

Migration, Settlement and the Rise of a New Middle Class in Malaysian Chinese Society: A Case Study of Kajang

Diana WONG, LIN Chew Man and TAN Pok Suan *

Abstract

This paper traces the settlement history of the Chinese in Kajang (and Sungai Chua), as seen in particular through an account of their economic and religious life. Kajang, as a small town turned Klang Valley satellite town locale, presents the opportunity to examine immigrant small-town Chinese society in the setting of the tin, rubber and land settlement economy which was the making of colonial Malaya. At the same time, its participation in the vigorous demographic, economic and social development of the Klang Valley in the past 30 years provides a setting for an understanding of the forces of transformation in the social and religious landscape of contemporary Malaysian Chinese society. The paper makes two arguments. First, it argues that settlement was far more integral to the process of Chinese migration to colonial Malaya than the evocative figure of the “sojourner”, widely seen to be typical of the Chinese migrant, suggests. Second, it argues that in the course of the recent New Economic Policy (NEP) decades, a new, tertiary-educated, sinophone but multilingual, Malaysian Chinese middle class has emerged, concentrated in the Klang Valley, whose political and cultural imaginations are of great significance in understanding the dynamics of Malaysian society today.

Key words: middle class, Chinese religion, migration

Introduction

Kajang, the capital of Hulu Langat district in the state of Selangor, is a burgeoning satellite town of Kuala Lumpur, the Federal capital some 22.4 km away, to which it is connected by several new highways as well as by a commuter train service. With a rapidly increasing population housed in sprawling new suburbs, its historic old town centre however, serves as a reminder of an earlier phase of extraordinary growth, fuelled by the pioneering spirit and unrelenting labour of Mandailing, Javanese, Tamil, Hakka, Cantonese, Hokkien and other migrants and settlers who cleared the surrounding jungle and built its urban economy. In the 1931 census, the Kajang population consisted of 14,801 Chinese, 6,415 Malays and 6,447 Indians (Radcliffe, 1969: 168)

* Dr. Diana WONG (黄永宝) is an independent scholar. E-mail: dwongingboh@gmail.com
LIN Chew Man (练秋满) is a teacher at Hua Lian High School, Taiping. E-mail: linchewman@gmail.com
TAN Pok Suan (陈宝瑄) is a teacher at Hua Lian High School, Taiping. E-mail: suansuan@yahoo.com

- a picture book model of the Furnivallian “plural society”. The Chinese commercial centre consisted of three streets, one of which was the old Jalan Mandailing, lined with merchants and tradesmen closely linked to the surrounding tin and rubber economy of Hulu Langat.

This paper is an attempt to trace the history of settlement of the Chinese in Kajang and the adjoining village of Sungai Chua, as seen in particular through an account of the religious life of its Chinese inhabitants. In 1980, with its population of 29,301, Kajang would have ranked in the small town category. The dramatic population growth experienced in the past three decades led to a population size of 205,700 in 2000, and a ranking of 17 in the Malaysian urban hierarchy (Jamaliah Jaafar, 2004: 51). Population growth in the suburbs of Kajang was especially spectacular (Table 1).

Table 1. Population of Kajang and of Area Covered by Kajang Local Authority, 1980-2000

Population	1980	1991	2000
Kajang	29,301	46,269	85,810
Kajang Local Authority (MPKj)	n/a	78,063	506,526

Source: Malaysia. Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, Selangor. Jabatan Perancang Bandar dan Desa. *Draf Rancangan Struktur Sebahagian Majlis Perbandaran Kajang (MPKj) 1995-2020*. 1997

Kajang as a locale thus presents the opportunity to examine immigrant small-town Chinese society in the setting of the tin, rubber and land settlement economy which was the making of Malaya (see Voon, 2007). At the same time, its participation in the vigorous demographic, economic and social development of the Klang Valley in the past 30 years provides a setting for an understanding of the forces of transformation in the social and religious landscape of contemporary Malaysian Chinese society.

Two paradigmatic depictions of a dichotomized Malaysian Chinese society have dominated the field, both penned by Wang Gungwu, the eminent scholar and doyen of overseas Chinese studies. The first is that of a society constituted essentially by the merchant and the non-merchant: “there were broadly speaking only two divisions in overseas Chinese society -merchants and those who aspired to be merchants” (Wang, 1981: 161); the second is that of the “dichotomy of the English-educated and Chinese-educated” (Wang, 1981: 160). The inference was that the middle class in Malaysian Chinese society was essentially English-educated. Wang based his first model of the mercantile elite on Chinese society in colonial Malaya; the second “more recent dichotomy” (Wang, 1970: 160) referred to the immediate post-war decades. Nevertheless, the continuing influence of these models can be seen in a recent reformulation of the English vs Chinese-educated divide by Rita Sim, Executive Director of the Chinese daily *Sin Chew Jit Poh* and Deputy Chairman of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) think tank Insap, who divides Malaysian Chinese society today into the G1-those Chinese-educated who subscribe to the so-called three pillars (Chinese associations, Chinese schools and Chinese

media) and the “for want of a better term, referred to as the English-speaking group (G2)” (see Tan, 2007).

Based on empirical field material from a research project conducted in Kajang in 2007, we suggest that these two models of Chinese society are in need of modification in light of the profound forces of change in contemporary Chinese society in Malaysia. While a divide between the English and Chinese-educated is still discernible, the contours have been blurred, and the character of the Chinese-educated, in particular, has undergone profound change. The data speak for the emergence to national prominence of a new middle class in Chinese society aged 40 and below, schooled in the national education system and hence essentially bi- and in many cases, trilingual. This middle class, which dominates the cultural and religious life of Kajang Chinese society today, is the product of social and geographical mobility. Most issue from the small towns and new villages not dissimilar in character to Kajang itself-30 years ago. Many have since acquired tertiary education in the many universities and colleges located in the Klang Valley and have settled there. The proportion of professionals, as well as of women, is high. This middle class shows little inclination to engage in the old highly localized dialect-based Chinese migrant temple and clan associations, one of the “three pillars” alluded to earlier. With its “traditional” understandings of ethnic and religious identity, which were key institutions in early Chinese settlement in the country, and they are to be found today in new religious, civic and political organizations which speak to the national context of their settlement. In these new organizations, Mandarin, not dialect, is the medium of communication. It is the preferred language of this new sinophone, yet multi-lingual middle class.

