbooks to Chinese schools in Malaya and other parts of Southeast Asia, relying on Shanghai for supply. Chapter II discusses the emergence of Hong Kong as the sole supply source after 1949. Chapter III explains the factors under which Hong Kong became a hub for textbook supply in terms of human resources and printing technology. Chapter IV shows that the textbook supply channels from Hong Kong also became the book supply channels after the import of books from China was severely restricted in Singapore and Malaya in the late 1950s. Chapter V discusses the demise of the cross-border textbook supply network due to a growing consensus in Singapore that Hong Kong was a threat to its development. It also discusses human resources, which supported the cross-border supply network internalised in Singapore and Malaysia by the 1970s.

## I Establishing Bookstores in Singapore: Connections with Shanghai (the 1910s-1941)

Singapore has developed as a free port since 1819. By the middle of the 20th century, Singapore had become a major trading centre for exporting agricultural and mineral products produced in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies to European and American markets. Singapore became a nodal point for sea routes connecting the inside and outside of the Strait of Malacca and a place where people sailed through. In particular, economic and personal ties between Singapore and Malaya were strong. Singapore also functioned as an information base for the Malacca Straits region, and newspapers and books were published in multiple languages, including English, Chinese, and Malay. Many of these publications had readers from Malaya.

Modern Chinese schools were established in Singapore and Malaya after 1904, with curricula based on the modern educational system introduced in 1902, during the Qing dynasty of China, which taught mathematics, geography, history, and science. By 1937, the number of Chinese schools in Singapore and Malaya had increased to 1,180, with 94,516 students (Tay, 1999: 286-287).

The increase in Chinese schools in Singapore and Malaya and the students studying there became the background for establishing Chinese bookstores and publishers in Singapore. The Commercial Press (商務印書館), founded in Shanghai in 1897, and the Chung Hwa Book Company (中華書局), established in 1912 as an independent company

from the Commercial Press, expanded their business by selling textbooks in China. A reporter dispatched to Shanghai by the *Nanyang Siang Pau* (南洋商報, *NYSP*) noted that textbook publishing, with a fixed sales channel of primary and secondary school students across China, was the most profitable business in the publishing industry and that all large bookshops in China expanded their business through textbook publishing and sales (Wang, 1948).

In response to the growing demand for textbooks in Malaya, the Commercial Press and Chung Hwa Book opened branches in Singapore. The Commercial Press opened its first overseas branch in Singapore in 1915, while Chung Hwa Book set up an agency in Singapore in 1914 and opened a branch in 1923 (Chou Sing Chu Foundation, 2016: 33-34; 43-46).

In the 1920s, Shanghai Book and World Book entered the Chinese book-and-publishing industry in Singapore. The Shanghai Book was founded in 1925 by Chen Yoh Shoo (陳岳書) and Wang Shu Yang (王叔陽), and the World Book was established in 1934 as the predecessor of Cheng Hing Company (正興公司), which was founded in 1924 by Chou Sing Chu (周星衢). Both bookstores entered the publishing and sale of textbooks for Chinese schools business and have expanded since then by importing and selling literary works published in China, especially from Shanghai and Beijing, where publishing became active under the New Culture Movement after the May Fourth Movement (Chou Sing Chu Foundation, 2016: 53-54; 63-64).

## II Changes in Sources of Textbook Procurement: From Shanghai to Hong Kong (1945-1949)

Chinese schools in Malaya and Singapore were forced to close during the Japanese occupation period but reopened after the Japanese army withdrew, and the number of students increased. In 1941, there were 121,000 students in Chinese schools in Malaya, and by the first half of 1947, the number had increased to 200,000 (*NYSP*, 1947.7.20). As the number of students increased, procuring textbooks written in Chinese for each subject became a major challenge, a matter of both quantity and quality.

In China, the Central Foreign Affairs Department of the Kuomintang (國民黨中央海外部) was aware of the shortage of textbooks at Chinese schools overseas. The department ordered the National Institute of Compilation (國立編譯館) to compile national textbooks soon and provide them to Chinese schools overseas in cooperation with the Guangzhou Textbook Supply Committee (廣州供應委員會) and the Seven Textbook Suppliers (七家聯合供應處)<sup>4</sup> in China (*NYSP*, 1946.5.20; 1946.9.11).

