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## Exploring the Painting Styles of Malaysian Chinese Artists after the National Cultural Congress

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### Abstract

Since Malaysia's independence, the complex cultural environment has led artists to frequently mix cultures, shift ideas and borrow elements in the creative process. As an immigrant group, Chinese artists have gradually reduced their expressions of Chinese characteristics in the social interaction with different cultural groups, such as Malays and Indians, significantly as the indigenous Malaysian culture and the concept of Islamic art have considerably impacted traditional Chinese painting. After the National Cultural Congress (NCC) was conducted in 1971, the government advocated the development of national culture and art. To integrate into the mainstream art market, Chinese artists borrowed and referred to local cultural elements in their works and attempted to create a new form of artistic symbolism and expression. Therefore, this paper will interpret the paintings of Chinese artists of this period. A combination of form and context analysis will explain how Chinese artists and their works after 1971 were integrated into Malaysian society and contributed to Malaysian art by building an identity through their paintings.

**Keywords:** Malaysian Chinese, Painting, NCC, Forms, Cultural Contexts.

### Introduction

Malaysian modern art began in the early 20th century as a multi-ethnic country where cultural, ecological and environmental determinism were powerful forces in shaping individual cultural identity and development (Byrne, 2004). Artists of all ethnicities created a highly diverse language of painting in this environment. According to Arina et al (2016), three factors—colonialism, migration, and educational status—impacted the growth of modern Malaysian art. He also argues that the presence of artists from China in 1930 caused a different atmosphere in Malaysian contemporary art. Sarena (2018) goes a step closer by stating that immigrant artists brought about modern Malaysian art from China through the

practice of watercolour painting and the paintings of other travelling artists and British officials.

Painting as a visual medium expresses the artist's cultural experiences, emotional values, and perceptions of society. Malaysia encourages a deeper level of multiculturalism that goes beyond mere tolerance (Harris, 2020). The government introduced a series of guidelines, such as (The National Cultural Policy, 1971; The National Gallery Act, 1959). It can be seen that Malaysia has adopted a policy of symbiosis and preservation rather than eradication or integration of various ethnic cultures. The first generation of Chinese artists was more Chinese at heart, and the work expressed a diasporic consciousness with China at its core. Culture as an abstract concept is closely related to social life and is in constant movement and transformation. Shaping Chinese artists' cultural identity is a long-term, continuous and borderless process.

The NCC in 1971, however, was a conference that greatly influenced Chinese artists' perceptions of their own identity and creativity (Faizuan, 2017). It means that each new situation that emerges impacts the artist's thoughts and feelings and consequently produces a new group of artworks that reflects the state of mind of the time. The artist's role is to capture the situation's main characteristics and give it their own particular emotion. With the change of nationality and the long experience of living in Malaysia, Chinese artists have gradually found a balance between their social identity and their culture of origin, resulting in a more distinct and unique cultural identity. They no longer define themselves as ethnic Chinese or Chinese expatriates but as Chinese with Malaysian citizenship (Suryadinata & Chee-Beng, 1997). By this time, the influence of race had already diminished, and the Chinese began to dilute their Chinese identity in interacting with other ethnic groups, such as Malays and Indians. The influence of a pluralistic society often caused them to exude cross-cultural awareness, which is evident in many of their works. They have begun to borrow and fuse local artistic elements to reshape their paintings in an art form that is in keeping with local aesthetics and style, thus demonstrating a sense of identity and belonging to Malaysia. This distinctive style of Chinese Malaysian painting is a product of a particular social and historical context.

Therefore, this paper aims to examine how Chinese artists constructed paintings with Chinese identity in a multicultural context after the NCC, i.e., after 1971, by elaborating and examining the content of their works and the characteristics of their paintings as the formation of their content. The significance of this study is to provide ways for viewers to appreciate the paintings of Chinese artists, to help them better understand and recognize the content of the paintings, to expand the dissemination of the painting art of Chinese artists, and to increase their contribution and role in contemporary Malaysian art.