In the following, section II gives a brief introduction to the early history of Kajang and its environs, section III traces the migration and settlement history of the Chinese in Kajang in the colonial and immediate post-colonial period, section IV looks at the post-NEP rise of a new Chinese middle class and the changing religious landscape in Kajang today and section V concludes by reaffirming the importance of settlement in Chinese migration and the emergence of a new middle class in Malaysian Chinese society.

The Opening of the Frontier

The earliest inhabitants of Hulu Langat, the district in which Kajang is located, would have been Temuan, with some accounts dating their presence in this area to around 1580.¹ Other oral accounts place the founding of Kajang in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the area was the scene of conflict between various ethnic groups drawn to the rich spoils of the new tin-mining economy, known as the Selangor Civil War of 1867-1873.² Although downplaying the traumatic violence highlighted in these oral accounts, the written records clearly affirm the pioneering role played by migrants from Sumatra.³ Interestingly, a collective memory of the tragic violence of this civil war is inscribed into the religious worship of the Chinese immigrant community in Kajang. The patron deity of its community temple known as Shiye temple

(师爷庙) or *See Yar* temple in the Cantonese dialect (one of the religious organizations to be discussed later), was a former Chinese Capitan (*Kapitan Cina*) of Seremban, Sheng Ming Li (盛明利), a Hakka tin miner who was killed in the fighting and deified shortly thereafter. He is said to have successfully mediated a conflict between two indigenous tribes in Seremban, which won him their respect and earned him the position of Kapitan of Seremban. His death in turn is attributed to his failure to mediate between two Malay groups which were fighting with each other. When he was killed in the ensuing war, white blood gushed out of his severed head, the miracle which led to his deification (温故知/Wen Gu Zhi, 1988: 13-14). These early narratives show how inextricably linked the various incoming ethnic groups were, not just as competitors but also as allies.

With the end of the war and the establishment of a British Protectorate in 1874, tin mining in Hulu Langat resumed with a vengeance and new Chinese *towkays* no longer linked to the *kongsis* such as Goh Ah Ngee (吴亚义) began mining in Kajang (Voon, 2013: 51). By 1901, there were 7,269 Chinese tin miners in the district (Voon, 2013: 52). It was to be agriculture however, which was to lead the demographic and economic transformation of the district. Coffee was the first crop to be planted by the European plantations established in the Kajang and Hulu Langat area.⁴ It was Malay peasant immigration however, which was to grow exponentially in the wake of British colonial rule and agricultural expansion.

There had already been a major migrant Malay participation in the new tin economy of the nineteenth century, from the Bugis nobility, who had founded the Selangor sultanate in the eighteenth century, to the Mandailings and other groups from Sumatra, who had led the movement into the interior, largely as traders and miners, but also as agriculturists. This migration took a collective form and was encouraged, as well as occasionally financed, by the palace (see Gullick, 1960). Apart from the active role played by the royal family, there was also the encouragement provided by the British administration. Peasant settlement was a cornerstone of the British colonial policy of capitalist expansion as cheap rice was essential for the maintenance of low wages for imported coolie labour. The encouragement of Sumatra migration was expressed in particular through its land policy, and the passage, in 1913, of the Malay Reservations Enactment, under which large stretches of land were gazetted as reservations for Malays, sealed an already on-going process.⁵ The upper reaches of the Sungai Langat, on whose lower banks Kajang was located, fell under the purview of the Act and the area was officially demarcated and delineated as Malay Reservations in 1916 (Voon, 1976). The early Mandailing immigrants, who had founded the urban settlement of Kajang, moved upstream to open up and settle in the surrounding hills and valleys of the Hulu Langat, joined by others such as Kerinchi, and Rawa, and in particular, Minang settlers moving west from their early settlements in Negeri Sembilan.⁶

While Malay settlers moved upstream, Chinese capital and labour continued to move into Semenyih and Kajang to invest in the new sector of commercial agriculture. Towkays such as the above-mentioned Goh Ah Ngee, and Low Ti Kok (刘治国), both of whom owned several

houses in Kajang, led the way.⁷ Apart from the towkays however, the opening of the rubber frontier in Hulu Langat was done primarily by Chinese immigrants claiming small lots of land to establish rubber smallholdings with family labour. By 1920, when most of the state land had been given out by the Land Office, 41 per cent had been obtained by Chinese smallholders, identical to the share held by European planters, and 14 per cent by Malay owners (Voon, 2013: 55). By then, Kajang had developed into a town that tin and rubber built.

Chinese Migration, Settlement and Social Organisation in Kajang

Haji Abdul Rasyid, an 84 year-old Mandailing born in Jalan Reko and now living in Sungai Kantan,⁸ remembers a time when only a few Chinese were living in Kajang, all concentrated in the two or three main streets of the *pekan* or inner city area, centred around Jalan Mandailing. Far more Chinese were to be found in Sungai Chua, the tin-mining village across the river. Today, the town of Kajang has absorbed the Chinese settlement of Sungai Chua, although local Chinese terminology still distinguishes between Xi Mi Shan (锡米山) or Tin Hill, the Chinese name for Sungai Chua, and Kajang (加影). That Sungai Chua has a Chinese name, and Kajang merely a transliteration of a Malay one, is indicative of the origins of the two respective settlements, the one a Chinese (mining) village, the other a Mandailing-founded trading town. Nevertheless, as the town grew, the emergence of Chinese place-names reveals a growing sense of place and attests to the process of localization taking place. Jalan Mandailing had become a Chinese street, known in Chinese as Hou Jie (后街) or Back Street. The surroundings of Sungai Kantan, founded by Malay immigrants, had also become largely Chinese, and was known as Shu Fang Bei (书房背) or Behind the School. The map below shows the Chinese topography of Kajang.

The early Chinese migration to the tin mines of the interior at the invitation of the local Malay royalty had been entirely self-organized by kongsis formed along lines of *jiguan* (籍贯) native-place or provincial origin. In this pre-colonial period of “free and unrestricted” movement (Saw, 1988: 13), labour migration was entirely transient in character. Comprising single men working the tin mine on a shareholder basis, the kongsi as the migrant form of social organization precluded local household formation. Individual kongsi members would have had their households in their ancestral villages in China, to whom, when sufficient money had been made, the men would return.

