

The Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School: Heritage, Transformation, and Renovation

Yu-Ju Hung, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

History Department, Chinese Culture University, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

hyr11@ulive.pccu.edu.tw

Abstract

The creation of mother-tongue language schools was the prevalent phenomenon in the American immigration communities in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Some European, such as German, immigrants capitalized their ethnic network to develop their ethnic language instructions within the systems of public school or religious parochial school, while certain Asian (Chinese or Japanese) immigrants created private language schools to maintain their heritage and culture for younger generations. Through the case study of history of the Chinese Confucius Temple School in Los Angeles Chinatown, along with the examination of theoretical frame of contemporary non-English mother-tongue schools in the United States, this study demonstrate the transformation of Chinese language school in the aftermath of 1950s. It shows that the development of language school not only dwells on the issues of Mandarin-learning and culture maintenance, but also accompanies with the transition of Chinese community from inner-city enclave to suburbs.

Keywords: Language school, Los Angeles Chinatown, Chinese Confucius Temple School, Chinese tradition, cultural heritage

Introduction:

The development of Chinese language schools dates back to the late 1880s when the first one, Chinese Minister Zhang Yinguan, was established in San Francisco.¹ In the following years to serve the needs of early immigrants, classes in Cantonese language were provided for the residents of Chinatown in a number of large cities in the United States. The common feature of the earliest Chinese school in San Francisco and its contemporary counterparts was that it played supplementary role to regular school. Moreover, just like language schools in the immigrant German, Scandinavian, Jewish, and Japanese communities, Chinese language schools strongly aimed to preserve Chinese language and cultural heritage in the second and succeeding generations. Nevertheless, due to the restriction of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the resulting discriminatory practices against the Chinese in the United States, Chinese language schools seldom evolved the way of their European counterparts that finally joined in the mainstream educational system. Rather, Chinese language schools maintained their isolated situation and located exclusively within Chinatown.

¹ The earliest Chinese classes for the Chinese miners were created in 1848 in California, but it was not the formal Chinese language school. In 1874, the compulsory Chinese classes were established in Connecticut to ensure that the 120 Chinese youths sent by Qing government to study in America would not forget their ancestral heritage. However, these classes had little interaction with the contemporary Chinese American community, and had slight influence on the development of community-style Chinese language schools. See Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American: A history of Communities and Institutions* (New York: A Division of Rowman X Littlefield Publisher): 272; Theresa Hsu Chao, "Overview," in Xueying Wang, *A View from Within: A Case Study of Chinese Heritage Community Language schools in the United State* (Washington, D.C.: National Foreign Language Center, 1996): 7.

After World War II, the development of Chinese language schools entered the new stage. A host of new immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China made a fundamental demographic change to the traditional Chinese communities in the United States, which used to be mainly constituted by Cantonese. These new Chinese immigrants were mostly professionals, from middle class backgrounds, and emigrated in family units, so that they possessed the capability to acculturate into the American society. In residential patterns, they tended to inhabit in the suburban region and gradually created the distinctive Chinese language schools for their descendants. The emergence of the new Chinese language schools had an impact on the traditional ones in Chinatown, and forced them to transform and renovate as well.

The Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School was the model of the traditional Chinese language school in Los Angeles Chinatown after WWII. Supported by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA)², from the beginning, the school was intimately connected with the local Cantonese Chinese community and obviously portrayed itself as the representative of the Chinese cultural heritage. Although the school faced a challenge from the new Chinese language schools after 1980s, it self-transformed and recreated itself to conform the need both for newcomers and traditional Cantonese decedents. From the history of the Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School capitulated the reality and dilemma that Chinese community encountered for their younger generations in the second half twentieth century.

In this essay, first I will introduce the review of literature about the study of different ethnic language schools, then, go on a brief history of early Chinese language schools in Los Angeles. In the final part, I will focus on the development of Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School, discussing its history, school life, and its transformation and renovation.

Review of Literature

As for the relationship among language, culture, and ethnicity, along with the typology of ethnic language schools in the United States, research by Joshua A. Fishman and other scholars provided fundamental theoretical structure.³ Fishman suggested that the mother tongue school, acting as secondary reward system and combined with force within home, community, and churches, could play an important role in maintaining the ethnic language through promoting ethnic literacy, sustaining ethnic dignity, and training leadership within the minority community. Likewise, E.Brdunas and B.E. Topping's research examined language schools for thirteen

² Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Los Angeles (CCBA of Los Angeles) was the branch of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/huiguan, which was founded in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century in San Francisco. This association served as the major association for six main Chinese clan systems in the Chinatown. CCBA had established its branches in many cities throughout the United States in 19th century and early 20th century. As for CCBA of Los Angeles, it was originally called as "Wei-Liang Association" when setting up in 1889 in the Garmier building, Los Angeles Street. In 1910, "Wei-Liang Association" was renamed as CCBA of Los Angeles, and predominated the Chinatown affairs. In 1945, CCBA of Los Angeles planned to construct its new building at 925, N. Broadway which followed the move of Chinatown. In September 1952, CCBA of Los Angeles moved to the new constructed building and lasted till nowadays. CCBA of Los Angeles contained twenty seven associations—Wong's Family Benevolent Association of Los Angeles, Lung Kong Tin Yee Association, Taishan Ningyung Huigen, Taishan Ningchiao Kung Hui, Bing Kung Tong, Lee On Dong Association, Hoy Ping Student Association of Southern California, Gee How Oak Tin Association, Ho Sheng Tsung Chih Tong, Jan Ying Benevolent Association, Gee Tuck Sam Tuck Association, Chinese American Citizens Alliance, Gee Poy Kuo Association, New Women Movement Association, Eng Suey Sun Association, Ma's Family Association of Southern California, Lung Sai Ho Tong, Kuomintang-Los Angeles Branch, Ying On Association, Chew Lun Association, Kong Chow Benevolent Association, Kong Chow Pao An Hui, Su Yuan Tong, Yee Fung Toy Association, Fung Lun Association, Louie Family Association, Chung Wah Corporation. These twenty seven associations elected the board of directors and board of supervisors, which were responsible for operations of the accessorial associations—Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, Chung Wah Fu Ti Commission, Chung Wah Fu Chiao Commission. Interviewed with CCBA of Los Angeles. November 13, 2008.

