AN ETHNIC PRESS IN MALAYSIA: A STUDY OF *SIN CHEW DAILY* 2012-2013

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AN ETHNIC PRESS IN MALAYSIA: A STUDY OF *SIN CHEW DAILY* 2012-2013

by

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子曰：三人行必有我师，择其善者而从之，
其不善者而改之。

*Confucius said, "When I walk along with two others, they
may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good
qualities and follow them, ignore their bad qualities and
avoid them."*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC   Audit Bureau of Circulations

AUKU   *Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti* (The Universities and College Universities Act)

BERNAMA   *Berita Nasional Malaysia* (The Malaysian National News Agency)

BERSIH   The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections

BN   *Barisan Nasional* (National Front coalition)

CGAs   Chinese guilds and associations

CIJ   Centre for Independent Journalism Malaysia

CNY   Chinese New Year

DAP   Democratic Action Party

Dongjiaozong   Alliance of *Dongzong* and *Jiaozong* (董教总)

Donglianhui   The United Association of Private Chinese Secondary School (华文独中董联会)

Dongzong   United Chinese School Committees Associations of Malaysia
(马来西亚华校董事联合会总会)

FELDA   Federal Land Development Authority

FMS   Federated Malay States

FPP   First-Past-the-Post

GE12   The Malaysian 12th General Election

GE13   The Malaysian 13th General Election

GERAKAN   Malaysian People's Movement (*Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia*)

HINDRAF   Hindu Rights Action Force

Huatang	The Chinese Assembly Hall （华人大会堂）
Huazong	Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia （马来西亚中华大会堂总会）
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISAs	Ideological State Apparatuses
Jiaozong	The United Chinese School Association of Malaysia (马来西亚华校教师会总会)
LPM	Labour Party of Malaya (马来亚劳工党)
MARA	*Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (Council of Trust for Indigenous People)
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association (马来西亚华人公会)
MCIL	Media Chinese International Limited (世界华文媒体有限公司)
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
NCP	National Culture Policy
NDP	National Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OSA	Official Secrets Act
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party (*Parti Islam Semalaysia*)
PBB	*Parti Persaka Bumiputera Bersatu* (United Traditional Bumiputera Party)
PBS	*Parti Bersatu Sabah* (The United Sabah Party)
PEC	Political economy of communication
PKR	*Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (The People's Justice Party)

PPPA	Printing Presses and Publications Act
PR	*Pakatan Rakyat* (People's Alliance)
RAPID	The Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development project
RSAs	Repressive State Apparatuses
SCD	*Sin Chew Daily*
SOSMA	Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act
UEC	Unified Examinations Certificate (独立中学统一考试)
UMS	Unfederated Malay States
UMNO	United Malays National Organization (*Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Malayu Bersatu*)
WW2	World War 2
Xiaoyoulianzong	The Malaysian Chinese Schools' Alumni Associations (马来西亚华校校友会联合会总会)
Xuehuatang	The KL & Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (吉隆坡暨雪兰莪中华大会堂)
YDPA	*Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (His Majesty)

AKHBAR ETNIK DI MALAYSIA: KAJIAN KE ATAS *SIN CHEW DAILY* 2012-2013

ABSTRAK

Akhbar etnik Cina *Sin Chew Daily* (SCD) berperanan sebagai akhbar yang berkhidmat untuk golongan masyarakat Cina di Malaysia di samping menghubungkan masyarakat Cina dengan kerajaan dan kumpulan-kumpulan sosial lain di negara berbilang etnik ini. Dalam konteks media, masyarakat, kuasa negara dan pasaran, peranan SCD boleh juga diteliti dari aspek media dalam masyarakat demokratik. Berdasarkan latar belakang ini maka kajian ini bertujuan meneliti pemaparan SCD terhadap agenda pemeliharaan kebudayaan orang Cina, pembangunan bangsa, parti-parti politik pemerintah dan pembangkang, dan isu-isu hak asasi manusia sebelum Pilihanraya Umum ke-13. Kaedah-kaedah penyelidikan yang digunakan termasuklah kaedah analisis kandungan, kaedah temuramah mendalam dan kaedah analisis wacana. Sebanyak sepuluh tema telah dikenalpasti berdasarkan objektif-objektif kajian yang disebut di atas. Berita-berita, Lidah Pengarang dan ruangan pendapat (*opinion columns*) yang disiarkan di '*Opinion Corner*' dalam tempoh kajian dari Mei 1, 2012 hingga April 30, 2013 pada halaman-halaman berita kebangsaan di SCD telah dianalisis berdasarkan tajuk berita, muka surat berita berkenaan disiarkan, sumber berita, kecenderungan berita dan penggunaan gambar-gambar berita. Walau bagaimanapun, Lidah Pengarang dan ruangan pendapat tidak dianalisis berdasarkan muka surat ia disiarkan dan penggunaan gambar-gambar kerana '*Opinion Corner*' disiarkan di halaman-halaman yang tetap dan tidak menggunakan gambar-gambar. Seramai enam orang responden telah dikenalpasti untuk mendapatkan maklumat secara temuramah mendalam. Mereka terdiri daripada seorang wakil media, seorang

pemimpin dari parti pemerintah dan seorang pemimpin dari parti pembangkang, seorang wakil intelek dari universiti dan dua orang wakil dari organisasi bukan kerajaan (NGO). Bagi mengkaji ideologi SCD, sebanyak sembilan Lidah Pengarang telah dianalisis dengan kaedah analisis wacana. Hasil kajian analisis kandungan terhadap laporan berita dan ruangan pendapat menunjukkan bahawa SCD memaparkan paling banyak berita dan ruangan pendapat tentang parti-parti politik sebelum Pilihanraya Umum ke-13. Di samping itu, pemaparan berita-berita pemeliharaan kebudayaan orang Cina merupakan berita kedua banyak disiarkan, manakala pemaparan berita-berita berkenaan isu-isu hak asasi manusia merupakan berita ketiga banyak dipaparkan berbanding dengan pemaparan berita-berita pembangunan bangsa. Seperkara lagi, majoriti berita dan ruangan pendapat yang disiarkan semasa tempoh kajian adalah neutral, dan kebanyakan gambar-gambar berita yang digunakan adalah gambar yang berwarna. Hasil kajian temuramah mendalam pada keseluruhannya menyokong hasil kajian daripada analisis kandungan. Hasil kajian analisis wacana pula menunjukkan bahawa Lidah Pengarang SCD ditulis dengan nada neutral terutamanya yang berkenaan isu-isu politik dan parti-parti politik. Namun demikian, SCD didapati menyokong penuh isu-isu berkenaan pendidikan Cina, hak asasi manusia, hak kebudayaan orang Cina dan hubungan etnik. Pada keseluruhannya, kajian ini mendapati bahawa SCD bertindak berhati-hati dan bersikap waspada dalam pemaparan berita-berita, ruangan pendapat dan Lidah Pengarangnya serta gagal memainkan peranan menyediakan ruang perbincangan dan perbahasan terhadap isu-isu sebelum Pilihanraya Umum ke-13. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa SCD telah terkawal dan terkongkong dengan kuasa negara yang diwakili oleh parti-parti pemerintah dan juga kuasa parti-parti pembangkang yang semakin berkembang