The Chinese Immigration Ordinance, 1877 marked the first attempt by the new colonial administration to regulate Chinese migration and although it failed, this intervention in the recruitment of Chinese labour into the country heralded the end of the closed, all-encompassing kongsi system. However, the Chinese tin mining economy continued to rely on the availability and ruthless exploitation of an unending stream of cheap and unregulated labour (Tai, 2010) and population fluidity and migrant mobility and mortality remained high. The data for 1886 show that among the 1,339 Chinese who entered the district of Hulu Langat, 519 left (Mohd.

Shaidin, 1981-82: 16).

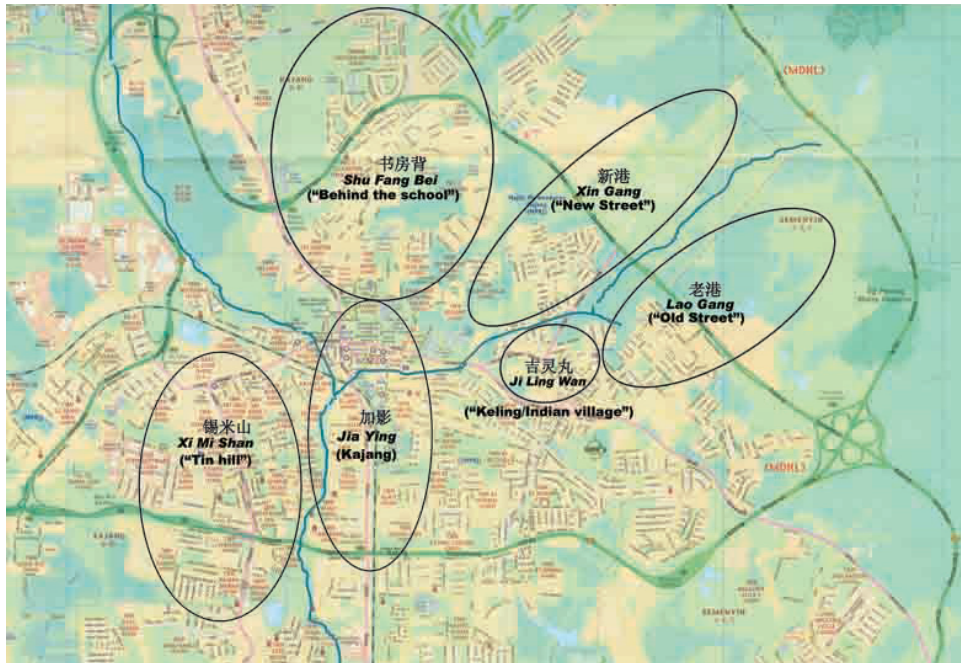


Figure 1. Map of Kajang with Chinese Place Names

In the newly-emerging small towns such as Kajang, local household formation-the prelude to settlement, such as had already happened in the Straits Settlements cities of Malacca, Singapore and Penang-soon occurred, and those who could afford it now preferred to live in the townships. In the early days however, household formation remained highly limited. It was generally the mine-owners, traders, and the increasing number of artisans and tradesmen who were in a position to bring their wives or families from China.

With household and town formation came the establishment of the community temple and cemetery. The kongsi organization of the tin-mines had taken the guise of secret societies welded together by the worship of a patron deity (Kok, 1993: 104). For the Hai San secret society which governed the Hulu Langat mines, the afore-mentioned Hakka kongsi head and Kapitan Cina of Seremban, Sheng Ming Li, around whose death in the Selangor civil war miraculous accounts arose, was deified into the local protector deity. As the mining towns grew, a chain of Shiye temples, dedicated to this local deity, spread across ex-Hai San mining territory (see Appendix).

In Kajang, the Xian Si Shiye (仙四师爷宫) community temple was completed by 1898. The completion of the Shiye community temple in the heart of the town, and the acquisition in 1895 of a large piece of land for a public cemetery in Sungai Kantan, then the site of a large Chinese settlement, by the newly-formed Kwangtung Cemetery Association (加影广东义山公

会), was largely due to the efforts of Jian Yang Zheng (简扬钲), a leading Cantonese merchant in Kajang. Among the funders he was able to mobilize for the temple, two stand out: Loke Yew and Ye Jie Liang (said to be Yap Kwan Seng), wealthy Cantonese mine owners based in Kuala Lumpur. Jian also played a lead role later in the 1910 formation of the Kajang Merchant Club (商矿公会, initially known as 公商矿馆). A small coterie of men such as Jian, representing the largely Cantonese-speaking mercantile elite in Kajang, constituted the early settled core of the new local community.⁹

The household, the temple and the cemetery were the core sacral institutions of traditional Chinese village society, in which religion functioned as a community cult (Yang, 1961). Religious cult communities under the protection of a patron deity remained of primary importance in the lives of Chinese migrants and settlers struggling to survive and prosper in a hostile new environment. The ritual community constituted by the temple and cemetery was along provincial lines, in this case from the same region in the province of Guangdong. This comprised the largely Cantonese mine-owners, as well as the far more numerous and less settled Hakka mine labourers,¹⁰ and may help explain the quiescence of a brutally exploited tin mining labour force. Indeed, it may be argued that the temple with a Hakka deity (Sheng Ming Li was Hakka) was built by Cantonese mine owners to keep their Hakka labourers under control; although divided by class, both belonged to the same ritual cult community.

Table 2. Distribution of Chinese Population in Hulu Langat by Dialect Group and Gender 1911-1947

Year	1911	1921	1931	1947
Cantonese	2,736 (2,176/560) 1:3.9	1,710	3,170 (2,043/1,127) 1:1.8	5,179 (2,868/2,311) 1:1.2
Hakka	6,065 (5,088/977) 1:5.2	9,846	18,117 (10,343/7,774) 1:1.3	17,468 (8,955/8,513) 1:1.05
Tie Cheu Kheh	14 (14/0)			
Hokkien	2,283 (2,137/140) 1:15	3,048	6,019 (3,668/2,351) 1:1.5	8,805
Hin Hun	292 (291/1)			
Hok Chiu	146 (145/1)	23		297 (124/83)
Teochew	336 (284/52)	174	369 (362/107)	814 (428/386)
Hailam	571 (560/7)	298	563 (479/84)	738 (513/225)
Kwong Sai	45 (41/4)		911 (788/123)	1,244 (758/486)
Total	12,618	15,622	29,474 (17,794/11,675)	34,669

