Abstract

Scholars studying the history of Chinese literature in Singapore and Malaya generally agree that World War II divides the sixty-year period of literary development, since its beginnings in 1919, into the prewar period and the postwar period. This thesis is concerned with the former period and will focus on Chinese literary works produced during the economic recession years of 1930 to 1933.

This study is divided into seven chapters. Chapter One lays out the significance and methodology of this research. To enhance the depth of this study and to better understand the various authors, their work, and the development of Chinese literature during this period, I will be examining in detail NUS's collection of Chinese newspapers and periodicals from 1930 to 1933, in addition to existing secondary studies. In Chapter Two, I shall look at the social background of Singapore and Malaya in the early 1930's against which the development of Chinese literature took place. Chapter Three is concerned with introducing the literary columns in major local newspapers and highlighting their editorial concerns and literary disposition. This will be followed by a detailed analysis of writings in these literary columns. Chapter Four examines the major social and political issues reflected in these writings while the following chapter discusses their ideological concerns. I shall sum up my appraisal of these literatures in Chapter Six. In the concluding Chapter Seven, I intend to place the literature under study in the larger perspective of Chinese literary development in Singapore and Malaya, and to argue for a fairer assessment of the literary achievement of this period that has been lacking in most works so far.