ABSTRACT

This article studies the self-making process of colonial Straits Chinese at the turn of the 20th century under the converging forces of British colonial power, plantation economy, mass labor migration from Qing-China, and everyday interracial contacts. Along the theoretical line of *creolization*, a term historically characteristic of the multiethnic diversity of Caribbean coloniality, the article examines how the late 19th-century changing colonial relations among the British, the localized Straits Chinese, the China-born newcomers, and the Malay indigenes together incited a sense of existential crisis on the part of Straits Chinese elites, who launched the *Straits Chinese Magazine* (1897-1907) in colonial Singapore to address the need to make use of local nexus of hybrid affinities to re-form and remake the meanings of being Chinese. Focusing on selected writings in the *SCM* dedicated respectively to topics of reform, education, morality, and nationality, this article regards the *SCM* as a distinctive cultural space, in which conscious discursive efforts were made to fashion the model Straits Chinese public images — as modern youth, as rightful descendants of Chinese cultures, as loyal British subjects, as fallible but educable people, and finally as deserved protégés of the Empire.