Source: Pountney, 1911; Nathan, 1922; Vlieland, 1931; Del Tufo, 1949

By 1911, a sizeable number of Hokkiens, originating from the neighbouring Fujian province in China, had also moved into Kajang (see Table 2).¹¹ They established their own community temple and cemetery, with their own patron deity. Community formation and identity thus followed closely the boundaries established in the homeland, defining in the last instance those who worshipped and were buried together. Transplanting themselves into a new environment, early Chinese immigrants in Kajang thus organ themselves into different cult communities following familiar native-origin lines, incorporating however, new deities. These included, it should be noted, those of a non-traditional Chinese form. The Kajang towkay Goh Ah Ngee was a Teochew convert to Catholicism and his fortune funded the construction of the Catholic Church in Kajang (built in 1905) as well as St. John's Cathedral in Kuala Lumpur for the small Teochew Catholic flock under the care of the French mission.¹² Among the many Hakka miners residing in Sungai Chua, a small number were Methodists converted in China and a Methodist church was built in Sungai Chua in 1905, not too long after the construction of the Shiye temple.

The need to adapt to the new political environment however, brought forth in due time new secular community organisations which transcended these cultic divides. The kongsi system was finally ended by the abolition in 1905 of the office of Kapitan by the British administration. In order to have continued representation of local Chinese commercial interests vis-à-vis the British, as well as a platform for inter-group negotiations, Jian and his friends established the Kajang Merchant Club in 1910. Although, as the name indicates, tin mining interests were still predominant, this new association was the first to accommodate other commercial elites in town, regardless of ethnicity or industry. At least two Hokkien rubber tycoons, Low Ti Kok¹³ and Kuan Guang Hou (官光厚), were elected as committee members of the Club. Two local Malay political elites were also invited to sit on the committee.

In 1914, the banning of Chinese indentured labour lifted all regulation of Chinese entry into the country, resulting in another period of free and unhampered movement and the following decade, buoyed by world economic demand for rubber and tin, witnessed a dramatic rise in Chinese migration (Saw, 1988: 15).¹⁴ In the wake of the rubber boom, Chinese landownership in the Kajang area increased at an average annual rate of 32 per cent between the years 1915-1920 (Voon, 1978: 512). The shift from a predominantly tin to a predominantly rubber-based economy had profound implications for Chinese household and community formation. As Voon notes, rubber was a non-seasonal crop, providing a regular, and with its long productive life-span of more than 25 years, permanent source of income, enabling and promoting settlement (Voon, 2007: 58).¹⁵ Furthermore, whilst the tin economy had involved largely Cantonese and Hakka migrants, a much broader range of dialect groups, including Hokkiens and Teochews, participated in the rubber economy (Tai, 2010: 177).

The outcome of a booming mining and agricultural economy was the flourishing of new towns and the emergence of an urban economy (Voon, 2007: 59) of Chinese artisans or traders whose businesses were based on household labour. Concurrent with, and in part the outcome of,

these momentous socio-economic and demographic developments was the emergence of a new set of important Chinese public institutions-non-dialect-based Chinese schools-which replaced the temple and cemetery as the central pillars of Chinese community life. In Kajang, the left-leaning Hua Qiao (华侨学校) was founded in 1912 and the Kuomintang-related Yu Hua (育华学校) in 1918. They were themselves the product of the new (unregistered) associations in Kajang which were being formed along political lines, which included the Kuomintang (KMT or 国民党), Tong Meng Hui (同盟会), Zhong He Tang (中和堂), and the Jia Ying Wen Hua Shu Bao She (加影文华书报社). Low Ti Kok, who was also one of the key leaders of the Kajang branch of the Tong Meng Hui and KTM in Kajang, played a major role in the foundation of these schools. In addition to these Chinese-medium schools, the English-medium Kajang High School was established in 1916. Notwithstanding the adverse economic conditions which still accounted for considerable population fluctuation, a stable core of settled families with children to educate, including new elites as well as non-elites no longer based on the tin economy, had thus obviously developed. The three new schools were the institutional expressions of this new demographic trend.

Toward the end of the decade, the *Immigration Restriction Ordinance, 1928*, and its replacement with the *Aliens Ordinance, 1933*, signaled the end of an era of uncontrolled migration (Saw, 1988: 16). Women and children however, were exempt from the Ordinance. The result was a further improvement in the sex ratio and a deepening of the settlement process.¹⁶ Kajang earned a reputation as a flourishing cultural centre and gained the epithet of “a cultural town”. Especially in the late 1930s, stage performances and magazine publications were available in town, much of it inspired by the spirit of Chinese national renewal in China itself, and the anti-Japanese struggle there. The presence of the Chinese schools played an important role in this development. The Hua Qiao School, before it was closed down in the 1940s during the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, was well-known for its spirit of reform and resistance towards Japanese colonialism. Its very name encapsulated the importance of the “*Huaqiao*” movement (see Wang, 1989) for overseas Chinese settlements in the first half of the twentieth century.

1949 saw the closure of the Mainland Chinese border when the Communist Party came into power. The replacement of the 1933 *Aliens Ordinance* with the *Immigration Ordinance, 1953*, in turn, signaled the closure of the Malayan border to free labour entry, including of women. A history of migration was coming to an end. An immigrant population, long on its way to a largely self-organized process of localization and settlement, had to learn to deal with a more and more intrusive colonial state.

For a large segment of the localized population, this meant in the first instance another wrenching round of forced dislocation. Kajang and its surrounding areas were deeply implicated in the anti-colonial revolt known as the Emergency, which began in 1949. Several thousand families were uprooted from their homes, including in Sungai Kantan, and forced to re-settle in the New Village of Sungai Chua in 1951/52.

The vastly changed political circumstances of this postwar period also generated new

economic opportunities, a new set of community institutions, and a new generation of local leaders. These were scions of the established families, some of whom, educated in English at Kajang High, represented a new generation of local leadership based on their ability to deal with the postwar British colonial administration. Ng Bow Tai (黄卯泰), a son-in-law of the Kajang pioneer, Towkay Goh Ah Ngee, was a Teochew Catholic whose family owned a grocery business and who made a fortune from supplying rice to the British administration during the Emergency period (for which he was awarded the OBE). He was the President of the Merchant Club from 1946 to 1963. He was also one of the founding members of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) in Kajang, the Chinese political party through which the other Chinese associations have since mediated their relationship with the state. Low Ti Kok's son¹⁷ also became the president of the Merchant's Club, and the Low family continued to play a role in the Kajang business community and Chinese education until the late 1970s. Leadership in these Chinese associations remained, as before, in the hands of the mercantile elite, and remained exclusively male.

