# Studies in Modern Overseas Chinese History

Yen Ching-hwang

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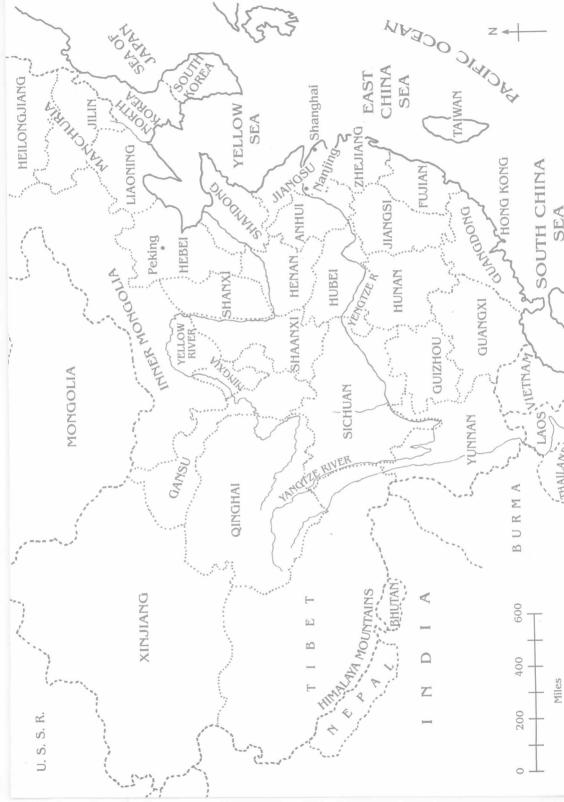
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Part I	China and the Overseas Chinese
Chapter 1	Ch'ing Changing Images of the Overseas Chinese (1644–1911): <i>Modern Asian Studies</i> (Cambridge University Press, 1981), Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 261–85.
Chapter 2	Ch'ing Protection of the Returned Overseas Chinese after 1893, with Special Reference to the Chinese in Southeast Asia: <i>Review of Southeast Asian Studies</i> (South Seas Society, Singapore, 1985), Vol. XV, pp. 29–42.
Chapter 3	Wu T'ing-fang and the Protection of the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1897–1903: <i>Working Paper No. 12</i> (Centre for Asian Studies, The University of Adelaide, 1981).
Chapter 4	Sun Yat-sen and the Overseas Chinese,1894–1911: Unpublished.
Chapter 5	The Overseas Chinese and the 1911 Revolution: <i>Papers on Far Eastern History</i> (Australian National University, Canberra, 1979), No. 19, pp. 55–89.
Chapter 6	The Nanyang Chinese and the 1911 Revolution: Lee Lai To (ed.), <i>The 1911 Revolution – The Chinese in British and Dutch Southeast Asia</i> (Heinemann Asia, Singapore, 1987), pp. 20–34.
Chapter 7	Overseas Chinese Nationalism: A Historical Study: Unpublished.
Part II	Modern Overseas Chinese Enterprises
Chapter 8	The Overseas Chinese and Late Ch'ing Economic Modernization: <i>Modern Asian Studies</i> (Cambridge University Press, 1982), Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 217–32.
Chapter 9	Chang Yu-nan and the Chaochow Railway (1904–1908):

A Case Study of Overseas Chinese Involvement in China's Modern Enterprise: Modern Asian Studies

- (Cambridge University Press, 1984), Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 119-35.
- The Wing On Company in Hong Kong and Shanghai: A Chapter 10 Case Study of Modern Overseas Chinese Enterprise, 1907–1949: Proceedings of Conference on Eighty Years' History of the Republic of China, 1912-1991 (Taipei, 1991), Vol. IV, English section, pp. 77–117.
- Modern Overseas Chinese Business Enterprise: A Chapter 11 Preliminary Study: Unpublished.





#### **About the Author**

Yen Ching-hwang, formerly Professor of History at the University of Hong Kong, is now Reader/Associate Professor in History at the University of Adelaide, South Australia. He was born in Fujian, China and brought up in Malaysia. A graduate of Nanyang University, Singapore, he obtained his Ph.D from the Australian National University, Canberra in 1970.