³ Joshua A. Fisherman, V.C. Nahirny, J.E. Hofman, and R.G. Hayden, *Language loyalty in the United States* (The Hauge: Mouton & Co., 1966); Joshua A. Fisherman and V.C. Nahirny, "The ethnic group school and mother tongue maintenance in the United States," *Sociology of Education* 37 (1964): 306-317; Joshua A. Fisherman, "Minority language maintenance and the ethnic mother tongue school," *The Modern Language Journal* 64, no.2 (Summer 1980): 167-172; Joshua A. Fisherman, "Ethnic community mother tongue schools in the U.S.A.: Dynamics and Distributions," *International Migration Review* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 235-247.

groups that corresponded to Fishman's classifications of language schools, including Polish, Hungarian, Turkish, Cambodian, Japanese, Greek, Korean, and other ethnic schools.⁴

Since the United States is a country composed of mostly immigrants and their descendants, the mother tongue school in American history was evident. Hence, there is ample relevant research based on the theoretical structure Fisherman, Brdunas and Topping established. Regarding the European immigrants and language maintenance, German, as the largest non-Anglo European immigrant group, presented the most far-reaching endeavors to keep their mother tongue since eighteenth century, whether in the forms of private schools, parochial schools, or in the form of setting up their mother tongue courses in the public schools. Early German language schools usually existed as all day schools or weekend schools. Furthermore, the numerical size of the German-speaking population at the beginning of the nineteenth century contributed to growth of the ethnic language instructions. As a result, German language became as the most important non-English language that spread nationwide. Many German words such as hamburger, kindergarten, delicatessen, and frankfurters were already incorporated into American system of language and culture.⁵ In this vein German language schools and its supplementary instructions, both in and outside the public education proved to be the representative of the contemporary maintenance of non-English linguistic traditions.

The significance of German language schools was reflected by enormous scholarly case study. For example, Kloss's research offered an outline of the development of German mother tongue schools in the United States, along with the specific discussion of their virtual disappearance during the two world wars, caused by intense national anti-German activities.⁶ Similarly, Steven L. Schlossman's study demonstrated developments of German language instruction within the public elementary school system in famous German Triangle Area in the Middle West, including several cities—Cincinnati, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis—during the period from 1840 to 1919.⁷ Kenneth B. O'Brien Jr.'s article examined three Supreme Court cases—*Meyer v. the State of Nebraska* (1919), *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1922), and *Farrington v. Tokushige* (1927), marking the mounting nationalism and xenophobia after World War I that targeted three types of foreign language schools: parochial German schools in Nebraska, German language schools in Oregon, and Japanese language schools in Hawaii respectively.⁸ Joanthan Zimmerman's work stressed the ambivalent attitudes European immigrants toward their native language courses in the American public schools prior to 1940.⁹ Richard J. Quinlan's article focuses on another type of European groups, the Catholic followers, showing how Catholic parochial schools offered alternative language training for certain ethnic groups.¹⁰ Walter P. Krolikowski and Dorota Praszalowicz's article stressed the early importance of Polish parochial schools in the formation of language heritage in the religious system.¹¹

The development of Japanese language schools in the United States was representative of mother language maintenance among Asian Americans. Yoshihide Matsubayashi's dissertation presented an overall examination of the historical development of Japanese language schools (Nihon-go Gakko) in Hawaii and California between 1892 and 1941.¹² He focused on the socio-political realities, the culture, and the nationalistic factor that led to

⁴ E.Brdunas and B.E.Topping, *Ethnic heritage and language schools in America* (Washington: American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, 1988).

⁵ Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981): 43.

⁶ H. Kloss, "German-American language maintenance efforts," in *Language loyalty in the United States*: 207-251.

⁷ Steven L. Schlossman, "Is There an American Tradition of Bilingual Education? German in the Public Elementary Schools, 1840-1919," *American Journal of Education* 91, no. 2 (February 1983): 139-186.

⁸ Kenneth B. O'Brien Jr., "Education, Americanization and the Supreme Court: The 1920's," *American Quarterly* 13, no.2 (Summer 1961): 161-171.

⁹ Joanthan Zimmerman, "Ethnics against Ethnicity: European Immigrants and Foreign-Language Instruction, 1890-1940," *The Journal of American History* 88, no.4 (March 2002): 1383-1404.

¹⁰ Richard J. Quinlan, "Growth and Development of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Boston," *The Catholic Historical Review* 22, no.1 (April 1936): 27-41.

¹¹ Walter P. Krolikowski, "Poles in America: Maintaining the Ties," *Theory into Practice* 20, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 52-57; Dorota Praszalowicz, "The Cultural Changes of Polish-American Parochial Schools in Milwaukee, 1866-1988," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13, no.4 (Summer 1994): 23-54.

