

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

## Cultural Exchange between Hong Kong and Malaya: The Case of the Union Cultural Organization

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### Introduction

This study examines the cultural exchange that occurred between Hong Kong and Malaya/Malaysia, including Singapore<sup>2</sup>, focusing on the Hong Kong Union Cultural Organization (友聯社, hereafter UCO), which published *Chao Foon*.

The history of Hong Kong following the Japanese occupation (1941-1945) has been observed mainly in the context of its relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United Kingdom. The PRC, founded in 1949, was a powerful, national, united government, and Hong Kong, which is connected to the PRC by land, was described as “an entity that can be liberated with a single phone call”. In contrast, the publishing networks of East and Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 60s, the theme of this special issue, reveal a different aspect of Hong Kong. *Chao Foon* was a Chinese-language literary magazine that was founded by young people from Hong Kong who moved to Malaya. Against the backdrop of this magazine was the spread of the Cold War regime across Asia and the presence of the United States (US).

After World War II ended, Cantonese became the *lingua franca* in Hong Kong<sup>3</sup>. Hong Kong appears to be a society dominated by Cantonese people. However, after 1945, Hong Kong experienced a massive influx of immigrants from mainland China. These included Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China, hereafter KMT) supporters, military personnel, businesspeople, capitalists, and intellectuals, many of whom came from further north than

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<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> The English spelling of personal names followed their Cantonese pronunciation. For example, the surname Lin (林), which is pronounced Lin in standard Chinese, was often rendered as Lam, while Liu (劉) was rendered as Lau.

Guangdong. For example, Tung Chee-hwa (董建華)<sup>4</sup>, the first Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), was born in Shanghai and migrated to Hong Kong at the age of 12. Anson Chan Fang On-sang (陳方安生), the first ethnic Chinese to become Chief Secretary in Hong Kong under the British administration, was also born in Shanghai and migrated with her family to Hong Kong in 1948. A famous Hong Kong director, Ann Hui (許鞍華), was born in Anshan (鞍山), Liaoning Province in China.

These examples may create an impression that Hong Kong was the final destination for Chinese immigrants. While this was true for some, Hong Kong was also a gateway for the spread of Chinese communities across the world, and the case of the UCO illustrates the links between mainland China, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia.

To explore this point, this study is structured as follows: Chapter 1 reviews the political context in which the UCO was established in Hong Kong. Chapter 2 examines the background of the people who established the UCO, while Chapter 3 describes the staff members of the UCO who went to Malaya to establish and join *Chao Foon* and what kind of activities they performed, and Chapter 4 examines aspects of Hong Kong as a front in the cultural Cold War.

The main sources for this study are Lo and Hung (2014; 2017). The two-volume books included interviews with 18 people, mainly the founders of the UCO and their successors. Under the umbrella of the UCO, the Union Press published *The Chinese Student Weekly* (《中國學生周報》) between 1952 and 1974, which was a general magazine for young people. Aimed at secondary school students, university and tertiary institution students, and young people in general, it focused on books, life, thought and literature, promoted young people to post their essays, and was popular among young Chinese people in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. In 2003, Lo Wai Luen digitised and uploaded *The Chinese Student Weekly* to the Hong Kong Literature Database (香港文學資料庫) (Chinese University of Hong Kong Library, 2003). In addition, the memoirs of Yu Ying-shih (余英時), a prominent Chinese historian in the US who was involved in the activities of the UCO during its early period, was also referred to as a source (Yu, 2018).

## I Overview of the Union Cultural Organization

The Union Cultural Organization (UCO) is known as a product of the US dollar culture (美元文化) and “greenback culture” (綠背文化)<sup>5</sup>. During the Cold War, the US

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<sup>4</sup> The names of Chinese/ Chinese origin persons in this paper follow the dialectal notation where this can be ascertained. Otherwise, the pinyin notation is used for the names of Chinese/Chinese origin persons.

<sup>5</sup> As the US dollar note is green in colour, greenback means financial support from the US.

engaged in cultural publicity and propaganda activities on a global scale. The Ford and Asia Foundations actively supported cultural activities in Asia. The UCO survived after the support from the US foundations ended and was, arguably, the most successful venture of the US dollar culture.

The Union Research Institute(友聯研究所, hereafter URI), under the umbrella of the UCO, was well-known among China watchers in the 1950s and 60s. During the Cold War, Hong Kong served as a window for the West to observe the PRC behind the “Bamboo Curtain”. Those observing China made use of the Universities Service Centre (大學服務中心, hereafter USC) located at No. 155 Argyle Street (亞皆老街), Kowloon Tong (九龍塘), and the nearby Union Research Institute at No. 9 College Road (書院道). Both institutions were financially supported by US organizations and were part of the cultural Cold War.

According to John Gittings<sup>6</sup>, a British journalist who arrived in Hong Kong in 1968, Hong Kong served as a base for anti-Chinese propaganda and intelligence gathering. The largest intelligence-gathering centre in Hong Kong was the US Consulate General (Gittings 1972). For those observing China during the Cold War, the USC and URI in Hong Kong were important intellectual infrastructures for observing China; the USC was an institution that was founded in Hong Kong in 1963 by US China studies academics to re-energise US-China studies when McCarthyism came to an end. The USC provided a research base for China studies scholars and graduate and postdoctoral students from the US.