### **Literature Review**

The recent record of mass migration of Chinese into Malaysia dates back to the British Malaya period, when the former Federation of Malaya experienced intensive migration due to British colonial policies, creating a multi-ethnic identity (Nagata, 1974). The late 20th century saw the diminishing influence of race and the deepening of communication and interaction with other cultural groups. The government's acceptance of multiculturalism eventually opened up more options for ethnic minorities. The Chinese gradually gained equal rights, creating various forms of identity and ethnic identities with varying degrees of proximity to Chinese culture (Peter & Ling, 2011). Chinese artists' ideologies began to shift and reposition their identities, beginning the transition from diasporic to civic consciousness. In Malaysia, a person

has cultural and racial identities, both used to delineate the membership of different groups (Freedman, 2001). This results from a specific political, historical and cultural context, which is evident in many works.

The history of modern painting in Malaysia is not a long one. In the 20th century, before the discovery of indigenous art, the art scene consisted mainly of artistic resources native to immigrant artists and Western art promoted by the colonial government, which converged to some extent to enrich the subject matter of Malaysian art. The earliest painting activity can be traced back to the arrival of British painters in Penang in the 19th century (Sarena, 2018). Art was not widespread, and its dissemination was limited at the time, so it did not receive large-scale attention. It did not contribute to the development of artistic activities in Malaysia until the emergence of Chinese artists in 1930 created a different atmosphere in Malaysian modern art (Arina et al., 2016). And with the establishment of the Nanyang Art College, painting became popular in Malaysia. They created a unique painting style in the land, depicting the local tropical scenery with a blend of Western modernism and traditional Chinese aesthetics. The artworks provided a means of visualizing the aims and ideas of the Chinese artists, acting as a visual language created by the artists to communicate their social experiences and ideologies to society. As D'Allema (2010) suggests, the artwork is seen as a 'document' of an artist, a religion, a philosophy, or a civilization. Thus, as a cultural symbol of a nation, understanding its artistic expression is the most profound way of knowing that community.

According to Valerie et al (2020), the arrival of Cheong Soo Pieng and Chen Wen Hsi from Shanghai and Georgette Chen from Paris, whose visual experiments aimed to combine the naturalistic principles of the Renaissance with the aesthetics of the Chinese scroll in painting, intensified the blending of painting vocabularies. Such was the painting style of the early Chinese artists. In light of the above, Malaysian Chinese painting can be understood as an eclectic expression of Eastern and Western art. Hence, the artwork is, in fact, a form of expression that links the cultural essence of the artist to their life experiences. As Liza Marziana et al. (2015) state, based on each artwork always represents the bias of the artist creating the work toward a cultural category.

The NCC, held on 16 August 1971, can be seen as an attempt by the government to shape artistic and cultural identity. This congress proposed three principles as the basis of national culture.

1. Islam is the religion on which the national culture was developed.
2. Malaysian culture must be grounded in the culture of the indigenous people of the region.
3. Other elements from the culture that are legitimate and in line with the above may be accepted as part of the national culture

Azian (2009) suggests that the NCC was established to encourage artists to express a sense of national pride and identity in their work. With a clear understanding of the direction outlined by the conference, perspectives related to the broader national interest in presenting national culture now shape the artists' thoughts.

Sarena (2020) proposes that throughout the 1970s, artists began the difficult and painful process of rethinking their positions and reshaping their views on culture, language, race, nation, ethnicity, and identity.

Andriana (2017) Argues that the NCC had a significant impact in terms of the context of art, after which Malaysian artworks emerged that began to showcase the country's socio-cultural history and mythology so profoundly and with a greater focus on Malaysia.

With the NCC, there has been a visible transformation in the philosophy and sentiment of Chinese artists, which is effectively a movement in search of identity. They are no longer confined to their heritage of traditional Chinese art and oriental cultural values. Instead, they have been more influenced by Western modernist art and have come up with new ideas about cultural, historical, and social issues. Sarena (2019), in her analysis of Chinese paintings, suggests that not all indigenous Chinese artists look to their lineage for artistic inspiration. On the contrary, some non-native Chinese artists have begun to use native Chinese culture as the subject of their art.

