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### **Singapore's May Fourth Movement and Overseas Print Capitalism**

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**"Singapore's May Fourth Movement and Overseas Print Capitalism"****David Kenley**

Elizabethtown College

Three years ago, I published a monograph titled *New Culture in a New World: The May Fourth Movement and the Chinese Diaspora in Singapore, 1919-1932*.<sup>i</sup> In my text, I argued that the May Fourth Movement increased in intensity until it eventually reached the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. In Singapore in particular, individuals discussed May Fourth concepts and ideologies. As was the case in China, Singapore's version of the movement emphasized the eradication of "feudalism" and the introduction of new concepts and ideologies—or "new culture"—all for the sake of national salvation. Yet, because May Fourth was deeply influenced by a sense of Chinese nationalism, the community members in Singapore were forced to reinterpret the movement according to their unique geographical situation.<sup>ii</sup> The nation, as constructed in the meta-narratives of the day, emphasized territory, citizenship, and international boundaries. Singapore obviously was not part of this Chinese nation. However, by portraying themselves as members of a Chinese national diaspora, Singapore's intellectuals claimed a participating role in the May Fourth Movement.

Recently, historians have radically altered accepted interpretations of the May Fourth era. For many years, participants of the movement described it as China's renaissance, emphasizing their own role in bringing China out of its dark, medieval past.<sup>iii</sup> With the ascendancy of the Communist Party, the May Fourth Movement assumed even greater historical importance. May Fourth was, after all, the intellectual ferment from which the party bubbled forth. During the past few years, however, historians have reduced the imposing May Fourth mountain down to a more modest hill. Rather than describing it as a radical rupture with China's past, these

historians have found continuities that transcend the May Fourth era, linking it socially and intellectually with both the late Qing and with the later Republican and Communist eras.<sup>iv</sup> They have also pointed out that the debates of the 1920s continued on well into the 1930s, demonstrating that the traditionally defined May Fourth Era was not as decisive as historians originally believed.<sup>v</sup> Some scholars have further diminished the May Fourth legacy, suggesting that the movement was merely a “powerful fiction” appropriated by intellectual and political elites for their own gain.<sup>vi</sup> Rather than being an organic and spontaneous development that drew on people’s sense of nationalism and intellectual frustration, these historians contend that it was a manipulated and artificial episode commandeered by a handful of aspiring individuals. As Rudolf G. Wagner points out, in the struggle for “hegemony over the definition of May Fourth and the control of the political capital it represented..., independent political articulation was criminalized as ‘counter-revolutionary’.”<sup>vii</sup>

Not surprisingly, these interpretations have forced me to rethink my analysis of both the May Fourth Movement as a whole, and more specifically, the impact of the movement on Singapore. I believe my original findings stand up remarkably well—though not perfectly—against these latest interpretations. Nevertheless, I have started to look at my own research in a new light and to ask new questions. For the next few moments, I would like to share with you some of my reevaluations of the May Fourth Movement in Singapore and then move on to talk about how these reevaluations have influenced my current research agenda.

I still believe May Fourth was a seminal period for the Chinese community in Singapore and not merely a “powerful fiction.” I would like to share three examples from my book that I believe demonstrate this significance. First, as was the case in China, Singapore’s May Fourth Movement was punctuated with large, public protests. Second, it was a period of exploding growth in Singapore’s publishing industry. Third, this growth in publications allowed for the

introduction of many new ideas and ideologies into Singapore's intellectual arena, affecting gender relations, social structures, and even political organizations. I will start by talking about public protests.

### **The Role of Public Protests**

Public protests played an important role in China's May Fourth Movement. The defining moment in this decade-long movement was the student protest against the Paris Peace Conference on May 4, 1919. Not surprisingly, public protests played an important part in Singapore's May Fourth Movement. As in Beijing, the Paris Peace conference provided the impetus for protests in Singapore. By June of 1919, frustration over the peace conference meshed with anti-Japanese sentiment existing throughout Singapore's Chinese community.

