“Now we want Malays to awake” : Malay women teachers in colonial Johor and their legacy

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Publication Date:
2012

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/2486

School of Humanities

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

"Now we want Malays to awake": Malay Women Teachers in Colonial Johor and their Legacy.

Anna Maree Doukakis

A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of New South Wales, Australia

2012

PLEASE TYPE

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
Thesis/Dissertation Sheet

Surname or Family name: Doukakis

First name: Anna | Other name/s: Maree

Abbreviation for degree as given in the University calendar: PhD

School: School of Humanities | Faculty: Arts and Social Sciences

Title:
"Now we want Malays to awake": Malay Women Teachers in Colonial Johor and their Legacy.

Abstract 350 words maximum: (PLEASE TYPE)

This thesis focuses on Malay women teachers and girls' schooling in British Malaya during the 1920s and 1930s, when educational opportunities for Malay girls were expanding. It discusses the teachers' agendas, their roles as leaders, authors and publishers, and their participation in national politics and women's movements following World War II. The thesis addresses whether and how Malay female pioneers for girls' education are treated in general and in specialist academic literature. The research also explores the increasing impact of global forces of modernisation in Malaya. It draws on primary and secondary sources in English, Malay and *jawi* Malay for case studies of: the pioneer of girls' schooling, Zain bte Sulaiman, who was supervisor of Malay girls' schools in Johor between 1926 and 1948; the professional association of Malay women teachers in Johor, which she founded, and its publication *Bulan Melayu*; and the Malay Women's Training College, the first Malaya-wide residential teacher training institute for Malay female students. Malay women teachers contributed to the form and content of the schools instructing girls using the Malay vernacular. They negotiated with Malaya's royal and colonial administrators to achieve positions of leadership and influence, and they contributed to the formation of a peninsula-wide Malay identity. Study of the roles and experiences of Malay women in the 1930s contributes to the understanding of Malay nationalism, Malay Islam and the public place of Malay women in the Federation of Malaysia today.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on Malay women teachers and girls' schooling in British Malaya during the 1920s and 1930s, when educational opportunities for Malay girls were expanding. It discusses the teachers' agendas, their roles as leaders, authors and publishers, and their participation in national politics and women's movements following World War II. The thesis addresses whether and how Malay female pioneers for girls' education are treated in general and in specialist academic literature. The research also explores the increasing impact of global forces of modernisation in Malaya. It draws on primary and secondary sources in English, Malay and *jawi* Malay for case studies of: the pioneer of girls' schooling, Zain bte Sulaiman, who was supervisor of Malay girls' schools in Johor between 1926 and 1948; the professional association of Malay women teachers in Johor, which she founded, and its publication *Bulan Melayu*; and the Malay Women's Training College, the first Malaya-wide residential teacher training institute for Malay female students. Malay women teachers contributed to the form and content of the schools instructing girls using the Malay vernacular. They negotiated with Malaya's royal and colonial administrators to achieve positions of leadership and influence, and they contributed to the formation of a peninsula-wide Malay identity. Study of the roles and experiences of Malay women in the 1930s contributes to the understanding of Malay nationalism, Malay Islam and the public place of Malay women in the Federation of Malaysia today.

A NOTE ON SPELLING AND ABBREVIATIONS

This thesis uses modernised Malay spellings, except where directly quoting sources.

The following abbreviations are used throughout:

BM	*Bulan Melayu*
KI	*Kaum Ibu*
KIS	*Kumpulan Ibu Sepakat*
MG	*Majallah Guru*
MWTC	Malay Women's Training College
PPMJ	*Persekutuan Perempuan Melayu Johor*
SITC	Sultan Idris Training College
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation.

PUBLICATIONS

Sections of this thesis have been used in the following publications:

Doukakis, Anna, "A Letter from Kuala Lumpur", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol 43, No 1, 2009, pp245-249.

Doukakis, Anna, *"Now we want Malays to awake…" The Malay Women Teachers of Johor and Bulan Melayu"*, Refereed Conference Proceedings, Asian Studies Association of Australia Biannual Conference, Melbourne, July 2008.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my Supervisors, Jean Gelman Taylor and Mina Roces, for the blood, sweat and tears they have poured into me and my research. I couldn't have finished this without your support.

To Rochie Machali at UNSW, who taught me Malay and *jawi*, translated the Arabic that I still can't read and checked my more esoteric translations, my everlasting gratitude.

Special thanks to Norani Othman and Clive Kessler, for their encouragement, support, brainstorming sessions and invaluable introductions to many Malaysians.

In Malaysia, thanks to Rustam A Sani, Rohani Rustam, Tuan Haji Said Zahari, Rahimah Aziz, Raman, Roslina Rosli, Sumit Mandal, Datin Patricia Lim and Dr Lim, Siew Mun Khoo, Iza Hussin, Fadzillah and Shakib Amin.

Thanks must also go to the many academics and fellow students at universities around Australia and the world who have given me information and encouragement, including Tim Allender, Susan Blackburn, Philippa Levine, Angela Woolacott, Grace Karskens, Dominic Fitzsimmons, Tracey Lee Downey, Laura Ferguson, Martyn Lyons, Marion Quartly, Dan Kark, Sean Brawley, Nick Doumanis, Rae Francis, Anne O'Brien and Lenore Lyons.

Staff at many institutions have been of invaluable assistance, especially as the topic of this thesis slid and changed over the years: the National Library of Australia; Monash Asia Institute and Monash Library; ANU; the British Library; the National Archives (Kew, England); SOAS; the Girl Guiding UK Archives (especially Karen Taylor); the National Library of Scotland; the School of Divinity, New College, Edinburgh; the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Library; the Bodleian Library, Oxford, especially the Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House; the University of Bristol Library; the National Library of Singapore; the National Archives, Singapore; NIE and the Nanyang Technological University; ISEAS at the National University of Singapore; IKMAS at UKM, Malaysia; ATMA; Universiti Malaya; PNM; Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka; Arkib Negara Malaysia, and the Institut Perguruan Perempuan Melayu.

My deep gratitude to those with whom I've stayed during my research trips, particularly the Brook family, Joan and Selina.

I received financial support during the course of this research from the UNSW School of Humanities, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and the UNSW Graduate Research School.

Hugs galore to my indefatigable readers and spotters of grammatical stuff ups: Jan, Elizabeth, Maggie, Dianne, Felicity, Julia, Simon, Jan, Ian, Tracey, Dom, Tony and Laura.

Much appreciation to my family for not laughing in my face at my initial insistence this degree would be completed in three years...

To my husband Tim, for your bottomless support – cheers. I'm done (for now)!

To anyone I may have missed, my apologies, and my thanks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

"All these tasks must be done by the women themselves and not by men." [1]

On January 22, 1903, the sixth child of Munshi Sulaiman and Siti Shahirah was born in the village of Nyalas, near Melaka on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula which was, at the time, a colonial possession of the British. She was called Zainon, later known in Malaysian history as "Ibu Zain", a heroine of Independence. Zain attended a Christian missionary kindergarten, then the English language Malacca Methodist Girls' School until the age of twelve. [2] Outside school hours she learnt *jawi* Malay (Malay written in modified Arabic script), as well as Arabic and Quranic recitation. Zain set up a Malay language kindergarten and then, at the age of 19, entered the British Education Department of the state of Johor as a teacher in the Malay vernacular schools. Two years later she was Principal, then Visiting Teacher, and at 24 Zain bte Sulaiman became Supervisor of Malay Girls' Schools in Johor. In 1929 she founded the *Persekutuan Perempuan Melayu Johore* (*P.P.M.J.*, the Malay Women's Association of Johor), an association for women teachers, and edited their journal, *Bulan Melayu*. By the end of the 1930s, Zain played a significant role in the professional organisations and publications that linked women teachers throughout British Malaya.

Zain was thus one of a group of Malay women taking on newly emergent public roles in the colony. Such women stepped away from a tradition that generally characterised leadership as male. Zain lived from 1903 to 1989, her life

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[1] Zain, "Malay Women – Want to Live?", *Bulan Melayu* (1930).
[2] Malacca was the old British spelling of Melaka.

spanning most of the 20th century. During this period, Malaya changed from a collection of sultanates to a single federation and nation state. Rapid urbanisation, immigration and technological change affected all levels of Malay society. Opportunities for Malay girls and women expanded, the role of Islam in Malay society changed significantly and British Malaya became part of the independent entity Malaysia.

Zain and the Malay women teachers of the *PPMJ* began to take part in conceiving Malay nationalism and identity during the 1920s and 1930s, the period that is the primary focus of this thesis. Defining what it meant to be Malay was always an ongoing process. [3] Malays are often regarded as coming late to the concept of nationalism as compared to the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries. [4] However, scholars such as William Roff, Joel Kahn and Anthony Milner have written of incipient nationalism and the special circumstances of the Malay Peninsula and Singapore in the 1920s and 1930s. [5] Colonial Malaya was made up of a diverse ethnic mix: the 1931 census reported 1,709,392 Chinese, 1,644,173 Malays, 317,848 "other Malaysians" and 624,009 Indians. [6] As a result, nation and nationalism were seen through a very specific ethnic lens. Malay identity was defined by ethnic group, language and Islam, and against racial "others".

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[3] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001).
[4] Norman G. Owen (ed), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).
[5] Owen, Norman G. (ed), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005; Joel S. Kahn, *Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Malay World*, (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006); Anthony Milner, *The Malays*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).
[6] The term "other Malaysians" is used in the 1931 census.

The ideas and practices of the Malay women teachers were shaped by a variety of influences from Britain, the Empire, neighbouring colonies and the Islamic world. These currents were disseminated through the new transport systems of road and rail, improvements in communication, and a boom in printing. The latter brought Islamic modernist ideas from Cairo and nationalistic publications from the Netherlands East Indies, while colonial administration brought British models of schools for boys and training centres for male teachers. Malay identity outside the boundaries of Malay sultanates was on the rise. The term "*bangsa*" ("race" and/or "nation") [7] began to take on specific meaning for educated Malays, replacing the old discourse of *kerajaan* (rule by a sultan), and bringing with it an emphasis on racial distinctiveness. A boom in Malay language publication spread such intellectual developments throughout Malaya. New opportunities beckoned, and Malay women positioned themselves to take full advantage. Malay women teachers worked to stake a place for women in the process and shaping of Malay identity.

Zain and the *PPMJ* are known as the most accessible and arguably the most influential group of Malay women from the 1930s. They advocated secular and religious schooling for Malay girls as a means of ensuring that Malays would take a pre-eminent place in Malaya's plural society. Their goals for Malay women included primary level schooling in the Malay language, emphasising the role of women as wives and mothers, and a definition of Malay modernity that did not negate traditional cultural definitions. British colonialism and the British-run schooling system, especially administrators who supported Malay women

[7] See Glossary for a more detailed definition of the term "*bangsa*".

teachers and girls' schooling, helped to create a situation where Malay women could take on positions of leadership as teachers. [8]

Malay women's contribution has hardly been recognised in histories of the Malay nationalist movement. In many cases, their contribution has not been acknowledged at all, or they are presented merely as a support mechanism for Malay men. [9] However, Malay women teachers were not passive recipients of the changes which modernisation brought to Malaya. They actively took part in defining a modern Malay Muslim womanhood, positioning themselves as leaders of Malay women, and attempting, with varying degrees of success, to implement a schooling system which would deliver their goals. The good of the *bangsa* became their legitimising discourse, and these women participated in the creation and development of Malay identity, well in advance of World War II, in a period where women teachers came into their own.

Including Malay women in discussions of colonialism, schooling, nationalism and Malay identity achieves more than simply illuminating a neglected area of history. Through a focus on a particular group of Malay women teachers and their ideas on schooling, women's roles, colonial policies and the role of Islam, it is possible to see that many of the methodologies used to discuss Malay identity as a whole may prove inadequate for women's experiences. The divisions between male intellectuals of the 1930s, which structure much of the

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[8] For the purposes of this thesis I will use the more limited term "schooling" rather than the broader "education", unless the latter is used in sources or I mean a broader form of socialisation than that experienced in schools.

[9] To some degree, many Malay women did regard their role as being helpmeets for Malay men, a pervasive view also found in nationalist politics after Independence. Tabitha Frith, *Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood in Malaysia*, (Centre of Southeast Asian Working Paper 117, Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, 2002); Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974).

way Malay and Malaysian history is written, do not always apply to the women. Whether they were schooled in English, Malay or Arabic, the Malay women teachers worked together. It is likely that there were too few women in public life to do otherwise. The women teachers also focussed on a limited and pragmatic set of goals. [10] Close study of these Malay women teachers will illuminate the complexities of 1930s Malaya and the development of Malay identity during this period.

Aims

This thesis will focus on Malay women teachers and girls' schooling in British Malaya during the 1920s and 1930s, a period which saw the expansion of schooling for Malay girls. Female teachers, students and schools received increasing attention from British educators, despite the fact that many British administrators and Malays (men and women) opposed schooling for girls. British views on teaching women and girls had made a significant impact on Islamic modernists in Cairo, and such ideas were recycled and indigenised in Malaya into a form more acceptable to many Malays because they came from the Islamic world. The Malay women teachers were not just receiving vessels for British and Islamic modernist ideas. They contributed to an evolving Malay identity, and negotiated to achieve positions of power and leadership, and determine the form

[10] Musa highlights the importance of schooling for girls in the viewpoints of almost all women writers of the period. Mahani Musa, "The 'Woman Question' in Malayan Periodicals, 1920-1945", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, (Vol 38, No 111, 2010), pp247-271.

and content of Malay vernacular girls' schooling. They displayed their own views and strategies, albeit on a smaller scale than male teachers.

I will also explore the increasing role of global forces of modernization in Malaya. By 1914 Malaya consisted of the Straits Settlements (Singapore, Penang and Melaka), the Federated Malay States (Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan), as well as the Unfederated Malay States (Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis, and Terengganu). European colonial rule became the means of dissemination of inventions such as the printing press and the telegraph, the creation of an integrated economy, and access to global currents of information from the British Empire and beyond. The Peninsula acquired rail, road and telegraph networks, and together with continual immigration from China, India and the Netherlands East Indies, the tempo of new ideas in Malay life accelerated. To what degree did new opportunities shape Malay women during the 1920s and 1930s? This new Malay world, discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, provides the context for chapters on Zain, the *P.P.M.J.* and the MWTC.

In addition, I will discuss the agenda of these Malay women, their roles as teachers, leaders, authors and publishers, as well as touching on their later roles in politics and women's movements. I will also undertake an analysis of the way in which these women and their ideas are presented in histories, when they appear at all. I seek to understand the authority and autonomy of these Malay women to determine girls' schooling, the ways in which they negotiated positions of leadership for themselves and what it meant to be a modern Malay woman in the plural society of 1930s Malaya.

This chapter sets out the aims, methodology, significance and literature review of this thesis. Chapter 2 provides more detailed background on schooling,

the British Empire, Islamic modernism and the Malay women teachers. Chapter 3 outlines schooling in British Malaya, with a focus on Malay vernacular schooling for girls. Three case studies will then form the core of my research. Two chapters will concentrate on the development of Malay women's ideas, based on an individual, Zain bte Sulaiman (Supervisor of Malay Girls' Schools, Johor), and an organisation, the *Persekutuan Perempuan Melayu Johore* (the professional association of the Malay women teachers of Johor) and its publication, *Bulan Melayu*. To what extent the aims of these women could be implemented in the colonial context will be explored in a chapter about the Malay Women's Training College. The final chapter will consider Zain's legacy and the broader conclusions of this thesis.

Significance of thesis

Malay women pioneers contributed to the definition of Malay identity and women's roles within the plural society. My primary focus is the 1920s and 1930s, but I will also look at longer term consequences. Malay women today follow careers in parliament, the professions, schools and factories, as well as experiencing universal mandatory schooling. The rights to pursue these were not questioned from the 1970s onwards. Indeed, the New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1971, emphasised the roles of women in development, government schools and tertiary education for girls with the aim of raising the welfare of all Malays. During this period and beyond, Zain was recast as a national heroine of Independence and racial tolerance, more than a promoter of vernacular schooling

for Malays. She has become a symbol of national unity, rather than an advocate of the rights of Malays, and of Malay women in particular.

The topic of Malay women is also of added significance in view of the ways that public roles for women in Muslim societies worldwide are under review. Malaysia now faces challenges in the way that women are presented and participate in public discourse, nationalism and nation building. It is thus worth studying Zain and her colleagues and the ways in which they made women in public legitimate in nationalist and religious terms, as well as in the ways they defined and redefined Malay identity. The consequences of adding a deeper understanding of the roles and experiences of Malay women during the 1930s informs discussions of Malay women and nationalism until the present day.

Sources

The scope of my research necessitates using a wide range of primary and secondary sources. Primary documentary sources include British Colonial Office correspondence and reports, as well as textbooks and curriculum documents in both English and Malay. Such sources provide a valuable window into the administrative and colonial contexts, but do not often capture the lived experiences of those they discuss. *Bulan Melayu* (Malay Monthly), *Majallah Guru* (Teachers' Journal) and a range of other Malay language publications illuminate the ideas and experiences of the Malay women teachers themselves. Interviews conducted by myself and others serve a similar purpose. Photographs provide a visual representation not only of people and events, but of how they were presented at the time. Textbooks and curricula from the MWTC illustrate

the ideas of Malay women teachers and British administrators in practice. Together, they give a sense of the Malay teachers and the context of their lives.

I also use more than 100 years of secondary sources, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Colonial authors express a justification of empire and lay out long term plans which were to disintegrate post World War II. Academic works present a scholarly interpretation of the people and ideas at the heart of this thesis, but few are focussed specifically on this topic. General publications and newspaper articles can provide colour and additional information, but do not present the same degree of rigorous interpretation as academic studies. Musicals, movies and television shows indicate the ways in which Zain, in particular, has entered contemporary Malay consciousness. Used together, this wide range of sources allows a more detailed examination of the Malay women teachers and their historical context than previously attempted.

Literature Review

British Schooling

The Malay women teachers' careers flourished in a very specific context: the colonial vernacular schooling system. One of the major ways in which the British attempted to modify Malay society was through the medium of schooling. The first writings on British Educational Policy in Malaya came from the administrators who created the system. [11] These sources, and the historians who

[11] Eg: Sir Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya*, (London: John Lane and The Bodley Head, 1907); R.J. Wilkinson, *History*, (Kuala Lumpur: F.M.S. Government Press, 1924); R.O. Winstedt, and R.J. Wilkinson, *A History of Perak*, (Kuala

soon used them, presented British schools in the colonies as a great civilising project bringing light to dark and oppressed corners of the world. [12] After Independence, the mood of optimism amongst historians was replaced by anger about how British policies and practices did a disservice to the native peoples of the colonies, seeking to divide and conquer colonised populations and supply the British system's need for labour. [13] These historians pointed out that Malays were given inferior vocational schooling in the Malay language, channelled into professions and skills to serve the colonial machine and indoctrinated with the ideas of colonial superiority and their own inferiority. From the 1980s some attempt was made to rehabilitate the efforts of British educators, often concentrating on the problems faced by educators on the ground and the genuine beliefs of many that they were making a positive difference in the lives of colonised peoples. [14] Since then there have been few studies of education or

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Lumpur: Malay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1974); H.R. Cheeseman, "Education In Malaya", *Oversea Education*, (Vol 17, No 4, July 1946, pp 346-353 and Vol 18, No 1, Oct 1946, pp. 391-400).

[12] As above, plus, for example, Hugh Edward Egerton, *British Colonial Policy in the XXth Century*, (London: Methuen & Co, 1922); Frederick Mason, *The Schools of Malaya*, (Singapore: Donald Moore, 1957).

[13] Eg: Francis Hoy Kee Wong *Comparative Studies in Southeast Asian Education*, (Kuala Lumpur, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia), 1973); Francis Hoy Kee Wong and Ee Tiang Hong, *Education in Malaysia* (2nd edition) (Kuala Lumpur, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) 1975); Francis Hoy Kee Wong and Paul Chang Min Phang, *The Changing Pattern of Teacher Education in Malaysia*, (Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia), 1975); Philip Loh Fook Seng, *Seeds of Separatism: Educational Policy in Malaya 1874-1940*, (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1975); Awang Had Salleh, *Malay Secular Education and Teacher Training in British Malaya (With Special Reference to the Sultan Idris Training College)*, (Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: 1979).

[14] Clive Whitehead, Colonial *Educators: The British Indian and Colonial Education Service 1858-1983*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Clive Whitehead "Oversea Education and British colonial Education", *History of Education*, (Vol 32, No 5, September 2003, pp. 561-575).

schooling in British Malaya, although those authors who do consider it have become more adept at balancing the above interpretations. [15]

Historians writing during the 1970s emphasised paternalistic and self-serving aspects of British colonial schooling. Francis Wong Hoy Kee published a number of studies on Malayan and Malaysian educational policy. [16] In his view, the nations of Southeast Asia needed the benefits that foreigners could bring in order to rise above their "poverty". Wong refers to British policy as education to serve the need for native administrators rather than an attempt to "raise" the Malays from previous levels of ignorance. [17] Considering Wong's ideological emphasis on the powers of education in fulfilling a person's spiritual needs and creating a vibrant nation, his conclusion is that British policy was essentially self serving. [18] In terms of British aims for Malay education, Philip Loh Fook Seng (1975) follows a similar line of argument. [19] He also emphasises the level of paternalism in British administrators who took on the role of educationalists and saw themselves as the preservers of "good" Malay culture. [20] Awang Had Salleh (1979) also emphasises the role of British dominance, in particular the role education played in controlling Malay society. He argues that that restricting

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[15] Chief amongst these is J.A. Mangan, (ed) '*Benefits bestowed'? Education and British Imperialism*, (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1988).
[16] Wong *Comparative Studies* (1973); Wong and Hong *Education in Malaysia* (1975); Wong and Phang, *The Changing Pattern of Teacher Education*, (1975). The independent nation of Malaysia came into being in 1963 and included Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor, Malacca, Penang, Johor Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis, Terengganu, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore until 1965.
[17] Wong, *Comparative Studies*, (1973), pp16-17.
[18] ibid, pp82-86.
[19] Seng, *Seeds of Separatism*, (1975). British policy aimed to preserve the status quo. Salleh, *Malay Secular Education*, (1979), pp132-33.
[19] Seng, *Seeds of Separatism*, (1975), p147.
[20] ibid, pp132-33.

schooling to only primary level could delay the Malay community's awareness of and desire for independence.[21] These historians focus on boys' schooling, mentioning girls only in passing.

Rex Stevenson, writing in 1975, does not express such a direct ideological argument. His primary concern is British educational policy towards the Malays, with a valuable section on Malay responses. British-run schools were based on a secular curriculum, in contrast to the traditional Quran schools, which taught Arabic and memorisation of the Quran. Stevenson also highlights the presence of a degree of xenophobia and religious antagonism amongst Malays. [22] As Stevenson focuses on the years 1875-1906 in the Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang, there is little on girls' schooling. Nonetheless, Stevenson's is still one of the most detailed studies of the basis and practice of British policies based on India Office and Colonial Office documents. He argues that the impact of British schooling was restricted to males of the upper classes, a fair argument as mass schooling did not occur during the time period on which he focuses.

Clive Whitehead (1981) is one historian who has endeavoured to rehabilitate British educational policy across the Empire as a whole. [23] He argues that communal racially based schools were not a deliberate policy of the British and certainly not part of a strategy to divide and rule. [24] They were designed to "improve" native peoples in line with then current ideologies. Whitehead places greater emphasis on the formation and imposition of British policy than on its

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[21] Salleh, *Malay Secular Education*, (1979), p147.
[22] Stevenson, *Cultivators and Administrators*, (1975), pp119-20,128.
[23] Whitehead, "Education in British Colonial Dependencies", (1981).
[24] ibid, p77.

effectiveness and/or local responses. He also studies African colonies more often and in more depth than Asian or Southeast Asian examples. Nevertheless, Whitehead provides an alternative way of conceptualising British involvement in the field of colonial schooling.

In *Benefits Bestowed?* (1988), James Mangan and fellow authors advocate a balanced view of the colonial schooling system. British educational policy could aim for both liberation for colonised people (under the guidance of benevolent British dominance) and at the same time create a system to serve the colonial power. [25] Mangan also argues that formal education and schooling in the colonies, influenced by developments in England, supported, resisted and created stereotypes affecting both British and colonised cultures. [26] In Malaya, colonised peoples were often regarded as impotent representatives of civilisations in decline, displaying negative, effete, childish attributes, which justified conquest and systems of control, administration and instruction. [27] In the same volume, James Greenlee argues that the British saw themselves as bearers of a higher civilisation, with a right to civilise the Malays and even the whole environment

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[25] Mangan, (ed) *'Benefits bestowed'?*, (1988), p16.
[26] J.A. Mangan "Images for Confident Control: Stereotypes in Imperial Discourse" in J.A. Mangan (ed) *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp6, 12.
[27] Mangan, (ed) *'Benefits bestowed'?* (1988), pp10, 15, 17. It should be noted that the two-tier system of education in British Malaya was modelled on England, where the top tier catered for the upper classes, and the other for the lower ranks of society. Mangan, (ed) *'Benefits bestowed'?* (1988), p6; Detlef K Muller, Fritz Ringer, Brian Simon, *The Rise of the Modern Educational System: Structural Change and Social Representation 1970-1920*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987); Keith Watson "Rulers and Ruled: Racial Perceptions, Curriculum and Schooling in Colonial Malaya and Singapore" in Mangan (ed) *The Imperial Curriculum*, p150.

in which they lived. [28] Education was seen as a way to "individual and social liberation", or even as a "sacred duty". [29] Mangan asks whether the prime consideration was the welfare of the indigenous people as a whole or preservation of British cultural and political dominance by providing Western schooling to only the elite few. [30]

Extending some of these historians' arguments to girls' schooling could prove problematic. If British schooling was designed to create a small core of educated men to fuel the colonial system, what was the point in educating girls? Stevenson is the only historian to explicitly make this link with British inaction in the area of girls' schooling. [31] Many other authors simply gloss over the area or dismiss female schooling as based around domestic skills and affecting only a small proportion of the population, with minimal impact on society as a whole. [32] This thesis will argue that the importance of girls' schooling and female education should not be so easily dismissed. Teacher training provided further opportunity for women to seek skilled employment and served as the basis for some participation in public life. School policies had different impacts on both sexes, and considering the experiences and opportunities for girls and women, a different view and assessment of British policy can be reached.

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[28] Stevenson, *Cultivators and Administrators*, (1975), p7.
[29] ibid, p9; Greenlee in J.A. Mangan, (ed) *'Benefits bestowed'?* (1988), p16.
[30] Mangan, (ed) *'Benefits bestowed'?* (1988).
[31] Stevenson, *Cultivators and Administrators*, (1975), p93.
[32] Eg: Wong, *Comparative Studies*, (1973); Wong and Hong, *Education in Malaysia*, (1975); Wong and Phang, *The Changing Pattern of Teacher Education*, (1975); Salleh, *Malay Secular Education*, (1979); Seng, *Seeds of Separatism*, (1975).

Gender and Empire

Experiences of colonialism and colonial schooling were different for men and women, boys and girls. In studies of schooling in Malaya, historians refer primarily to boys. Girls are mentioned rarely, if at all. Excluding Malay female teachers and students does a disservice to the complexity of developing Malay identity during the period. Schooling for girls was assumed by British administrators, Islamic modernists and Malay teachers to be one of the main ways in which Malay society would advance, and women were also debating in print what it meant to be a Malay woman in the ethnically diverse colony and the Empire as a whole. In the Malay context, there are no in-depth studies of how women made colonialism work for them. Studies focus on the British as the active partners in the colonial relationship. In contrast, I will argue that a group of Malay women teachers was highly proactive, both in expanding the number and scope of schools for Malay girls and in using the colonial system to advance their own careers. Their numbers may have been small, only a couple of hundred in Johor, but the Malay women teachers were nonetheless an important part of the new Malay educated classes.

There are a number of studies on gender and the British Empire, particularly focussing on India. However, many are more concerned with the role of white women within the discourse of empire than on the position of colonised women, particularly within the Southeast Asian context. The same omission also plagues histories of women and missions. Other studies focus more on British conceptions of natives as feminine/feminised, but apply these ideas to the men of the societies in question, glossing over what this may mean for conceptions of the colonised feminine.

I will also draw from other fields, including anthropology, in order to analyse colonial society, Zain and the women teachers of Johor. Authors in this discipline have grappled with similar issues surrounding women, tradition and modernity. In *Matriliny and Modernity*, a study of the matrilineal society of Rembau in Negeri Sembilan, Maila Stivens argues that women were often presented by both British and Islamic reformers as tied to tradition and Malay customs. Stivens sets out to reveal the role of gender in the construction of such societies, [33] and presents the way in which women were regarded by many as a source of transmission for new ideas. The British argued that Malay women needed to be liberated by the (Western) "civilising" process. [34] Islamic discourse urged an Islamic modernisation. It is rare for Islamic intellectual movements and British colonialism to be analysed in tandem in a work on Malay women. By highlighting the interdependence of these intellectual currents, Stivens provides a useful framework for this thesis to follow, although her context is significantly different from that of the Malay women teachers of Johor.

Philippa Levine's collection of studies in *Gender and Empire* considers gender and colonialism in regard to both colonised and coloniser women. [35] In particular, Catherine Hall's chapter on gender and empire considers the role of gender in justifying British colonialism in India. British rhetoric expressed the idea that the more civilised a race, the more the women are "exalted" rather than "degraded". "Progress" was linked to women's "improvement" and forms of

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[33] Maila Stivens, *Matriliny and Modernity: Sexual Politics and Change in Rural Malaysia*, (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996), p7.
[34] ibid, p4; Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire*, (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) pp49-50.
[35] Levine (ed), *Gender and Empire*, (2004). Bush's chapter on gender and empire in the 20th century concentrates almost entirely on coloniser women.

companionate marriage. Colonial authors argued that Indians did not have the proper relations between men and women, and constructed women as degraded victims of a barbaric society of effeminate and incapable men as judged by the standards of the truly civilised society, Britain. [36] The British stated that they were saving Indian women from barbarism and this justification became a tool in the legitimisation of Britain's right to rule. It was a colonial discourse, a justification of conquest and domination, and a way of representing Indian women by assuming their inferiority to British ones.[37] Similarly, early British administrators presented Malay women as childlike and ignorant despite significant evidence to the contrary. Educators increasingly saw schooling as the primary means of raising the status of Malay women, an emphasis shared by Islamic modernists.

Islamic Modernism

Islamic modernism originally arose among scholars at Cairo's Al-Azhar Mosque at the end of the 19th century. The movement had its basis in Western colonialism extending throughout Muslim societies. For the purposes of this thesis, my focus is on important developments in the Islamic modernism movement that related to the roles of women. British administrators wanted to raise the position of women in Egyptian society and give them a basic schooling in order to make them better wives and mothers. [38] Egyptian intellectuals were influenced by these colonial narratives, which linked such changes to the

[36] Hall in Levine (ed), *Gender and Empire*, (2004), p51.
[37] ibid, p52.
[38] See Chapter 2.

progress and modernisation of a country. However, they also wished to preserve the primacy of Islam. As a result, the goals of Islamic modernists were presented in Egyptian publications as springing from Islam rather than the West.

There were a number of commonalities between Islamic modernism in Malaya and other areas of the Muslim world. The importance of modernity, the superiority of Islam, separate schools for boys and girls, and the role of women as mothers were emphasised in many variants of Islamic modernist thought. These Islamic modernist ideologies had travelled quickly to the Malay world. Modern technology played a significant part in spreading new ideas. Steamships, the telegraph, the printing press, and increasingly fast and easy travel between Malaya, Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies and the Middle East all contributed. Contact became continuous, fast and regular. [39] As a result, Zain and the women of the *PPMJ* received similar messages from British colonisers in Malaya and from Islamic modernists such as Qasim Amin and Syed Syeikh al-Hadi. [40]

Malayan Islamic modernism and Islamic modernists appear in a number of academic studies, for instance Roff's pioneering work on Malay nationalism (1974). They are also significant enough to warrant entire studies, such as Ibrahim bin Abu Bakar's *Islamic Modernism in Malaya* (1994). [41] However, these works do not deal in depth with how Islamic modernism affected Malay women, let alone how it was used as a source for female agency. Authors such as Howard Federspiel (1970) on the Netherlands East Indies are useful for gaining a

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[39] Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds*, (London/New York, Routledge Curzon, 2003).
[40] See Chapters 2 and 3.
[41] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974); Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya*, (1994).

sense of the impact of Islamic modernism on Muslim women, [42] and Charles Kurzman (2002) briefly mentions Malaya. [43] However, a focus on the effects of Islamic modernism on Malay women is lacking from many sources.

Islamic modernist ideas on schooling were particularly important for the Malay women teachers. The latter argued that without access to knowledge as advocated by the Quran, Malay girls would be poor mothers. Schooling was presented as having an Islamic rather than a Western precedent. Islamic identification was a means of legitimising the women teachers' demands for female schooling without seeing themselves as stepping beyond Malay Muslim identity and allowable behaviour.

At times, it is unclear whether Malay thinkers of the early 20th century simply indigenised Egyptian forms of Islamic modernism or whether they actively adapted the arguments and forms of the movement to the Malayan context. The *kaum muda* were strongly influenced by Egypt, and some of Malay modernist al-Hadi's (1867-1934) arguments are almost direct quotes from the Egyptian modernist Qasim Amin (1803-1908). However, Malayan Islamic modernism became increasingly localised during the 1920s and 1930s. The nature of the plural society in the Peninsula and Singapore, an increasing emphasis on a Malay identity that superseded Islam, and the role of Malay women in determining their own position – all these characteristics mean that existing models of Islamic modernism in other countries are only partially

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[42] Howard M Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia*, (New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series, 1970).
[43] Charles Kurzman (ed), *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

applicable to Malay women. A similar problem applies when discussing Malay identity.

Malay Identity

One of the most important contributions of Malay intellectuals during the 1930s was towards the development of Malay identity. The latter was defined during the 1930s in terms of opposition to “others” in Malay society, particularly Chinese and Indian immigrants. Ethnic identification was encouraged by the British, although not necessarily created by them, and is likely to have been a result of pre-colonial identifications as well as immigration encouraged by colonial policies. Such differentiation was also encouraged by Islamic scholarship. The result was a strongly localised Malay identity arising from a complex system of interlocking influences, an ongoing process rather than a fixed identity. However, expressions of changing Malay identity were often presented by Malay authors as maintaining a pre-existing Malayness rather than creating a new one. The Malay women teachers were active participants in this process, although their contribution is rarely recognised in studies on the subject.

William Roff (1974) was the first major scholar to publish on Malay nationalism. However, Malay women were not a focus of his research, since women’s history was only just beginning to influence historical writing at the time. Thus Roff focussed on the most immediately visible individuals, and they were all male. The same absence marks many sources, including British primary sources from the period. Malay women and their experiences were submerged, and a narrative leading to Independence became most important. Sections of

Roff's work, such as the problems of inadequate training and too few teachers, could apply word for word to Malay women teachers as well as to men. Roff has since published further on the subject, [44] however, Malay women still do not appear as a part of his analysis of Malay nationalism and identity.

Roff's work is particularly significant for his exposition of the rise of communal, ethnic and nationalist feeling prior to World War II. He emphasises the importance of teachers, schools and the Sultan Idris Training College, as well as the ways in which Malay nationalism developed and permeated through all levels of Malay society. Roff uses a number of sources to reach his conclusions including Malay-language publications, colonial office documents and secondary sources, and also seeks to place the development of Malay nationalism in a Southeast Asian and colonial context.

Later historians, such as Milner (1994), have argued that Roff's work needs to be reconsidered in light of the prominence he gives to nationalistic unity. [45] Milner argues that Roff regards nationalism as a given, when it was a novel ideology in the process of being defined. [46] Milner's work centres on a limited sample, focussing on Malay perceptions, and aims to interrogate public sources and growth of ideas such as "*Tanah Melayu*", the "land of the Malays" which came to stand for the Peninsula as a whole rather than its nine separate sultanates or the broader Malay world. However, even Milner still defaults to a male definition of Malay nationalism and nationalists. Therefore, the problem of the absence of Malay women in discussions of Malay identity extends well into

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[44] See for example his chapters in Owen (ed), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, (2005). There is a general chapter on race, gender and class but the Malay nationalists discussed by Roff are still all male.
[45] Milner, *The Invention of Politics*, (1994), p5.
[46] ibid.

the period in which authors would be expected to consider women's history as an important subject for investigation. It is also important to consider the ways in which Malays expressed their sense of self-identification.

Self-definition of Malay identity has been developing for centuries. Leonard Andaya, writing in 2008 about the 16th century, identifies the way that the term "Melayu" was only used by Malays in comparison to other ethnic groups. Otherwise identification with a sultanate continued. [47] Up to and including the 19th century, Malays were generally more concerned with their differences than their similarities. [48] Ethnic identifications as Malays across the whole of Malaya were still in flux. The plural society served to extend the boundaries of what was considered "Malay", as identification became linked to culture and emotion rather than having a purely ethnic basis. [49] However, by the 1920s and 1930s the concept of "*bangsa Melayu*" became less porous and more potent. [50] Aspects of this shared cultural identification, such as the Islamic faith, were later emphasised by Malay intellectuals and the women of the *PPMJ*. Their world view was Malay-focussed, defined in opposition to non-Malay others, particularly the Chinese residents of the Peninsula.

Another way of conceptualising identity can be found in Thongchai Winichakul's *Siam Mapped* (1994). In Siam, through the methods of mapping, claiming, defending by treaty and the ideology of rulers Rama IV, V and VI, the geographical boundaries of the nation served as a means of establishing a

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[47] Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, (2008), p80.
[48] Milner, *The Invention of Politics*, (1994).
[49] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), pp183-4.
[50] Milner, *The Invention of Politics*, (1994), p12.

national identity, rather than reflecting an existing situation. [51] Similarities between a people, as well as differences from "others", also served to define boundaries. [52] Thongchai presents nationhood as a cultural construct, [53] a mental state mapped onto the physical world. He argues that colonial powers defined Siam's borders, and that Siam's modernising kings filled in that defined territorial space with a Siamese identity. A similar process was taking place in Malaya, but without the single royal family that was such a feature of Siamese identity. The 1909 treaty between the British and Siam and demarcation by treaties with the Dutch from the Netherlands East Indies meant that Malays increasingly contrasted their own religion, Malay culture and ethnicity with those of immigrants and other colonies. A purely geographical Malay identity was fractured by the presence of migrant groups. As a result, Thongchai's conception of the "geobody" is a useful way of thinking about Malay concepts of nation as they relate to the physical world and colonial boundaries, but is not entirely apt for the context of this thesis.

Kahn (2006) is another influential author whose focus on the agency of individual Malays and Malay organisations in formulating Malay identity is highly useful. Kahn discusses whether Malayan pluralism was a result of pre-colonial conditions, a product of labour migration as a result of colonial policies, or a direct result of a divide and rule policy of colonial governance. His conclusion is that Malays did not merely reproduce colonial discourses, and that at any given time there were no clearly agreed boundaries on what it meant to be

[51] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), p130.
[52] ibid, pp16, 68.
[53] ibid, p3.

a Malay. During this period, identity was constantly in flux. [54] Kahn identifies the interconnected nature of the influences on Malays during the colonial period, a context of dynamism, movement and constant contact. [55] In such a context, the actions and writings of Zain and the women of the *PPMJ* make far more sense than within a rigid model of Malay nationalism, which does not allow for their own agency and the interconnectedness of their influences.

