

Panel 19

Illustrations, Text, and Cultural Engagement

The Covert Kaleidoscope: Left-Wing Worldview Shaping and Malayan Cultural Identity in *Nanyang Children* (1959-1969)

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This study examines *Nanyang Children* (南洋儿童), a Chinese-language children's magazine published in Hong Kong from 1959 to 1969 and widely circulated in Singapore and Malaysia. This research aims to explore how the magazine, through a combined visual and textual strategy, covertly disseminated left-wing ideology while also contributing to the construction of a Malayan cultural identity for children during the "Malayanization" process.

The study argues that the magazine did not use straightforward political indoctrination. Instead, it achieved its cultural goals through the careful selection of content. For example, the seemingly depoliticised "Colour TV" (彩色电视) section, with its global knowledge and visuals, may have effectively prepared young readers for other content with specific cultural orientations. This includes sections like "Little Friends' Travel Notes" (小朋友游记) and "Folk Tales" (民间故事), the latter serving as a method to transmit the concept of "Cultural China".

Visually, the cover art and internal illustrations were vital. They simultaneously presented an "imagination of Chinese culture" (e.g., traditional festivals, attire) and incorporated local "Malayan" elements, such as multi-ethnic children and tropical landscapes. This visual localisation was likely a strategy to foster a sense of belonging among Chinese children in Singapore and Malaysia, thus contributing to a "Malayan consciousness".

The study analyses the evolution of the magazine's content, narrative tone, and illustration styles. The goal is to reveal how its unique "covert kaleidoscope" model subtly shaped the worldview and cultural identity of a generation of Chinese children in the region. This research is expected to offer new perspectives on left-wing cultural dissemination in Cold War Southeast Asia, children's visual culture, and the formation of overseas Chinese identity.

Biography

Du Shuang is a PhD candidate at the University of Malaya. Du's research focuses on cultural dissemination and identity formation among Chinese communities in Hong Kong and the Singapore-Malaya region during the Cold War, with particular attention to the historical experiences shaped by competing left-wing and right-wing cultural forces. Through an interdisciplinary approach, Du aims to gain deeper insights into the historical transformations and cultural dynamics of Chinese societies in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.