pada masa itu, selain menerima tekanan daripada pasaran dalam process penghasilan

berita.

AN ETHNIC PRESS IN MALAYSIA: A STUDY OF *SIN CHEW DAILY*

2012-2013

ABSTRACT

The Malaysian Chinese ethnic press *Sin Chew Daily* (SCD) plays the role of serving and bridging the Chinese community with the government and other social groups in the setting of a multi-ethnic nation. In a larger context of media, society, the state and the market, the role of SCD could also be examined from the perspective of the desired media's roles in a democratic society. It is in this setting that this study aims to examine the representation of SCD on the Chinese cultural preservation agenda, nation-building, the ruling and opposition parties, and human rights issues before the 13th General Elections (GE13). The research methods used included content analysis, in-depth interview and discourse analysis. Ten news themes were identified based on the research objectives and the news reports, editorials and opinion columns in the '*Opinion Corner*' that were published between May 1, 2012 and April 30, 2013 in the national edition of SCD and were analyzed based on the headlines, page numbers, source of news, news slants/tones and pictures used. The analysis of the editorials and the opinion columns has excluded the page numbers and pictures used due to '*Opinion Corner*' was published at the same location and no pictures were used. Six respondents, mainly the media gatekeeper, leaders of the ruling and opposition political parties, an intellect and the NGOs representatives were interviewed. In order to understand the ideology of SCD, a total of nine editorials/leaders were selected for discourse analysis. The content analysis of the news reports and opinion columns indicated that SCD gave the most coverage on political parties and political issues before the GE 13. Besides that, SCD gave second and third priority to the agendas of

Chinese cultural preservation and human rights issues compared to nation-building, and the majority of the news and opinion columns were in a neutral tone. Most of the pictures used for the news reports were colored pictures. The in-depth interview findings generally supported the findings of the content analysis. The discourse analysis of the editorials indicated that SCD was neutral in issues related to politics and political parties. However, SCD was very supportive of the issues related to Chinese education, human rights, Cultural rights and ethnic relations. Generally, SCD was found to be more cautious in representing the news reports, opinion columns and its editorials/leaders and failed to create a discussion and a debate platform before the GE13. The study concludes that SCD was constrained by both the state and the opposition political powers besides the market forces in its news production process.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the response of *Sin Chew Daily* (SCD), the largest circulating Chinese ethnic press in Malaysia, towards the society and state power, especially during the democratic transition period between the 12th General Election (GE12) and the 13th General Election (GE13). More specifically, this study examines SCD and its Chinese cultural preservation agenda to provide insights into how the Chinese ethnic press, SCD, responded to the Chinese communal rights in the larger context of the multi-ethnic society in Malaysia between the GE12 and GE13. The investigation into SCD's representation of the ruling and opposition political parties as well as nation-building in the context of ethnic relations and national identity, also contributes to the understanding of the relation of media (namely SCD) and the state (namely the ruling *Barisan Nasional* (BN, the National Front)/United Malays National Organization (UMNO) party-state power and the opposition *Pakatan Rakyat*'s (PR) power) as well as media and the society (namely the Chinese community and the civil society).

This study lies upon the political setting of the GE13 that witnessed a democratic transition with party-alternation or change of government that could take place alongside numerous civil movements that happened during the one-year period before the GE13. The rise of civil movements was then further examined through SCD's representation on human rights issues before the GE13. In brief, this study of SCD is carried out in the context of society, politics and economy in Malaysia before the GE13.

The objectives of this study are to examine the representation of SCD of the (1) Chinese cultural preservation agenda; (2) nation-building in Malaysia, in the

context of ethnic relations and national identity; (3) ruling and opposition parties before the GE13; and (4) human rights issues before the GE13.

This chapter provides an overview of the study. The overview is structured according to the research background, statement of the problem, research objectives and research questions. The significance of the research, the theoretical framework, methodology and organization of the dissertation are also explored.

The following section discusses the background of the media in Malaysia based on its social and political contexts.

1.1　Media, Society and the State: A Malaysian Context

The media is strongly linked with the society where it comes from. On the one hand, the media is seen as representing the voices in society; on the other, the media is also said to shape public opinion and the way people perceive the world. Critical communication scholars have examined the role of media in the society based on the relationship of media and the powers that be, especially state power (Gomez, Mustafa K. Anuar, 1990, 2005, 2014a, 2014b; Mustafa K. Anuar & Lee, 2018; Zaharom, 1991; Zahrom & Wang, 2004). Any effort to investigate the role of media in the society and especially during the time of the general election requires studying the social-political and economic background of where the media comes from. In the context of this study, it is crucial to understand the multi-ethnic society context in Malaysia and the political setting that influence the manufacturing of news in a media organization.

1.1.1　The Multi-ethnic Society and the Multi-lingual Press

In 2016, the Department of Statistics Malaysia estimated that there are 31.7 million citizens in Malaysia, of which 68.6 percent is the *Bumiputra* (sons of the soil), a term that refers to the Malays and indigenous communities in Sabah and Sarawak, but

excluding the original people, namely the *Orang Asli* (the original people) of Peninsular Malaysia. A total of 23.4 percent is made up of the Chinese, 7.0 percent formed by the Indians and 1.0 percent is categorized under other ethnics groups or *Lain-lain*.[1] The diverse ethnic groups in Malaysia have no doubt contributed to the richness of Malaysian society as a whole, in terms of its history, culture, religion and language. However, from the social perspective, ethnic tensions and conflicts would still arise from time to time. Syed Hussin Ali (2015, p.1) asserted that "ethnic differences exist, which often manifest in stereotypes, discriminations, tensions and conflicts that complicate the process of building national unity". While Malaysia has been an independent nation for more than six decades, in certain aspects, it still struggles to arrive at a consensus on nation-building and the contestation of national identity because the ethnic and social groups in Malaysia hold different intentions and goals regarding the nation they wish to build (Shamsul 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1999, 1998, 2013).