The growth of Malay identity was closely tied to the rise of a Malay literary culture. Between 1870 and 1941, 162 Malay language periodicals were printed, along with eight in English aimed at Malays and three in both Malay and English. [56] Malay language journalism began to reach greater numbers of Malay readers. Novels and textbooks were published in both *rumi* (Malay written in the Roman alphabet) and *jawi* (modified Arabic script) Malay. Specialist publications for teachers' organisations, women and interest groups such as the *Sahabat Pena* (Pen Friends) illuminate new areas of debate and discussion. Malay identity, British colonialism, Islamic practice, the plural society, the role of women, the importance of schools and a range of other topics were discussed in print throughout the Malay Peninsula. Authors and publishers had high aims: not just entertainment, but remodelling Malay society to fit varying definitions of Malay modernity. Through these publications, the historian is able to trace social and political changes, literary conventions and social realities. [57]

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[54] Kahn, *Other Malays*, (2006), pp16-17.
[55] ibid, pp39, 43.
[56] William Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals Published in the Straits Settlements and Peninsular Malay States, 1876-1941*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p1.
[57] Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, *Modern Malay Literary Culture: A Historical Perspective*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Research Notes and Discussion Paper no. 62, 1987), p1.

Women's Roles and the Impact of Colonialism

In order to study the impact of girls' schools and teacher training, it is necessary to first consider pre-colonial gender relationships. Scholarship on gender relationships in Southeast Asia often presents male/female relations as egalitarian, with an emphasis on complementarity. [58] Scholars have regularly stopped short of interrogating in detail how colonialism affected women's roles and lives. When considering gender in Malaya and Malaysia, almost all of the available works concentrate on contemporary post-colonial examples. There are few detailed studies of the role and position of women in Southeast Asia in pre-colonial times. This is one of the reasons why Barbara Andaya's *The Flaming Womb* is so crucial. [59] She situates the whole paradigm of higher status in a comparative context, and examines a huge variety of textual and visual sources. Andaya argues that, based on gender, and despite historical and cultural

[58] Barbara Watson Andaya (ed), *Other Pasts: Women, Gender and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia*, (Honolulu: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 2000); Barbara Watson Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), p2; Aihwa Ong and Michael G Peletz (eds) *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Barbara Ramusack and Sharon Sievers, *Women in Asia: Restoring Women to History*, (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999); Virginia H Dancz, *Women and Party Politics in Peninsular Malaysia*, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987) p8; Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce: Volume One: The Lands Below the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) p6; Aihwa Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

[59] Andaya *The Flaming Womb*, (2006).

specificity, the region can be viewed as a whole, and the idea of continuity between pre-colonial and colonial ideas of women should be fostered. [60]

Some studies of Malay women under colonialism and since Independence in 1957 argue that British policy and schools had only a superficial impact on the roles and lives of women in Malaya. One example, Lenore Manderson, argues that *adat* (custom) and Islam were complementary as they presented roles for women based on biology. She states that formal (British) schooling supported such ideas.[61] To some degree this is indeed the case, although the role of British schools as a catalyst for changes in women's roles should not be dismissed. [62] Manderson argues that it is unhelpful to view *adat*/Islam, female/male, patriarchal and oppressive/communitarian and egalitarian as oppositions. Women redefined and reinterpreted Islamic principles, creeds and traditions to serve their needs, and men could use *adat* for contemporary identity politics. [63] She also stresses a degree of Malay flexibility and autonomy, which do not always appear in much of the secondary literature. However, her studies of the period prior to World War II concentrate on specific aspects of British policy, such as prostitution, rather than on broader roles of women in colonial society, or the very early women's groups. Barbara Ramusack and Sharon Sievers (1999) argue that the British (and others) understood men as the agents of expansion and

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[60] ibid, p4.
[61] Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980) p26.
[62] Jamilah Ariffin, *Women and Development in Malaysia*, (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduduk Publications, 1992) and Benjamin Murtagh, *The Portrayal of the British in Traditional Malay Literature*, (PhD, University of London (SOAS), 2005).
[63] Manderson in Kalpana Ram, and Margaret Jolly (eds), *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p243.

women as socialisers of children. [64] This perception was reflected in British arguments about Malay schools for boys and girls. The British also promoted the ideal of companionate-style marriage: an educated man would want an educated wife.

Overall, constructions of the feminine in Malaya and Malaysia have been defined mostly by anthropologists and mostly on the basis of studies in rural areas and matrilineal societies. Anthropologists present official British policy on gender as altering the everyday lives of the Malayan peasantry as little as possible. Conceptions of the feminine remained largely unchanged, they argue, with minimal British impact. However, by bringing a historical approach I seek to add to this argument by considering how Malay women used the British system to their advantage. During the colonial period, schooling and its associated opportunities mostly affected the new (generally urban) middle classes, created as a result of the policies and opportunities of the colonial state.

Arguments for the impact of the British system on Malay women do not generally appear in studies about colonialism or schooling. Instead, they can be found in various theses considering the "Emancipation of Women", social change during and after the Japanese occupation, and the roles of teachers and teacher unionism in Malaya. For Halinah Bamahadj, it was World War II and not the Malayan Union which provided the catalyst for expansion. [65] Overall, Bamahaj provides a nuanced reading of the beginnings of the women's movement in Malaya but like Awang Had Salleh her primary focus is post

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[64] Ramusack, and Sievers, *Women in Asia*, (1999).
[65] Halinah Bamahaj, "*The Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya on Malay Society and Politics 1941-1945"*, (Thesis, ANU Microfilm).

Japanese invasion. [66] In addition, women and their concerns are presented in Bamahaj's work as separate from the rest of Malay society – the thesis mostly considers men and male organisations, and the significant impact the Japanese occupation had on their membership and aims. On the other hand, Asiah binti Abu Samah's 1960 thesis *Emancipation of Malay Women* argues that the beginnings of "emancipation" (in the sense of being able to participate in education, politics and public life) for Malay women occurred before the commencement of World War II. She argues that World War II forced women to create their own livelihood (neglecting the fact that many lower class women already worked for a living on family farms and on plantations), and that the later Malayan Union conflict "spontaneously" caught up the "majority" of Malay women in nationalist sentiment. [67]

There are some studies of the women's movement in Malaysia, rather than Malaya. Cecilia Ng, Maznah Mohamad and Beng Hui Tan's *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia* (2006) is the most notable. It deals with feminism as cultural influence and social and political force in Malaysia, and its role in the lives of the Malaysian people and Malaysian state. Malaysian women are divided by ethnic and cultural roots, as well as class.[68] Some examples are given of the women's movement before World War II, such as the *PPMJ* and female Islamic reformers. However, the origins of the feminist movement are argued to have occurred after World War II, as women received their leadership training and politicisation during the Japanese occupation. The nationalist

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[66] Salleh, *Malay Secular Education*, (1979).
[67] Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960) pp10-11.
[68] Cecilla Ng, Maznah Mohamad and Tan Beng Hui, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia: An Unsung (R)evolution*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) p1.

movement is presented as spawning debates on roles in the workplace, formal education, and participation in political organizations. [69]

Meredith L. Weiss and Saliha Hassan's *Social Movements in Malaysia* (2003) also touches on the early origins of the women's movement, as it is amongst Malaysia's oldest social movements. The *PPMJ* is again mentioned, as is their emphasis on girls' schooling, cooking, handcrafts, and adult literacy, and the increasing development of a politicised public sphere from the 1920s. Lai Suat Yan's chapter: "The Women's Movement in Peninsular Malaysia, 1900-99" barely touches on the 1920s and 1930s. The decades prior to World War II receive a total of 5 lines of text, covering issues relating to girls' schooling and women's education, and a single mention of the *PPMJ*. The chapter then jumps to the 1940s and the Japanese Occupation. [70]

Studies of Malay girls' schooling and women teachers are scarce. The most comprehensive study of female Malay education (her term) is by Manderson. [71] The short article focuses on schooling for Malay girls, gender bias in the curriculum, and British and Malay attitudes towards the schooling of girls. Manderson states that there was little significant change in the Malay community until after World War II. [72] She mentions *Bulan Melayu*, but only when referring to Zain, and the *PPMJ* and MWTC are not mentioned at all. The teachers' college in particular does not fit with Manderson's argument that prior to World War II Malay female schooling appealed only to elite families. My research will

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[69] ibid p17.
[70] Meredith L. Weiss and Saliha Hassan (eds), *Social Movements in Malaysia from Moral Communities to Ngo's*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).
[71] Lenore Manderson, "The Development and Direction of Female Education in Peninsular Malaysia", (*JMBRAS*, Vol 51, No 2, 1978, pp100-122).
[72] ibid.

show that the urban middle classes and well off villagers sought schooling for their girls when opportunities became available. This article demonstrates the absence of Zain and the *PPMJ* even in studies on this subject.

Methodology

All of the above sources have very different aims and scope, and most illuminate only sections of Malay women's ideas and experiences, their historical context, or their achievements. Used together, these sources provide a much more balanced and nuanced picture than presented in existing studies of the period. I will also use a variety of methodologies, from the immediacy of biography to theoretical frameworks drawn from studies of gender, empire, schooling and colonial life. I will consider in depth the Malay women teachers, their agenda and arguments, publications and achievements.

This thesis will rely on a biographical framework to illuminate neglected areas of Southeast Asian history. *Southeast Asian Lives* (2007) provides a useful demonstration of the importance of biography in writing history. The 20th century was an era of rapid transformation, and many official histories are unable to capture the diversity of people's experiences. [73] There has been a tendency amongst nationalist historians to focus on the important and powerful and thus they fail to tell the stories of workers, peasants, and women. [74] Nevertheless,

[73] Roxana Waterson (ed), *Southeast Asian Lives: Personal Narratives and Historical Experiences*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007) p2.
[74] ibid, pp5-6.

where history and biography intersect, it is possible to draw out insights into broader social and political processes.[75]

The experiences of Zain can be used to illuminate the experiences of Malay women during this period. Use of a single example to illuminate broader trends will form the basis of three chapters of this thesis: on Zain, the *P.P.M.J.*, and the MWTC. I also intend to revisit early sources in order to write an alternative biography of Zain to that which exists in much Malaysian historiography, and to contextualise historically Zain's life. After Independence, the public figure of Zain diverged from the historical facts of her early career. Instead, she came to represent a unifying force in multi-racial Malaysia as a woman who campaigned against the British and sought independence for all the races of Malaya. To acknowledge fully Zain's early career working with the British was problematic at a time when nationalism in Malaysia required anti-British sentiment. Instead, the making of "Ibu Zain" [76] began during Zain's lifetime, and has been continued after her death by her children, Malay politicians, journalists, commentators and historians. [77] I will analyse a wide

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[75] ibid, p2.

[76] The ways in which Kartini's role and writings are analysed by Coté is useful for conceptualising debate about Zain. Coté argues that the focus on Kartini's writings by later authors was not necessarily because her work was influential, but that it can be seen as representative of wider trends. Study of Kartini has tended to overemphasise the biographical at the expense of the historical, leading to a "double vision" of the actual historical Kartini and the public Kartini who emerged after 1911 as part of a broader political process. The idea of Kartini became a malleable phenomenon manipulated by political interests. Joost Coté, *The 'Education' of Java: A Modern Colonial Discourse, 1960-1905*, (PhD Thesis, Monash University, 1997), pp293-4. The process of creating "Ibu Zain" can be seen as similar, a division between the historical and the political. When I use her title in inverted commas, I refer to the public rather than the historical figure.

[77] A full and complete biography of Zain is not the purpose of this thesis, although it would be an important future project.

range of sources relating to Zain's life, in order to illuminate both her career and her experiences and the ways in which she can be used as a tool to better understand the lives of the Malay women teachers during the 1920s and 1930s.

James Warren's work on Singapore, *Rickshaw Coolie* (1986), uses colonial sources to reconstruct the lives of people who have otherwise been left out of the historical record. [78] He uses a combination of contemporary descriptions, statistical analyses and coronial records, as well as photographs and oral histories, to build a sense of the lives of the rickshaw pullers of Singapore. Warren recognises that colonial sources are often biased and serve to obscure those they discuss, but he also shows that they can reveal the details of the lives of the colonised. I will undertake a similar project using colonial records of correspondence, curricula and Education Department reports and publications, as well as interviews, *Bulan Melayu* and other sources from a Malay perspective. I aim to reconstruct the experiences of the Malay women teachers from sources with both British and Malay perspectives.

I will also use existing models when writing about publications. Virginia Hooker's work on Malay publications (2000) is extremely useful for my methodology. While she focuses on extended prose fiction rather than the journalism, poetry and short fiction which form the basis of my study, Hooker identifies modernist Islam and Western humanism as significant influences, and publishing as a powerful means of spreading ideas. [79] She also cautions against only reading sources from a post-colonial viewpoint, as colonialism was not

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[78] James F. Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore (1880-1940)*, (Singapore; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[79] Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Writing a New Society: Social Change Through the Novel in Malay*, (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia/Allen & Unwin 2000), pp3-4.

always the focus of authors. [80] In addition, like Roff, Hooker identifies the importance of horizontal bonds between authors and groups, rather than the old hierachies of obligation to a sultan. [81] Following Virginia Hooker's methodology, I will use a prominent text (*Bulan Melayu*) to illuminate the concerns of its authors and readers, the intellectual space they created for discussion and deliberation, and their role in the development of Malay intellectual thought during the 1930s.

Another useful model is Mahani Musa's article *The "Woman Question" in Malayan Periodicals, 1920-1945* (2010). [82] Musa focuses on debates about women's roles in Malay language newspapers and periodicals during the 1920s and 1930s. She seeks to determine whether women authors' concerns represented a continuous thread from previous male Malay writers. She emphasises the way in which the rise of an alien-dominated urban society proved a trigger for such considerations of Malay society, and attributed the beginnings of debate on women and their roles to the *kaum muda* (literally "new group" or "younger generation", Malayan Islamic modernists).[83] Mahani's scope is both broader than mine, in the sense that her focus is Malaya wide, and narrower, in that she primarily focuses on Malay periodicals as sources. She recognises the importance of schools to Malay women, but does not examine girls' schools in depth.

Other authors have an even narrower focus than mine. For example, Ali bin Ahmad, writing in 1975 about *Majallah Guru (MG),* a popular and long

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[80] ibid, p13.
[81] ibid, p61.
[82] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010).
[83] See Chapter 2 for further information on the *kaum muda*.

running teachers' magazine in *jawi* Malay, focuses on a particular group of male Malay teachers and intellectuals. Their ideals and arguments can be traced through the pages of their publications, especially *MG*. [84] Within the bounds of his source material, Ali is one of the few who attempt an integrated analysis of how women, girls' schooling and women leaders fit within the wider framework of a changing Malay society. The position, rights, schooling and education of Malay women occupy a section of the magazine [85] but these topics are not Ali's major focus. His work is thus a useful model for this research as Ali studies a single publication for an extended period and seeks to set the authors, events and arguments of the publication into an appropriate historical context. This thesis will perform a similar service for Zain, *BM* and the Malay women teachers of Johor.

Conclusion

This thesis will focus on a specific group of women teachers during the 1930s, and particularly on their statements and aspirations about being Malay women. Their focus was on Malay women in the construction of Malay identity, and their definition of a modern Muslim Malay woman was not a fixed end result but an ongoing process throughout this time period and beyond. Zain and the Malay women teachers wrote in Malay to reach an audience of Malay women who couldn't necessarily read English. Their alphabet of choice was Arabic,

[84] Through the course of this research, I have noted that male teachers have been studied in more depth but there is little in most studies about women teachers as leaders, even of other women.

[85] Some care must be taken with using his thesis as a source, as references are sometimes incorrect.

cementing Islam to Malay identity and situating Malays within an Islamic heritage. Later they wrote Malay in the Latin alphabet, recognizing its necessity as a passport to a modern colonial world. Either way, they were not interested in addressing Indian and Chinese women. Their concept of nation was ethnically based, and thus smaller than Malaya as a whole.

Zain and the Malay women teachers were not anti-British in rhetoric or actions. The teachers profited by their connections to British educators, administrators and education departments, and made the most of these links to advance their professional and personal goals. However, post-Independence, Zain in particular has been recast as an anti-British nationalist, loving all of the peoples of Malaya. She herself came to embrace this identity. Her children, as keepers of her legacy, as well as a number of authors, have come to do the same.

Studying Zain and the Malay women teachers of the 1920s and 1930s illuminates a neglected area in the construction of Malay identity. These women were not passive observers: they chose a set of achievable goals related to schooling and women's participation in society and devoted themselves to achieving them. They built horizontal bonds based on their shared experiences and goals, outside traditional vertical bonds of authority to sultan and family, upper or lower class background, urban or rural. They participated in the fluid, ongoing process of defining Malay identity, drawing on arguments from the Islamic and Western world to urge Malay women to ensure the place of Malays in the plural society. They published articles, lobbied for the founding of a teacher training college, and went on to become campaigners for Independence, elected politicians, and noted educators and teachers. These Malay women

teachers came into their own in a complex colonial context, the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

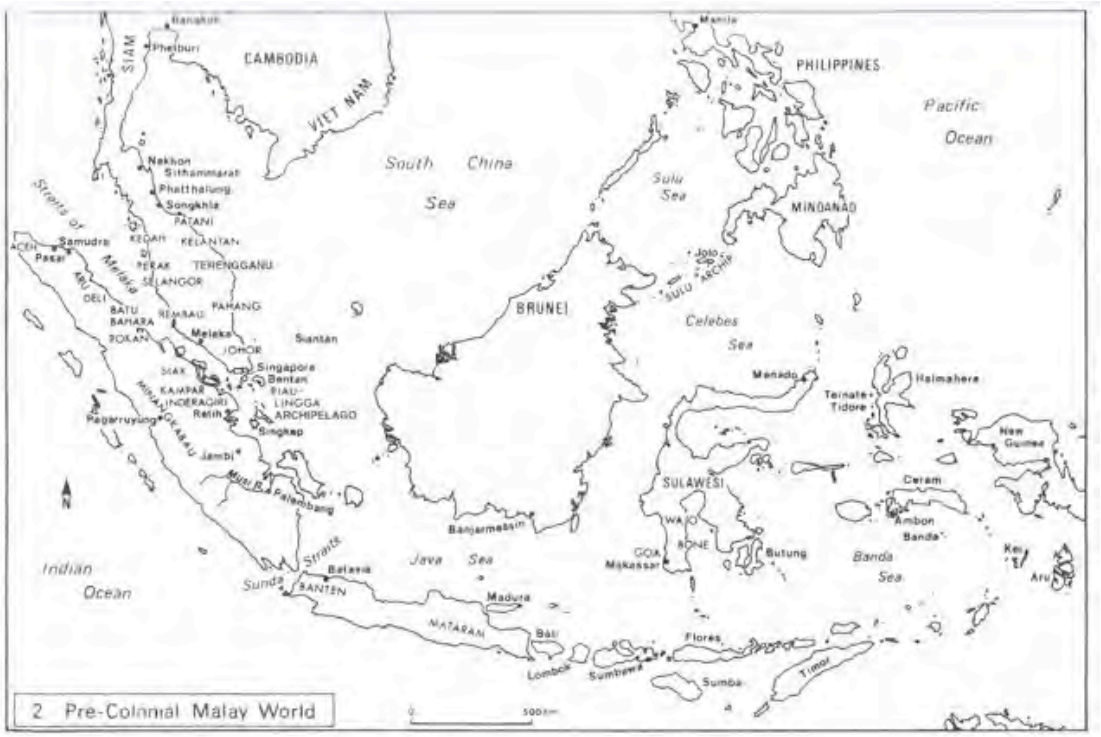
Background

The world of the Malay women teachers was extremely complex. Over a period of two centuries, the Malay world changed from a collection of sultanates to a centrally organized colonial polity. Significant economic, structural and governmental developments, especially in the late 19th and 20th centuries, changed the face of the area that would come to be known as British Malaya. An indigenized Islam was exposed to reformist currents from the Middle East, contributing to Malay engagement with modernity. The rise of the Malay language periodical press spread new ideas throughout Malaya and the Malay world. Ethnically based definitions of identity, particularly that of "*bangsa Melayu*" were on the rise amongst the new Malay middle classes during the 1920s and 1930s. Finally, British educationalists, Islamic modernists, and Malay authors and teachers began to urge vernacular schooling as the primary means of changing Malay society

The Malay World

The area which came to be known as British Malaya was not a discrete entity but a colonial creation on the Western end of the Malay world. This Malay world was polycentric, and included diverse peoples and cultures touched by trade and religions from surrounding areas. A trading network spanning all of Southeast Asia converged on the Malay archipelago, stretching from China to as far away

as Africa. [1] The area was rich in natural resources. Malay settlements followed the rivers and coast. [2] The Malay Peninsula's location astride the sea highway exposed it to influences from India, including Buddhism and Hinduism, the Middle East and Islam, China, Siam and immigration from the Indonesian archipelago. All played roles in creating the Malay world.



2 Pre-Colonial Malay World

Figure 2.1: The Pre-Colonial Malay World [3]

Political realities changed regularly in this Malay world. A series of polities based in Sumatra and the West of the Peninsula, including Srivijaya, Melaka, Johor and Riau, periodically controlled parts of the Malay world. [4] European colonial powers also intervened. In 1511, the Portuguese conquered the Sultanate of Melaka, the centre of Malay learning and literature. Melaka's

[1] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (1982), p11.
[2] ibid, p12.
[3] ibid, pxix, reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan. This material may not be copied or reproduced without permission from Palgrave Macmillan.
[4] ibid.

royal family and court moved to Johor. Portuguese Melaka fell to the Dutch in 1641 and became a fringe territory of the Dutch East Indies Company. In 1786 the British took possession of Penang Island at the northern end of the Straits. They took Melaka from the Dutch in 1796, established themselves in Singapore at the southern end of the Straits in 1819 and began to extend their sphere of influence throughout the Peninsula. With the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of London (1824), the British and Dutch created two new states within the Malay world: Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. Peoples within the British sphere began the process of forming a new identity based on an identification with "Malaya" rather than prioritising loyalty to a sultan or the Islamic religion.

The Role of Islam

The Development of Malayan Islam

It is not the purpose of this thesis to trace how Islam came to the Malay Peninsula or how Malays became Muslims [5] but it is necessary to study developments within Malayan Islam. Islam became increasingly localised over

[5] The question of who brought Islam to Malaya may never be resolved, although there is a link to trade. From the 9th century Arab traders were acquainted with Southeast Asia, but there seems to have been no organised trade until the tenth century. Many scholars regard the most important Islamic influence as that which came from India from the thirteenth century. Sufism is often suggested as a factor in the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia, and in the Malay world, and it flourished in Aceh in the 16th and 17th centuries. Sufism was a mystic stream of Islam with some readiness to incorporate local non-Islamic beliefs. There were substantial links between Melaka-Malay culture and Islam, and both served an important role in cultural transmission. The conversion of the ruler of Melaka to Islam early in the 15th century was a watershed in the history of the region. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), pp53-55. Melaka's court set a standard for sultanates that formed in harbour states along the coasts of the Indonesian archipelago in ceremony, dress, language, literature and scholarship.

time, both infusing and taking on aspects of Malay culture and practice. As Melaka expanded, its vassals were encouraged or compelled to adopt this religion. Melaka's prestige and commercial success fostered the Islamisation of the Malay Peninsula and the spread of "Malay" culture and language. [6] "The adoption of Islam brought the Malays new religious concepts, multiplied their contacts with other peoples, nurtured a sense of solidarity with the Muslim world and defined the parameters of their social and economic life." [7] Islam thus became an integral part of Malay identity.

Prior to the British protectorate, there was a general awareness in the nine Malay sultanates of the Peninsula of the link between Islam and Malay identity. To convert was to "*masok Melayu"* (become Malay).[8] There was a clear correlation between government and the religious life of the people through the relationship between ruler and ruled and the Sultan's responsibility for both the spiritual and material wellbeing of his subjects. [9] *Adat* (Malay customs and customary law) and *agama* (religion) were related parts of the one whole, a society controlled by sultans, harbour masters and riverine chiefs. [10] Islamic teachers had brought the Arabic writing system and Arabic language to Malays. The Quran, Hadith, theological treatises, manuals on kingship and an extensive popular literature on heroes of Islam inducted Malays into Islamic civilization. Translations into Malay spread Islamic culture widely through the Malay world.

By the 17th and 18th centuries, Islam was firmly established in the Malay archipelago. Azumardi Azra argues that these centuries are often seen as a dark

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[6] ibid, p56.
[7] Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions*, (1979), p109.
[8] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974), p67.
[9] ibid, pp68.
[10] ibid p69.

time for Islamic polities, situated on the eve of European colonial expansion. However, he also states that that this period was one of the most dynamic periods in the social and intellectual history of Malay Islam. [11] Southeast Asian religious scholars based in Mecca and Medina attracted large numbers of followers and students who began to establish an Islamic discourse. From this time come commentaries on the Quran for Muslims of the Jawi community and a flow of rulings on religious questions for Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. Azra highlights a tendency amongst some scholars to regard Islam in the Malay world as lacking a stable core and as distinct from Islam in the Middle East. Malay Islam was affected by local influences, but it was never cut off from the Islamic heartland. [12] In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Islamic reformism in the Middle East would contribute to the rise of a movement that would impact on the schooling of Malay girls: Islamic modernism.

Islamic Modernism

Islamic modernism emerged among a group of Muslim thinkers at Al-Azhar University in Egypt in the late 19th century and spread in various forms throughout the Muslim world. In the second half of the 19th century, Muslim societies were increasingly dominated by Western colonialism, technology and philosophy, and the colonial narratives that linked such changes to the progress and modernization of a country. Azra writes: “The *ulama* had to look over one

[11] Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism*, (2004).
[12] ibid, p2.

shoulder at the past, and, at the same time, to a new future in a new world." [13] Reformers such as Muhammad Abduh [14] and Rashid Rida, [15] spread their views through magazines and pamphlets that travelled across the Islamic world. [16] Modernists argued that there was a need for "rational" education to advance Muslims who were ignorant of the true nature of Islam as a progressive religion. Mohammed Abduh called for a revival of Islam by emphasising the original form of the Quran and Hadith and purging Islamic practice of superstition and age-old interpretations. He argued that it was this accretion rather than the core of Islam that had led to a stagnation of Islamic life and loss of power to Western colonialism. [17]

A defining characteristic of Islamic modernism was a self-conscious adoption of "modern" values, including rationality, science and constitutionalism. The movement was not simply "modern" (a feature of modernity), but "modernist" (a proponent of modernity). [18] According to Ibrahim bin Abu Bakar, Islamic modernism had three main aims:

> "1. To persuade Muslims to accept Islamic teachings regarding reason, science, modern civilisation and some other Western ideas and concepts;
>
> 2. To encourage Muslims to uphold Islamic beliefs and practices; and

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[13] ibid, p150.
[14] Abduh (1849-1905) was an Egyptian scholar, jurist, author and reformer.
[15] Rida (1865-1935) was born in Syria and moved to Egypt in 1897. He was a student and fellow author of Abduh.
[16] Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism*, pp150-1.
[17] Howard M. Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia*, (New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series, 1970) p46.
[18] Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, (2002), p4.

3. To discourage Muslims from becoming Muslim secularists or Muslim conservatives." [19]

These basic aims spread to all countries reached by the movement. Modernists saw tensions between modern values and the Islamic faith as a historical accident, not an inherent feature of Islam. Charles Kurzman states that "The modern period both required and permitted this accident to be repaired: the threat of European domination made repair necessary, and the modern values associated with European domination made repair possible." [20]

According to founders Abduh and al-Afghani, [21] colonialism had caused the disintegration of a single Muslim geopolitical body, although in fact no such entity had existed since the 8th century. Modernists argued that colonialism also led to a heightened sense of difference between Muslims of client states rather than a focus on the communal bonds of Islam. The end of the universal caliphate in 1924 played into these fears. [22] However, by 1930 the emphasis of Islamic

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[19] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya*, (1994), p34.
[20] Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, (2002), p4.
[21] Al-Afghani (1838-1897) was a scholar and activist. His place of birth is not known.
[22] The most prominent of Mustafa Kemal's changes to the Ottoman Empire was the abolition of the caliphate on March 3, 1924, on the same date that the Islamic schooling and legal systems of Turkey were replaced by secular equivalents. Kemal introduced a Western-inspired modernisation, secularisation of administration, and a secular education system. By 1928 Islamic script had been replaced by a new Latin alphabet (Irfan Orga and Margarete Orga, Ataturk, (London: Michael Joseph, 1962), p225), in 1934 religious clothing including the veil was banned, and legal equality of the sexes in areas such as suffrage and inheritance was progressively enshrined in legislation. (H.C. Armstrong, *Grey Wolf: Mustafa Kemal, An Intimate Study of a Dictator*, (London: Methuen and Co, 1932) p233.) Some Muslims regarded the abolition of the caliphate as Turkey voluntarily abandoning the Muslim world. Other saw the action as more justifiable as the Quran did not mention the caliphate. Riaz Ahmed (ed), *Mustafa Kemal Ataturk*, Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Quaid-i-Azam University (2005), pp10-11.

modernists on a unified worldwide Muslim community was beginning to weaken. [23]

Geography and ethnicity were becoming increasingly important as means of defining identity, even for Muslims, a trend which extended throughout the Muslim world. The 19th and 20th centuries thus saw the rise of the "geographic Muslim". [24] Michael Laffan argues that calls from the Middle East for Islamic unity were not necessarily reflected in Malaya. [25] European colonial rule, Islamic modernist ideas, increased opportunities for travel and negotiation of what it meant to be "Malay" and "Muslim" all played a role in Malays increasingly identifying their ethnicity, rather than their religion, as their primary marker of identity. [26] Defining Malay identity was always a process, rather than a given result.

Discussion of the role of women in Muslim societies was common to Islamic modernists throughout the world. Islamic modernism was also closely associated with schooling for both boys and girls in the countries to which it spread. [27] Modernists began discussing women's roles in Islamic societies during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. [28] They argued that women who had

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[23] Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the expansion of the Pacific Sphere*, (Cambridge/New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p230.
[24] The term "Geographic Muslim" was used in a pejorative manner.
[25] Laffan, "Another Andalusia", (2007).
[26] ibid.
[27] See Chapter 3 for more information on Malayan Islamic modernism and schools.
[28] Eg: "It is critical that women have access to certain careers of social importance, such as medical treatment of infants and women's diseases, teaching in orphanages and kindergartens, and all the functions involved with health, education and culture without these activities preventing the accomplishment of her duties as mother of the family." Haddad, quoted in Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, (2002), p24.

attended schools would make better mothers, be able to raise their own children according to modern ideas of health and hygiene, and would teach other women how to do the same. The debate on women in Egyptian society also encompassed marriage, polygamy and divorce. Eventually, Egyptian reformers began to campaign against European colonial powers, emphasising the importance of the emancipation of women as an integral part of the struggle against backwardness, foreign colonialism and traditionalist Islam. [29]

Egyptian Islamic Modernism: Qasim Amin

As Malay Islamic modernism was influenced by the Egyptian movement, it is necessary to consider the latter in some detail. In Egypt, reformers blamed the backwardness and ills of Egyptian society on the lack of appropriate schooling for women. Qasim Amin was not the first Islamic modernist to discuss the position of women and the importance of education and schooling, but he is the best known. [30] His most well known books were *The Liberation of Women* (1899) and *The New Woman* (1901). Amin stated that "Education is the only means by which a human being can rise from a state of corruption to dignity and honour. All natural laws indicate that men and women have the same mental faculties." [31] Such modernists argued that education was thus a prerequisite for

[29] Qasim Amin, (trans Samiha Sidhon Peterson), *The Liberation of Women*, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1992), px.
[30] Amin was born in 1865 in Egypt, and was first educated in a state school for the children of military officers. He then went to France for further education where he studied law. On his return to Egypt in 1883, he joined the Cairo law courts.
[31] Amin, quoted in Kader, *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society*, (1987), p37.

the transformation of Egypt, [32] and that the talents of half of society were being wasted.

For modernists, appropriate schooling was the primary medium for enabling women to fulfil their function in society and the family, with minds freed from harmful traditions and superstition. Amin saw women's status in the family as a microcosm of society: society oppressed men and men, in turn, oppressed women. [33] When the status of women was low, society as a whole suffered:

> "This is the basis of our observations. This evidence of history confirms and demonstrates that the status of women is inseparably tied to the status of a nation. When the status of a nation is low, reflecting an uncivilised condition for that nation, the status of women is also low, and when the status of a nation is elevated, reflecting the progress and civilisation of that nation, the status of women in that country is also elevated." [34]

Amin argued that in order to raise the status of women, they needed more than just household skills, and should be able to read, write and have knowledge of history, politics and basic science:

> "In my opinion, a woman cannot run her household well unless she attains a certain amount of intellectual and cultural knowledge. She should learn at least what a man is required to learn through the primary stage of education. This would ensure her grasp of some introductory

[32] From introduction to Amin, *The Liberation of Women*, (1992), px.
[33] ibid, ppx-xi.
[34] ibid, p6.

> principles and allow her to make her own choices. She could master these principles and be involved intellectually whenever she wished.
> It is important for a woman to be able to read and write, to be able to examine the basis of scientific information, to be familiar with the history of various countries, and to be able to acquire knowledge of the natural sciences and of politics. This knowledge needs to be complemented by a thorough understanding of cultural and religious beliefs. Eventually her knowledge will enable her to accept sound ideas and to discard the superstitions and myths that presently destroy the minds of all women… She should be taught to appreciate those qualities that affect the family, maintain the kinship structure, and are needed to support the social structure of our society. She will gradually internalise these values, and they will become a dominant and permanent part of her spirit… I believe that a woman who lacks this upbringing will be unable to adequately carry out her role in society or in the family." [35]

Nonetheless, Amin advocated only primary level schooling for girls. While his proposals were limited, almost all girls and many boys lacked any schooling at the time. Amin's view of women was one which emphasized the idea of separate spheres, women as wives and mothers rather than competing with men. He argued that a woman who had attended school would be able to take responsibility as the first moral, religious and secular teacher of her children, for the benefit of Egyptian society. [36] Amin was also at pains to deny

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[35] Amin, *The Liberation of Women*, (1992), p12.

[36] "We have forgotten that an adult man is a product of his mother's

arguments that schooling girls would lead to immorality. [37] At that time, he agreed that women's minds were inferior and inclined to deceit, but such inferiority was a consequence of ignorance and the low status of women, not an innate quality. [38] Such arguments for girls' schooling echoed those in Britain at the time, [39] and were later disseminated in Malaya.

The hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) heightened a sense of Muslim fellowship amongst Malays, as well as strengthening communal existence. [40] Journeying to Mecca became easier for Malays during the 19th century, once regular steamship services connected Malaya to Jeddah. [41] Ideas and people thus flowed backward and forwards between the Malay world and the Middle East. In this context,

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> influence during childhood. I wish that men would understand the importance of this complete tie between a man and his mother. It is the crux of everything I have written in this book, and I repeat: it is impossible to have successful men unless their mothers can prepare them for success. This is the worthwhile goal that civilisation has entrusted to the women of our era. Women carry out these heavy responsibilities in all the civilized countries of the world, bearing children then moulding them into adults."

ibid, p71.

[37] "We need to repudiate a counterargument that we cannot ignore. This counterargument assumes that education would be harmful to a woman's character. We cannot be silent on this concern because it is the only obstacle supported by the majority, who have used it to keep a woman from education. Deeply rooted in men's minds is the idea that an educated women and a chaste woman cannot be one and the same… We must deny, and insist upon denying, that education will destroy a woman's character, because education – especially when accompanied by the refinement of character – will elevate a woman, and return her to an esteemed status. It will perfect her mental ability and allow her to think, meditate and reflect upon her actions."

ibid, p31.

[38] When it came to the question of a literate woman's ability to write letters to a lover, Amin pointed out that other methods were available to allow the same behaviour among the uneducated, including using a male or female servant, a matchmaker or an elderly neighbour as a messenger. Amin, *The Liberation of Women*, (1992). Similar concerns had been voiced in Malaya.

[39] See Chapter 3.

[40] Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood*, (2003), p33.

[41] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p157.

Cairo came to occupy a new position in the Muslim world: a centre of analysis of the impact of European colonizing powers on Islamic societies.

Islamic Modernism in the Netherlands East Indies

Studies of Islamic Modernism in the Netherlands East Indies can help to shed light on the situation in Malaya. The Indies demonstrates how Islamic modernism became localised, and has been studied in greater detail. For Islamic modernists in the Netherlands East Indies, the roles of an ideal woman were threefold: she would be a servant of God, the mother of her household, and an educator of her children. It was not proper for a pious wife to rule or administer society and the state, and a Western-style career was extremely improper.[42]

Islamic publications played an important role in influencing ideas and behaviour relating to women in both the Netherlands East Indies and Malaya. M.B. Hooker identifies four main sources of proscription for Muslim women in the Indies: *fatawa* (Islamic legal pronouncements), the laws of the state, the Friday sermon (*khutbah*) and instructional literature. [43] The last of these is particularly important for this thesis. The spread of the print revolution throughout the Muslim world in the late 19th century produced a substantial body of publications; at the same time positive Muslim responses began to be written

[42] Hooker, *Indonesian Islam*, (2003), p127. Like their Malayan equivalents, Indies Islamic modernists were referred to as the *kaum muda* (new group), and they disputed with the *kaum tua* (old group), those who thought that religious knowledge learned by rote was a matter of faith, infallible, and not intended to be scrutinised by reason. Any attack on this system was seen by the latter as an attack on the Islamic religion as a whole. Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam*, (1970), pp46-7.

[43] Hooker, *Indonesian Islam*, (2003).

and circulated. Manifestations differed from country to country. [44] While aspects of Malay modernization, colonialism and experience with Islamic modernism were in some ways similar to those of the Middle East and the Netherlands East Indies, the situation in Malaya also differed in one significant respect: the plural society.

Malayan Islamic Modernism and the *Kaum Muda*

Islamic modernism arose in the context of colonialism, as a way to create modern Islamic countries that could catch up with the West. In the case of Malaya, the context for Islamic reformers was the colony's plural society. The Islamic modernist movement in Malaya, as elsewhere, tended to be an urban centred phenomenon linked to the rise of an educated middle class. The modernists were not a monolithic group. They debated polygamy, women's rights in regard to divorce, dress and their participation in politics. [45] Exponents picked and chose what aspects of modernist thought they adopted and emphasised. [46]

In the context of the N.E.I., reformers described themselves as being "new". In Malaya, *muda* was initially a pejorative term applied to Islamic modernists by their opponents, though the term was later adopted by the

[44] ibid, p125.
[45] Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, (2002), pp19, 23.
[46] The Islamic modernist movement must be differentiated not only from Islamic traditionalists, but from secularists, and particularly from later religious revivalists, who espoused modern values such as social equality and mass education, and stressed a sense of authenticity and divine mandate. ibid, p4.

former.[47] The main opposition to the *kaum muda* (younger generation) was the *kaum tua* (older generation), the existing Malay political and religious elites.

It can be problematic to refer to the *kaum muda* as exponents of modernity. The *kaum muda* usually described their goals as reforming popular practice to renew the Islamic community. They argued that Islam was valid for all times and places. Their apparent modernism is found in the way in which they advocated reform through an emphasis on the rational, the concept of a pristine Islamic past and the employment of aspects of modernity such as the printing press, as well as their arguments expounding technology's compatibility with Islam. [48] The *kaum muda* were thus Islamic modernists, even if they did not yet claim the term for themselves.

Roff dates the emergence of the *kaum muda* to July 1906, with the appearance of *Al-Imam*, a monthly Malay language journal published in Singapore. Authors such as al-Hadi presented the Islamic religion as a means to strengthen and realise the desires of its followers, and cure the ills of the Muslim community. [49] The first concern of publishers was religion, not social or political change. [50] However, the men of the *kaum muda* soon turned their attention to the state of Malay society, especially as Islamic modernism in Malaya became increasingly localised. Roff states that

"In an orgy of self-vilification and self-condemnation, *Al-Imam* points

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[47] ibid, p4. Some care must be taken in the use of the term. For example, in the Indonesian context, Coté uses the term to refer to young Javanese who drew on the principles of European reformism. (Coté, *The 'Education' of Java*, (1997).
[48] Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood*, (2003), pp7-8.
[49] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974), p56. See Chapter 3 for further information on al-Hadi.
[50] However, the idea of such a division was slightly foreign to them at the same time, considering the concept of the undifferentiated *umat* or community where everything is subsumed under Divine law.