The URI, under the umbrella of the UCO, had been storing clippings from newspapers and periodicals on contemporary China since the 1950s. In addition to newspapers published in China, its coverage also included newspapers published in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. The USC used the URI's clipping files by paying royalties to the UCO. However, after 1966, the USC began to expand its own collection, as the URI was no longer able to keep its collection up-to-date (Vogel, 2004: 13). The URI material was purchased by the Hong Kong Baptist College (香港浸會學院), which later became the Hong Kong Baptist University (香港浸會大學) and, as of 2023, the newspaper clippings, magazines, and pamphlets collected by the URI between the 1950s and 70s have been available at the university library (Hong Kong Baptist University Library 2021).

Meanwhile, in the overseas, URI was prominent as a China-watching base, and the UCO was known in the Hong Kong and Southeast Asian Chinese communities for its high-quality publications. *The Chinese Student Weekly*, a favourite among the Hong Kong youth during the 1950s and 60s, was launched on 28 July 1952, and ran for 1,128 issues, over a 22-year period, until 20 July 1974. Following this, the Union Press published *China Weekly* (《祖

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<sup>6</sup> John Gittings is a UK journalist. He was affiliated with the Contemporary China Institute at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London when he wrote this article on China watching in Hong Kong. He took MA in Oriental Studies from Oxford University.

国周刊》，first published in January 1953), which reported on the internal workings of mainland China, *Children's Paradise* (《兒童樂園》, first published in January 1953), which was aimed at children, and *University Life* (《大學生活》, first published in April 1955) (Law, 2009).

Of these, *The Chinese Student Weekly* carried news about schools in Hong Kong, mainland China, and schools that used Chinese as the medium of instruction in various overseas locations, as well as information about studying in Taiwan, and accepted a large number of essay postings from young people and students. The first issue, published in July 1952, had four pages; however, from the second week of December that year, it became an eight-page publication. On the first anniversary of the first issue, the circulation had increased from a few hundred to 20,000. In Hong Kong, apart from the newspaper stands on the street, it had agency sales offices in 127 schools and 45 bookshops, with actual sales in Hong Kong reaching 12,000 copies per issue. It also established a sales network in Taiwan and Southeast Asia as well as within Chinese communities in Europe and the US (Law, 2009). Based on the Hong Kong edition, other editions were published in Singapore, Malaya, Myanmar, and Indonesia (Lo and Hung, 2014: 147).

The UCO is considered to have been established during the late 1940s, as publications by the Union Press in late 1949 and early 1950 can be identified (Lo and Hung, 2014: 11). The fundamental objective of the UCO, namely, to promote “political democracy, economic equity, social freedom”, can be seen in its brochure and publication catalogue, (Lo and Hung, 2014: 11-12). In its brochure, the UCO introduces itself as follows:

Since the Communist Party of China (CPC) began to gain power, many Chinese people have fled the mainland for the free world. Most of them fled to avoid being liquidated, but some had other ideas. They would not have been liquidated had they stayed in China; in fact, if they had wished, they could have joined the privileged class in order to liquidate others. They did not come to the free world only to embrace freedom, but also with a sense of responsibility and determination to contribute to the destruction of communist rule and the establishment of a democratic society in China.

Among them was a group of young intellectuals who had already contributed to the movement; they had established an organization for young people and embarked on cultural work before the fall of the mainland government and now ran two schools, an institute and two magazines. They became refugees in a land of unknowns: Hong Kong. They were very poor; some of them arrived in Hong Kong with only a toothbrush (Lo and Hung, 2014: 13).

In its founding statement, the UCO clarified its opposition to the CPC. It also asserted

that there existed a group of intellectual youths who had fled abroad, including to Hong Kong, with a sense of intellectual responsibility for building a liberal democratic society.

Therefore, the UCO was regarded as a Third Force. Wang Jianwu (王健武), who later spent ten years in Singapore and Malaya/Malaysia, stated: “At that time, we left China because we did not agree with the situation in the country. We were neither the KMT nor in favour of the CPC. After leaving China, we did not want to go to Taiwan either. Therefore, many people regarded the UCO as a Third Force” (Lo and Hung, 2014: 148-149).

The Third Force sought a third path that was different from that of either the KMT or the CPC. The activities of the Third Force can be divided into two periods, namely: (1) the period when they were active in mainland China during the Republic of China (ROC) era; and (2) the period when the movement developed in Hong Kong during the 1950s. The Third Force during the ROC period was organised as the “Democratic parties” (民主黨派) of the “Three Parties and Three Interest Groups” (三黨三派), which refers to the Young China Party (中國青年黨, formed in Paris in 1923), the Chinese National Socialist Party (中國國家社會黨, formed in 1932, later becoming the China Democratic Socialist Party, 中國民主社會黨), the Chinese Action Committee for National Liberation (中華民族解放行動委員會, formerly the Provisional Action Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party, 中國國民黨臨時行動委員會, later becoming the Chinese Peasants’ and Workers’ Democratic Party, 中國農工民主黨), the National Salvation Association (救國會, originally 全國各界救國聯合會), the National Association of Vocational Education of China (中華職業教育社) and the Rural Reconstruction Association (鄉村建設協會). These formed the China Democratic Political League (中國民主政團同盟) in 1941 and were later reorganised to become the China Democratic League (中國民主同盟) in 1944 (Nakamura, 2018: 234-235)<sup>7</sup>.