<sup>4</sup> It consisted of seven companies: the Commercial Press, the Chung Hwa Book Company, the Da Tong Book Company (大東書局), the Kai Ming Book Company (開明書店), the Cheng

Bookshops in Singapore sought to secure textbooks from China proactively rather than waiting for them to be supplied. At the end of 1945, Chen Yun Qing (陳雲卿), the manager of the Singapore branch of the Commercial Press, went to Shanghai to procure textbooks. However, due to postwar turmoil and soaring prices, it was not possible to procure sufficient copies of textbooks to meet demand in Singapore and Malaya. The price of reference books in China was 1,000 times that before World War II. In 1914, Chen Yun Qing visited Hong Kong and established a branch of the Commercial Press. It kept stock of textbooks before the Japanese occupation. Chen Yun Qing transported them to Singapore to meet the demands in Singapore and Malaya. When stocks in Singapore ran short, the Singapore branch duplicated textbooks (*NYSP*, 1946.9.7; 1947.2.8).

Chung Hwa Book duplicated textbooks in Singapore and used pre-war textbooks for Chinese schools in Southeast Asia to survive supply shortages. However, labour and material costs in Singapore were several times higher than before the war. The price of textbooks was expected to fall if the Hong Kong branch of the Chung Hwa Book, established in 1927<sup>5</sup>, resumed operations at full capacity (*NYSP*, 1946.9.7).

Regarding quantity, they managed to procure textbooks relying on supplies from Hong Kong. Bookstores and Chinese schools were aware of these quality problems.

Schools in Singapore and Malaya increased after World War II due to the involvement of Chinese political organisations. Colonial authorities were concerned that these political organisations, particularly the Communist Party of China (CPC) and its affiliates, would propagate political ideas to students through schooling. The Education Department of Singapore issued documents banning political propaganda in schools (*NYSP*, 1946.9.6; *ST*, 1946.10.25). Therefore, in September 1946, the Chinese Textbook Advisory Committee held its first meeting; their members were the directors of education of the Malayan Union and Singapore, assistant directors of education (Chinese schools), Chinese inspectors of schools, and teachers from the Malayan Union and Singapore. Government representatives urged that textbooks used in Chinese schools were immediately and significantly suitable for the Malayan context (*ST*, 1946.9.13).

Even before the meeting, Chen Yun Qing of the Commercial Press highlighted that there would be a problem with whether national textbooks edited and published in China were suitable for Chinese schools in Malaya and Singapore (*NYSP*, 1946.9.7). Zhong Zhen Jia (鐘振家), manager of the Chung Hwa Book, stated that he had provided schools with samples of national textbooks procured from Shanghai; however, many schools were

Chung Book Company (正中書局), the World Book Company, and the Wen Tong Book Company (*NYSP*, 1948.1.13).

<sup>5</sup> There are two theories about when the Chung Hwa Book Company was established in Hong Kong: 1913 and 1927. The theory that it was established in 1927 is believed to be the most convincing (Chow, 2016: 9-10).

reluctant to adopt those textbooks (*NYSP*, 1946.9.7).

In February 1947, the Chinese Textbook Advisory Committee discussed the revision of textbooks used in Chinese schools in Singapore and Malaya (*NYSP*, 1947.2.6). The Education Department of Singapore decided on the principles for revising Chinese school textbooks and communicated them to the Commercial Press and Chung Hwa Book. The principle was that textbooks and teaching materials should incorporate the climate, natural features, and demographics of Singapore and Malaya. For example, walnuts, mentioned in Chinese textbooks should be replaced with plants commonly found in Singapore and Malaya, where walnuts do not grow naturally (*NYSP*, 1947.2.8).

The Commercial Press sent the textbook revision policy of Chinese schools, requested by the Education Department, to its headquarters in Shanghai, where it was edited by specialists familiar with Southeast Asia. The Chung Hwa Book edited textbooks for the lower grades of primary schools in Singapore while sending textbooks for the upper grades to its headquarters in Shanghai for revision (*NYSP* 1947.2.8).

Some bookstores and publishers have established bases in Hong Kong. The Shanghai Book Company established Hong Kong Shanghai Book in 1947. In 1948, it established the textbook editing committee (現代版教科書編委會) suitable for the time, gathering writers and educators who were living in Hong Kong to edit and publish textbooks for Chinese schools overseas. It was Wen Ping (溫平), the son-in-law of Chen Yue Shu, the founder of the Shanghai Book, who saw a business opportunity in textbook publishing, and Xia Yan (夏衍)<sup>6</sup> recruited the talent. The editor-in-chief was Song Yun Bin (宋雲彬)<sup>7</sup>, the deputy editor-in-

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<sup>6</sup> Born in Zhejiang, China in 1900. Joined the CPC in 1927. Since 1929, he has written numerous plays and films. He also worked as a translator of foreign literature and as a journalist. From 1941 to 1942 and from 1946 to 1949, he lived in Hong Kong and worked for the CPC organ *Huashang Daily* (《華商報》). He travelled to Singapore in mid-March 1947, but was deported to Hong Kong by the British colonial government in September 1947. Since returning to Beijing in April 1949, he has held important posts in the CPC and has written many screenplays for movies and storytelling, as well as literary theories and criticisms (Kanzaki, 1997; Hou, 2009: 244).