Following Li & Izmer (2015), Although the works created by these artists vary in terms of subject matter, approach and style, their work can be considered as a construction of Malaya's identity centred on the diversity of the different ethnic communities that make up the Malayan population. In this context, Chinese artists have gradually accepted and adapted to the Malaysian social and cultural environment and attempted to convey a 'Malaysian spirit and identity through their artworks. In this way, the painting style of Malaysian Chinese artists has transformed from "Chinese" to "Malaysian". For this reason, Malaysian Chinese art should be part of modern Malaysian art rather than a branch of Chinese art.

Based on Omar et al (2015), Malaysia's cultural assets include objects produced and collected by Malaysians, constituting an essential aspect of Malaysian identity. They provide a means for artists and people from other countries to visualize Malaysia. Chinese artists who have lived in Malaysia for a long time actively seek inspiration from their native culture. They represent this in their paintings, responding to the NCC's rallying cry to shape artworks with a Malaysian national cultural identity. Malaysian art is not merely Malay art in the narrow sense but a state of symbiotic co-existence and mutual appreciation of multi-racial art. Only by promoting the arts of all groups equally can the variety of Malaysian art be enriched to the greatest extent.

As mentioned above, different scholars have had varying opinions on Chinese paintings. However, there is still a paucity of relevant literature and even less analysis of artworks. Chinese artists have progressively weakened the influence of racial perceptions through acculturation, and their work is more of a mixed cultural product. This acculturation is different from cultural assimilation. Acculturation is the process by which the culture of origin unilaterally moves closer to the dominant culture and makes some changes. The end of cultural adaptation is assimilation, the complete loss of the original identity and integration into the mainstream culture. This paper will analyze the works of some Chinese artists to verify whether they retain an artistic language with national identity while building a Malaysian consciousness in a multicultural environment.

## **Method**

This paper uses a qualitative research approach focusing more on the descriptive writing method. Qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. Each artwork is considered to offer unlikely meanings, usually unique and sometimes profoundly revealing evidence of the identity of a time, country, individual, or nation (Preziosi, 1998). Therefore, all of this underlines the significance of context to the work of art, which includes an analysis of the artist's life experiences, the context of the time in which the work was created, and the cultural context of the same period. In the research context, the factors that influence the creation of Chinese artists will be discussed through historical background and cultural studies. In the form analysis, the focus will be more on interpreting images and symbols.

The paintings of five representative artists of the time, namely Chua Siew Teng, Tew Nai Tong, Khoo Sui Hoe, Wong Nai Chin, and Puah Kim Hai, were selected for this study. Firstly, they are all ethnic Chinese or Chinese nationals of Malaysian origin and have won mainstream awards in the field of art. The paintings were selected from the period after 1971 to explore the influence of the NCC on the work of Chinese artists. It adopts Feldman’s (1973) theoretical approach to visual art (Table 1), which consists of four steps: description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment, to help us better perceive the artists and artworks of a particular period.



Table 1  
*A research framework*

Edmund Feldman’s (1973) theoretical approach to visual art	
Description	The first step is where the visual details in the artwork are identified, named, distinguished, and described.
Analysis	The second step focuses on the formal aspects of the artistic elements, design principles, composition, and other formal considerations.
Interpretation	The third step is to state your view of the painting and try to list criteria to help others judge the work.
Judgment	Fourth, explain what the artist is trying to say and describe the inner qualities of the work.

**Results and Discussion**

In the following Table 2, The paintings selected for this study were analyzed in different forms of artistic expression, including batik painting, ink painting, and oil painting. Secondly, in terms of subject matter, three paintings are based on local Malaysian themes, with the artists depicting scenes of natural landscapes, daily routines, and lifestyles. Another is influenced by Chinese culture, reinterpreting traditional Chinese floral and bird imagery through memory, and the last uses Western painting concepts to reflect the artist’s inner world of memories.

