

【Special Feature Articles: *Chao Foon Magazine* and the Chinese Publication Network  
in East and Southeast Asia during the Cold War】

## Introduction

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The featured articles of the Chinese language literary magazine *Chao Foon* trace transnational Chinese-language publishing network centred at Malaysia, which developed during the Cold War in the 1950s and 1960s, linking East and Southeast Asia. They also trace the human and ideological exchanges that developed within this network.

*Chao Foon* was first published in Singapore in November 1955 by intellectuals who had moved from mainland China to Hong Kong and Singapore. In the late 1950s, the magazine's publishing base was moved to Kuala Lumpur, Malaya. 488 issues of the magazine were published until February 1999 when publication ceased. However, the magazine was reinstated in November 2002 and has since been published by the Malaysian Chinese Literature Centre (MCLC, 馬華文學館) at the Southern University College (南方大學學院), Skudai, Johor. The latest issue (as of April 2023) was the 515<sup>th</sup>, with readers and contributors from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan supporting its long history of over 70 years.

*Chao Foon* has attracted attention in Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan in recent years. Several books on the theme of *Chao Foon* have also been published.

Memoirs of those involved in the publication of *Chao Foon* were published in Hong Kong in 2014 and 2017 (Lo and Hung, 2014; 2017). These books revealed support from U.S. organisations and institutions for journalistic and literary activities critical of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and communism.

A series of studies by Malaysian researchers were published between 2021 and 2022. A book by Lim Choon Bee (Lim, 2021)<sup>2</sup>, a Malaysian researcher and writer who served as the lead editor for *Chao Foon*, was published in 2021. A collection of academic papers edited by Tee Kim Tong, Ng Kim Chew, and Lee Soo Chee (Tee, Ng, and Lee, 2022), whose research and creative work were based in Malaysia and Taiwan, was published in 2022. The collection contains a foreword by Ng and 13 papers by 11 authors, including Tee, Lee, and Lim. The main focus of these studies is Malayanisation (indigenisation) and modernism. Malayanisation examines the national image of the Chinese in Malaya during the

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<sup>2</sup> It was introduced to Japan in a book review by Oikawa (2022).

independence period of the 1950s and 1960s and their attempts to be involved in the founding of Malaya. Modernism focuses on the modernist literature from Taiwan, brought to Malaya through *Chao Foon*, and attempts to reconsider the history of Chinese literature in Malaya/Malaysia, where realist literature with strong left-wing currents has been regarded as mainstream. Furthermore, the Cold War was emphasised as a factor that determined these developments. Considering the U.S. subsidisation of press and cultural activities in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the perspectives of the advocacy of Malayisation by the founders of *Chao Foon*, who moved from Hong Kong to Malaya, and the rise of modernist literature in Taiwan and its influx into Malaya are discussed.

Additionally, in 2022, a retrospective analysis of the history of the Union Press, which published *Chao Foon*, was published in Singapore (Zhong, 2022). In Japan, Shinozaki, Masutani, and Yamamoto (2022) was published. Rikkyo University and Kyoto University were also equipped with access to all issues of *Chao Foon*<sup>3</sup>.

Recent studies of *Chao Foon* focus on the international environment during the Cold War. Thus, this special feature also focuses on the Cold War. Specifically, it focuses on the role of *Chao Foon* in the Cold War context. It also evaluates the contribution to Asia of those involved in the *Chao Foon*, particularly Malaysian Chinese.

For the Chinese in East and Southeast Asia, the Cold War was primarily about the communisation of mainland China. The CPC came to power in 1949 and founded the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the PRC, building a country based on socialism was prioritised, and culture and arts were supposed to serve this purpose. All the literature was evaluated in terms of socialism. Chinese classics were rejected as nostalgic for feudalism, and their interpretations became a tool for political contestation. The Chinese in East and Southeast Asia travelled frequently to and from China from the end of the Qing dynasty to the period of the Republic of China. They could influence society and politics in China. However, after the establishment of the PRC, free travel to and from outside the PRC became impossible, and the exchange of information was blocked.