His major publications in English are *The Overseas Chinese and the* 1911 Revolution (1976), Coolies and Mandarins (1985) and A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya, 1800–1911 (1986). These books have been translated into Chinese by scholars in Taiwan and China, and were published in 1982, 1990 and 1991 respectively. His more recent publication is a book in Chinese H'ai-wai bua-jen shih yen-chiu (Studies in Overseas Chinese History) published by the Singapore Society of Asian Studies in July 1992.

#### Introduction

The economic and political links between the overseas Chinese and China have attracted the attention and interest of scholars in the past. With China's growing economic ties with the outside world and the increasing importance of investment by ethnic Chinese abroad, studies of overseas Chinese have once again captured the imagination and interest

of scholars and journalists alike.

'Overseas Chinese' is a historical term which is used to refer to the Chinese who sojourned outside China and lived under foreign rule (including those who lived in Hong Kong and Macao), while maintaining strong cultural, socio-economic and political links with China. They identified themselves as Chinese, and hoped to return to China eventually. But with the emergence of new nations in Southeast Asia and the political change in North America after the Second World War, the majority of the overseas Chinese adopted local citizenship, and changed their identities from overseas Chinese to ethnic Chinese. The term, 'overseas Chinese', however, is still relevant to the study of a historical stage before the change in their status.

Like most immigrants the world over, the overseas Chinese maintained strong cultural, socio-economic and political ties with China. They were no different from other immigrants in trying to retain their ethnic identity. On the other hand, as their economic and social roots grew deeper in the host countries, and as their temporary stay became a permanent one, they entered into an inevitable process of change. They developed closer economic and political ties with their new land, and weakened their old

ties with their motherland.

However, postwar history of overseas Chinese, especially the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, has been misunderstood by the West's policy of containment of Chinese communism. During the Cold War innocent ethnic Chinese were suspected of being in allegiance with the Chinese communists. The history of contemporary Southeast Asia has proven this wrong. The majority of the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia have adopted their host countries as permanent homes both for themselves as well as for their descendants. They have successfully integrated into the countries they have chosen, and they play significant roles in the nation-building of the region.

This volume, containing eleven articles written in the two and a half decades of my academic career, is not intended to chart the process of this change from overseas Chinese to ethnic Chinese abroad. Instead it is part of the historical records of the social, political and cultural links between the overseas Chinese and their motherland in the period before the Second World War.

The first chapter sets the scene for modern overseas Chinese history with Ch'ing changing images of overseas Chinese. The Ch'ing government from the beginning of its rule adopted a hostile policy, which it inherited from the Ming dynasty, in treating emigrants. It banned emigration, and punished the violators. But changing socio-economic conditions in China and the political situation on the international scene forced the Ch'ing government to relax its restrictive emigration policy and to change its attitude towards the overseas Chinese. This change in emigration policy in 1893 ushered in a new era during which the Ch'ing government adopted a new protection policy towards its overseas subjects and maintained a cordial relationship with them.

Chapter 2 looks at the implementation of this new protection policy at home – the protection of returned overseas Chinese in China. The traditional paternalistic and oppressive attitude of the mandarins towards emigrants, corruption and nepotism, and the central-provincial rivalry were the main causes for the failure of the Ch'ing government to protect the returned overseas Chinese.

Using Wu T'ing-fang's protection of American Chinese in late 19th and early 20th century as a case study, Chapter 3 examines the implementation of this protection policy abroad and the problems that the Ch'ing diplomats encountered. Wu was one of the best diplomats that China had ever produced during the late Ch'ing period. Proficient in English and versed in Western laws and customs, Wu fought tenaciously against unjust laws and regulations imposed on Chinese immigrants in the United States. Despite his efforts, Wu failed in his task. What accounted for his failure was not lack of support on the part of the Ch'ing government, but the imperialist attitude of the United States government.