Table 2  
*Analysis of the paintings*

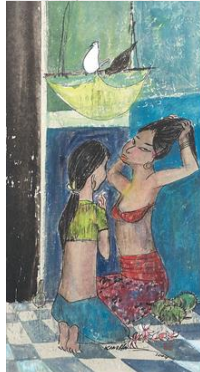
Painting image	Painting title, author, and date	Type of painting	Painting themes
	Spring is Coming, Chua Siew Teng (1977)	Batik painting	Traditional Flower and Bird Subjects in Chinese Painting
	Rubber Tappers, Tew Nai Tong (1979)	Oil painting	Tin miners at their daily work in Malaysia



Two at the Top, Khoo Sui Hoe (1982) Oil painting Non-realistic figure painting



Tin Mining, Wong Nai Chin (1985) Ink painting Representing the local Malaysian landscape in traditional Chinese painting form



Sisters, Puah Kim Hai (2004) Ink painting The daily life of Malaysian girls

Next, we analyze each one in turn: This Figure 1 is a batik painting of 'Spring is Coming' by Chua Siew Teng in 1977 and is a typical Chinese flower and bird painting in terms of its content.



Figure 1: *Spring is Coming* by artist Chua Siew Teng

The painting is composed in a 'drooping' form, in which a wisteria flower drops naturally from above, with its branches flourishing, the birds singing, and the flowers fragrant. Among the flowers is a bird flying with its head tilted up, infected by the atmosphere of spring, making a joyful cry that seems to signify the arrival of spring. In the colouring of the wisteria, the artist has taken reference from the traditional Chinese painting technique of 'clashing powder', where different colours collide and blend to create a colourful effect while the water is still wet. In addition to the usual English signature in the lower left-hand corner, the artist has followed the Chinese painting style of inscribing the painting in Chinese with the words 'Xiao Ding, 1977' and a stamp on the left-hand side painting. This is a conventional practice in Chinese painting, where calligraphy, painting, and seals are all integral parts of the image. It can be argued that the painting represents the artist's knowledge and heritage of traditional Chinese painting, and Chua Siew Teng, as a Chinese artist, makes a good impression of an aesthetic style with a Chinese literati flavour through his paintings. From antiquity to the present day, many Chinese painters have preferred to use wisteria as a subject for their paintings. In ancient China, the colour purple represented good fortune and signified the coming of the purple chi, a sign of luck. This is a Chinese-orientated artistic expression,



especially compared to his other works of the same period, which are full of oriental charm, and the choice of colours is made with a sense of elegance and harmony. Unlike Western painting, where the colouring method needs to consider following the environment, light sources, and other factors, the colouring in Chinese painting does not need to follow the inherent colour of the object but instead combines objectivity with the artist's subjectivity, so that on this painting wisteria has several colours: blue, green, purple, yellow, etc., more than the intrinsic colours.

However, the difference in this painting is that while traditional Chinese painting is done on rice paper, the artist has used batik as a material to represent the flowers and birds, an influence from indigenous Malaysian art. Originally an extension of an indigenous Malaysian craft, batik painting was first developed by his father, Chuah Thean Teng, as an art form, breaking new ground for Malaysian art. Due to his Chinese ethnicity, Chuah Thean Teng's works are often centred around Chinese-style themes such as affection, family, and motherhood. Chuah Siew Teng inherited his father's painting style, drawing inspiration from Chinese culture and working to promote the development of batik painting in Malaysia.

Figure 2 is an oil on canvas, 'Rubber Tappers' by Tew Nai Tong, painted in 1979. As Malaysia is a vital rubber producer, it is only natural that many people are employed in this field. The artist depicts a group of rubber cutters at work.



Figure 2: *Rubber Tappers* by artist Tew Nai Tong

The rubber tappers cut the bark of the rubber trees to allow the latex to spill out of the latex tubes and then collect it. The rubber cutters usually get up at two or three in the evening to cut the rubber. This process usually lasts three to four hours before the rubber is collected in the morning, and the dusky blue sky at work seems to suggest that they will return early in

the morning. By presenting this scene of local life, the artist has captured the busy but rewarding lives of the rubber cutters.

