ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to examine the early history of Chinese women in Singapore and Malaya through *Penang Sin Pao*, one of the most important newspapers during the colonial period. Although there have been many studies of the lives of Chinese women in Singapore and Malaya, however, almost none have used newspapers as the main source.

This thesis is therefore prompted by the need to provide an insight into the coverage of feminine issues by *Penang Sin Pao*. The paper provides a valuable source of materials for studying the history of Chinese women in Singapore and Malaya. Taking the three years 1920, 1930 and 1940 as the main period of discussion, this thesis will also attempt to understand the lives of Chinese women during those times of turbulence. The year 1920 witnessed the beginnings of feminism in both Singapore and Malaya, while 1930 experienced the impact of the Great Depression, followed by the Sino-Japanese War in China in 1940, which significantly affected the Chinese community in the British colonies.

The first chapter briefly explains the objective of this thesis. It also summarizes the topics to be studied, as well as the specific reasons for using the above-mentioned time frame.

The second chapter of the thesis examines the contents of the newspaper with regards to Chinese women in the two colonies. This discussion will tabulate all the different news items with regards to Chinese women under different themes. The changing emphasis of the paper in the three periods under discussion is reflected in the quantity of the news
covering to the issue in question. In the case of 1940, for example, ongoing war between Japan and China fueled nationalism in the Southeast Asian society. Hence 1940 saw the greatest quantity of news with regards to the anti-Japanese efforts of Chinese women.

The next chapter focuses on the significant themes that can be found inside the paper. One example is education: the amount of news relating to the education of Chinese women tells the importance their society places on such education at a given time.

Chapter four attempts to understand issues such as social problems and government policies which affected Chinese women, based on Penang Sin Pao. This chapter also serves to reinforce the fact that newspapers are a valuable source of historical data.

Finally, the last chapter sums up the entire discussion. It also summarizes how Chinese women in Singapore and Malaya lived during these turbulent years, and what affected them most.