

A stylized, light-colored illustration of bamboo stalks and leaves is set against a dark background. The bamboo stalks are vertical and segmented, with clusters of leaves branching out from them. The leaves are elongated and pointed, typical of bamboo foliage. The overall style is minimalist and elegant, reminiscent of traditional East Asian art.

SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN CHINESE LITERATURE

Edited by THERESA CHONG CARIÑO

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Welcome Remarks

Bro. Andrew Gonzalez, FSC

I am very honored to welcome you this morning and to have my institution playing host to this very important regional conference. For us here at De La Salle and our China Studies Program, the topic takes on special importance. Overseas Chinese Literature which seems to be the focus of the conference is very important to us because of the number of Filipino-Chinese students and staff that we have in this University and the special attention that we have paid to them in line with our own thrusts, especially in relation to the China Studies Program.

I think the second thing that is very significant for us here is that it is a regional conference and that we have speakers and scholars who will be talking about this topic from the vantage point of the "huachiao" — from the different parts of Southeast Asia.

Perhaps the third item that is of significance to me, is that I began as a literary scholar and I was trained in formalism and structuralism in terms of linguistics and I am told that that is outdated now. I am afraid that structuralism is not the "in" thing among literary scholars and literary critics. So we have gone back really to a very culturally determined type of literary study that is represented, I suppose, by some of the British critics whom some of our scholars on campus have been studying lately: i.e. the school of post-structuralism and the school of cultural materialism represented by people like Terry in England. One of our scholars has just returned from a year's stay in England and is talking about this now. So this takes on special significance for us.

And it seems that the theme of the conference which is "Social Change and the Literature of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia" is very, very timely because to understand these pieces of literature now, we have to go back to the cultural matrix and context of these literary pieces. So from the point of view of pure academic interest plus all its other ramifications for life and politics, culture, and economics, the topic takes on added significance. I look forward to the contributions

of the scholars from different parts of Asia. When these proceedings are published, we will have some very, very interesting documentation of what is happening to the Chinese literature all over Asia as a result of the impact of political and, probably more important, economic changes in the region.

I'd like to welcome you, to tell you how happy we are that we are part of this enterprise and I certainly wish you a very, very fruitful seminar both today and tomorrow.

Thank you very much.

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Conference Convenors:

Theresa Chong Cariño
 James Na Teng Choon

Introduction to the Conference on “SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN CHINESE LITERATURE”

by Theresa Chong Cariño

It has been said that literature is for the soul what politics is for the will. As one trained in Political Science, I certainly know more about politics (that is, theoretically) than I do about literature. But, as many of you know, it is quite impossible to separate literature from politics. The heated political controversy and bloodshed generated by Salman Rushdie's "Satanic Verses" is a perfect illustration of how literature can be political and how political conditions impinge upon the writer.

This is true of Southeast Asian Chinese Literature as it is of any other literature - hence the theme of the Conference: which is "Social Change and Southeast Asian Chinese Literature." We would be missing much if we ignore the social and political circumstances under which Southeast Asian Chinese Literature has evolved. The literature of the Chinese in Southeast Asia today reflects the tremendous transformation the region has undergone since the Second World War. In the last four decades, we have witnessed major changes in the relationship between China and Southeast Asia and between the Chinese minorities and other Southeast Asians.

The Chinese in Southeast Asia no longer perceive themselves as sojourners or "huachiao" and increasingly see themselves as Southeast Asians first and Chinese second. And nowhere is this better expressed than in their literature.

Some of our speakers will attempt to trace the dialectical relationship between socio-political conditions and the literature of the ethnic Chinese. While the Southeast Asian Chinese share many similarities, differences in their socio-political environment have affected the medium, the

content and the forms of literature that have emerged. In some countries where writing and publishing in Chinese is prohibited or strictly monitored by state authorities, writing in a non-Chinese medium has become both a political necessity and a historical reality. As many of the speakers in this conference will point out, more and more ethnic Chinese write in languages other than in Chinese. Thus, when we speak of Southeast Asian Chinese literature, we not only refer to literature written in Chinese but we are also referring to literature written by the ethnic Chinese in whatever language medium they may adopt. To what extent then is Southeast Asian Chinese literature "Chinese" and to what extent does it belong to mainstream Southeast Asian literature (i.e. assuming there is such a thing)? This is a question our speakers will be addressing.