This work has six subjects, two men and four women, each carrying a white rubber bucket containing latex freshly collected from the rubber trees. The difference is that the men are used to holding the rubber buckets above their heads, while the women carry them in plastic tubes, showing the artist's eye for detail by distinguishing between the working habits of men and women. The two men wear long trousers and shorts in simple white and dark blue, while the women still wear long tube skirts, even though they labour, which wrap around the soft contours of the women's bodies in just the right way, with bright colours such as red and blue adding lightness and playfulness to them.

The artist has deliberately designed the composition of the painting. The figures can be divided into three groups, the first being the man and woman at the front, whose rubber buckets echo each other; the second being the three people in a line in the centre of the image, the two women moving similarly and side by side, while the man at the front slightly disrupts this repetition through his hand movements, enriching the relationship between the figures; and the last group is the woman at the end, who is bending down to collect the This is the only non-standing movement in the frame. The whole painting, except for the bright colours of red, yellow, and purple on the figures, is enveloped in a subtle, crisp blue-green hue that seems to reflect the relaxed mood of the rubber cutters as they return home. The brown earth and green trees are joined together, and the whole image does not place much stress on the principles of light and shadow or perspective but instead places all the elements in the same space, a flat layout advocated by traditional Chinese painting. This was also the most common style of painting used by Chinese artists at the time, the 'Nanyang style'. In other words, it was a fusion of Western and Chinese artistic methods to portray the local customs and people as a way of establishing a sense of identity and belonging to Malaysia.

Figure 3 An oil on canvas painting 'Two at the Top' by Khoo Sui Hoe from 1982. In keeping with the artist's usual minimalist painting style, the painting is modern, simple in composition, and dreamy in form and colour. The artist uses repetitive and equally simplified shapes to represent the figures, the two young girls who are the subject of the painting, gazing silently ahead with a quiet, serene, and unfathomable elegance, their bright red mouths like rubies attracting the viewer's attention.



Figure 3: *Two at the Top* by artist Khoo Sui Hoe

The main figure is covered in dark green and yellow-brown, with a subtle highlighting of the left side of the face suggesting the relationship between light and shadow and a few red lines near the light source to deepen the sense of volume. In contrast, is the bright background colour, which is half green and half white. The white parts are layered on each other like the sky, mountains, and clouds. As usual, the artist's style is mysterious and romantic, filled with the collision between the primitive and the modern.

The viewer can communicate with the figures in the painting and perceive their moods and temperaments. When the viewer looks at the image, they wonder what the artist is trying to say or attempt to interpret the story depicted. This is the result that the artist seeks to concentrate on the original character and meaning of the subject rather than expressing the author's consciousness and specific concepts through particular images, thus allowing the viewer to interpret and construct the work with the most significant degree of autonomy.

Compared to other Chinese artists of his time, his works make rare, if any, use of Chinese artistic elements, which is related to his study experience at the Pratt Graphic Centre in New York, USA. The development of modern art in Malaysia was not long in coming, and as a result, many artists travelled to places such as the West to study avant-garde art. Painting, as a product of its culture shaped by the artist's lived experience and ideology, is easily influenced by the spirit of the times and customs around it. The long period of practice and continuous growth abroad has led to his work being incrementally influenced by modernism, post-modernism, and other Western painting concepts. One such style is Minimalism, an art style

that emerged in New York, USA, after World War II, which emphasizes non-realism, i.e., reducing the artist's emotional expression and making the work purer and more uncomplicated. This seems to coincide with the non-figurative subject matter of painting by Malay artists influenced by Islamic culture and traditional motifs after 1970.

Figure 4 is an ink drawing of 'Tin Mining' by Wong Nai Chin, painted in 1985. Malaysia is rich in tin, which was heavily mined by the British in the 19th century, leading to the mass migration of Chinese labourers to Malaysia.