The opposition to the KMT-led constitutional transition after World War II led to the dissolution of the China Democratic League in 1947. Some remained in mainland China, whereas others moved to Hong Kong and continued their activities, with American support. A report by the Hong Kong Working Group of the KMT (國民黨香港工作組) on “the Current Status of Political Activities of Chinese Residents in Hong Kong” (留港華人政治活動現狀) listed the military officers of the Wang clique (汪派) and New Guangxi clique (桂系), each of which was linked to Wang Ching-wei (汪精衛) as the main actors of the Third Force (Huang,

<sup>7</sup> Chen Zhengmao (陳正茂) also sees the Third Force during the ROC period as these three parties and three interest groups. The three parties were the Young China Party (中國青年黨), the Third Party (第三黨, reorganised into the Provisional Action Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party (中國國民黨臨時行動委員會) in 1930) of Deng Yanda (鄧演達), and the Chinese National Socialist Party (國家社會黨) of Zhang Junmai (張君勱) known as Carsun Chang. The three interest groups were Liang Shuming’s (梁漱溟) Rural Construction group (鄉村建設派), Huang Yanpei’s (黃炎培) National Association of Vocational Education of China (職業教育社), and Shen Junru’s (沈鈞儒) National Salvation Association (救國會) (Chen, 2011: 2). The three constituent organizations of the three factions are as Nakamura views them.

2020: 241-242). These included Xie Chengping (謝澄平), who was Xu Guansan's (許冠三) teacher at university and the organiser of the *Freedom Front* (《自由陣線》). Following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, the major cities fell one after another in mainland China, and Guilin in Guangxi became a place of refuge for intellectuals, including academics, journalists, and cultural figures. In Guangxi, Li Zongren's (李宗仁) KMT Guangxi clique dominated. Li rivalled Chiang Kai-shek and, in opposition to Chiang, accepted the CPC and leftist officials based on Guangxi (Nakamura, 2018: 140-141).

In fact, members who were later involved in the establishment of the UCO, such as Xu Guansan and Chen Siming (陳思明), gathered at the Free Press (自由出版社), which published *Freedom Front*. The Free Press was one of the publishers that was funded by the US Information Agency during the early 1950s. Many publications by the Free Press have anti-Communist, nostalgic, and gang-related themes. *Freedom Front* contained many articles advocating third-party political ideas (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008).

The Free Press had a close relationship with the Young China Party, which belonged to the Third Force. The founding members of the UCO, who were in and out of the Free Press, naturally had a close correspondence with Zuo Shunsheng (左舜生) and Li Huang (李璜) from the Young China Party (Lo and Hung, 2014: 11). Among the founding members, Qiu Ran (邱然), Chen Siming, Hu Xinping (胡欣平), Xu Dongbin (徐東濱) and Xu Guansan were involved in the Democratic Chinese Youth Grand Alliance (民主中國青年大同盟) (Chen, 2011: 92). The Grand Alliance was intended to rejuvenate the human resources of the Third Force.

However, Xi Huihui (奚會暉), who was instrumental in the corporatisation of the UCO, disagreed with the logic that the UCO was a Third Force because of its anti-Communist, anti-Taiwan stance. Xi saw the UCO as not necessarily anti-Taiwan, although it opposed a series of policies when the KMT was in power on mainland China and criticised the KMT's failure to implement democracy after moving to Taiwan (Lo and Hung, 2014: 62-63).

## II Founding Executives of the Union Cultural Organization

Yu Ying-shih stated that the UCO was founded by intellectual youths who had migrated from mainland China to Hong Kong. None of the founding cadres was born in Hong Kong or Cantonese. According to Yu, the earliest founding members were a group of approximately 20 people, led by ten leaders. Their ages ranged from 24 to 32 years, and they had graduated from universities in mainland China before 1949 (Yu, 2018: 135-136).

Zhang Linghua (張浚華, born in Hong Kong in 1938, whose place of origin was Xinhui county, Guangdong province), who edited *Children's Paradise* until 1994, describes the core

members of the UCO as follows:

Yan Yun (燕雲) from the Union Cultural Organization was from Yenching University (燕京大學) and Xu Dongbin was from Peking University (北京大學). They were well versed in English and familiar with international community. I was unacquainted with them when I was in charge of *The Chinese Student Weekly*. (Among the UCO cadres,) there were members who did not really understand Cantonese, like Zhao Cong (趙聰), for example. Zhao was a graduate of Peking University and the most knowledgeable regarding classical Chinese literature. He seemed to play with and enjoy the world of literature and history and had little intention of integrating into Hong Kong society. Some of the senior members of the UCO lacked any language aptitude or any desire to learn Cantonese (Lo and Hung, 2017: 193).

Thus, the founding members of the UCO did not speak Cantonese and seemed like outsiders, who had no intention of integrating into Hong Kong society.

By cross-checking several sources, including Lo and Hung (2014; 2017), Yu (2018), and Fu (2019) who discussed the relationship between the UCO and the Asia Foundation, based on the Asia Foundation's archives, it can be inferred that the core members of the UCO, during its early years, were Chiu Ren, Xu Dongbin, Hu Xinping, Chen Siming, and Xu Kuan-San<sup>8</sup>. Hence, the author wishes to review the backgrounds of these core members individually and consider whether these characteristics emerge.

Qiu Ran was Maria Yen, and known as Yan Gui Lai (燕婦来) at the UCO. Her pen name was Yan Yun. She was a first-class student from the Department of Western Languages at Peking University, one year junior to Xu Dongbin, and well-versed in English.