Antagonism and suspicion boiled over on the evening of June 19.<sup>viii</sup> At about 8:30 in the evening, a group of students broke into the business of a Chinese merchant and destroyed his Japanese-made inventories. From there, they continued to other neighboring businesses repeating their actions. As they proceeded, others joined in until the crowd became quite large. Eventually, the roaming demonstrators began destroying all sorts of merchandise and property. At one point, the protestors entered a brothel, enlisting the prostitutes to assist them in their "search and destroy" mission. Eventually the brothel itself was burned to the ground. "The mob," the *Straits Times* reported, "made bonfires in the middle of the roads, and with the air filled with piercing screams and shouts, scenes of wild confusion reigned."<sup>ix</sup> Some of the neighborhood residents, attempting to placate the throng and thereby limit the destruction, threw some of their own wares into the street. Nevertheless, the crowd continued to grow larger and more unpredictable. Eventually, police officers arrived to calm the situation. Instead, the crowd pushed four of them into the surrounding flames, killing two. The police responded by firing

their weapons at the crowd and then retreating. For several hours, the demonstrators were free to continue their destructive spree until troops from the docked warship “Manchester” were able to restore calm. In the end, 4 people were killed, 8 seriously injured, and 130 arrested. Newspapers in Tokyo put the numbers much higher, claiming that there were 90 casualties, all of whom were Japanese citizens.<sup>x</sup>

While the June 19 protest was a defining moment in Singapore’s May Fourth Movement, it was by no means an isolated incident. Between 1919 and 1932, at least eight large protests or demonstrations wracked Singapore’s calm exterior.<sup>xi</sup> Interestingly, some of those protests were offshoots of the June 19 events. Others were responses to new stimuli, originating in either China or in Singapore. Regardless, protest remained a central feature of Singapore’s May Fourth period. As such, I think it is safe to claim that the May Fourth era was more than simply a “powerful fiction” in Singapore.

## The Role of Newspapers

Like public demonstrations, the explosive growth of the city's publication industry was another characteristic of Singapore's May Fourth Movement. The newspaper industry in particular grew dramatically between 1919 and 1932. During this time, Singapore's papers changed in volume, in readership, and in content. While the front pages of the papers remained a collection of reprints and wire service publications, the later pages became increasingly diverse and audience-specific. Publishers and editors, with varying backgrounds, appealed to different segments of the population, hoping not only to increase their circulation numbers, but also to influence the public sphere in Singapore and China.<sup>xii</sup> Journalists of the 1920s supplied business counsel, entertainment advice, and engaging literature.<sup>xiii</sup>

By looking at the number of publications that emerged during this period, it becomes clear just how impressive the growth was. Prior to 1919, several Chinese-language newspapers circulated in the streets of Singapore. The oldest was the *Le Bao*, which was founded in 1881. The *Zong Hui Bao* and the *Guo Min Bao* also predated the May Fourth Era, with their first editions coming out in 1906 and 1914, respectively. Between 1919 and 1932, this number doubled from three newspapers to six, with the introduction of the *Nanyang Shang Bao*, the *Xingzhou Ribao*, and the *Minguo Ribao*.

Besides the growth in the number of newspapers, the growth in the number of supplements is even more impressive. The supplement, or *fuzhang*, was usually an extra sheet of newsprint included with the standard section of the newspaper. *Fuzhang* writers provided their readers with poetry, short stories, drama, political essays, and other types of literature. The first supplement to circulate in Singapore emerged in 1907, but during the 1920s the *fuzhang* truly blossomed. During that decade, each major newspaper introduced at least one new supplement, and most introduced several.<sup>xiv</sup> Some of the supplements were merely the product of a local