It is clear that literature by the Chinese in Southeast Asia comes in many languages and eludes classification into a single category. Our subject matter then is much more complex than it appears at first sight. Just as scholars now talk about the many identities of the Chinese in Southeast Asia, so are we obliged to recognize the many literatures of the Southeast Asian Chinese.

To the extent that our conference attempts to combine both a literary and sociological perspective in the analysis of Southeast Asian Chinese literature, it promises to be exciting. Clearly, literature is more than just an art form. Literature is history - both a repository of tradition and a challenge to it. It is social and political testimony as well as political tool and social weapon. In this sense, if we wish to understand the Southeast Asian Chinese, we will have to examine their literature.

It is one of our hopes that a conference such as this will provide a better understanding of the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia.

At the same time, we are extremely happy to have brought together both writers and academics from different countries in the region. The interaction between the two groups can be mutually enriching.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous amount of organizational work that has been exerted by my co-convenor, Mr. James Na, in putting this conference together. He is truly the man behind the scenes. I would like to thank him and all those who have made this event possible.

I believe we can look forward to an interesting time over the next two days.

March 10, 1989

MODERN MALAYSIAN CHINESE LITERATURE: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

by Goh Then Chye

INTRODUCTION

The modern Malayan-Chinese Literature or modern Malaysian-Chinese literature has a history of almost sixty years. During this period, tremendous changes have taken place and many literary events have happened due to the political evolution and social change. We cannot discuss all these within one hour, therefore I shall discuss only the major aspects of Malaysian Chinese literature in Malaya/Malaysia over the past sixty years.

DEFINITION AND ORIGIN OF MODERN MALAYSIAN CHINESE LITERATURE

Malaysia is a new nation peopled by various ethnic groups like Malays, Chinese, Indians and others, each of which has its own cultural traditions. It is also true of Malaysian literature which radiates their beauty and sublimity. Although Mahua literature came into existence only 60 years ago, its output is commendable. Since Malaya broke away from the shackles of colonialism and attained independence, the way of thinking of the Chinese has undergone changes and they no longer regard themselves as foreigners but as citizens of an independent country. The love for the country of their birth is so profound that they would willingly sacrifice body and soul for the interest and prosperity of the motherland. In this sense, Mahua literature has made significant strides and moulded a new Chinese society since then.

Before we elaborate on what modern Mahua literature is, it is essential that we make clear the meaning of "Mahua". The word "Mahua" is derived from the Chinese character *ma* and the second character of *Zhonghua* which means Chinese. Thus, Mahua means "the Chinese in Malaya". In this paper, Mahua literature refers to the

Chinese literature in Malaya and Singapore and later, Malaysia. Nevertheless, after 1965, when Singapore seceded from Malaysia, Mahua literature refers to the Chinese literature in Malaysia only, that is excluding Singapore.

In this context, Mahua literature is the whole literary output of the Chinese community in Malaysia (including Singapore before 1965). Having been influenced by the cultural revolution of the "May Fourth" in China, Chinese writers in Malaya started writing in Chinese as their vehicle, but the works were loaded with new ideas, consciousness and convictions. The content was largely anti-feudal, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist in nature.

The aim of Malayan-Chinese literature was to reflect and portray the Malayan reality and had its own characteristic and identity. Its role was to stimulate and to consolidate the unity, mutual understanding and harmony of the people of Malaya.

Malayan-Chinese literature is a component of Malaysian literature. It first appeared in the literary supplement of the daily *Xin Go Min Ri Bao* or *The Xin Go Min Daily*, published in Singapore in 1920. Thus, the 1920s have been regarded by many as the years of inception of Malayan Chinese literature. The Chinese writers had made revolutionary changes in Chinese literary writing technique by using *baihua* or vernacular that is, the modern form of Chinese. We find each and everyone of them using the common tongue as means to convey sentiments, feelings and patriotic affection for the people and the country they love.