> to the backwardness of the Malays, their domination by alien races, their laziness, their complacency, their bickering amongst themselves, and their inability to cooperate for the common good." [51]

The *kaum muda* argued that the position of Malays as a people dominated and sidelined in their own land was to some degree shared by the rest of the Islamic world. Malayan modernists stated that Islam was not hostile to Western progress and knowledge, and that a proper understanding of Islam was the only way they could compete with other peoples and religions in the modern world. [52] Islamic modernists were divided in their attitudes towards the British. Some argued that the "ferocious British lion" was taking over. [53] On the other hand, there was a certain amount of admiration for the British amongst some modernists. Al-Hadi referred to the British as God's "righteous servants". [54] On this issue, as on many others, modernists did not express a single set of views.

The actual achievements of the Malayan *kaum muda* with regard to the schooling of girls were not particularly substantial. Modernists' views on the role of women are reflected in the scope of the schooling they advocated: a focus on religion, handcrafts and homemaking skills. Modernists stated that women should not be allowed to compete with men outside the home, make speeches or discuss economic matters. The female character would be damaged and women would have fewer children if they were to be given the same freedoms as men.

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[51] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974), p57.
[52] ibid.
[53] Al-Imam in Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, (2002), p343. Zain also looked to Japan as an example for the Malay women teachers, see Chapter 4 and 5.
[54] Al-Hadi, quoted in Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, (2002), p8.

Instead, women should be encouraged to become good wives and mothers. [55] The views of the *kaum muda* were thus more restrictive than those of the women of the *PPMJ:* the latter did not simply adopt this existing model of women's roles but adapted and built upon it to serve their own ends.

Malaya's male modernists did not greatly increase Malay girls' access to schools, [56] but they did contribute. Bakar suggests that by emphasising the importance of schooling for both sexes, they contributed to the achievements of Malay Muslim women under British rule. [57] I would add that in doing so, they helped to give the Malay women teachers a platform from which to express their ideas from an explicitly Malay Muslim perspective. Thus these women were able to express their agenda in terms of their identity as Malay Muslim women, acting for the good of the *bangsa*, as well as improving their own careers and position in society.

The Decline of Islamic Modernism

Islamic modernism as a movement began to decline in the early to mid-20th century. There were a number of reasons for this change. The first was the death of the movement's founders, charismatic individuals who pushed modernism forward. Secondly, Islamic modernism emerged during a time of Western rule in Islamic countries, and began to decline after the rise of Muslim nationalism.

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[55] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010), pp247-271.
[56] The *Madrasah al-Majuhur al-Islamiyyah, Bahagian Perempuan* was opened in 1934 in Penang. William R Roff, *Studies on Islam and society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), p122.
[57] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya,* (1994), p132. See Chapter 3 for more detail on Islamic modernist schooling for Malay girls.

Ethnic and linguistic similarities rather than religion increasingly became the basis of identity. [58] The modernists were always a minority but they planted the seeds of change. [59]

Another reason for the decline in the modernist movement in Malaya is that the *kaum muda* was in competition for Malay loyalties. Roff identifies two other significant groups who drew their membership from among Malay men during the 1920s and 1930s. The first were the Western trained elite, inspired by specifically Western socio-political values and organisations. The second were young Malay-educated intellectuals and teachers who drew on cultural, literary, and political activist movements from the Netherlands East Indies. They were pro-Malay, and focused heavily on defining Malay identity. Neither placed Islam at the centre of their concerns. "Squeezed, as it were, between these two groups, the reformists were forced increasingly onto the defensive, a process assisted by the strong 'pro-Malay' reaction evinced by the second group…"[60] However, such rigid divisions in reactions to colonialism among Malay men do not seem to have extended to Malay women. The *PPMJ* demonstrate influences from and engagement with all three of the above responses. The Malay women teachers were not necessarily Western educated, but they were acculturated and employed in the specific context of British Malaya.

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[58] ibid, pp44-5.
[59] ibid, p49.
[60] Roff in Ibrahim et al, *Readings on Islam*, (1985), p125.

Colonial British Malaya

The Creation of a British Colony in the Malay World

By the 19th century, the Malay world no longer drew legitimacy, sovereignty and authority primarily from Islam. While some areas such as Aceh maintained the authority of the Muslim elite until the end of the 19th century, [61] elsewhere colonial power structures began to displace traditional rulers. British encroachment into the Malay world was a slow process. Penang was claimed in 1786, and Melaka from 1794. In 1819 Raffles signed the treaty with the ruler of Johor which gave Singapore to the British and in 1824 the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of London formalised Dutch and British spheres of influence in the Malay world.

[61] Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism*, (2004), pp149-50.

Figure 2.2: Peninsular British Malaya. [62]

British colonial administration in Malaya did not replace existing social and religious structures, but rather modified and built on those already in

[62] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (1982), pxx, reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan. This material may not be copied or reproduced without permission from Palgrave Macmillan.

existence. The initial policy of the British in Malaya was non-intervention. Administrators were content to leave ruling to Malay sultans, as long as British interests were not compromised. Penang, Melaka and Singapore were administered together from 1826 as the Straits Settlements. From the 1860s, there was significant pressure from British and Chinese businessmen to change the policy of non-intervention as warfare in the western tin-producing states endangered their business interests in the Straits and Peninsula. [63] In response, from 1867 the Straits Settlements became a crown colony under the Colonial Office. [64]

From 1895/6, four of the nine sultanates in the Malay Peninsula – Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang – were administered as the Federated Malay States. British influence was subsequently extended, with Brunei (in Borneo) becoming a Protectorate in 1906, and the transfer of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu from Siam under the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909. The latter four states were administered as separate entities and known as the Unfederated Malay States. The process was completed in 1914 when Johor joined the Unfederated Malay States. By the 1920s and 1930s there was an increasing push for decentralisation amongst British administrators and Malay rulers alike. The political and economic interests of the Malay elite were challenged by centralisation and British administrators regarded the Federated Malay States as overcentralised and expensive. [65]

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[63] Lim Teck Ghee, *Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977), p8.
[64] The Straits Settlements were thus no longer administered as part of India and under the India Office.
[65] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p248-9.

British policies encouraged greater Chinese and Indian immigration but administrators thought that Malay political power would provide protection for the Malay "race". Historically, the Chinese often occupied important economic positions throughout Southeast Asia, [66] although the majority of Chinese and Indians in Malaya worked as labourers. [67] Non-Malay ethnic groups, particularly the Chinese, attended English language schools in greater numbers than Malays, although English-speaking Chinese remained a minority of their own community. Those with such skills were more likely to be employed in the colonial bureaucracy.

It is important to note that classifications such as "Chinese" or "Indian" hide a diversity of backgrounds. Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochiu and Hainanese were the largest groups of Chinese migrants, and Indians were most often South Indian Tamils, with some Tamils from Ceylon and Sikhs from the Punjab. [68] However, in the minds of the Malay teachers, "*orang Cina*" was sufficient designation for those they regarded as a threat to the rightful position of Malays in Malaya, views which arose in the specific context of rapid immigration and economic stratification.

Population growth in the region accelerated during the 19th century, linked to a growth in export production by bringing new areas under cultivation.[69] Colonial governments provided vital economic incentives. By 1895 the beginnings of a road network was taking shape in Malaya, and construction had begun on railways and public works. The aim was to service a form of

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[66] Ian Brown, *Economic Change in South-East Asia, c.1830-1980,* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[67] ibid, pp36-41.
[68] ibid, pp37-8.
[69] ibid, pp114-5.

plantation agriculture. [70] The British also introduced the cultivation of rubber to the Peninsula, although most Malays and some immigrants remained primarily subsistence farmers. Some Malays responded dynamically to the opportunities presented by the rubber trade: by 1953 Malays owned some 56 per cent of smallholdings. [71] Surplus income tended to be spent rather than invested in the holding. [72] Nonetheless, British administrators were hostile to Malay smallholders. The former regarded as superior the management and farming techniques of Western enterprise, disparaged smallholders' practice of growing rubber trees among other crops and clung to the stereotype of the "lazy native", despite evidence to the contrary. [73] Malays were encouraged to concentrate on food production rather than cash cropping, especially when rubber cultivation infringed on *padi* rice cultivation. [74] In British plans for Malaya, Malays were to be rice farmers.

In the lives of many Malays, the economic situation in Southeast Asia led to a blend of continuity (subsistence farming) and change (rubber as a cash crop and increased Indian and Chinese immigration). Malay society was thus in a constant state of flux. The rise of ideas about the *bangsa*, as well as increased opportunities for schooling, date from this time. Johor, the southernmost sultanate of the Peninsula, was no exception.

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[70]Lim Teck Ghee, *Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy*, (1977), pp13-20.
[71] John H. Drabble, *Malayan Rubber: The Interwar Years*, (Houndmills/London: Macmillan, 1991), p1.
[72] Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown, *Capital and Entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia*, Houndmills/London: the Macmillan Press (1994).
[73] Drabble, *Malayan Rubber*, (1991), pp145-8, 153, 163-5.
[74] Lim Teck Ghee, *Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy*, (1977), pp78, 191.

Johor

Zain and the *PPMJ* came to prominence in a particular environment: the state of Johor. The sultans of Johor created and patronised schools for girls as a means of demonstrating their own modernity. The Johor Education Department administered religious and secular schools together, encouraging the Malay women teachers to consider both aspects in their demands for more girls' schools. Close links with the Straits Settlements brought skilled British administrators and educationalists to Johor, allies for Zain and the *PPMJ*. Johor provided a very specific context which allowed the development and support of the Malay women teachers.

Johor was the inheritor of the Sultanate of Melaka when the Melaka royal court fled the Portuguese during the 1530s to settle on the Johor River. [75] Thereafter, the continuing rise of Johor was closely linked to the Dutch. Their association brought prosperity to Johor and trading privileges in Melaka denied to the other sultanates. [76] Thus Johor had an early history of both independence and accommodation with European powers. [77]

After the British replaced the Dutch as colonial power, Singapore became an important social-cultural contributor to Johor's prosperity. Johor became part of the business of Singapore, and from 1863 onwards, thousands of Chinese labourers moved into the sultanate through the *kangchu* system of farming out land to migrant workers for cash cropping. [78] Javanese labourers also settled

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[75] Sneddon, *The Indonesian Language*, (2003), p60.
[76] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p72.
[77] ibid, pp72-3. The decline in Johor's status after 1699 (the regicide of Sultan Mahmud) also led to the rise of a number of newly independent states. ibid, p79.
[78] Carl A Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temmengongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore, 1784-1885*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), p138.

outside the *kangchu* system, increasing the "Malay" population of Johor. [79] The sultanate was built and developed on capital and manpower sourced from Singapore by the Johor's enterprising rulers. Johor was the first of the Unfederated Malay States to come under British influence, and the last to accept British control. The state had a reputation for being open to Westernisation and willing to employ British officials and accept their advice. [80] Johor's rulers also kept abreast of British reforms in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, giving few excuses for formal British intervention in the state. [81]

Sultan Abu Bakar (born 1833, reigned 1862-95) was highly regarded by many British and Malays. For the British, he was an example of what could be accomplished by a modern and accommodating Malay ruler. He had been educated in a mission school in Singapore, spoke English well and was a leading figure in Singapore society, described as an "English Gentleman". [82] Abu Bakar played cricket and billiards, kept a stud of horses and was a lavish host. [83] He made many trips abroad, and was received by monarchs including Queen Victoria, the Emperor of Japan, the Kaiser, Emperor Franz Joseph, the King of Italy and Sultan Abdul Hamid of Turkey. In 1882 he entertained Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales. [84] His bureaucracy was built around a loyal elite, most of whom descended from royalty. This system combined the English notion of the modern civil servant with traditional Malay government. [85] Abu

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[79] ibid, pp152-3.
[80] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p46.
[81] Hooker, *A Short History of Malaysia*, (2003) p165.
[82] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p155.
[83] Winstedt, *A History of Johore*, (1979), p135.
[84] ibid, pp136-7.
[85] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), pp155-6.

Bakar also introduced increased secular schooling. However, Johor remained economically tied to Singapore.

Association with the British brought prestige and economic advantages for Johor, but it also brought risks. From the 1890s, support for Abu Bakar in Singapore and in London began to erode. Abu Bakar seized every opportunity to counter complaints and in 1885 Johor was recognized by the British as a sovereign state. However, his control over Johor's affairs was beginning to fray. Johor's foreign affairs were by now under Singapore's control, the sultan was not permitted to "interfere" in such policy and concessions were not to be granted to foreign Europeans. [86] Abu Bakar continued to try to preserve Johor's special status. The 1895 constitution set out Islam as the state religion, listed the duties of the British forms of government of the cabinet and legislative council, presented Johor as a constitutional monarchy and stated that no part of Johor's territories could be alienated to a European power. [87] Abu Bakar was thus partially successful in maintaining Johor's independence, and remained a figure of admiration to many Malays.[88]

Abu Bakar and his son Sultan Ibrahim (born 1873, reigned 1895-1959) were not successful in maintaining the complete independence of Johor. In 1896 the Colonial Office considered absorbing Johor into the Federated Malay States.

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[86] ibid, p173.
[87] ibid, p173.
[88] Al-Hadi often used him as an example of a Malay worth emulating. An article from *Al-Imam* referred to him in the following terms:

> "It seems then that words of great experience, opinion, comprehension and vision were formed on the heart of this blessed ruler [Abu Bakar] through his comparing and discerning the most attractive and fitting actions of the nations of the world."

Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, (2002), p342.

It was, however, reluctant to put pressure on the new Sultan Ibrahim. [89] Ibrahim finally agreed to consult the British on important matters and before making trips abroad. In 1909 he requested a financial adviser, and more Europeans were appointed to the administration. By 1910 a British General Adviser had taken office and after 1912 all British bureaucratic and government officers to Johor were seconded from the Federated Malay States. [90] From March 1914, Johor's General Adviser was made legally responsible to the Governor of Singapore rather than the sultan.

Ibrahim was not entirely stripped of his powers. The role of Islam was codified through legal reforms, and Malay religion and custom were still the domain of the sultan. Links to Islam and Malay tradition also extended into preferred script. In 1914, *jawi* characters were recognised as the official version of written Malay in Johor, and Malay was an official language along with English. [91] Muslim affairs were administered by a Religious Advisory Board appointed by the sultan. [92] Ibrahim's final acceptance of Britain's increasing role was on the proviso that certain additional privileges continued, such as

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[89] Winstedt, *A History of Johore*, (1979), p142. In 1903, Swettenham toured Johor and could find no reason for intervention. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p202. Nevertheless, advocates of intervention found material in Ibrahim's private life. He did still follow much of the pattern for an Asian monarch seeking European approval, such as having his sons educated in England. Winstedt, *A History of Johore*, (1979), p145. However, he led a lavish lifestyle and had never cultivated personal friendships with powerful British individuals. British administrators also worried about "clever" Malays in government. Most serious was the number of times Sultan Ibrahim ignored colonial wishes. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), pp202-3. Abu Bakar had tended to defer to the Colonial Office in London and only defy local officials. Ibrahim asserted his independence more vigorously. Winstedt, *A History of Johore*, (1979), p143.

[90] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), pp202-3; Winstedt, *A History of Johore*, (1979), p142.

[91] Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions*, (1979), p48.

[92] ibid, p82.

preference for Johor Malays in government appointments and that Malays and Europeans in government service be treated as equals. [93] Johor thus maintained some vestiges of independence.

Johor was advantageously placed in close proximity to Singapore, the centre of colonial influence. Singapore's role as a staging point for the hajj and a centre for Islamic publishing and teaching brought together Muslim people from disparate backgrounds. Malay Muslims in Singapore shared a common language and elements of a common culture without the suppressing effects of traditional systems of authority. [94] The resulting flourishing of literary culture influenced Malays in Johor and throughout the Peninsula.

The Malay Language Periodical Press

It is impossible to look at the development of Malay identity without studying the Malay language press. The Malay language functioned not only as a trading lingua franca, but also as a religious and philosophical vehicle, and as a link to historical and romantic literature.[95] In Malaya, newspapers and magazines were modelled at first on English language papers in the Straits Settlements, on which they depended for content. However, such papers came to increasingly use the Arabic and Egyptian press as sources for stories. [96] They wrote in *jawi*, an alphabet which connected script, language, faith and context, and was most widely read by Malays at the time. Newspapers and the printing press opened up

[93] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p 203.
[94] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974), p32.
[95] ibid, p43.
[96] ibid, p50.

the Islamic world to the reader, and indicated views about how that world was organised. Publications also allowed people to create space for discourse and debate in the public sphere. [97] Periodicals became increasingly specialized, catering for groups such as teachers, those interested in religious debate, and women. [98]

Such publications by no means represented a popular press, and their readership was limited. In 1884, some three quarters of the Malay population of Singapore were still illiterate.[99] Literacy figures in Penang and Melaka were probably similar, and were even lower in the Federated Malay States and Unfederated Malay States. By 1931, literacy rates among Malay men were 419 per 1000 in the Straits Settlements, 407 per 1000 in the Federated Malay States, and 236 per 1000 in Johor. For women, literacy rates were still only 71 per 1000 in the Straits Settlements, 84 per 1000 in the Federated Malay States and 31 per 1000 in Johor. [100] Newspapers had a broader reach than these figures imply: they were read out loud to illiterate friends and family members, and were used as an important teaching medium in the vernacular schools. Both government and non-government schools subscribed.[101]

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[97] Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood*, (2003), pp142-3.
[98] The first Malay language newspaper for women was the Javanese *Poetri Hindia*. It was established by Javanese journalist Tirto Adhi Soerjo in 1908 and produced by a group of *priyayi* (upper class) women. Coté, *The 'Education' of Java*, 1997), p143.
[99] Roff states that this figure is from 1894. Literacy would have improved by the 1930s but Malay women who could read were very much in the minority. See Chapter 3.
[100] In the 1931 Census, Malaysians were defined as the indigenous peoples of the Peninsula, and Malays as the Malays of British Malaya, born in Malaya and identifying as Malays. "Other Malaysians" included ethnic and cultural groups such as the Javanese.
[101] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974), pp50-1.

The publications and the issues they discuss reflect the nature of Malaya's plural society. Papers were seldom critical and never hostile towards the British. [102] A common theme, the backwardness of Malays, emphasised laziness and a penchant for extravagances and getting into debt. Malay authors contrasted these traits with what they argued was Chinese economic aggression, deviousness, deceitfulness and economic greed. [103] Representations of both ethnic groups were highly stereotyped and literature thus functioned as a tool of racial prejudice. Malays were defined in opposition to an ethnic other, and neither was presented in a nuanced or flattering light. Authors urged Malays to acquire a sense of diligence and frugality to counteract the ways in which their own laziness and backwardness were causing them to fall behind other ethnic groups in the plural society.

The heart of the new Malay ethnic identity in literature was centred in the village. Modernisation and Westernisation were associated with the city, which came to represent a negation of both Malay culture and religion. [104] The moral framework which resulted saw Islam and its teachings as the point of reference for Malay conduct. Malay culture and religion were not differentiated, and positive "cultural" values were seen as the same as "Islamic" values. Malay identity was crystallised as rural, poor, disadvantaged and virtuous, with an Islamic moral core. [105] Rural bias also extended throughout the vernacular

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[102] ibid, p50.
[103] Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, *Modern Malay Literary Culture: A Historical Perspective*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Research Notes and Discussion Paper no. 62, 1987), pp38-9.
[104] ibid, p40. This rural bias was a contrast to the Netherlands East Indies where the cities were seen by authors as the correct site for pure Islamic practice and the villages as sources of superstition and other non-Islamic practices.
[105] ibid, p41.

schooling systems, where the curriculum emphasized the roles of Malays as fishermen, subsistence farmers and mothers.

Conclusion

The context for the rise of the Malay teachers was made up of European colonial rule, Islamic modernist thought, economic, technological and political change. All contributed to rapid change in the plural society of Malaya. Each wave of ideas and information built on those before, adapting and indigenizing new concepts rather than replacing existing structures entirely. The rise of the idea of the "*bangsa*" as a means of conceptualizing competition between ethnic groups and an integral part of the process of defining Malay identity also dates from this period. Schools were one of the main means of increasing opportunities for Malays, and building their capabilities to allow them to fully participate in the economic and political life of British Malaya.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of schooling in colonial Malaya, with a focus on Malay girls' schooling. It begins with early Islamic schooling which was later augmented by the development of the British colonial schooling system, and the relationship between Empire and colony. English language and Malay vernacular schools for Malay girls will be discussed, as will Islamic modernist schools. The importance of teacher training for Malay men and women, as well as the conditions which led to teachers taking on roles as community leaders and in determining Malay identity, will conclude the chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Girls' Schools in Colonial Malaya

"We wish to draw attention to our belief that educational progress of the Malay race can be expedited only by extending the facilities for education of Malay girls." [1]

Provision of schools was one of the primary ways in which the British changed the face of British Malaya. From the mid 19th century, providing schools came to be seen as a duty of government in Britain and, by extension, in the colonies. Even primary schooling for Malays was radical in the Malayan context. No sultan had seen providing schools as a duty of Malay government prior to the arrival of the British. Until the 1920s, British administrators concentrated on setting up their educational apparatus and policy. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the system was expanded, leading to a significant increase in the number of schools, teachers and pupils. Literacy rates improved throughout British Malaya.

There was a strong link between schooling and advancement in British Malaya. English language skills could lead to further education and a position in commerce or the colonial administration for men, and to marriage with such a man for women. The prospects for those from Malay vernacular schools were more limited: the latter aimed to improve Malay lives as farmers, fishermen and mothers, rather than expand career horizons.

The British schooling system in Malaya also created a situation where Malay women could take up careers as teachers, a respected profession in Malay society. The information such women gained from their time in schools, training

[1] CO273/651/14, *Report on Higher Education in Malaya*, p4.

college and teacher organisations, as well as from periodicals, textbooks and novels, exposed them to a range of intellectual currents from the British Empire, the Islamic world and other Malays. The Malay women teachers were a product of this environment but they also sought to shape it to their own ends. They encouraged Malay parents to send their daughters to school and also envisaged a new kind of Malay woman who would contribute to the broader movement to ensure Malay dominance in the colony's plural society.

This chapter will focus on English language and Malay vernacular schools, as these were the focus of the British administration, as well as the schools attended and taught by the Malay women teachers, whose strong Malay identity was created in opposition to the other ethnic groups of Malaya. I will begin with a discussion of sources before considering traditional and modernist Islamic schools and the British-run system of vernacular and English language schools. I will highlight the importance of Johor and conclude with an examination of teacher training for women.

Sources

This chapter is based on a range of primary and secondary sources. Information on the English language and vernacular schools in Malaya is drawn mostly from British records, particularly Colonial Office correspondence, school regulations, Education Reports, missionary archives and the published writings of administrators and educationalists. The material available in Colonial Office files is substantial and includes reports, correspondence and printed materials. There is also significant emphasis within these sources on the need for girls' schools to

educate and advance the Malay race. Every *Education Report* contains a section on these schools. I have also used a number of secondary sources, particularly academic texts. However, when such studies do touch on girls' schooling or female education, many have only a small section in an otherwise detailed work on the specifically gendered aspects of curriculum and the education system after 1916. [2] Others neglect women and girls altogether. [3] For Islamic schooling I have relied more on secondary sources, particularly studies by Yegar and Bakar,[4] and I also draw on al-Hadi's published writings in Malay, as well as English translations. Other historians have used many of these works and documents, but never with my detailed focus on Malay girls' schooling.

Quranic Schools in Malaya

Prior to European colonisation, education meant study of the Quran and Arabic. In Islamic societies, education had a religious goal: to enable the adult male to take part in the mosque and society. Students clustered around a local man in his private residence, and learned to recite passages of the Quran, prayers and formulae, in order to function as adult Muslims. In Malaya, if students sought to take their religious studies to a higher level, they could travel to a teacher in the Malay Peninsula who specialised in a branch of Islamic learning, such as *fiqh*

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[2] Mangan (ed), *The Imperial Curriculum*, (1993); Wong and Phang, *The Changing Pattern of Teacher Education*, (1975); Stevenson, *Cultivators and Administrators*, (1975); Seng, *Seeds of Separatism*, (1975).
[3] Seng, *Seeds of Separatism*, (1975). The only reference to female education is a quote from *Majallah Guru*, p125. This is more understandable in works which deal only with the earlier period of British education and policy in Malaya, before enrolments of girls and schooling opportunities for them increased.
[4] Moshe Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions*, (1979), and Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya*, (1994).

(Islamic jurisprudence). A few went to Mecca, or later to Cairo. Such students returned to Malaya where they became opinion shapers, respected for their Islamic learning, their experience and piety. They fostered a sense of belonging to a universal Muslim community and they also attracted students of their own. [5]

In the east coast sultanates, *surau* (small Muslim prayer houses) and *pondok* (boarding schools for religious students) became centres for Islamic transmission [6] and provided the only available schools for most boys. A proficient student could become a religious teacher or officer, such as a *muezzin* (a mosque official who summons the faithful to prayer), *imam* (leader of prayers), *kadi* (Muslim judge), or *mufti* (interpreter of Muslim law). [7] Quran teachers were also employed in the colonial educational system. [8] In order to overcome opposition to the new government schools, Education Departments adopted a system of appointing Quran teachers to take afternoon classes. [9] Female Quran teachers were also appointed, although I have been able to find only scant information on them. [10] Religious and secular schools remained formally separate in terms of governance in most of British Malaya, though later the curriculum of the *madrasah* would incorporate both religious and secular subjects and provide an alternative option for Malay schooling.

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[5] See Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions,* (1979).
[6] ibid, p111.
[7] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya,* (1994), p103. *Pondok* teachers had high social status due to both their religious knowledge and economic position. They derived income from donations and the labour of students in their petty businesses and as landlords. ibid, p102.
[8] Eg: Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions,* (1979), and the writings of Winstedt. Both describe religious classes as rote learning of the Quran, taught by uneducated and even illiterate teachers. Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions,* (1979), p235.
[9] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism,* (1974), p26.
[10] See Chapter 5.

British Schooling in Colonial Malaya

The British schooling system in Malaya took a very different form from existing Quranic schools. Schools were in a dedicated building, rather than in the home of a teacher or the local mosque. Teachers generally had some form of formal qualification, rather than a certificate identifying their religious instructor and their teacher's teachers. Pupils were taught from a standard curriculum, divided into classes by age, progressed by examination and studied from printed textbooks rather than handwritten manuscripts. The British educational system had a very different worldview and purpose from that of the Quran schools. It offered basic numeracy and literacy, as well as practical skills to prepare students to function in the modern colonial world.

However, this new system of schools did not seek to degrade the importance of religious knowledge to Malays. Religious education was often taught to students in government schools, although outside school hours. The British system complemented existing Islamic schools; it did not replace them. The British offered Malays the opportunity to attend schools with a much broader curriculum than that of religious schools and increased the total number of places available in schools for Malay students.

It was the British who emphasised the concept that it was a duty of government to provide schools for the native population. British administrators saw Malays as the original inhabitants of the country who therefore should be the beneficiaries of government services. Until the 20th century, most Asian immigrants to the Peninsula were men, and regarded as temporary residents only. Schools for these ethnic groups only became necessary once women began to migrate in substantial numbers during the early 20th century and families were

formed as a result. British administrators still considered the immigrant population as temporary residents and the schooling of their children as the duty of their home governments. Chinese schools were often run by Chinese organisations, and Indian schools by owners of large commercial estates, rather than by British Education Departments. [11] Nonetheless, all types of schools spread throughout the Peninsula along with British power.

The philosophy current in Britain at the beginning of the 20th century was that the government should provide some schooling for all children. Officials in Malaya followed the same pattern. [12] In Britain, it was not until the passage of the Endowed Schools Act in 1869 that mass secondary schooling for girls really began. [13] In 1899 the school leaving age was 12, moving up to 14 in 1900, and compulsory attendance until the age of 14 was legislated in 1918. [14] Victorian middle class and working class schools were kept quite separate. Curricula for

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[11] The most sympathetic view of British educational policy was:

> "The original purpose was to establish a system of free Malay vernacular schools, leaving English schools largely to private enterprise and Christian religious missions. The British bureaucracy had been just and enlightened and most of its members tended to develop pro-Malay sympathies, dictated no doubt in part by certain treaty obligations; there was also the British tradition of respect for another man's point of view and a reluctance to interfere in and change native customs and beliefs."

(Sergit Singh, *The Leadership Role in Education of the Federal Inspector of Schools as Perceived by Inspectors Themselves and Teachers In Selected Primary and Secondary Schools in Negri Sembilan*, (M. Ed thesis, Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Malaya, 1974**).** A less sympathetic version regarded British educational policy as a means to divide and conquer. See also Chapter 1.

[12] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p226.

[13] Fletcher, *Feminists and Bureaucrats*, (1980), p1. By 1870 the Elementary Education Act had created local authorities to establish schools funded by a special schools rate, and attendance at primary schools became compulsory between 1876 and 1880. By 1891, elementary schooling for the lower classes was free. Felicity Hunt, *Lessons for Life: The Schooling of Girls and Women, 1850-1950*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pxv.

[14] ibid, pxvii. If secondary schooling was available, students attended until the age of 15 or 16, or as late as 18 or 19 if a pupil intended to attend university. ibid, pxviii.

both were often differentiated by sex, though schools remained coeducational for the working classes, in contrast to middle and upper class schools. [15] British girls were first admitted to Cambridge local examinations in 1865.[16] The transfer of policies from metropole to colony was relatively fast. Thus it is unfair to criticise British policy in Malaya for aspects of curriculum or a lack of compulsory schooling when such practices had not yet been introduced in the motherland.

An awareness of the benefits of sending girls to school grew throughout colonial Malaya. Some Chinese girls attended English-language schools but many also attended the Chinese-language boys' schools. [17] By 1913, Lee Chou-Neo (the first Straits woman to qualify for the local medical school) stated that Chinese girls were given as much education as boys, depending on what parents could afford for their children. By 1931, 112 per 1000 Chinese girls were literate in their own language (76 per 1000 Chinese women as a whole), as compared to 408 per 1000 males. Tamil-language schools were established on the rubber estates, but in 1938 only 7,236 of 22,820 enrolled students were girls. [18] Tamil girls also enrolled in English schools, [19] and a Sikh women's association, founded in 1917, advocated girls' schooling. [20] Few girls of any ethnic group

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[15] Fletcher, *Feminists and Bureaucrats*, (1980), p64.
[16] Cambridge Local Examinations were administered by the Cambridge Schools Examination Board and passing led to the award of a certificate. The Junior Cambridge was sat by students under 16 and the Senior by those under 18. Overseas examinations began in 1864. Sheila Fletcher, *Feminists and Bureaucrats: A Study in the Development of Girls' Education in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) p17, Hunt, *Lessons for Life*, (1987), pxviii.
[17] Manderson, "The Development and Direction of Female Education", p107.
[18] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987), p67. The source does not go into detail about in which language or script Chinese or Indian literacy was held.
[19] Manderson, "The Development and Direction of Female Education", p107.
[20] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987), p69.

completed Standard 6, [21] although in 1938 565 girls were enrolled in Standard 6 in Chinese language schools (compared to 36 in the Tamil medium, 24 in Malay vernacular schools, and 1,510 of all ethnicities in English language schools).[22] The Colonial Office was nominally responsible for implementing educational policy in Malaya. In practice, policies evolved in a much more organic fashion in response to local conditions and the initiative of officials.

British Educational Policy for Malay Girls

In the absence of a uniform policy laid down by the Colonial Office, administrators on the ground in the Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States and Unfederated Malay States had a great deal of power in determining British policy on schools for Malay girls. [23] It was only after 1920, as a result of attempts to re-organise the Colonial Office, that a serious Malaya-wide policy began to appear, helped by further consolidation of British control in the Peninsula. [24] There was policy development prior to this date, but it was not directed from above. Thus British educators had almost free rein to develop their ideas and put them into practice.

Frank Athelstane Swettenham (1850-1946), well known for his interest in the Malay language, as the first Resident General of the Federated Malay States (1896-1901) and Governor of the Straits Settlements (1901-1904) was one of the

[21] ibid, pp41-2.
[22] Ministry of Education, *Educational Statistics*, (1968).
[23] See *Education Reports* and Kok Loy Fatt, *Colonial Office Policy Towards Education in Malaya (1920-1940)*, (Thesis, M Education, Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, 1978).
[24] ibid.

first to address education for Malay girls. [25] Writing in 1900 he stated: "Her intellectual education is so slight that one can only be surprised at the quite uncommon intelligence shown by many of the better class." [26] He perpetuated the Malay and British distinction between the elites and the bulk of the Malay population, as well as the assumption that a lack of formal schooling in a British style system automatically equated to a lack of knowledge. He also believed that too much education could prove damaging to Malay women in their isolation from other women of like mind. [27] As Swettenham was writing early in the history of British schools in Malaya, his primary focus was understandably on elite men and boys.

Attitudes amongst administrators began to change around the turn of the century. Educators such as E.C. Elcum (the first Director of Education for the Straits Settlements, 1895-1915) recognised that to modernise Malay society, girls and women needed to be included. [28] The next major development in policy

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[25] I am not considering Stamford Raffles (1781-1826, one of the founders of the British colony of Singapore), as he was concerned mostly with Singapore, and had no real impact on Malay girls' education.

[26] Swettenham, *The Real Malay*, (1900) p269.

[27] ibid pp272-3:

> "From what I have said, it might be thought that a little education, a little emancipation, is what the Malay woman chiefly needs. I doubt it. That form of experiment, though full of interest to the operator, is sometimes fatal to the patient. A little learning is not so dangerous as to plant the seeds of aspirations which can never grow to maturity… But when the time comes to satisfy the cultivated taste of the educated mind, the teacher is powerless to help, is probably far out of reach, and the lonely soul of the misdirected girl will find little comfort in her own home and the society of her own unregenerate people."

On the other hand, a Malay man would have his career and the comradeship of other men. It was the isolation of his hypothetical Malay woman which Swettenham saw as especially harmful, a half awakened mind left to decay.

[28] SS *Education Department Report*, 1906. Director of Education Elcum does not seem to have made any concrete improvements in girls' schooling during his tenure.

came with the Winstedt Report of 1916/17. [29] The report placed substantial emphasis on vocational schooling, particularly in the area of traditional Malay handcrafts, in addition to reading, writing and arithmetic. The report has been heavily criticised by scholars such as Roff, who argues that it shows Winstedt as an administrator rather than a true scholar, a man without an understanding of the Malay spirit and Malay needs. Roff dismisses the report as lacking a guiding principle and concerned only with the practicalities of British colonial rule. [30] Nonetheless, the report is an important source, not only for the policy it illuminates, but for its continuing impact on schooling in Malaya. It advocated pride in the home and their labour for both girls and boys, an emphasis which continued in vernacular schooling throughout the period under study. Winstedt's report reflects the orthodoxy of British educationalists at the time: Malay roles as farmers, fishermen and homemakers were important for colonial administrative and economic stability. Given the reverence with which his report was treated by future policy makers, Winstedt's conception of appropriate study continued to influence the decisions of Malay administrators.

Winstedt's report made one important direct recommendation for girls' schooling: "A Lady Supervisor is required for the girls' schools… It will be impossible to improve the training of girls by any other means, she must be skilled in cooking, embroidery and lace making." Initially, the role was taken by a European woman. [31] As the number of girls' schools expanded, more

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[29] Winstedt was Straits Settlements Assistant Director of Education (Malay) from 1916 to 1921, and Director from 1924-31.
[30] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974).
[31] The first woman appointed to the newly created post (1918) was Miss Agnes MacIver, who arrived in Malaya in December 1919. Her responsibilities do not seem to have extended to the Unfederated Malay States.

Supervisors were needed, and Malay women teachers were appointed to these important roles.[32] The report is referred to in most histories of schooling in Malaya, [33] one example being the Straits Settlements *Education Report* of 1933:

> "The Report of 1916 did not neglect this grave problem of female education. The girls' schools benefited greatly from the use of the new series of vernacular text-books. And above all it was decided to engage a European lady to re-organise and supervise the work of these schools. Despite almost insuperable obstacles, the Lady Supervisor has effected real reforms..." [34]

The Winstedt report is recognised as an important foundation for girls' schools in Malaya.

The other influential educationalist of the 1910s, R.J. Wilkinson (1867-1941) [35], was particularly interested in Malay intellectual culture. Roff states that he had a genuine love of the Malay people, and thought them intelligent. [36] Wilkinson saw the Malay past as an undifferentiated golden age, and education as a way to lay new foundations which would allow Malays to better deal with

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[32] See Johor section, p105.
[33] The report is referred to in histories including Wong and Hong, Education in Malaysia, (1975). Manderson, "The Development and Direction of Female Education", p104, mentions the results of the report, but not Winstedt himself.
[34] SS *Education Report* 1933.
[35] Wilkinson was Acting Director of Education in Penang (1896-1898), Acting Inspector General of Schools in the Straits Settlements (1898-1900), Acting Inspector of Schools for the Federated Malay States (1903-1906), and later Secretary General to the British resident in Perak, the British Resident of Negeri Sembilan and the Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements. He established the Malay Training College in Melaka (1900), which was succeeded by the SITC and also founded the Malay college at Kuala Kangsar. A noted scholar, he wrote a number of books on subjects including the peoples of various parts of Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, Malay literature, history and customs, as well as Malay language grammar and Malay-English dictionaries.
[36] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974), p130.

the modern world. Wilkinson introduced the study of Malay literature in *rumi* into schools. [37] He had little to say directly on girls' schooling but his emphasis on Malay culture contributed to a sense of Malay identity and pride, and a Malay focus in the vernacular curriculum.

By the 1930s, schooling in Malaya was becoming increasingly politicised. The Colonial Office and the education administration it supervised suffered from internal conflicts. In 1936 and 1937 the Colonial Office discussed English language schooling for Malays. One committee member went so far as to criticise administrators in Malaya for seeking "a Malay arcadia", an idealised Malay life where nothing had changed, and for their "obsession" with avoiding the creation of a white collar proletariat for fear of what it may achieve. [38] Ensuring that a proportion of the Malay population was literate in English was an operational necessity in Malaya. [39] Too many graduates and their subsequent demands might become a problem. How these tensions played out in relation to Malay girls is the subject of the following sections.

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[37] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p237. In responding to demographic trends and thus viewing the other ethnic groups of Malay as permanent residents rather than transients, he broke from the general British view of the position of the races in Malaya.

[38] CO 273/616/14.

[39] The memorandum which sparked the whole debate was very conventional in some senses, arguing that schools should not train girls for careers, but to be "useful and intelligent wives of the better educated boys". In it C. Clementi, once Governor of the Straits Settlements, argued that even girls educated in English needed to be able to run a house and bring up children. The contentious part of the memorandum was his recommendation to raise the fees for English language education, stating that schooling would be valued more if paid for. CO 273/616/14. The impact this would have on the budget and in cutting down applicants for limited places is not mentioned, but is likely to have been a consideration. The Colonial Office dismissed this proposal as unworkable and discriminatory as many parents would not be able to pay.

In official British sources, the benefits of schooling for Malay girls fall into two main categories: to make them better wives (English language schools) or better mothers (Malay vernacular). There are a number of possible reasons behind this division. English language schools were designed to remake Malay boys into useful colonial subjects and administrators. These men would then need a different type of Malay woman to marry, a woman with similar experiences and interests. Malay boys who went through the vernacular system would not have such significant upheavals in their lives, and they and their wives would fulfil existing roles, enriched with some targeted scientific knowledge of health, hygiene, geography and empire. In addition, English language and convent schools would have been more likely to emphasise an ideal of companionate marriage for the Malay elites. English language and Malay vernacular schools had differing goals for their female students.

Most girls did not cross between vernacular and English language schools. [40] The exception was the Special Malay classes (classes in English for Malay speaking girls) set up at some convent schools, giving girls who had begun in Malay vernacular schools an opportunity to progress quickly in English before joining other classes. [41] Some girls went directly from Malay schools into the convent schools without special classes. [42] Either way, their learning curve would have been extremely steep and difficult, and consequently the bulk of Malay girls remained in vernacular schooling.

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[40] The separation was seen as undesirable by administrators including Cheeseman and Maxwell. CO 273/574/8 Straits Education.
[41] Johore *Education Report*, 1936.
[42] SS *Education Report*, 1933.