<sup>7</sup> Born in 1897 in Zhejiang, China. Joined the CPC in 1924. He entered Kai Ming Book Company in Shanghai and oversaw editing. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, he became the head of the publishing department of the Press of Cultural Supply (文化供應社), which was established in Guilin by the CPC, and the professor of Guilin Normal University. Additionally, he edited the magazine *Wild Grass* (《野草》) with Xia Yan and others. After the end of the Sino-Japanese War, he stayed in Hong Kong and worked for CPC-affiliated institutions such as the Hong Kong Press of Cultural Supply (香港文化供應社), *Wen Wei Po* (《文匯報》), and Ta Teh Institute (達德學院), founded by CPC Guangdong District Committee. From the time he returned to China in 1949 until the 1950s, he wrote numerous history books and was involved in editing textbooks for local governments and publishers (Wang (Nagahori), 2007).

chief was Sun Qi Meng (孫起孟)<sup>8</sup>, and the well-known educator Ye Sheng Tao (葉聖陶)<sup>9</sup> served as supervisor (Chen, 2012: 65). These people established close ties with the CPC, and all returned to China around the time the People's Republic of China was founded, in October 1949. Subsequently, those who remained in Hong Kong<sup>10</sup> took over textbook editing at Shanghai Book.

The Commercial Press and Chung Hwa Book edited and printed textbooks in Shanghai until June 1949, consistent with the principles of the Education Departments of Singapore and Malaya. However, owing to the Chinese Civil War, the situation in Shanghai became tense; the market fluctuated greatly, prices rose, and it became difficult to arrange ships for transportation. Therefore, Commercial Press and Chung Hwa Books increased their dependence on Hong Kong for textbook procurement. In Hong Kong, the price of textbooks for primary and secondary school students rose by 150%, and the price of reference books by 100%. It was reported that this was done in response to the situation in Shanghai (NYSP, 1949.5.14), but it might have also partly reflected the increasing demand in Southeast Asia.

In June 1949, the CPC stipulated an editorial policy for textbooks for primary and secondary schools in China, stating that textbooks must support communism and be anti-

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<sup>8</sup> Born in Anhui, China in 1911. After graduating from Soochow University (東吳大学) in Suchow in 1929, he worked as a teacher at the Suzhou Women's Normal School (蘇州女子師範學校) in Jiangsu Province and the Shanghai Chinese Vocational School. During the Sino-Japanese War, he worked at the Sichuan Office of the Chongqing Chinese Vocational Education Company (重慶中華職業教育社四川辦事處). In 1945, he was involved in establishing the China National Democratic Construction Association (中國民主建國會), whose main members were businessmen and others, and in 1947, he was dispatched to Hong Kong as the association's resident representative. He returned to China in 1948 and joined the CPC in 1950 (Guo, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Born in 1894 in Jiangsu, China. After graduating from secondary school in 1912, he wrote poetry and novels while working as an elementary school teacher, and edited collections of fairy tales and novels. In 1923, he entered the Commercial Press, and in 1930, he moved to Kai Ming Book Company. He spent the Sino-Japanese War in Sichuan and returned to Shanghai in 1946. Invited by the CPC in 1949, he moved from Shanghai to Beijing via Hong Kong, where he engaged in textbook publishing, education, publishing, and literary activities (YRAC, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> CUHK Library (2014) lists the names of editorial staff members such as Zhao Ke Ren (趙克任, editor-in-chief), Lee Yee (李怡), and Au Yeung Nai Chim (歐陽乃霽). Born in Guangzhou in 1936, Lee Yee spent his childhood in Beijing and Shanghai, and during the Sino-Japanese War in Anhui Province. In 1948, he moved to Hong Kong, where he studied at a left-wing school before joining the Hong Kong Shanghai Book Company in 1955. He supported the CPC and launched the magazine *The Seventies* (《七十年代》), later renamed *The Nineties* (《九十年代》) in 1970, but after 1981 he turned to a critical tone against the CPC. Since 1995, he has published a series of critics, "Lee Yee's Column" (《李怡專欄》) in the *Apple Daily* (《蘋果日報》) (Lee, 1990; Chong, 2020). Born in Guangdong Province in 1931, Au Yeung Nai Chim has lived in Hong Kong since the age of seven and studied Western painting. From the 1950s to the 1980s, he worked as an art editor for the Shanghai Book Company and art magazines (Hou, 2016).



imperialists. The CPC authorities had organised a publishing committee involving the Commercial Press, the Chung Hwa Book, the Kai Ming Book, and the World Book, responsible for managing and supervising the production of textbooks (*NYSP*, 1949.6.17).