Qiu Ran was one of the founders of the UCO, who set the organization's policy and held the position of secretary-general of the Union Press, and director of the URI. It is said that Qiu Ran used the royalties from the book *University Life under the Red Banner* (《紅旗下的大學生活》) as capital to found the UCO. Gui Zhongshu (桂中樞)<sup>9</sup>, a friend of Qiu Ran's father Qiu Chun (邱椿), introduced James Ivy, head of the Asia Foundation in Hong Kong, to Qiu Ran, and thus a relationship between the Asia Foundation and the UCO was established (Lo and Hung, 2014: 65-66; Fu, 2019: 69). Like Xu Dongbin (see below for details), Qiu Ran negotiated and liaised with the American institutions, including the Asia Foundation (Yu,

<sup>8</sup> Xu left the Union Press shortly after its foundation.

<sup>9</sup> Born in Kai county (開縣), Sichuan province, he studied in the US as the first foreign student after the Boxer Uprising, returned to China in the 1920s and published *The China Critic* (《中國評論周報》) in Shanghai. He studied law at Dong Wu University, became a lawyer, opened an office in 1928, and moved with his family to Hong Kong in 1949. He worked as an editor at the *Hong Kong Standard*, an English-language newspaper.

2018: 137-138).

Qiu Ran's deep commitment to the UCO seems to have been largely due to her own father. Qiu Chun (his courtesy name is Da Ran 大然), was of the same generation as the pioneer of liberalism in China, Hu Shih (胡適). Qiu Chun taught at Beiping Normal University (北平師範大學), Peking University and Beijing Normal University (北京師範大學)<sup>10</sup>. Qiu Chun was expelled from the KMT due to his involvement in the Young China Party. Qiu Chun was unable to travel to Hong Kong for health reasons in 1948, and remained in the mainland China after the establishment of the PRC in 1949. He was criticised during the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and passed away in September of that year (Cong, 2019).

Qiu Ran left the UCO in 1967. She then briefly worked for the Chinese University of Hong Kong, pursued postgraduate studies in Germany, obtained a PhD and taught at the University of Zurich. Yu recalls that Qiu Ran was an important activist during the Cold War and published prose and poetry. She entered a German monastery in the late 1970s and found faith to be a stronghold in the latter part of her life (Yu, 2018: 138).

Alongside Qiu Ran, Xu Dongbin was also the face of the UCP. Xu was born in Beiping (now Beijing) in 1927, and his birthplace was Enshi county (恩施縣). He used the alias Xu Chongzhi (許崇智) for a time in Hong Kong. During the Sino-Japanese War, he enrolled in the Department of Foreign Languages at the National Southwest Union University (國立西南聯合大學), which was formed through a merger of Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Nankai University. During the war, he trained and worked as an interpreter for the US Air Force, after which he returned to the Department of Western Languages at Peking University. After joining the UCO, his excellent English language skills enabled him to negotiate and liaise with US foundations, such as the Asia Foundation. He also had a deep understanding of China's foreign relations and international politics, and served as the editor-in-chief and president of the Union Press and director of the URI (Yu, 2018: 136).

Xu launched the *Tiger Newspaper* (《中文虎報》) in Kuala Lumpur with a newspaper belonging to the *Sing Tao Daily* Group (星島日報) on behalf of the UCO in 1959. When the newspaper ceased publication, he returned to Hong Kong in 1964 to serve as chief editor of the *Sing Tao Daily* (Lo and Hung, 2014: 168); between 1973 and 1978, he was general editor of the *Shidai Congshu* (《時代叢書》) at TIME magazine, and, in 1981, was general editor of the *Ming Pao* (《明報》), for which he wrote editorials. In 1989, he retired and settled in San Francisco, but wrote weekly editorials for *Ming Pao* until early 1995. He died in October 1995 (Lo and Hung, 2014: 167, 170).

In addition to this, Hu Xinping, known as Sima Changfeng (司馬長風), was also a key founding member of the UCP. He used the pseudonym Hu Yue (胡越) for his essays on

<sup>10</sup> The Education Department of Peking University was incorporated into Beijing Normal University.



Marxism and the CPC, and the pseudonym Si Ma Chang Feng for his literary and other works (Yu, 2018: 137). Hu was born in Harbin, Heilong Province, graduated from the National Northwest University (國立西北大學), and became a National Congress delegate after the Sino-Japanese War ended. He arrived in Hong Kong during the late 1940s, became a member of the Democratic Chinese Youth Grand Alliance, and was involved in the founding of the UCO. He later taught at Hong Kong Shue Yan College (香港樹仁學院) and the Hong Kong Baptist College, and died in New York in the 1980s (Lo and Hung, 2014: 34). He is the author of *Zhongguo Xin Wenxue Shi* (《中國新文學史》) and *Xiangchou Ji* (《鄉愁集》). He was the first editor-in-chief of *China Weekly* (Yu, 2018: 137).

Another founding member, Chen Siming, also known as Chen Weiqiang (陳維瑄) and Chen Zhuo Sheng (陳濯生), was a graduate of the National Central University (國立中央大學). He was a member of the Democratic Chinese Youth Grand Alliance, edited the *Freedom Front* in the 1950s and later joined the UCO. He was also involved in the activities of the UCO in Malaya in 1955 and emigrated to the US (Lo and Hung, 2014: 11). Chen published his memoirs on the UCO<sup>11</sup>.