The uniqueness of the cultural and language diversity contributed by the multi-ethnic society in Malaysia is also reflected in the growth of the different language presses in Malaysia, particularly in the development of different language presses such as the English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil language presses. In the nineteenth and twentieh centuries (before the formation of Malaysia), the migration of Chinese and Indian immigrants to Malaya during the British colonial period provides the historical background of the formation of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious

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[1] For further information, see the official portal of Department of Statistics Malaysia at https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemeByCat&cat=155&bul_id=OWlxdEVoYlJC S0hUZzJyRUcvZEYxZz09&menu_id=L0pheU43NWJwRWVSZklWdzQ4TlhUUT09.

nation in Malaysia today.[2] This large scale Chinese immigration into the Malay states during this time period had changed the demographic landscape of the Malay Peninsula dramatically (Ariffin Omar 2003). The migrants also helped to set up the various different language presses during the times of British colonialism.

The history of presses in Malaysia started in the nineteenth century during the British colonial rule with the publication of the first English press *The Prince of Wales Island Gazette* in Penang on 1 March 1806 (Mohd. Dhari Othman, 1992; Mohd. Safar Hashim, 1996; Yap, 1996). At the same time, presses and news magazines were also published in three other major languages, these being in Chinese, Malay and Tamil languages. Mohd. Dhari Othman (1992) noted that the first Chinese-language news magazine was the *Chinese Monthly Magazine* published in 1815 in Melaka; the first Tamil-language press was *Singhai Warthamaani* published in 1875 by S.K Masuthum in Singapore while the first Malay-language press was the *Jawi Peranakan* (1879-1895), a weekly that was published by Munshi Muhammad Bin Dada Mohaidin in Singapore.

Today, the presses that enjoy the biggest market shares in terms of circulation amongst the various media in Malaysia include the English language press *The Star* (with 217,082 circulations), the Chinese ethnic press SCD (with 303,781 circulations) and the Malay language press *Utusan Malaysia* (with 115,830 circulations). [3] Evidently, the multi-ethnic component of Malaysian society has become the breeding

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[2] Before the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the "Malaysia" that consisted of eleven states in the Peninsular Malaysia and two states, namely Sabah and Sarawak in the island of Borneo as it is today, was formerly known as "Malaya". Malaya achieved its independence in1957.

[3] For further information, see Audit Bureau Circulations (2016) and *Latest Audit Reports January- June 2017*.

ground for different ethnic media or ethnic presses since the nineteenth century. These presses serve different target audiences from different ethnic groups and are proficient in different languages. For instance, the English and the Malay language presses are read by most Malaysians who are proficient in these two languages, whilst the Chinese ethnic presses can only reach out to the target audience who can read Chinese. In Malaysia, the Chinese press readers are the Chinese ethnic minority who are Chinese-educated. To Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach (2011, p.6) ethnic media is the media that are "produced by and for (a) immigrants; (b) racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, as well as (c) indigenous populations living across different countries". According to Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach, the ethnic media could vary significantly in size. They might be small, such as family-owned media organizations, or they might be medium or large corporate entities. The languages used in these media are the languages spoken by the specific ethnic groups of a country or their home countries. The Chinese ethnic presses in Malaysia evidently fall under this conceptualization, as the immigrants before the independence of the nation in 1957 produced the Chinese ethnic presses. Today, these presses are produced, distributed and consumed mainly by the Chinese ethnic in Malaysia and have been used as various progandic tools especially in politicis and during the time of elections.

1.1.2 Malaysian Politics and Elections

In terms of politics, the formation of mono-ethnic political parties such as the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) that represents the Malays, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) that represents the Chinese and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) that represents the Indians, all of which are ethnic-based, have shaped and contributed to the practice of the ethnic political system in Malaysia. UMNO is the largest Malay ethnic party in Malaysia that was established in 1946. UMNO enjoys

the dominant power in the ruling political coalition, namely the *Barisan Nasional* (BN, the National Front). It was known as Alliance before 1974 and BN (after 1974) before the GE13 consiststed of thirteen component parties across the Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak.[4] According to Ong (1998, p.12), UMNO, MCA and MIC are ethnic-based political parties that are "intolerant of each other most of the time". When they perceive the political issues from the perspective of ethnicity, "it often results in conflict".

Malaysia is a country with thirteen states and three Federal Territories that practices parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (YDPA, His Majesty) is the Head of State, and the administrative power lies with the legislative, judiciary and executive branches of the government. The duty of the YDPA is to safeguard the customs and traditions of the Malays, and the administration of the Islamic religion in the country and the YDPA is advised by the Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers (Kuang, 2008). The Parliament of Malaysia consists of two houses, namely *Dewan Negara* (Upper house/House of Senate) and *Dewan Rakyat* (Lower house/House of Representatives). The members or senators of the *Dewan Negara* are appointed by the YDPA on the advice of the Prime Minister. For the *Dewan Rakyat*, representatives are elected through a general election that must

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[4] The Alliance before 1974 was formed by UMNO, MCA and MIC. During the research period, the thirteen component parties in *Barisan Nasional* include UMNO, MCA, MIC, PBB, SUPP, GERAKAN, MYPP, LDP, PBRS, UPKO, PBS, SPDP and PRS. For further information, see Component Party *Barisan Nasional* (http://www.barisannasional.org.my/en/component-party). However, in the 14th General Election (GE14) on 9 May 2018, BN was severely defeated by the opposition *Pakatan Harapan* led by the former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. For the first time in Malaysia history, Malaysian and the world witnessed a change of regime and government of Malaysia at the Federal Government level. The current BN component parties had reduced from fourteen to three, namely the UMNO, MCA and MIC as the other component parties have left the coalition after the GE14.

be conducted before the five-year terms ends whereby citizens who are 21 years old and above and are registered voters cast their votes (Nik Abdul Rashid, 1983).

