

‘Chinese’ as the Twisted Others? The ‘Chinese Images’ of Historical Textbooks in Malay-medium Secondary Schools in Malaysia

Yeh, Yu Hsien

PhD, Department of Comparative Education, NCNU.

Lecturer, Department of Early Childcare and Education, Kun Shan University.

ABSTRACT

The ethnic relationship between Malay and Chinese has been a social engineering for Malay-based government in the national building in Malaysia since the British colonial period. Although Malaysia is always recognized as the typical multi-racial country, the *Rukunegara* (National Ideology) which is used as the political strategy for Malays to encourage national unity, plays the important role in educational policies since 1980s, especially in the the reform of historical textbooks in Malay-medium secondary school (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*). With the national building began from 1980s in Malaysia, the restructuring of ‘Chinese images’ have been the main targets in historical textbooks in Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (*Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah*, KBSM) reform , especially on the issue of identity changing from ‘being Chinese’ to ‘be Malaysian Chinese’ in the content of historical textbooks. With the background of curriculum reform, the questions of my paper are as follows: With the building of *Rukunegara* since 1980s, how the official historical textbooks to reconstruct or to deconstruct the history of Malaysian Chinese? How and what the ‘Chinese images’ reflect in history textbooks? Is ‘Chinese’ finally viewed as the twisted other from the perspective of Malays, and the ethnic boundary between Malay and Chinese is increasingly visible?

This study does the above-mentioned research questions by; (1) reviewing the background of history textbooks reform since 1980s in Malaysia; (2) analyzing how and what ‘Chinese images’ are in five official history textbooks designed for Malay-medium secondary school students by Malaysian Curriculum Development Department; (3) considering and discussing the issue how the Chinese became as the twisted other in official pedagogy, especially in historical textbooks?

Keywords: Chinese images, Historical textbooks, Malay-medium secondary schools, the Twisted Others.