This second-generation leadership, with its closer ties to the British administration, helped to ameliorate the much more intrusive presence of the state in the life of the local Chinese society in the difficult postwar decade. As the dust settled in the 1960s, Kajang had become a quiet Chinese trading town surrounded by Malay villages and Indian plantation labour, with the mercantile elite, bilingual in the post-war generation, still running the traditional local community organizations such as the Shiye Temple, the Merchant Club, the Yu Hua School, and the MCA. Many had attended the English-medium Kajang High and the local Kajang Convent, together with children from the early Christian families, constituting a small anglophone middle class. Sungai Chua was the working class district across the river, housing the third largest new village in the country.

Nation-building, the NEP, and a New Chinese Middle Class

The post-independence Alliance consensus with MCA representation of the Chinese middling urban towns and New Villages left the economy and society of Kajang cum Sungai Chua largely intact. The profound changes, such as they were, took place in the metropolitan centres, such as Kuala Lumpur and Penang. It was in the 1970s, as the national government stepped up development spending under the newly-introduced New Economic Policy, that the postcolonial nation-building state became a major factor in the economic and political life of the community. Among the many projects which it undertook, the establishment of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in the neighbouring town of Bangi, together with the concurrent establishment of an industrial park there, was to kick off the profound changes which were to transform the town and its surroundings. An economic boom ensued, from which the local tradesmen and small businesses profited. This commercial middle class, their ranks augmented by the few new educated teachers and journalists now living in the town, was to set the tone

for a new community leadership structure in the NEP years. The dominance of the wealthy mercantile class was to come to an end. By the second half of the 1970s for example, the Low Ti Kok family no longer played a prominent role in the local community. The wealthy pioneer towkay families of the past, now English-educated, relocated to the metropolitan centre, and joined the ranks of the anglophone middle class.

The career of Li De Shu (李德恕) is illustrative of the changes wrought by the new political context of government policy activism. Li, of Hokkien origin, had moved to Kajang in the 1940s, and served as headmaster of the new primary school in nearby Bangi. In 1979, he was elected State Assemblyman for Kajang, running as an Independent after having lost the presidency of the Kajang MCA.¹⁸ He was then invited to lead the Shiye temple and the Merchant Club, as both organizations had necessary dealings with the state legislature. Li was the first person to hold the presidency of these two important local organizations in Kajang concurrently. In fact, his term marks the beginning of the cross-holding of key posts in the two organizations.

Moving into the late 1980s, more cross-holding of posts was observed, as well as the recruitment of an even wider range of occupations beyond the commercial class. These developments may be due to difficulty encountered in recruiting the younger generation into these community organizations. Their original functions-to provide for protection, networking, and conflict resolution-had become increasingly irrelevant in local society, hence the failure of these old networks of the past to attract members of the younger generation.

The nature of the “younger generation” has also changed. No longer is it confined to the offspring of the first or second generation of local immigrants. In keeping with the national trend of internal migration toward the Klang Valley (see Tey, 2012; Fadzil *et al.*, 2014), population growth in the 1980s and 1990s in Kajang and its suburbs has been phenomenal (see Table 3 below). Recent migrants to the Klang Valley are over-represented by the 20-29 age group, in part due to the institutions of higher learning which are concentrated here. The 2000 census revealed that 52 per cent of Chinese in-migrants to the Klang Valley have received a tertiary education (Tey, 2012: 48 and 58).¹⁹

In the vicinity of Kajang are to be found several such institutions, including UKM, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), and New Era College. As Chinese enrolment in these local tertiary institutions increased in the 1990s and 2000s, a wave of “new migrants” streamed into Kajang, mostly from the small towns and new villages of an earlier Malaya (see Voon, 2001; Zhang, 2011). Coming from a labouring or petty mercantile background, many belonged to the first generation in the family to acquire a tertiary education. Having gone through the national educational system, many of these tertiary educated graduates were sinophone, but functionally trilingual in Chinese, Malay and English. Most of them later found employment in the Klang Valley, and settled in Kajang. They constitute a new urban professional Chinese middle class hitherto unknown in Malaysian Chinese society.

The rise of this new Chinese middle class has had a profound impact on Chinese society in

Kajang. Today, a century after its founding, the Shiye temple continues to exist as a community temple for public worship, based on the *bai shen* (拜神) practices of Chinese popular religion often characterized as folk Taoism. It has however, lost its character as a community cult. After undergoing reforms in its management structure in the last few decades, the leadership of the Shiye temple is more representative of the pluralistic, multi-dialect as well as professional and middle-class character of Kajang society.²⁰ However, although there is a high level of participation at public, civic events, such as its annual dinner conducted in Mandarin, participation in the ritual events conducted in the vernacular during the festivities surrounding the birthday of the patron deity is extremely low. The ritual segment of the three-day festivities, which fell on 19 September in 2007,²¹ and included the execution of elaborate Taoist rituals and the performance of Cantonese opera, as well as the ritual burning of old tablets from members of the community, attracted a small crowd of about 30 people.

The leadership of the temple remains exclusively male, elderly and local-born, with many also holding leadership positions in other Chinese associations in the town.²² The profile of the committee members as well as the general constituency of the temple clearly indicate the difficulties a “traditional” religious institution such as the Shiye temple faces in appealing to the new professional middle class. Where they are more likely to be found are in two new vibrant Chinese religious organizations which have emerged in Kajang offering a new confessional Buddhist identity not equated with, but related to, Chinese culture.

On a beautiful moonlit night on 1 May 2007, a large procession of a few thousand people snaked its way through the main streets of the town of Kajang and back to the huge, brightly-lit Fo Shan (佛山) temple at the top of the hill in Sungai Chua.²³ It was Wesak Day, the day Sakyamuni Buddha’s birth, enlightenment and death is celebrated. Weeks before the event, posters in Chinese, Malay and English announcing the procession had been plastered all over town. The ceremony on the temple grounds which kicked off the procession comprised largely of speeches by local politicians and the singing of the national anthem.