¹² Yoshihide Matsubayashi, *The Japanese Language Schools in Hawaii and California From 1892 to 1941* (PhD diss., University of San Francisco, 1984).

the establishment of the schools and effected the enrollment of Japanese children in these schools. Noriko Asato's research also discussed the Japanese language schools in Hawaii from 1916 to 1920; nevertheless, she stressed the debates and influences, together with the Federal Survey of Education in 1919 targeting Japanese language schools.¹³ Eileen H. Tamura and Ralph Thomas Kam dealt with the dispute over Japanese language schools in Hawaii during the two great wars.¹⁴ Yuki Yamazaki's work portrayed the Japanese Americans experience of acculturation in a Los Angeles church school, the St. Xavier School, by focusing on the results of their conversion to Catholicism in early twentieth century.¹⁵

With respect to the Chinese language schools in America, Him Mark Lai's two articles can be regarded as most significant investigation, drawing panorama of the development in San Francisco and Hawaii from late nineteenth century to current times.¹⁶ Xueying's overview focused on the academic curriculum, extracurricular activities, teaching and training, along with the administration and management of the Chinese language schools.¹⁷ Min Zhou and Li Xiyuan's article aimed to unpack ethnicity through a close examination of ethnic language schools and the system of supplementary education in the immigrant Chinese community, particularly those being established in the post-1960s, in the United States.¹⁸ Charles A. Donovan's study described the Paulist Mission's effort to evangelize and help the Chinese in San Francisco by building parochial day school and Chinese language school since early twentieth century.¹⁹ Catherine Leung's essay surveyed the conditions of Chinese language schools in San Francisco presently.²⁰

In addition, there are three relevant dissertations focusing on Chinese schools in America through specific case studies. Min-Hsun Chiang's dissertation offered an understanding of a community-based Chinese language school, while she sheds light on American-born Chinese's perceptions of Chinese schools through a case study of the Faith Chinese School (FCS) in Cypress City, Texas.²¹ Lu Chang's dissertation was another case study, including surveys of 800 principals, teachers, parents and students, concerning about Chinese language schools in Northern California in maintaining the Chinese language, culture, and ethnicity in a multilingual/multicultural environment.²² Chen Yung Fan's dissertation was a case study of the Chinese language schools in the Chinatown of San Francisco, and he stressed the interrelation between the school and community in a complex and changing contemporary environment.²³

Materials in Chinese are the important source for research on the Chinese language school. Pei Chi Liu's books provided detailed and considerable references for the development of Chinese schools, especially before WWI, in the United States.²⁴ Shu-Hua Wang's book, published by Taiwan's Overseas Compatriot Affairs

¹³ Noriko Asato, "Mandating Americanization: Japanese Language Schools and the Federal Survey of Education in Hawaii, 1916-1920," *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no.1 (Spring 2003): 10-38.

¹⁴ Eileen H. Tamura, "The English-Only Effort, the Anti-Japanese Campaign, and Language Acquisition in Education of Japanese Americans in Hawaii, 1915-40," *History of Education Quarterly* 33, no.1 (Spring 1993): 37-58; Ralph Thomas Kam, "Language and Loyalty: Americanism and the Regulation of Foreign Language Schools in Hawaii," *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 40 (2006): 131-147.

¹⁵ Yuki Yamazaki, "St. Francis Xavier School: Acculturation and Enculturation of Japanese Americans in Los Angeles, 1921-1945," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 18 (2000): 54-73.

¹⁶ Him Mark Lai, "Chinese Schools in America before World War II," in *Becoming Chinese American: A history of Communities and Institutions*, Him Mark Lai (New York: A Division of Rowman X Littlefield Publisher,): 271-309; Him Mark Lai, "Chinese Schools in America after World War II," in *Becoming Chinese American: A history of Communities and Institutions*: 310-351.

¹⁷ Xueying Wang edited, *A View from Within: A Case Study of Chinese Heritage Community Language Schools in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: National Foreign Language Center, 1996).

¹⁸ Min Zhou and Li Xiyuan, "Ethnic Language Schools and the Development of Supplementary Education in the Immigrant Chinese Community in the United States," *New Directions for Youth Development* 100 (Winter 2003): 57-73.

¹⁹ Charles A. Donovan, "The Paulist Mission to the Chinese in San Francisco since 1903," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 18 (Winter 2000): 126-142.

²⁰ Catherine Leung, "An Overview of the Chinese Language Schools in San Francisco," *History & Perspectives* 7 (2007): 265-266.

²¹ Min-Hsun Chiang, *A Study of the Chinese Language School and the Maintenance of Ethnic Language in the Second-Generation* (PhD diss., University of Texas, Austin, 2000).

²² Lu Chang, *Culture and Ethnicity in Chinese Language Schools in Northern California* (PhD diss., University of the Pacific, 1994).

²³ Chen Yung Fan, *The Chinese Language School of San Francisco in Relation to Family Integration and Cultural Identity* (PhD diss., Duke University, 1976).

²⁴ Pei Chi Liu, *A History of the Chinese in the United States of America, 1848-1911* (Taipei, Taiwan: Li Ming Culture Corporation, 1976); Pei Chi Liu, *The education of Chinese Americans* (Taipei: Taiwan, The Editing Committee of the Overseas Chinese Education Conflation, 1957).