A total of thirteen general elections had been conducted in Malaya and later Malaysia since independence in 1957. UMNO that was established in 1946 to protest the British proposal of the Malayan Union has developed and grown into a strong Malay party that not only leads the Malays but also other ethnic groups in Malaysia through the formation of the Alliance in 1955 and later the BN in 1973.[5] The three-party (UMNO-MCA-MIC) Alliance coalition gained a big victory in the decolonizing elections in 1955. The British colonial government then handed over power to the Alliance when independence or *Merdeka* was declared in 1957. After the independence, the Alliance continued to perform well in the 1959 and 1964 general elections by winning 51.8 percent and 58.5 percent of the popular vote respectively (Election Commission of Malaysia, n.d.; Ng 2003). Nevertheless, in the 1969 General Election, the Alliance was challenged by the opposition and lost the state of Penang to the Chinese-dominated opposition party—Malaysian People's Movement Party (GERAKAN) and the states of Kelantan and Terengganu to the Malay opposition party, the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS). The Alliance only won 49.3 percent of the popular vote in the 1969 General Election (Election Commission of Malaysia, n.d.;

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[5] Under the Malayan Union plan, the *Sultans* were to cede their sovereignty to governors who would rule in the name of the British crown. The *Sultans* would only have power over religion and Malay customs while citizenship would be granted to all who were born in Malaya or had lived for ten of the previous fifteen years. Besides that, all citizens should enjoy equal rights in the new state and the government administrative post would be open to the immigrant races. Singapore was excluded from the Malayan Union because of its strategic and military importance to Britain as well as its large Chinese population, which was seen as a political threat to the Malays (Andaya & Andaya, 2001).

Ng, 2003). This period of political uncertainty led to a race riot taking place on 13 May 1969 and parliament was suspended.[6]

After the 1969 race riots, the Alliance incorporated the political parties in Sabah and Sarawak and expanded to become the BN coalition consisting of thirteen political parties.[7] Since then, BN has survived as a long-standing ruling coalition in Malaysia. According to Gomez and Kaur,

> All BN component parties are subservient to UMNO as they depend on UMNO, the Malay-based party, to win seats except for the dominant political party in Sarawak, namely *Parti Persaka Bumiputra Bersatu* (PBB, or United Traditional *Bumiputra* Party) (Gomez & Kaur, 2014; para 10-13).

This further strengthened UMNO's hegemonic position in Peninsular Malaysia for decades, as there appears to be no check and balances in BN's form of consociationalism. Gomez and Kaur further pointed out that though the elections in Malaysia are free, it is "marred by various types of malfeasance". For instance, the electoral system is deeply flawed due to significant gerrymandering [8] and the malapportionment [9] of constituencies (Gomez & Kaur, 2014; Lim, 2002, 2003).

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[6] The 13 May 1969 race riot took place in the aftermath of the 1969 General Election. The incident led to the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman stepping down from office and being succeeded by Tun Abdul Razak.

[7] The Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) joined BN from 1974 to 1978, after which it withdrew from BN.

[8] Gerrymandering is a term derived from the name of Governor Elbridge Gerry (1744-1814) of Massachusetts who enacted a law in 1812 that defined a new state senatorial district ("Gerrymandering", n.d.). Gerrymandering is a practice of establishing a political advantage for a party over its opposing party through drawing the boundaries of electoral districts and it is criticized as it violates two principles of electoral apportionment, mainly compactness and equality of size of constituencies ("Gerrymandering", n.d). In practice, district boundaries are drawn to aid a particular party by strategically splitting a territory where an opposition party has the majority's support and integrating those pieces into surrounding districts where the opposition's supporters will be considered the minority (Ostwald, 2013)

[9] Malapportionment refers to "the discrepancy between the shares of legislative seats and the shares of the population held by geographical units" (Samuels & Synder, 2001). This is an electoral system that incorporates a bias in favor of some voters against others as votes of some citizens weigh more than the votes of other citizens (Samuels & Synder, 2001). In other words, the term explains the situation where the electoral district sends the same number of representatives to the parliament, but comprises quite a different number of voters and it violates the "one person, one vote" principle in democratic elections.

Besides that, Nelson (2014, p.106) noted the BN coalition "held overwhelming majorities in the legislature", "blurring the boundaries between state and party" and the party-state also largely controlled the judiciary, the media, and state and local governments.

Despite conducting regular multiparty elections, Malaysia has in fact been ruled by a single party or coalition, the BN coalition that has held power without interruption for more than six decades. Political scientists have given different names to describe the Malaysian political system, such as 'competitive authoritarian' (Levitsky & Way, 2002, 2010), 'electoral authoritarian' (Schedler, 2006), 'semi-democracy' (Case, 1993) and 'strong-state democracy' (Slater, 2012). Although the Alliance and then BN government has retained its power at the Federal level since independence in 1957, however, the Alliance and then BN lost its two-thirds majority in parliament—an important requirement in amending the Federal Constitution, for three times. This happened in the 1969, 2008 and 2013 general elections. The Alliance and then BN won 64 percent of the parliamentary seats in the 1969 General Election, 63 percent in the 2008 General Election and 60 percent in the 2013 General Election (Election Commission of Malaysia, n.d.; Ng, 2013).

In the 1969 General Election, the Alliance faced a fierce challenge from the opposition and lost the Penang state to GERAKAN and Kelantan state to PAS (Wong, Chin & Noraini Othman, 2010). However, UMNO managed to incorporate GERAKAN and PAS in the newly formed BN, until PAS was expelled from BN in 1977 (Andaya & Andaya, 2001). In the 12th General Election (GE12), the PR opposition coalition led by the *defacto* leader of *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR), Anwar Ibrahim (the former Deputy Prime Minister who was sacked by the former premier Mahathir Mohamad in 1998), together with Democratic Action Party (DAP) and PAS,

managed to win administrative power in five states, namely Kelantan, Kedah, Penang, Perak and Selangor.[10] BN lost its two-third majority in parliament in this round of 'political tsunami' that changed the political landscape of Malaysia and weakened the BN government (Chin & Wong, 2009; Kuang, 2008; Lee, Wong, Wong & Yeoh, 2010). Kuang (2008) further noted that the GE12 ended the 51-year political hegemony of the BN ruling coalition.