Chen was the son-in-law of Ding Tingbiao (丁庭標) (Lo and Hung, 2014: 177). Ding Tingbiao was a member of the Legislative Yuan of the Nationalist Government (國民政府立法委員) and a leader of the Young China Party of Jiangsu Province (江蘇省青年黨). Ding Ting Biao moved to Hong Kong in 1949, joined the Free China Movement (自由中國運動) and became part of the Free Press, where he was involved in the publication of the *Freedom Front* (Lo and Hung, 2014: 177). Ding Ting Biao was Ding Wenjiang's (丁文江) uncle. Ding Wen Jiang was a prominent geologist and writer in the Republic of China, and also a friend of Hu Shi, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (梁啟超) and Fu Ssu-nien (傅斯年).

Several of the founders of the UCO, such as Xu Guansan, left it shortly after its foundation. Xu was born in 1925 and graduated from the Northeastern University (東北大學) in 1947. At the request of Xie Chengping of the Free Press, Xu moved to Hong Kong in 1950 and took charge of the editorial work for the Free Press (Yu, 2018: 139). Xie Chengping was Xu's mentor at university. Xie moved to Taipei in 1949 to work as the secretary of Fu Ssu-nien, the principal of Taiwan University. Yu attributes the greatest success of the UCO among the Third Force to the "mutual respect" among the members. However, he states that "Xu Guansan was the only exception and we had to follow separate paths" (Yu, 2018: 139). When Xu left the UCO, he formed the Platitude Press (人人出版社) together with Sun Shuxian (孫述憲) and published *Every Man's Literature* (《人人文學》). Xu taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學), where he authored *Wo Suo Liaojie de Ziyou* (《我所了解的自由》), *Xin Shixue Jiushi Nian* (《新史學九十年》), and *Shixue yu Shixue Fazhan* (《史

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<sup>11</sup> It was severely criticised by He Zhenya as being "full of inaccuracies" (Lo and Hung, 2014: 10).

學與史學發展》(Lo and Hung, 2014: 13).

Shi Chengzhi (史誠之) was also a founding member but passed away at an early age. He wrote several books on the CPC, including *On the Military Development of the CPC* (《論中共的軍事發展》), and *Historical Turning Point and China's Future: On the Past of the People's Liberation Army and the Future of the CPC* (《歷史轉捩點與中國前途——論解放軍的過去與中共的未來》) .

Yu states that the UCO, unlike other US-supported organizations, survived the loss of US support because it had developed into a modern enterprise, the Union Cultural Organization Limited (友聯文化事業有限公司) (Yu 2018: 139-140). Yu also states that the contributions of Chen Siming and Xi Huihui were significant. Sun Shuyu (孫述宇), the younger brother of Sun Shuxian, a founding member of the UCO, recalls that He Zhenya (何振亞) was in charge of the accounting (Lo and Hung, 2014: 120).

He Zhenya was born in Shanghai in 1925. His place of origin was Anhui Province. He attended the National Central University (國立中央大學) and later served in the Youth Army as a translator and paratrooper. He arrived in Hong Kong in 1949 and joined the UCO in 1950. Although he did not publish any of his own writing, as the general manager, he was responsible for the overall business operations of the UCO. After leaving the Union Press, he maintained his relationships with the previous UCO members. In 2003, he donated a large amount of materials related to *The Chinese Student Weekly* to the Chinese University of Hong Kong Library. He later settled in Shanghai and died in Taipei in 2009 (Lo and Hung, 2014: 9).

Xi Huihui was born in Shenyang in 1929. He moved to Hong Kong in 1949 and enrolled in the Department of Economics of the New Asia College (新亞書院). While studying, he became involved in the activities of the UCO, on the advice of Ch'ien Mu (錢穆), the principal of the college. After graduating from college in 1953, he began working full-time at the UCO and was put in charge of printing *The Chinese Student Weekly* as Publishing Supervisor (督印人) in 1954. Between 1956 and 1959, he developed UCO activities in Singapore and Malaya, and became the president of the *Student Weekly* there. He studied in the US from 1960, completed his MBA in 1963, and returned to Hong Kong to become the liaison officer between the UCO and the Asia Foundation. He served as the president of the Union Press and secretary-general of the URI, and emigrated to the US in 1967 for family reasons (Lo and Hung, 2014: 49).

He Zhenya's involvement in the UCO was triggered by a chance meeting on the street one day with one of the founding members, Chen Siming (Lo and Hung, 2014: 10). Xi Huihui and Yu Ying-Shih joined the Union Press on Ch'ien Mu's recommendation. Qiu Ran visited Ch'ien Mu at the New Asia College around 1951 and asked him to introduce some outstanding students. Ch'ien Mu was a long-term friend of Qiu's father from his days in mainland China (Lo and Hung, 2014: 54-55).

Yu was invited by a friend to take up the position of general editor of *The Chinese Student Weekly* in July 1952. He resigned after approximately three months and returned to his dual role at the *Freedom Front*. Yu was unable to work on *The Chinese Students Weekly* for a long time. For this reason, Yu recalled that he was poorly-suited to editing a student publication. He also stated that he had to help Ch'ien Mu, his mentor, to set up the New Asia College (Yu, 2018: 141).

Yu Ying-Shih was born in Tianjin in 1930 and, like Xu, He, and Xi, his place of origin was Anhui. When the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, Yu stayed with his father's family in Anhui (Yu, 2018: 15). In 1946, when his father was appointed to Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the Northeastern Zhongzheng University (東北中正大學文學院院長代理), Yu also took supplementary courses at the university to prepare for the university entrance examination the following year. In 1948, Yu became a student at Yenching University (Yu 2018: 64), but then moved to Hong Kong to avoid the Chinese Civil War and transferred to the New Asia College (Yu, 2018: 93; 95). He graduated from the college in 1952, and was numbered among the first batch of students. After graduating, he taught at a secondary school in Hong Kong before moving to the US in 1955 to study at Harvard University, where he obtained his PhD. He spent most of the rest of his life in the US, teaching at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton universities. He also acted as the Dean of the New Asia College.