Commission, and offered overall an introduction of the Chinese language schools in North America.²⁵ Han-Liang Yu, Chen-Hua Hsia, and Tzu-An Tai's books all discussed about the education of overseas Chinese.²⁶ In addition, the unions or associations of Chinese language schools in the United States also routinely publish related references which can be used as school catalog. For example, National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools (NCACLS), Southern California Council of Chinese Schools (SCCCS), Association of North California Chinese Schools (ANCCS), and other associations all publish journals quarterly or yearly. Moreover, many Chinese schools publish their own school journal as well. In addition, the books on the history of Chinese in Los Angeles and California served as references for the Chinese language schools. Icy Smith, Robert S. Greenwood, Susie Ling, and Timothy Patrick Fong all wrote books on this subject.²⁷ As for the materials of the Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School, its two publications were the most important sources. I also interviewed the principal of the school, Kuo- Pin Chang, and some faculty of school and CCBA. Their conversations provided additional information. Some newspaper articles from *Los Angeles Times*, *World Journal* (in Chinese), *Singtao Journal* (in Chinese), and *Epoch Times* (in Chinese) all offered reports about the schools.

The early development of Chinese language schools in Los Angeles

Los Angeles was one of the most important cities for creating Chinese language schools in the aftermath of the late nineteenth century. Like their counterparts in the San Francisco, the development of Chinese language schools was associated and synchronous with the vicissitudes of Chinatown. They developed distinctiveness as Los Angeles grew, and as the city became most concentrated spot for Chinese immigrants after 1960s.

The earliest Chinese school in Los Angeles was the True Light Chinese School, which was operated by True Light Chinese Presbyterian Church in 1894.²⁸ In the early twentieth century the "Kan Cheng Xuetang" was established by the Chinese Empire Reform Association, headed by Kang Yu-wei, who assisted the emperor Guangxu wage a failed coup d'état against the Empress Dowager Cixi and later fled abroad. "Kan Cheng Xuetang" was operated by Lin Hsiang-Tan and Chang Hsiao, who rented the site of Chee Kong Tong, a Chinese secret society, as their classrooms. Basically, "Kan Cheng Xuetang" possessed strong political stance; thus, most of the students were adults and received military discipline. This school was plagued by the frequent personnel infighting, and soon suspended in one year.²⁹

From 1910 to 1920, several Chinese schools, including Yeh-Ch'in School (operated by Tan Shu Tang), the Methodist Episcopal Church Chinese School (managed by Madam Liang Chang), Chung Shan School (operated by Chou Chien Chen), and Lee Cho-Nan Sishu emerged in Los Angeles. By 1916, Shang-Chih School was

²⁵ Shu-Hua Wang, *An Introduction of Chinese Schools in North America* (Taipei, Taiwan: Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission, 1998).

²⁶ Han-Liang Yu, *The Education History of Overseas Chinese* (Taipei: National Institution for Compilation and Translation, 2001); Chen-Hua Hsia, *Overseas Affairs and Education, 1912-2004* (Hsinchu, Taiwan: Hsuan Chuang University Overseas Chinese Research Center, 2005); Tzu-An Tai, *Research of Overseas Chinese's Culture and Education* (Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1963).

²⁷ Icy Smith, *The Lonely Queue: The Forgotten History of the Courageous Chinese Americans in Los Angeles*; Robert S. Greenwood, *Down by the Station: Los Angeles Chinatown, 1880-1933* (Los Angeles: Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996); Susie Ling, *Bridging the Centuries: History of Chinese Americans in Southern California* (Los Angeles: Chinese Historical Society of South California, 2001); Timothy Patrick Fong, *The First Suburban Chinatown: The Remaking of Monterey Park, California* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

²⁸ The True Light Chinese School originally located at 766 Juan Street. According the 1900 Census, there were 44 students attending the grammar class of the school from seven to eight o'clock, after they were back from English schools. The True Light Chinese School changed its location into Adam Street in the early twentieth century, and relocated to 2500 Griffin Avenue in 1967. Till 2002, the school was still in active. See Icy Smith, *The Lonely Queue: The Forgotten History of the Courageous Chinese Americans in Los Angeles*: 17.

²⁹ Kan Ch'eng Xuetang was one of the branches of the Chinese Empire Reform Association (later transformed as the Chinese Constitutionalist Party), which aimed to secure emperor Guangxu. Led by K'ang Yu-wei and his famous disciple Liang Qichao, the Chinese Empire Reform Association expanded its associations throughout the America Continent in the early twentieth century to more than one hundred divisions. Nevertheless, suppressed by the Qing Dynasty along with the founding of the Republic in 1911, the influences of Chinese Empire Reform Association soon disappeared both in China and America.

established, and in 1919, managed by Huang Chien-Nung, the Ming-Te School was set up. These Chinese schools essentially were operated by private as the form of *sishu*.³⁰