In my own opinion, the development of Malaysian Chinese Literature Movement can be generally divided into the following five stages:

1. 1919 - 1945 From the embryonic stage until the end of World War II.
2. 1945 - 1957 From the stage of World War II until Malaya's independence
3. 1957 - 1963 Since the independence of Malaya until the formation of Malaysia
4. 1963 - 1965 From the formation of Malaysia until Singapore's secession from Malaysia.
5. 1965 - Since Singapore's independence on 9 August 1965, Malaysian - Chinese literature and Singapore-Chinese literature have parted their ways due to the political and social changes in the two countries.

THE OVERSEAS-CHINESE LITERATURE AND MALAYAN-CHINESE LITERATURE

During the course of its short history, Malayan-Chinese literature had undergone various literary movements. Some new literary thought and schools of literature were caused by the changes and development of social life and political influences. For instance, the Chinese literary world had put forward the slogan of "Nanyang literary flavour," and advocated the literature of Malayan-Chinese characteristics. There was an anti-yellow culture movement. There was also the call to promote patriotic literature. More recently there have been attempts to make the Chinese literature recognized as part of the national literature in Malaysia. All of these literary movements reflect the development in different aspects of Malayan-Chinese literary circle.

Between 1919 - 1924, most of the essays published in the literary supplements reflected the thinking and the consciousness of overseas Chinese because most of the writers then came from China. These writers had received their education in China and usually wrote with nostalgia, yearning for their native place in China and thinking of relatives and old friends. They express feelings of wandering far from home and about their exile in a hot and sweaty new land. The overseas Chinese writers maintained that the writings of Chinese abroad, irrespective of their content, were part of Chinese literature. They themselves lived abroad, but wrote about Chinese subjects, paying no attention to their immediate environment. They were entirely China-oriented. The early Malayan-Chinese literary world were largely controlled and monopolized by these writers who came from China. Thus the early period of Malayan-Chinese literature can be regarded as tributaries of the mainstream literature of China. The famous writers of China who came to Malaya before the Second World War were Lao She, Ai Wu, Hong Ling Fei, Ma Ning, Xu Jie, Jin Shan, Wang Ying, Wang Jinting, Wang Renshu, Shen Zijiu, Chen Canyun, Xia Yan, Yue Ye, Wu Tian and others.

A controversy about the characteristic of Malayan Chinese literature broke out between 1947 - 1948. This well known controversy was between those who talked of overseas Chinese literature and those who advocated a new Malayan-Chinese literature. The controversy lasted several months. The Malayan-Chinese writers insisted that the Chinese writers abroad should be part of their environment and their responsibilities should be towards the land where they lived. In other words, they should not engage in expatriate writing. They emphasized

that Malayan literature should have local characteristics. These Malayan Chinese writers claimed to be citizens of Malaya and not Overseas Chinese. They advocated patriotism in local politics to strive for the interests of the local Chinese.

In the actuality, although the early Chinese writers were physically in Malaya, their hearts still remained in China. They came to Malaya as temporary sojourners and regarded Malaya as a foreign land. Thus, very few of their works reflected the Malayan reality. In 1947, two famous writers of China, Go Moruo and Xia Yan, also gave their views on this debate. They finally accepted the view of the Malayan-Chinese writers and agreed that Malayan Chinese literature should have its own characteristics and identity. It should have a life of its own, unfettered to the literature of China. Its role and responsibilities should be to depict Malayan reality and not that of China. Eventually the Malayan-Chinese writers won, and their view of Malayan-Chinese literature was accepted.

From 1950s onwards, there have been many Malayan-Chinese writers, the more well-known are Lin Cantian, Lian Shishen, Xin Yin, Wei Yun, Miao Xiu, Yao Zi, Fang Bei Fang, Fang Xiu, Xu Xu, Li Rulin, Zhao Rong, Yu Mowo, Li Guo, Tiao Wenmei, Xie Ke, Wei Beihua, Lin Chen, Ye Taiheng, Tu Hong, Zhou Can, Miao Mang, Meng Ping, Wei Meng, Wu An, Zhen Yan and others.

Since Malaya became an independent country in 1957, the social political system has changed greatly. The Chinese in Malaya are now citizens of Malaysia and regard Malaysia as their homeland. Nowadays, ninety-eight per cent of the Malaysian-Chinese writers are local-born, and their roots are in Malaysia. The writers of the new generation have a strong sense of being Malaysian. They have no connection with China. They have not been to China which is foreign to them.

