

FROM HISTORICAL TIES TO CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS: CULTURAL DYNAMICS WITHIN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND CHINA RELATIONS

Ismail Suardi WEKKE¹, Himad ALI², Syamsiah MUHSIN³ and Angga Pratama SYAMSUDDIN⁴

1 The Academia of Papua, Indonesia Universitas Muhammadiyah Barru, Indonesia; iswekke@gmail.com

2 Northwest University Xian, China

3 Institut Agama Islam Darul Dakwah Wal Irsyad Sidenreng Rappang, Indonesia

4 Universitas Muhammadiyah Barru, Indonesia

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 28 April 2025

Revised: 12 May 2025

Published: 29 May 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the intricate needle point of cultural interactions that shape the contemporary relationship between Southeast Asia and China. This abstract delves into the historical foundations of these connections, tracing the long-standing exchange of ideas, traditions, and artistic expressions that have woven a complex cultural fabric across the region. While historical ties have fostered a sense of familiarity, the contemporary landscape is marked by evolving dynamics driven by China's increasing regional influence. This study examines how China's cultural diplomacy, through initiatives like Confucius Institutes and media outreach, seeks to enhance its soft power and cultivate positive perceptions. It also considers the complex role of overseas Chinese communities, which serve as cultural bridges but also raise concerns about potential influence. Furthermore, the abstract analyzes the impact of Chinese popular culture on Southeast Asian societies, exploring both its appeal and the anxieties it evokes regarding cultural homogenization. The abstract highlights the diverse responses across Southeast Asia, reflecting the region's rich cultural mosaic. Each nation navigates its relationship with China's cultural influence through its unique historical experiences and socio-political contexts. Ultimately, this research underscores the necessity of understanding the cultural dimensions of Sino-Southeast Asian relations alongside economic and geopolitical considerations. The interplay of historical legacies and contemporary influences paints a nuanced picture, revealing a region grappling with both the opportunities and challenges posed by China's cultural presence.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Regional Influence, Historical Exchange, Overseas Chinese, Soft Power

CITATION INFORMATION: Wekke, I. S., Ali, H., Muhsin, S., & Syamsuddin, A. P. (2025). From Historical Ties to Contemporary Connections: Cultural Dynamics within Southeast Asia and China Relations. *Procedia of Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(5), 91.

Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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