As Yu pointed out in the chapter 2, all of members listed here were either graduates or about to start university education in mainland China. In addition, two served in the military and three were born in Anhui. Four were in contact with Ch'ien Mu, a professor of the New Asia College in Hong Kong. The college was founded in 1949 by the famous scholars from the mainland such as Ch'ien Mu. The founding objective was to establish an educational institution which combines the essence of the scholarship of the Song and Ming academies and the tutorial system of Western universities. The college attracts students because of its splendid course list, which includes General History of China taught by Ch'ien Mu and Introduction to Philosophy by Tang Chun-i (唐君毅). This selection was a direct import of the best academics from Republican China.

### III The UCO's activities in Malaya

In 1956, the UCO decided to expand its operations in Malaya and Singapore (Lo and Hung, 2014: 61). The core members of the UCO, such as Chen Siming, Qiu Ran and Xi Huihui, moved to Malaya and Singapore as the first wave. Then Yu Dekuan (余德寬) followed. Later, Wang Jianwu, Zhang Haiwei (張海威), Yao Tuo (姚拓), Gu Mei (古梅), Huang Ya (黃崖), Li Yongzhen (黎永振) and others also went to Malaya. By then, *Chao Foon* had already been launched, in November, 1955.

As the first stage, Xi and Gu Mei published the *Student Weekly*, the Singapore and Malayan versions of *The Chinese Students Weekly*. They also published Chinese language textbooks and *Chao Foon*, and ran bookshops that sold them. *Students Weekly* and *Chao Foon* were sister journals and often had overlapping editors (Masutani, 2022:41). Outposts of *Student Weekly* were set up in cities in Singapore and Malaya to recruit talented students from Chinese secondary schools as correspondents. Extracurricular activities, such as choirs, dramas, and literary creations, as in Hong Kong, were also provided to the students in Malaya. These activities aimed to promote democratic ideas among young overseas Chinese people and preserve Chinese culture (Lo and Hung, 2014: 60).

Gu Mei (born in Nanjing, hailing from Guangdong) described the work of the UCO in Malaya as follows: Chinese was not an official language in Malaya and there were few Chinese language schools. It was important to reach out to students and encourage their creative work in Chinese. Outstanding correspondents were invited to attend a two-week summer camp (Lo and Hung, 2014: 94). Thus, the UCO was able to establish a network of correspondents and raised the next generations.

It was dangerous to travel to various parts of Malaya at that time, as the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), which took up arms in 1948, was engaging in guerrilla activities in the mountainous areas. The colonial government forcibly relocated to the New Villages and prevented the Chinese people from providing food and other necessities to the CPM. By 1954, 480 new villages had been built across Malaya (Tsuboi and Murai, 2011: 77). Passage in and out of these new villages was subject to traffic checks. If individuals carried food, it could be mistaken for aid supplies to the CPM, and they could be arrested and imprisoned. Contrarily, in the remote areas, the CPM members might consider travellers an enemy and kidnap or kill them (Lo and Hung, 2014: 61).

These activities of the UCO were supported by two Malayan Chinese leaders. One was Leong Yew Koh (梁宇皋)<sup>12</sup> (Lo and Hung, 2014: 21, 61), who was a devout Catholic and appreciated the activities of the UCO. When He Zhenya and Xi Huihui moved to Malaya, Leong was the Minister of the Health and, following independence of Federation of Malaya, he became the first Malacca Governor, a ceremonial head of the Malayan State of Malacca (Lo and Hung, 2014: 60). According to He Zhenya, it was Leong that encouraged the UCO to organise cultural and media activities for young people in Malaya (Lo and Hung, 2014: 21). It is assumed that Leong contacted the UCO through the network of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong. Qiu Ran, a Catholic, again acted as an intermediary. When Qiu Ran spoke to rural and remote Chinese communities in Malaya, Leong sometimes accompanied her (Lo and Hung, 2014: 65).

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<sup>12</sup> Leong's wife and Wang Ching-wei's wife were sisters (Lo and Hung, 2014: 21).

The other was Loke Wan Tho (陸運濤). Loke ran the Cathay Organization (國泰機構), which not only operated cinemas, restaurants and hotels in Singapore and Malaya, but also began to produce films in 1953. Loke bought out Yong Hwa Film Co. (永華影業公司) in Hong Kong in 1955 and founded the Motion Picture & General Investment Co. Ltd. (國際電影懋業有限公司). Loke treated Xi like a younger brother. When Leong was compelled to step down from the position of Malacca Governor due to his family's financial situation, Xi visited Loke in Singapore and obtained a cheque for Leong (Lo and Hung, 2014: 21; 61-62).

Of the UCO listed members who moved to Malaya, apart from Yao Tuo and Huang Ya, Wang Jianwu remained there for the longest time. Wang was born in Shanghai, but his birthplace was Anhui Province, similar to Xu, He, and Xi. Wang enrolled in the Department of Economics of the New Asia College and was in charge of the network for correspondents of *The Chinese Student Weekly* while still a student. After graduating from college, he began to work full-time at the UCO (Lo and Hung, 2014: 141). Wang travelled to Malaya in 1955 and spent five years in Singapore and five years in Malaya/Malaysia before returning to Hong Kong in 1965 (Lo and Hung, 2014: 61).