Throughout the period under study, the aim of British schooling for Malay girls was

> "…to provide a sound primary education for girls from the age of 5 years to 14 years. Special attention is to be paid to Needlework, Cookery, Domestic Economy, Handwork and Art. Education is to be free, and every encouragement is to be given to girls to attend schools."[43]

The content of the curriculum in the vernacular primary level system limited the educational opportunities available to Malay girls. Post-primary schooling opportunities were restricted to teacher training under the pupil teacher system, normal and post-normal classes, [44] and later the Malay Women's Training College at Melaka. [45] Nonetheless, Education Reports state that there was substantial demand from Malay parents for places in vernacular girls' schools. By the 1930s the most common reason given for a lack of girls' schools was insufficient qualified Malay women teachers and the reluctance of British

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[43] Johore *Education Report*, 1929 Part 1 p1.
[44] Normal classes were teacher training classes such as at the M.W.T.C. Post-normal classes were ongoing training.
[45] See Chapter 6. There were also some Malay midwives listed on the *Johor Records of Service and Leave* (Johor Arkib Fail Peribadi 13/1715) during this period, but I have been unable to find evidence of formal training in an institution for them. It is likely that they received some on-the-job training in the colonial hospitals or medical system. They certainly did not receive the tertiary education that Chinese and Indian women doctors from Malaya were beginning to obtain by this time. In contrast, Batavia had a midwife training school from 1850. Twenty girls a year completed a two year course, where they were taught reading, writing, arithmetic and theoretical and practical midwifery. Hilary Morland "Midwives, Missions and Reform: colonising Dutch childbirth services at home and abroad" in Mary P Sutphen and Bridie Andrews (ed), *Medicine and Colonial Identity*, (London/New York, Routledge, 2003), p66.

administrators to compromise the quality of the girls' schools by expanding too fast without them. [46]

In the absence of sufficient resources for all girls to attend dedicated girls' schools, a substantial number of Malay girls attended boys' schools. In 1935/36, 5,914 Malay girls attended girls' schools and 8,007 attended boys' schools in the Federated Malay States; 3,334 girls attended boys' schools and 3,293 were in girls-only schools in the Straits Settlements. [47] British administrators recognised the practicalities of co-educational schools in the Malayan context, especially given that most girls did not attend school at all:

> "Girls going to boys' schools must be under twelve... Co-education exists here because parents have asked for it: it has advantages both as regards expediency and economy but it obviously cannot be adopted as a policy as far as Muslims are concerned, and it is not permitted except at the express request of the parents." [48]

Pedagogical reasons for single sex schooling are not referred to by British administrators or Malays in this context. The weight of Islam and Malay culture was the primary reason for opposition to co-educational schooling.

Other than needlework classes, girls in boys' schools completed the same curriculum as the boys. Examination results illustrate that in some cases they did

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[46] *Education Reports*, (eg: Johore 1929-31). As the rhetoric in the rest of these reports is about improving and expanding British education, it is likely that this was a valid reason, in conjunction with limited finances. I do not think there was any agenda to deliberately restrict Malay girls' access to education by limiting teachers. Zain and the women of the *PPMJ* felt that substantial work was yet to be done in attracting girls and their parents to schooling. See Chapters 4 and 5.
[47] SS/FMS *Education Reports* 1935, 1936.
[48] SS/FMS *Education Report*, 1938, p33. "Where there are sufficient girls in a boys' school to warrant it, women teachers are, wherever possible, appointed to take needlework with the girls and to teach the first or second year mixed classes."

even better than their male classmates. In Penang in 1933, 3.6 per cent of girls who presented for Standard IV examination passed with a mark of 80 per cent or over, compared with 2.5 per cent of the boys, "…though it must be kept in mind that the boys presented were probably of a more average lot than the girls, who probably stayed on so long at school only because they were bright." [49] A tiny minority of Malay girls not only completed the boys' syllabus, they thrived. Nonetheless, most administrators and parents wanted single sex schools, and a curriculum especially designed for girls.

English Language Schooling

Schooling in English was designed for the Malay elite and was to produce an upper class of Malay men who shared a common education with their British counterparts, as well as graduates to fill the lower ranks of the colonial administrative service. The Malay language was developing rapidly in the early twentieth century. Its vocabulary was expanding, and the written form of the language was changing from handwritten *jawi* manuscripts to printed texts in *rumi*. Literacy in English opened up a world of knowledge to Malayan readers, which would otherwise have remained unavailable. An English language education offered more opportunities in the colonial world of work than a Malay language education, and the former became particularly appealing to some parents of boys. Attitudes towards girls attending school took longer to change. Parents feared their girls would use their new skills to write love letters, become

[49] SS *Education Report,*1933, p38.

difficult to manage, excessively anglicised, convert to Christianity and no longer be willing to perform domestic tasks for their families. [50]

During the period under study, the experiences of the British in India loomed large in the minds of administrators. "Excessive" education (too much schooling and too many graduates, particularly in English) was blamed for unrest in that country. Early British educationalists explicitly warned against allowing such a situation to arise in Malaya. [51] As a result, administrators initially saw girls' schooling as something best left to non-government institutions. In addition, state governments did not have the funds to provide the required schools for all. Thus administrators initially relied on the Aided (mostly Mission) schools.

Missionary Schools

Christian mission schools were the first alternative to Quran schools to appear in the Malay Peninsula, and constituted the majority of English language schools. [52] They were generally single sex. Girls' schools catered to female students from all ethnic groups. The missionary girls' schools initially catered almost exclusively for European and Eurasian girls, but soon attracted Chinese pupils. Malay girls

[50] Stevenson, *Cultivators and Administrators,* (1975), *Education Reports*, and *Bulan Melayu.*

[51] A more nuanced view held that it was not schooling in English which was at fault, but rather unregulated education, schools not following British policy. Such a mistake should not be repeated in Malaya. CO717/101/1 1932 FMS *Education Report*, Correspondence.

[52] Christianity was first introduced to Malaya by the Portuguese in Melaka in 1511. During the British period, the first Protestant mission, from the London Missionary Society, arrived in Melaka in 1815, and Singapore in 1834. Methodists, led by Rev Shellabear, a Malay scholar who specialised in literature and translations, entered Malaya from 1884 onwards.

did not begin to attend the mission schools until the 1900s. [53] Mission schools taught girls to run hygienic homes, bear and raise healthy children and become suitable wives for educated men.

The first British school in Malaya was the Penang Free School, [54] which opened in 1816. Girls were admitted soon afterwards, on July 1, 1817. By October, 11 girls were registered on the school's roll. The girls' section was suspended in 1821, due to lack of a female teacher, and closed in July 1851. [55] It was not until 1883 or 1884 (dates vary between sources) that the first dedicated Malay Girls' School was established at Telok Blanga. [56] Schools soon followed in Penang and Singapore (1889), two in Perak (1890), one in Selangor (1896) and one at Kuala Lumpur (1901). By 1902 there were 12 girls' schools in the Federated Malay States alone, with an enrolment of some 234 students.

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[53] It is extremely difficult to judge exactly how many Malay girls were attending these schools, as pupils are not recorded by race in Education Reports. Where a division has taken place on the basis of race, the figures given are for Government and other English schools grouped together. In 1938 in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, there were 591 "Malaysian" girls in Government and Aided English schools from a total of 23,723 girls in schools (the category "Malaysian" appears to include immigrants from other areas of the Malay world). *Education Report*, SS and FMS, 1938, Appendix XXI. The Christian nature of these schools deterred Malay parents because they feared their children would give up their Islamic religion and so lose a key part of their Malay identity. In 1936, of 7,702 girls enrolled in English language schools in the Straits Settlements, only 141 were Malay, while 5,080 were Chinese. Manderson, "The Development and Direction of Female Education", p111. Some missionaries referred to the area as "Malaysia" at this time. The term did not refer to the boundaries of the modern Malaysia, but to Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. The term seems to be linked to the older concept of "the Malay world" rather than colonial borders.

[54] The school was "free" in that it did not target any one race or class. Fees were still payable.

[55] Peter Wicks, "Education, Colonialism and a Plural Society in West Malaysia: The Development of Education in the British Settlements Along the Straits of Malacca, 1786-1874" *History of Education Quarterly*, (Vol 20, No 2 (Summer 1980)), p168.

[56] Lenore Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980); Wong and Hong, *Education in Malaysia*, (1975). There is a clash in dates between these sources.

Official British policy was that missionaries were not to attempt conversion of Malays, though in practice this policy was not always followed in schools. Religious instruction was allowed, but not mandatory. [57] The limitation necessarily interfered with missionary endeavour regarding the Malay community. However, Muslims in the missionary schools were not always excluded from scripture classes or the singing of hymns. [58] Rates of conversion amongst Malays seem to have been extremely low, especially considering that only a small minority of the population was sent to mission schools. [59] By the twentieth century, mission schools were no longer the only way for Malay girls to attend an English language school.

Government English Schools

While the Mission schools were the main opportunity for Malay girls to obtain schooling in English, they were not the only option. The Rochor Girls' School, a government school in Singapore, included the English language in its

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[57] "Religious instruction is given in the schools of the Christian Brothers, the Convents, the schools of the American Methodist Mission, of the Church of England and of the Plymouth Brethren; it is not given in Government schools. It is taken either before or after regular schools hours and no pupil can be compelled to be present at it or at any time of religious observance."
FMS *Education Report*, 1936 p74. Similar systems operated in most Malay schools for teaching the Quran, though in Selangor half an hour every day was taught by school teachers from approved textbooks. ibid.

[58] NAS Interview Siraj Mohamed (Mrs) (Khatijun Nissa Siraj) AN: 001663. However, she states that they did not try to directly convert her (Reel 9), and she remembers the school as being multi-racial and multi-religious, teaching respect for others (Reel 24).

[59] Loh Keng Aun, *Fifty Years of the Anglican Church in Singapore Island 1909-1959*, (Singapore: Department of History, University of Singapore, 1963).

curriculum.[60] In addition, two Government English Schools for girls were founded in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, and later in Johor.[61] These institutions would only be able to educate a tiny minority of the Malay population, illustrating the low priority given to English schooling for girls. Enrolments in government English schools tended to be small, and were often not divided according to race in classes or official reports. By 1938, Malaya had only 44 Government and 32 aided English language schools for boys, and 2 government and 27 aided schools for girls. [62] English language skills were valuable, but school places were scarce and many Malay parents suspicious. Of the minority of Malay girls who attended schools, most studied in the Malay vernacular.

Malay Vernacular Schooling

The aims of the Malay vernacular school system were more limited than those of the English language schools. Vernacular schools were primary level only, and emphasised agriculture for boys and domestic tasks for girls. However, school places were still very much in demand. Parents saw the schools as an opportunity to at least gain some formal education in secular subjects for their children. English language schools were too far distant or expensive, or represented the threat of conversion. Quranic schools taught only a limited range of religious subjects. Sending their children to Malay vernacular schools still marked parents

[60] SS *Education Reports*.
[61] See p110.
[62] Ministry of Education, Malaysia, *Educational Statistics of Malaysia, 1938-1967*, (Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1968), p15.

as modern, increasingly aspiring to middle class status, and offered the possibility of their children getting ahead in the world. The Malay vernacular schooling system itself also provided jobs for educated Malays.

The bureaucratic structure of the British Educational Departments offered new career paths to Malay women teachers. Generally, each department was under the control of a Director or Superintendent of Education, an educationalist or administrator appointed from within the Colonial Office or Colonial Education Service. Sometimes these departments also supervised religious schools, but the latter were usually a separate hierarchy in the department, as were English and Malay schools respectively. Boys' and girls' schools were also separate in some departments. A major consequence of these structures for women teachers was the opportunity for a career in teaching with a departmental structure, regular pay, set conditions, and the possibility of promotion. Malay women teachers were not expected to retire upon marriage, unlike the requirement in other professions. [63] Departmental structures also opened up the potential for women to be mentored and supported by British officials such as H.R. Cheeseman.

H.R. Cheeseman

Harold R. Cheeseman, teacher and administrator, was responsible for a number of important innovations in Malayan schools. In a career spanning 41 years, he grappled with an era of rapid social change, and influenced the structure and curricula of the schools of Malaya. Cheeseman and the Johor Education

[63] See *Education Reports*.

Department gave Malay women teachers positions of influence and control (though still subject to a British male Superintendent) and a role in determining the future directions of Malay girls' schooling. The women teachers and Cheeseman shared similar goals for Malay girls, and it is likely that they supported and inspired each other. Cheeseman helped to create a culture in the Education Department of Johor where the PPMJ could flourish. Men like Cheeseman were a bridge between British education policy and Malays in the school system.

Cheeseman's career in Malaya began on September 4th, 1907, with his appointment as Assistant Master at the Penang Free School.[64] On August 1st, 1922, Cheeseman left to open a Government English School. In 1923 he was appointed as Inspector of Schools, Penang, and was later responsible for the opening of four new Government English Schools. He was particularly interested in teacher training, and instituted classes in subjects including Phonetics, Art, and Physical Training on a much larger scale than previously. He would introduce a similar system in Johor.

In 1928 Cheeseman left Penang for Johor. He had been appointed as Superintendent of Education, with the task of creating a new Department of Education, and was to have a special interest in the English and Malay schools of the state. His impact was significant. Secular and religious schools were overseen by the one department, girls' schooling was placed under the control of women,

[64] A Free School was a non-sectarian institution. At this stage the School was an aided English school. By August the following year, he was appointed a Normal Class Instructor, then Senior Normal Class Instructor, a post he retained in addition to his other duties as a teacher until February 1920, when he was appointed Chief Master of the Lower School as well as Form Master of the highest class in the school.

and schools and teacher training emphasised as vital to the future of Johor, and indeed to Malaya as a whole. Cheeseman had been responsible for the founding of the first (male) teachers' organisation in Penang, and he also founded one in Johor.[65] In addition, he instituted separate staff meetings for Johor's women teachers in order to encourage the latter to voice their opinions, [66] given Islamic opposition to women leading or mixing with men in public. It is possible that Cheeseman's background sparked his initial interest in the schooling of Malay girls. He came from a family of educated women, and one of his sisters joined him as a teacher in Malaya. [67] Cheeseman expressed a sense of paternalistic benevolence [68] towards the women teachers, but their relationship remained close. [69] He gave them credit for their own initiative and achievements, and was considerate of Malay culture and their own wishes.

In 1934 Cheeseman was appointed Inspector of Schools for Singapore and Labuan (an island off the coast of Sabah). Headmaster of the Penang Free School, D Roper, stated that "By this time he was the most notable contemporary figure in the Department of Education of Malaya". [70] In 1938 he was promoted to Chief Inspector of English Schools, Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States. A few months later his role was converted into Deputy Director of Education, Straits Settlements, and Deputy Advisor on Education, Federated

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[65] The Johor Teachers' Association was for the male teachers of the English language schools.
[66] Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation*, p46, based on interviews with Karim and Zain.
[67] Cheeseman in *Progress*, (March 1932). She generally taught Chinese girls, as did he in his earliest period of teaching girls in Malaya.
[68] Paternalistic is Bamahaj's term. Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya*.
[69] ibid.
[70] D. Roper, Headmaster Penang Free School, CO 1045/177.

Malay States. Cheeseman was interned in Singapore by the Japanese during the war, where he continued to teach both children and adults. Post-war, and even though he was past retirement age, he accepted the post of Director of Education of the Malayan Union. Cheeseman left Malaya on December 19, 1948, after a career spanning 41 years. Holgate (Headmaster of the Penang Free School, 1934-46) referred to him in the following terms: "It may be doubted whether any public man in the life of Malaya in this century has played so important and so varied a part." [71]

During his career, Cheeseman also wrote Malay and English textbooks for use in Malayan schools, the contents of which related directly to Malay experience. He prepared the first complete set of Malayan readers for English schools, a Malayan English course (with A.W. Frisby), a Malayan edition of West's *New Method Readers* and a Malayan Speech course. He was also General Editor of a series of supplementary readers totalling 24 books, and edited on behalf of the Johor Teachers' Association a series of *Conversational Pictures*. [72] He thus played an important role in making Western information accessible to Malay speaking teachers, and giving them a means to impart such knowledge to their pupils. [73]

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[71] *Annual Report on Education, Federation of Malaya*, 1948.
[72] Eg: H.R. Cheeseman, and A.W. Frisby, *The M.P.H. English Course: A Course in English Composition and Grammar for English Schools in Malaya*, (Singapore: Malayan Publishing House Limited, 1937); H.R. Cheeseman and B.L. Milne, *Dramatic Readers: A Series of Dramatic Readers for English Schools in Malaya*, (The Johor Teachers' Association) (Singapore: Malaya Publishing House, 1932).
[73] Most technical and scientific information remained available only in English during this period, a significant handicap to those schooled only through the Malay vernacular system.

Cheeseman advocated further separation between the curricula for boys and girls. He emphasised the idea that a woman's most important work was the management of the home, but he was also dismissive of any suggestion that the Education Department should focus first on schools for boys. [74] Such a domestic emphasis for girls was common across a range of educational systems. It was not a point of difference between Malaya and other countries in the British Empire,[75] or amongst Malay reformers and educationalists. [76] It was also reflected in the Malay vernacular curriculum.

Malay Vernacular Curriculum

The curriculum of the Malay schools is a major source for the study of Malay girls' schools, the *PPMJ* and the MWTC. The curriculum indicates what skills, concepts and values the British meant to impart to Malay girls. To a lesser extent, it also demonstrates how Malay women teachers could influence and adapt British aims to suit their own ends. In addition, the curriculum for girls in Malay schools allows study of the overlap between subjects studied by boys and girls, and offers the possibility of charting prevailing views on Malay roles and

[74] Cheeseman was writing in *Progress: A Magazine for Teachers, Parents and others interested in Education in Malaya* (Published by the Johore Teachers' Association. Vol 1 no 1 March 1932). Housecraft could be taken as a subject in the Cambridge Local Examinations, and included laundrywork, needlework, housewifery and cookery.
[75] Eg: Arthur Mayhew, *The Education of India: A Study of British Educational Policy in India, 1835-1920, and its Bearing on National Life and Problems in India Today*, (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1926); Brian Holmes (ed), *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools: Case Studies From the British Empire*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967); J.A. Mangan (ed) *'Benefits bestowed'?* (1988).
[76] See Chapters 4 and 5.

responsibilities in the plural society of the colony. A detailed discussion of the girls' curriculum of the 1930s can be found in Chapter 6.

For Mangan the curriculum taught in British Empire schools demonstrated political authority, and was linked closely to British culture, society, control and stereotype. [77] In the case of British Malaya, he states that the curriculum aimed at teaching village Malays their social and economic position in society, assumed by the British to have remained unchanged from the 1890s.[78] In terms of textbooks and the curriculum itself, Watson states that the British presented themselves as benefactors, traditional society as backward (though idyllic), and the other races of Malaya as of little consequence.[79] In schools throughout the British Empire as a whole, a literary curriculum prevailed, and English school syllabi and examinations were used. However, many British administrators were against this model – it was seen as neither useful nor appropriate for the environment of the "natives". [80]

By 1936, the boys' curriculum, also followed by most girls, was laid out in detail in the *Regulations for Malay Schools.* These regulations represented a substantial degree of long term planning on the part of the British Education Department. [81] From Kindergarten to Standard VI, Malay students studied reading and writing Malay in the Latin and Arabic alphabets, arithmetic, drawing

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[77] Mangan "Images for Confident Control" in Mangan (ed), *The Imperial Curriculum,* (1993), p16.
[78] Watson "Rulers and Ruled" in ibid, p160.
[79] ibid, pp147-8.
[80] Whitehead, "Education in British Colonial Dependencies" (1981), pp71-2, 77-78.
[81] Education Code Part V *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, 1936* (Second and Revised Edition, Government Printing Office, Singapore 1936). This was also the model used for most schools in the Unfederated Malay States.

and hygiene. Kindergarten also included handwork and indoor games, moving to outdoor games by Standard I. Composition was added from Standard II onwards, and geography (initially Malayan, then world geography as well), practice and theory of gardening. Basketry began in Standard III, Malayan history the following year, and geometry in Standard VI. The curriculum for girls had lower standards in arithmetic and geography, and varied the practical and handwork sections of the boys' curriculum. Domestic science was to be taught wherever possible, and drill and games were a part of the curriculum in all schools. [82] Care was taken that school hours allowed pupils time to assist their families. [83]

For Malay girls, the curriculum emphasised additional subjects, which were commonly taught in schools throughout the Empire, and focussed on the home and children. [84] Handwork was particularly important in the vernacular

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[82] At the time the report was written, schools teaching Domestic Science included a number of schools in Perak, some in Melaka and various other centres. Cloth weaving was a part of the curriculum in Perak, Pahang and Negri Sembilan.

[83] Education Code Part V *Regulations for Malay Vernacular, 1927* (1928). School hours in the 1920s were four hours a day for six days a week, with a break of no more that half an hour. The schools met for not less that 200 days a year, with five weeks holiday for "*Bulan Puasa"* (the fasting month of Ramadan), two weeks for *padi* planting, two weeks for *padi* cutting, all religious feasts and fasts, and other public holidays as approved by the Inspector of Schools. Education Code Part V *Regulations for Malay Vernacular, 1927* (1928). Thus the school day did not take up all available time, allowing another school, secular or religious, to operate in the same buildings in the afternoon, and pupils to have time to assist their families in necessary chores. By 1936 hours had changed to four and three quarters a day for five days a week, with all schools having Friday as a holiday. Education Code Part V *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education,1936* (1936). Saturday was a normal school day for teachers and some pupils, and was used for pupil teachers' classes, teachers' training classes, and conferences and meetings. Some of this training now took place in recognised institutions, the SITC and the MWTC. For further information, see Chapter 6.

[84] One particularly successful import into the girls' curriculum for all ethnic groups in Malaya was domestic science, also known as "domestic subjects", "domestic economy", "homecraft" and/or "home economics" (all refer to the

curriculum, and needlework was taught as an essential skill in girls' schools. During the 1920s, when four years of school was the maximum offered to most Malay girls, a special fifth year of needlework was the only way for girls to continue their studies. [85] Specialist teachers were trained to improve the skills of other teachers, and a specific curriculum was developed, emphasising sewing as a domestic rather than a commercial skill. [86] Sewing was thus taught according to regulated, Western-influenced methods. It was unlikely that pre-made clothes were cheaply available in all villages. Therefore being able to sew was an important practical skill for Malay girls, as well as a skill the British regarded as appropriately ladylike. Other practical activities in girls' schools included school gardening, carpentry, weaving, *mengkuang* (screwpine) mat and basket making, net-making (for fishing), lace-making, poultry keeping, cookery, *batek* work, Girl Guides and Brownies. [87] Like sewing, many of these skills designed for use

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same set of subjects). A woman's domestic duties were linked to her moral and religious role, and from 1878, "domestic economy" became compulsory for girls in elementary schools. It was invented as a specifically female subject, sometimes linked to the "sciences", and sometimes excluding them. (Attar, *Wasting Girls' Time: The History and Politics of Home Economics*, (London: Virago, 1990), pp 25, 27, 36-8) A more in depth discussion of the role of domestic science in Malaya can be found in Chapter 6.

[85] SS and FMS *Education Reports*.

[86] For example, the Johore *Education Report* (1939) refers to these specific needlework teachers. Skill development began with sewing cards, a small towel and a bag, then a head veil and a baby's vest, progressing to a pillowcase, a bodice and slipper fronts in gold or beads. By Standards IV and V, more difficult skills such as lettering in *jawi* and *rumi*, a *baju* (long-sleeved blouse), making a fan and mat, and gold work, and where a Lady Medical Officer was available to teach Child Welfare, the making of baby clothes. Education Code Part V *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Schools in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States and for the Sultan Idris Training College, 1927,* (Government Printing Office, Singapore, 1928). By 1936, the needlework curriculum was published in *jawi*, even in the otherwise English language regulations. Education Code Part V *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education,1936,* (1936).

[87] SS *Education Report,*1935.

in the domestic sphere would also have allowed women to earn a supplementary income while working from home. These "female" skills were thus a combination of old and new for many Malay girls.

Many Malayan textbooks were adaptations of those used in English schools of the time, with some modifications and examples from local situations.[88] Such textbooks were generally printed in romanised Malay. Printing in *rumi* served the purpose of disassociating the Malay language from its Islamic past, and linking it instead to a British future. It may also have been a matter of budget, as the same script could be used for Malay vernacular and English language schools. By the 1930s, textbooks were written specifically for the colony's schools. History and geography texts began to conceptualise the Malays as one race, or "*bangsa Melayu*", and define Malay space in terms of the territorial boundaries of the British colony. [89] The teaching of history became Malay oriented. Through Malay medium schools, these textbooks were a source of colonial knowledge and ways of thinking. [90]

Definitions of Malay and Malaya were not simply British concepts imposed on Malays. Malays appropriated and internalised definitions of identity developed in part through the colonial schooling system. [91] One site where such ideas developed was the Sultan Idris Training College.

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[88] Watson "Rulers and Ruled" in Mangan (ed), *The Imperial Curriculum* (1993), p165.
[89] Soda Naoki, "The Malay World in Textbooks: The Transmission of Colonial Knowledge in British Malaya", *Southeast Asian Studies*, (Vol 39, No 2, September 2001), p188.
[90] ibid, p189.
[91] A.B. Shamsul, "Debating About Identity in Malaysia: A Discourse Analysis", *Southeast Asian Studies*, (Vol 34, No. 3 December 1996).

The Sultan Idris Training College

Malay boys and their families who wished for further schooling in Malay had a limited set of options. Predominant among these was the Sultan Idris Training College. The college was founded in 1922 in Tanjong Malim, Perak, to train Malay boys to become teachers for the vernacular school system. The cost to governments was substantial: $460 per student per annum in 1927. The college was designed to take 300 students, 200 from the Federated Malay States and 100 from the Straits Settlements, although students were also selected from the Unfederated Malay States. Candidates to sit the entry exam had to be 16 years of age at entry, and were selected by the local Inspectors of Schools. They were also required to provide a certificate of physical fitness. By 1936 the age requirement had changed to not less that 16 or older than 18. [92] In addition, the College served as a centre of Malay literary activity, particularly once the Malay Translation Bureau was transferred from Kuala Lumpur in 1924. The Bureau was responsible for the production of textbooks, a Malay Home Library and the magazine *Majallah Guru*, amongst other publications.

As the primary goal of the SITC was the training of Malay male teachers, the curriculum closely mirrored that of the boys' schools. [93] Students studied arithmetic, geography, geometry, language, history and literature, agriculture, hygiene, drawing, writing (on the blackboard), general knowledge, carpentry, handcrafts, and music (selected students only). In addition, students took part in

[92]Education Code Part V *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education,1936*.
[93] The College year commenced a month after the end of the fasting month, and certain necessities were provided for the students. Each student was provided with all books and stationery, a mosquito net, blanket, football shorts and a white coat, cup, plate and spoon, and $3 per month pocket money for expenses.

"criticism lessons" where teaching techniques were reviewed. The College hosted evening lectures and films. Students, designated as Assistant Masters, gained practical experience in teaching in local vernacular schools. They also had the option of joining the Scouting movement or becoming military volunteers, with shooting practice 4 times a week. To graduate, a student was required to pass a wide-ranging examination. [94] A separate certificate was given for religious knowledge, and students were also required to obtain a certificate of character, good conduct and diligence from the principal.

Malay and overseas periodicals available to the students highlighted issues such as schooling, political rights and economic welfare. [95] SITC students were made aware of the increasing speed of political and social change. Bonds of common Malayness and shared social and intellectual experiences were also stressed in published articles by SITC graduates. [96] The college's engagement with public debate in the colony reflected the impact of Islamic modernism on Malay schools in the early decades of the twentieth century.

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[94] The examination included general literature (history, literature, composition, grammar); general science (arithmetic, mathematics, geography and physical geography); writing and drawing (on paper and blackboard); pedagogy (theory and practice of teaching, hygiene and physiology); physical training (drill, gymnastics and first aid); manual training (theory and practice of gardening, rural husbandry) basketry, carpentry and other handcrafts.

[95] Tahir, *Antara Kampung dan Kota*, (1998), p35.

[96] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974), p149. One of the best known of these SITC graduates and authors is Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad, better known as Za'ba. Born in the small village of Kampung Bukit Kerdas in Negri Sembilan, Za'ba began writing in 1915, while a temporary teacher in Johor Bahru. From 1916 he worked at the English College, and then at Kuala Kangsar. From 1924-39, Za'ba was employed at the SITC as a translator. His first book *Umbi Kemajuan* (Root of Progress) was published in 1932, and many of his works addressed Malay poverty. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974) p151. Za'ba was briefly a member of UMNO, and from 1953 was a lecturer at Universiti Malaya Singapura. Za'ba corresponded with Zain, was published in *Bulan Melayu* and is recognised as an important author and translator for Malay language periodicals.

Islamic Modernism and Malay Schooling

There were significant differences between the old Quranic schools and the new British educational system. However, by the twentieth century, the *pondok* boarding school was no longer the only option for Malays seeking religious instruction. Islamic modernists, like the British, were convinced that modern times required literacy in Malay, Arabic and secular and religious subjects to prepare students for the modern world. The *kaum muda* set up religious schools that offered an expanded range of subjects. These schools were modelled on the colony's government schools. Students sat at desks in purpose-built schoolrooms, instead of at the feet of their teacher; they were assigned to classes based on age and progressed through exams. The schools thus not only departed from traditional Islamic Malay relationships between teacher and students but also embraced a pedagogical style developed in the West. In the *kaum muda* schools the methodology of Muslim education was westernised. [97]

The modernist madrasahs (religious schools) offered "secondary" schooling, but it was rarely recognised by British administrators. [98] The Al-Iqbal Madrasah, sponsored by *Al-Imam*, was opened in 1907. Subjects taught included "religious sciences and associated disciplines, English, Malay, mathematics, geography, history, drawing, script – both Arabic and Latin – speech, and composition". [99] The *Majlis Ugama dan Adat Isti'adat Melayu* (Council of

[97] Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds*, (London/New York, Routledge Curzon, 2003), p171.
[98] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya*, (1994), p206.
[99] Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood*, (2003), p154.

Religion and Malay Culture) was formed in 1915 in Kelantan. Two years later it launched a modernist Islamic school, the Madrasah Muhammadiah, which eventually offered streams in English, Arabic and Malay. The school aimed to demonstrate that Islam was compatible with change while preserving the existing link between Islam and Malay identity. Students could go on to the Malay College, the Penang Free School or the SITC. [100] Islamic modernists also wanted to establish a religious college or high school where advanced instruction would be available, [101] but had no success in Malaya prior to World War II. One prominent exponent of such a school was Sheik Syed al-Hadi.

Sheik al-Hadi

One of the most frequently mentioned figures in discussions of Islamic modernism and girls' schooling in Malaya is Sheik Syed al-Hadi (1876-1934). Al-Hadi was the founder of a prominent madrasah as well as the Singapore-based modernist journal, *Al-Imam*. He made little direct contribution to girls' schooling, but was influential through his advocacy of schooling for girls that included study of both secular and religious subjects. The women's columns

[100] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p239.
[101] The British were reluctant to interfere in religious education at all. At the time, Malays had to go to Mecca, Cairo or India for further religious education. Reformers argued that without a college such as the Muslim University of Aligarh, the Jamia Millia Islamia of Delhi, Osmania University of Hyderabad or the Government Colleges of Egypt, Malay Muslims would not be able to keep abreast of developments in other Islamic lands. Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions*, (1979), p176. In July 1940, the Muslim Association of Perak invited Muslim leaders from all over Malaya to a meeting to discuss the founding of an Islamic college, but Japanese rule delayed the institution's founding. ibid, p259. Further vernacular schooling for Malays remained restricted to institutions such as the SITC.

"*Alam Perempuan*" (Women's World) and "*Tanah Isteri*" (Wives' Garden) in his publications provided opportunities for Malay women to discuss issues of concern to them. [102] Al-Hadi proposed the establishment of an Anglo-Malay school for boys to teach Malay, English and other subjects. [103]

Al-Hadi supported the British schooling system in Malaya, and said that if Muslims did not follow it they would be forever backward and dominated by ignorant religious teachers. [104] He was also responsible for the opening of private schools in Singapore, Melaka and Pahang, where he sought to modernise religious instruction. These schools became centres for disseminating the ideology of the Islamic reformers. They had higher academic standards and were more overtly political than the traditional Quranic schools. [105]

The focus of al-Hadi's writings on women was their roles as wives and mothers. He discussed the Qur'an as it related to women, and the position of women in Islamic history. To spread his views, al-Hadi used not only periodical publications but also the new form of the Malay language novel. His most popular novel was *Faridah Hanum*. It was set in Egypt, and was possibly an adaptation of an Egyptian story. [106] The titular female character was educated in French and the novel was published with illustrations of the main characters in Western dress. [107] In Al-Hadi's novel, Faridah was an example of an educated Islamic heroine, able to make moral decisions based on her faith and yet moving

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[102] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", p249.
[103] Al-Hadi published an outline of this system in *Al-Ikhwan* in 1930. Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya,* (1994), pp119-20.
[104] ibid, pp123-4.
[105] Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions*, (1979), p238.
[106] Roff states that the novel is an adaptation (Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974**)**. In a more recent study, Virginia Hooker argues it was an original work. V. M. Hooker, *Writing a New Society,* (2000), pp38-9.
[107] ibid, pp20-21.

in the modern world and acting for the good of her people. His heroines were "…young, educated, beautiful, charming, moralistic, intelligent and courageous; they represent women who strive for their proper status and role as well as their rights." [108] In al-Hadi's fiction, women were respected as both moral beings and contributors to society.

Al-Hadi argued that Malays should stop exalting illiterate and ignorant women. [109] In 1930, he wrote that

> "The development of a woman's intellect is a necessity for if her mind is weak or inadequate, her value will diminish, which is exactly what is happening in our society. Her present function to give birth and bring up her offspring is not unlike that of other female species in the animal kingdom…" [110]

If a woman's knowledge was confined to the bedroom and the kitchen, then she would raise stupid children. [111] Parents who refused to send their girls to schools were roundly condemned by al-Hadi. Additionally, he attacked parents who only sent their girls to school for a few years, then shut them away in seclusion,

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[108] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya*, (1994), p136.
[109] Al-Hadi was greatly influenced by Qasim Amin, to the point that some sections of his book *Alam Perempuan* (Women's World) were almost direct translations of the latter's work. Ahmad, *The Life, Times and Thoughts of Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi*, (1979), p233. The role of women as mothers was absolutely crucial to al-Hadi: "The strong and perfect bond between men and their mothers is what we wish to highlight." (Alijah Gordon (ed) *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady*, (Kuala Lumpur: (Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1999), p227). This statement was almost a direct quote from Amin.
[110] ibid, p227. He argued that one of women's primary roles was to manage their households. If women were enlightened and knowledgeable, they would be able to run their homes properly. Gordon (ed) The Real Cry (1999), p227. In addition, women would be able to make their houses a haven for their husbands, in line with a division of labour between husband and wife. The wife also would become the first teacher of her children. Ahmad, *The Life, Times and Thoughts of Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi*, (1979), pp241-3.
[111] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya*, (1994), p147.

ostensibly to prevent immoral influences. He stated that God had given the ability to reason to women as well as to men, and such a gift should not be disregarded. [112] Al-Hadi blamed local traditions rather than Islam for enslaving women, and stated that such practices were untrue to the spirit and teachings of Islam. [113] He also stated that Quranic verses relating to women as a degree below men only applied to family life, [114] and that preventing girls from attending school was a grave sin for the community, the race, and the country. [115] Al-Hadi wanted women to play a more dynamic role in society than was permitted at the time. In order to bring this about, he emphasised the nature of Islam as a dynamic and moderate religion, which offered opportunities to both men and women.

Why had the British been able to triumph in Malaya? According to Al-Hadi, it was not just due to their superior education, but also because their women participated in nation building, especially by the way they raised children. [116] His aim was to produce a new generation of Malays, better suited to deal with modernity and negotiate Malaya's plural society. The primary roles of women would be to see to the comfort of their husbands, manage their households and raise their children. Al-Hadi did not encourage women's public participation, but he did not entirely condemn it either. [117] The role of Malay women was crucial for the future of the *bangsa*:

"Indeed, the education of our women is a most pressing matter.

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[112] Ahmad, *The Life, Times and Thoughts of Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi*, (1979), p249.
[113] ibid, p245.
[114] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya*, (1994), p137.
[115] ibid, p142.
[116] ibid, p141.
[117] Ahmad, *The Life, Times and Thoughts of Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi*, (1979), p257.

> This is our most urgent duty, for only by doing so will it be easy for us to work for the progress of our community in other directions. If we treat this problem lightly then we will surely be confronted with difficulties in all directions when attempting to achieve progress for our people." [118]

Al-Hadi's definitions of the role required of Malay women "to achieve progress" also extended outside the household. He argued that women were capable of participation in war and politics, although he then went on to state that such developments were excesses. [119] Al-Hadi praised the exploits of Zain and the Malay women teachers of Johor. He thought they could explain religious rights and duties to Malay women.[120] Al-Hadi also argued that Malay girls should be taught foreign languages, [121] skills well outside what they would need as homemakers. While he may appear to be contradicting himself in terms of the scope of women's roles, it is possible he felt that it was more expedient for women to contribute to society by playing their traditional role well. [122]

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[118] Gordon (ed), *The Real Cry*, (1999), p228.
[119] Ahmad, *The Life, Times and Thoughts of Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi*, (1979), p237. The source does not go into detail. Al-Hadi also stated that women needed to be educated in order to be independent of men, specifically in case of divorce or the death of a husband. An educated woman would be able to provide for her children through honest employment, instead of being compelled to become a prostitute. Such women would also not be reliant on men in the administration of their households. ibid; Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya, (1994)*, p148.
[120] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya*, (1994), p153.
[121] ibid, p147.
[122] Ahmad, The *Life, Times and Thoughts of Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi*, (1979), p239.

Al-Hadi argued that girls needed to have a physical as well as a mental education, as "…nothing inhabits a weak body but a weak mind…" [123] Like Qasim Amin, al-Hadi then went on to discuss how the English had become dominant throughout the world through training their bodies and minds. [124] Both Al-Hadi and Amin alike saw Europeans as worth emulating: taller and longer lived, as well as being in positions of political and economic dominance around the world. Colonialism had a significant impact on the link between a healthy body and a healthy mind in Islamic modernist thought, a concern also shared by Zain and the PPMJ [125]

While al-Hadi did not achieve a lot of his goals for Malays, his influence on others such as Zain and her fellow Malay women teachers was significant. Al-Hadi's arguments encouraged Malay women to use Islam as a justification for female schooling, and claim the latter as not just a right but as a responsibility. Thus Malay women teachers could present girls' schooling as religiously sanctioned, even a religious necessity. Their self-definition as Malay Muslim women was a source of strength for Zain and her colleagues and a means to claim greater rights and responsibilities in Malay society. Another important aspect of the success of Zain and the *PPMJ* was the specific context of the Sultanate of Johor.

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[123] Gordon (ed), *The Real Cry*, (1999), p226:

> "Women cannot be called perfect creatures unless the care of their bodies and minds is perfected. The care of their persons is a necessity and a duty, if we desire to maintain their health and beauty; and they should be brought up: their bodies should be accustomed to exercise…"

[124] ibid.

[125] See Chapter 4.

Johor

Johor provides an important case study for girls' schools in British Malaya. The state's proximity to Melaka and Singapore meant that it was one of the earliest areas outside the Straits Settlements to encounter Western influences. The Johor royal family had English nannies, and royal children and retainers were sent to English language schools in Singapore, and then to England. Sultan Abu Bakar (reigned 1862-1895) sent all of his children to the early schools in Singapore, and, on the closure of the first girls' school at Telok Blanga, set aside a room in the palace grounds for the continued schooling of his female relatives. [126] Johor rulers and their administration emphasised the importance of schooling, in Malay and English, religious and secular, for both boys and girls. As it remained outside the Federated Malay States and maintained a degree of bureaucratic autonomy, Johor was able to set its own educational policy. The state also drew on the resources of the Straits Settlements to ensure that qualified staff were available to implement reforms.