Figure 4: *Tin Mining* by artist Wong Nai Chin

The artist does not deliberately show the miners at work but instead depicts the landscape of the mines in the form of a Chinese landscape painting. In traditional Chinese landscape painting compositions, the method of scattered perspective is generally used, meaning that the point of view is not restricted by space and line of sight and can be moved at will from left to right, up and down, front to back, etc. This is manifested in the variations of forms such as far and near, void and solid, sparse and dense, black and white, large and small, and in making these opposites harmoniously balanced in the image.

In this painting, the subject is the tin mine at the centre of the scene, which the artist has sketched in a realistic style. The height and steepness of the mine and the long, thin ladder at the edge of the mountain seem to suggest the difficulty and danger of the job, and at the foot of the hill stands the only figure in the scene. The contrast between the tall mountain and the small figure is striking. The figure here is only an embellishing element in the landscape painting, so the artist has kept his portrayal simple but also shows the magnificence of the mountain from the side and the mine, with the man looking tiny in the face of the great mountain. The two houses at the foot of the mountain appear to be resting places for the workers, and the artist has meticulously observed the details. The ore at the forefront of the painting is apparently more detailed and heavily inked than the primary mine, while the

mountains behind the mine are expressed in large areas of ink, and the clouds in the distance are only lightly inked. This dark-to-light, complex-to-simple treatment not only enhances the sense of space in the painting but also clarifies the relationship between reality and fiction. Concerning the use of colour, the distant mountains on the right are covered in a layer of vivid red, which is the largest area of colour in the whole painting, while the ore at the forefront of the image, and even the primary mine, are predominantly in ink, with less colour used, which is in line with the colour rule of Chinese ink painting. Besides, the white space in the picture is handled with great attention to detail, highlighting the relationship between the main and secondary aspects of the image and creating a sense of mood. "Liu Bai" (leaving white space) is a standard method of expression in Chinese painting, often interspersed between the real and the imaginary. If the image is too full, it will appear cluttered and crowded, while if it is too sparse, it will be too empty. Only the right amount of "Liu Bai" can evoke the viewer's imagination, and it is this realm of 'meaning to the brush' those Chinese artists seek. Apart from the Chinese calligraphy and seal on the right-hand side, the painting is also signed in English in a Western-style on the top left-hand side. This is a result of Malaysia's diverse cultural environment, which has enriched the composition while maintaining the essence of the Chinese painting tradition.

Figure 5 is an ink painting by Puah Kim Hai, 'Sisters', created in 2004. Kampong is a traditional aboriginal village in Malaysia, and the two Kampong girls are the subjects of this painting. The two sisters look young, sitting cross-legged on the floor, the girl in red on the right fixing her hair and gazing idly into the distance, while the girl in green on the left has her back to the image and is slenderer and thinner than the girl in red, sitting with her feet under her hips, kneeling and facing her companion, holding flowers in her hands, as if waiting for the girl in red to brush her hair. Above their heads is a simple birdcage consisting of two ropes tied to a tree trunk with a light green cloth tied underneath to hold the birds' food. The black-feathered birds are searching for food, while the white-feathered birds look in the same direction as the red girl as if something is there that catches their eye.