After 1921 Chinese educators and official administrators Tsai Yuan-Pei, Wu Tsai-Min, and Tsou Lu successively toured Los Angeles. They advised the local Cantonese Chinese to organize a school conforming to the Chinese educational system. It caused the local Cantonese to launch the unification activity for the regional Chinese schools which gave birth to the establishment of three Chung Wah Chinese schools in the subsequent years— the major one was in Los Angeles Chinatown in 1927, with two branches formed at Tenth Street in 1927, and the third one started at Twenty-third Street in 1932, respectively.³¹ Pei-Ha Chang, as the principal of these three schools, led them with the elementary program and junior high school. From 1930 to 1940, 112 students graduated from the schools’ elementary program, while twenty students graduated from the junior high school. Nevertheless, the occurrence of World War II, along with a series changes in Chinatown³² from the 1930s to 1940s, interrupted the schools’ operation, forcing them to suspend activities in 1943.³³ In addition to the Chung Wah Chinese schools, several Chinese schools (or classes) supported by Chinese Protestant churches, were founded: Baptist Church in 1932 and Catholic Church founded in 1931. Compared to the Chung Wah Chinese schools, the size and scale of these church schools were relatively small and exclusive.³⁴

Briefly, the development of Chinese schools in Los Angeles during the first half twentieth century showed the fledging, but aggressive potential for further progress. The emergence of Chung Wah Chinese schools, though discontinued in 1943, demonstrated firm resolution that the local Chinese community supported the language schools for the young generations. Moreover, with the growth of the Chinese population in Los Angeles, and the rebirth of Los Angeles Chinatown after 1950s, the ground for the Chinese language school’s advancement became more staunch, exemplified by the advancement of the Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School.

Chinese in Los Angeles County and Los Angeles Chinatown, 1960-2000

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Chinese in L.A. County	19,286	40,798	93,747	245,033	329,352
Chinese in Chinatown*	3,321	4,218	6,661	8,078	11,029

*Chinatown and its immediate communities include census tracts of 1971, 1976, 1977, 2071.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

³⁰ *Sishu* was the private school headed by a personal tutor, and was the most common style of schools in China before 1905 which taught the *baguwen* (eight-part style essays) and other Chinese literary classics helping students to pass the government exams. Normally, *sishu* was mainly associated by its tutor, was usually identified by the teacher’s name.

³¹ In 1924, Chung Kuo School established in Los Angeles under the auspice of Kuan Shao-Wen,. In 1928, this school discontinued because of the establishment of Chung Wah Chinese schools.

³² Since late nineteenth century, the nascent Chinatown in Los Angeles experienced a host of vicissitudes. The Golden Rush and the construction of Pacific Railroad brought hundred thousand Chinese workers in California which produced the demographic possibility to build a Chinatown in Los Angeles. In 1870, according to Census, there were 172 Chinese in Los Angeles as farmers, peddlers, , and the most primitive Chinatown in Los Angeles was built around Los Angeles Street. The Chinatown then expanded into the region of Marchessault Street, Alameda Street, and Apablaza Street in 1880s. Thereafter, scourged by a fire attack (possible arson) in 1887, Chinese residents, about two thousands rebuild Chinatown around the district off Marchessault Street and Apablaza Street, and gradually relocated it to the area which the Union Station situates presently. During the mid-1930s, the construction of Union Station forced the Chinese to move to the area of Spring Street and Main Street in 1938. In the late 1940s, the construction of Santa Ana Highway, which expropriated the property of local Chinese compelled them to make a move again to the territory of North Broadway. See Robert S. Greenwood, *Down by the Station: Los Angeles Chinatown, 1880-1933* (Los Angeles: Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996): 1-19.

³³ See Pei Chi Liu, *A History of the Chinese in the United States of America, 1848-1911*: 368; Pei Chi Liu, *The education of Chinese Americans*: 33-34.

³⁴ Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American: A history of Communities and Institutions*: 286-287.

The History of Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School

The interruption of Chung Wah Chinese schools in 1943 did not discourage the enthusiasm of local Chinese in Los Angeles to rebuild the Chinese school. As Chinatown was resettled in the late 1940s, the CCBA of Los Angeles took the leadership in the local Chinatown, proposing the formation a new Chinese language school. In the late 1940s, the CCBA of Los Angeles created the non-profitable organization, Committee of Preparation and Construction for CCBA Building and Chung Wah Chinese School, to support the construction of the school scheduled to finish at the end of 1951. With \$ 120,000 left from war relief funds, which aimed to help China fighting against Japan during the period of 1937-1945, and another \$60,000 raised from the local community, the committee acquired a site in Chinatown (816 Yale Street) on which to build the school. The new school, which was completed on schedule and opened in the fall of 1952,³⁵ was a merger of the former Chung Wah Schools and three Chinese classes sponsored by the Congregational and Presbyterian churches.³⁶ The school was governed by the student affairs office (changed to school board of directors afterward), which was appointed by CCBA's board of directors and supervisors. At the beginning of operation, the total number of the pupils was roughly sixty, and the tuition for each student was only three dollars. Almost free tuition was out of the consideration that CCBA expected to provide universal education for the local Chinese, and to continue instilling the culture and language heritage for the younger generations. In other words, the re-formation of Chung Wah Chinese School in Chinatown in 1952 manifested the determination that the local Chinese community was highly concerned about their cultural heritage, just as their ancestors were. Moreover, as the major and largest Chinese school in Los Angeles at that time, Chung Wah Chinese School was the forerunner, providing the model for the subsequent educational aspirants to follow in the later decades.