In the 1950s and the 1960s, Southeast Asia underwent decolonisation during the Cold War. Newly independent states inherited Western systems of governance developed during the colonial period by their Western masters. After independence, attempts were made to remould them to suit Southeast Asian conditions. In this process, references were often made to Asian civilisations. For example, in the Malay-Muslim world, the independent states of Malaya/Malaysia and Indonesia emerged. State institutions based on the Western system

<sup>3</sup> Back issues of *Chao Foon* were assembled by Masutani Satoshi of Rikkyo University and Yamamoto Hiroyuki of Kyoto University. An index of all the titles published in *Chao Foon* issues from No. 1 (Nov 1955) to No. 488 (Feb 1999) was also compiled by Yamamoto (2022c). This index is published in Shinozaki, Masutani, and Yamamoto (2022) which is available online <<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/276308>>.

of governance inherited from the colonial period were developed. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, the limitations of the direct application of Western-style parliamentary democracy became evident. Muslim intellectuals experienced setbacks in the Islamisation of state institutions and felt threatened by Western modernisation. Thus, they sought to counteract it by modernising Muslim society by strengthening religious education and incorporating science and technology<sup>4</sup>.

The Chinese in Malaya, who had closely witnessed the Muslims' attempts, were limited in their efforts such that even if they tried to refer to Chinese civilisation, the civilisation to be referred to could be denied or destroyed in mainland China. Therefore, an attempt was made to transfer the heritage of Chinese civilisation outside China, extract the essence of Chinese civilisation that could respond to the changing times, position it in the world, develop it consistent with the times, and transmit it to the world. The *Chao Foon* was one such attempt.

In addition to literary works in Chinese, *Chao Foon* included numerous introductions, translations, and critiques of foreign literature. Following the two major currents of Western and Chinese literature, *Chao Foon* focussed on Latin American, Soviet and Japanese literature and was conscious of the relationship with Malay literature to position Mahua literature (馬華文學, Chinese literature in Malaya/Malaysia) in the world consistent with the need of the times (Yamamoto, 2022b; 2022c). By sending messages in Chinese, it was possible to connect with the Chinese in Singapore, Malaya, Taiwan, and Hong Kong and those in mainland China. Literature from different parts of the world appeared frequently in *Chao Foon*, both for referencing ideas and values from around the world and for connecting with the world. In Singapore, Malaya, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, many Chinese are multilingual and have connections worldwide. The ideas and values emanating from *Chao Foon* have reached the world and are sometimes translated through a multilingual and cross-border Chinese

<sup>4</sup> This interest has to do with the development of the *Qalam* project in Japan. *Qalam* is a periodical first published in Singapore in 1950 and later moved to Malaysia, where it remained until 1969. Its main readers were Muslims in Singapore and Malaya/Malaysia. It also had a wider readership in northern Borneo and southern Thailand. The articles were written by prominent Muslim intellectuals from Malaya and Singapore, and from Indonesia. Many articles were published on the situation of Muslim communities in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries. The magazine actively introduced Islamic thought in the Middle East through contributions from international students studying in Egypt (Yamamoto, 2009: 57-58). All the issues scattered in several libraries in Malaysia and Singapore were collected, digitised and published on the web by Yamamoto Hiroyuki. Through a joint research project by Kyoto University, all the articles were translated from Jawi into Roman characters. An article search database was also created on the web (<http://majalahqalam.kyoto.jp/eng/>). The discussion paper titled "The Age of *Qalam*" was published in 13 issues by Kyoto University. Issue 1 is edited by Yamamoto Hiroyuki, issues 2 to 10 by Tsuboi Yuji and Yamamoto Hiroyuki, and issues 11 to 13 by Mitsunari Ayumi and Yamamoto Hiroyuki. The discussion papers are also available at the URL above.

network.

As a Chinese-language literary magazine, *Chao Foon* is not simply a “luo ye gui gen (落葉歸根, fallen leaves returning to their roots)”, oriented to return to China. It is rather “luo di sheng gen (落地生根, putting down roots)” in a way oriented towards the universal values of the Chinese civilisation being refined in multicultural, multireligious and multilingual society in Malaya/Malaysia, resulting in new universal values. It also has the spirit of “dao chu kai hua (到處開花, blossom everywhere)”, in which the essence of the Chinese civilisation refined in Malaya/Malaysia is transmitted across borders and mixes with the local culture at the destination to further blossom anew<sup>5</sup>. The contributions of the Malaysian Chinese and other supporters of *Chao Foon* can be positioned as contributions to specific countries such as Malaysia and Singapore and the wider region from East Asia to Southeast Asia.

Malaysian and Malaysian-Chinese studies in Japan have focused on the universal values in Malaysian and Malaysian-Chinese experiences.