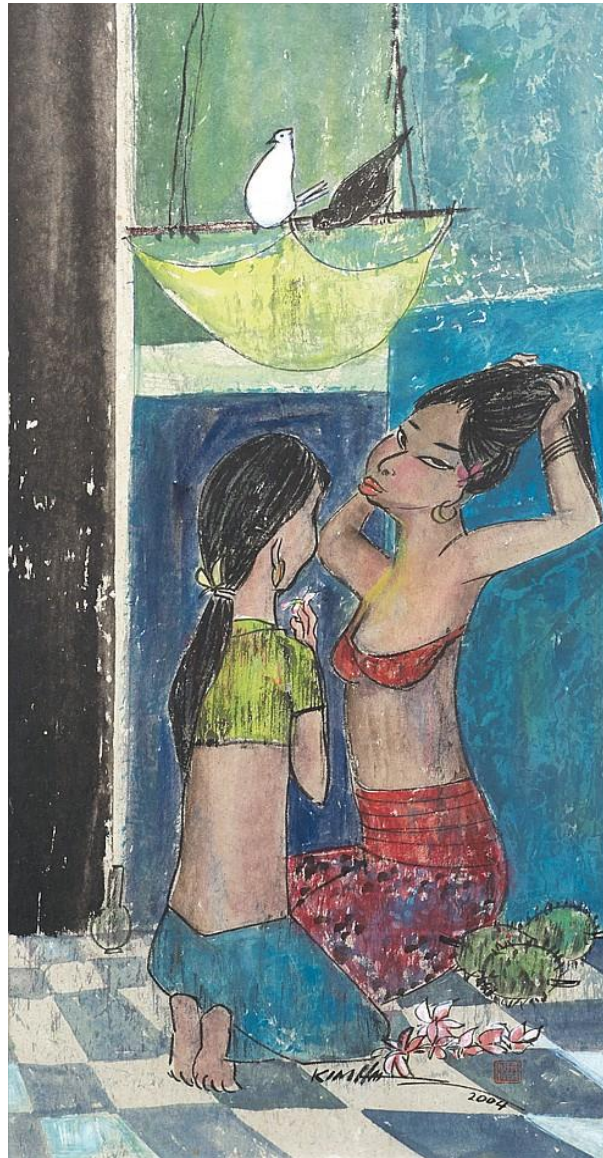


Figure 5: *Sisters* by artist Puah Kim Hai

Green fruits accompany the green girl, and the green girl is surrounded by red flowers, a colour echo that the artist has masterfully handled. The blue dress worn underneath the girl in green is also the same colour as the wall behind the girl in red, which has been divided into four pieces and painted in fresh, cool blues and greens. This prosperous, vibrant colour relationship enhances the decorative nature of the work. The whole painting reflects the relaxed and cheerful atmosphere of a family in the Kampong tradition, full of living flavours, the only modern touch is the black and white checkered floor, which the artist has also painted a few pieces of blue to make the picture more harmonious and balanced.

In this painting, the artist does not emphasize excessive perspective but continues the composition commonly used in traditional ink painting, i.e., converting the original three-dimensional structure into a limited flat structure. However, in contrast to traditional ink painting, which focuses on variations in line and ink colour, the lines in this work are simple, without much variation in a twist and turn. The ink and wash sections are few and far between, with more of a clash of colours. This is actually against the principles of traditional Chinese painting. In this ink, itself is a 'colour'. There has always been a concept of 'five colours

of ink' (i.e., burnt, thick, heavy, light, and clear), so Chinese artists follow the concept of "ink as the main element, colour as a supplement", and the colour is only used as an embellishment to the painting and does not overpower the main character. In contrast, the Western concept of colour and the use of colour is different from traditional Chinese painting, and in this respect, the artist is more influenced by the Western concept of painting. His images have a strong 'Nanyang style' and are enriched by a fusion of Eastern and Western painting techniques to create works based on local objects.

Figure 6 shows that most Chinese artists after 1971 were influenced by a multicultural environment, with a more significant proportion of Chinese and Malaysian culture, followed by Western culture. They have adopted new methods, techniques, and forms to express their culture and values, which has led to variations in their painting styles. An analysis of the five painters' works reveals that most have chosen to express themes with Malaysian characteristics, which is the influence of the second article of the NCC, that works that reflect the local culture can become part of the national culture, and this is the process of Chinese artists finding and shaping a new cultural identity.