The impact of the GE12 was huge on the GE13 as the power struggle continued between BN and PR. In the GE13, the BN government was not only challenged by the new voting trend of many young voters who aligned themselves with the opposition coalition but also challenged by the demands of the voters and civil society who called for a two-party system since the GE12 (Chin & Wong, 2009; Khoo, 2013). It was also an uphill task for BN to win back the non-Malay voters who aligned themselves with the opposition coalition since the GE12, despite the rise and challenges of the Internet media that is believed to provide "a free flow of information that play a key role in strengthening the democratic opposition" (Chin & Wong 2009, p.84). As asserted by Gomez and Kaur (2014), despite all these challenges and losing the popular vote in the GE13, BN still retained its power at the Federal level by securing more seats in parliament than the opposition coalition, the PR.

During this democratic transition period one year before the GE13, a few civil movements that led to the rise of political consciousness amongst Malaysians took place. One example was the BERSIH rallies. BERSIH is a popular term to Malaysians, named after the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH) that aimed to seek

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[10] The dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister on 2 September 1998 led to the *Reformasi* movement, a movement that called for the end of corruption and cronyism of the Mahathir-led government and fought for economic equality, misconduct in government institutions (Ahmad Lutfi Othman, 1998)

to reform the electoral system in Malaysia and called for free, clean and fair elections was formed by some civil society groups and supported by politicians (especially opposition leaders). The first rally organized was BERSIH 1.0 held on 10 November 2007, whereby a mass rally was held on the streets of Kuala Lumpur to call for electoral reforms in Malaysia.[11] On 9 July 2011, BERSIH 2.0 once again called for clean and fair elections. According to the official portal of BERSIH 2.0, fifty thousand people made their way to the Stadium Merdeka, and the police used tear gas to crack down on the rally.[12]

On 28 April 2008, in response to the *Dewan Rakyat* that passed the report released by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform, BERSIH 3.0 again called for electoral reforms.[13] On that day, the rally was also held in seven other states in Malaysia, as well as eighty-five cities around the world. According to the official portal of BERSIH 2.0, over two hundred fifty thousand people participated in BERSIH 3.0 domestically and worldwide. The police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the protesters (Kee, 2012a; Tan & Lee, 2012).

Another significant civil movement that took place before the GE13 was the Save Malaysia! Stop-Lynas! Campaign organized by resident group activists in Malaysia to protest the Lynas rare earth processing plant. Lynas is an Australian corporation that built a highly toxic rare earth refinery near Kuantan, Pahang (Boyle, 2012). The protest was carried out from time to time since 2011 and was popularly known as *Himpunan Hijau* (literally the Green Assembly). On 28 April 2012, *Himpunan Hijau* joined the BERSIH 3.0 at the Dataran Merdeka ("Himpunan Hijau

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[11] See http://www.bersih.org/rallies/bersih1/

[12] Further information, see http://www.bersih.org/rallies/bersih2/

[13] See http://www.bersih.org/rallies/bersih3/

3.0", 2012). Other environmental civil movements before the GE13 included the protests of cyanide at Bukit Koman, Pahang and the refinery and petrochemical integrated development project (RAPID) at Pengerang, Johor. At the same time, the media brought up issues related to freedom of the press after the incident of police brutality towards journalists who covered the BERSIH 3.0 + Stop Lynas 3.0 rally on 28 April 2012.

Other issues raised between the GE12 and the GE13 were issues on what were considered as draconian laws such as the Internal Security Act (ISA),[14] Printing Presses and Publication Act (PPPA),[15] *Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti* (AUKU, the Universities and College Universities Act) and Sedition Act and the controversy of 114A, the newly added section to the Evidence Act 1950, which are seen as contradictory to the basis of the justice system and a threat to the online freedom of expression, were also attracting the attention of the public through news reporting by SCD and other Chinese ethnic presses.

It is in this democratic transition period between the GE12 and the GE13 that the study of the ethnic press SCD in the multi-ethnic nation in transition is based upon. In this study, the largest circulating Chinese ethnic press—SCD is chosen to examine its response towards the UMNO party-state, the nation-building aspiration of the BN

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[14] ISA allows detention without trial. It has been described as one of the draconian laws in Malaysia that was used against the ruling government's political rivals. In 2012, Najib's government replaced ISA with the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012.

[15] PPPA is used to control all types of publications in Malaysia, whether printed in Malaysia or imported from abroad. The Act requires the printer to obtain the license from the Home Affairs Minister and to be renewed every year. PPPA 1984 had been amended in 2012. The changes include to remove the yearly application for the print and publication permit and allow the media owners to seek review of the Minister of Home Affairs's decision (to grant or refuse permit, to revoke or to attach a condition to a permit) by the court (Mustafa K. Anuar, 2014).

government and the cultural preservation demands of the Chinese minority under the challenges arising from the market forces. The study is also framed in the context of the media in the democratization process,[16] particularly when free access and exchange of information are believed to be vital in a democracy (Berman & Witzner, 1997).

The following section discusses the problem statement of the study based on the ideal role of media in a democratic society and the reality of the media ownership and control.

1.2 Media and Democratic Society: Ideal vs. Reality

1.2.1 The Ideal Role of the Media

Many scholars have expressed the ideal and desired media role in a democratic society. For instance, Adam (2000) noted that democracy, freedom and social justice are unthinkable without an independent media. According to Adam, pluralism and peaceful cooperation could only be embedded within a society when the state, the economy and civil society can interchange with each other through the media. Mustafa K. Anuar (2000, p. 97) also pointed out that from the perspective of communication, democracy entails the freedom of citizens to articulate their views in the public domain. It provides them with the opportunity to exercise their rights to engage in a discussion or debate and to offer criticisms that collectively contribute to the common good of society. With regard to the role of media in a democratic political system, Curran (2002) argued that it could be understood from the perspective of liberal theory and neo-liberalism. On the one hand, the liberal theory views media from a watchdog

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[16] Generally, 'democracy' can be defined as a political system or a form of the ruling regime, while democratization is a political process that leads to democracy, and this process is never static, but continues to evolve (Meinardus, 2004).

perspective, whilst on the other hand, neo-liberalism believes that the freedom of the market allows anyone to publish an opinion and extend participation in the public debate, which brings good judgment and a wise government. In other words, to enable the media to play its role to scrutinize the government, a free market is important to ensure media independence from the government (Curran, 2002).

