ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the coverage of feminine issues in Singapore-Malayan Chinese newspapers’ Women-supplements during the pre-war period, 1937-1942. Many studies on the historical developments of Singapore-Malayan Chinese newspapers and its supplements had been carried out. However, few studies or none were done on Singapore-Malayan Chinese newspapers’ Women-supplements.

Therefore, this study was prompted by the need to provide an insight into the coverage of feminine issues, particularly on the roles of Chinese women in all aspects of social life in the society during the pre-war years. In addition, it traces the changes that had occurred during the pre-war years. This study shows that during the period, the constraints of the patriarchal tradition and the conservative nature of the general public still placed women in the subordinate position as reflected in the feminine issues discussed in the supplements. It was only after the “Qi Qi Lu Gou Qiao” incident (“七七” 芦沟桥) that the public began to make an appeal to the Chinese women in the society to take an active role in the anti-Japanese movements. It was during this period that the Women-supplements shouldered the responsibility of appealing to the Chinese women in the society and many of such issues were published. Besides, the Women-supplements featured other feminine issues as well. It is interesting to note the changes in the coverage of feminine issues discussed in the Women-supplements as they indirectly reflected the changing roles of Chinese women. As a result of participation in the anti-Japanese movements, the feminine issues in the Women-supplements reflected that the status of Chinese women was recognised by the general public.
This study provides a better understanding of the feminine issues as well as the changing roles of Chinese women during the pre-war period, 1937-1942.