ANTI YELLOW CULTURE MOVEMENT

The period 1953 - 1956 after the Second World War was a period of anti "yellow culture" movement in the history of Malayan Chinese literature. The Malayan-Chinese literary world returned slowly to a new and dynamic atmosphere from hibernation. The movement influenced the young students. Although the anti-yellow culture movement was launched by the students, it also indirectly stimulated the Malayan social movements. The anti-yellow culture movement not only afforded the favourable conditions of rejuvenation to the Malayan-Chinese literature, but also made the content of literary works "healthier." It promoted anti-colonialism and anti-aggression, and

fighting for national independence. During this period the local-born and talented Malayan-Chinese writers had increased and the standard of literary works had improved generally.

The students' daring action fully displayed immense courage and enthusiasm. The students organised a series of cultural activities in order to coordinate with the anti yellow culture movement. They burnt pornographic books, obscene pictures and comics, lascivious pictorials and magazines and condemned "decadent" music and scurrilous films, low-down stage performance and dance and opera which were of poor taste. During this time (1953-1956), there were five Chinese literary magazines namely Huang Di (Waste land), Ren Jian (The world), Ren Wen (News of the world), Geng Yun (Cultivation) and Shengho Wencong (Literary Series of Life) which were established and published by the young writers. Two other literary magazines, Literary Post and Literary Ranks were published by Yao Zi. The literary supplements of newspapers such as *Chen Xin* in *Sin Chew Jih Poh* (*Xinzhou Ribao*) and *Wen Feng*, *Xue Hai* and *Shijilu* in *Nanyang Siang Pa* (*Nanyang Shangbao*) continued to be published.

In 1953, the anti-yellow culture campaign reached its climax. The Malayan-Chinese literary world encouraged writers to write essays which criticized the yellow culture and urged the playwright to write plays which would enlighten the audience. The characteristic of literary activities during this period was that many young writers took part in the Malayan-Chinese literary movement. Their literary works reflected several aspects of life, such as the life of coolies and workers, students movement, the feelings of the working class against the bourgeoisie etc. Besides, their works were also filled with high spirit and patriotism. The literary writers also had a hand in the call for national independence especially in raising people's political consciousness. The talented young writers of this period were Xie Ke, Bai Mong, Xie Ming, Tu Hong, Song Ya, Miao Mang, Zheng Yan, Wen Ting, Bai Fan, Ma Yang, Tu Hong, Zhou Can, Zhong Qi, Jian Shi, Song Ren, Bin Mei, Ren Ning, Ma Ya, Wu An and others.

THE LITERATURE OF PATRIOTISM

In 1956, before the independence of Malaya, the Malayan-Chinese literary world took strong measures against the "yellow culture," and people were encouraged to read good books. At the same time, the literature of patriotism was promoted. The Malayan-Chinese writers put forward a proposal regarding the content and form of the literature of patriotism. Their views may be summarized as follows:

The creative content should strengthen the national concept of Malayan people and reflect the toiling life of the people in order to foster the spirit of Malayan patriotism. The writers should forsake the obscure, low-spirit, demoralised and carefree kind of literature. They should create a clear and positive style, and the literary language should be simple, plain, unadorned and popular. The writers must assume the historical responsibilities of literature so as to reflect life, criticise life and lead life. Malayan-Chinese writers should arouse and inculcate in the masses the spirit of nationalism and produce artistic works which emphasize patriotism.

With the independence of Malaya in 1957, the patriotic literary movement spread like wildfire. The Malayan-Chinese literary world advanced a series of theoretical discussions on patriotism and nation building. Malaya just broke off the shackles of colonialism and strode forward into the new era. The Malayan-Chinese literary movement also advanced to a new stage, expanding with the object circumstances and political development. For the sake of keeping in touch for mutual study and learning, some writers proposed to set up an association of Malayan-Chinese Writers. It was hoped that this would bring the writers together to develop the literature of Malaya and to appeal to the Chinese writers to change their expatriate attitude towards their new nation.

Zhao Rong, a celebrated writer of Singapore had drawn up the characteristics and responsibilities of patriotism: (1) The literature of patriotism is the literature of new Malaya which is developed by the multi-ethnic groups and personalities of various circles. (2) The literature of patriotism is the literature which united the multi-ethnic groups and social stratum for peace and coexistence. (3) The literature of patriotism is the literature which unites the multi-ethnic groups and social stratum against oppression and anti-aggression. (4) The literature of patriotism is the literature which builds the new Malayan culture. These four principles formed the guidelines for implementation by the Malayan Chinese.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE THROUGH TRANSLATION

Malaysia is a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural country. Each ethnic group has its own cultural tradition.