This annual Wesak Day procession had in fact been introduced for the first time in 1986. The gleaming, imposing temple on the hill overlooking Sungai Chua and visible from all directions in Kajang was completed only three years ago. It grew out of a small folk temple located at Sungai Chua, and is run by an association officially registered under the name of Pertubuhan Budhis Manju Suddhi (PBMS), known in Chinese as Jing Miao (淨妙).

The “takeover” of the small folk temple and its transformation into a “modern” Buddhist organization was the work of the elderly couple, Lee Tian Ji, who grew up in Sungai Chua,²⁴ and his wife Mdm. Liu, from Kajang. Though from modest backgrounds, both had acquired high school education, Lee in English and Liu in Mandarin. They had “returned” to Sungai Chua in 1978 after several years of working in Kuala Lumpur, where they appear to have been drawn into Buddhist reform activities influenced by the thinking of the Taiwanese Buddhist monk and founder of the Fo Guang Shan (佛光山) movement, Hsing Yun. Sungai Chua was then a typical Chinese New Village steeped in poverty, secret society activities and deity worship. Lee, who

was familiar with the writings of Marx and Mao and also an avid admirer of Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, felt that the social backwardness of the Chinese community he had grown up in needed to be addressed through a reform of its folk religious beliefs and practices, which he viewed as holding households and community to ransom to the twin evils of superstition and commercialization. Liu's position as deputy principal of the local primary school gave her a vantage point from which to initiate the process of reform.

In the early stages, the resistance was considerable. Gaining the support of young professionals who were returning to the village from tertiary education abroad proved to be critical. One had just returned from an Australian university, another from Taiwan; both proved invaluable in the struggle over control of the temple. Today, the gleaming new temple, with its assortment of deity statues from the Mahayana, Hinayana and Tibetan traditions but dominated by a huge statue of Kwan Yin, stands as proud testimony to 30 years of reform efforts.

The public face of Buddhism that was first presented in Kajang through the PBMS had a strong Chinese-language, village, working-class and ethnic character. In 1999, another Buddhist society was registered in Kajang as a branch of the Buddhist Missionary Society of Malaysia (BMSM), which has its headquarters in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. BMSM owes its origins to a Sri Lankan monk, Rev. Dhammananda, who arrived in Malaya in 1951 to serve the small Sinhalese Buddhist community. English-educated and urbane, he won, in the following three decades, a large following among the urban English-educated Malaysian Chinese middle class in Kuala Lumpur. The founding members of the Kajang branch were members of the BMSM parent body at the Maha Vihara, Brickfields, who felt that they should bring "Buddhism to Kajang". Many were English-educated scions of old-established wealthy Kajang families, for whom the older community institutions, such as the Shiye temple, no longer held any attraction. Although dialect would have been spoken in these wealthier households, the second generation was often sent for an English education to the well-known English medium schools in town such as the Kajang High for boys and the Kajang Convent for girls.

Others, who had also been members of the Brickfields temple, were recent migrants to Kajang, largely anglophone professionals who had found employment in the Kajang area, including a number of Kelantan Chinese some of whom were teaching at the local university. In 2007, BMSM Kajang had a membership of 206. It is a lay organization, run by an elected committee; monks from the parent temple are in attendance only at key annual festivals such as Wesak Day, with a purely ritual function, that is, to lead in the chanting of the sutras (in Pali) and to dispense blessings. The majority of those who turned up at the AGM in 2007 were adults in their mid-thirties to fifties, most of them with children of school-going age. There is a high percentage of professionals, as well as a good gender balance, with a number of women active in the committee. In form though not content, the congregational nature of this new Buddhist organisation resembles closely the Christian churches (Catholic and Protestant, old and new) in and around greater Kajang which have also expanded greatly in the last decades, thanks again to the influx of "new migrants" and university students to the area.

These changes in the religious landscape of the town cannot be understood without taking into account the profound changes in culture and society, both national and transnational, which have shaped the thinking of this postcolonial generation of descendants of immigrants. In stark contrast to their forefathers in the colonial period, the political imagination of this new sinophone middle class no longer connects to a distant homeland, and political engagement today is directed exclusively toward the nation. Kajang seethed with political debate during the 2008 national election and voted in as State Assemblyman a multilingual ex-schoolteacher, known popularly as teacher or *Cikgu* Lee (Lee Kim Sin) from the opposition, Parti Keadilan Rakyat. The emergence of this new Chinese middle class and its new politics has sealed Kajang's transformation from a localized immigrant community to a Chinese society firmly located within national society.

Conclusion

The study of Chinese migration has been dominated by the paradigmatic figure of the “sojourner” or the temporary migrant, as opposed to the “settler” (see Siu, 1952). It is certainly true that the pattern of Chinese migration in the 19th and 20th centuries was not based on the intention to settle. Nonetheless, *de facto* settlement on a not insignificant scale did occur. In his study of the Chinese contribution to the making of Malaya however, the Malaysian geographer Voon Phin Keong notes that for the “pioneers, entrepreneurs and labourers” who toiled at this development frontier,

“settling down was not an alien concept, but part of the traditional concepts that had guided the life of the Chinese. Traditionally, attachment to the land, wherever it might be, was in keeping with the idea of “putting down roots on the land” (落地生根 *luodi shenggen*) (see Wang, 1998). The intention was to start a family away from one's ancestral village (安家落户 *anjia luohu*), to live a peaceful and contented life (安居乐业 *anju leye*), and to abide by the age-old tradition of simple living and keeping out of trouble (安分守己 *anfen shouji*). It was this pragmatism that transformed the vast majority of the early immigrants in Malaya and the Borneo territories into *de facto* permanent settlers.” (Voon, 2007: 79)

We suggest in this paper that settlement has been an important, and overlooked, dimension of Chinese migration. The religious organizations discussed above represent different stages and dimensions of social formation and transformation in the settlement process of Chinese society in Kajang. The Shiye community temple bears witness to the migrant Chinese community at the turn of the century. It was a community with a strong “sojourner” character, but even there, the ongoing process of localisation and the gradual transition from sojourner to settler is suggested by the deification of local personages as the patron deities, in this case, the Xian Si Shiye (仙四

师爷). The community temple and cemetery were transplanted institutions around which new localized dialect-based communities with new local deities were re-constituted. As the process of settlement proceeded, they were superseded as central institutions of Chinese public life by the establishment of Mandarin-medium local schools. These schools were the embodiment of the “Huaqiao” era of Chinese migration (Wang, 1989) when a trans-dialect sense of ethnic Chinese identity and a new emotional tie with an abstract “homeland” was forged. With the establishment of the post-war nation-state, *de facto* settlement has been affirmed by citizenship. Thanks to its attendant institutions, in particular the national education system, we see the emergence of a new sinophone Chinese middle class for whom the homeland-orientated ethnic Chinese identity of the Huaqiao era no longer holds much, if any, attraction.