Chapter 4 starts with a fresh perspective in looking at the relationship between the overseas Chinese and China. Previous chapters focused on aspects of the relationship between the Ch'ing government and its overseas subjects. This chapter looks at the activities of Sun Yat-sen in the overseas Chinese communities in a crucial period of change in modern Chinese history. Sun and his associates represented a new political force on the

scene of late Ch'ing China, at the time of a national crisis. Sun offered new direction and a solution to China's national problems. His presence in the overseas Chinese communities and his appeal for support brought China's politics to the overseas Chinese communities throughout the world. For the first time, the overseas Chinese were considered to be important to China's salvation. Sun Yat-sen's success in acquiring the support of the overseas Chinese was crucial to his eventual toppling of the Manchu regime in early 1912 and his activities paved the way for a large-scale involvement of the overseas Chinese in the 1911 Revolution.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine in some detail the overseas Chinese involvement in the 1911 Revolution. They investigate the organizations, strategies and techniques which the revolutionaries used to obtain the support of the overseas Chinese. They also examine the issues that the revolutionaries propagated among their overseas audiences, and assess the contributions of the overseas Chinese to the 1911 Revolution. Both chapters focus on the Chinese in Southeast Asia, in particular the Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia.

Chapter 7 is a more general discussion of overseas Chinese nationalism, and its expressions in various historical stages in modern Chinese history. It provides insight into the active involvement of the overseas Chinese in China's politics from the late Ch'ing period to the Second World War.

In the second part of the book, the focus is on the economic aspect of overseas Chinese relations with China, as well as the nature and characteristics of modern overseas Chinese enterprises. Chapters 8 and 9 look at the close economic relationship between the overseas Chinese and Ch'ing China. Under severe pressure from the Western and Japanese imperialist powers during the last decade of the 19th century, China was looking desperately for alternative capital to replace foreign capital in its modernization, and to resist imperialist economic penetration of China. It was in this political and economic climate that overseas Chinese capital was given by the Ch'ing government an important role to play in the modernization of China. Chapter 8 discusses how the Ch'ing government attempted to use this overseas Chinese capital and how it failed. Using Chang Yu-nan and his construction of the Chaochow Railway (1904-1908) as a case study, Chapter 9 examines how overseas Chinese capitalists like Chang were deeply involved in China's early economic modernization. It analyses Chang's motives, and assesses the success and failure of the project.

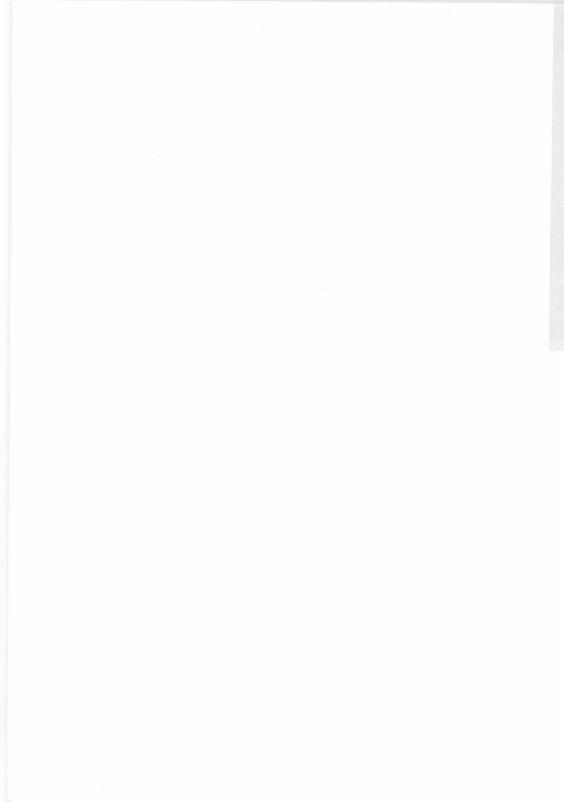
Chapters 10 and 11 look closely at overseas Chinese enterprise, an

entirely different aspect of overseas Chinese economic activity. Residing in foreign lands, the overseas Chinese were exposed to foreign influence. They observed, learned and imitated Western ways of organizing business, and at the same time, tried to integrate Confucian values with Western business practices. This resulted in the creation of a distinctive overseas Chinese modern enterprise which is a hybrid of Western and Chinese values and systems. Using Wing On Company in Hong Kong as a case study, Chapter 10 examines the origins and development of this modern overseas Chinese enterprise, and analyses the factors contributing to its success. It credits a major part of Wing On's success to the entrepreneurial spirit of its founders, Kwok Lock and Kwok Chin. It also identifies the overseas Chinese entrepreneurship exemplified by the Kwok brothers as one of the new types of entrepreneurship in modern China. The ideology, organization and management of modern overseas Chinese entrepreneurship is further explored in Chapter 11 in a more general discussion of modern overseas Chinese business enterprises. The findings of these two chapters may help readers understand the nature and operation of the Chinese big businesses in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and other parts of the world.