To sell textbooks reliably in Singapore and Malaya, bookstores in Singapore no longer relied on bookstores in Shanghai to produce and procure textbooks. Consequently, bookstores in Singapore increasingly depended on Hong Kong bookstores.

World Book established a World Publishing Company in Hong Kong in 1949. It became a base for publishing, printing, and importing Chinese books. It provided new literary works, books for teenagers and children, and textbooks for Southeast Asia (CUHK Library, 2013).

Consider a textbook on moral education published and revised in 1949 by Shanghai Book. An illustration of the Capitol Theatre on Stanford Road, Singapore, was provided on the cover. A textbook of the Chinese language included topics related to China and sentences set in Southeast Asia, and the folk tale 'Mouse Deer and Crocodile' widely spread in Southeast Asia, including Malaya<sup>11</sup>.

However, the 'Fenn-Wu Report', published in 1951,<sup>12</sup> highlighted that the textbooks used in Chinese schools in Malaya and Singapore still had many Chinese elements. The report stated that it was important for Chinese school students to understand their Chinese roots but that more Malayan elements should be included (Fenn-Wu Report, 1951). In response to this report, textbooks were revised again after 1952.

### III Hong Kong's Publishing Industry Supported the National Education Systems of Singapore and Malaya

In Singapore and Malaya, schools teaching in English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil remained a part of the national education system during the 1950s and the 1960s.

Until the mid-1950s, Singapore had an educational policy emphasising English, and government subsidies for vernacular schools taught in Chinese, Malay, and Tamil languages were not treated as generously as English schools. However, since 1956, vernacular schools have received the same treatment as English schools (Tanaka, 1987: 101-103).

In Malaya, the Education Ordinance was enforced in November 1952, and schools teaching in Malay or English received full government subsidies as national schools. Chinese

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<sup>11</sup> The content of the textbooks will be discussed in a separate paper.

<sup>12</sup> 'Fenn-Wu Report' was a set of recommendations for the state of Chinese schools in Singapore and the Federation of Malaya. It was drafted by William P. Fenn, who had experience in running higher education institutions in China, and Wu Teh-yao (吳德耀), a UN official, at the request of the Government of Federation of Malaya, after visiting Chinese schools in the Federation of Malaya and Singapore.

and Tamil schools did not become national schools but continued to exist. Due to a lack of financial resources, the government failed to expand national schools nationwide. Chinese and Tamil schools filled this shortfall and continued to provide educational opportunities. In 1957, the Education Ordinance was amended, and Malay and English schools became standard schools, fully subsidised by the government. In contrast, Chinese and Tamil schools became standard-type schools, partially subsidised by the government<sup>13</sup>.

During this period, textbooks were again revised between 1952 and 1953. The textbooks in English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil schools were all revised based on the same content, reflecting the social and cultural realities of Malaya and Singapore (*ST*, 1952.10.13). In revising Chinese school textbooks, the General Textbook Committee, consisting of 11 government representatives (seven from Malaya, four from Singapore) and nine civilian representatives (seven from Malaya, two from Singapore), and the Teachers Advisory Committee, consisting entirely of civilians (10 members from the Federation of Malaya and four members from Singapore) were formed. Consultations began in April 1952 (*NYSP*, 1952.4.17; 1953.1.1; *SS*, 1952.5.6). The editorial policy for the textbook was consistent with the social and cultural realities of Malaya and Singapore, fostering awareness regarding Malaya and Singapore and maintaining Chinese culture (*NYSP*, 1952.10.13).

Initially, the governments of Singapore and Malaya had a policy in which only one government-designated publisher would be responsible for editing and publishing textbooks. It was also planned that four companies—Chung Hwa Book, Commercial Press, Shanghai Book, and Nanyang Book—would jointly establish one publishing house, which the government would commission to edit and publish textbooks (*SCJP*, 1952.3.21). However, the Teacher Advisory Committee urged the General Textbook Committee to allow publishers to edit and publish textbooks independently with government approval and to allow each school to select textbooks (*SCJP*, 1952.9.15).

The United Publishing House (聯營出版社) was established as a joint publishing house, but it was effectively run by the World Book. Companies such as Chung Hwa Book, Commercial Press, Shanghai Book, and Nanyang Book did not participate<sup>14</sup>. These companies were allowed to edit, publish, and sell their textbooks after obtaining government approval.