Johor had a history of both Malay and English schools. [127] The English School, Muar, was the first secondary institution in the state, and its first class passed the Junior Cambridge examinations in 1912. In 1914 the English College in Johor Bahru opened. The development of English and Malay schooling

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[126] "I make this suggestion merely as a temporary means of keeping up the schools, until a time is reached when the Malay parents shall have so far recognised the advantage of educating their female children as to be induced to send them to schools independently of what may be done by members of my family. At present they do not appear to be exercising their own judgement, but are simply following an example and therefore they consider it indecorous to send their children to school unless in company with those of my family."
Sultan Abu Bakar, letter to Governor of the Straits Settlements, 15/12/1887.

[127] 1919 *Education Report.*

continued under Sultan Ibrahim (1895-1959). From 1902, all subjects and residents of Johor were required to send their sons to school (if one was available within two miles) from the ages of seven to sixteen. [128] The state introduced compulsory school attendance for all boys in 1915. [129] There were still insufficient facilities to make girls' schooling mandatory.

Prior to 1928, Johor had advocated "Universal English Education". [130] In practice, the policy was not followed. During the 1920s and 1930s, a Malay boy who wished to enter the English language system first had to finish his Malay vernacular primary schooling. Sultan Ibrahim protested that boys of the same age belonging to other ethnic groups faced no such restrictions. He wanted English classes taught in Malay vernacular primary schools, but the response of the Colonial Office was negative, based on costs and the effect on Malays of not first learning their mother tongue. [131] If Malay elites were not literate in Malay, the Colonial Office argued, they could become alienated from Malay life, despite the fact that Malay elites did not generally attend Malay language schools.[132] "Universal English Education" was officially rejected after the arrival in 1928 of

[128] If boys did not attend, parents could be summoned and fined $25 or imprisoned for three months.
[129] By comparison, Kedah made schooling (which could include government sponsored Quran classes) compulsory in 1914, Perlis in 1916, Terengganu in 1923 and Perak in 1935. Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions*, (1979), p248.
[130] R.O. Winstedt, *A History of Johore (1365-1895)*, (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1979), p159.
[131] CO717/98/5.
[132] Winstedt claimed that the previous Malay-language education of the boys allowed them to catch up with and surpass other boys once the former were in the English system. He also blamed disappointed parents for influencing the sultan, as there were not enough places for their children in the English system, and went so far as to call the children who were not accepted "backwards". CO717/112/1.

H.R. Cheeseman. There was a constant testing of boundaries between the Colonial Office and Malay elites in Johor.

The structure of the Johor Education Department changed regularly over the years.[133] The change which occurred in 1928 is the most significant for Johor girls. The Malay, English and Islamic schools were amalgamated into a single department by Superintendent Cheeseman. [134] The Department became responsible for paying the salaries of Quranic teachers, but the Religious Education Committee, appointed by the sultan, was still responsible for pedagogical supervision. Religious teachers now had official status in the state's bureaucracy. [135] By 1938 the Religious Education Committee was responsible for 73 religious schools for boys and 15 for girls. Islamic teachers numbered 180, and the enrolment across all religious schools for boys and girls was some 10,000. [136] Where there were no religious schools, elementary religious instruction was given at secular schools. Religious instruction was given to girls

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[133] From 1895 to 1906, the Ecclesiastical and Education Department had a single President, two Vice Presidents, one for each division, then two separate organisations beneath them. From 1906 the two became completely separate, each with a President and four Inspectors, and run by Johor statesmen. Information on the identity of these Johor statesmen is unavailable. In 1918 the Education Department was divided into English and Malay departments and in 1919 an Education Board was created to supervise Malay and English schooling. Superintendents during the period under study were Cheeseman (1928-34); Meade (1934-5); Swain (1935-6); Shaw (1936-7, 1938-40); Bain (1938, 1941); and Dato' Hj Abdullah b. A Rahman (1942).

[134] Jabatan Pelajaran Johor *Sejarah Sekolah-Sekolah Johor*, (1981), Johore *Education Reports*.

[135] Under the Johor *Offences by Muhammadans Enactment 1935*, no Muslim could teach religious doctrine save in their own home and to members of their own family unless they had the prior permission of the sultan (Yegar, *Islam and Islamic Institutions*, (1979), p247), an assertion of royal prerogatives and control of Islam.

[136] ibid p250. These numbers included both sexes.

in every year of their schooling in Johor and classes in the Quran for women teachers were run at Johor Bahru and Muar. [137]

The development of girls' schooling in Johor was slow but steady. [138] *Sekolah Perempuan Sukapati* (Sukapati Girls' School) opened in Muar in 1911. The building was constructed by the people of the village and the teachers included members of the royal family of Singapore. No further details are given in sources. [139] By 1918, two girls' schools were operating in Batu Pahat. [140] In Johor Bahru, construction of the *Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Tinggi* was completed in 1924. [141] The *Sekolah Perempuan Kampong Baru* had opened in

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[137] ibid, p256. In comparison, in Perlis the Quranic schools were severed from the vernacular schools in 1934. Annual examinations in Quran reading and recitation were held at the schools by the chief *kathi*, and a visiting teacher in Quran studies supervised the work of 20 men and 4 women religious instructors in the schools, who were appointed by the State council. One girls' school was opened at Arau in 1923. ibid, p251) In Selangor, schooling was reorganised in 1933 by the sultan. The Education Department assumed responsibility for all children at vernacular schools, Malay teachers gave religious instruction at the end of lessons for half an hour a day and religious instruction in the afternoon was dispensed with. This new school system did not take in the reading of the Quran. Parents had to arrange further religious study for their children themselves. Malay teachers received no extra pay and it seems the new system was a cost cutting exercise. ibid, p253.

[138] Girls' schools for Malays in Johor had the same aims as the boys' schools: to provide moral, mental and physical primary education to students ranging from five to 14 years of age. Girls were taught many of the same subjects as boys, and the girls' curriculum included reading, writing, cooking, moral discipline, general knowledge, health science, art and crafts, and mother craft. Jabatan Pelajaran Johor *Sejarah Sekolah-Sekolah Johor*, (1981), p178.

[139] The Singaporean royals had some training as teachers, and gained practical experience by teaching in Johor. Jabatan Pelajaran Johor *Sejarah Sekolah-Sekolah Johor*, (1981), p176. No further details of their identities is given. A year later the school was taken over by the government and re-named *Sekolah Melayu Bandar Maharani Muar*.

[140] The *Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Pengaram* and *Sekolah Perempuan Bagan*.

[141] Prior to this the school had met in Engku Sulaiman's house (no further details are given in the source but Engku is a royal title), then in Jalan Ayer and finally in Jalan Ngee Heng.

1922. [142] The building of vernacular girls' schools continued throughout the 1930s. [143]

The actual number of girls attending schools in Johor remained modest, though still significant. In 1939, the religious and vernacular schools combined taught 4,391 girls, more than four times the numbers of a decade earlier, with another 157 girls in Government English schools. [144] It is likely the increase was a result of a number of factors, including but not limited to the proximity of the Straits Settlements, Islamic modernist influences, the example set by the sultans and their patronage of schools and education, and the British administrators and Malay educationalists whose tenures coincided with, and helped to create, a period of maximum opportunity for the Malay women teachers.

These schools required the services of 118 women teachers. Ten years earlier, Cheeseman had written with pride of the achievements of the women teachers of Johor:

> "The Johor Malay Girls' schools have a deservedly high reputation throughout the Peninsula and are visited by educationalists from all over Malaya. Though they are regarded as better than parallel schools elsewhere, yet much remains to be done; but a valuable tradition is being created." [145]

And

> "They are probably the best Malay Vernacular Girls' Schools in

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[142] Jabatan Pelajaran Johor *Sejarah Sekolah-Sekolah Johor*, (1981), p177.
[143] Including the *Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Segamat* in 1932 and in 1937 the *Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Kluang* and *Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Tangkak Muar*. In addition, a number of smaller *kampung* (village) schools appeared and girls continued to be educated in boys' schools.
[144] Johore *Education Report*, 1939.
[145] 1933 *Report on Education in Johore*, CO717/98/5, p9.

> Malaya. While this is in some extent due to the competent and enthusiastic Malay supervisor in charge, whose headquarters are at Johor Bahru, it is chiefly due to the excellent quality of the teaching staff. Most of the teachers are young and intensely interested in their duties. There is equally good material on the teaching staffs of the Schools in the other centres and it is hoped to organise the work so that similar progress may be registered in all schools in the future." [146]

The reputation of the Johor girls' schools continued to grow throughout the period under study.

In 1938 and 1939, the government and Education Department of Johor took a step unprecedented in the Peninsula: the creation of three Government English Schools for Girls. The Temenggong Ibrahim Primary Girls' School in Batu Pahat was opened in 1938, and 1939 saw the opening of the Sultan Abu Bakar Primary Girls' School in Muar and the Sultan Ibrahim Primary Girls' School in Johor Bahru, each named after important figures in the history of Johor. The aim of the Education Department was to create a higher percentage of English-speaking Malay women in Johor than any other state. [147] Nonetheless, the schools did not accept only Malays. Enrolments in 1939 included 157 Malay girls (of whom 137 were from Johor), 13 Chinese, 7 Indians, 1 European or Eurasian, and 10 others, including girls from the Netherlands East Indies.[148]

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[146] 1929 Johore *Education Report*, p11. The "other centres" he refers to are Muar and Batu Pahat.
[147] Johore *Education Report*, 1938. Such women would thus make better wives for their English educated husbands.
[148] Johore *Education Report*, 1939. As the Japanese closed the schools, the experiment was short lived.

English language schools represented significant opportunities for the students who attended, and were also a sign of the modernisation of Johor. In these schools, Malay girls were given priority, and the ability of Johor to determine educational policy and demonstrate a degree of independence from British administrative control came to the fore. The same can be said of the Malay women teachers.

Teacher Training for Malay Women

The ultimate product of schools for Malay girls was Malay women teachers. Prior to the opening of the MWTC in 1935, teacher training was run on a state-by-state basis. Mentions of teacher training in the *Education Reports* are sporadic and often refer only to men. However, there were some notable exceptions which reveal the form of teacher training for Malay female candidates.

The British in particular were worried by the shortage of qualified Malay women teachers. Attempts had been made to recruit qualified women teachers for Malay schools from the very beginnings of colonial expansion into the Malay Peninsula. Some women Quran teachers were successfully recruited and the British hoped that the wives of teachers in the Malay schools would become qualified teachers themselves. Whether due to poor pay or social considerations, as of 1886 none had yet accepted such an appointment. [149] After the recommendations of the Winstedt Report of 1916 came into effect, the European Lady Supervisor and Assistants attempted direct recruitment in the Federated

[149] Salleh, *Malay Secular Education*, (1979), p25.

Malay States, and some training classes were offered at Johor Bahru. [150] These met with little success.

Two distinct schools of thought emerged relating to the skills and roles of Malay women teachers. The first of these held that Malay women were inherently childlike and required strict British supervision and guidance. Miss Purdom (later Mrs Irving), Lady Supervisor and Principal of the Malay Women's Training College, founded in 1935, was one exponent. She described the situation in 1925 as follows:

> "These women were ignorant of their own script and only knew a little needlework, weaving and basketry. Men attended the schools for one hour each day to teach the girls reading, writing and arithmetic. Results must necessarily be meagre until the women teachers had received instruction; and they were therefore given lessons in their own needlework and basketry." [151]

When asked about the prospect of a central training college, she replied that "…the time was not ripe for this yet and that the work should all proceed more slowly." [152] Recognising the limited skills of many Malay women teachers due to the constraints of their training was fairly common amongst administrators – illiteracy is not a sound basis for teaching others. Purdom was unusual in (publicly) still holding such a derogatory view of the abilities of Malay

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[150] ibid, p26.
[151] SS Correspondence, Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, CO273/574/8, 1931. It is significant that the focus regarding the improvement of women teachers was on vocational rather than academic subjects. The men who "attended the schools" were male teachers.
[152] ibid.

women. [153] Colonial ideas of the childlike native, particularly the female native as a perpetual child, were slowly replaced in educational discourse by greater recognition of the skills of Malay women teachers, as espoused by British educators such as Cheeseman.

The training of Malay women teachers was not without setbacks. The Straits Settlements was the first area to pioneer a form of residential training for women teachers.

> "Malay women teachers are now periodically brought to centres near their homes for a few weeks at a time for courses of training by qualified Eurasian schoolmistresses under the supervision of the Lady Supervisor… It is hoped however that in the near future a more satisfactory method of training Malay Women Teachers will be available." [154]

The failure rate was significant:

> " A teachers' training class was held in Singapore under the direction of selected instructors who gave their services gratuitously. Sixteen teachers sat for the examination and four passed. No training classes were held elsewhere."[155]

This high failure rate led to a concerted push to find appropriate candidates for training at the MWTC.

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[153] The implications of Purdom's views will be discussed in Chapter 6.
[154] SS *Education Report*, 1933 pp10-11. The mention of a Eurasian in a report about Malay women is quite rare. Usually mistresses were identified as either European or Malay.
[155] ibid, p39.

Johor took pride in its teacher training system. Classes were held in Johor Bahru and Muar, although the failure rate remained high. [156] Teacher training did not finish with the end of the training classes:

> "Every new teacher was appointed in the first place as a teacher-in-training and was attached to a school in Johor Bahru and put under a competent Headmistress. No new teacher assumed control of a class until the Superintendent of Education was satisfied as to her competence. This necessarily delayed the opening of new schools but proved very satisfactory in arguing that all new teachers had some preliminary instruction in the theory and practice of teaching." [157]

Johor thus had a full system of professional development, producing qualified teachers for the Malay girls' schools despite the difficulty of training women who may only have had rudimentary schooling themselves.

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156 "There were special classes in Johore Bahru, in general class subjects, and in Hygiene, Art, Handwork and Physical Training. The classes in general subjects were taken by the local Supervisor, in Hygiene by the local Lady Medical Officer, in Art, Handwork and Physical Training by the Assistant Supervisor Malay Girls' Schools, Singapore (by kind permission of the Education Department of the Straits Settlements). The Examination in Physical Training was conducted by the Superintendent of Education; the examinations in other subjects were conducted under his direction. The results, which are given in the Appendices, were very good. There were also special classes in Muar in general subjects, taken by one of the senior teachers, and in Physical Training taken by lady members of the staff of the Government English school, Muar. The 4 examinations in general subjects were completed by the end of the year and the results were not satisfactory. It is hoped to arrange for more satisfactory classes in 1930. Training classes for new teachers were held at Johore Bahru and Muar. The most suitable pupils were selected and given special training with a view to receiving appointments where vacancies occurred."
Johore *Education Report*, 1929.

157 ibid.

By 1931, training classes in Johor were held in general subjects, as well as cooking, nursing, hygiene, art and physical training. Cookery and nursing classes were taken by a Mrs Murray, and hygiene by the Lady Medical Officer.[158] Other classes were conducted by Zain, in her role as Supervisor, by her Assistant Supervisor, courtesy of the Malay Girls' School Singapore, and by needlework mistresses and group teachers.[159] By 1938, classes for women teachers included general subjects, singing, cooking, weaving and sewing. Arithmetic and Romanised Malay classes continued in all centres, and religious classes were included in the curriculum of the schools in Johor Bahru, Batu Pahat and Muar. [160]

The 1939 report reveals further details:

> "The usual Saturday morning classes were held at all centres and the following subjects were taught at them:- Arithmetic, Composition, Geography, Romanised Writing and Drawing. The teachers of all these subjects were, generally, men teachers from the boys' schools." [161]

Whereas classes were previously led by female teachers and supervisors, the teachers were now male. However, the subjects mentioned in the above quote are not the specifically "female" orientated subjects mentioned in earlier reports on teacher training. It is quite possible that there were simply not enough qualified female teachers in the more "academic" subjects to take all of the necessary classes.

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[158] No further details of this officer are given. It is most likely that she was a European woman, and a qualified doctor, employed by the Colonial Office.
[159] Johore *Education Report*,1931 p17. The statement about the training of new teachers as in the 1929 report was repeated.
[160] Johore *Education Report*,1938 p20.
[161] Johore *Education Report*, 1939, p22.

Not all teaching candidates attended the MWTC after its establishment in 1935. There were simply not enough available places. Many teachers in training continued to attend training in other centres. In Singapore, training classes included speech training, drama, general elementary science, first aid, art and handwork, folk dancing and singing. [162] Emphasis continued to be on general school subjects, including art and handwork. [163] A similar situation prevailed throughout the rest of Malaya.

Limited facilities for the training of women teachers also existed in the Federated Malay States. By 1935 there was one centre in Selangor, and two in Kuala Lumpur. 37 teachers passed examination in these centres. [164] By 1938 Perak held classes in domestic science, including knitting and needlework in 11 different centres, attended by 88 teachers, and the Selangor centre specialised in the theory and practice of teaching. [165] Administrators in both the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States regarded the establishment of a centralised training centre as highly desirable.[166] The result of their efforts was the Malay Women's Training College (MWTC), the subject of Chapter 6.

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[162] SS/FMS *Education Report* 1936, p59.
[163] SS/FMS *Education Report* 1938, p88.
[164] FMS *Education Report* 1935, pp61-2.
[165] SS/FMS *Education Report* 1938, p88.
[166] "These classes could not be and were not intended as definite training centres, but they give the women an opportunity of meeting each other. Incidentally they acquired (1) a knowledge of reading and writing (Jawi and Rumi), (2) some rudimentary ideas of number, (3) practice in games for children with simple physical exercises (obstinately opposed previous to this time), (4) a definite scheme for the teaching of needlework and some form of handicraft, (5) as well as practical teaching in hygiene, laundry and in the case of Perak cookery, where a European expert taught in 12 centres."
CO273/593/3.

The MWTC was not designed to answer the need for further schooling for the whole of the Malay female population. The students who attended were middle class, rather than from elite or peasant families. The latter had no real opportunities for further schooling during this period. On the other hand, the sultans called for greater opportunities for their own daughters. A boarding school was suggested for "high-born" Malay girls, which would teach them to be the "educational equals" of their husbands. However, they would still be taught the "domestic arts", and it was acknowledged by British administrators that such a project would have to move slowly. [167]

The proposed boarding school was to be single sex and elite girls would be segregated on the basis of race and class, an even smaller group than those at the MWTC; 16 girls would be taught a seven-year course. However, World War II and the Japanese Occupation prevented the planned opening of this college in 1941. A mostly rigid class divide remained between those who attended English language or Malay vernacular schools. On the one hand were those who would have the benefit of an English education and who would be taught to be good wives, able to mix with Westerners and move in an explicitly modern context of cities and elite society. On the other were the graduates of the Malay vernacular system, focussing on motherhood in the *kampung*, and the MWTC's emphasis on teaching others.

[167] CO717/144/7 *Malay Girls' Education Proposed College for Girls of Good Birth 1940.* Again, Malaya was significantly behind the Netherlands East Indies. Van der Veur, "Education and Social Change", (1969).

Conclusion

Girls' schooling had a significant effect on a number of Malay girls and women, although it is neglected in most histories of colonial Malaya. The British schooling system in Malaya perpetuated the division between elite and lower class Malays, but also fostered creation of a new Malay middle class. Teaching in vernaculars entrenched segmentation of the population along ethnic lines. New curricula and institutions such as the SITC contributed to the rise of the idea of Malaya as a single unit and the concept of the Malay *bangsa* as bridging the divisions between sultanates and colonial administrative units. As leaders in their communities, Malay teachers contributed to the process of defining Malay identity.

The Malay women teachers presented study of Western secular subjects as part of women's "natural" roles as wife and mother, and drew on arguments of Islamic modernists to justify such education. However, the system required female teachers and administrators in order to expand and thus increased the opportunities for Malay women to enter salaried employment. Training and working as teachers exposed Malay women to new intellectual currents. They focussed on the rights and responsibilities of Malay women and the methods necessary to create such Malay women and Malay society. They also gained the skills and contacts necessary to expound their ideas in print, reach a wide audience and create a public space for discussion and debate.

One of the most prominent figures in girls' schools in Johor and the Peninsula as a whole was Zainon bte Sulaiman. Zain was the daughter of a teacher; she attended an English language missionary school, and was employed by the Malay vernacular school system. She became Supervisor of the Malay

girls' schools of Johor, founded one of the first women's organisations and assisted in selecting students to attend the MWTC. The following chapter will explore the ways in which schools, colonial rule in Malaya, ethnicity, class, gender and politics played out in the life of one significant individual. It will also consider the way that Zain is now presented in Malaysian histories and popular culture, the legacy which she claimed for herself, and the way in which a schoolteacher, administrator and a strong advocate of Malay rights has been transformed into a public figure who espoused anti-British nationalism and tolerance of all ethnic groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

Zain

"At this time in history, Malay women are very valuable in the development of religion and the nation." [1]

Sri Hajah Zainon binti Haji Sulaiman (1903-1989), better known in contemporary Malaysia as "Ibu Zain", is one of the most prominent Malay women of the 20th century. As Supervisor of the Malay girls' schools of Johor from the age of 24, she was one of the highest-ranking Malay women in the British educational system. Zain also founded one of the first Malay women's organisations, the *Persekutuan Perempuan Melayu Johore* (*PPMJ*, Malay Women's Association, Johore) [2] and created and edited *Bulan Melayu* (*BM*, Malay Monthly), the first monthly Malay women's magazine. [3] In addition, Zain was a member of the committee which selected boys for the Sultan Idris Training College. Zain went on to become a founding member of UMNO, a campaigner against the Malayan Union proposed by the British, and an elected Federal Legislative Councillor.

Zain's life spanned the 20th century history of Malaya and Malaysia and its evolution from a collection of sultanates to an independent nation state. She was the product of two complementary global forces, British colonialism and Islamic modernism, that acted on existing Malay culture and created a new category of Malay female, the salaried teacher with a position in the public sphere. Such women lived through a period of rapid change, as increasing

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[1] *Bulan Melayu* (in *Idaman*, July 1941**)** p49.
[2] See following chapter for more details. Other than quotes and proper names, I will use the modern spelling of Johor throughout this thesis.
[3] *Bulan Melayu* is the subject of Chapter 5.

urbanisation, communications and transport networks and immigration changed the face of Malaya and solidified a plural society. Colonial contact and social transformation led to the rise of the idea of the "bangsa", Malay identity defined in contrast to ethnic others. Zain and the Malay women teachers aimed to ensure the pre-eminence of Malays in colonial society, explicitly excluding members of other ethnic groups. Zain wrote in Malay for a Malay speaking audience, specifically in *jawi* script, with its links to Islamic tradition and Malay culture. Later she switched to romanised Malay, recognising its utility in a colonial world and the opportunities such literacy opened up. She was not opposed to the British and, indeed, regarded their presence as presenting opportunities for Malay advancement. Zain is also central to an understanding of the public and intellectual life of Malay women in Johor during the 1930s.

Zain's writing reflected a rising sense of Malay identity and a new Malay middle class consciousness. She understood the importance of publishing and the written word to spread ideas. Similar forces are recognised as significant influences on male Malay intellectuals during the 1930s, though the experiences of Zain and the *PPMJ* were slightly different. Zain's goals were limited in focus: universal primary schooling for Malay girls, preparing them to become wives, mothers and good Muslims. However, even such modest goals would make a difference for many Malay girls, few of whom attended schools before Independence. They would gain access to modern knowledge and even the beginnings of a role in public life as teachers. Zain did not adhere to Western feminism, existing Islamic precepts or Malay cultural heritage, but sought modernity on her own terms. Zain and the *PPMJ* participated explicitly as Malay women in the ongoing and fluid process of defining what it meant to be "Malay".

After Independence, the public figure of Zain diverged from the historical facts of her early career. Instead, she came to represent a unifying force in multi-racial Malaysia as a woman who campaigned against the British and sought Independence for all. While Zain did indeed begin to campaign for Independence after the Japanese Occupation, these later goals have been read back into her life and achievements during the 1920s and 1930s, obscuring the historical realities of her earlier career. Even as a member of UMNO during the 1946 campaign, Zain was not anti-colonial, but sought to safeguard Malay interests under the British. [4] The name "Ibu Zain", which she encouraged from 1958, [5] now distinguishes her in modern political discourse, one of the few women identified as a heroine of independence in otherwise male-dominated narratives. [6] . She is recognised for her attributes of bravery, personal sacrifice, dedication to the cause, and multiracialism. [7]

When considering the way in which Zain is presented in Malaysia, Coté's analysis of Kartini's role and writings is useful for conceptualising debate. [8] Coté

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[4] Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change)*, 1980, pp42-4.
[5] CTRA Production, "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Tales of Ibu…. Political Journey" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/03/tales-of-ibu-political-journey.html Accessed 30/04/09).
[6] For example, see Malaysian Bar, "They dared to take up public office" (2007, http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/echoes_of_the_past/they_dared_to_take_up_public_office.html Accessed 21/12/12); Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960).
[7] For example, Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail"; CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/ Accessed 30/04/09).
[8] Kartini (1879-1904) was a member of an aristocratic Javanese family in the Netherlands East Indies. She attended school until she was 12 and later corresponded with a number of Dutch friends. In her letters she discussed the rights of girls to schooling in academic and practical subjects such as hygiene and cookery. She opposed child marriage and polygamy, and wanted the establishment of reading circles in which young men and women could discuss social issues. Kartini entered into a polygamous marriage and died shortly after

argues that the focus on Kartini's writings is important not just because they were influential, but because they are representative of wider trends. He argues that study of Kartini has tended to overemphasise the biographical at the expense of the historical, leading to a "double vision" of the actual historical Kartini and the public Kartini who emerged after 1911 as part of a broader political process. The idea of Kartini became a malleable phenomenon manipulated by political interests. [9] The process of creating "Ibu Zain" displays a similar division between the historical and the political. When I use her title in inverted commas, I refer to the public rather than historical figure. The making of "Ibu Zain" began during Zain's lifetime, and has been continued since her death by her children, Malay politicians, journalists, commentators and historians. [10]

I intend to revisit early sources in order to write an alternative biography of Zain to that which exists in much Malaysian history writing. The intellectual climate of 1930s Malaya was very different from the period in which the myth of "Ibu Zain" came to prominence. The latter forms the subject of the final chapter of this thesis. Zain took advantage of the opportunities offered to her as an educated member of the Malay middle classes. In addition, she demonstrated a formidable work ethic and ability to draw the many different influences on Malay women during the colonial period into a coherent whole. Zain was fluent in Malay, Arabic and English, a combination which was highly useful in the colonial context. She drew on Western knowledge, Malay culture and Islamic teachings to call for modernisation for the Malay *bangsa*. However, such

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childbirth at the age of 25. She is commemorated in independent Indonesia as a national heroine for Independence and girls' education.

[9] Joost Coté, *The 'Education' of Java*, (1997), pp293-4.

[10] A full and complete biography of Zain is not the purpose of this thesis, though it would be an important future project.

attributes are generally unrecognised when discussing her early career, in which she worked with the British and then under the Japanese. Emphasising Zain can obscure the lives and work of other Malays who influenced or created girls' schools and women's organizations and politics. Nonetheless, she is a significant figure in the early period of women's publishing and political participation, and a dominant figure in the history of girls' schooling. Studying Zain highlights a neglected area of the development of Malay identity and women's role in the process.

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the public figure "Ibu Zain", as presented in historical and cultural works. A section on sources will follow, including Zain's own writings, interviews, biographies, her presence in media and popular culture, in academic studies and in British colonial sources. Zain's life and work will then be situated in the historical context of her time. I will address Zain's agenda, her family background, marriage and children, her career under colonial rule, engagement with Islamic modernism, and attitudes to clothing and dress and Malaya's plural society. I will also trace her activities during the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945). Such divisions are necessary when conceptualising Zain's life, in order to address the major points of the public persona of "Ibu Zain". However, the historian must be careful not to become circumscribed by the myth itself. Considering the life of Zain illustrates the interplay of events and experiences, writing and representation throughout the life of this prominent individual, and the ways that she participated in and was influenced by changes in broader Malay society.

“Ibu Zain”

A particular version of Zain’s life has become embedded in the popular history of post-Independence Malaysia, especially since the 1980s. Almost too sacred to criticise, the mythologised Zain even appears in tourist literature and popular culture. This single narrative of Zain lacks nuance, and connects her biography to the changing history of Malaysia. It outlines the beginning of her career under British rule, her campaign against the Malayan Union, leadership of the *Kaum Ibu* UMNO, and appointment to the Johor State Council. Her profile continued to rise throughout the 1980s, and she is represented as a unifying force in contemporary multiracial Malaysia.

As with many biographical studies, biographies of Zain approach hagiography. The synopsis of *Ibu Zain: The Musical* presents her life as follows (errors are in the original):

> “Zainun Munshi Sulaiman, or rather, more well known as Ibu Zain, grew up as an active and energetic lady. Her father’s guidance in religion education and perseverance in sending her to an English school has opened her eyes and soul to become an educator of the nation, not only through her role as teacher, an author and also a fighter for her nation. She went through the crucial era of the English colonisation, Japanese invation, Comunists, Calamity, the rise of opposition for Malayan Union until the independence of Malaya. She also experienced the sail of time as a single mother to three children, and at the same time she was also the leader for *Kaum Ibu* (Mothers in UMNO) which really stretched her body and soul… The only thing that she wished to seen by

> fighting so dearly is that her nation would be free and independent, not only from the colonists, but also the limitation of their minds which stop the children of the nation from developing." [11]

As stirring a figure as "Ibu Zain" presents, the realities of her life are far more complex.

Sources

In order to analyse the public figure of Zain, it is necessary to consider in detail the sources in which she appears. I will also include sources that challenge the dominant representation, particularly those dating from the period 1929-41. Biographical entries, newspaper and magazine articles, television journalism and interviews create and reinforce the public figure of Zain. Other sources, such as British documents and reports and Zain's own writing, present a much more nuanced picture of her early career. By using the latter sources as the basis for research, my reading of Zain's work and life differs from the existing narrative.

Available sources on Zain are mostly in Malay, although a few are in English – particularly academic works, some biographies, and newspaper articles. Zain is still a figure of interest primarily to Malays, as indicated by the Malay names of many authors and the predominance of Malay language sources. Authors are both male and female, although sources which focus on Zain's role in politics and as a campaigner for women's rights tend to have been written by

[11] CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Synopsis of Theatre" 2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/03/synopsis.html, Accessed 30/04/09.

female authors. [12] In both English and Malay sources, Zain's Independence campaigning is privileged over her pro-Malay attitude. A newer national narrative in which referring to early politicians as "anti-colonial" is common has been overlaid, uneasily at times, on an older sectarian emphasis. Considered together, these sources will show how the image of "Ibu Zain" was created and perpetuated, as compared to historical evidence about Zain.

Zain's Writings

Zain's writings are major sources of information for this chapter and the thesis as a whole. Zain was a prominent author in publications which discussed women during this period. Prior to World War II, Zain's work is primarily found in teachers' journals, including *Majallah Guru*, *Lembaran Guru*, and *Bulan Melayu* (1930-1941). [13] The latter is the major repository of her writings. Zain was its founder, editor and a major contributor to its pages. Most of her public writings are in Malay written in the Arabic alphabet. I have not been able to find any of her private correspondence. [14] Zain's writings can shed light on both the

[12] In the course of researching this chapter, I have amassed the most detailed collection of information on the early life and career of Zain that I have seen in any publication. Not all available information has been included for reasons of space or relevance.

[13] Zain's first work in a teachers' publication was published in *Majallah Guru.* She wrote the column "Guru Nombor Satu" (Teacher Number 1) under the pseudonym "Zainah al-Nadrah". Ahmad, Majallah Guru (1975), p121. Zain's contribution to *MG* stretched to 25 instalments, some 60 columns in total. Zain's pen-name translates to "beauty", both physical and spiritual, although in this case most likely she is expounding the beauty of her vision. Kartini also wrote under a pseudonym, "*het klaverblad*", the cloverleaf.

[14] There is evidence in interviews, biographies and journal articles of her carrying on a wide correspondence with individuals including prominent male leaders such as Dato Onn, Sheik al-Hadi, Za'ba and Mahathir. Additional tapes

historical Zain and the later public figure, and are part of a significant increase in Malay publications during the 1930s, linked to a rise in Malay literacy, schools and the middle classes.

Zain's writing style was evocative, even florid at times. She writes of bringing "shining rays of light for this world and the next", [15] of Malay women rising up to take their place in Malayan society. A number of Zain's articles discussed *BM* and the *PPMJ*: "*Haluan Kaum Ibu*", [16] "*Kata Kita*", and "*Kenyataan Khas Bulan Melayu*". [17] Zain's use of language was designed to uplift and inspire as well as inform its main target audience, the Malay women teachers of Johor. [18]

Zain's writings of the 1930s are generally positive towards the British presence in Malaya. It is likely that she found her association with the British profitable both personally and professionally. The other possibility is that Zain was unable to express her true opinions for fear of British sanctions, [19] however, she was writing in *jawi* Malay, in a journal intended for Malay women teachers.

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of Zain's interviews (to which I have not had access) are held in the National Archives of Malaysia. (CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical: The Musical in Media" 2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/05/ibu-zain-musical-in-media.html accessed 30/04/09) However, at the time I was there, despite searches of the catalogue and discussions with archive staff, I was unable to locate them.

[15] Shaharom Husain, "*Peranan Bulan Melayu dan Tokoh-tokohnya dalam Perkembangan Bahasa dan Persuratan Melayu*" (*Institut Bahasa, Kesusasteraan dan Kebudayaan Melayu, UKM*, 1987), p6.

[16] *Bulan Melayu* 1.3, p52.

[17] "Course of the women's group", "Our Words" and "Special Anniversary *Bulan Melayu*". Articles are also mentioned in Husain, "*Peranan Bulan Melayu*" (1987), pp19-20.

[18] Even when she was being pragmatic, her writing is still powerful, eg: "Now the girls of our race have started to come forth to serve their country and their nation…" from *Lembaran Guru* ("Teachers' Paper"), appears in Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation*, (ANU), p42. Zain also wrote about women's roles in *Majallah Guru*. Ahmad, *Majallah Guru*, (1975) p154.

[19] Husain, "*Peranan Bulan Melayu*" (1987).

Few British colonial officials were likely to read such a women's magazine, and Zain's ideas were not particularly inflammatory.

In contrast, from the 1940s onwards, themes of independence and anti-colonialism began to feature more prominently in Zain's writings. While Zain initially wrote in *BM* about the need for Malays not to fall behind the Chinese, she later began to blame the British for the backward position of Malays in the multi-ethnic society. [20] Zain continued to write in Malay, and her audience was thus restricted to the Malay speaking population. On the other hand, a switch to romanised Malay broadened Zain's possible readership. Zain's choice to emphasise Malay as the language of Malaya and Malaysia also implies that she was still most interested in addressing Malays, not fellow Malaysians of Chinese and Indian descent. *Rumi* was increasingly taught in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States and Malay was the official language of an independent Malaysia. I will mostly rely on earlier published examples of Zain's writings, as I have been able to find only a few of her later speeches and other writings. [21]

Interviews

Another important source of information on Zain is my interviews with her children. Zain had three children who survived infancy, Adibah Amin (born 1936), Fadzilah Amin and Shakib Amin (1941). They were raised by Zain and her extended family after their father's death in 1945, and all went on to higher education. Adibah taught Malay and English and then became a journalist and

[20] Zain, "Wanita Dengan Rumahtangga" ANM 2007/093029.
[21] She was well known for her speeches in favour of Independence. I was not able to find any direct examples of these preserved.

columnist, Fadzilah is an English lecturer and columnist, and Shakib was an accountant and then a teacher. From these interviews I derived a sense of the political figure of "Ibu Zain", but also information about her life in general. Zain's children have a particular stake in continuing her legacy and present a picture of a caring wife and mother, nationalist campaigner, and lover of all the peoples of Malaysia. [22] I interviewed Fadzilah and Shakib Amin in their homes in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru respectively during November 2007. [23]

Like any historical source, oral histories are shaped by dominant historical discourses.[24] They are in themselves an act of interpretation. The historian needs to consider not just what was remembered, but why. [25] Zain's children have a strong sense of themselves as the keepers and continuers of the memory of their mother. They are understandably proud of Zain and her achievements. Both Fadzilah and Shakib emphasised certain stories and aspects of their mother's life they wished me to focus on, and which also appear in other sources on Zain. The first of these incidents was an offer to Zain to study medicine in America, and how missing out on this experience led to her lifelong interest in health. Her children also presented her marriage as an idealised love match but they were very young at the time of their father's death and were assessing a relationship they could have only experienced as young children. Zain's strong Islamic faith was also discussed, in both the context of her English

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[22] Interviews with Adibah, Fadzilah and Shakib are quoted in other sources, eg: Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".
[23] Interview with Fadzilah Amin, 19/11/07; Interview with Shakib Amin, 27/11/07.
[24] Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method" in Robert Perks, Oral History Reader (London: Routledge 2007. Online Resource through UNSW Library Website), p78.
[25] ibid pviii.

language schooling and her adoption of a head covering. A story of her confronting Japanese soldiers was repeatedly mentioned. In addition, her role as a campaigner for Independence was a significant part of conversations with her children, even as they also stated that Zain did not hate the British, and indeed had got on quite well with men such as Richard Olaf Winstedt. [26] Zain's family's recollections are important in following and reinforcing the story of "Ibu Zain". They emphasise her love for all Malaysians and her tireless work for Malayan Independence.

Biographies

Biographies are another important source for throwing light on the life and representation of Zain. They are the most accessible source on Zain's life, contribute to the representation of "Ibu Zain" and are descriptive rather than analytical. Biographies of Zain are mostly small articles of two to four pages, written for a Malay-reading audience, and are without references. Nevertheless, such biographies tend to be more balanced (in terms of Zain's early and later life) than interviews and most secondary sources. Biographies of Zain generally take the form of a list of her specific appointments and achievements. [27] A typical example is the entry in the *Biographical Dictionary of Malaysia*: one half

[26] Interview with Fadzilah Amin, 19/11/07. The latter response was in answer to a direct question on the subject.
[27] Eg: ANM2007/0021444 "Majlis Kebangsaan Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Wanita Malaysia – Biografi".

covers her early life and work in education, the other her role in nationalism and politics. [28] The entry is only one paragraph long.

The focus of biographical articles in Malay varies depending on the nature of the publication and the aim of the author. For example, the national magazine *Pelancar* [29] paints a fairly typical picture: Zain's early life, a list of her educational achievements, then her life in politics and UMNO. [30] On the other hand, *Jurnal Warisan Johore* (Johor Heritage Journal) presents her as one of Johor's first women writers, and deals with her life accordingly. [31] There are also a number of small biographies of Zain in other publications and online [32] which also reinforce the popular view of Zain. I have located one longer biography of Zain, an academic exercise in Malay. It is almost entirely descriptive and concentrates on her life as a nationalist campaigner and politician. [33] The work is 43 pages long, lacks references, and is written for a general audience rather than

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[28] Amarjit Kaur, *Historical Dictionary of Malaysia*, (Metuchen/N.J./London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1993), p157.

[29] *Pelancar* ("Launcher") is a national magazine, published by ANGKASA (the *Angkatan Koperasi Kebangsaan Malaysia*, a body representing the Malaysian co-operative movement).

[30] Noriah Mohd. Ali, "Ibu Zain: Tokoh Wanita Terbilang" Pelancar, (Disember 2005), pp36-7.

[31] Rosnah Baharudin, "Penulis Wanita Johore : dari Ibu Zain ke Hasidah Disan" (*Jurnal Warisan Johore II* (1998), pp71-82). Despite the fact Zain was born outside the state, she is claimed as a woman of Johor, where she spent most of her professional life.

[32] Eg: Abu Bakar Hamid and Mohd Ismail Zamzam, (eds) *Pejuang Terbilang Johore*, (Johor Bahru: Yayasan Warisan Johore, 2002); "*Ketua Wanita Kedua: Allahyarhamah Tan Sri Hajah Zainun Sulaiman*" Wanita UMNO Malaysia, (http://wanitaumno2u.com/sejarah/ketua-wanita-kedua/ Accessed 06/03/09). Even Wikipedia follows the general trend. ("Ibu Zain" Wikipedia: The Online Encyclopaedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibu_Zain Accessed 29/04/09; "*Zainon Munshi Sulaiman*" *Wikipedia Bahasa Melayu, ensiklopedia bebas* http://ms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zainon_Munshi_Sulaiman Accessed 29/04/09). The Malay-language version is more detailed, but both tell the same stories.