According to Curran (2002, p. 217), traditional liberal theorists believe that the principal democratic role of the media is "to act as a check on the state and the media should monitor the full range of state activity and fearlessly expose abuses of official authority". This means that the role of the media in a democratic society is to serve society by investigating the abuse of authority by public officials. The second democratic role of the media in liberal theory, according to Curran, is that the media acts as an agency of information and debate, which facilitates the functioning of democracy. Liberal theorists believe that in a democratic political system, the free media briefs the electorate and assists voters to make an informed choice during election. The media also provides a forum for debate in which people can identify problems, propose solutions, reach an agreement and guide the public direction of the society (Curran 2002, p. 225).

This role is in fact in line with the watchdog perspective that assumes that democracies need informed and participating citizens to manage their common affairs. Liberal theorists also believe that public debate is more likely to produce rational and just outcomes if it takes into account different views and interests (Curran 2002, p. 225). The third democratic function of the media, in liberal theory, is representing people to authority. This means that the media speaks for the people and represents their views and interests in the public domain (Curran 2002, p.227).

In short, the liberal theory and neo-liberalism see the media as being independent of the government's control, and the free market allows freedom of information, as everyone is free to publish their opinions. In this context, the media should also play its role in monitoring and checking the state, as well as reporting the wrongdoings of the government, besides representing the voices of the people. Nevertheless, in response to the above ideal roles of the media in a democratic society, Curran (2002) pointed out that traditional liberal theory fails to consider the exercise of economic power by shareholders and managers. Curran noted that the media systems in the early twenty-first century are given over largely to entertainment with very little disclosure of official wrongdoings. According to Curran, the cost of market entry is high, and it curtails the freedom to publish. Secondly, competition and market pressure to maximize sales result in more coverage given to topics and contents catering to wider public interest apart from politics and governance. Thirdly, the free market generates information-rich media for the elites, and information-poor media for the general public, which subsequently restricts participation in public debate, and fourthly, market-oriented media tends to generate information that is "simplified, personalized, decontextualized, with a stress on action rather than process, visualization rather than abstraction, stereotypicality rather than human complexity" (Epstein, 1973; Gitlin, 1994; Hallin, 1994; Inglis, 1990; Iyengar, 1991; Liebes, 1998; as cited in Curran, 2002, p.226). Consequently, this undermines intelligent and rational debate. Curran (2002, p.228-230) further asserted that consumer choice was strongly constrained by media oligopoly in the early 1980s in the West.[17] The media landscape

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[17] Oligopoly is a market structure in which a small number of firms has the large majority of market share. An oligopoly is similar to a monopoly, except that rather than one firm, two or more firms dominate the market. There is no precise upper limit to the number of firms in an oligopoly, but the number must be low enough such that the actions of one firm significantly impact and influence the others. For further reading, see http://www.investopedia.com/terms/o/oligopoly.asp#ixzz4Xgi0hkyI

was transformed in the 1980s and 1990s by the introduction of new communication technologies that expanded the range of media products and established new sources of competition in the media market. Curran pointed out that the increase in media concentration and ownership and the operation of the market have limited consumer influences and such situations are also present in Malaysia.

1.2.2　The Reality of Media Ownership and Control: A Malaysian Context

Evidently, the media market is not as free as desired by neo-liberalism. In the West, the restructuring of the media industries along with the emergence of a global commercial media market started in the early 1980s and the global media system is dominated by large transnational corporations, with mostly U.S-based media conglomerates towering over the global market (Herman & McChesney, 1997). In Malaysia, media ownership by the political parties began in 1961 when the ruling UMNO took over *Utusan Melayu*. *Utusan Melayu*'s editor Said Zahari then led an industrial strike but failed to stop UMNO's move (Said Zahari, 2001). The establishment of Media Prima Berhad in 2003 marked a subsequent media concentration move in Malaysia. Media Prima now owns television stations TV3, 8TV, ntv7, TV9; newspapers *The New Straits Times*, *Berita Harian* and *Harian Metro*, as well as the radio station Fly FM, Hot FM and One FM.[18] According to Gomez (2017, pp.119-121), Media Prima is directly or indirectly owned by government-linked investment companies such as *Permodalan Nasional Berhad*, *Kumpulan Wang*

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[18] See http://www.mediaprima.com.my/aboutus/our_profile.aspx. Media Prima Berhad (Media Prima), a company listed on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia, is Malaysia's leading integrated media investment group. It currently owns 100 percent equity interest in TV3, 8TV, ntv7 and TV9. In addition, Media Prima now owns more than 98 percent equity interest in The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) (NSTP) Berhad, Malaysia's largest publisher which publishes three national presses; *New Straits Times*, *Berita Harian* and *Harian Metro*.

Persaraan Diperbadankan (Retirement Fund Incorporated), and *Lembaga Tabung Haji* (Pilgrims Savings Fund). However, the media consolidation of the Chinese language-publishing group first took place with the merger and acquisition exercise by the Sarawak timber tycoon Tiong Hiew King in 2008.

Tiong Hiew King is the owner of Sin Chew Media Corporation, which publishes SCD and *Guang Ming Daily* [19] in Malaysia. SCD is the largest circulating Chinese daily in Malaysia. On 23 April 2008, Tiong Hiew King successfully merged Hong Kong's Ming Pao Enterprise with Malaysia's Sin Chew Media Corporation Berhad and Nanyang Press Holdings Berhad, which brought about the formation of a new media entity, Media Chinese International Limited (MCIL). Tiong Hiew King owns 44.76 percent of Nanyang Press Holdings' stake, which published two daily newspapers in Malaysia, namely *Nanyang Siang Pao*, [20] *China Press*, [21] and 22 magazines. Tiong Hiew King owns a 100 percent stake of Sin Chew Media Corporation as well as the Hong Kong Ming Pao Enterprise, [22] which publishes a

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[19] *Guang Ming Daily* was established in 1987. It is a trendsetter among Chinese ethnic presses. It is printed in full colour and uses accessible and easy-to-understand language. It is positioned as "A PAPER FOR THE FAMILY" (http://www.mediachinesegroup.com/htm/content.cfm? channel= biz&path= biz 05b_&lang=E)

[20] Nanyang Siang Pau was launched in 1923. It is the oldest Chinese daily in Malaysia. It is also one of the largest Chinese dailies, which ranks fourth in terms of circulation and readership in Peninsular Malaysia. A highly-regarded opinion maker, Nanyang Siang Pau is the leading Chinese-language financial and business publication in Malaysia (http;//www.mediachinesegroup.com/htm/content. cfm? channel=biz& path=biz_05i&lang=E).