Malaysia has embraced diverse people and ideas from various regions, including Islamic, Chinese, Indian, and Western regions. Together with people with different ideas and values, Malaysians have peacefully created a multilingual, multicultural, and multireligious state where major conflicts stemming from differences in ideas and values have rarely occurred. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of Japanese researchers. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the nation-state was based on the principle of “one people, one nation”. Therefore, if a group of people maintained a unique culture different from that of the majority ethnic group, it was often seen as an obstacle to national unity. Against this theory, Okabe Tatsumi (1968) and Tanaka Kyoko (2002)<sup>6</sup> pointed out that although the Malaysian Chinese maintain their cultural identity as inheritors of the Chinese civilisation, their political identity lies in Malaysia, and they actively participate in the construction of a culturally pluralistic society in Malaysia.

Research has shown that the identity of the Malaysian Chinese as inheritors of the Chinese civilisation is shaped more by Malaysia’s political and social situation than by their links to China. Imatomi Masami (1987) discussed this based on Mahua literature, while Ogi

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<sup>5</sup> Shinozaki, Masutani, and Yamamoto (2022) titled the book *Banana, Coconuts and Hornbill*. Banana and Coconuts represent the idea of Mahua literature growing roots and bearing fruit in Southeast Asia. Hornbill is used to describe the idea of a fruit flying away from Malaya/Malaysia to bear fruits in other places. Hornbill is the state bird of Sarawak, and represents the hope that those from Sarawak will act as a bridge to further develop Mahua literature (Yamamoto, 2022a).

<sup>6</sup> Tanaka (2002), although published in 2002, is a compilation of papers published individually in the 1980s and 1990s and is representative of research from that period.

Hirofumi (1995) studied the history of Chinese language education in Malaysia, which supported the survival and development of Mahua literature. Contrarily, Ota Isamu (1998) highlighted that, as the Malaysian Chinese are multilingual and multicultural, it would be difficult to capture their dynamism by only focussing on Mahua literature and Chinese language education.

Furthermore, research has progressed in the field of anthropology. Kawasaki Yuzo (1986) described a Chaozhou fishing village in Selangor that maintained contact with mixed communities outside the village and carried on the culture of its origin in China through ancestral rites and funeral rituals. Sakurada Ryoko (2008) argued that houses in new residential areas in the suburbs of cities had become home to Malaysian Chinese and that ancestral rites were passed on to the next generation in these homes. Huang Yun (2011) traced the development of the Dejiao (德教). Dejiao was founded in Chaozhou, China, with Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist doctrines and was introduced to Malaysia via Hong Kong as a unique religion in a multireligious environment with Islamic and Christian doctrines.

Active research has been conducted on the integration of Chinese into Malaysia regarding their political participation. Kaneko Yoshiki (2002) discussed how the Chinese gained representation in the federal government through the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) in the 1950s and 1960s. Murai Hiroshi (2013) conducted interviews in a new village near Seremban about the state of emergency period and discussed the steps adopted by the local Chinese elites, who became members of the MCA, in the mediation between the Chinese residents and the British colonial government. Hara Fujio (2003) focused on the indirect contributions of the political forces that had not become mainstream, such as the Communist Party of Malaya, in shaping Malaysian society.

In education, several institutions teach in vernacular languages other than the national language (Malay) within and outside the national education system. Moreover, diverse educational pathways with links to networks outside the country exist. Takekuma Hisao (1998) argued that although independent Chinese secondary schools are outside the national education system, they respect Malaysia's national integration policy and are conscious of living in harmony with other cultures. Sugimura Miki (2000) argued that the survival of Chinese language schools in Malaysia was because those involved in Chinese schools recognised the importance of national integration and patiently engaged in verbal negotiations with the government. Sugimura noted that, since the 1990s, higher education institutions teaching in languages other than the national language had been established, indicating the development of multiculturalism in the field of education. Sugimoto Hitoshi (2005) argued that from the colonial period to the 1960s, Malaysia was forced to identify with external standards such as British, Islamic, and Chinese standards; from the 1970s to 1980s, Malaysia isolated itself and pursued its own identity, while from the 1990s onwards, it

pursued its own identity and became compatible with globalisation. Ishii Yuka (1999) argued that the Malaysian government expanded the overall economic and educational pie, while the Chinese networks in East Asia and English-speaking regions provided opportunities for upward social and economic mobility.

Malaysians have enacted laws through debates in parliament and the media and formed a consensus through verbal negotiations based on the law. In addition, there is a widely shared mindset and attitude in the society that does not accept the use of violence to redress grievances. By doing so, Malaysia has avoided major conflicts. Such Malaysian political culture is universally significant. Some studies focus on this aspect, including Yamamoto Hiroyuki (2006), who discussed the independence period from the 1950s to 1960s; Suzuki Ayame (2010), who discussed the period of development from the 1970s to 1980s; and Shinozaki Kaori (2017), who discussed the colonial period.

