

COMPLETION REPORT

Research Summary

War, Malay-Muslim Women and Social Change, 1941-1957

The research started on 8 April 2012 and ended on 31 July 2012. During this period, data collection was conducted at the National Archives of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur and its branch in Johor. During the research in Johor, I made day trip to the Changi War Museum and Chapel in Singapore. From the data it could be concluded that in Malaya (as well as Southeast Asia), the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945) had impacted on women in different ways. Racially, Malay women suffered less compared to Chinese women due to Chinese-Japanese animosity since the 1930s. However, the social and economic disaster brought by the Occupation affected the Malays in many ways. With the Japanese presence, Malay women had to balance their traditional roles with the need to feed the family; some went out to work far from the home. They were even involved in black market trading. Rape and the fear of being raped or forced into sex slaves were perennial concern for women during the Occupation although there were many cases of Malay women who had gained from the Occupation by becoming mistresses to Japanese officers. Due to the economic hardship, sly prostitution (waitresses in coffee shops, restaurants and so forth) became prevalent among Malay women during the Occupation. The question is did the involvement in economic activities and prostitution alien to Malay women? Except for black market trading, Malay women involvement in economic activities had taken place before the outbreak of the war. Their increasing role in the rural economy during the Occupation only led to the strengthening of their influence in the domestic and traditional domain without any new modernizing element. As for prostitution, it had taken place in the Malay states since the feudal era and it had continued during the colonial era, and during and after the Occupation.

Undeniably women who lived in urban areas had gained new skills, experiences and the Occupation provoked their consciousness in term of organization and vocation. Urban families that had good relationship with the Japanese were more likely to get educational and vocational opportunity. Many entered the workplace as teachers, clerks, telephone operators or journalists; many also worked in Japanese firms or in the government sector. By 1944 and early 1945, women branches of Malay association had appeared in most towns. Educated women used Japanese sponsored magazine to instill awareness among Malay women. Did these new skills and experiences rudely provoke women consciousness and brought drastic changes to women's life? A movement toward greater social and occupational freedom was already in existence before the war although it was on a small scale and based on personal whims. In fact, Malay women in the 1920s and 1930s as evidenced in contemporary Malay newspapers and magazines had publicly discussed important issues affecting them such as education, vocation, organization, modernization, forced marriage and cultural practices that have negative impact on women. Except during the war some writers widened the scope for women to think about society, nation and the fatherland. Before the war, women had already taken part in women section of Malay association although the number was small. Most associations were only active in the later part of the Occupation at the encouragement of the Japanese whose main intention was to make women to contribute to the war efforts. In fact, for the first time, Malay women were exposed to political activity through rallies and public lectures. However, when the women section

of the United Malays Organization was formed in 1946 (in 1949 changed to Pergerakan Kaum Ibu) to become the largest organization in Malaya, it only shows *continuity* of the pre war role in the political world of the emerging nation. They were mainly auxiliaries to the main party while their future was in the hands of the male party leaders. Only radical Malay women had taken the struggle further by challenging the existing patriarchal structure and advocating revolutionary political change through the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) which was formed in March 1942 and was part of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The 10th Regiment, a Malay wing of the MCP, consisted of not only men fighters but also women who left their family and lived as guerillas to liberate Malaya.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

1. 2-6 July 2012, Solo, Indonesia, The 22nd Conference of International Association of Historians of Asia (IAHA), "Johor Malay Women and Social Issues, 1930s-1950s," as presenter (**attached, the abstract and programme schedule a of the conference**).
2. 27-28 September 2012, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, USM-UGM (Universiti Gajah Mada) Bennial History Workshop 2012, "The Impact of the Japanese Occupation on Malayan Women," as presenter (**attached, the abstract and programme schedule of the workshop**).
(Working papers on this theme to subsequently provide manuscripts for an edited volume. The latter will feature as the inaugural publication of "Nusantara: A History" Project', a multi-volume publication series by an international publisher).

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)