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<sup>13</sup> See Tan (1997) for the process and struggle in which Chinese and Tamil schools in Malaya moved from outside the national education system to within it. Under the Education Act 1961, schools taught in Malay language became national schools and schools taught in English, Chinese, Tamil became national-type schools. English national-type schools in peninsular Malaysia were converted to national schools taught in Malay after 1970.

<sup>14</sup> Chew (2017) discusses this process in detail. However, Chew writes that there are no materials regarding why multiple publishers did not participate in the alliance publishing company, and the background is not well understood.



Chung Hwa Book and Commercial Press jointly edited and published the textbooks. Its headquarter was in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong branches of both the Chung Hwa Book and the Commercial Press developed textbooks for Southeast Asia to secure the Southeast Asian market under the title of Zhong Shang United Textbook for Overseas (中商聯合版海外課本). The Nanyang Book and Shanghai Book also published textbooks for Chinese schools with government approval (SCJP, 1955.12.15).

Between 1954 and 1956, the textbook markets of Singapore and Malaya became highly competitive. Due to competitive discounts, bookstores could not profit. In 1957, a new joint company was established to ease the competition among bookstores. Zhang Zi Hong (張子宏), General Manager of the Hong Kong Commercial Press Printing Factory, and Wu Shu Tong (吳叔同), Chairman of the Hong Kong Chung Hwa Book, visited Singapore to establish the new joint company. It included United Publishing House, Nanyang Book, Shanghai Book, and other bookstores known as Educational Suppliers Limited (教育供應社). Each publisher handed over textbooks approved by the government to Educational Suppliers, which sold them at a uniform price, and 20-25% of the sales were returned to the publishers (SCJP, 1957.9.23).

Even after establishing Educational Suppliers Limited, schools maintained their discretion in selecting textbooks (SCJP, 1957.10.24) published by other publishers. Malaya Educational Suppliers (大馬出版供應社) published textbooks on Malay, Chinese, arithmetic, civics, hygiene, nature, English, geography, and history for Chinese elementary schools. These textbooks, which conformed to the curriculum and social realities of Malaya, were edited in Hong Kong and transported to Singapore (SCJP, 1962.12.11).

Hong Kong publishers had also entered the Singapore and Malaya textbook markets. The Xiang Gang Da Gong Book Company (香港大公書局)<sup>15</sup> received approval from the Singapore government for textbooks for Chinese schools, and some schools adopted them (NYSP, 1955.1.9; 1955.12.8). The Hong Kong Language and Culture Publishing Company (香港語文出版社) published materials to study the Malay language, such as *A Guide to Composition* (馬來作文指導 / *Panduan Karang-mengarang*), and *A Guide to Letter Writer in Malay* (馬來書信指導 / *Panduan Surat-menyurat Melayu*). These materials were written in Malay, Chinese, and English and used as textbooks and reference books in primary and secondary schools (SCJP, 1961.2.7).

As textbooks were printed in Singapore, the printing industry grew, and by 1955, the number of Chinese-run printing houses had exceeded 100. However, Singapore's printing industry stagnated after the Korean War ended (around 1953). Since 1953, Singapore's economy had been sluggish as a whole, however, the standard of living and labour costs had

<sup>15</sup> Founded in 1937, by Xu Shao Mei (徐少眉) from Shaoxing, Zhejiang; who worked at the Guangzhou Commercial Press (Hui, 2020: 220).

risen (NYSP, 1955.10.17). In Singapore, except for some large printing houses, small- and medium-sized printing houses used old printing equipment and mainly handled the production of wrapping paper and receipts printed with trademarks and store names (NYSP, 1957.6.6).

However, Hong Kong had facilities to print textbooks in quality and quantity, and labour costs were low. The total value of textbooks imported into Singapore from overseas reached S\$4.5 million around 1960 (NYSP, 1960.2.23). Most are believed to have been imported from Hong Kong. Additionally, statistics in 1967 showed that Singapore imported a lot of printed matter from Hong Kong. Hong Kong exported S\$12.6 million worth of publications to 50 countries, with Singapore being its largest customer. Exports from Hong Kong to Singapore amounted to approximately S\$3 million, accounting for 26% of the total export value (NYSP, 1968.9.16).

Yang Quee Yee (楊貴宜), who published a Malay language dictionary *Kamus Umum Bahasa Malaysia*, in 1972 from the World Book, recalls that in the late 1960s, printing technology in Malaysia and Singapore had not yet reached a satisfactory level, and long manuscripts were generally sent to Hong Kong for printing. Yang also noted that proofreading typesets and galleys across Singapore and Hong Kong took time. He stayed in Hong Kong for a month during the final stage of editing and proofreading of the dictionary (Yang, 2006: 464-468).