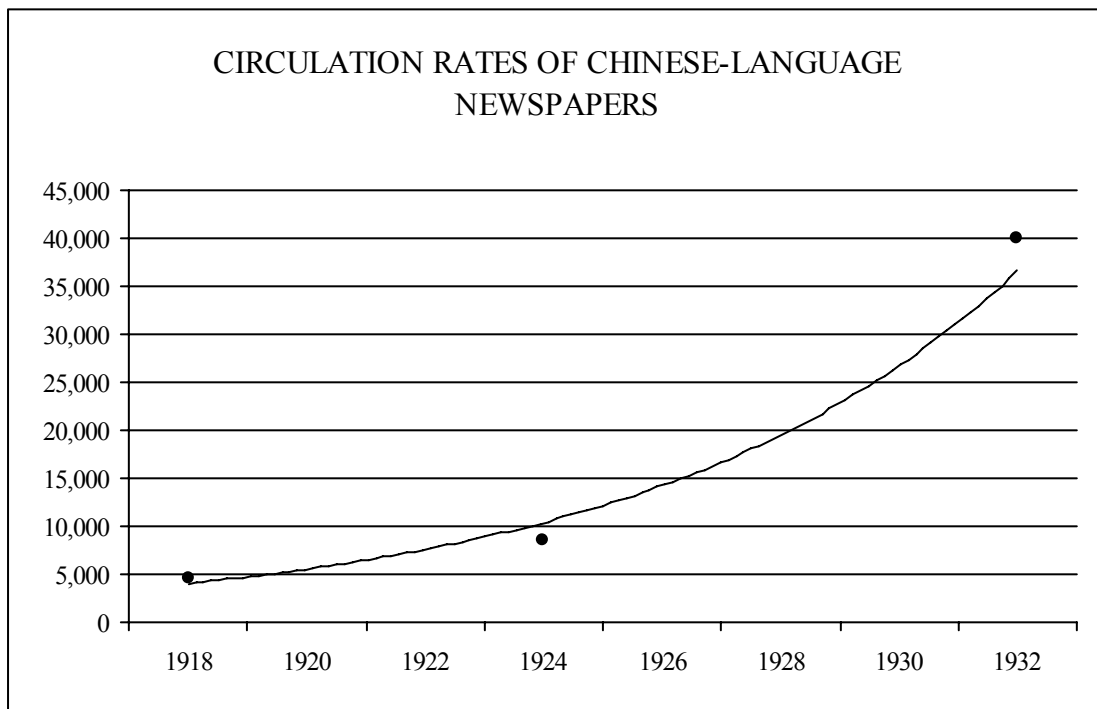
literary club, eager to spread its work with a larger audience. The “sponsoring” newspaper provided the printing equipment and allowed the *fuzhang* to be circulated alongside the professionally produced section. These types of supplements had a very short life expectancy, usually only a few weeks or months. Some were daily productions, some were weekly, but many had no specific publication calendar, leaving its readers in suspense as to when the next issue would come out. Other supplements were designed and produced by the paper itself, possibly in response to its competitors. These supplements were more regular and consistent, with some of them in publication for several years. In either case, the *fuzhang* allowed for a new group of writers to influence Singapore’s printing establishment, and by extension, Singapore’s public sphere. For this reason, the *fuzhang* was in many ways just as important, if not more so, than the traditional section of the newspaper.

Between 1919 and 1932, at least 25 supplements circulated along with Singapore’s newspapers. Some had simple titles, such as the *Le Bao Fuzhang*, or *Straits News Supplement*. Others were more creative, including the supplements *Star Life*, *South Wind*, and *Green Ripples*. Many incorporated the call for newness and rebirth, such as *New People’s Magazine*, *New Life*, and *New Voyage*. Others had more pessimistic sounding titles, including *Vast Wilderness*, *Desert Island*, and *Claustrophobia*. Not surprisingly, there was great variety among these publications. Some *fuzhang* specialized in poetry, while others focused on drama, short stories, or essays. Some chose to publish only the works of local writers; others included selections from throughout Southeast Asia and the Chinese mainland. In each case, however, the supplement was the more creative section of the newspaper, free from the conventional restraints of the news section. Most were outspoken in their calls for an end to feudalism, the introduction of “new culture,” and the restoration of Chinese national independence. At the same time, each of these inserts promoted literary reform, incorporating many of the vernacular proposals so closely



associated with China's May Fourth Movement. Using this new language, *fuzhang* writers discussed social inequality, gender issues, educational opportunities, political ideologies, and a host of other intellectual trends.

Along with this impressive growth in new publications, circulation rates also expanded dramatically. On the eve of Singapore's May Fourth Movement, the existing Chinese-language newspapers had a combined circulation of about 4,550. By the approximate mid-point of the movement, that number had jumped to 8,440. In 1932, the waning year of the movement, 40,000 newspapers circulated throughout the streets of Singapore.<sup>xv</sup> Such growth represents a nearly 900 percent increase during the May Fourth era. Since many of these papers were read aloud to others, it is safe to assume that the newspaper industry was reaching a sizeable and significant segment of Singapore's Chinese population.



Newspapers were the mouthpiece of the May Fourth advocates. Judging by the growth of the newspaper industry, the May Fourth era was significant for Singapore's Chinese population.