[21] China Press was launched in 1946. China Press is the second-largest Chinese-language daily newspaper in Malaysia. It is also one of the few authorized Chinese-language dailies circulating in Singapore
(http://www.mediachinesegroup.com/htm/content.cfm?channel=biz&path=biz_05i&lang=E).

[22] The group's principal activities are the provision of printing services and publishing of magazines, newspapers, periodicals and books. Other activities include the provision of travel and travel related services, Internet businesses, property investment and investment holding. Some of the company's magazines and newspapers include Ming Pao Daily News, Ming Pao Weekly, Ming Pao Monthly, City Children's Weekly, HI-TECH WEEKLY, *Yazhou Zhoukan*; while book publications include the Ming Pao, Crystal Window and Ming Man Publications. Charming Holidays and Delta Tour & Travel

Chinese language newspaper *Ming Pao* in Hong Kong. *Ming Pao* is published in Toronto, Ontario, Vancouver, B.C., and the United States as the Canada Eastern, Canada Western, and U.S. Eastern editions of *Ming Pao Daily News*.

Besides the institutional structures of the media organization, the ideal of having free information and a free media is also a huge challenge in Malaysia. The fact is the press freedom status of Malaysia in 2013 and 2014 was ranked as "Not Free" according to Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization dedicated to the expansion of freedom and democracy around the world.[23] According to Freedom House, the total press freedom score is from 0 (best) to 100 (worst). Malaysia scored 64 in both 2013 and 2014. The Freedom House Report in 2013 pointed out that although the Article 10, Malaysian constitution assures freedom of expression to all citizens, the Sedition Act and Defamation Act are regularly used to impose restrictions on the press and other critics of the government. The report further asserted that although the ruling BN coalition repealed the Internal Security Act (ISA) in July 2012, the ISA was replaced with the new Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA). SOSMA "grants suspects the right to a fair trial, but it nevertheless permits 28 days of initial police detention, after which the attorney general must decide whether to prosecute" ("Freedom of the press" 2013, para 32-34). On the other hand, the Freedom House Report in 2014 noted that though an amendment has been made to

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Services comprises the Company's travel services; the Mingpao.com is the main Internet service of the Company in which it provides editorial content and e-services. The Group operates in Hong Kong, Canada. the United States of America, Mainland China, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands. Publishing accounted for 66% of fiscal 2004 revenues; Travel and Travel Related Services 34%. Tiong Hiew King is Ming Pao Enterprise Corporation Limited Executive Chairman. See http://www.bisiness.com/directory/ media_and_entertainment/publishing/newspapers/publishers/ ming_pao_enterprise_corporation_limited/profile/

[23] See https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2013/malaysia and https://freedomhouse.org/ report/freedom-press/2014/malaysia

the 1984 PPPA and a provision that had required all publishers and printing firms to obtain an annual operating permit repealed, "the government authority is granted the rights to deny license applications and to revoke the required licenses at any time without judicial review" ("Freedom of the press" 2014, para 56-58). For instance, the Home Affairs Ministry of Malaysia seized copies of opposition party presses *Suara Keadilan* (owned by PKR) and *Harakah* (owned by PAS) in 2013.[24]

The reality that the media systems are not operating in a vacuum in any society is also supported by McChesney (2008) who noted that the media is influenced by its political and economic structures, cultural traditions and communication technologies of the society. McChesney added that the relationship between media and economy shapes the media's political role and determines the media's relations with the dominant political and economic forces in the society. Ali Salman and Mohd Safar (2011) also asserted that it is crucial to study the role and impact of media in the broader context of society in which the media operate as the causal relationship between media content and the influence on social behavior is complex.

Another concept related to the role of media in a democratic political system as discussed in liberal theory and neo-liberalism, is the concept of 'public sphere' developed by Jürgen Habermas in the 1960s. The term 'public sphere' was first discussed in Habermas's book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). Public sphere refers to "a forum of public communication in which individuals can come together as a public and confer freely about matters of general interest" (Ali Salman & Mohd Safar Hashim 2011, p.16). In the nineteenth century in Europe, the public sphere was physically fixed in places such as salons, coffee shops, beer gardens

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[24] For further reading, refer to https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2014/malaysia and Gomez, Mustafa K.Anuar & Lee (2018), pp. xix-xxiv.

and speakers' corners. However, Ali Salman and Mohd Safar Hashim noted that the physical location for public sphere is recognized as irrelevant now. 'Public sphere' is a social rather than a physical place. Ali Salman and Mohd Safar (2011, p.16-17) further pointed out that the 'public sphere' defined by Habermas possesses the characteristics such as guaranteed access for all citizens, citizens within the public sphere are considered equal in principle, all citizens are free to engage in dialogue without coercion or constraint, the public sphere is distinct from both state and market, and it is not subjected to domination by either. As such, the free media is essential in order to create the public sphere and through public provision of knowledge and information, the public sphere promotes the development of an informed citizenry, something important in a functioning democracy.

In the twenty-first century, the emergence of the New Media or Internet Media is seen as a new form of public sphere (Abbot, MacDonald & Givens, 2013). Ali Salman and Mohd Safar Hashim (2011) noted that the New Media, especially the Web 2.0 technologies—which is a generic term used to describe the group of media technology that enables user-generated content, such as the video-sharing website, YouTube.com, social networking websites, such as Facebook and the blogs, all of which makes a difference compared to the traditional form of mass media in terms of the ability of the users to publish their own content and the readers to respond without interference or 'gatekeeping' from editors. According to Ali Salman and Mohd Safar Hashim (2011, p.17), "Web 2.0 allows the users to circumvent existing laws and regulations that govern traditional media such as print and broadcasting" and in Malaysia, there is growing awareness about the influence of New Media on the outcome of the general elections such as in the 2008 General Election. Some scholars believe that the emergence of the New Media or Internet media has changed the

political landscape in Malaysia and are optimistic that social media is an important instrument in promoting democracy, besides having a huge potential to strengthen the democratization process and democracy in Malaysia (Ali Salman & Mohd Safar Hashim, 2011; Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 2014; Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani & Zengeni, 2010). However, some studies found that the impact of the Internet and social media on democratization is relatively limited (Abbott et al., 2013; Liow 2012). Gomez (2014) pointed out that although social media plays the role of keeping important political issues in the forefront from 2008 and prior to the 2013 General Election, nevertheless, the results of the GE13 show that the influence of social media in the general election as well as the predictive power of social media remains elusive in the Malaysian political context.