However, some literary and publishing workers moved from Hong Kong to Singapore and Malaya during this period. Union Press (友聯出版社), established in Hong Kong, is an example. The company is known for launching the Chinese literary journal *Chao Foon* (《蕉風》) in Singapore, in November 1955, but before that, it had published teaching materials for Chinese schools in Malaya and Singapore. The most notable material was *You Lian Hua Ye Wen Xuan* (《友聯活葉文選》), containing 129 Chinese literary works (NYSP, 1955.7.8). In February 1957, Yao Tuo (姚拓) of the Union Press, who edited the material, moved from Hong Kong to Singapore and became involved in editing *The Student Weekly* and *Chao Foon* (NTNU Library and MCLC, 2022).

#### IV Loss of a Major Supply Source of Chinese Books and Construction of a New One

As discussed in the previous chapters, the supply of textbooks from China to Singapore and Malaya ceased in 1949. China had ceased to be a major supplier of general books by the late 1950s. Huang Guo Xiang (黃國祥), who joined the Shanghai branch of Singapore Shanghai Book in 1945 and moved to the Hong Kong branch in 1954 to serve as manager, recalls that 80% of Chinese books in Singapore, Malaya, Hong Kong, and Macau, in the 1950s, were supplied from China (Huang, 1990: 53).

Other articles report the situation around 1957 as follows:

Very few literary books have been published in Singapore in the past year, and those in bookshops are exclusively published in China and Hong Kong. Books published in China were Chinese classics, or foreign literature translated decades ago. Hong Kong publications tended to have amorous, horrifying, and violent content. We should rely on outside sources to supply us with culture and create a culture consistent with the peculiarities of our society and create the publications we need (*NYSP*, 1957.11.2).

Singapore and Malaya began to significantly restrict the supply of books from China from the late 1950s onwards under the Undesirable Publication Ordinance of 1949, the Ban on the Sale and Circulation of Publications Ordinance of 1956, and the Control of Imported Publications Act of 1958, which tightened controls on imported books.

In January 1957, the government of Malaya uniformly banned the sale of books published by 29 publishers in China and Hong Kong, regardless of their fields or content (Table 1). The reason was that the communists controlled these 29 publishers. Some bookshops had their books confiscated, incurred losses, and went bankrupt (*NYSP*, 1957.1.25). Among the books banned for sale were those unrelated to communism, including Chinese classics such as *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and *The Water Margin*, and translated literature by foreign authors such as Shakespeare and Andersen. Complaints were made that it was a great loss for bookshops not to be able to sell even those (*NYSP*, 1957.1.25).

In October 1958, Singapore's government uniformly banned the sale of books by 53 publishers in China and Hong Kong to contain Communist propaganda (see Table 2). A bookstore owner in Singapore stated that books from publishers accounted for 80% of the product (*SCJP*, 1958.10.24). Chen Mong Tse also recalls that over 90% of the books circulated in the Chinese-language publishing markets of Singapore and Malaya could not be sold because of import and sales restrictions (Chen, 2012: 68).

As imported books from China and Hong Kong became harder to reach, publishers who had established branches in Hong Kong supplied textbooks to Singapore and Malaya. Shanghai Book and World Book, which set up editorial departments in Hong Kong and built distribution networks to supply textbooks to Singapore and Malaya, took steps to resolve this shortage. Shanghai Book established new publishing houses in Hong Kong to acquire copyrights for books published in China to supply to Singapore and Malaya. They also organised Hong Kong writers and editors to publish their books (Chen, 2012: 69-70). Huang recalled that books published in Hong Kong in the 1950s depended heavily on markets in Singapore and Malaya, with less than 30% of books distributed in Hong Kong (Huang, 1990:

Table 1 : 29 Publishers Banned in Malaya in 1957

Publishers' Name	Place	Publishers' Name	Place
Bei Xin Shu Ju	China	Shanghai Publishing House	China
Chao Hua Mei Shu Chu Ban She	China	Shi Dai Chu Ban She	China
China Youth Publishing House	China	Sin Min Chu Chu Ban She	China
Hai Yan Shu Ju	China	Ta Tung Book	China
Jie Fang She	China	Wen Hua Gong Ying She	China
Juvenile & Children's Publishing House	China	Wen Hua Gong Zuo She	China
Kai Ming Shu Dian	China	Worker's Publishing	China
Li Ming Chu Ban She	China	Xin Hua Shu Dian	China
New Art Publishing House	China	Xin Wen Yi Chu Ban She	China
New China Book	China	Youth Press	China
People's Fine Arts Publishing House	China	Chen Guang Chu Ban She	Hong Kong
People's Literature Publishing House	China	Qiu Shi Chu Ban She	Hong Kong
People's Press	China	Self-Study Publisher	Hong Kong
Popular Book	China	Xue Wen Shu Dian	Hong Kong
San Lian Shu Dian	China		