Unlike the modern Chinese language schools after 1970s in suburban area of Los Angeles, which operated with independent monetary support and higher tuition fees, the Chung Wah Chinese School, as a nonprofit organization and by virtue of the extremely low fee charged to students, certainly encountered the financial problems from the inception. Hence, the support from local community was inevitably necessary, and proved to be the most vital source to uphold the school maintaining till nowadays. First of all, through the CCBA of Los Angeles, the school conducted the fund raising campaigns annually, usually on the occasions of New Year festivals, school anniversaries, fairs, and wedding feasts, to ask donations from Chinese organizations as well as earnest Chinese individuals of Greater Los Angeles region. In addition the Ming Yi Hsuan Jui Lion Dancing Team, which belonged to Lung Kong Tin Yee Association, was another enthusiastic community unit to assist the school in fund raising. From 1952 the Ming Yi Hsuan Jui Lion Dancing Team volunteered freely to perform lion dancing, with the school students and teachers waving the flags ahead, and forming the parade in Chinatown on the first day of Chinese New Year. Store by store was called on, as well as shops, restaurants, banks, and associations, to share the New Year luck, while seeking funds for the school as well. The performance of lion dancing brought about ten thousand dollars to the school each year, and it became a fascinating tradition both for the school and Chinatown residents that tied them together;³⁷ another important monetary source for school came from selling firecrackers. Credited by the local Fire Station, in the very previous days of every Chinese New Year, the school would purchase firecrackers, and sold them to the residents during the New Year. The firecrackers sale resulted in more than \$ 8,000 funds each year for the school.³⁸

³⁵ The CCBA and Chung Wah Chinese school inaugurated on 18 May, 1952.

³⁶ See Board of Directors of Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, *Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School Building Renovation and Expansion Commemoration* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School, 2004): 61; Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American: A history of Communities and Institutions*: 312-313.

³⁷ See Board of Directors of Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, *Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School Building Renovation and Expansion Commemoration*: 75.

³⁸ See Board of Directors of Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, *The 32 anniversary of founding of Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School and*

Depending upon voluntary fundraising did not guarantee the financial stability for the school. In particular, more than \$ 2,000 for property taxes every year proved to be the heavy burden for school operation. It forced CCBA to reorganizing the school to become tax-free. In 1968, the school principal Huang Yuan-Sheng proposed the suggestion looking for tax-free to the CCBA's board of directors, and the board soon agreed, then, hired lawyers, along with accountants to apply to the government for the exemption. When the application failed, the school sought other access to reach their end. In March 1969, CCBA organized the "Chinese Confucius Association," which was subordinate to CCBA as well. Subsequently, CCBA transferred the whole property of Chung Wah Chinese School to the "Chinese Confucius Association." In the name of "Chinese Confucius Association," CCBA applied again for exemption, and was approved by the Californian government in August. One month later, the school was renamed as the "Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles."³⁹

Although the reorganization of school was inescapably for tax purposes, the change still matched the goals of the school in education and culture to a certain extent. For the school itself, the thoughts of Confucius remained the quintessence of Chinese traditional culture that the leaders of the school expected their students to embrace. The image of Confucius as the teacher and educator was also suitable for the school which tried to portray itself as the representative of traditional Chinese schools in Los Angeles. Moreover, according to the faculty of school I had conversations with, they thought Confucianism can serve as the religion for Chinese, given its intensive and lasting spiritual influences upon Chinese, just as Western religions had on the Americans. At last, the external and internal of Confucianism injection into school also built effective social bridge to conjoin the school with the varied Confucius organizations beneficial for the co-activities. Physically, the school served as the location of a variety of relevant activities and associations in Southern California and they frequently upheld the collective celebration and festival of Confucius's Birthday (The Teachers' Day on September 28). Spiritually, the school provided the forum for the advocacy and discussion of Confucianism. Based on that, the changes of name and organization of the school associated with "Chinese Confucius Association" more appropriately reflected the essence and additional function of the school in some ways.

As for the student life and their response to the school, *Los Angeles Times* in 1969 ever had a report concerning the subject. From the essay depicting that there were 150 children (120 during the winter months) making up five grades between the ages of 5 and 14, many of the children were American born and had learned to speak Chinese language in their homes, but were unable to read or write it. In school, they were taught to speak Chinese loudly and uniformly, and learned the Chinese writings through copying the Chinese characters in the paper in order to recognize them. The teacher Miss Ma found that the students were enthusiastic learners, but tended to be quiet and listen in the classroom, which she regarded as the different way from the American students did. Besides, the correspondent also quoted one student Scott Lee, who was 12 at that time and attended the school for two years to cheer the school, "I like it here. It's good to learn the language. Now I can talk to my grandmother." However, he also revealed that "Sometimes, I'd just rather go out and play ball."⁴⁰

In 1973, CCBA amended its statutes, and transformed the school's governing unit, "student affairs office," into the school board of directors, which constituted by twenty-one members (fourteen from CCBA's board of directors, seven from CCBA's board of supervisors). The reconstitution of school board of directors formally made the CCBA more involved in the school's affairs and reinforced its weight to decide the school's issues regardless of the personnel appointment and the operation direction of school.⁴¹

Confucius' Birthday Commemoration (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School, 1984): 30.

³⁹ See Board of Directors of Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, *The 32 anniversary of founding of Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School and Confucius' Birthday Commemoration*: 26-28.

⁴⁰ Marlene Cimons, "Confucius Taught Here," *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 1969.

⁴¹ See Board of Directors of Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, *The 32 anniversary of founding of Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School and Confucius' Birthday Commemoration*: 28.