After an understanding of the research background and the research problem, the subsequent section provides the research objectives, research questions significance of the study and scope of the research.

1.3   The Study of *Sin Chew Daily* and Democratization in Malaysia

The ideal role of the media as a watchdog in a democratic political system and the reality of media control via various media laws such as SOSMA and PPPA in Malaysia context, alongside issues of ownership, market forces and the rise of Internet media that created the competition to the printed media in the twenty first century, has led to the need to the study of the ethnic press *Sin Chew Daily* (SCD) in the political-economy setting of Malaysia before the GE13. Specifically, this study enables the researcher to evaluate the responses of SCD towards the society and the state in the context of the rise of the Internet, especially in the political-economy setting of Malaysia before the GE13 through the investigation of the news representation on the

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Chinese cultural preservation agenda, the state's nation-building agenda, the political parties and the human rights issues raised by the civil society before the GE13. Based on the above-discussed context, the research objectives of this study aim to examine:

1. The representation of *Sin Chew Daily* of the Chinese cultural preservation agenda.

2. The representation of *Sin Chew Daily* of nation-building in Malaysia, in the context of ethnic relations and national identity.

3. The representation of *Sin Chew Daily* of the ruling and opposition parties before the 13th General Election (GE13).

4. The representation of *Sin Chew Daily* of the human rights issues before the GE13.

To achieve the above objectives, the following research questions have been formulated for this study:

1. How does *Sin Chew Daily* as an ethnic press represent the Chinese cultural preservation agenda?

2. How does *Sin Chew Daily* as an ethnic press represent nation-building in the context of ethnic relations and national identity?

3. How does *Sin Chew Daily* as an ethnic press represent the ruling and opposition parties before the GE13?

4. How does *Sin Chew Daily* as an ethnic press represent human rights issues before the GE13?

The following section discusses the significance of the research.

1.3.1 Significance of the Research

This study about the Chinese ethnic press will also be one of the first, if not the first, to be published in English. The study of the Chinese ethnic presses in Malaysia has been limited to researchers who have a good command of the Chinese language, scholars and students from the Mainland China, Taiwan as well as Malaysia conducted most of these studies. Additionally, the majority of the studies were published using the Chinese language in comparison to using English (Shao, 2012). In view of this, the research archives in English for the studies of the Chinese ethnic presses in both public and private universities in Malaysia is very limited compared to the study of the English and Malay presses. Thus, this study is an effort to contribute to the corpus of knowledge, particularly regarding the studies of Chinese ethnic presses in Malaysia.

As a matter of fact, the research sample selected in this study, namely SCD, is not only the largest circulating Chinese ethnic press in Malaysia but also an influential Chinese ethnic press in Southeast Asia and the surrounding regions. SCD is not only bridging the Chinese ethnic minority group in Malaysia with the government but is also seen as an important channel to reach the Malaysian Chinese by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Malaysia, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia, as well as other embassies, consulates and representatives from other regions. For instance, the former Ambassador of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Malaysia, Mr. Huang Huikang not only attended the 85th Anniversary of SCD on 6 October 2014 but also donated a total of RM48,000 (USD12,396) to Sin Chew Foundation on 16 November 2016, to help poor students.[25] This evidently

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[25] Further reading, see Zhu malai xiya. (2014). *Zhu malai xiya dashi Huang huikang chuxi "xingzhou ribao qingyi bawu" qingzhu wanyan*. (驻马来西亚大使黄惠康出席"星洲日报情意八五庆祝晚宴:

justifies the significance of studying SCD as one of the most influential Chinese ethnic presses in the multi-ethnic nation of Malaysia.

In terms of politics, SCD also plays its role as a medium between the politicians and the voters. The democratic transition period leading up to the GE13 in 2013 was a significant event in the Malaysian political arena that witnessed the ruling coalition BN losing its two-thirds majority in the GE12 and later facing a severe challenge from the opposition coalition, namely the PR in the GE13. Although the BN coalition managed to win the federal government power in the GE13, the coalition lost its two-thirds majority in parliament once again after the GE12. Many studies have been conducted in analyzing the GE13 either from the perspectives of politics or the impact of New Media in the democratization process. Nonetheless, little has been done on the print media, especially the ethnic press during the democratization process before the GE13.[26] This study attempts to fill that gap.

Despite the fact that little research has been conducted on the Chinese ethnic presses in the context of political-economy setting in Malaysia, the study of SCD, the largest Chinese ethnic press in between the GE12 in 2008 to the GE13 in 2013, particularly one year before the GE13, provides an in-depth examination on how the

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The Chinese ambassador Huang Huikang attended the 85th Anniversary of *Sin Chew Daily*) and *Sin Chew Daily* (2016, November 16). *Xingzhou jijinhui zhuxue jihua. Zhong shiguan juan 4.8 wan zhu 20 xuesheng* (星洲基金会助学计划．中使馆捐４.８万助20学生；Sin Chew Foundation Education Fund. The Chinese embassy donated RM48,000 (USD12,396)to help 20 poor students ）

[26] Some examples of studies after the GE13 are: Abbott, J.P., MacDonald, A.W. & Givens, J.W. (2013). New social media and (electronic) democratization in East and Southeast Asia: Malaysia and China compared; Khoo, B.T. (Ed). (2013). 13th general election in Malaysia: Issues, outcomes and implications. Interim Report 2013; Mustafa K. Anuar. (2014a). Election Advertising in the Mainstream Print Media: Politics for Sale during Malaysia's 2013 General Election; Mustafa K. Anuar. (2014b). Seeking democracy in Malaysia: New media, traditional media and the state; and Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani. (2014). The social media election in Malaysia: The 13th general election in 2013; and Gomez, J., Mustafa K.Anuar & Lee, Y.B. (2018). *Media and election: Democratic transition in Malaysia*.