### **The Role of New Ideas**

Finally, during this period May Fourth advocates introduced many new ideas and intellectual trends to the public. For instance, Singapore's writers became active promoters of vernacular Chinese, all the while criticizing the exclusive and arcane styles of the past. In the early years of the movement, they spoke of "democratizing" literature through the use of the vernacular. By the end of the 1920s, they shifted their attention to "proletarian literature," to highlight the oppressive world of the working class. For instance, in a 1930 poem entitled "Twilight on the Island," Zhang Chuyun told of a place where all people had equal opportunities and were valued as family members:

Oh you workers on the side of the road, you farmers in the fields,  
Hurry! Discard the shackles of the capitalist system!  
Come, come, come, here is our heavenly kingdom,  
Here we have mountains, seas, and a lasting clear sky.

"Equality" is the only requirement of this place,  
Old, young, male, female—no one can rest forever,  
Working together and happy together,  
And bread is not the reward for the leisurely.<sup>xvi</sup>

Singapore's May Fourth leaders also called for an end to the oppressive mind-set of the past. Religion, they claimed, was the capitalist's form of social control, restricting the mind from achieving a more scientific outlook on life. Writing in the supplement *Coconut Grove*, Chen Lianqing explained:

Religious leaders have always been on the side of the capitalists. They fear that the poor will not always be willing to be slaves, so in their hearts they

conjured up this spiritual victory ploy and spread it among the people, causing the poor to adopt an attitude of passivism toward things, however unfair they might be. Because the poor daily think of heaven's glory and their future rewards, they are contented with spiritual peace. The result is a deep drunkenness, and confusion as they continue working as always like cows and horses.<sup>xvii</sup>

Instead of traditional spiritual and philosophical answers, Singapore's writers provided other, more credible explanations wrapped in a cloak of scientism and each ending with the obligatory "ism."

By way of quick summary, Singapore's May Fourth Movement is not merely a historical fabrication or fiction. As can be seen from a look at public protests, the expansion of newspaper publications, and the introduction of new ideas, the May Fourth Movement was a vibrant and important era in the Singapore community.

What, then, about the recent research regarding the May Fourth Movement? There is no denying that many of the revisionist interpretations have validity. By reassessing my own work on Singapore, I see that there are new conclusions I can draw.

First, it is true that there is much continuity between Singapore's pre- and post-May Fourth eras, and therefore this period is not as radical as might first appear. For instance, though newspapers expanded dramatically at this time, they were not new features in the community. Newspapers already had a long and rich history in Singapore before 1919. Even the *fuzhang* predated the May Fourth era. In fact, the period between 1890 and 1911 was nearly as active in terms of the numbers of newspapers published. By taking a more long-term perspective on the newspaper industry, the May Fourth era does appear to be less of an aberration than one might otherwise assume.

It is also true that Singapore's May Fourth Movement did not alter intellectual, social, and political systems as radically as might be assumed. Even the use of the vernacular language,

long considered one of the defining features of the period, was not as widespread as might be expected. In evaluating the use of the vernacular, Liam Hsiao Wen argues that as late as 1922, traditional forms of writing in the *Le Bao* still outnumbered vernacular essays by nearly six to one.<sup>xviii</sup> Continuity, in many ways, was easier to discern than was radical change.

Additionally, it does seem clear that many of Singapore's May Fourth participants attempted to manipulate the movement for social and political gain. In this regard, there is an element of truth to the contention that May Fourth was a "powerful fiction" wielded by elites and sub-elites for their own purposes. In the case of Singapore, competing groups attempted to use the ideas of the May Fourth era, primarily nationalism, to enhance their own positions in Singapore society. Zhou Jun, for example, utilized nationalism to promote his language programs. In the pages of *Star Light* he wrote:

... each nation has its language; each nation has its writing system: regardless of whether they drift to foreign lands, people cannot forget [their language and writing system]. . . . There are no other nations whose people do not know [their own] language and writing system. Yet China does. This is extremely strange. . . . If a person does not know his own national writing system, it may be excusable, but if a person does not know his national language, then he or she has completely lost the natural form of a person. In other words, he is not a person.

The life of this kind of person is pitiful; moreover, he has a great negative influence on the nation. We should think of a method to rescue this type of person. Fathers and elder brothers, pay particular attention, and do not remain complacent!<sup>xix</sup>

No doubt Zhou was attacking those who promoted the use of English or possibly local dialects as enemies of the nation. By utilizing the May Fourth emphasis on nationalism, Zhou attempted to undermine his intellectual opponents.