[33] Siti Patonah Muashor, *Tan Sri Hajah Zainon Bt. Sulaiman: Ibu Zain Tokoh Wanita Malaysia*, (Unpublished exercise, supplied to the author by Shakib Amin).

an academic readership. It was provided to me by Shakib Amin, and did not contain any information at odds with the family view of Zain.

None of these biographies presents a controversial view of Zain. There are also very few differences in interpretation between examples, aside from the views of authors who argue about the importance of UMNO to Malay nationalism and women in politics. [34] Most Malay language biographical texts focus on Zain's nationalism and anti-colonialism. They lack indexes, bibliographies, and references. These are not scholarly texts but are written for a general audience, and build up the public image of Zain as a national heroine.

Media and Popular Culture

Zain as a heroine of Malaysia is the subject of newspaper and magazine articles, television and stage shows, film and tourism literature. A similar picture to the short generalised biographies of Zain is presented in a Malay language television documentary of her life. [35] Still and moving images of Zain appear, as well as interviews with her children. The documentary does not interrogate Zain or examine her ideas. Some information on Zain can also be found in the newspaper columns of her daughter Adibah Amin. [36] During the 1980s, Zain herself was

[34] The latter interpretation appears more in academic theses or texts with an emphasis on women's history. Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960); Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation*, (ANU); Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980); Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987). These studies do include full scholarly research and referencing, in contrast to many Malay language sources.
[35] Naharuddin Haji Ali, *Profil Ibu Zain*, (kaset video), Gombak, (199-)
[36] Amin, *As I Was Passing*, (2007); Amin, *As I Was Passing 2*, (2007). *As I Was Passing* was a short column written in English in the first person, and is now

interviewed for magazine articles on topics including her life and her Islamic college for girls. [37] She even appears in the tourism campaign for Visit Malaysia 2007, the 50th anniversary of *Merdeka* (Independence). [38] The latter article, written in English, includes a number of quotes from her children and presents Zain as pioneer in education, politics and nationalism, as well as an advocate for multi-racial Malaysia. Her educational career is still dealt with only as a background to bigger achievements later in her life. [39] The character of "Ibu Zain" has appeared in the play *Merdeka Merdeka Merdeka* (Independence), and the 2007 movie *1957 Hati Malaya* (*1957 Heart of Malaya*). [40] However, Zain is only a minor figure in these examples, which focus on her work as a campaigner for Malaya's Independence in 1957.

The most recent and detailed manifestation of Zain in popular culture is *Muzikal Ibu Zain* (*Ibu Zain the Musical*), staged in conjunction with *Merdeka* celebrations, and again emphasising Zain the nationalist. The musical was staged by the Istana Budaya from 12-18 August 2007, and restaged 13-22 March 2009, at the Malaysian Tourism Centre. It was presented by Malaysians for Peace, a

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collected in book form. Zain appears primarily as Adibah's mother, although still with some emphasis on her role as an educator and later a nationalist.

[37] Abdul Aziz Mahmuddin, "Ibu Zain: Ingin Melahirkan Puteri Islam" (Ibu Zain: Hopes to create Islamic Girls), *Dewan Siswa*, (Jilid 4, Bilangan 10, Oktober 1982, pp40-41). In the latter example Zain emphasises the importance of Islamic education for Malay girls.

[38] Suhani Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail" (*Visit Malaysia*, consulted 7/9/07 http://allmalaysia.info/visitmalaysia2007/story.asp?file=/2007/1/28/vm07_founding/20070510194432&sec=visitmsia07_founding) It first appeared in The Star newspaper (Suhani Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail" (The Star Online, January 28, 2007, http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2007/1/28/nation/16709039&sec=nation Accessed 29/04/09).

[39] Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail" (2007).

[40] CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical: The Musical in Media" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/05/ibu-zain-musical-in-media.html Accessed 30/04/09).

government-supported coalition of NGOs concerned with global peace and international humanitarian aid. The script of the musical was approved by Zain's family. Publicity materials and plot summaries from the musical, as well as newspaper articles, blog postings in both Malay and English, and Youtube clips indicate that the work is one of the strongest articulations of the myth of Zain. [41] The English version of publicity materials seems to be a direct translation of the Malay, as there is no difference in their content and the English grammar is awkward. The synopsis of *Ibu Zain the Musical* states:

> "Her efforts, sweat and tears brought us the happiness that we are enjoying today. She was accused. She was shot. She lost her husband. She remained strong for her nation, faith and country. Stay tuned for this heart touching Musical Biography of the life & times of Ibu Zain (Tan Sri Zainun Munshi Sulaiman)"

The emphasis of *Muzikal Ibu Zain* is on Zain's opposition to colonialism but it also notes the importance of her contribution to Malay girls. [42] The musical

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[41] CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/ Accessed 30/04/09). In Malay, it reads

> "*Perjuangan & keringat serta air mata seri kandi inilah membawa kebahagiaan kepada kita hari ini. Dia pernah difitnah. Dia pernah ditembak. Dia pernah kehilangan suami, tapi dia tetap gagah demi bangsa, agama & negara. Dialah Ibu Merdeka. Saksikanlah Teater Muzikal Biografi Ibu Zain Anjuran Persatuan Penulis Wanita Malaysia (PPWM) dan AMAN Malaysia dengan kerjasama CTRA Production, MaTic, ASWARA & Istana Budaya.*"

(CTRA Production, "Teater Muzikal Ibu Zain" (2008/2009 http://ibuzain.blogspot.com/ Accessed 30/04/09). The only difference is in the final sentence.

[42] CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical: The Musical in Media" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/05/ibu-zain-musical-in-media.html accessed 30/04/09). The Star Online "A Past for Posterity: Ibu Zain the Musical" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-ZAyKnh1DM accessed 12/05/09) relates

covers aspects of her life which appear in no other published sources I have been able to obtain. These include accusations about an affair with Dr Burhanuddin Helmi [43] and her wish to use the land on which her college was later founded as a headquarters for UMNO.[44] Despite such tantalising snippets of information, the work is at heart a drama, and the focus of the production is the story of Zain, the heroine of modern Malaysia.

Theses and Academic Texts

Zain is also referred to in some academic texts and theses. Most conceptualise Zain as a politician rather than as a teacher. None are scholarly biographies; rather they are works in which Zain is related to the primary subject matter. Zain appears in sources dealing with women and politics in Malaysia, and in academic works on education, schools and *Bulan Melayu*. In an English language study *Emancipation of Malay Women* (1960), Asiah bte Abu Samah refers to Zain as the "greatest" of the three women activists she identifies (the others are Sofiah bte Abdullah and Azizah Jaafar), and as the "mother of Malay women's

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Zain's life to the importance of girls' education, an emphasis not always shared by the publicity materials. Such an emphasis on her opposition to colonialism is also found in sources such as Wanita UMNO, *Zainun Sulaiman (Ibu Zain)*" (2012, http://www.wanitaumno.my/?p=179 Accessed 21/12/12) and Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".

[43] Also known as al-Helmy (1911-1969), he was a Malaysian politician and president of the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party from 1956-1969.

[44] CTRA Production, "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Tales of Ibu…. Political Journey" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/03/tales-of-ibu-political-journey.html accessed 30/04/09**;** CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Synopsis of Theatre" 2008/2009) The latter piece of information appears in no other source I have been able to locate.

emancipation". [45] The section which deals with Zain is brief, and concentrates on the radicalism of the three women activists after World War II. In *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation*, Halinah Bamahaj acknowledges the significance of education rather than politics as the key to social change prior to World War II, but she is primarily interested in organisations rather than individuals. [46] In a Malay language thesis by Innun bte Rahiman on the *Kaum Ibu* UMNO, Zain again plays a significant role, but, since the focus is on UMNO in Johor, her early life is necessarily presented as background material. [47]

Zain also features in Malay language academic works on *Bulan Melayu* by Shahazana Mamat (2004) and Shaharon Husain (1987). [48] However, each has a significantly different focus from this thesis. Shahazana's exercise is descriptive and lacks historical context, while Shaharon considers the magazine as the basis for a literary rather than historical study. Mahani Musa (2010) discusses the teachers' publications *Lembaran Guru, Kencana, Saudara, Majallah Guru* and *Bulan Melayu* and thus includes a significant amount of information on Zain and her work. However, Zain is included as just one woman writer of the 1930s rather than as the focus of sustained study. Compared to other works which mention Zain, these texts are more scholarly, but she is not their main focus.

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[45] Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960).
[46] Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation*, (ANU).
[47] Innun Bte Rahiman, *Pergerakan Kaum Ibu UMNO Johore Baharu Sebelum 1945-1964*, (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia).
[48] Husain, "*Peranan Bulan Melayu*" (1987); Mamat, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004). These papers concentrate on the importance of *Bulan Melayu* and provided important information on issues of the magazine I have not been able to locate as well as some discussion of Zain's life and ideas.

Zain also appears in books and articles on women in politics and education in Malaysia. Works by scholars such as Manderson and Dancz focus on women in party politics.[49] As a result, Zain's early life is passed over fairly quickly and she is presented as a nationalist and politician. Manderson also mentions Zain in half a sentence in her article on Malay female education. [50]

It is worthwhile reviewing gaps and omissions in the historical record as well as those texts which include discussion of Zain.[51] Since many works on schools barely mention girls, omission of Zain is not surprising. Zain is also not acknowledged in general histories of Malaysia, such as those by Leonard and Barbara Watson Andaya or Virginia Hooker. [52] Thus references to Zain are mostly found in texts which emphasise the role of Malay women in politics, and occasionally in education. Once again, these sources tend to follow the same narrative of the life of Zain.

British Colonial Sources

One set of sources which are not confined to the established narrative of Zain's life are those generated by the British in Malaya. As a result, these sources are central to my research. Education reports, correspondence and British publications dating from the period of Zain's work as an educator shed light on

[49] Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change* (1980); Dancz, *Women and Party Politics,* (1987).
[50] Manderson, "The Development and Direction of Female Education", (1978) p110. Manderson also mentions Siti Mariam Sa'adi (ibid).
[51] See Chapters 1 and 2.
[52] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001); V. Hooker, *A Short History of Malaysia*, (2003). Harper, *The End of Empire*, (1999)**,** p29 refers to Zain in regard to schooling, but he is unusual.

the earlier part of her life. They illustrate the way that Zain and the women teachers of Johor worked together with the British in order to expand opportunities for Malay girls. They also show the often subtle differences in the way that each party conceived their role. Both saw the British as helping to raise the Malay *bangsa*. However, the Malay women teachers saw themselves rather than the British as the leaders of this process, at least as it related to Malay women.

There are problems of perspective in using these British sources to reconstruct the lives of colonised peoples. [53] As Warren makes clear, colonial sources report what was of interest to British administrators and the Colonial Office, and focus on British achievements. However, the historian is also able to use these sources to recreate the lives of the colonised in ways that are not available through other sources.[54] I did not pursue British sources dating from after the Japanese Occupation, as Zain began to campaign for Malayan Independence rather than focussing on schools for girls.

The primary British sources relating to Zain are the Education Reports.[55] These reports record and recognise the achievements of Zain's work as Supervisor of girls' schools in Johor. Along with other British correspondence and publications, [56] such reports are also invaluable in showing clearly the syllabus and focus of girls' schooling, allowing the historian to compare the

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[53] James F. Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore (1880-1940)*, (Singapore; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[54] ibid. See Chapter 1 for further details.
[55] See also Chapters 3, 5 and 6; *Education Reports.* In Johor, the reports were written by the Superintendent of Education and in other states by his equivalent. As Zain is mentioned in the Johor reports, they are the most significant for the purposes of this chapter.
[56] Examples include Colonial Office correspondence and Educational Codes. See Chapter 3 for details.

formal curricula with the writings of Malay educationalists, including Zain. Official British sources show the workings of colonialism, the Colonial Office and the Education Departments, and many, though not all, of these sources survive. Using a wide range of sources on Zain allows us to set her in a full historical context.

Situating Zain

The major problem with many representations of Zain's life is their lack of historical context. I will investigate her life prior to World War II in more detail than other sources, and focus on her actions and writings as products of her times. The mythologised figure of Zain reflects later historical and political changes in Malaysia, through emphasis on national independence, tolerance and participation in politics. In contrast, I will focus on class, gender, Malay identity, Malaya's plural society, religion, family, marriage, colonial rule and the Japanese Occupation, a much more diverse set of interests than those represented by the modern figure of Zain. The early period of Zain's life is significant in its own right, as well as illustrating the ways in which she contributed to the process of developing Malay identity and building the capabilities of Malay women.

Zain's Agenda

Zain's aims were both ideological and practical. Her writings indicate the negative sentiments of Malays regarding demographic changes stimulated by colonial rule and new concepts of the Malay *bangsa*. Malay identity was defined

in opposition to ethnic "others" who dominated in commerce and Zain sought to ensure that Malays were able to modernise and participate fully in colonial society rather than being left behind by the advancement of Malaya's other ethnic groups. Zain and the teachers of the *PPMJ* placed some of the blame for the backwardness of the Malay *bangsa* on Malay women themselves. As the first teachers of children, mothers were responsible for moulding future generations, and society could not improve unless mothers overcame their weakness. She stated, "Every action, every step, everything which contributes to the decline of the status of the Malays, is founded on the weakness of women, because all behaviour which is praised and honoured derives from the teachings of earliest childhood." [57] The primary solution advocated by Zain to overcome the "weakness" of Malay women was provision of girls' schools.

Zain's aims for Malay women and girls were limited in scope and tightly focussed. At this stage, she sought 4 to 5 years of primary school for all Malay girls. Those who attended would learn to read Malay written in *jawi*, as well as at least a little of the Arabic language, and take classes in domestic science, health, hygiene and childcare. The curriculum was to be differentiated by sex. Zain stated that men and women should play separate but complementary roles. Both would have a strong Malay identity, and help to raise the Malays to become the pre-eminent people of Malaya through political leadership, better paid jobs with improved living standards and living moral lives.

Regardless of her ambitions for Malay girls, Zain's proposed schools for Malay girls reinforced the existing two tier schooling system. A general

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[57] *Bulan Melayu* August 1930, translation from Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation*, (ANU), p45.

education in Malay would be available for most Malay girls, while the academic stream in English language schools would provide opportunities beyond the primary level for a select few boys and girls. This program may have been an unconscious carry over from existing school and political systems, or perhaps the wider availability of Malay primary schools is all that Zain was confident she would be able to achieve, as even this was controversial for many Malay parents.[58] Zain thus aimed to improve and expand rather than reinvent the Malay vernacular primary schools. She genuinely believed her program of schooling was crucial to develop Malay identity.

Zain did have an additional goal for Malay girls outside their existing roles as wives and mothers. She desired jobs in the vernacular schools and positions of community leadership for Malay women within the ethos of service to the Malay *bangsa.* The aspiration for an institution to train women teachers appears in Zain's writings from the 1920s onwards:

> "Now the girls of our race have started to come forth to serve their country and their nation. Many of them have become teachers, not only in Johore but in all parts of the peninsula… May a training college of similar standing as the men's college be built for them, one which may even provide greater scope of learning than the men's

[58] In the Malay Peninsula, where 82.4% of Malays were farmers, fishermen or homemakers, the proposed basic curriculum was practicable. In 1931, of 537 058 employed Malays, 442 285 were employed in agriculture. Charles Hirshman, *Ethnic and Social Stratification in Peninsular Malaysia*, (Washington: ASA Rose Monograph Series, 1975). The end result was that the bulk of Malays would remain rural labourers, tied to Malaya, the village and the Islamic world, rather than to England and the Empire.

college at Tanjong Malim or the Malay College Kuala Kangsar." [59] In the end, the MWTC was not on the same scale as the SITC or Malay College, but was otherwise in line with Zain's agenda. [60]

Zain wanted Malay women to attend Western-style schools that offered a standard, secular Western curriculum, but she resisted wholesale Westernisation, and also advocated the inclusion of religious education. Zain wanted Malay culture preserved.[61] She argued that the education of Malay girls was too important to be left in the hands of foreigners. [62] Malay girls needed to know their own language and religion. They should learn about issues and events closer to home, who they were and where they lived. Zain feared that excessive Westernisation would lead to the loss of Malay culture and religion. She considered the behaviour of Westernised Malay youth to reflect the "…damaged character… of our new children, boys and girls. They are not ashamed to go dancing, or to dance like Westerners." [63] Zain remained suspicious of some of the results of English schooling, despite the advantages of her experiences within

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[59] *Lembaran Guru*, translation appears in Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation*, (ANU), p 42. Zain also campaigned for a women's college in *Majallah Guru*. Ahmad, *Majallah Guru*, (1975) p154.
[60] See Chapter 6 for further information on the MWTC.
[61] *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930).
[62] Again, this is an emphasis which suited the British administration. As far as the British were concerned, it made more sense for the teachers in the Malay vernacular schools to be Malays. There were enough problems as it was in obtaining suitably trained European teachers for the Government's English schools.
[63] *Bulan Melayu* (in *Idaman*, July 1941**),** p49. I assume that she was referring to male and female teenagers dancing together, and regarded such activity as transgressing religious and cultural strictures on mixing between the sexes.

the system. [64] She maintained a strong Malay Muslim identity from her childhood onwards.

Family background

Zain's family background is important in understanding her as both a historical and a political figure. She was born in the village of Nyalas, near Melaka, on January 22, 1903, the sixth of eight children. Zain's heritage was "Malay" in the sense which the word was used at the time by the British, who did not differentiate between those who were native to the Peninsula and migrants from the Indonesian archipelago. Her paternal grandfather was Mohamed Nor, an official of the Sultan of Siak in East Sumatra, [65] just across the Straits of Melaka. Stories of Zain's life state that he emigrated to escape increasing Dutch control of Siak, thus providing the figure of "Ibu Zain" with an anti-colonial family pedigree. Zain's father was Munshi Sulaiman, (1870-1928) a teacher at the British Teachers Training College in Melaka. [66] Sulaiman urged Malays to learn the colonial language to gain power, and reminded them that Islam did not interfere with this goal of learning, as it encouraged the seeking of knowledge. Sulaiman further stated that the British used a "very small needle" (a very subtle

[64]She wrote of English educated Chinese girls who had lost their religion and language, and who even looked down on their own race. Ahmad, *Majallah Guru* (1975), p158. She objects to the way that such women converted to other religions.

[65] When the Sultan did not stand up to Dutch attempts at control, Mohamed left in a boat with his son Sulaiman. Halfway across the Straits of Melaka, he threw some uncut gems into the ocean, vowing that only when they resurfaced would he return. Muashor, *Tan Sri Hajah Zainon Bt. Sulaiman*. Such stories are a standard trope in Malay literature,

[66] Munshi is an Urdu word for writer (in the sense of a secretary), and the title travelled with the British from India to Malaya.

form of colonialism) in Malaya. [67] Zain's family background illustrates mobility within the Malay world, court service, teaching and eventual accommodation with colonial powers. Hers was a family which valued education and indeed Zain acknowledged her gratefulness to her parents for their support for female education. [68] This narrative, and indeed almost all sources on Zain's life, do not give any details on her female relatives. Her mother, Siti Shahirah, as well as her grandmothers and siblings, remain generally unknown**.** [69]

Zain's family may have valued education, but stories of her childhood also illustrate missed opportunities. A significant event of her childhood is present in almost all Malay sources. When William Shellabear (1862-1848, Methodist missionary and translator of the Bible into Malay) and his family were to leave Malaya in 1916, Zain was invited to join them in America, ultimately to study medicine, a profession then unavailable to Malay girls. [70] However, opposition from her family prevented her taking up the offer. Her mother was distraught at the idea, [71] though her father had agreed. [72] Zain would only have been 12 or 13 at the time. Presumably, she would have had to complete her secondary schooling in America before progressing to university study. Considering her youth and the length of absence required, her mother's opposition does not seem

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[67] Interview with Fadzilah Amin,19/11/07.
[68] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010), p251.
[69] The only source I have been able to locate which mentions Zain's mother by name is Rosminah Mohd Tahir, *Kumpulan Drama Pentas/Teater Patriotik Ibu Zain*, (Bandar Baru Selayang: CTRA Production, 2009).
[70] There was as yet no medical school that a Malay girl could attend. The first Malay woman doctor graduated in 1947. Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010), p252.
[71] Muashor, *Tan Sri Hajah Zainon Bt. Sulaiman*.
[72] Hunt, *William Shellabear*, (1996), p165. There were some trained Malay women midwives in the first few decades of the 20th century, but no Western-trained Malay women doctors.

an unreasonable response or necessarily evidence of opposition to women in the medical profession**.** Zain's family engaged with the English speaking world but there were limits to what they would agree to for their daughter. She was not able to leave the country to train as a doctor, but with her family's encouragement, she became a teacher. Her husband would also encourage her work as a teacher.

Marriage

Another significant event in the public narrative is Zain's marriage. It is also an area in which the myth of "Ibu Zain" and Malay marriage practices of the early 20th century collide. When most sources discuss Zain, her status as a second wife is glossed over, and the match is presented as freely chosen and based on love. Her daughters state that she resisted an arranged marriage in her youth. [73] Instead, in 1934, at the age of 31, Zain married Amin Sulaiman, later the State Assistant Treasurer of Johor. [74] Amin was born of Arab-Javanese parentage, grew up in Mecca and learned English from tourists to Malaya. Orphaned at the age of 15, he worked his passage on a ship bound for Singapore where he attended the Victoria Bridge school and later the Raffles College. There are significant gaps in such accounts of Amin's life. How could he afford to attend Raffles college? Where did he do his advanced studies in Arabic? Regardless,

[73] Amin, *This End of the Rainbow*, (2006?), p59. Zain would not stand for the old order, and showed opposition from an early age. At approximately the age of six, Zain scolded a neighbour who used to beat his young wife in a traditional arranged marriage. When this neighbour fell into a well, she "crowed" over him. Interview with Fadzilah Amin,19/11/07.

[74] Information on Amin's date of birth is not easy to find, but he was 45 when appointed to the post of Assistant State Treasurer.

Amin became a respected Arabic scholar, and with Dato' Onn [75] began compiling a Malay-Arabic-English dictionary. They got as far as "J" before World War II put an end to the project. [76] Amin died of diabetes during the Japanese Occupation.

The couple met when Zain began further study in Arabic before leaving for the hajj to Mecca in 1933. Amin accompanied her on the pilgrimage, ostensibly to visit his sister. [77] She used to call him *akhi* (brother), and the name stuck once they married. [78] Another commonly recorded version is that the couple met while Zain was on the pilgrimage itself. [79] Journeying together as an unrelated male and female would have been scandalous at the time. While travelling together in this manner may suggest that marriage took place before the pilgrimage, all sources, including interviews with Zain's children, assert that her marriage took place in 1934. They also state that it was a love match, freely chosen by both partners, rather than an arranged marriage between compatible partners.

Their marriage provided significant benefits for both parties. Amin seems to have been supportive of his wife's ongoing involvement in the schooling system. [80] Fadzilah Amin (at most nine years old at the time of her father's death

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[75] Onn was born in 1895, son of the first Mentri Besar of Johor. He was sent by Sultan Abu Bakar to be educated in England and, on his return, to the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar for further studies. He was a journalist and editor, a Chief Minister of Johor and one of the founders of UMNO.
[76] Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".
[77] Interview with Fadzilah Amin,19/11/07.
[78] Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".
[79] Eg: Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960), p60.
[80] Malay women teachers were not expected by the British to retire when they married, and were able to take leave for the birth of their children, although this system did require some spousal support and/or servants and other family members assisting in the home and with the raising of children.

in 1945), states: "My father was a sweet person. He was very intelligent and supportive (of my mother). They never quarrelled." [81] Thirty-one was a very advanced age for a first marriage, one possible reason that Zain became a second wife. It is likely that her marriage gave her greater social legitimacy, required for a public career without scandal. It is also possible that marriage to such a woman, a favourite of the British and known to the Sultan of Johor, helped Amin in his own career, as he became Assistant Treasurer after their marriage. The social legitimacy granted by the marriage does not seem to have been damaged by their travel together as unrelated individuals prior to marriage.

The only published source I could locate which specifically stated Zain's status as a second wife was *Muzikal Ibu Zain*. As the script was approved by her family, I assume that the information is accurate. [82] The musical depicts her husband as asking permission from his first wife, named here as Aisah, before marrying Zain, and that he continued to support Aisah throughout his life. As Islamic law only requires a brief period of alimony, the fact that Amin continued to financially support his first wife indicates that they likely remained married after 1934. Other details of Aisah are scarce. Zain lived with her own extended family in her school compound. In almost all sources, her status as a co-wife does not fit with post-Independence definitions of romantic love.

Perhaps inspired by her own experiences, both the possibility of an arranged marriage and a later union of her own choosing, the subject of marriage

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[81] Fadzilah Amin in Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".
[82] CTRA Production, "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Tales of Ibu…. The War" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/03/tales-of-ibu-war.html Accessed 30/04/09). The information appears in both the Malay language and English language versions. Tahir, *Kumpulan Drama Pentas/Teater Patriotik Ibu Zain*, (2009).

was a major topic in Zain's writings. Her main emphasis was on the issue of inequality. She discussed the right age for first marriage and whether women should choose who their partner was to be. Zain disagreed with a Malay cultural practice of girls being married in their early teens. She saw such young brides as being deprived of the opportunity to acquire basic skills, including reading, housekeeping and childrearing. Writing in *Majallah Guru*, she expressed her opposition to forced marriage and confining girls to their home to avoid mixing with boys, a practice she described as 'torture'. [83]

Zain also argued that the practice of early marriage resulted in an unhealthy generation. Worn out by early marriage and childbearing, women became sick and weak by middle age and were consequently unable to foster Malay progress. [84] "Stupid mothers can only copy, and will damage and ruin the lives of their children, along with their children's health, character and childhood…" [85] If education was open only to men, Zain argued, women would be left ignorant and dependent, having to follow their husband's guidance rather than being able to make decisions for themselves.

Zain urged that girls should be able to choose their own life partners. Given the right education and religious training, she stated, they would be able to choose men with similar tastes and ambitions, leading to a more peaceful and secure married life. [86] While such an argument is in line with her own life experiences, she did not advocate completely free choice: marriage based on sexual attraction alone was unacceptable. Zain did not discuss polygamy as a

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[83] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010), p260.
[84] Ahmad, *Majallah Guru*, (1975).
[85] ibid.
[86] *Bulan Melayu* 1.11/12 (1930). Zain also argued that the high rate of divorce amongst Malays was related to the practice of forced marriages.

contentious issue, nor did she attack divorce, [87] as the institutions are both permitted in the Quran. Other reasons for her stance on polygamy may come from her own personal life, as a co-wife in a polygamous marriage.

Zain's personal life may be the reason that inequality in terms of knowledge and power between husbands and wives, rather than polygamy, is discussed most clearly in her writings. [88] It may also account for her emphasis on a companionate match, inspired by British practices. Zain, British educationalists and Malayan Islamic modernists encouraged Malay women to be wives who could be equal companions for their husbands. [89] The polygamous nature of Zain's own marriage is deliberately erased. Thus we can see an illustration of broader social and cultural shifts in ideas about the nature of marriage.

Without denying affection and regard, there would have been other benefits to Zain from marrying. She and Amin were both teachers and writers with high status amongst the emerging middle classes. He was a graduate of the Raffles College and of Arabic descent, [90] and she was an educated wife of whom he could be proud in social situations. She gained status on marriage, and would have likely become a more acceptable figure amongst conservative groups in the Malay community. Even though she was only married for ten years, her

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[87] Samah also states that she did not attack child marriage (Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960). However, this does not seem to have been the case. See Blackburn, *Women and the State*, (2004) for discussions of polygamy and divorce in the Netherlands East Indies.

[88] Discussions of inequality were also a hallmark of other Malay writings on Islamic modernism.

[89] In the case of the British educational system, this was especially the case for those educated in English. It is hard to tell whether British education or Islamic modernism was the source of influence as an emphasis on woman as wife also existed in Malay literature.

[90] The prestige associated with Arab descent was beginning to fade in Malaya by the 1930s. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (1974) p220.

partnership would thus have provided ongoing professional benefits, as well as companionship. Zain's marriage also allowed her to become a mother.

Zain's Conception of Women's Roles

Zain had three living children, Adibah, Fadzilah and Shakib, as well as at least one adopted daughter, Mas Neng. [91] The birth of her children would have cemented her place as a respectable Malay woman, even if she was a working mother in a "white-collar" occupation. The Malay vernacular school system aimed to create a new idea of the Malay middle class in which the mother stayed home to care for her children. In contrast, most Malay women continued to work in agriculture, fishing or other tasks as well as being wives and mothers. Women such as Zain rejected both options, and continued their careers after marriage and children in an era during which domestic servants and extended family were able to make this feasible.

Publicly, Zain argued that the responsibilities of women fell into five main categories. They needed to:

- "be capable of organising the household
- understand the real responsibility of being a mother
- be capable of organising all matters affecting her life

[91] Mas Neng was a MWTC graduate. See Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010).

- be capable of providing religious and spiritual education for her children to enable them to grow up as useful human beings in this world and the hereafter
- maintain purity and sincerity in doing obeisance to Allah." [92]

While men were at work, women should look after the household and children. This pattern was not reflected in her own life.

Zain went significantly beyond what had previously been expected of Malay women in both her writings and personal life. In the March 1930 issue of *BM*, in the article '*Perempuan Melayu – mau hidup*?' (Malay women – want to live?), she stated:

> "Malay women, if they want to live must work – work in the home, in the village, the paddy fields, sewing, crotchet embroidery, cutting cloths, cooking and other tasks that are their responsibility. All these tasks must be done by the women themselves and not by men. Show the men that they aspire to lead a better and more organised life than the existing one.
>
> The village women all seem to be working. No matter how large or small the tasks, they are doing something to assist the men. But what about women in the towns and urban areas? Are they satisfied just to wait in the kitchen only?
>
> Malay women should get themselves busy – busy – busy – so as to enable men to find other ways to get better benefits for the race and the nation...
>
> Malay women must form an association that caters to the progress of

[92] *Bulan Melayu*, August 1930, translation in Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010), p258.

> women so that they can become more focussed... if there were such an association, women could move forward together. In no time, the useless customary practices that have affected women in a negative manner would be abolished..." [93]

These "useless customary practices" are not stated here, but almost certainly include a preoccupation with physical appearance, holding closely to superstition, tendencies towards debts and laziness, a lack of opportunity to attend schools, early marriage, and no knowledge of religion or how to raise children correctly. Zain felt that Malay women should be inspiring and supporting other Malays. A class division is apparent in her statements on the subject: village women performed manual labour, but urban and middle class women could work for the *bangsa*. The latter should come out of the kitchen and into public life, overcoming harmful traditions and embracing modernity for the sake of all Malays.

In order to continue her work in teaching and later in politics, Zain spent a lot of time apart from her family. [94] She had help from her extended family, as well as an *amah* (a servant specialising in childcare) to raise her children. [95] She gave her children educational opportunities, and also emphasised Malay identity and culture to them. She spoke to them in Malay, but conversed with her

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[93] Translation from Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010).

[94] "At the time we didn't feel it. Later on, you realise how much time she had to give up travelling all over. She trusted that we would not go wild and that nothing terrible was going to happen to us… She instilled in us the importance of self-confidence. We must try our very best, then leave the rest to God. She taught us never to be envious of anyone…family unity, as in the larger family, is very important. We might quarrel but love must bring us together again."
Adibah Amin in Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".

[95] Amin, *As I Was Passing*, (2007), pp250-2.

husband in English. Her children state that she believed that they should be fluent in their own language before attempting to learn another. [96] Her emphasis on the importance of fluency in Malay was shared by the colonial vernacular school system.

Colonial Rule

The British administration in Malaya had a substantial influence on Zain. She and British educationalists worked together to achieve some shared aims, such as basic vernacular schooling for all Malay girls, emphasising health, hygiene, and domestic science. On the other hand, the public narrative of her life, developed in the 1980s, emphasises her opposition to British colonialism and campaign for Malayan Independence. This version of Zain's life glosses over her employment by the British as a teacher, and when her occupation is mentioned, she is presented as a proto-nationalist, or more accurately a proto-Malay-nationalist. The goals of Zain and British administrators are presented as competing, if not in overt opposition, despite indications that many Malay elites wanted the pre-World War II cooperative relationship between Malays and the British to continue. There is little or no room in such a narrative for the work she carried out with supportive British administrators**.**

My research shows Zain worked professionally with the British, including successive Superintendents of Education and General Advisers in the state of Johor. She was particularly associated with Winstedt and Cheeseman, important figures in the history of schooling for Malaya as a whole. Zain and

[96] Adibah Amin in Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".

these men seem to have had a cordial relationship. [97] Indeed, Cheeseman wrote the following about her work as Malay Supervisor: "…an advance on what it has been possible to attempt elsewhere in the peninsula, and an excellent augury for the future." [98] British administrators recognised Zain's efforts and importance.

Zain's engagement with British colonialism begins in her family history of mobility within the boundaries of Malaya and the wider Malay world, [99] as well as engagement with the schooling system. In 1915, her father was transferred to Kampung Pasuh Jaya Warus in Negeri Sembilan on the Pahang border, taking his family with him. There she learned unusual skills for a Malay girl: by the age of 14, she was already able to swim and shoot a rifle.[100] She also set up a kindergarten connected to her father's school, paid for with money earned by typing stories and articles in *jawi* and *rumi*. [101] It is unclear how many of these stories were her own work or whether the kindergarten was intended for all the local children. This period of Zain's life also reflects some of the changes affecting Malay society more broadly. The introduction of the typewriter in Malaya is indicative of technological change during the period and provided a conduit for new information. In Britain, the typewriter led to the increasing feminisation of clerical work, a development that contributed to women's entry

[97] Interview with Fadzilah Amin,19/11/07.
[98] CO717/102/15 *Education Report Johore*, 1933 (correspondence).
[99] The wider Malay world was now divided between the British and the Dutch.
[100] *Majallah Guru*; Interview with Shakib Amin, 27/11/07, Johor Bahru, Interviewer: Anna Doukakis.
[101] Arkib Negara Malaysia 2007/0021444: Majlis Kebangsaan Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Wanit Malaysia – Biografi Hajah Zainun Bt Munshi Sulaiman (Ibu Zain).

into the workforce. [102] In Malaya, it gave women like Zain the opportunity to earn money outside the skills traditionally identified as female.

As a result of her work in the kindergarten, Zain was approached by Dato' Abdullah,[103] who asked her to become a teacher in the formal school system. [104] At 19, she became a teacher in a Malay vernacular school. [105] In 1922 she began teaching at the Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Maharani, Muar, [106] and by 1924 she was Principal. [107] The following year she was promoted to Visiting Teacher for Batu Pahat and Muar and at 24 became Supervisor of Malay Girls' Schools in Johor. [108]

It is unclear how Zain was selected for such promotions. It is likely that she was simply the best qualified, and her ability to speak and read both English and Malay would have been an advantage. That she was made Supervisor after only a short period of formal schooling also indicates how few educational opportunities were available for Malay girls at the time, and how few girls had taken advantage of them. Zain was compulsorily retired as both Supervisor and teacher in 1948 when she reached the retirement age of 45. As other teachers

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[102] Meta Zimmerck "The Mysteries of the Typewriter: Technology and Gender in the British Civil Service 1870-1914", pp67-96 in Gertjan de Groot and Marlou Schrover (eds), *Women Workers and Technological Change in Europe*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995).
[103] Dato' Abdullah was a Muar Administration officer and brother of Dato' Onn (1895 62). Zain and Dato' Onn would remain in contact.
[104] In addition, Dato' Abdullah urged Zain to try and persuade the parents of bright Malay girls to allow them to remain in the schooling system and become teachers themselves. Interview with Fadzilah Amin,19/11/07; Muashor, *Tan Sri Hajah Zainon Bt. Sulaiman.*
[105] Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".
[106] Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960), p60.
[107] Although there had been a boys' school in this location since the 1860s, I have been unable to find a founding date for the girls' school.
[108] There is some confusion in sources over the date of this appointment which seems to arise from the fact that she was promoted in June 1926 but only formally took up the post in 1927.

were permitted to continue to work past retirement age, it is also possible that her lack of formal qualifications had become a problem for administrators. Her position as supervisor was abolished on her retirement.

Zain is also credited with founding the *Persatuan Guru-Guru Sekolah Melayu dan Sekolah Agama Negeri Johore* of which she was the first President. Details of this organisation are sketchy and, as the term is often used to refer to events and the publication associated with the *PPMJ*, it is probably another name for the latter. Fadzilah Amin (Zain's youngest daughter, born during the 1930s) remembers these women teachers of the *PPMJ* always going in and out of the family home with a real sense of solidarity and community. [109] The teachers even travelled together, including a bus tour in 1938 all over the Peninsula. [110] This organisation opened up a whole new world to these women, one of education and opportunities. They also sent their daughters to school. [111]

Studying Zain's interactions with the British gives a sense of her in a British world, before and even after Independence. She travelled to Burma (administered as a province of the British colony of India until 1937, then administered by the British government Burma Office), Egypt (a mandated territory, administered by legal commission) in 1934, and India (also in 1934). Such travels indicate the importance of English as a tool and how the language contributed to Zain's ability to move in British circles in Malaya and around the Empire. She was a member of a number of British-run community organisations beginning with the St John Ambulance while she was still at school. [112] As a

[109] Interview with Fadzilah Amin, 19/11/07.
[110] *Bulan Melayu*; *Education Reports* 1938.
[111] Interview with Fadzilah Amin, 19/11/07.
[112] Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960), p60.

teacher, she joined the Red Cross and was active in Girl Guiding, [113] founding the first Johor Malay-language troop in 1932. Road and rail networks allowed her to travel throughout Johor and the Peninsula, and she was able to drive, at a time when a woman's right to ride a bicycle was being considered by some Southeast Asian Islamic scholars. [114] Zain illustrates the excitement and intellectual stimulus of the colonial context. She had a career and a cash salary, and in return the British had the services of a skilled and enthusiastic educator and administrator to improve girls' schooling. Co-operation between locals and colonisers was what made the Empire work. In this sense she was representative of her times. However, her engagement with the West was tempered by her own Islamic identity and a particular school of thought: Islamic modernism.

Islamic Modernism

Zain's modernist Islamic beliefs formed an important part of her life and writings. Many sources date her strong Islamic presentation to her childhood when she attended an English-language convent school. In 1908, at the age of four, she began attending missionary William Shellabear's kindergarten at Bandar Hilir. At that time, she was the only Malay girl attending an English school in Melaka. [115] She also studied Islam outside school hours, learning to

[113] See Chapter 6 for more details on the Girl Guides in Malaya.
[114] Hooker, *Indonesian Islam*, (2003). In 1939 a fatwa was issued by the Nahdlatul Ulama in the Netherlands East Indies stating that women were allowed to ride bicycles as long as it did not lead to any forbidden acts. By this point, the bicycle was an acceptable form of transport. (ibid p135). I have not found an equivalent fatwa for Malaya.
[115] The village elders muttered about such a break with tradition and threw unpleasant objects at Zain. Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960), p3.

recite the Quran, some Arabic and how to read and write Malay in *jawi*. [116] The public narrative of Zain's life states that the decision whether or not to convert to Christianity, was left to her alone, [117] and that she remained a Muslim. In this sense, the matter of interest is not so much Zain, but that she is used as an example against apostasy. Her English-language education continued at the Malacca Methodist Girls' School which she attended from 1909 until 1912 and then at the Tengkera School (likewise in Melaka) from 1913 to 1915. The colonial context, Western knowledge and schooling, and her sense of Malay disadvantage vis-à-vis other ethnic groups in the colony all formed the framework of Zain's embrace of Islamic modernism.