There is therefore a need to promote mutual understanding, mutual tolerance and mutual respect so that the people may coexist peacefully and harmoniously. The Malay proverb says "*Tak kenal, maka tak cinta*", (not knowing, therefore no love). Thus, the best way of facilitating cultural interchange is to promote the spirit of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation as well as friendship and unity among the people of different ethnic groups. Translation is a bridge of art that spans the banks of feelings of two different languages for the purpose of opening the door of understanding of two different hearts. In this sense, translation represents a valuable contribution to bringing down the barrier that separates people of different tongues. Through translation, the people not only have the opportunity to enjoy literary works of other ethnic groups but also to understand the thoughts and sentiments of the different communities.

The history of Malay-Chinese literary translation can be traced to the late nineteenth century. Chinese traditional novels (a type of traditional Chinese novel with each chapter headed by a couplet giving the gist of its content) and historical stories have been translated into Malay by the straits Chinese in particular the Baba (Malay-speaking Chinese) in the Straits Settlements between 1889-1950. They had translated about eighty kinds of story books. For instance, *San Guo* (The Three Kingdoms), *Xi You* (Travel To the West or The Monkey), *Gianlongwang You Jiangnan* (Emperor Qianlong travels in Jiangnan) and *Meng Lijun* etc; have all been translated into "Baba" Malay. Two prominent translators were Chan Kim Boon (Zeng Jinwen) and Wan Boon Seng (Yuan Wencheng). They had contributed much to the literary translation and promoted cultural exchange.

After the independence of Malaya in 1957, the Malay language became the national language. The schools began to include the Malay language and Malay literature as subjects and later these became compulsory subjects in government examinations. With the development of Malaysian political system and social change, Malay now called Bahasa-Malaysia has become important in the multi-racial society. Nowadays, the young generation of Chinese can speak and write in Malay fluently, some of them are even better than the Malays themselves.

Between the late 1950 - 1960, the promotion of literary works in translation became the special characteristics of the Chinese society. Modern Malay and Indonesian stories were translated into Chinese. During this time, The World Book Co., a Chinese publishing firm in Singapore had published more than 200 titles of International and Chinese picture-story books (usually for children with a story told in pictures) into Malay. The Commercial Printing Co. of Singapore, also

published a set of Malay-Chinese picture-story books, about 100 titles in all. The above translation of story books, undoubtedly, has made a great contribution to the cultural exchange. Due to the development of national education, the standard of Malay among the Chinese has improved gradually and now they can read and write Malay directly without having to depend on the translation. Thus, since the 1970s, the translation of Malay books into Chinese has decreased because Chinese readers now prefer to read the original Malay literary works.

In the 1960s, the Malay literary works continued to be translated into Chinese. However only three Chinese literary works were translated into Malay, namely: 1. *Hidup Bagaikan Mimpi* trs. by Li Chuan Siu (1961) 2. *Ah-Soh, Hsiang-lin* trs. by Li Chuan Siu (1966) and 3. *Hidup dengan Mati* trs. by Chan Tat Cheong (1966). In the 1970s, Chinese literary works and Malaysian Chinese literary works continued to be translated into Malay.

After two scores of years, the standard of translation has been raised and the technique of translation has improved too. Now there is a new development, that is, some Chinese in Malaysia have begun to write stories, essays and poems in Malay. Their effort has been appreciated and commended by the Malay literary world.

On 31 May 1983, a multi-racial Committee on the Coordination of Translation was set up under the leadership of the eminent Malay poet Usman Awang. Its aim is to promote cultural exchange through translation in order to forge unity among the various ethnic groups. *Angkatan Ini* (This Generation), an anthology of modern Malaysian Chinese fiction was published by The Language and Literary Agency Malaysia in 1988. This anthology consists of 16 short stories written by Malaysian Chinese writers in Chinese and translated into Malay by the members of the Association of Translation and Creative Writing of Malaysia. Another anthology of Modern Malaysian Chinese Poetry is in the process of translation and it will be published at the end of this year.