Others, however, suggested that the spirit of May Fourth was not merely a spirit of nationalism, but also one of newness and creativity. In *Literature Weekly's* inaugural edition, Editor Zeng Shengti called on his readers to create a new literary community. "We seek . . .

local products and local goods,” he wrote, to use in the building of an “iron *Nanyang* tower of literature.”<sup>xx</sup> In the next week’s edition he continued, exclaiming:

Singapore artists, awake... we have a beautiful, newly developed city that is unpolluted by the remnants of history. It has not encountered either the praise or the cursing of the ancients.... The old world has melted under the fierce heat of the sun. Let us hang our flag upon the towering coconut tree. The immense and cloudless sky affirms our openness. The elephant symbolizes our resoluteness. The long green leaves declare our freshness. The sea rings out our triumph cry. Our fresh environment provides us with unlimited material. Come, let us blow by blow and layer by layer construct our artistic, iron tower.<sup>xxi</sup>

With his references to palm trees, elephants, and the surrounding sea, Zeng Shengti was obviously emphasizing local issues at the expense of the homeland. By exploiting an intellectual movement that originated in China, Zeng opposed his China-centered rivals such as Zhou. Therefore, both Zhou and Zeng used the same tools to achieve very different ends. Both used the language of the May Fourth era to argue their diverging points. As such, they manipulated its ideas for their own personal benefit.

### **Future Research**

My reassessment of Singapore’s May Fourth Movement in light of revisionist histories has led me to ask new questions regarding overseas Chinese communities. As we have seen, Singapore’s intellectuals employed the May Fourth concept of nationalism as a discursive tool for altering accepted socio-intellectual paradigms. Did other overseas communities do the same? If so, how did they interpret and reinterpret the concept of nationalism and to what end? As in the case of Singapore, did they also rely on newspapers to publish their version of the nation? In short, I want to analyze the role of overseas newspapers in the formation of Chinese nationalism.

In his seminal publication, Benedict Anderson focuses on the role played by newspapers in the creation of nationalism, or as he calls it, the “imagined community.” He explains:

We know that particular morning and evening editions will overwhelmingly be consumed between this hour and that... The significance of this mass ceremony... is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony is being replicated simultaneously by thousands of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion... What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?<sup>xxii</sup>

Craig Calhoun, in discussing this imagined community adds, "...space-transcending communications technologies from print through broadcast can play a crucial role both in linking dispersed populations and in creating the possibility for producing a popular memory beyond the scope of immediate personal experience and oral traditions."<sup>xxiii</sup> In other words, newspapers could possibly link the dispersed Chinese diaspora in the nation-building process.

Anderson and Calhoun's emphasis on the newspaper as a conduit of nationalism is warranted. However, many questions remain unanswered. For example, do newspapers (and the people that write them) simply highlight and publish underlying cultural codes, broadcasting the identity of nations, or are they forums for the construction and deconstruction of collective identity? Do newspapers allow political elites to nurture their own versions of nationalism while discrediting competing versions, or are newspapers open to sub-elites, providing them with a public sphere in which to challenge and contest previously accepted national "borders?"<sup>xxiv</sup> How would those borders appear if the newspapers were published in overseas, diaspora communities?

Such questions require me to expand my research both geographically (beyond simply Singapore) and chronologically (transcending the May Fourth era). Currently I am researching four separate Chinese communities during the period 1905 to 1937.<sup>xxv</sup> The first of these was located in Japan in the early twentieth century. At this time, overseas Chinese in Tokyo organized themselves according to their provincial origins. These organizations would also publish serials such as *Yunan* and *Henan*. Not surprisingly, their organization patterns provide

unique insight into the relations between local identities, national identities, and transnational identities.

Next, I will add the perspective of Singapore's Chinese journalists. Though I will draw on much of my previous research, I will be asking different questions of the documents. Newspapers such as the *Le Bao* and the *Nanyang Shang Bao*, together with their accompanying *fuzhang*, will provide the bulk of the evidence for understanding this community. Because the overseas Chinese in Singapore represent the majority culture, their perspective will no doubt be different from the tiny Chinese minority living in Japan.