To the middle of 1970s, over more than twenty years since its establishment, the Chinese Confucius Temple School progressed in many ways. With regard to facilities, the school had three capacious classrooms (and two classrooms separated with folding screens) with equipment's such as reference books, biologic specimens, and maps; a well-equipped auditorium for multiple usage; the playground that suitable for diverse sports activities; the principal and faculty offices; the library containing more than ten thousands books, the largest one among the contemporary Chinese schools of Los Angeles. As for the academic program, from the beginning the school operated its elementary classes for first to sixth grades from 4: 30 to 6:30 in the afternoon every day. By 1962, the school added the kindergarten program as well. In general, during the first twenty years, the school's students mostly came from Chinatown or the neighborhood, and basically spoke Cantonese as their mother tongue. Hence, by the middle of 1970s, the school provided the classes solely in Cantonese as the teaching language. Nevertheless, compared to its nascent years and other early Chinese schools at that time, the school officials were able to be proud of its extraordinary advancement: the total students nearly rose to three hundred— more than two hundred in the elementary program, and seventy in the kindergarten program.⁴²

The influx of Vietnamese refugees into the United States in the late 1970s brought an expansion in the school to the unimaginable levels. A host of Vietnamese settled in Los Angeles at that time, and the Chinese Confucius Temple School, situated well geographically and with noteworthy fame, soon attracted Vietnamese newcomers, including many Vietnamese Chinese in need of instruction in Mandarin. Responding to the sudden increase students' needs, by 1980, the school arranged morning classes on the weekends, and added noontime classes on the of weekends in the following year, as well as setting up afternoon classes in 1983 for the new Vietnamese students. Moreover, the school continued to form the seventh-grade classes in 1982, and the eighth to ninth classes in the next year. In sum, until the early 1980s, the classes ranging from kindergarten to ninth grades expanded to nearly 1,000 students, making the school maintain the largest and most influential Chinese school in the Greater Los Angeles area.⁴³

The blossom of the school went on to early 1990s when the numbers peaked at more than 1,100 students with the total of thirty classes. Nevertheless, the school began to decline in the middle of 1990s, and the numbers of students went down to about 500 in 2000. In this light, the Chinese school attempted to revamp itself to progress with the times. It began to cooperate and exchange with other Chinese schools in the field of teaching, and participated in the school unions such as the Southern California Council of Chinese Schools (SCCCS) as well. Presently, the school makes an effort to gear its class program toward the public education system and the AP tests.

From traditionalism to renovation

From the school's history, the Los Angeles Confucius Temple School demonstrates impressive emphasis on traditionalism. First, from the original goal of the school, it reflected the insistence of the early Cantonese immigrants on instruction in the traditional language and culture.⁴⁴ Its curriculum concentrated more on the Confucius' thoughts and the Chinese classics. The extracurricular and cultural courses at the school also stressed the conventional Chinese arts and crafts such as calligraphy, abacus, traditional Chinese painting and music instruments (zither, huqin, flute, and drum).

⁴² See Board of Directors of Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, *The 32 anniversary of founding of Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School and Confucius' Birthday Commemoration*: 27; Board of Directors of Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, *Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School Building Renovation and Expansion Commemoration*: 77.

⁴³ See Board of Directors of Chinese Confucius Temple of Los Angeles, *The 32 anniversary of founding of Los Angeles Chinese Confucius Temple School and Confucius' Birthday Commemoration*: 28-29.

⁴⁴ The goal of school is to "cultivate the Chinese teenagers to learn Chinese; promote the Chinese culture and ethics."

Moreover, the school underscored the Chinese traditional values and ethics, looking forward to delivering these traditions to the younger generation. They taught their students to be loyal to the country and hometown, to maintain filial duty to their parents, to respect teachers and the seniors, to get well along with their siblings, and to behave politely and modestly. The school also launched a variety of cultural activities in traditional Chinese holidays— Chinese New Year, Lantern Festival, Youth Day, Ching Ming Festival (Tomb-Sweeping Day), Dragon Boat Festival (Zongzi's Day), Double Seventh Festival (Lover's Day), Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Cake Day), and Confucius Birthday (Teacher's Day). In a word, through the spiritual and physical culture instilled to the students, the school served as the source of Chinese traditional culture for the Chinese American community, rather than mere a school for language instructions.

In addition, since the school was administrated by CCBA, it inevitably became incorporated with the overseas Chinese educational system, which was promoted by the Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission (OCAC), an official organization in the government of Taiwan (Republic of China, ROC).⁴⁵ From its establishment, the school maintained frequent interchanges with the OCAC, and regularly received the assistance in the form of teaching materials, instruments, and manpower from OCAC. For instance, the school used the textbooks of Taiwan's Cheng Chung Book Company and the National Institution for Compilation and Translation (a Taiwanese officially educational unit). Every year, the school sent their students to the Summer Camp in Taiwan under the auspices of OCAC. Moreover, along with the CCBA, the school also earnestly involved the activities associated with ROC. On the Double Tens Festival (in 10th October), the day commemorating the founding of the Republic of China in 1911, The school, sponsored by CCBA, usually organized a parade in Chinatown every year to express the respect for the feat of Chinese Revolution of 1911, while showed the close relationship with ROC, the government that CCBA recognized as the legitimate authority of the Chinese heritage.

The intensive sense of clan and hometown identity, which was predominately within CCBA, also influenced the school's emphasis on regionalism (Cantonism). Before 1980, the students were mainly Cantonese, residing in Chinatown and the adjacent area. The classes exclusively were taught in Cantonese, and the teachers were almost all Cantonese as well. Likewise, non-Cantonese principal, though appointed through the public recruitment, barely had the chance to head the school. Furthermore, the Chinese Confucius Temple School remained as the only one school rooting in Chinatown, and unintentionally had a plan to expand itself beyond Chinatown. At last, the swift personnel changes and the patriarchal approach of the school's board of directors led the school into the clan-superiority and conservativeness.