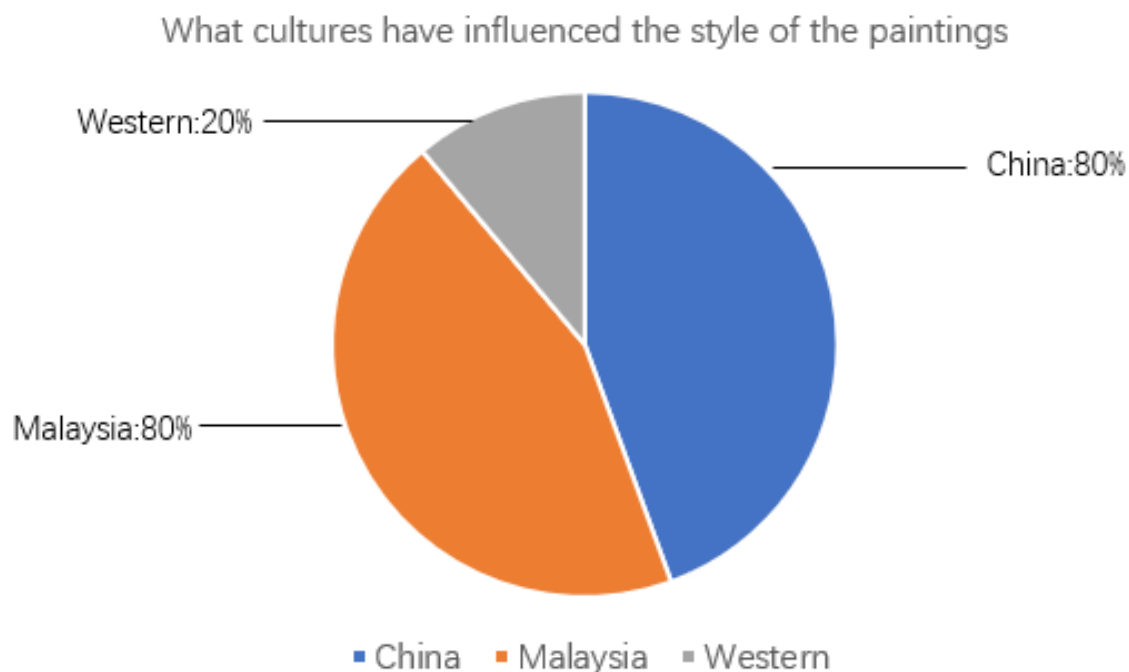


Figure 6: The results of the analysis are based on the cultural influences on the style of painting

In conclusion, Malaysia, as a pluralistic society with a diverse cultural background, where many different cultural groups collide and merge, has resulted in a varied and complex composition of its national culture. One of the implications of the unfolding of the NCC is to initiate a new phase of harmony and unity in Malaysian society through the establishment of national culture. In this context, therefore, the Chinese artists' Chinese characters have gradually diminished and been replaced by a new style of painting related to Malay culture.

### Conclusions

The influence of Chinese indigenous culture on artistic expression is still more profound than that of Western culture. But national identity and ethnic identity are not incompatible. They can be fused. Just as Chinese artists constantly reconcile the functions of multiple cultures in

their creative process, this is particularly evident in the ink painting form. While they shape their Malaysian identity, they are not prevented from expressing their national identity through the language of their art. Finally, it should be emphasized that this paper has a vital role to play in analyzing the work of Chinese artists, who are constantly creating new symbols and forms to give meaning to their works, which not only provide a means of visualizing Malaysian art scene but also enhance the international awareness of multicultural arts.

This paper also sheds further light on how the multicultural context influences the artist's construction of the work and seeks to explore the impact of the NCC on the work of Chinese artists. Paintings since 1971 have been influenced not only by Chinese artistic traditions and culture but rather by an artistic style that is more Malaysian. As such, the paintings of Chinese artists are part of the national culture instead of just being derivatives of Chinese art overseas. The significance of this paper is to provide the audience with the knowledge to appreciate the content and approach of the paintings of Chinese artists and to contextualize them to get to know the creative environment, ideology, emotion, cultural orientation, and values of Chinese artists so that they can better appreciate the inner meaning and more profound significance of the paintings and know-how Chinese artists express their cultural spirit through the language of art.

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