

The Role of Children's Magazines in Recording Childhood: A Comparison of *Modern Children's Magazine* (1941 - 1948) and *Cotton Tree Children's Literature Monthly Magazine* (1988 - 2019)

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Abstract

Situated between several geopolitical superpowers, Hong Kong has found herself in a unique current since the twentieth century. The 1940s and the “postcolonial” era since 1997 are two significant times when competing political ideologies confronts the city. Hong Kong was under British colonial rules in the 1940s, and at the same time, the intensifying civil war in China and the Pacific War presented an urgency for people in Hong Kong to negotiate their allegiance and identity. In July 1997, People’s Republic of China took over Hong Kong’s sovereignty, ending the British colonial rule. Unlike the pressing threat of war and oppression from the occupying Japanese forces in the 1940s, the new challenges that confronted Hong Kong simmered in the background. As the society negotiated its way forward, two children’s magazines found their places amidst the adult-dominant public discourses. It included children within the dialogue of how to live during these trying times. These two magazines are *Modern Children Magazine* (新兒童) and *Cotton Tree Children’s Literature Magazine* (木棉樹兒童文學月刊).

Modern Children’s Magazine was a bi-weekly magazine in print between June 1941 and 1948. Its founder and editor-in-chief is Annie Wong Hing-wan. *Cotton Tree Children’s Literature Magazine* was a monthly magazine in print between October 1998 and June 2019, founded by Melodie Wong Nga-man. These two magazines were decades apart, but shared a similar value for quality literature and a distinct vision a good childhood. This paper examines and compares the significance of these two magazines in terms of its representation of childhood and its view on children’s role during these politically trying times. While the rich and varied contents of the magazines provide a wealth of materials that reflect childhood in their respective era, this paper will focus on its editorial direction and readers’ contribution to the magazines. While *Modern Children’s Magazine* accompanied its readers through WWII Japanese occupied Hong Kong and the subsequent years of hardship, *Cotton Tree* came at a time where the political changes in Hong Kong brought along many changes in children’s school curriculum, leaving subtle but long-lasting impact to their lives.