

EAST ASIAN HISTORICAL MONOGRAPHS

General Editor: WANG GUNGWU

The East Asian Historical Monographs series has, since its inception in the late 1960s, earned a reputation for the publication of works of innovative historical scholarship. It encouraged a generation of scholars of Asian history to go beyond Western activities in Asia seen from Western points of view. Their books included a wider range of Asian viewpoints and also reflected a stronger awareness of economic and socio-cultural factors in Asia which lay behind political events.

During its second decade the series has broadened to reflect the interest among historians in studying and reassessing Chinese history, and now includes important works on China and Hong Kong.

It is the hope of the publishers that, as the series moves into its third decade, it will continue to meet the need and demand for historical writings on the region and that the fruits of the scholarship of new generations of historians will reach a wider reading public.

Other titles in this series are listed at the end of the book.

Chinese Politics in Malaysia

A History of the
Malaysian Chinese Association

Heng Pek Koon

805782
SINGAPORE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD NEW YORK
1988

Oxford University Press
Oxford New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Petaling Jaya Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland
and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press

© *Oxford University Press Pte. Ltd. 1988*

Published in the United States by
Oxford University Press, Inc., New York

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press

ISBN 0 19 588881 2

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Heng, Pek Koon, 1949-
Chinese politics in Malaysia : a history
of the Malaysian Chinese Association.-
(East Asian historical monographs).

1. *Penninsular Malaysia. Politics,*
1949-1987

I. *Title* II. *Series*

320.95951

ISBN 0-19-588881-2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Heng, Pek Koon, 1949-
Chinese politics in Malaysia.

(East Asian historical monographs)

Abstract of thesis (Ph.D.)—University of London,
1984.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. *Chinese—Malaysia—Politics and government.*

2. *Malaysian Chinese Association—History.*

3. *Malaysia—Politics and government.*

I. *Title* II. *Series.*

DS595.2.C5H46 1988 959.5'004951 88-1622

ISBN 0-19-588881-2

M

959.5004951

HEN

567293

Printed in Malaysia by Peter Chong Printers Sdn. Bhd.
Published by Oxford University Press Pte. Ltd.,
Unit 221, Ubi Avenue 4, Singapore 1440

25 SEP. 1991

Pustaka Negara
Malaysia

To Mother and Father
and
to Paul

Preface

THIS study is a revised and updated version of my doctoral thesis presented to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1984. My interest in embarking on an intensive study of the development of Chinese politics in Peninsular Malaysia after World War II was spurred by the scarcity of published materials on this subject of great importance to all Malaysians, particularly those of us who are of Chinese descent. Standard works on Malaysian politics, such as those by G. P. Means, K. J. Ratnam, R. S. Milne, R. K. Vasil and K. van Vorys, have tended to treat Chinese politics as one component part in the complex overall mosaic of multiracial politics in Malaysia. I have tried to give greater focus to the unique configurations of Chinese political development within that mosaic.

I have made the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) the central player in this narrative because of its crucial role in weaning the Chinese away from their preoccupation with the old motherland and engaging their active participation in the mainstream politics of their new homeland. In this sense, the MCA's history is a history of the indigenization of Chinese politics in Malaysia. In addition, I am hopeful that this account will remind contemporary readers that the MCA, which today seems to be in a state of confusion and decline, played a pivotal part in the dramatic events surrounding the defeat of the Communist insurgency and the attainment of independence.

This study would not have been possible without the generosity of Datuk Lee San Choon, MCA president from mid-1974 to April 1983. Datuk Lee granted me permission to consult the party's archives, thus opening up a large and rich body of hitherto unconsulted MCA and Alliance materials. Several other party leaders, in particular Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan and Datuk Dr Ling Liong Sik, were equally co-operative in facilitating my research. Their frank and stimulating discussions during interviews greatly broadened my understanding of the MCA and Chinese politics in general, and their interest in my study made it possible for me to observe the workings of the party through direct access to party general as-