Wang's account of the Union Press' activities in Malaya was more specific than that of Xi and Gu. Wang's first task upon his arrival in Malaya was to establish a theatre company, Singapore I-Lien Drama Society (藝聯劇團). Xi Huihui, mentioned above, played the lead role in *The Flower of Begonia* (《秋海棠》), and *Thunderstorm* (《雷雨》) (Lo and Hung, 2014: 149).

Wang was also responsible for a three-week camp in the Cameron Highlands. The correspondents came from the new villages that were surrounded by barbed wire. The camp gave a lasting impression on correspondents. Some of the participants were still in touch with Wang even half a century later (Lo and Hung, 2014: 153). Among the correspondents at the time was Huang Zhilian (黃枝連), who later taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Lo and Hung, 2014: 23).

The publication of *Chao Foon* could not be considered a very commercially profitable venture. The financial support from the US also proved inadequate. It needed to be funded by a solid profit generated by other ventures conducted in Malaya/Malaysia. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the successful development of corporatisation may have facilitated the UCO's healthy financial condition. Its textbook business in fact brought a stable profit to the UCO in Malaya/Malaysia.

The Union Press published *Youlian Huoye Wenxuan* (《友聯活葉文選》). This book was originally edited as a reference book on Chinese language and literature in Hong Kong. It was beautifully laid out and printed, with detailed explanatory notes, annotations, and colloquial translations of the classical texts. In Singapore and Malaya/Malaysia, the Union Press customised the book to suit the local conditions and compiled 129 works, including

both classics and modern literature (Ng, 2022: 136). In addition, Wang established a printing factory in Kuala Lumpur. This made it possible to produce textbooks that were customised to suit Malay/Malaysia (Lo and Hung, 2014: 155).

Finally, the UCO in Malaya/Malaysia got right persons who have capability, patience and willingness to conduct editing *Chao Foon*. Zhang Haiwei (張海威)、Huang Ya (黃崖), and Yao Tuo played a central role in this (Masutani, 2022: 38).

Zhang Haiwei was the first editor of *Chao Foon* and was known by the pen name Fang Tian (方天). Zhang's father was a political leader in China<sup>13</sup>. After Zhang graduated from National Chiao Tung University (國立交通大學), the family left Shanghai for Taiwan and arrived in Hong Kong in 1949. Zhang joined the UCO and edited *The Chinese Student Weekly* from 1953, before moving to Singapore in 1955 for the launch of *Chao Foon*. Around the time of the independence of Malaya in 1957, *Chao Foon* became a strong advocate of the "pure Malayanisation" of Chinese literature in Malaya. Zhang himself published *Lannihe de Wuyan* (《爛泥河的嗚咽》) in the same year as Malaya gained independence. This work was concerned with the harsh living conditions of the lowest-class workers and depicted their oppression by capitalists. However, Zhang was unable to obtain citizenship in Malaya and so migrated to Canada (Huang, 2022: 174).

Around the time that Zhang left Malaya, *Chao Foon's* base moved from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur in 1958, and Huang Ya led *Chao Foon's* editing in the 1960s. Huang was one of the leading long novel writers on the Chinese literary scene outside mainland China (Masutani, 2022: 38). Huang emigrated to Hong Kong in 1950 and edited *University Life* and *The Chinese Student Weekly* before moving to Malaya in 1959, where he edited *Chao Foon* between 1961 and 1969. He then left the UCO and emigrated from Malaysia in 1987, when mass arrests were made under the Internal Security Act (Operasi Lalang). He died in Bangkok in 1992 (Ogi, 1977: 192; Lo and Hung, 2014: 19; Masutani, 2022: 38). Huang published several full-length novels based on Malayan politics and history during his time as editor of *Chao Foon*. One of his best-known works is *Lie Huo* (《烈火》), which is set against the backdrop of Malaya's first national elections in 1959, and concerns a man and woman whose families are opposed to their relationship because of class differences (Lim 2022:149-151).

Yao Tuo was born in 1922 and served in the army during the Sino-Japanese War. He moved to Hong Kong in 1950, joining a refugee camp in Tiu Keng Leng (調景嶺)<sup>14</sup>, and

<sup>13</sup> Zhang Haiwei's father was Zhang Guotao (張國燾). Guo Xuan was one of the founding leaders of the CPC and a Central Committee member, elected at the First CPC Congress. However, due to divisions within the CPC, Zhang Guotao switched to the KMT in 1938 and was expelled from the CPC.

<sup>14</sup> There was a temporary enclave in Tiu Keng Leng for resettling KMT soldiers, supporters and their families who had fled from mainland China to Hong Kong.

worked as a scullery worker. In 1953, he found a job advertisement in a newspaper for a position at *The Chinese Students Weekly*, applied for it and was hired. In 1956, he was appointed the president and main editor of *Student Life* and also edited *Youlian Huoye Wenxuan*. In 1957, Yao Tuo moved to Singapore with his wife and children to edit *Student Weekly* and *Chao Foon*. He moved to Kuala Lumpur in 1958 following the UCO office's moving to Kuala Lumpur. He became the editor-in-chief of the Union Press in Malaysia and president of *Student Weekly* in 1963, when Malaysia became independent. He also became a member of the editorial board of *Chao Foon* (Ho, 2017: 158-159). Yao Tuo supported *Chao Foon* on the management side. *Chao Foon* ran at a deficit of RM2,000-2,500 per month. Yao appropriated funds from the UCO for *Chao Foon* and continued publishing (Masutani 2022: 41). Yao was awarded the Malaysian Chinese Literature Prize in 1993. He died in Malaysia in 2009 (Ogi, 1976: 218(820); Lo and Hung, 2014: 19; Masutani, 2022: 38).