From Singapore, I will cross over to San Francisco, analyzing the contents of the *Shao Nian Zhongguo*. First published in 1910, the *Shao Nian Zhongguo* was a creation of Sun Yat-sen's Tongmenghui, and therefore was deeply involved in the debate over national identity. Nevertheless, as historians have shown, the publication did not represent a monolithic voice.<sup>xxvi</sup> Through a "horizontal reading" of this and other serials, it is possible to discern the cacophony of opinions in this community.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Finally, I will investigate the publications of Paris's Chinese population. This community, which included such notable individuals as Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, eventually had a tremendous influence on creating a new Chinese nation.<sup>xxviii</sup> Their publications, including such titles as *Xin Shi Ji*, shed tremendous light on the burgeoning ideas of this small but important group.

By comparing and contrasting the role of the newspaper in these overseas communities, I will add an important perspective to the study of overseas print capitalism and Chinese national identity. This work will help to answer many of the thorny questions regarding diasporas, nationalism, and transnationalism. It will be of tremendous value to scholars of Chinese history, world history, and media studies.

As you can see, recent revisionist scholarship on the May Fourth Movement has forced me to rethink many of my previous assumptions. Though I still stand by most of my original findings, these revisionist histories have forced me to ask new questions and look across greater horizons. Just as the May Fourth Movement is an interesting period in Singapore's history, overseas print capitalism is interesting terrain for the study of Chinese nationalism and transnationalism.

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<sup>i</sup> See David Kenley, *New Culture in a New World: The May Fourth Movement and the Chinese Diaspora in Singapore, 1919-1932* (New York: Routledge Press, 2003), 47-76.

<sup>ii</sup> One notable difference between the May Fourth Movement in China and Singapore is its temporal scope. The most widely accepted time frame for China's May Fourth Movement is 1915 (the year *Xin Qingnian* was first published) and 1923 (with the Debate on Science and Metaphysics). For Singapore, the movement started with the 1919 protests. It continued until 1932, when Governor Clementi implemented more stringent government censorship laws.

<sup>iii</sup> For instance, Hu Shi, one of the movement's leading participants, published a history of the period titled *The Chinese Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934). However, the seminal publication on the May Fourth Movement is Chow Tse-tung's *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). Other influential interpretations of the movement include Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) and Joseph Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai: The Making of a Social Movement in Modern China* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

<sup>iv</sup> See, for instance, Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872-1912*; Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); David D.W. Wang, "Return to Go: Fictional Innovation in the Late Qing and the Late Twentieth Century," in Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král, eds., *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 257-298.

<sup>v</sup> Hockx, *Questions of Style*.

<sup>vi</sup> Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and David Der-wei Wang, "Introduction," in Doleželová-Velingerová and Král, eds., *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital*, 5. In this same volume, see also Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Incomplete Modernity: Rethinking the May Fourth Intellectual Project," and Rudolf G. Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," 31-122.



<sup>vii</sup> Wagner, “The Canonization of May Fourth,” 67.

<sup>viii</sup> This account of the events of June 19, 1919 is taken from the *Straits Times*, 20-23 June 1919, *Le Bao*, 20 June 1919, and Cui Guiqiang, “Hai xia zhi min di hua ren dui wu si yun dong di fan xiang,” *Nanyang xuebao* 20 (1965-66): 13-18.

<sup>ix</sup> *Straits Times*, 20 June 1919.

<sup>x</sup> *The Japan Advertiser*, 29 June 1919.

<sup>xi</sup> See Kenley, *New Culture in a New World*, 47-76.

<sup>xii</sup> For more information on the role of Singapore’s newspapers on the public sphere, see David Kenley, “Singapore’s Middle Realm: The *Nanyang Shang Bao* and the Jinan Incident of 1928,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, 10, no. 1 (April 2003): 65-84

<sup>xiii</sup> For an overview of the Chinese newspaper industry since the May Fourth Era, see Zhuo Nansheng, “Xingma huawen baoye di fazhan yu tezheng” (Development and special characteristics of Singapore’s Chinese newspaper industry), *Xingzhou ribao 55 nian* (Xing zhou ribao: Singapore, 1984), 125-129.

<sup>xiv</sup> The only paper that did not include a *fuzhang* was the *Zhonghui Ribao*. For a specific discussion of these *fuzhang* see Yang Songnian, “Zhanqian xinma wenxue fukan qikan lunxi” (An study of pre-war Chinese literary publications in Singapore and Malaya) in *Dongnanya huawen wenxue* (Chinese literature in Southeast Asia), ed. Wang Runhua and Bai Haoshi (Yooh-wah Wong and Horst Pastoors) (Singapore: Goethe-Institut and Singapore Association of Writers, 1988), 43-55.