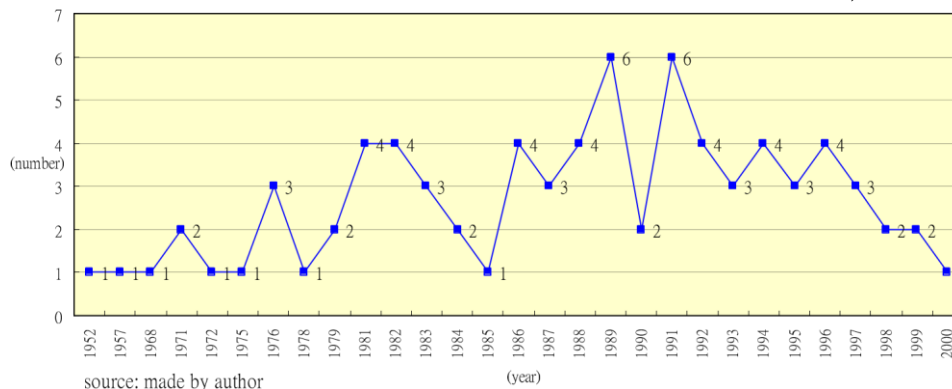
However, after 1980s, the Los Angeles Confucius Temple School increasingly improved itself, while simultaneously taking pride in maintaining the traditional heritage. With the establishment of Mandarin classes, the students were not confined to Cantonese language. Following the trend that Him Mark Lai claimed, the school accepted more children of new Chinese immigrants from suburban areas such as Monterey Park, Alhambra, San Gabriel, and others. Vietnamese Chinese students also enrolled in the school as well. For example, the child star Jonathan Ke Quan, who played "Short Round" in the movie of *Indiana Jones and the Temple Doom*, was a Vietnamese Chinese who fled to America in late 1970s and attended the Los Angeles Confucius Temple School in 1981. The school's publication noted that he was an impressive well-performed student, and ever won the championship of the speech in the school. Moreover, in the last decade, there were white and Hispanic students from the Castelar Elementary School, which located on the same street with the

⁴⁵ Traditionally, the CCBA throughout the United States were closely connected with the Republic of China (R.O.C.), even though the ROC government moved to Taiwan when Kuomintang lost its inner war to the Communists Party of China in 1949. For ROC, the overseas Chinese served as the important part of its blueprint against the Communist China, and the CCBA became the vital role that ROC controlled the Chinese American community. Till present, Kuomintang branches also constitute part of the CCBA's organization.

Los Angeles Confucius Temple School, who joined the school to learn Chinese language and culture. The diversification of the student population made the school more open to the whole Chinese community and mainstream society.

The courses of the school transformed as well. The traditional phonetic system and standard Chinese character teaching system were replaced by *Hanyu Pinyin* and the system simplified characters, the way Mainland China applied for.⁴⁶ The cultural courses employed more living way to imbue the students in the local environment. For example, the school took the students to the Chinese restaurants or theaters, and let the students order for themselves; the school frequently invited the traditional Chinese drama troupe and artists to perform for the students. The school also organized the tour for students to Asia, usually sponsored financially by Chinese cultural organizations locally and transnationally. As for the extracurricular programs, the school increasingly created more practical programs such as computer and drawing classes. These transformations demonstrate that the school self-renovate to conform to the demand of the students with times.

The numbers of establishment of Chinese schools in Southern California, 1952-2000



⁴⁶ Before the mid-1990s, most of the Chinese language schools in United States used the traditional phonetic symbol and Chinese characters teaching system that Taiwan’s OCAC promoted. However, with the rise of People of Republic of China (PRC), more and more Chinese language schools changed to the *Hanyu Pinyin* and the simplified characters system, the way that PRC used.



The CCBA of Los Angeles in 2009
Photo by author; date: 2 May, 2009



The school in 1979 Double Ten Festival Parade
Source: Courtesy the school



The students in the class (1984)
Source: Courtesy the school



The student chorus (1984)
Source: Courtesy the school

Conclusion:

The half-century history of the Chinese Confucius Temple School witnesses the development of Chinese schools in Los Angeles. As the first one Chinese school in Los Angeles after World War II, its establishment and advancement demonstrates the collective enthusiasm and insistence of the early local Cantonese Chinese community to maintain their traditional language and culture in the alien territory. Moreover, its role as the forerunner in Chinese instructions and its symbol as the traditional Chinese culture speaker provide the experimental model for the incessant Chinese language schools in the Los Angeles suburban area after 1960s.

From its peak in early 1990s with more than one thousand students and as the head of the Chinese schools in Los Angeles, the Chinese Confucius Temple School became mere one of the numerous Chinese schools nowadays, even it was regarded by its counterparts as the outdated one with virtue of its way of sticking to the local Chinatown, operating in conservative and patriarchal manner, and being solidly adherent to the traditional Chinese heritage. However, the normalization of the weight of the Chinese Confucius Temple School in the local Mandarin-learning circle after the mid-1990s reflected the collective progressions and promotions of the overall Chinese schools in Los Angeles. The Chinese Confucius Temple School does not have to take the leading responsibility anymore; instead, it acts as a sharing companion to contribute its effort to the developments of Chinese schools in Los Angeles nowadays and in the future, just as what it had done for the Chinese community in the last sixty years.

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