ABSTRACT

This four-chapter dissertation aims to study the figure of the Nanyang Child from the perspective of a children’s Chinese periodical, World Children, namely the issues published within the period of 1950 and 1954. World Children was one of the first children publications published and distributed in the Nanyang area, with the Nanyang children as its specific target audience. It was originally a monthly publication, but due to its popularity amongst its readers, it became a fortnightly publication from its forty-first issue onwards.

Previous studies regarding the Chinese publications in the Nanyang area show certain inadequacies. Firstly, in terms of the types of printed publications, the scope is relatively narrow as most studies usually place more emphasis on the Chinese newspapers. There is relatively little interest shown in the periodicals, until the recent commendable efforts of the National Library Board of Singapore, who published an extensive compilation of Singapore Chinese periodicals in the past fifty years. Secondly, these studies often use a top-down approach to provide an overview of the publishing industry, over a rather prolonged period of time. Hence, there are few comprehensive studies on Chinese publications in Nanyang area that reflect the political, social and cultural climate of a particular period in Nanyang history.
The concept of the child is a historical concept, and is specific to a particular country, or pertaining to a certain demarcated area, within a framework of time. Hence, the notion of the child is not to be viewed as a universalistic concept. This dissertation uses the World Child periodical as a lens of study, to discuss and analyse the figure of the Nanyang child in early 1950s. The Cold War was an ideological warfare between the European allied powers and the communists and its effects were also felt in the Nanyang area, where most European colonies were situated. As such, after the communist victory in China in 1949, Chinese publications imported from China were viewed with suspicion, bringing about strict controls and bans. The overseas Chinese living in Nanyang area also faced issues of cultural identity and citizenship uncertainties following the establishment of a new regime in China. Being introduced under such a period of political unrest and cultural uncertainty, the World Children periodical’s construction of a figure of a Nanyang child inevitably bears the indelible mark of history, making it a significant and important lens of study.

This study will show the construction of the figure of the Nanyang child through the images and words displayed through the World Child periodical, as well as reflect on the underlying causes leading to the nature of the initial stages of the development of a Nanyang child figure in the early 1950s.