Recently, Encik Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysian Minister of Education, announced that the Language and Literary Agency will translate the Chinese philosophy and literature called *The Four Books* and *Five Classics* into Malay. Besides this, attempts will be made to translate the outstanding works in different languages into other local languages so as to foster the interaction and mutual understanding among the different ethnic groups in the country.

THE PRESENT SITUATION AND DILEMMA OF MALAYSIAN-CHINESE LITERATURE

The Malaysian-Chinese literature has passed a cycle of sixty years, but the Chinese society in Malaysia is still not very concerned with its development and survival. Recently the Chinese writers criticized the Chinese society and warned that if the Chinese continued to be indifferent to the Malaysian-Chinese literature, then it may elapse with time.

In the past, the Chinese writers took great pain to carry on their writing through self-reliance under difficult circumstances. They wrote silently without attracting public support whether financially or spiritually. The Chinese society showed neither interest nor concern. Some Chinese know that the existence and flourishing of Chinese education is closely linked to the existence of Chinese literature. If the Chinese literature elapses, Chinese education will be in danger too. They are as closely related and mutually dependent as lips and teeth. A Chinese proverb says, "with the skin gone, what can the hair adhere to" (a thing cannot exist without its basis). In fact, Chinese literature is the yeast of Chinese culture and so if Chinese literature is on the decline, so too the Chinese education. Thus in my opinion the Chinese society must care for the Chinese literature. They should love and support the Chinese literature, and promote it.

It is regrettable that the Chinese in Malaysia do not show concern and support for Chinese literature or read Malaysian literary books. On the other hand, the Chinese writers also have to examine themselves critically. Why do the local Chinese not want to buy and read the Malaysian literary books? Why don't the Chinese literary books sell well? I have been a panel member of both Chinese literary awards and Malay literary awards for many years. In my opinion, the current situation and dilemma of Malaysian Chinese literature are due to two main factors namely, the internal factor and the external factor.

Internal Factors:

1. The outlook of some literary works is narrow and limited, divorced from reality and lack of practical or immediate significance.
2. The description of main characters (especially in short stories) is dull and hackneyed.

3. The content is stereotyped, lack of vivid portrayal.
4. Technique of writing is stiff and inflexible, using old rigid forms and lack of nimbleness.
5. The language is rather drab and logic is a conspicuous lack in the writing.
6. The excessive publishing of poor quality books (lack of content) has caused readers to lose confidence.
7. The content still follows the same pattern and fails to break through the stereotypes (especially in the case of short stories).
8. Few writers read widely and engage themselves in advanced studies, so most writers cannot improve their quality of writing. Some of the writers even made errors in their writings, like quoting wrongly or mixing up the chronology of historical events. Some examples are as follows. (a) Chu Yuan read Four Books and Five Classics (Actually Chu Yuan lived in the Warring States and the Four Books and Five Classics were compiled by Zhu Xu, a great Confucian scholar of the Song Dynasty). (b) Cao Zhi was of the Spring and Autumn Period [Actually Cao Zhi (192 - 232 A.D.) was of the Dynasty of Wei]. (c) A writer says that a saying is from the poem of Wen Tianxiang entitled "Zhenggige". (Actually it is from Wen Tianxiang's poem "Guo Lingtingyang"). (d) Even the President of the Chinese-Medium Writers' Association of Malaysia (namely Meng Sha) has committed this kind of mistakes. For example, he said that Lu Yuan was a poet of the May Fourth Movement Period who died at a young age. (In actual fact, Lu Yuan is still alive and he is now working in the Peoples' Literature Publishing House in Beijing, China). Recently he made another mistake at a speech in the closing ceremony of the Training Course on Writing. He quoted inattentively the poem of Zang Kejia "Some live, when they are already dead; Others have died, but are still alive" (entitled Some and Others — In memory of Lu Xun, written in November 1949). He attributed this famous verse to Lu Xun. It is most unfortunate that even the President of the Chinese-Medium Writers' Association of Malaysia made these mistakes. No wonder Prof. Ismail Hussein said that the standard of Malaysian-Chinese literature was as low as that of the secondary Chinese school students. No wonder the foreign critics of art and literature treat the existence of Malaysian Chinese literature with indifference and little concern.