Ideas and arguments drawn from Islamic modernist thinkers run throughout Zain's writings. Her Islamic contacts included individuals such as Sheik al-Hadi, whom she met on several occasions. In 1930, al-Hadi expressed his hope that the women leaders from Johor would explain to Malays the rights and responsibilities of Muslim women under true Islamic teachings. In return, Zain wrote to al-Hadi stating that she hoped that his book, *Alam Perempuan*, would open the eyes of Muslims who did not grant women the rights dictated by

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All eight of Sulaiman's children, however briefly, were sent to English schools. Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987), p170. Zain's father was determined to give his children the best education possible, both English and Islamic.

[116] Zain learned these skills from her father, as she did not attend a formal Islamic school. Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960), p60. Shakib states that

> "When my mother returned from school, she and my grandfather would compare the teachings of the Quran and the Bible. He would explain the difference; he was the *guru ugama*. So she was not influenced because when she got home there was already an antidote."

Shakib Amin in Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".

[117] CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Tales of Ibu…. Childhood" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/03/tales-of-ibu-childhood.html Accessed 30/04/09).

Islam. She stated that it would be a great advantage for Muslim women if they became aware of these Islamic rights and their duties towards their community and country. [118]

Like many other modernists, Zain emphasised reason over dogma, stating that pronouncements should be backed up with sentences from the Quran and the Hadith, "…not with *nas* [119] so that the conversation does not continue". [120] Islamic modernism, controversial as it could be in the Malayan context, was a source of legitimacy to Zain and guided her in defining and fashioning modern Malay Muslim women through the medium of girls' schools. At this point, she diverged from the Malayan *kaum muda*. *Al-Imam* had stressed the importance of women as partners of men. [121] Zain agreed, but also added a role outside the home for women as speakers and leaders, teaching Malay girls and defining Malay identity. Even if her goals for the bulk of Malay girls fitted within Islamic modernist sensibilities, the careers of Zain and the Malay women teachers far outstripped those of the general population.

Zain's hajj in 1933 helped to broaden her Islamic horizons and credentials. Most sources addressing this period of her life mention little more than that she met her husband and travelled with him. However, she also met important Egyptian women leaders of the time, including Hadi Sha'dawi. [122] Such modern Muslim women were examples for Malays to emulate. The hajj would also have given her added status in Malaya and the right to bear the title "Hajah". The latter provided a public proclamation of her Islamic piety and

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[118] Bakar, *Islamic Modernism*, (1994), p153.
[119] "*Nas*" is a quotation from the Quran used to settle a point.
[120] *Bulan Melayu* (in *Idaman*, July 1941), p49.
[121] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010), p249.
[122] Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960), p90.

possible protection against her aims for girls being denounced as irreligious by Islamic conservatives. Zain later referred in her writing to the time she had spent abroad in the past. [123] However, as I lack issues of Bulan Melayu for the years 1933 and 1934, I am unable to say whether she discussed her hajj in any detail at the time.

Even prior to her hajj, and in the context of a cultural and religious framework which blamed women for sexual immorality, Zain advocated a greater degree of gender justice than many other writers. Writing in *Majallah Guru* in 1929, she stated:

> "It is strange that there is no Malay word like 'bad men'? Is it possible for women to be bad if there are no bad men? Actually the number of 'bad women' is just slightly more than the number of bad men. In this country the number of bad women is not in the hundreds; but if we take into account that three bad men that come out of the door of the house of each bad woman, the number of such men would be three times more than the number of bad women... If the authority wants to be fair, they must be regarded in a similar fashion and branded as bad men regardless of their position, physical shape and wealth. Even if a ruler has committed bad actions he too should be branded a bad man or bad ruler." [124]

Her statements also illustrate a sense of social justice: if a Malay ruler was no longer "good", he was no longer exempt from scrutiny and condemnation. In

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[123] *Bulan Melayu* (in *Idaman*, July 1941**),** p49. Zain referred to her earlier travels in the north of Malaya, and what they had taught her, in *Majallah Guru*. Ahmad, *Majallah Guru*, (1975), p110.
[124] Translation in Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010), p261.

Zain's writing at least, the idea of blind obedience to the sultan and Malay tradition was beginning to break down, to be replaced with an Islamic moral framework emphasising accountability for both sexes across the social spectrum.

As she grew older, Zain placed increasing emphasis on Islamic education for girls. [125] In 1947, along with a group of women from the *PPMJ*, and beginning with $1000 of that organisation's money, she began the Malay Girls' Higher Education Fund, which aimed to establish an Islamic college for girls. As her fundraising began during campaigning against the Malayan Union, it is likely that she saw the project at least in part in terms of safeguarding Malay interests. Tuanku Ampuan Mariam of Johor, a sister of Sultan Ibrahim, donated her palace on Bukit Serene in Johor Bahru, [126] and the college was henceforth known as *Kolej Puteri Tuanku Ampuan Mariam*. Fundraising continued until 1963, the year of Malaysia's founding, when the college was finally able to open its doors with Zain as Principal. [127] The move to Islamic schooling is a progression in her views on appropriate schooling for Malay girls. "*Agama dididik Moden dibela*" ("While religion is taught, modernity is also accommodated") was Zain's slogan, one she would continue to use until her death. [128]

Zain significantly emphasised the importance of religious schooling, particularly at her college. "Our boys and girls must be educated with the spirit

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[125] Zain, "Wanita Dengan Rumahtangga" (ANM 2007/093029). Zain's speech ranged over the problems of colonialism and Malay women's roles and education throughout history. She mentioned education with other ethnic groups in English, girls and boys attending the same schools, and the rise of the MWTC. However, she proceeded to argue that there needed to be greater emphasis on religious education. The transcript is undated, but is post-*merdeka.*

[126] The property was given as *wakaf*, a foundation to finance a charitable cause.

[127] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987).

[128] Interview with Fadzilah Amin, 19/11/07; Zain, "*Wanita Dengan Rumahtangga*" di Radio Singapura, Penggal 11. ANM 2007/093029 (Malay transcript).

of religion", as well as modernity, she stated. [129] The modern age could not be avoided, but Malays should believe in the power of Allah, and be patient, wise, brave and loyal. [130] Ideas "...from outside our homeland have been brought by... invaders, and [are] being imitated by half our children" who did not have the benefits of religious education. [131] She argued that even though the Malays had been "struck by a West wind... their eyes have been opening a little", a process she sought to hasten via the creation of schools for girls which taught both religious and secular subjects. [132] Part of Zain's definition of a Muslim woman was presented in her choice of clothing.

Clothing and Dress

Zain's self-professed Islamic identity continued to develop throughout her time as a teacher and is emphasised in the official narrative. She presented herself as a pious Muslim and advocated a particular form of Malay Muslim dress as a public statement of Malay identity. Covering the hair as a form of Muslim piety was not traditional to Southeast Asia. [133] Photographs of Zain with her hair covered by a

[129] Ibu Zain, "Wanita Dengan Rumahtangga" (date not given) di Radio Singapura, Penggal 11. ANM 2007/093029.
[130] ibid.
[131] ibid.
[132] ibid.
[133] Zain's choice of Islamic and Malay clothing had a particular context. Changing notions of modesty had a significant impact on types of clothing and fabrics worn throughout Southeast Asia. Maxwell states that prior to the arrival of Islam, women wore skirts and men loincloths, both with a bare upper body. As Islamic notions of appropriate dress permeated Southeast Asia, the body became increasingly covered, especially in public. Headcloths became popular for both men and women. Long, flowing shirts and jackets became popular from the 18th century onwards, and adoption of Middle Eastern standards of Islamic dress

loose *selendang* or *tudung* [134] predate her marriage [135] and may have served as a way of marking her as respectable when mixing with both men and women in public. However, she did not change her manner of dress on marriage. Her lacy scarves, generally covering her hair but leaving her neck bare, continued to appear in photographs for the rest of her life. She also emphasised what she saw as appropriate Islamic dress in her pronouncements on education.

The degree to which Quranic exhortations of modesty (related to the wives of the Prophet) applied to other Muslim women has been debated throughout the Islamic world.[136] For example, Egyptian Islamic modernist Qasim Amin opposed full sexual segregation and domestic seclusion for women, as well as the full face veil. [137] In Turkey, wearing the veil was presented as anti-modern by Kemalists after the abolition of the caliphate. [138] In 1934 religious clothing (including the veil) was banned outside places of worship throughout Turkey, and legal equality of the sexes in suffrage and inheritance was progressively enshrined in legislation.[139] Kemalists presented Turkish women as overjoyed to cast off the veil. However, reception of the clothing change was neither swift nor

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continued to permeate Southeast Asia. Robyn Maxwell, *Textiles of Southeast Asia*, (Melbourne: Australian National Gallery/Oxford University Press, 1990).

[134] Also known as a *kerudung*, this type of veil was more associated with Javanese village women. Ong uses the same term in reference to the scarf used to loosely cover a Malay woman's hair. Ong, "State versus Islam", 1990, p261-2.

[135] Photographs of Zain with her hair covered date from 1924 at the latest, well in advance of her hajj and marriage.

[136] Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an: Traditions and Interpretation*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p92.

[137] ibid, p127.

[138] The caliphate was abolished on March 3, 1924, on the same date that the Islamic schooling and legal systems of Turkey were replaced by secular equivalents. By 1928 Arabic script had been replaced by a new Latin alphabet, Irfan Orga and Margarete Orga, *Ataturk*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1962), p225

[139] H.C. Armstrong, *Grey Wolf: Mustafa Kemal, An Intimate Study of a Dictator*, (London: Methuen and Co, 1932), p233.

universally popular. [140] In Malaya during the 1930s, as part of Johor's modernisation program, Sultan Ibrahim decreed that Malay women should not wear an Islamic headscarf. Zain arranged a meeting, and informed him that she must obey the law of Allah over his law. An exception was duly made. [141] The incident does not seem to have damaged her relationship with the Sultan.

Zain did urge other women to adopt some form of veil**.** *Bulan Melayu*'s response to a Sumatran woman reader's comment about Penang women who wore veils (*tudung*) '*Adakah tudung kepala dijadikan dalil maju?*' ("Is the veil evidence of progress?") took the form of advice to a *Sinar Deli* author, Siti Masih, who concluded that Penang Malays who covered their heads were less progressive than other Muslims who did not. [142] Zain's reply was: "Do we want the kind of social mixing associated with western women? Or is putting on the veil a sign of the lack of progress?" [143] Zain argued that Malay women should cover themselves in accordance with Islam and that progress was not simply blind emulation of Western women. She also stated that Malay progress was impossible without Islamic knowledge and that about 90 per cent of Malay mothers were unfamiliar with Islamic precepts. [144]

There may be an additional reason for Zain's choice of dress. In order to facilitate her visits to village schools during the 1930s, she learned to drive a car,

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[140] John Norton "Faith and Fashion in Turkey" in Nancy Lindsfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham (eds), *Languages of Dress in the Middle East*, (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), p163.
[141] Interview with Shakib Amin, 27/11/07. No exact date for this incident is given.
[142] *Sinar Deli* was a nationalist publication from Medan during the 1930s.
[143] *Bulan Melayu* 1.9 (1930), translated in Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010), p258.
[144] *Bulan Melayu* 2.3 and 2.4 (1931).

an unusual skill for a Malay woman. [145] Zain was thus unorthodox in terms of the existing Islamic hierarchy. Aside from the strength of her personal beliefs, perhaps her goals for girls' schooling and working outside the home for a salary explain why she was so emphatic about presenting an Islamic appearance? Such self presentation would make it much harder for conservative Islamic opponents to argue against her.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 4.1: Zain and the women teachers of the *PPMJ*, 1930s. [146]

Formal photographs of Zain and the other women teachers of Johor show that they continued to wear mostly Malay dress. *Sarungs* are full, sometimes plain but often patterned, and loose enough not to restrict freedom of movement. Blouses are pale coloured, full bodied and sleeved, usually leaving the lower arms and hands free. The teachers' loose clothing conceals the contours of the body, in line with ideals of Islamic modesty. Zain and several other teachers wear Western shoes and stockings. The photograph of Zain on her appointment

[145] Interview with Fadzilah Amin,19/11/07.
[146] Photograph courtesy of Shakib Amin, removed for copyright reasons.

as Supervisor presents her in her role as a teacher, seated in a high backed chair and holding papers on her lap. Zain and the other women teachers wished to present in visual form their links not just to Malay tradition, but to the new modernity as well. They specifically elected to present themselves visually as Malays. Their choice of dress was a conscious combination of modernity and tradition, a visual signposting of their ethnic and class identity. Malay men from Johor were much more likely to wear Western dress, at least in public, [147] or even a Western military uniform.

[147] Examples of such photograph can be found in Zainah Anwar, *Legacy of Honour: Ja'afar Mohamed; Dato' Onn Ja'afar; Tun Hussien Onn*, (Yayasan Mohamed Noa, 2011).

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

AN ALTERNATE VERSION CAN BE FOUND AT
http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2007/1/28/nation/16709039&sec=nation

Figure 4.2: Zain on her appointment as Supervisor, 1926/7. [148]

Zain's concern with Islamic dress was still apparent after her founding of the *Kolej Puteri Tuanku Ampuan Mariam*. [149] In an interview for *Dewan Siswa*

[148] Photograph courtesy of Shakib Amin, removed for copyright reasons.
[149] Her time as Headmistress of this school is not covered in detail in most presentations of the public figure of Zain.

(published by *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*), she stated that clothing should cover *aurat*, [150] and this was the first step in appreciating Islam for men as well as women. [151] Sport for girls was still controversial: Zain advocated that girls play sports, but in appropriate clothing, and not where the two sexes could watch each other. Her overall aims for the students who came to her were that they should learn to do good, not just in the college, but in their family and in society as a whole. "I want to create Islamic girls who are true...", and who think and act according to the teachings of Islam. [152] They should be polite, not rebel against their parents, have knowledge of this world and the next, and would "guard their self respect but not being too free in socialising between boys and girls." Thus they would follow the commands of Islam. [153] In short, such goals were her "...plan to follow Allah's commands." [154] Zain's final call in this article was, "Let's modernise our country and race". Her plans for Malaysia and the Malays were explicitly Islamic, and defined in opposition to ethnic and religious "others".

Malaya's Plural Society

Zain engaged in the process of defining Malay identity in the context of the plural society in which she lived. She and a number of other educational

[150] *Aurat:* the parts of the body which must be covered in Islam.
[151] Abdul Aziz Mahmuddin, "Ibu Zain: Ingin Melahirkan Puteri Islam", *Dewan Siswa*, (Jilid 4, Bilangan 10, Oktober 1982, pp40-41). For men, this was shoulders to knees.
[152] ibid.
[153] ibid.
[154] Zain uses the word *dakwah* to mean a call to virtue and abandoning sin, rather than referring to the more modern Islamic movement of the same name.

reformers and activists were conscious that Malays had little power in commerce, and a lesser degree of schooling and associated opportunities than fellow residents of Chinese and Indian ancestry. Zain asked whether this situation should be accepted? "Hah! Malay women are not ready to admit defeat!" [155] Such concerns were one factor which helped to shape a sense of Malayness developed not in opposition to the British, but to the Chinese and Indian communities. [156] The latter groups were presented as differing from the Malays in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture, language and dress, as both examples of what Malays could achieve and potential competitors in a rapidly modernising world.

Malay writers in particular recognised that more Chinese boys and girls attended schools than Malay children, and the former continued to a higher level. By the time of the 1931 census, there were more Chinese than Malays in Malaya as a whole, adding to Malay concerns. At the lower levels of schooling, the gap was not quite so obvious. In primary schools, 17,592 girls and 45,477 boys attended Malay medium schools, and 22,972 girls and 63,175 boys Chinese medium schools. The real difference occurred in English medium secondary schools, where 5,057 girls and 15, 241 boys from a variety of ethnic groups were enrolled. [157] It is unclear exactly how many were Malays. Many more Chinese than Malay students attended English language schools, and, due to the commercial importance of English literacy, went on to take positions in trade. Malay women in particular lagged behind Chinese women in English literacy; in

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[155] *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 p11 (1930).
[156] Zain does not directly criticise the Malay elite.
[157] Ministry of Education, Malaysia, *Educational Statistics of Malaysia, 1938-1967*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1968), pp32-43.

the Straits Settlements alone, 385 Malay women spoke English, in comparison to 12,648 Chinese women, according to the 1931 census. [158]

Zain also noted that few Malay girls continued to tertiary education. Writing in 1941, she stated that Malays should "… look at the children of foreign communities who study seriously until college, achieve a medical degree…" and eventually study outside their own country. [159] In contrast, "Only 2 Malay women have ever attended Raffles College or the Medical School." [160] Even in Chinese shops, women and men contributed equally. [161] Yet amongst the Malays, women did not have such opportunities, and the *bangsa* was being overtaken by ethnic groups which better recognised the importance of women. *Bulan Melayu* blamed the Malays themselves:

> "In times past our older generation was obsessed with prohibitions… To attend the white man's schools is sinful… to use inventions like the mechanical wheel or electricity is sinful. What has happened to our people as a consequence. They are ignorant. They are inefficient. Try to think! Can our youth today do anything that is not better done by the other races? At best, they can only begin to imitate the others… [W]e can hardly match the others' progress." [162]

Zain explicitly compared Malays to the other ethnic groups, and Malays were found lacking. Her attitudes were similar to those of Malay Islamic modernists, as well as British colonial administrators.

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[158] *1931 Census, Malaya*, p369.
[159] *Bulan Melayu* (in *Idaman*, July 1941**),** p49.
[160] ibid.
[161] ibid.
[162] *Bulan Melayu* 2.1 (1931), translation is from Loh, "British Politics and the Education of Malays", (1974).

Zain also blamed aspects of *adat* for the plight of Malay women in the colony's plural society. She asserted that *adat* was responsible for holding Malay women back, and that their roles and knowledge were so circumscribed that they would prove unable to contribute fully to the advancement of the Malays:

> "It is just impossible to get out of that abject prison except when we are in possession of real knowledge that suits our disposition and that will enable us to fulfil our responsibilities. Only then will we be held in esteem by the human race, whether by men or women, and will the same respect be accorded to us as the men... We must be courageous enough to discard customary practices that are out of date or useless and contradictory to our religion, including wearing excess makeup, tooth filing, putting on thin blouses that show the shape of the body, and putting flowers on the head. Smoking and the chewing of tobacco only destroy the sweet lips . . . and other habits of laughing loudly and nagging or speaking badly of others when they get together, putting on excessive gold accessories... We women are not merely displays or accessories for the men, but we are the ones who organise the household and supervise family members in a proper manner not entirely different from organising the state. [163]

The final point is a crucial one. Zain argued that Malay women should not just develop their skills for use in their own homes, but for the benefit of society as a whole. She aimed to build new and greater roles for women on the basis of existing traditions, but also aimed to discard aspects of *adat* which did not suit

[163] Zain, writing in *Lembaran Guru* (November 1926), from Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010) pp259-260, quoting from Zabedah 1964, pp163–4.

her vision of modernity. Her choice of words hints at even greater possibilities: Malay women as participants in the organisation of the state. The Japanese Occupation was to extend these changes.

The Japanese Occupation

Information about Zain during the Japanese Occupation is scarce. The Occupation meant the end of the *PPMJ*, the shutting down of *BM* and temporary closure of Malay schools on the orders of the Japanese military administration. The *PPMJ* was not specifically targeted for closure, but rather was disbanded in response to the stringencies of the Occupation. In addition, Zain had to hide English books out of sight, speak no English, and teach herself Japanese. Publicly available stories of Zain during this period emphasise the hardship she faced, and the ways in which she stood up to the Japanese. [164]

Many sources mention one specific incident. During the Occupation, Zain took a number of Malay girls under her wing, teaching them Arabic in her home. One evening, the girls received a fright: the faces of Japanese soldiers appeared at the window. Although the soldiers left when she confronted them, she was not prepared to leave the matter there. The next day, with a young Adibah in tow, she went to see their commander. In Japanese, she praised the discipline of the Japanese troops, and then expressed her surprise at having seen men at her windows the preceding night. As the Japanese were so disciplined, they could not possibly have been responsible, could they? The commander treated her with

[164] Eg: CTRA Production, "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Tales of Ibu…. The War" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/03/tales-of-ibu-war.html Accessed 30/04/09).

respect, promised that no such thing would happen again, the troops were punished, and the matter was settled. [165] The fact that this story is discussed so often means it has come to form part of the Zain mythology. The incident illustrates her excellent diplomatic skills, as well as her talent for languages. It is unclear whether she was teaching the girls in her home as it was the most convenient location, or because the teaching of Arabic was banned. The latter seems less likely: in the Malayan context, Kratoska mentions the banning of Chinese religious instruction, but says nothing on Arabic. [166] Thus the degree to which Zain defied the Japanese in this instance is unclear.

It is hard to tell how actively Zain actively worked with the Japanese. She was required to learn the occupier's language, as were all school teachers, and she continued to work as a teacher and supervisor. [167] During the Occupation, schools in Johor taught Bahasa Melayu, arithmetic, hygiene, writing (in *rumi* and *jawi*), *Nippon-go* (Japanese language and culture), gardening, *taiso* (a form of exercise), songs and sport. [168] Most teachers continued to work under the Japanese for a variety of reasons including economic need, a sense of patriotism in providing benefits to Malay pupils and even coercion. [169]

In addition, Zain founded a Malay women's self-help organisation, *Kumpulan Ibu Sepakat* (*KIS*, the United Women's Association) in Johor during

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[165] Amin, *As I Was Passing*, (2007); Interview with Shakib Amin, 27/11/07; Muashor, *Tan Sri Hajah Zainon Bt. Sulaiman.*
[166] Kratoska, *The Japanese Occupation*, (1998).
[167] CTRA Production, "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Tales of Ibu…. The War" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/03/tales-of-ibu-war.html Accessed 30/04/09).
[168] P. Lim Pui Huen and Diana Wong (eds), *War and Memory in Malaysia and Singapore*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), p48.
[169] Huen and Wong (eds), *War and Memory in Malaysia and Singapore*, (2000), p49.

or shortly after the period of the Occupation. She also formed an informal teachers' group focussing on evening education. [170] In addition, she wrote for the Japanese sponsored periodicals *Fajar Asia* and *Semangat Asia* (Jan 1943). Zain may have faced censorship in her work within these publications. However, she continued to discuss similar issues relating to Malay women as in her pre-war writings. Writing in *Fajar Asia,* Zain urged Malays to adopt patience, perseverance and strong will, like the Japanese. Women should play a complementary role to men, organise their home and bring up their children. In this manner, Malays could become as great as the Japanese. [171] In these journals, Zain and other women writers emphasised the need to create the *puteri baharu* (new woman), with a focus on education, women as wives and mothers, their role in society and love for their homeland. [172] Zain continued her teaching, organising and publishing under the Japanese as well as the British.

The Malay community suffered some hardships during the Occupation, but they were not persecuted like the Malayan Chinese. [173] In post-Occupation Malaysia and Singapore, nation-centred narratives of resistance and liberation have tended to gloss over such atrocities. [174] In Johor, massacres of the Chinese took place in Johor Bahru, Muar, Batu Pahat and a number of other sites

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[170] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987) states that *KIS* was formed post-Occupation; Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010) that it was during.
[171] ibid.
[172] Mahani Musa "Official State Records: A Minefield for Studying Pre-1957 Malay Women", Sari 26 (2008), p175.
[173] Kratoska, *The Japanese Occupation*, (1998), Patricia Pui Huen Lim & Diana Wong (eds.), *War and Memory in Malaysia and Singapore, 1941-1945*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2000.
[174] Huen and Wong (eds), *War and Memory in Malaysia and Singapore*, (2000), p6.

throughout the state, and may total thousands of people. [175] Retellings of Zain's actions state that she was horrified at Japanese actions, and subtly opposed them whenever she could.[176] Such a presentation ignores the degree to which Malay elites, and even the middle classes, worked with the Japanese, and dismissed Japanese treatment of the Chinese in favour of maintaining their own position and interests. This is not to say that Zain shared such views. Nonetheless, she continued to advance her agenda for Malay women throughout the Japanese Occupation. By the end of the Occupation, Zain wanted two outcomes: Malay privilege to be guaranteed and to be part of a free Malaya. Following the defeat of the Japanese and return of the British to Malaya in 1945, Zain's writings began to change from accommodation with the British to Independence for Malaya.

Conclusion

Zain is an example of a Malay woman teacher who seized available opportunities to bring about her goals for Malay society as a whole. British schooling opened up new concepts and possibilities, and when she could, she took full advantage. Zain integrated aspects of Malay *adat*, Islamic modernist principles and the British colonial education system to bring about her own vision of modernity for Malay women. Prior to World War II, her focus was on schooling for girls, both religious and secular. She placed particular emphasis on the importance of

[175] ibid, pp145-8.
[176] CTRA Production, "Ibu Zain, the Musical: Tales of Ibu…. The War" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/2008/03/tales-of-ibu-war.html Accessed 30/04/09).

teaching health and hygiene for mothers and children in colonial Malaya. [177] Where Malay identity was formulated as being male, she also highlighted Malay women's roles in conceptions of what it should mean to be Malay.

Much of the early part of Zain's life is obscured in current historiography. Her employment by the British is not judged as important. She is presented as a Malaysian (rather than Malay) nationalist, with love for all ethnic groups rather than pushing an ethnic identification, and her views on class and ethnicity are either ignored or converted into a nationalist discourse. The reasons for the differences between the historical figure of Zainon binti Haji Sulaiman and "Ibu Zain" are a result of national mythmaking and reflect different time periods in the life of the state, by both Zain herself and later political interests. During the later part of her life, she also began to give thought to emphasising and preserving her own legacy.[178] She wished to be remembered as an educator, a devout Muslim and a nationalist heroine, rather than as a colleague of the British, a teacher under the Japanese, or a champion of Malays above other ethnic groups. How and why Zain came to be a heroine of Malaysia can be found in Chapter 7.

Zain energetically drove changes in what it meant to be a Malay woman during the 1930s. She was active as author and editor in the expansion of Malay language publishing. She identified and organised a group of Malay women teachers who began to think of themselves as part of the Malay *bangsa* first, rather than as members of a sultanate. Zain's importance in the school system brought her into contact not only with important figures in the British

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[177] See Chapters 5 and 6 for further details.
[178] For example Abdul Aziz Mahmuddin, "Ibu Zain: Ingin Melahirkan Puteri Islam", *Dewan Siswa*, (Jilid 4, Bilangan 10, Oktober 1982, pp40-41).

administration, such as Winstedt and Cheeseman, but also with Malays such as Dato' Onn, al-Hadi and Sultan Ibrahim of Johor. She was born into the Malay middle class, displayed class and ethnic centric views**,** and also cultivated ties with the political elite. Zain's later achievements would not have been possible without her own schooling, and the skills she acquired as a teacher and Supervisor.

Zain did not act alone. She was part of a growing community of Malay women who embraced new ideas, as evidenced by *Bulan Melayu*, the publication of the *PPMJ*. While the magazine began as Zain's project, she had retired as editor by the end of the 1930s and other Malay women took over production. The ideology and information published in *Bulan Melayu* influenced Malay women teachers throughout the Peninsula, and is the focus of Chapter 5. Chapter 6 demonstrates how the aims of Zain and the Malay women teachers played out in practice in the form of the MWTC.

CHAPTER FIVE

The *Persekutuan Perempuan Melayu Johore* and *Bulan Melayu*

"Now we want Malays to awake…" [1]

Zain is one of the most influential Malay women in promoting girls' schools, but she did not operate in a vacuum. During the 1930s, her views on girls circulated amongst those who could read Malay in Arabic script, primarily teachers, but also British administrators and even some Malay elites. Zain was not the only Malay woman active in advocating girls' schooling during the 1930s. The women of the *Persekutuan Perempuan Melayu Johore (PPMJ,* Malay Women's Association, Johor), which met between 1929 and 1941, [2] also discussed the role of women and girls in Malay society, and the need for further schooling, [3] particularly in their publication, *Bulan Melayu (BM)*. Zain founded the *PPMJ* and played a significant role in the organisation and the publication with which it is associated. Nonetheless, *BM* continued beyond her writings and after her resignation, providing a forum for a number of Malay women to publish on issues of concern to them. Between 1929 and 1941 the women of the *PPMJ* became some of the foremost advocates for Malay girls' schooling.

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[1] *Bulan Melayu 1.3* (1930).
[2] The same organisation is often referred to as the *Persekutuan Guru-Guru Perempuan Johore (P.G.G.P.J.*) (Malay Women Teachers Association, Johor), or the *Persatuan Guru-Guru Sekolah Melayu dan Sekolah Agama Negeri Johore.*
[3] One of the reasons that the *PPMJ* was so important is their role as one of the first women's groups in Malaya. At the time that they came into being, the few other options for educated Malay women included nursing, midwifery and secretarial work. Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980). The first Malay female doctor did not graduate until 1948. Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960) p17.

This chapter will focus on a small group of Malay middle class women teachers who tried to influence what it was to be a “modern Malay woman”. The women of the *PPMJ* tapped ideas from Islam, Malay culture and the British, creating an eclectic philosophy unique to this time. They had to balance existing religious and cultural demands while seeking modernity on their own terms. On the one hand, the *PPMJ* took a soft and slow approach to avoid antagonising existing power structures in Malay society, such as the sultans and religious elites. On the other, the speed of change in 1930s Malaya was rapid. Roads and railways increasingly opened up the interior of Malaya. The telegraph, postal system and fast and reliable steamships brought information and publications from the outside world. Colonial economic needs opened up new professions and opportunities for Malay men and women. Male and female teachers took up leadership roles in this developing system, and the spread of literacy meant that increasing numbers of men and women were able to take part in new discussions on what it meant to be a Malay.

Of paramount importance was the *PPMJ*’s commitment to the shared importance of being Malay women, guiding and leading other Malay women. They used the language of safeguarding Malay identity in opposition to other ethnic groups in Malaya in order to reinterpret what it meant to be Malays in a modern world. Authors in *BM* also illustrate the class bias of the organisation. Their selective use of evidence and examples indicates the role which *BM* played in imparting a particular ideology about Malay women, a re-working of what it meant to be Malay presented as an enduring tradition.

The *PPMJ* urged greater control for Malay women over girls’ schools and curriculum, but the organisation also supported colonial policies and schools.

They did not see the British as the "other" against which Malayness was defined. The *PPMJ* also helped to provide the agenda and training for the first Malay women's movements and the way that such groups understood colonialism, Islam, and Malay identity. These working professionals still situated themselves within established definitions of Malay women as primarily wives and mothers. They presented the primacy of motherhood as the traditional role of women in contrast to traditional literary emphasis on the role of women as wives. Zain's slogan "*Agama dididik Moden dibela"* ("while religion is taught, modernity is also accommodated") was also applicable to the *PPMJ*.

One of the richest sources for the ideas and achievements of the *PPMJ* is the magazine/newsletter *Bulan Melayu*, published by the organisation between 1930 and 1941. Written in *jawi*, it was the only monthly Malay women's publication in Malaya and the first periodical written and run for and by Malay women. It was part women's magazine, part educational publication and part newsletter, a tool for developing, expressing and disseminating their ideas, as well as for professional communication. Each edition averaged around 40 pages, including varying numbers of advertisements. Editors and contributors worked on a voluntary basis.

BM is a crucial window into the eclectic influences and interests which shaped these future women leaders of Malaysia. It reveals how women teachers negotiated a period of rapid change in Malaya's history and used the opportunities presented by British educational policy to shape Malay modernity to their own agenda. *BM* discussed subjects ranging from marriage, family life and raising children to the position of women and the Malay *bangsa* in society as a whole, from modernist developments in Islam through to information on

curriculum, teaching methods and world events. The magazine also contributed to an increasing sense of Malay identity and debated the place of Malays and Malaya in the colonial plural society. *BM* illustrates the engagement between Malay women and wider Malayan society, the British Empire, and the world. A general consensus on most issues is evident among contributors to *Bulan Melayu.* The Malay women teachers of Johor presented a unified front and worked together to have an impact on British policy and Malay society.

During the 1920s and 1930s, educated Malay middle classes began to develop ideas of the place of Malays outside direct British influence and linked to other transnational trends such as Islamic Modernism. In such a context, the *PPMJ* gave Malay women a platform to articulate their aims to define a modern Malay Muslim womanhood. The *PPMJ* was non-political in that it did not discuss politics. However, some of the topics which it did cover, such as the position of Malays in the colony's plural society and the role of women, were inherently political. [4] *BM* and the *PPMJ* provided a space for women to discuss women's concerns. Their focus remained "*Pertolongan besar kepada bangsa Melayu*": work for the Malay people. [5]

BM provided greater space and more freedom to women authors, previously marginalised in magazines which catered primarily to men. Members felt that women as well as men had a responsibility to *bangsa Melayu*, and needed to work together in order to create a future for all Malays. Nonetheless, they also expressed a desire for sexual segregation in schooling, based on moral

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[4] Post World War II with the emergence of formal mass-based middle class led party politics in Malaya, the position of Malay women and the multi-ethnic nature of the plural society took on even greater prominence, sometimes still discussed by the same women who had articulated problems in the pages of *BM*.
[5] *Bulan Melayu* 2.5 (1931), author not identified.

rather than pedagogical reasons. *BM* authors and editors regularly reiterated that they as women did not intend to compete with men, but to support them. [6] This pattern was reflected in the way they participated in politics, the Independence movement and the growth of Malay identity. However, the fact that some of these women saw themselves in a support role should not be used to dismiss the importance of their writings and actions. Authors urged Malay women to become the best at what they did and, while the roles of wife and mother were emphasised, advocacy was not restricted to these roles. The women of the *PPMJ* had much broader goals than those of the *kaum muda* before them. They encouraged Malay women to teach and to lead other women, otherwise all Malays would continue to suffer in competition with the other ethnic groups of the colony.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of sources, followed by the aims and objectives of the *PPMJ*. The special nature of Johor will be addressed, as well as the development of Malay women's writing for publications. *Bulan Melayu* itself forms the basis for the next section of the chapter which will cover authors, poetry and fiction, as well as how the magazine dealt with Islamic modernism, Malay dress, marriage, women around the world, British colonialism, education and schools, *bangsa Melayu* and national identity.

[6] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010), p256.

Sources

Issues of *Bulan Melayu* are the main source for my analysis of the Malay women teachers. The publication is mentioned briefly in secondary sources, [7] but has not been used for a historical study of the Malay women teachers. It has been mentioned in two theses. Shahazana Mamat's 1987 short thesis [8] contains little historical context or analysis. Husain's paper on *Bulan Melayu* in 1940 and 1941[9] is more useful, particularly as the author had access to issues I have been unable to locate. However, the focus of the paper is on the contribution of the periodical to Malay literature, rather than a study of *Bulan Melayu* on its own terms. Mahani Musa (2010) also discusses the authors and content of *BM*, but only as part of her study of Malay women authors. [10] Due to some gaps in the copies of *BM* I have been able to source, some references are drawn from these authors rather than the magazine itself. [11] This chapter will concentrate on the magazine, particularly its early years, and use wider secondary sources to set authors and contents in a national and international historical context.

Bulan Melayu was printed as a monthly with some breaks until February 1938, then quarterly until 1941, and bi-monthly until the Japanese Occupation in

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[7] Eg: Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987); Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980).
[8] Shahazana Mamat, *Isu-isu Wanita Dalam Majalah Bulan Melayu*, (Jabatan Sejarah, Fakulti Sastera dan Sains Sosial, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 2004).
[9] Shaharom Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu dan Tokoh-tokohnya dalam Perkembangan Bahasa dan Persuratan Melayu" (Institut Bahasa, Kesusasteraan dan Kebudayaan Melayu, UKM, 1987).
[10] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010).
[11] I hold copies of almost all issues from 1930, 1931 and 1935 (on microfilm in the library of Monash University, Melbourne), as well as most issues from 1936, 1937, and 1938, and a few issues from 1940 and 1941(originals held at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka). I have attempted to fill the gaps in my collection by using secondary sources.

1941. Exact circulation figures are unknown. [12] Surviving issues are rare and are scattered between different repositories. In 1940, the publication amalgamated with *Idaman*, published by the *Persekutuan Guru-Guru Melayu Batu Pahat* (Malay Teachers' Association of Batu Pahat, an area of Johor) although *BM* continued to be published as a discrete section. Some gaps in *BM*'s publication may be due to the illness of Ibu Zain, the editor and most frequent contributor until 1940. [13] *Bulan Melayu* was initially her project, one of the main vehicles for expressing and publicising her agenda: "*Bulan Melayu itulah Ibu Zain (Cik Zainun) dan Ibu Zain itulah Bulan Melayu*" [14] (*Bulan Melayu* is Ibu Zain, and Ibu Zain is *Bulan Melayu)*. However, it would be a mistake to assume that Zain was the only driving force. *BM* was based at the Sekolah Perempuan Ngee Heng[15] in Bandar Tinggi, Johor Bahru, and all those involved in its creation participated on a voluntary basis. Almost all references to *BM* in English language works stop at 1935, for an (as yet) unknown reason. [16]

As late as 1938 *BM* still advertised itself as the only Malay women's monthly magazine.[17] Initially the cost for subscribers was $4.00 per year in Malayan dollars (or f6.00 in Dutch East Indies guilders, implying that some subscribers lived outside British Malaya). By 1935 the cover listed yearly costs

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[12] Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals*, (1972), p19. Roff discusses the reasons why it is all but impossible to obtain exact figures for circulation of periodicals, as copies were passed from person to person, and often read aloud as well.
[13] Ahmad, *Majallah Guru*, (1975).
[14] The quote is by Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), p10.
[15] The school is presumably named after the road on which it is located. P. Lim Pui Huen, "Continuity and Connectedness: The Ngee Heng Kongsi of Johor" (2000**).** It was a Malay vernacular girls' school.
[16] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987) is one example. 1935 is also the limit of the collections available in Australia (Monash University) and the British Library.
[17] *ibid*, 1938.

at $2.00, and the option to pay in foreign currency had been removed. [18] *BM* was mostly available by subscription, and was posted to readers. [19]

The editor and organisation were quite definite about their target audience: Malay women teachers, primarily in Johor. The magazine was also sent throughout the Peninsula and to Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei, all part of the British world in the archipelago **(**despite Fadzilah's statement that Zain regarded them as outside the boundaries of Malay ethnic identity). [20] Malay women and even men in other states were also targets for the ideas of the *PPMJ*, as they aimed to change Malay society as a whole. However, while a concept of identity based on colonial boundaries was beginning to form, the *PPMJ* still identified themselves as women of Johor. By 1938, when the women of the *PPMJ* went on a bus tour of the Peninsula, and regular reports on other Malay states appeared in the pages of *BM*, a Peninsula-wide Malay identity had become dominant. The definition of *orang Melayu* in *BM* changed over time to reflect the borders of colonial Malaya, excluding the rest of the Malay world.

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[18] *Bulan Melayu* 1.3 (1930) and 5.1 (1935). Considering that other publications advertised in *BM* cost as little as 15 cents, this was not particularly cheap, but nor was it prohibitively expensive. An average female teacher's salary ranged between 300 and 600 dollars per annum. As a Supervisor, Zain's salary of $1440 in 1930 and $1920 in 1935 made her the best paid Malay female teacher in the state. *Johore Service and Leave* (Arkib Negara Malaysia – Johore, Fail Peribadi 13/1715).

[19] Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), p5.

[20] Interview with Fadzilah Amin, 19/11/07.