<sup>xv</sup> Kenley, *New Culture in a New World*, 97

<sup>xvi</sup> Zhang Chuyun, “Daoshang di huanghun” (Twilight on the island), *Ye lin* (Coconut grove), 6 January 1930.

<sup>xvii</sup> Chen Lianqing, “Tiantang” (Heaven), *Ye lin* (Coconut grove), 15 February 1930.

<sup>xviii</sup> Liam Hsiao Wen, *Le Bao zhong de xiao shuo*, (MA Thesis, National University of Singapore, 2002), 59.

<sup>xix</sup> Zhou Jun, “Tong Xin” (Pained heart), *Xing guang* (Star light), 4 June 1926.

<sup>xx</sup> Shengti, “Wenyi zhoukan di zhiyuan” (The wishes of the Literature Weekly), *Wenyi zhoukan* (Literature weekly), 11 January 1929.

<sup>xxi</sup> Shengti, “Xingxingba xingcheng di yiren” (Singapore artists, awake!), *Wenyi zhoukan* (Literature weekly), 18 January 1929.

<sup>xxii</sup> Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 35.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> Craig Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19 (1993): 224.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Several scholars have built on the work of Anderson in regards to newspapers and nationalism. Some have applied Anderson’s theories to individual nations, such as Ireland and Korea. See, for example, Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850-1892* (Four Courts Press, 1999); *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919*, by Andre Schmid. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Additionally, several scholars have looked at the role of the newspaper in Chinese nationalism. See Z. He, “How do the Chinese media reduce organizational incongruence? Bureaucratic capitalism in the name of communism,” in Chin-Chuan Lee, ed., *Chinese Media, Global Context* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 198-214; S. Rosen, “Chinese media and youth: Attitudes toward nationalism and internationalism,” in Lee, ed., *Chinese Media, Global Context*, 97-118; Z. Pan, C.C. Lee, J.M. Chan, and S.Y.K. So, S.Y.K., “Orchestrating the family-nation chorus: Chinese media and nationalism in the Hong Kong handover,” *Mass Communication & Society* 4.3 (2001): 331-346. There have even been recent studies on the impact of transnational media on China. See, for example Gina Marchetti, *From Tian’anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989-1997* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006; Jenny Kwok Wah Lau, ed., *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003). The quantity of existing scholarship demonstrates the timeliness of this topic. None of these works, however, looks at the roles of overseas Chinese media beyond the contemporary period, much less for the critical period between the fall of the Qing and the establishment of the communist regime.

<sup>xxv</sup> I have selected these four communities based on the availability of their publications as well as the diversity of their experiences. Because they come from multiple locations, they provide a truly global perspective on overseas Chinese experiences. While this macro-historical approach no doubt has its challenges, the benefits are readily apparent. For more information regarding the debate over global history, see Jerry Bentley, “A New Forum for Global History,” *Journal of World History* 1.1 (Spring 1990); and Gilbert Allardyce, “Toward World History: American Historians and the Coming of the World History Course,” *Journal of World History* 1.1 (Spring 1990).

Most historians would agree that this was a seminal era in the development of Chinese nationalism. The selection of these dates is based both on events in China as well as on events in overseas Chinese communities. The year 1905, for instance, represents the waning of the Qing dynasty in China. At that point, Chinese intellectuals were vociferously debating the roles of the court, the civil service exam, and the “people” in defining Chinese nationalism. Furthermore, overseas newspapers became active participants in these debates. For the next 32 years, these and similar debates continued to affect intellectuals, politicians, and journalists in China and in the overseas communities. This is not to say that there was not a continuous sustained debate in each of these four locales. The communities themselves—as well as their publications—would wax and wane during this time. By placing them side-by-side, however, it is possible to delineate many of the contours of the national debate. By 1937, debates over Chinese nationalism subsided as anti-Japanese sentiment increasingly became coterminous with Chinese nationalism. Therefore, 1937 represents a logical terminus for the project.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> See, for instance, Shehong Chen, *Being Chinese, Becoming Chinese American* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Hockx discusses the concept of “horizontal reading” in his work *Questions of Style*. A serial publication, he argues, is often approached as a loose collection of individual articles and advertisements, allowing the reader to pick and choose those sections she chooses to read. However, it can also be “horizontally read” as a finished, unified, multi-authored text.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Marilyn Levine, *The Found Generation: Chinese Communists in Europe During the Twenties* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993).