ABSTRACT

The emancipation of women is relatively recent development in Asia. There is therefore little research done by past and present scholars in this area, especially in Singapore and Malaya.

This thesis covers the Depression Years (1930—1934), in an attempt to study the issues faced by Singapore-Malayan Chinese women in their early days towards emancipation.

The women-supplements of the Chinese newspapers of that era were selected as the source of research because of its importance in centralizing discussion of feminine issues and in reflecting the problems faced by Singapore-Malayan Chinese women. Besides, there were not much writing about women then. Therefore, women-supplement is the most appropriate and important source for providing an insight into Singapore-Malayan Chinese's views on feminine issues during the Depression Years (1930—1934).

The National University of Singapore's collection of Singapore-Malayan Chinese newspapers from 1930 to 1934 was carefully examined and 9 women-supplements (6 from Singapore newspapers and 3 from Malayan newspapers), consisting of a total of 756 writings were identified and analyzed. Statistics were employed to check feminine issues that Singapore-Malayan Chinese discussed prior to the period. The results were then evaluated.

A wide variety of issues, like females' status in marriage and family, females' education, females' welfare, females' participation in politics, were discussed. From their discussions, it is found that Singapore-Malayan Chinese faced problems in adjusting between traditional and western values. Nevertheless, they were more conscious in improving the status of women, despite difficulties faced during the Depression Years.
This study sheds some light on the understanding of the difficulties Chinese women faced during the Depression Years and how their roles and status have changed over the past six decades.