



New Culture in a New World: The May Fourth Movement and the Chinese Diaspora in Singapore, 1919-1932

David Kenley

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During the 1920s, China's intellectuals called for a new literature, a new system of thought, and a new orientation toward modern life. Commonly known as the May Fourth Movement or the New Culture Movement, this intellectual momentum spilled beyond China into the overseas Chinese communities. This work analyzes the New Culture Movement from a diaspora perspective, namely that of the overseas Chinese in Singapore. Because they were members of a diaspora, the Chinese in Singapore first had to imagine themselves as part of the Chinese nation before they could fully participate in the movement. Also, Singapore's new culture advocates adopted then amended the movement's basic ideas to fit their situation. This work furthers our understanding of transnationalism and reminds us that in our rush to deconstruct the nation we should remember the discursive power of nationalism as it both enhances and restricts the authority of its advocates.

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