In this respect, the paper also addresses two other highly influential paradigmatic depictions of Malaysian Chinese society, namely Wang Gungwu’s model of an essentially mercantile overseas Chinese society comprised of the merchant and the aspiring merchant (see Wang, 1981); as well as his characterization of post-war Malaysian Chinese society as dichotomized into the Chinese-educated (Groups A and B) and the English-educated (Group C)-in his well-known categorization of Malaysian Chinese into Groups A, B, and C (Wang, 1981). The story of the Chinese “pioneers, entrepreneurs and labourers” (Voon, 2007) of colonial Malaya-one should perhaps add the artisans whose family businesses kept the urban economy going-would largely fit the model postulated by Wang, a model made manifest in the Shiye temple. The age of the Shiye temple however, has passed. So has that of the “Huaqiao” school. Any model of Malaysian Chinese society today must take into account the coming of age of a new sinophone but multilingual, tertiary-educated, professional and in good measure, feminized, Chinese middle class, whose allegiance to “traditional” Chinese institutions cannot be taken for granted. Just as multilingualism has nationalized the sinophone world of this new Chinese middle class, so has the contemporary globalized sinophone world injected new cultural, religious and political impulses to their community-making projects. A simple dichotomy between the English and the Chinese educated will no longer suffice. The nature of the English-educated middle-class may not have changed; that of the Chinese-educated certainly has.

Appendix

Shiye Temples in Peninsular Malaysia

Location	Name of Temple	Built in
1. Seremban, Negeri Sembilan	Gumiao(芙蓉千古庙)	1861
2. Kuala Lumpur	Xian Si Shiye(仙四师爷庙)	1864
3. Rawang, Selangor	Xian Si Shiye(万挠仙四师爷宫)	1869
4. Seremban, Negeri Sembilan	Xian Si Shiye(芙蓉仙四师爷)	1869
5. Semenyih, Selangor	Xian Si Shiye(士毛月仙四师爷)	1880
6. 14 th Milestone, Ulu Langat, Selangor	Xian Si Shiye(仙四师爷宫)	1890
7. Melaka	Guang Fu He Sheng(广福庙和胜宫)	1890
8. Kuala Kubu Baru, Selangor	Yue Shan Gumiao(新古毛岳山古庙)	1895
9. Kajang, Selangor	Shiye Gong(加影师爷宫) (shifted from Lukut)	1898
10. Serendah, Selangor	Xian Si Shiye(双文丹仙四师爷宫)	1898
11. Kalumpang, Selangor	Xian Si Shiye(龙邦古庙仙四师爷宫)	1902
12. Bentong, Pahang	Guang Fu Gong(文冬广福宫)	1902

Source: Survey conducted by authors, 12 August 2007

Notes

- 1 The name “Kajang” is said to derive from the Temuan term for the palm (mengkuang) which grew profusely in the area, and which was used by the Temuan to construct their rough shelter for the night.
- 2 “Kajang” means shelter, but can also mean “stab”. In one account, the conflict is between a Temuan and a Malay. In another, it is between two migrant groups, the Mandailing and the Bugis.
- 3 See official portal of Kajang Local Authority-Origin of the name of Kajang, mppj.gov.my. In one, the pioneering role is attributed to a Mandailing prince, Raja Berayun, who took shelter (berkajang) at a spot now known as Jalan Mandailing, and subsequently opened up Kajang and ruled the area with the title of Tengku Panglima Besar, granted by Sultan Abdul Samad, with whom he had sided during the Selangor Civil War of 1867-1873. In another, the founding of Kajang is attributed to a Tok Lili from Riau (possibly a Bugis), who was granted mining rights and the right to open up land in the Hulu Langat area by the Sultan Muhammad Shah Ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Ibrahim Shah of Riau, who also conferred on him the title of Dato’ Bandar Kajang.
- 4 The largest estate was West Country, which employed 116 Indian and 12 Javanese labourers (Mohd. Shaidin, 1981/82: 20).
- 5 In 1884, shortly after the establishment of a British administration, the village of Hulu Langat was estimated to have a population of 400, almost all migrants from Mandailing, Rawa and Minangkabau (Mohd. Shaidin, 1981/82: 13).
- 6 It was estimated in the 1960s that 80 per cent of the population of Hulu Langat were of Sumatran origin (Radcliffe, 1969: 181).
- 7 As a reminder of the founding Mandailing presence however, it is worthy of note that while