(NYSP, 1957.1.25)

Table 2 : 53 Publishers Banned in Singapore in 1958

Publishers' Name	Place	Publishers name	place
Chao Hua Art Publishing	Beijing	Academic Life Publishers	學習生活出版社
China Light Industry Press	Beijing	Bei Xin Shu Ju	北新書局
China Machine Press	Beijing	Children's Publishing	兒童讀物出版社
China Theatre Press	Beijing	China Record Factory	中國唱片廠
China Youth Publishing House	Beijing	Classical Literature Publishing House	古典文學出版社
Chinese Academy of Science	Beijing	Jian Zhu Gong Cheng Chu Ban She	建築工程出版社
Electric Power Industry Publishing	Beijing	Jiao Yu Tu Pian Chu Ban She	教育圖片出版社
Ethnic Publishing House	Beijing	Juvenile & Children's Publishing House	少年兒童出版社
Financial Economic Publishing House	Beijing	People's Art Publishing House	人民美術出版社
Gu Ji Chu Ban She	Beijing	Ping Ming Chu Ban She	平明出版社
Higher Education Press	Beijing	Science and Technology Press	科學技術出版社
Music Publication House	Beijing	Shanghai Culture Press	上海文化出版社
People's Education Press	Beijing	Shanghai Medical Publishing House	上海衛生出版社
People's Literature Publishing House	Beijing	Xin Wen Yi Chu Ban She	新文藝出版社
People's Medical Publishing House	Beijing	Shanghai Magazine Company	上海雜誌公司
People's Press	Beijing	Xin Zhi Shi Chu Ban She	新知識出版社
People's Sports Publishing House	Beijing	Qiu Shi Chu Ban She	求實出版社
Popular Science Press	Beijing	Chen Guang Chu Ban She	晨光出版社
Posts and Telecom Press	Beijing	Xiang Gang Xue Sheng Shu Dian	香港學生書店
Science Press	Beijing	Wen Xue Chu Ban She	文學出版社
Sheng Huo, Du Shu, Xin Zhi, San Lian Chu Ban She	Beijing	Hong Kong Self-Study	香港自學出版社
Tong Su Du Wu Chu Ban She	Beijing	Hua Qiao Xue Sheng Chu Ban She	華僑學生出版社
Worker's Publishing	Beijing	Xiang Gang Xue Wen Chu Ban She	香港學文出版社
Writers Publishing House	Beijing	Xiang Gang Zhong Liu Chu Ban She	香港中流出版社
Xin Hua Bookstore	Beijing	Xin Jiao Yu Cong Shu She	性教育叢書社
Zhong Hua Quan Guo Ke Xue Ji Shu Pu Ji Xie Hui	Beijing	Xiang Gang Wen Zong Chu Ban She	香港文宗出版社
Ren Jian Shu Wu	Guangzhou		

(SCJP, 1958.10.23)

52-53).

The Cultural Revolution unfolded in China between 1966 and 1976. Chen states that as Chinese publications propagated the revolution, the publishing industry in Hong Kong grew by further enhancing its publications and expanding its distribution channels overseas, including Singapore and Malaysia (Chen, 2012: 70-71).

The Singaporean government lifted the ban on books from publishers in China and Hong Kong after examining the books upon application by booksellers (*NYSP*, 1958.10.25). The books lifted ban between 1959 and 1960 were Chinese classics, translated literature, reference books, science, technology, and knowledge of daily life, but there were hardly any books on politics (*SCJP*, 1959.5.23; 1959.8.22; 1959.10.19; 1959.11.21; 1959.11.29; 1960.1.16).

## V The Internalisation of Textbook Resources in Hong Kong into Singapore and Malaysia

Singapore and Malaya were criticised for their dependence on Hong Kong textbook procurement in the late 1950s from the perspective of domestic industrial protection and economic development. Articles appeared pointing out that although Singapore and Malaya had many printers, they lacked printing facilities and personnel, and labour costs were high. Therefore, they were losing to Hong Kong, which had high quality and low costs. It was pointed out that printing costs in Hong Kong were about two-thirds of those in Singapore and that the printing industry in Singapore was at a disadvantage compared to the printing industry in Hong Kong (*NYSP*, 1957.11.2). This view led to the argument that textbooks imported from Hong Kong would maintain Hong Kong's advantages, harming the economic growth of Singapore and Malaya.