Since the 1980s, the seeds of Mahua literature, borne in Malaysia, have spread and blossomed outside Malaysia, mainly in Taiwan, which is indeed “blossoming everywhere”. From this perspective, since the 1990s, Masutani Satoshi (1993; 2022) tangentially introduced *Chao Foon* to Japan, while Oikawa Akane (2019) discussed Ng Kim Chew, who is both a writer and researcher of Mahua literature in Taiwan; Oikawa has also translated and introduced Mahua literature to Japan.<sup>7</sup>

The featured articles included five papers. Shinozaki provided an overview of the development of publishing networks across East and Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 1960s. In Chinese-speaking regions, the sale of textbooks supports bookshop development. Singapore was a hub for textbook supply to Southeast Asia, with Shanghai as a source. However, Hong Kong became the textbook source after the PRC was established in 1949. At the end of the 1950s, imports of general books into Singapore and Malaya were severely restricted, and the textbook supply network linking Hong Kong and Singapore developed into a general book supply network. From the 1970s onwards, the era of development seeking prosperity in each country led to the local publishing of textbooks in Singapore and Malaysia. This was supported by literary scholars who travelled from Hong Kong to Singapore and Malaysia, and the human links between Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia were maintained.

Kho<sup>8</sup> summarises the activities of Union Press (publishers of *Chao Foon*, Hong Kong),

<sup>7</sup> For example, Lee Yung Ping (李永平)'s *The Jiling Chronicles* (《吉陵春秋》) was co-translated by Ikegami Sadako (池上貞子) and Oikawa and published as *Kitsurinchin Monogatari* (『吉陵鎮ものがたり』) from Jimbun Shoin (人文書院) in 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Kho Tong Guan has played a central role in the reissue of *Chao Foon* and has been responsible for its editing and publication. Kho is currently Chief Librarian, Head of MCLC and Editor-in-Chief of *Chao Foon*. This featured articles has received full cooperation from Mr Kho, with

before the launch of *Chao Foon*, Singapore, and Malaya, both in and out of the magazine and against the backdrop of the Cold War. Those involved with Union Press worked hard to realise freedom and democracy in the Chinese world, and those based in Malaysia became involved with *Chao Foon*. Others moved from Malaysia to other centres in Europe, the U.S., Hong Kong, and Taiwan and worked to build a better society there.

Tanigaki discussed the Union Press in Hong Kong. In the 1950s, Hong Kong became a base for the cultural and information strategies of the Western capitalist world while being a base for the cultural and information strategies of the CPC. Hong Kong was placed on the front line of the Cultural Cold War, where the growing influence of the CPC could be felt. This situation in Hong Kong was one of the major factors behind the expansion of the Union Press to Malaya.

Ng provided a close reading of Chang Fu's collection of poems, *Outside the Wall*, from the Chao Foon Literary Series, published preceding the independence of the Federation of Malaya in 1957. Chang Fu likened the series of circumstances to a storm, in which the country was moving from the devastation caused by the Second World War towards independence, although once it became independent, it was caught up in the Cold War structure. Acknowledging the fear of jumping into a storm, he called on his readers to be prepared by supporting them with his literary work.

Chen analysed classical literature published in *Chao Foon* from its inception to its temporary suspension in 1999. Chinese classical literature, regarded as a hotbed of conservative ideas that hindered development and modernisation in mainland China in the first half of the 20th century, was referred to in *Chao Foon* for modern literature development. These essays were developed based on the responses from contributors and readers in Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. *Chao Foon* provides a platform for the transnational development of classical Chinese literature across Southeast and East Asia.

While there has historically been a Chinese-language publishing network linking Southeast Asia and East Asia, Chinese-speaking regions are divided into several countries and administrative regions, with limited access to literature and materials for each region owing to differences in political systems. Japan is not a Chinese-speaking region but a part of the Sinosphere, which has historically acquired knowledge through Chinese civilisation and has archived a large number of Chinese-language documents. By archiving Chinese-language documents in Japan, Japan could support researchers from Chinese-speaking regions to gather and deepen exchanges regardless of political positions. We hope these featured articles will help build a platform for research exchange in Chinese-language

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contributions from Mr Kho himself, as well as from Dr. Ng and Dr. Chan from Southern University College. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

literary and publishing activities.

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