- Goh owned 9 and Low 8 houses in Kajang in 1912, Raja Alang owned 20 (Voon, 2014: 57).
- 8 Reko was the site of the first tin mine opened in the area. There was an early Mandailing settlement there as well. Sungai Kantan was originally the site of a Chinese mining settlement. It has since become a Malay area.
 - 9 Nevertheless, there is no present record of Jian or his family in Kajang.
 - 10 The 1911 census shows that the Cantonese and Hakkas (termed in the census as Kheh) were the predominant dialect groups in Hulu Langat then (see Table 1). The highly uneven sex ratio in both groups show the low incidence of household formation, where the sex ratio is more favourable for the Cantonese (1: 3.9) than for the Hakkas (1: 5.2). See Table 2.
 - 11 The third largest group was the Hokkiens, with an even more unfavourable sex ratio of 1: 16.
 - 12 <http://stjohnkl.net/index.cfm?load=page&page=151>)
 - 13 For an account of Low Ti Kok in Kajang, see <http://kajangtown.blogspot.com/2007/08/low-ti-kok.html>
 - 14 The Chinese population in Hulu Langat doubled between 1921 and 1931.
 - 15 Voon's work on landownership patterns in the surrounding mukim of Semenyih and Ulu Semenyih also reveals the durability of Chinese owned lots, as compared to that of European, Indian and Malay, an indicator of the propensity to permanent settlement found within in the community (Voon, 1978: 516).
 - 16 In 1947, when the first post-war census was taken, the sex ratio was virtually balanced, with 1: 1.2 for the Cantonese, and 1: 1.05 for the Hakkas. It is noteworthy that for the smaller Hok Chiu, Teochew, Hailam and Kwongsai populations, the sex ratio remained far more imbalanced (see Table 2).
 - 17 Low YF (Liu Yan Fei 刘雁飞)
 - 18 He was also involved in the Min Sheng Ti Yu Hui (民生体育会), a local society that inherited the spirit of Sun Yat Sen's Tong Meng Hui (同盟会). It promotes Confucian teachings and martial arts.
 - 19 The sample of Chinese migrants to urban centres in a 2005 study consisted of 20.4 per cent college graduates, 15.5 per cent university graduates, 12.6 per cent with a Masters degree and 1 per cent a PhD (Zhang 2011).
 - 20 Spearheading the reforms was a wealthy Hokkien businessman Lee Ken (李遣) who was invited to head the Shiye temple. He introduced administrative reforms which "rationalized" temple management-the notion of membership, open elections to the positions of ritual *lu zhu* (炉主) and management leadership-and attenuated its narrow "sectarian" base.
 - 21 The birthday is celebrated annually on the seventh day of the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar.
 - 22 Of the 13 committee members covered in a 2007 survey, all are male, nine in their sixties and seventies. For example, the current President (who was not polled in this survey) is a wealthy businessman of Teochew origin, educated in English at Kajang High School, who also serves as President of the Kwangtung Association.
 - 23 The organizers estimate that more than 10,000 people participated in the procession.
 - 24 Lee characterized himself as a third generation Sungai Chua villager, the first being immigrants from China, the second those who were forcibly relocated to the New Village from Sungai Kantan during the Emergency, and the third being those like him who moved voluntarily to Sungai Chua.

References

- DEL TUFO, M.V. 1949. *Malaya: A Report in the 1947 Census of Population*, Millbank: Crown Agents for the Colonies.
- FADZI, M.A.D. *et al.* 2014. Evaluation of migration decision-selectivity factors in metropolitan area: a case of Klang Valley Region, Malaysia, *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 9(1): 34-44.
- GULLICK, J.M. 2000. *A History of Kuala Lumpur 1857-1939*, MBRAS Monograph 29, Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
- JAMALIAH Jaafar 2004. Emerging trends of urbanisation in Malaysia, *Statistics Malaysia*, 1: 43-54.
- KOK, Hu Jin 1993. Malaysian Chinese folk religion: with special reference to Weizhen Gong in Kuala Lumpur, in Cheu Hock Tong (ed.), *Chinese Beliefs and Practices in Southeast Asia*, Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk.
- Majlis Perbandaran Kajang, portal Rasmi, Sejarah Kajang, <http://www.mpkj.gov.my>, retrieved 14 July 2014.
- Malaysia 1997. Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, Selangor. Jabatan Perancang Bandar dan Desa 1997. *Rancangan Struktur Sebahagian Majlis Perbandaran Kajang (MPKj) 1995-2020*, Kajang: Majlis Perbandaran Kajang.
- MOHD. SHAIDIN bin Ismail 1981/82. *Orang-orang Mandailing di Selangor 1860an-1940an: Satu Kajian Kes di Daerah Ulu Langat*, Sarjana muda, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (*The Mandailing of Selangor, 1860s-1940s: A Case Study Ulu Langat District*, unpublished M.A. thesis, UKM).
- NATHAN, J.E. 1922. *The Census of British Malaya 1921*, Dunstable and Watford: Waterlow & Sons Ltd.
- POUNTNEY, A.M. 1911. *The Census of the Federated Malay States 1911*, London: Darling & Son Ltd.
- RADCLIFFE, David 1969. The peopling of Ulu Langat, *Indonesia*, 8: 155-182.
- SAW Swee-Hock 1988. *The Population of Peninsular Malaysia*, Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- 2006. Population trends and patterns in Multiracial Malaysia. In *Malaysia, Recent Trends and Challenges*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- SIU, Paul C.P. 1952. The sojourner, *American Journal of Sociology*, 58 (1): 34-44.
- TAN, Jocelyn 2007. One race, two sets of views, *The Star*, 23 September.
- TEY, Nai Peng 2012. Internal migration in the Klang Valley of Malaysia: issues and implications, *Malaysian Journal of Chinese Studies*, 1: 40-59.
- VLIELAND, C.A. 1931. *British Malaya: A Report on the 1931 Census*, Millbank: Crown Agents for the Colonies.
- VOON Phin Keong 1976. Malay reservations and Malay land ownership in Semenyih and Ulu Semenyih, *Modern Asian Studies*, 10 (4): 509-523.
- 1978. Evolution of ethnic patterns of rural land ownership in Peninsular Malaysia: a case study, *Southeast Asian Studies*, 15 (4): 510-529.
- 2001. The Chinese new villages in Malaysia: impact of demographic changes and response strategies, Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies, www.malaysian-chinese.net, retrieved 1 July 2014.
- 2007. Pioneers, entrepreneurs and labourers: building the social and economic foundations of statehood. In *Malaysian Chinese and Nation-building: Before Merdeka and Fifty Years after*, edited by Voon Phin Keong, Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies: 43-94.
- 2013. Transforming the development frontier: Chinese pioneers in the Ulu Langat district of Selangor, Malaysia, *Malaysian Journal of Chinese Studies*, 2 (2): 45-64.
- WANG, Gungwu 1981. Traditional leadership in a new nation: the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore. In Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, Singapore: Hinemann.
- 1989. Patterns of Chinese migration in historical perspective. In *Observing Change in Asia: Essays in Honour of J.A.C. Mackie*, edited by R.J. May and W.J. O'Malley, Bathurst, NSW: Crawford House Press: 33-48.
- YANG, C.K. 1961. *Religion in Chinese Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- ZHANG, Jijiao 2011. Urbanization and urban migrants in Malaysia: a comparative study between Chinese and Malays, *Journal of Malaysian Chinese Studies*, 12: 107-127.
- 温故知 1988. 《仙师爷与师爷庙》，吉隆坡：辉煌出版社 (WEN Gu Zhi 1988, *Xian Shiye and the Temple*, Kuala Lumpur: Hui Huang Press).