

The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya 1912–1949. By C.F. Yong and R.B. McKenna. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990. 289 pp.

So scant is the literature on the Kuomintang (KMT) movement in British Malaya that one looks eagerly to each new publication as an almost certain source of additional information. It is, therefore, quite refreshing for those interested in the history of the Chinese in Malaya to welcome C.F. Yong and R.B. McKenna's study, which covers a largely neglected area in both Malaysian and Singapore history.

The Kuomintang movement in Malaya, from 1912 to 1949, represents a significant chapter in the political activities of the overseas Chinese. The presence of the KMT movement not only in Malaya but also in other parts of Southeast Asia reveals that the pre-war Chinese population comprised a large segment whose outlook was China-centred. The Malayan Kuomintang (KMTM) symbolized the beginning of the first legal political party in British Malaya.

The importance of this movement becomes clear when one notes that the KMTM was the instrument through which China made its presence felt among the China-born Chinese in Malaya. Through this movement, the Chinese Government guided their education, directed their way of life to a certain extent, and made them remain Chinese and never Malayan, as befitted their environment and new home. While the KMTM ensured that the Malayan Chinese retained their identity, its presence posed considerable problems for the British authorities in both London and Malaya. The writers mentioned that "the 37 years of political endeavour by [KMT] members and sympathizers . . . consumed a large part of the energy and resources of both the Malayan Colonial Governments and their London offices in managing it during that time."

The writers examine the history of the KMTM chronologically and have periodized it into six major phases. The compartmentalization of the history of the KMTM into phases makes it easier for the reader to understand the complicated developments that took place during this time.

The first phase provides a historical background to the social and political conditions that existed in Malaya and Singapore prior to the formation of the KMT in China and Malaya. The difference between the China-born and Straits-born Chinese, especially their political orientations, is explained. As for the British, the development of Chinese nationalism from 1890 onwards meant that more effort was required to counter this nationalism generally.

The second phase commences from December 1912 and ends in October 1925 when the ban on the KMT branches in Malaya by the British

authorities was enforced. The writers devote two chapters to this period. The first looks at the Chinese revolution in China and how it led to the formation of the Malayan KMT party. The formation of the KMTM signified a new beginning for the Malayan Chinese as it heralded an era of legitimized political activism among the Malayan Chinese. The second chapter of this phase pays close attention to how the British authorities managed growing Chinese nationalism. The British were jealously and sensitively safeguarding their interests against real or potentially damaging KMT challenges. The British fear that their rule might be challenged, threatened or even undermined saw them banning the KMT branches in 1925. This banning highlighted the fact that the British expected the immigrant Chinese to be either loyal to the Malayan Government or be apolitical. The writers added that apart from depoliticizing the Chinese, one fundamental British policy was to "protect" the Malay population.

The third phase commences when the KMTM was banned by the British authorities in 1925 and ends in February 1930 when Sir Cecil Clementi was appointed Governor of the Straits Settlements. The writers examine this phase from both the KMTM's and the British authorities' perspectives. Chapter four explains how the KMTM survived the ban and was able to surge ahead. In spite of the constant harassment and repression from the colonial authorities, the KMTM was able to remain a viable and formidable political force among the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore. The next chapter looks at the difference in opinion over the KMTM by the Malayan and London authorities. This conflict over the banning of the KMTM has been clearly described by the writers as "The Divided Mind".

The fourth phase covers the period from the appointment of Sir Cecil Clementi as Governor in February 1930 up to the time when the Lampson-Wang Agreement was reached in April 1931. The attempts by Sir Cecil Clementi to discipline the KMTM are closely examined. Sir Cecil's punitive measures against the KMTM clearly reflected his desire to get the Malayan Chinese to divorce Chinese politics from that in Malaya. He was able to enforce a restriction on the KMTM through the Societies Ordinances and immigration restrictions. However, his efforts to contain the KMTM were not well received by the British Government. This saw the KMTM becoming a casualty of the diplomatic by-play between the Chinese and British governments. An agreement was reached between the two governments that enabled the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore to become individual members of the KMT of China but did not allow them to organize local branches, spread propaganda or raise funds in Malaya for political purposes. However, this compromise, though formalized in 1932, was never ratified, thereby casting a long shadow on the future of the KMTM's activities.

The fifth phase witnesses a heightening of Chinese nationalism in these territories in the wake of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. This intensified China-oriented nationalism stimulated individual KMT members to participate in the National Salvation Movement led by a non-partisan community and political leader, Tan Kah Kee. In this phase, the KMT leaders and members contributed substantially to the nationalist cause without being legally prosecuted or persecuted, owing principally to the fact that the British authorities were more concerned with the communist influence in these territories.

While the authors have provided an extensive coverage on the history of the Kuomintang movement in Malaya, they could have paid more attention to the developments that took place between 1937 and 1949. No doubt, the period 1937 to 1941 has been well-documented by a number of other historians, but this would have made the book more complete. Furthermore, the writers have not adequately discussed the period from the time of the Japanese invasion of Malaya in December 1941 to the Japanese surrender in August 1945. What did the KMTM do at this point in time and what was its role in defending Malaya and Singapore against the Japanese? This is one area that requires much research and until something is written extensively about it, the history of the KMTM remains incomplete.

Nevertheless, the writers have been able to accomplish what they set out to do. They have shown the complex nature of the politics that existed in colonial Malaya, and how the changing political circumstances in China influenced the development of Chinese nationalism in Malaya. The dynamics of this movement in British Malaya have been identified through close examination of its leadership, organization and ideology. The changing perception of the British authorities has also been clearly represented.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, the writers deserve high praise and appreciation for producing an authoritative study of the Kuomintang movement in Malaysia and Singapore during the British colonial period.

MANIVANNAN
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World Bibliographical Series, Vol. 93. By Sylvia C. Engelen Krausse and Gerald H. Krausse. Clio Press, 1988. 249 pp.

Negara Brunei Darussalam is an ancient country, with a history and traditions that stretch beyond the millennia of human memory. Yet a researcher