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#### Part I China and the Overseas Chinese



#### CHAPTER 1

### Ch'ing Changing Images of the Overseas Chinese (1644–1911)\*

#### Roots of the Bad Images of the Overseas Chinese

The Manchus inherited from the Ming Dynasty the images of the overseas Chinese as well as the policy towards them. The tarnished images of the overseas Chinese as 'deserters', 'criminals' and 'potential traitors' of the Ming were taken over by the early Ch'ing rulers. These images were soon transformed into new images of 'political criminals', 'conspirators' and 'rebels', for in the first four decades after the Manchu conquest of North China in 1644, the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia were directly involved in the resistance movement on the southeast coast of China. The leader of the movement, Cheng Ch'eng-kung (known in the West as Koxinga), seems to have enlisted the support of the overseas Chinese, particularly from Vietnam, Cambodia and Siam, for his resistance.<sup>2</sup> It is claimed that Koxinga's naval power was partly drawn from Nanyang (Southeast Asia) shipping, and financed from the profits of the Nanyang trade.3 Of course those overseas Chinese who supported Koxinga made no apology for their involvement. They saw the Manchus as alien usurpers and as the oppressors of the Han Chinese, and the support for Koxinga's resistance movement was seen as an act of patriotism to save the Han Chinese from the oppressive Manchu rule. The government countered the overseas Chinese involvement by introducing stringent laws against private overseas trade. In 1656 (13th year of the Emperor Shun-chih), a

decree was proclaimed that '... any traders who go overseas privately and trade or supply the rebels with provisions will be beheaded, and their goods confiscated. Properties of the violators will be given to the informants as reward. Local officials who fail to investigate and apprehend the violators will be sacked and punished with heavy penalties, the Pao-chia<sup>4</sup> officials who fail to expose the crime will face capital punishment'. This law was reaffirmed in 1661 (18th year of the Emperor Shun-chih).6 The use of the death penalty and collective punishment had effectively put a stop to private overseas trade with the result that the commercial activities of the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia were greatly affected.

Even after the suppression of Koxinga's regime in 1683 and the lifting of the ban on overseas trade, the Ch'ing government's fear of the overseas Chinese as 'political criminals', 'conspirators' and 'rebels' still existed. In 1712, for instance, Emperor K'ang-hsi decreed that '... those who stayed overseas permanently are liable to capital punishment, and will be extradited from foreign countries by the provincial governors for prompt beheading.'7 The fear was based on the assumption that the overseas Chinese would continue to support the 'rebels' who fled overseas after Koxinga's regime fell. Although the remnants of the rebels posed little or no direct military threat to the Ch'ing government, they could still hatch anti-Manchu conspiracies among the overseas Chinese, and could infiltrate China's coastal population through their secret activities. To what extent this fear was well grounded is difficult to judge. However, the Ch'ing government seems to have taken it very seriously and worked to avert the possibility. Of course not all overseas Chinese were supporters or sympathizers of the rebels; many were apolitical and were only interested in trade. Some of them were probably prevented from returning to China by the warfare between Ch'ing and Koxinga armies, or by the sea prohibition law introduced by the Shun-chih Emperor. To separate the genuine traders from rebels, a decree was proclaimed to the effect that '... Fukienese who have settled overseas are permitted to catch boats to return to their home province, and the owners of the boats must act as guarantors. After returning to China, they are to be handed over by the local officials to their relatives for custody. If the returned persons are found to be untruthful and of bad character, they are to be sent off to malaria-infested areas for hard labour; those who do not respond to this amnesty and sneak back into the empire later will be sentenced to death once they are apprehended.'8 As a result of this amnesty, about two thousand overseas Chinese were reported to have returned to their home