#### IV Hong Kong as a Front in the Cultural Cold War

Focusing on the UCO, it appears that Hong Kong was exclusively infiltrated by culture and information from the western, capitalist world. However, this is a one-sided view. It should be noted that, during the 1950s, Hong Kong was also the frontline of the Cold War, with active cultural and information activities being conducted by the CPC. These activities targeted workers, the youth, and schools<sup>15</sup>.

The activities that targeted the workers included the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (香港工會聯合會), which was established in April 1948. After World War II ended, Hong Kong experienced a large influx of people from mainland China, and life was difficult for workers. Trade unions were formed among workers with long working hours and low wages.

With regard to schools, leftist schools existed. For example, the CPC sent the Guangzhou-based party member Ng Hong Mun (吳康民) to work as a teacher at Pui Kiu Middle School (培僑中學). Ng later became a key figure in the CPC's propaganda activities in Hong Kong.

Activities targeted at the youth included the Hok Yau Club (學友社) and *Youths' Garden* (青年樂園). The Hok Yau Club had dance, singing, language writing, basketball, and drama groups, and also hosted cultural and sports activities. In the early days of the Hok Yau Club, the main organiser of activities was Szeto Wah (司徒華)<sup>16</sup>, who had joined the Chinese New Democracy Youth League (新民主主義青年團), the youth organization of the CPC, in

<sup>15</sup> This is discussed in detail in Tanigaki (2019).

<sup>16</sup> Szeto Wah distanced himself from the CPC since the 1970s and became involved in social movements. He was a prominent charismatic leader of the democratic faction in Hong Kong.

September 1949. The club was under the leadership of the CPC's underground organization.

*Youths' Garden* was launched in April 1956 in response to *The Chinese Student Weekly* (Chen, 2017: 3-11). Ng Hong Mun launched the first version<sup>17</sup>. *Youths' Garden* targeted middle school students and older in Hong Kong, and various innovations were introduced into the newspaper to broaden its readership. It included news about the sports and choral competitions in which Hong Kong secondary school students participated, information on textbook recycling, and model answers to difficult questions on the Hong Kong standardised examinations. Students were sometimes given the task of editing the paper. Cantonese language was used more extensively than in *The Chinese Student Weekly*. Rather than ideological propaganda, it sought to foster an interest in mainland China through offering guides to traditional culture, classical literature, and historical sites.

Thus, Hong Kong was on the frontline of the cultural Cold War. Some groups were critical of the CCP, whereas others were close to it. A major battleground was youth-oriented magazines. To attract more readers, efforts were made to create magazines that would attract the readers' attention and interest.

## Conclusion

Finally, the author would like to reconsider the reason why the UCP extended their activities to include Singapore and Malaya/Malaysia. As Gu Mei says, the UCO might consider a commercial opportunity in a country that was larger than Hong Kong, with sizeable Chinese communities and schools nationwide, where textbooks and other books were in considerable demand (Lo and Hung, 2014: 98). At the same time, Malaya and Singapore were both British colonies at that time, similar to Hong Kong, and the entry and exit procedures were easy. According to Yao Tuo, one could enter Singapore or Malaya at any time by applying for an entry and exit permit in Hong Kong (Ho, 2017: 157). Furthermore, it is important to note that there were requests for activities from the Malayan side, such as by Leong Yew Koh.

In light of these factors, Hong Kong in the early 1950s may not have given the UCO's founding members a sense that their goal of establishing a liberal democratic society would be realised soon. In mainland China, the suppression of counterrevolution and socialisation began, while the one-party dictatorship of the KMT gradually strengthened in Taiwan. Once they had left their own land, it may have made little difference to them whether they lived in Hong Kong, Singapore or Malaya/ Malaysia.

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<sup>17</sup> In August 1958, Ng was appointed headmaster of Pui Kiu Middle School and left his post as editor of *Youths' Garden*. Chan Tsui Tsun (陳序臻) took over editorial duties and continued to edit the magazine until it ceased publication in 1967.



During the 1950s and 60s, Hong Kong was involved in the Cold War, with the United States at its centre, not only from an economic perspective but also in a cultural sense. Hong Kong became a place of refuge for people leaving China who could not stand with the CPC.

However, their journey did not necessarily end in Hong Kong. Although somewhat neglected in this study, a number of Malaysian-Chinese individuals studied in Taiwan and, after graduating, remained there to create Chinese literature. Many of these identify as Malaysian-Chinese literary writers. The cultural networks in mainland China, Hong Kong, Malaya/Malaysia and Singapore extend to Taiwan. Networks that include Taiwan will be the subject of future research.

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<sup>18</sup> It was presumably created after 2019, given its content. It was displayed on the Chinese Studies Service Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong website until the end of 2020. After the centre became part of the Chinese Studies University Library in January 2022, Vogel's article could be viewed in "Folk History" on the Chinese Studies Service Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong website, <http://mjlsh.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/book.aspx?cid=2&tid=8313&pid=12928> (accessed on 23rd January 2022) but, as of 20th August 2023, the Folk History Archive was not available to view, as it was being prepared for online publication.

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