In Singapore and Malaya, there were two or three large companies with advanced printing equipment, but few printing engineers could operate these machines. Therefore, it was pointed out that an educational institution to train printing engineers should be established (*NYSP*, 1957.12.18). In addition, some argued that the government should take measures to protect Singapore's printing industry. As a measure, it was proposed that textbooks used in schools in Singapore and Malaya be printed and published domestically (*NYSP*, 1959.7.9, 1960.2.23). Ronald Scott, General Manager at Straits Times, stated at a meeting organised by the Singapore Printing Employees' Union in 1963, that Hong Kong threatened the printing industry in Singapore and that restrictions should be placed on importing printed matter into Singapore (*ST*, 1963.3.11).

Malaya gained independence from Britain in August 1957; Malay members of parliament said that textbooks from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan should not be imported because they were subversive. In response, Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Razak replied that



it was impossible to immediately ban the import of textbooks from overseas because of the lack of textbook circulation, but the government would consider it in the future (*SCJP* 1960.7.7; *BH*, 1960.7.7).

Singapore achieved independence and formed Malaysia in September 1963 but separated from Malaysia in August 1965 and became an independent state. Since then, Singapore has promoted economic development to survive. The Singaporean government developed various industries, including the printing industry. It established the Printing Industry Advisory Council in 1967 (*ST*, 1970.8.2) and a school for human resources to support the printing industry in 1968 (*ST*, 1968.8.25).

By 1972, Singapore's printing industry had grown to a level comparable to that of Hong Kong. The number of printing houses in Singapore increased to approximately 220; many introduced new printing equipment imported from Japan and hired trained personnel who studied at government printing schools. Most books in bookstores were printed in Singapore (*NN*, 1972.6.26).

In Singapore and Malaysia, editing and publishing Chinese school textbooks continued to be handled by private publishers (*ST*, 1973.10.9; 1974.8.4). However, in both countries, textbooks were increasingly printed and published domestically. In the 1970s, almost no textbooks were imported from Hong Kong to Singapore or Malaysia.

Since the 1970s, many textbooks for Chinese schools published in Singapore and Malaysia have been supported by literary workers who migrated from Hong Kong. For example, Yao Tuo, editor of *The Student Weekly* and *Chao Foon*<sup>16</sup> became editor-in-chief of textbooks in 1975 at The Malaya Press (馬來亞文化事業有限公司), under the umbrella of the Union Press. He has published many primary and secondary school textbooks in Malaysia and Singapore<sup>17</sup>. The human resources that supported the supply of textbooks in Hong Kong were internalised in Singapore and Malaysia and continued to develop textbooks in both countries.

## Conclusion

In the mid-1910s, Singapore became a centre for supplying textbooks to Chinese schools in Malaya and other parts of Southeast Asia. While Singapore initially relied on Shanghai for its supply, after 1945, it became increasingly dependent on Hong Kong. With

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<sup>16</sup> The editorial office of *The Student Weekly* and *Chao Foon* moved from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur in 1959.

<sup>17</sup> Examples of textbooks include textbook of Mandarin for secondary schools in Malaya/Malaysia (1960 to 1986) and primary schools in Singapore (1970 to 1980), and textbook of Mandarin, mathematics, moral education, and human and environment for Chinese primary schools in Malaysia (1980-1996) (NTNU Library and MCLC, 2022).

the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the textbook supply base shifted completely to Hong Kong, where mainland Chinese intellectuals came and went, printing technology was high, and costs were low. Hong Kong's textbook supply channel became a general book supply channel after importing books from China was severely restricted in Singapore and Malaya in the late 1950s. However, from the late 1950s onwards, there was a growing consensus in Singapore that Hong Kong was a threat to its development. The government subsequently made efforts to develop the printing industry, and by the early 1970s, Singapore had the equipment and workforce to produce its own textbooks.

In the 1970s, Singapore cut its textbook supply network with Hong Kong, regarding physical distribution channels. However, literary and intellectual figures who moved from Hong Kong to Singapore and Malaya in the 1950s and 1960s became key players in textbook production in Singapore and Malaysia from the 1970s onwards. A prime example is from the Union Press in Hong Kong, those engaged in the publication of *Chao Foon*. The textbook supply network linking Hong Kong and Singapore, in terms of human connections, is still alive, and its legacy is inherited.

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SS: *Singapore Standard*, Singapore

ST: *Straits Times*, Singapore

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