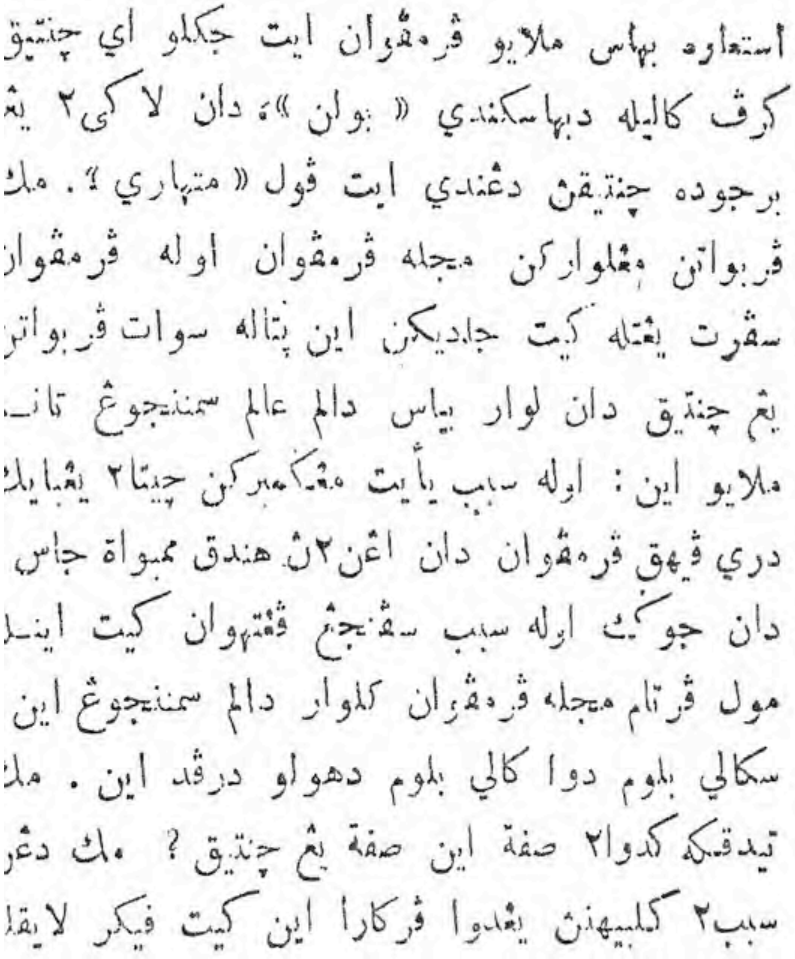

Figure 5.1: Jawi script in *Bulan Melayu.* [21]

Bulan Melayu was printed in *jawi* script. The magazine focussed on the unity of the colony, which the teachers increasingly perceived as their own country, with a Malay past and Islamic religion. The form of *jawi* used was itself modernised. Traditional Malay writing used neither punctuation marks nor paragraphs, instead using the device of "*maka*" as a linking term. In contrast, *BM* was mechanically printed and the text broken up by paragraphs and punctuation for ease of comprehension. The magazine's writers employed new Malay terms and foreign words in Arabic, English, and even French. The *PPMJ* promoted *jawi*, and Malay in general, as the main language of instruction. Similarly,

[21] *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930), p2.

British educational policy emphasised vernacular education for the Malay masses in the context of the colonial plural society. The choice of *jawi* as the language of *BM* would also have been practical, if not without problems. [22] Not all members of the *PPMJ* understood English and *jawi* was still an official script in Johor. In practice, the choice of *jawi* limited the readership of *BM* to readers who had attended Malay vernacular or religious schools. [23] *BM* was thus written with a very particular audience in mind. The language choice mirrored the perspective and agenda of this special group of women who wanted to improve women's access to schooling within the framework of Islam and Malay culture. Their language branded them not just as distinctly Malay, but as Muslim Malays.

***PPMJ* Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives of the *PPMJ* were school attendance for all Malay girls and the broadening of intellectual and practical horizons and opportunities for Malay women and the Malay *bangsa* as a whole. The first issue of *Bulan Melayu* set out the aims of the magazine:

> "The word bulan (moon) that we are using is meant to show that the magazine is published by women . . . In the Malay language pretty women are often known as bulan while handsome men

[22] The magazine discusses some of the problems involved in translation and changing between English, *Rumi* and *Jawi*. For instance, *tampek* (to criticise or reject) and *tempek* (cheers or war cries) look the same when written in *Jawi*, but different in *Rumi*. *Bulan Melayu* 1.6 (1930), p146. Transliterations have not always been done correctly. *Bulan Melayu* 1.8 (1930) p230 printed "Ilright" instead of "All right" when using English words, a usage which conforms to the rules of *Jawi* Malay, but not English.
[23] Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, (2000), p66.

> are known as matahari (sun). The endeavour to produce a women's magazine by women is obviously a commendable and unusual effort in Malaya; it represents the good intentions of women and their ambition to do service to the race, and as far as we know this is the first such effort within the peninsula... so as to enlighten others what is meant by women... our intention is to open a way for women to carry out their responsibilities towards men with regards development, to widen their ideas and views, to improve their reasoning and feeling, to spread knowledge and education, to show good examples, to provide guidance, to wake up those in a slumber and to remind those who are forgetful . . . This magazine is meant to assist the men so that Malays can benefit from this female-male collaboration. [24]

Further aims of the *PPMJ* itself included "To improve the knowledge of its members, to bring closer the ties of friendship between its members, to bring closer the religion and self respect of its members". [25] The organisation was an example of Malays working together based on horizontal bonds of common interest. [26] The *PPMJ* vigorously asserted the importance of Malay associations for the advancement of Malays: [27]

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[24] Translation from Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010), p255, no attribution to author.
[25] *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930), p6, in Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004), p17.
[26] Such horizontal bonds replaced older vertical bonds of allegiance to a sultan. Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, (2000), p61.
[27] By the end of this period, the *PPMJ* was not the only women teachers' organisation: 49 members founded another in Selangor in 1935. This date comes from the FMS *Education Report* 1935 (CO717/119/1). This may well be the date

> "...the benefits and usefulness of associations, and how religiously meritorious for those who are involved in an association that brings about unity, strength and power that enables the fulfilment of big tasks in this world and the Hereafter." [28]

In light of these goals, *BM* carried reports on the first meetings of the Johore Bahru Malay Women's Association on 29 January 1930 and Women's Association of Batu Pahat on 25 April 1930. [29]

The objectives of the *PPMJ* were much broader than simply encouraging Malay associations. They aimed to increase the opportunities for formal schooling in the Malay vernacular system, which involved setting up new schools and persuading parents to send their daughters there. Such secular schooling was to be complemented by religious instruction in Islamic principles (sometimes taught by different teachers) in the same school buildings, but outside formal school hours. The format incorporated Western ideas of progress, but retained Islam as its moral core, and emphasised Malay identity. The *PPMJ* set out a very specific course of actions for the bulk of Malay girls. They should have 4 to 5 years of secular and religious schooling, in subjects which were both academic (such as reading, writing, arithmetic and geography) and practical (domestic science, health, hygiene and handcrafts). They would go on to become wives for Malay men who were also graduates of the British schooling system, and then mothers of Malay children. The *PPMJ* sought to encourage Malay

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of formal association, however the timeline is complicated by *BM*, which has a photograph labelled *"Kaum Ibu Selangor"* in 1930. *Bulan Melayu* 1.8 (1930), p238. The association in Johor was the first, largest, and remained the most prominent.

[28] Translation in Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010), p263, no author indicated.

[29] ibid.

women to become teachers. They wanted the establishment of a training college for Malay women teachers modelled on the Sultan Idris Training College for boys. *BM* also played an important role in nurturing Malay writers, especially Malay women from Johor, [30] as this is where the organisation was based.

Like the vernacular schooling system, the *PPMJ* focussed on the role of women as mothers. As such, Malay women were the first secular and religious educators of their children. They were also seen as moral guardians and were responsible for the health and welfare of their children. As a result, the physical, mental and moral advancement of the Malay *bangsa* was linked to Malay women. "Every action, every step, everything which contributes to the decline of the status of the Malays, is founded on the weakness of women, because all behaviour which is praised and honoured derives from the teaching of earliest childhood." [31] Blaming the ills of Malay society on mothers was a harsh assessment, although a standard trope amongst reformers calling for girls' schools, including British administrators in Malaya and Kartini in the Netherlands East Indies. However, it shows how strongly the *PPMJ* linked Malay progress to women's roles as nurturers and shapers of future generations.

Johor

The *PPMJ's* location in Johor is significant. The state had a unique place in the Unfederated Malay States that made it fertile ground for progressive ideas on women. Johor was the inheritor of the Sultanate of Melaka, with the prestige

[30] Shaharom, "Peranan Bulan Melayu", (1987).
[31] *Bulan Melayu* 1.8 (1930), translation Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation* (ANU), p45. The author is not stated.

accrued from that lineage. Johor was also close to Singapore, and hence one of the first areas to have contact with new ideas and developments from that metropolis. Johor in the early 20th century was exceptional in the ways that geography, religion, ideology and colonialism intersected. Road and rail links ran to Singapore and the rest of the Peninsula, and trade, communication and consumer goods increasingly passed through Johor. [32] The state experienced rapid modernisation. [33] A dual secular and religious schooling system contributed to generating a Malay middle class that became active in commerce and in politics. Johor thus provided an ideal opportunity for the rise of a group such as the *PPMJ*.

The sultans of Johor and their families valued formal education for both boys and girls. Royal girls were sent to English language girls' schools, the only ones available during the 19th century, and to which Sultan Abu Bakar provided financial, moral and political support. The royal family set a powerful example to other families in the state in promoting female schooling. Nonetheless the divisive class implications of an elite schooled in English and a general populace in the vernacular should not be overlooked, as dual school systems continued and entrenched the existing divide between the ruling classes and the bulk of the Malay population.

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[32] Rail development in Johor began during the late 19th century. By 1904 the British had taken control of Johor's rail infrastructure and the line was completed in 1909. Kaur, *Bridge and Barrier*, (1985), pp27, 57. By 1930 Johor also had some 747 miles of roads. ibid p97. The postal system of Johor was set up in conjunction with Singapore. ibid, p132.

[33] See Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

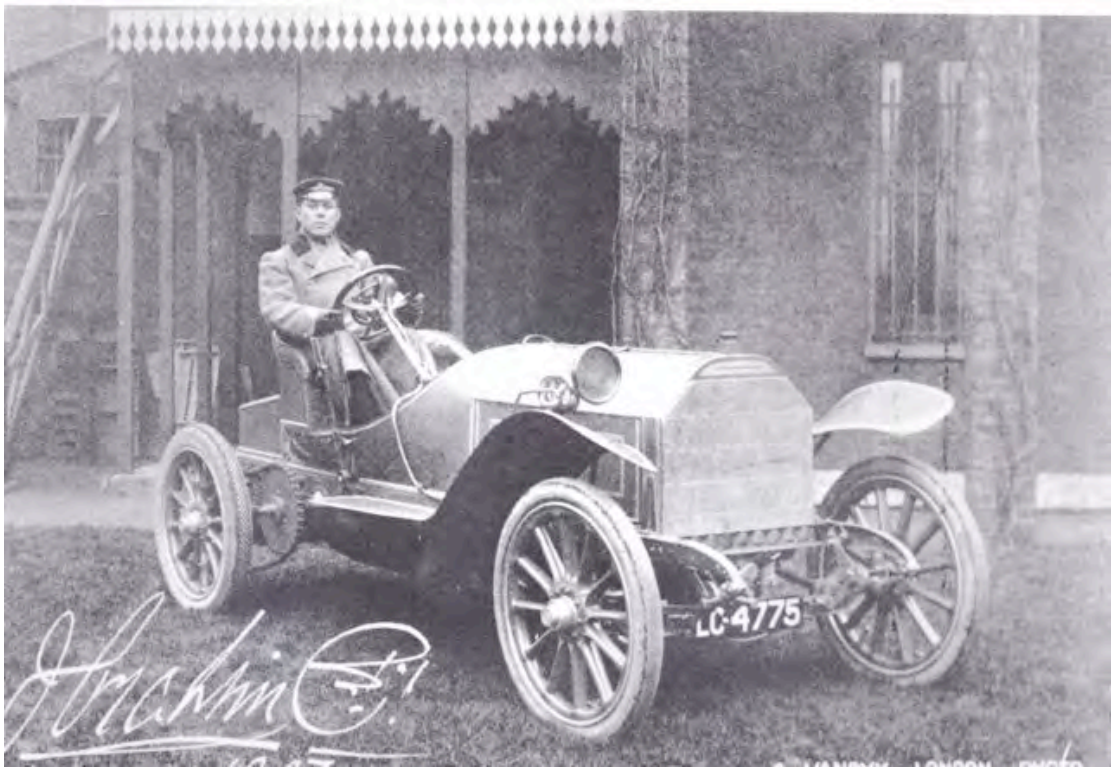

Figure 5.2: Sultan Ibrahim of Johor in 1907. [34]

Figure 5.3: The Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque. [35]

[34] Winstedt, A History of Johore, 1979, reproduced with permission of MBRAS.
[35] Anwar, *Legacy of Honour*, (2001), p35, reproduced with permission of Arkib Negara Malaysia.

Figure 5.4: Government Office, Bukit Timbalan. [36]

Centralisation of the education system also took place in Johor. From 1928 the established secular and religious schools were organised under the one Education Department and Superintendent of Education. [37] In 1931 Johor had the highest percentage of literacy in Malay in the Unfederated Malay States. However, the state still lagged behind the Straits Settlements and the Federated

[36] ibid, reproduced with permission of Arkib Negara Malaysia.
[37] Under the Superintendent, at this stage H.R. Cheeseman, the department was divided into the Government English schools and the Malay vernacular schools. The latter was divided into boys' and girls', and within each of those divisions into secular and religious. The girls' schools were under the control of Zain, as the Supervisor of Malay Girls' Schools, and she answered directly to the Superintendent of Education rather than to any other member of the bureaucracy.

Malay States in terms of Malay literacy. [38] Of 56, 967 Malay women in Johor, 3,398 responded that they were literate. [39] Only 70 were literate in English, and 66 could speak but not read that language. Thirty-three Malay women were listed as teachers. [40] The latter figure is particularly interesting as the first issue of *BM* reported a *PPMJ* membership of around 100. [41] There may have been some subscribers from outside the state, or even outside Malaya, but there is still a discrepancy in numbers. The latter may be due to the way that census data was collected or collated, perhaps only counting formally trained teachers in the sample. The census figures are small but not insignificant, as such women had the potential to impact on many other Malay girls through their work as teachers.

Census numbers in Johor did not yet reflect the rising student figures of the Education Reports. [42] There was a slow but steady increase in the number of girls in school over the first half of the 1930s. [43] In 1931, 200 girls were enrolled in the Convent school in Johor Bahru, which was the only English language girls' school in the state.[44] By 1935 enrolments had increased to 303, and a second convent school in Muar provided an additional 92 places. Malay vernacular schools and enrolments rose from 13 schools with 877 girls to 15

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[38]C.A. Vlieland, *The 1931 Census*, paragraph 334. There are problems using these census figures as they were only carried out every 10 years and the census due in 1941 was never taken due to the Japanese invasion. In addition, the terminology and method changed from year to year, and it is necessary to check both closely before making comparisons.

[39] Female literacy in Johor was thus 31 per 1,000, and 29 per 1,000 in those over the age of 15. The total Malay population of Johor was 113,247. Literacy was defined in terms of being able to read and write the language in question. ibid.

[40] ibid pp351, 373.

[41] *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930).

[42] The census and reports also used different measuring criteria.

[43] All figures are from the Johore Education Reports from 1932 (citing 1931 figures) and 1935.

[44] It is impossible from the figures given in these reports to say how many girls enrolled in convent schools were Malay.

schools and 1,305 pupils. Female enrolment in the purely religious schools also increased, from 279 to 477. Considering the overall population of Johor, this was not a large number of pupils, though it was enough to create a foundation for female schooling as there were more opportunities to recruit female candidates for teacher training. [45] Female teachers were essential in overcoming Malay religious objections to sending girls to school. Education reports state that the demand for places in the girls' schools continued to outstrip supply during this period, indicating growing interest and support. [46] Johor's history of early exposure to British objectives, proximity to Singapore, the patronage of schools by its sultans and the presence of colonial educators such as Winstedt and Cheeseman all contributed to the growth of the *PPMJ*.

Malay Periodicals

Bulan Melayu grew out of a boom in the publication of Malay language periodicals in the early 20th century. Between 1876 and 1941, 162 Malay language periodicals appeared. Eight were published in English for or by Malays, and three in a combination of Malay and English. [47] Post-World War I, Malay publishing accelerated and extended throughout the Peninsula as increasing numbers of Malays became literate and acquired an interest in reading. Between 1917 and 1941, 68 periodicals were published in Malaya, 36 of which were from

[45] It was also more likely that educated women would send their own children to school.
[46] A number of girls continued to be educated in the boys' schools.
[47] Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals*, (1972). Journals were in both *rumi* and *jawi* and included daily newspapers such as *Warta Melayu*, *Majlis* and *Lembaga*, religious periodicals such as *Al-Imam* and *Neracha*, and teachers' publications such as *MG*, *BM*, and *Chendara Mata*.

the Unfederated Malay States, mostly Johor and Kelantan. [48] Teachers contributed to many periodicals as writers, correspondents, critics and readers. Some teachers' organisations also began their own publications. The first was *Panduan Guru*, (Teacher's Guide), published by the *Persekutuan Guru-Guru Melayu Penang*. [49] The next significant development was the appearance of *Majallah Guru*, published by the (male) Malay Teachers' Associations of Penang, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka (later joined by Kelantan, Pahang, and Singapore). *MG* focussed on educational articles, but also touched on public affairs, published original fiction, and nurtured a number of Malay writers. [50]

Roff describes *Bulan Melayu* as "…the first known foray of Malay women into journalism." [51] His assessment is not quite correct. Women such as Zain had already been published in other forums, including *MG*. [52] *Saudara* and *Kencana* also had special discussions relating to women. The main forum for women writers during the 1920s was *MG*'s "*Bahagian Perempuan*" (women's section). Most women contributors expressed similar arguments to male authors when discussing women's rights. They called for education to enhance women's existing roles rather than to challenge them. Women authors called for greater opportunities and a chance to attend schools, but without negating existing gender hierarchies. [53] For example, Rahmah, a student of the Kampung Baharu Girls' School in Kuala Lumpur, wrote:

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[48] ibid, p2.
[49] A monthly magazine founded in 1922, lasting three years.
[50] ibid, p14.
[51] ibid.
[52] Ahmad, *Majallah Guru*, (1975).
[53] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010), pp253-4.

> "... the males should never harbour the thought that women aspire to be magistrates or government officials running the country – we do not aspire to that – we just want education that enables us to administer the household and education that will improve our artistic sense and thinking in the present world and the Hereafter." [54]

Such ideas were beginning to change by the late 1930s, though the emphasis in Malay publications remained on women as supporters of men.

MG also published attacks by Malay women on aspects of Malay culture. Zain was one example, but the author "Melor" was also particularly vehement. She exhorted Malay women to overcome non-beneficial customary practices where they were not in line with Islam, such as borrowing money and jewellery for marriage displays. She further stated that Malay women needed to work on thrift, hygiene and health, and become less dependent on traditional village midwives who lacked modern medical knowledge. She also defended monogamy and rebuked Malay women who married someone else's husband. [55] Some of these ideas extend into *BM*, though generally in a milder form. *MG* thus provided the basis for some of the first ventures of Malay women into journalism.

BM was the first Malay publication written and edited by and for Malay women. [56] According to Shaharon Husain, it was not very profitable, though its authors remained convinced that they could produce a quality periodical. [57] *BM* is linked to the emergence of an audience of educated Malay women, primarily

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[54] Ramah wrote in *Majallah Guru* March 1925 p47, translated in ibid.
[55] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010).
[56] *Bulam Melayu* would not remain the only periodical for Malay women, for example *Dewan Perempuan* and *Dunia Perempuan* appeared in Singapore in 1935/36.
[57] Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), p5.

Malay teachers from the developing middle classes. They allowed the magazine to come into being and formed the readership rationale for its continued publication.

Each issue of *BM* included: an editorial; correspondence about previous issues (addressed to the Editor); a report on the activities of the *PPMJ*; illustrations and photographs of women from around the Malay world and further abroad; discussion of religious matters including marriage and the hajj; and advertisements for publications, as well as other products aimed at a female readership, such as powdered milk for children, clothing, and cosmetics. There were also regular columns on cooking, sewing and other handcrafts, nutrition, care for children and pregnant women, and informative pieces on the British Empire and from around the world. [58]

BM is also an example of broader trends in Malay language writings during the 1930s. In *Writing a New Society*, Virginia Hooker established that there was a rise in the variety of publications in which Malay authors expressed concern about the position and future of the Malay race. [59] They feared that non-Malays would take over the wealth and administration of their country, and stressed that Malay initiative and drive were necessary to overcome such threats. [60] In order to express these new ideas, writers had to break from conservative and orally-based Malay traditions of writing and create a new genre altogether. [61] Modernist Islam and Western-derived ideas alike contributed to a

[58] See p200 for an example of articles included in an issue of BM.
[59] Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, (2000).
[60] ibid, pxv.
[61] ibid pxvi.

new emphasis on the responsibility of the individual for improvement. [62] Many authors chose to use Malay as the language for publication, avoiding the connotations linking English to colonialism, and explicitly targeting a Malay reading audience. [63] In their writings, Malays are differentiated from others based on shared religion, ethnicity and sense of a 'homeland'. [64] Hooker bases her arguments on writers of extended prose works as they were not bound by the same rules regarding reports of news and events as newspapers and other periodicals. [65] *BM* falls somewhere in the middle as it published fiction as well as reportage on current events. The Malay women teachers and other authors in wider Malay middle class society examined the roles of women in Malay society and the position of Malays in the multi-ethnic colony.

Authors and Activities

Bulan Melayu was an important forum for discussion and dissemination of ideas. It set out particularly to publish articles by its members and other women, but all were welcome to contribute. *PPMJ* members had varied educational backgrounds. Some were convent-educated in English. [66] Others were products

[62] ibid p3.
[63] ibid p4.
[64] ibid p356.
[65] ibid p5.
[66] In many cases, convent schooling was the best in terms of educational standards, or indeed the only schooling available to them. It did not necessarily lead to conversion to Christianity. For one thing, the mission schools were officially forbidden by British administrators to try to convert their pupils, though in practice many of the convent and mission schools were set up with the intention of producing good Christian men and women. Ho Seng Ong, *Methodist Schools in Malaysia: Their Record and History*, (Petaling Jaya: Board of Education of the Malaya Annual Conference, 1964), and J.M. Gullick, *Josephine*

of the Malay vernacular system, or had taken courses offered occasionally in Johor Bahru and elsewhere on the Peninsula, at the MWTC, or the student teacher system. Their positions ranged from Malay Supervisor to headmistresses and probationary teachers. At most there were only some 200 women in the group. [67] Thus these teachers needed to work together in order to have an impact. It was their shared identity as Malay Muslim women, as well as teachers, which helped to bind them together. The women of the *PPMJ* were part of the emerging middle classes, rising through education and achievement.

Most *BM* authors were female. Zain wrote many articles and reports on the activities of the *PPMJ*. Apart from Zain, prominent authors included Fatimah Yaacob who took over as Editor from 1939, Sharifah Anson bte Ali, Sharifah Fadhlun bte Abdul Hamid (Supervisor of Girls' Islamic Schools, Johor) and Kamariah Saadum. [68] Hajah Rahma Bte Hj Hassan, (Assistant Editor Johor Bahru), Syarufah Hafsah bte Khalis (Assistant Editor Muar) and Kalthum Bte Awang (a long term supporter from Muar) also contributed articles and played important organisational roles. Each issue included an editorial. It is hard to say how many authors were published in each issue, as some had more than one article published, pseudonyms were used, and some pieces were published without attribution. [69]

The January 1940 edition, marking ten years of *BM*, included the following articles: "*Kata Kita*" ("Our Words", authored by Zain); "*Istiadat*

Foss and the Pudu English School: A Pursuit of Excellence, (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduduk Publications for Pudu English School Old Girls Association, 1988).

[67] At its founding there were some 100 and membership was concentrated in towns. *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930).

[68] Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004), p20. For further information on Kamariah Saadum, see Chapter 6.

[69] I am not the only author who has had trouble attributing articles. See ibid.

Pembukaan Rumah Persekutuan Guru-Guru Perempuan Melayu Johore" ("Opening Ceremony of the Headquarters of the Malay Women Teachers' Association, Johor" by Azizah Bte Jafaar); "*Kenyatan Khas Bulan Melayu*" ("*Bulan Melayu* Special Announcement" by Zain) and "*Keputusan Mesyuarat Agung Tahun yang Kesepuluh*" ("Results of the Tenth Annual General Meeting", by Zain). The April edition of that year included "*Tawarikh Guides dan Brownies Sekolah-Sekolah Perempuan Melayu Johore*" ("The History of the Guides and Brownies in Malay Girls' Schools in Johor", no author listed). The use of the Arabic term *tawarikh* was relatively common at the time. Other articles were: "*Jaga Diri*" ("Awake oneself" or "Guard Oneself" by Nahram Tanja Muar); "*Moden*" ("Modern" by Ibu Muda Batu Pahat) "*Masa Bertanding*" ("Contest Time" by Kathum bte Awang – Muar); "and "*Kebebasan*" ("Freedom" or "Liberty" by Ibu Muda Batu Pahat). [70]

Two of the most notable regular male contributors were the Malay translator and educationalist Za'ba, and Johor Superintendent of Education, H.R. Cheeseman. The majority of authors were female but there was still a significant male presence. Male authors tended to write guides for Malay women and translate articles from English.[71] Other male authors in early issues included Embung Yahya and Ahmad Rejab, neither of whom wrote for *BM* very often. [72] Other *BM* authors included "Ambang", "Yusuf" (a fellow *MG* author), "Rajah Singapura", [73] "Mezan", "Mak Cik" and "Amin". [74] Both male and female

[70] ibid, p19-20.
[71] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010), p256.
[72] Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), p17.
[73] No further details about "Rajah Singapura" are provided, but members of the Singapore Royal Family taught in the early schools in Johor. Jabatan Pelajaran

authors seem to have had similar interests, unsurprising in view of the editorial control exerted by Zain and the *PPMJ*, and their shared cultural background and influences. *BM* functioned more as a means of engaging with ideas circulating in Malay society and the wider world than as a focus for internal debate.

Zain's voice was an extremely important part of *BM* and the *PPMJ*, but the organisation was broader than just her interests, and carried out a number of activities. Early in 1930, Zain had stated that "Malay women must form an association that caters to the progress of women so that they can become more focussed… if there were such an association, women could move forward together…" [75] The women of the *PPMJ* travelled to local villages to encourage parents to send their daughters to school. They met regularly with British officials, and underwent ongoing teacher training. They talked to each other in staff meetings, and their activities are mentioned in the Johor Education Reports.[76] They helped to build a system of girls' schools in Johor that were recognised by British administrators as one of the strongest in British Malaya. [77]

Johor *Sejarah Sekolah-Sekolah Johor*, (Johor Bahru: Jabatan Pelajaran Johor, 1981), p176.

[74] It is possible that the last was Zain's husband, a graduate of Raffles College and a member of the Johor Civil Service. He was also an Arabic scholar in his own right, and extremely supportive of Zain's work as a teacher and Malay Supervisor before his death during the Japanese Occupation. "Mak Cik" can be translated as "auntie", though this does not reflect all the connotations of the term in Malay. It is possible that one or more of these were Ibu Zain, as she published in *Majallah Guru* simultaneously under her own name and a pseudonym. Authors tended not to disagree with each other whether writing under a pseudonym or not.

[75] From Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010), p264.

[76] For example, see the *Johore Education Report* 1939.

[77] 1933 *Report on Education in Johore*, CO717/98/5, p9.

Poetry and Fiction

One of the ways in which *BM* contributed to the formation of Malay identity and Malay literary culture was through publishing poetry and creative writing. Games such as crosswords were also included. [78] One popular form of published creative writing was poetry – rhyming couplets (*gurindam)* or sets of four lines (Malay *pantuns)*. [79] Poems were sometimes based on an acrostic of the letters of *Bulan Melayu*, and many were inspiring and encouraging verse, [80] for example:

> "Strong consciousness, firm desire,
>
> Stubbornly demand knowledge.
>
> Work, men and women
>
> Thus achieve the aim of progress." [81]

In the original Malay the poems have an infectious rhythm, particularly when they run for page after page, and are written with a passion and flare lost in my translations. They were a traditional form of Malay composition, [82] although in

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[78] *Bulan Melayu* 9.2, 9.3, (1938).

[79] See Figure 5.5.

[80] Eg: *Bulan Melayu*, 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8 (1930). This acrostic basis means that a number of these lose even more impact in translation than simply the loss of rhyme and metre. Some *pantun* were repeated. For instance the following appears in volumes 1.3 (1930) and 2.7 (1931):

> "Quick, quick boat, quick, quick,
> Quick and quiet to the shore.
> Advance, advance Malays, advance,
> Advance towards the dawning plans."

[81] ibid, 2.7, no attribution. Much of the impact of the original is in the repetition of the word "*keras*":

> *"Keras semangat keras kemahuan*
> *Keras hati menuntut pengtahuan*
> *Keras kerja laki-laki perempuan*
> *Itulah di asas kemajuan!"*

[82] By the seventeenth century the form of *pantun* was relatively established. The first and third and second and fourth lines needed to rhyme, and the sound of the whole of each pair needed to mimic the other. *Pantun Melayu*, collected by RJ Wilkinson and RO Winstedt (Singapore, Methodist Publishing House, 1949).

the case of *BM* they were written in modernised language and often dealt with modern subject matter, including the *bangsa* and girls' schooling. [83]

[83] For example:

When we love the bangsa
The same as ourselves, not in torment
Slandering mouths will be unusual
Discovering character tomorrow and the day after.
Apabila kita kasihan bangsa,
Sama sendiri jangan desekai;
Fitnah mulut jangan dibiasa,
Kepatan budi esok dan lusa.

and

When we are highly educated,
Products of further college and university
Become a group that shares more
Apabila kita berpelajaran tinggi
Keluaran maktab university lagi
Kerana kaumlah supaya dibahagi

Ibu Tua Batu Pahat, Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita,* (2004), **p**p39-40.

Figure 5.5: Malay *pantun* and acrostic poetry. [84]

Fiction in *Bulan Melayu* also served as an expression of morality. One of the hallmarks of Malay literary works of the pre-war years was a nostalgic rural bias, and *BM* is no exception. [85] These stories argued that Malay life could be destroyed by the vices of the city, such as drinking, gambling and prostitution,

[84] *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930), p4.
[85] Tahir, *Modern Malay Literary Culture*, (1987).

and only a return to village life and values could save the fallen. [86] It is worth noting that in this context the village values referred to are those of Islam and its teachings, presented as the basis for all moral conduct. Again, the women of the *PPMJ* can be seen negotiating the complexities of tradition and modernity. They argued that an Islamic moral core should be preserved as the basis for Malay life, and as a buffer against excessive Westernisation and loss of values. However, this did not mean that no changes should take place. *BM*'s authors, living in cities and part of a cash economy, simultaneously argued that Malay society should return to an idealised rural life they had no intention of leading themselves, and that modernity was necessary for Malays to compete in colonial society. Fiction and poetry in *BM* argued that Malays needed to develop a Malay consciousness and to work together for their own advancement. Islamic modernist ideas were an integral component in achieving these goals.

Islamic Modernism

Religion was central to the women of the *PPMJ;* it was an integral part of their identity as Malay women. The blessings of Allah were repeatedly invoked. Allah was also an important presence in articles and fiction in *BM,* for instance: "God will help/On the condition that we have one heart". [87] Proverbs and Hadith were published in their original Arabic in the pages of *BM*. [88] The women of the *PPMJ*

[86] Eg: *Bulan Melayu* 2.5 (1931). The broader conclusions in this section are drawn from Tahir, *Modern Malay Literary Culture,* (1987).
[87] *Bulan Melayu* 1.3 (1930), p52.
[88] For example, "Heaven is under the feet of mothers". *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930), p3. I thank Dr Rochayah Machali of the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of New South Wales for her translations of the Arabic words

regarded religious instruction in schools as an extremely important part of their plans, particularly Quran study. [89] Religious instruction would help to revitalise Islam, and hence improve Malay society as a whole. [90] *Bulan Melayu* aimed to overcome Malay women's religious ignorance, otherwise the next generation would inherit it. [91] The women of the *PPMJ* identified themselves primarily as Malays rather than as members of the global Muslim community. The notion of a worldwide community of Muslims was increasingly being abandoned in favour of territorial identities formed within colonial borders. [92]

Like other Islamic modernists, *PPMJ* authors used the rhetoric of Islam to argue for the right of women to be educated. Zain shared views on girls' education with modernists such as al-Hadi, who in turn was influenced by Qasim Amin and other Egyptian modernists. Singapore, a centre for Arabic language publication, was also a source of influence. However, the *kaum muda* had limited goals for Malay women: they should focus on religion, home and handcrafts, not compete with men outside the home. The modernist journal *Al-Imam* (1920s) stated that if girls had the same freedom as boys the result would be fewer children and a threat to the female character. *Saudara* reported on Western women doing men's jobs in the workplace and hence no longer being dependent on men. The *kaum muda* emphasised the role of women within existing

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employed by *BM* writers. Readers of *BM*, would have known some Arabic, even if they could not read it very well.

[89] ibid. *BM* also mentions an important development in Malayan/Malaysian Islam: the qualified female Quran teachers. For example, see ibid, 2.2 and 2.3 (1931). This was another path to further education for women, although I have not been able to find much information on the subject, and it is not the focus of this thesis.

[90] Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004), p47.

[91] ibid, p45.

[92] Laffan, "Another Andalusia" (2007), pp689, 718.

frameworks as wives and mothers. [93] The Malay women teachers advocated similar roles and used similar rhetoric, but they imparted a sense of themselves as leaders for Malay women and expanded horizons for girls who had attended school.

An awareness of gendered differences ran throughout *Bulan Melayu*. [94] Allah had made men and women differently, ran authors' arguments, with different roles, and such difference should be maintained. [95] Such differentiation should not be a reason to deny girls and women schooling. Educating women would not turn them into men, just as "hens can not become roosters". "Even in 1,000 years", they would not become so "ferocious" and "fearsome". The author further argued that men were more suited for strong work; women were softer and more caring. [96] The *PPMJ* appreciated that there were differences in power and influence between men and women under Islam. They made appeals to men as well as women: fathers should not keep their wives and daughters ignorant. [97] Islamic Modernism provided the basis for calls for girls' schooling and the importance of Malay women's roles as mothers and first religious educators of their children, and Islam was the "key to this world and the next" for Malay women. [98] *BM's* authors argued that men and women working together would be

[93] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010), pp249-50.
[94] Since throughout this period a significant number of Malay girls continued to attend boys' schools and complete the same unmodified curriculum, arguments claiming gender difference were publicised to encourage acceptance of separate schools for girls.
[95] *Bulan Melayu* 1.3 (1930) p54. No author is listed.
[96] ibid. This is a Malay proverb, the implications of which would have been well known to readers.
[97] Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004), p51.
[98] *Bulan Melayu* 3.6 p94.

able to advance the *bangsa*. Women would thus need more than domestic skills although they would continue to fulfil their traditional roles.

BM and the *PPMJ* walked a fine line: advocating, inspiring and supporting change in favour of female schooling, but ever mindful of not antagonising the *ulama* or sultans. They knew that if they appeared radical they would alienate otherwise supportive sections of the population. If they were too cautious they would not be able to achieve their plans for Malay women. It does not seem that they were directly blocked or criticised by influential *ulama*. The *PPMJ* partially overcame these difficulties in balancing their demands with existing culture by acknowledging the importance of the role that women played in the economy, but also arguing that they would not and should not compete directly with men for jobs. [99] A possible advantage was that, like all of the teachers' organisations of the time, the *PPMJ* was single sex, allowing a degree of female autonomy not always available in mixed company. [100] Another means of demonstrating the virtue of the Malay women teachers was their form of dress.

Malay Dress

The influence of Islamic Modernism in *Bulan Melayu* also extended to the question of clothing and Malay costume. *BM* called for the wearing of Islamic

[99] ibid, p77.
[100] In addition, even the most conservative religious figures acknowledged the rights of women to be active amongst other women and in women's concerns. Howard M Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth century Indonesia*, (Ithaca/N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970) p149.

dress to cover *aurat* [101] when women were not around close relatives. [102] Islamic dress sometimes extended to the wearing of a loose veil to cover the hair. However, most of the photographs of women in *Bulan Melayu* show women with bare heads, and British administrators and Sultan Ibrahim alike saw head coverings as anti-modern. [103] While the women of the *PPMJ* appreciated many of the technological and even philosophical advances that came with British colonialism and Westernisation, they did not approve of some forms of Western clothing. They argued that Malay women should dress according to the requirements of Islam. Bobbed hair was not acceptable, nor short hair, lipstick or make up. [104] On the other hand, advertisements in *BM* included "Virgin Face Powder" and "Srivis Amla Hair Oil". [105]

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[101] Areas of the body which must be covered in accordance with Islam.
[102] *Bulan Melayu* 3.6, p52.
[103] See Chapter 4. Veiling was discouraged in Turkey for the same reason.
[104] Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004), p57-9.
[105] See Figures 5.6 and 5.7, *Bulan Melayu* 8.5 (1937).

[VIRGIN] بدق چف برجين

بدق واڠي چف (VIRGIN) اين ساڠت مشهور نامن دسلوره ڽانه جاوا دان سمترا، بربيو٢ اورڠ لاكي٢ دان فرمفوان ٢ اد ماكي بدق اين تراوتام سكالي كفد اتق ٢ فرمفوان يڠ فركي مكوله، بدق اين اوكن سڽاج مندالڠكن كچنتيقكن روفا اياله باڠي منجاڠ كصيحاتن بادن درفد دبو٢ يڠ اكن ملكت فد كوليت موك٠ بدق اين اد بايق فائدهن:—

(1) مڠهالوسكن كوليت موك٠
(2) مڠهيلڠكن فاروت٢ دان تنداء دموك٠
(3) ممبرسيهكن كوليت دان مڠهيلڠكن داكي٢٠
(4) مڠهيلڠكن جراوت٢ دان لاين٢ ڠ٠
(5) مڠهيلڠكن ياهو فلوه يڠ ماسم اتو هاڠيت٠
(6) منجيهكن كچنتيقكن روفا٠

VIRGIN FACE POWDER

جك انچي٢ يڠ بلوم فرنه ماكي بدق VIRGIN اين فاتوتله دچوب، تنتو اي اكن مموامكن هاڠي انچي٢ دان هر ڠ قون ساڠت موره سيلاله بلي ساتو٠ بارڠ سياف هندق ممبلي كران بوات برنياك سيلاله منوليس كفد كيت سفاي دافة كيت ممبري شرط٢ ڠ٠

Cheng Heng & Co.,
205 South Bridge Road,
SINGAPORE.

جيڠ هيڠ عند كمفني
205 ساوث بريج رود، سيڠاڤورا٠

Bedak Virgin Store,
No 666, Geylang Road,
SINGAPORE.

كيت سديا مڠيريمكن چونتوه (Sample) دڠن فرچوم ثنافي هندقله دكيريمكن سكفيڠ ستيم يڠ برهر ڠا 5 سين٠

فوتڠله كوفن يڠدباوه اين٠

نام _____
علامت _____
نڬري _____

Figure 5.6: Advertisement for Virgin Face Powder. [106]

[106] *Bulan Melayu* 8.5 (1937), p40.

Figure 5.7: Advertisement for Srivis Amla Hair Oil. [107]

In view of such advertisements and explicit links to consumerism, it may be worthwhile to consider whether the women of the *PPMJ* can be analysed as

[107] *Bulan Melayu* 8.5, (1937).

part of the transnational phenomenon known as the "Modern Girl". [108] The Modern Girl was presented as a wearer of provocative clothes, a seeker of romantic love, and as disregarding the roles of daughter, wife and mother. A global phenomenon, she was linked to the dissemination of European modernity through capitalism, consumption and visual culture. Writers at the time and since have differentiated the "modern girl" from the "new woman", seeing the latter as standing for social and political autonomy for women. However, the demarcation is not so clear in reality: "new women" were also consumers and "modern girls" also functioned as advocates. [109]

In countries such as India, the image of the "modern girl" was set in opposition to middle class women who embraced Western domestic norms as modern mothers and companions for educated husbands. "New women" were presented by campaigners as participants in the anti-colonial struggle. "Modern girls" embraced Westernisation. [110] Similarly, the ideal woman of the Malay women teachers differed in several ways from the definition of the Modern Girl. The latter is closely associated with a cosmopolitan aesthetic and a frivolous interest in men and romantic love. [111] The *PPMJ* rejected the bobbed hair and overt use of make up associated with the Modern Girl and emphasised the role of women as supporters of men and families. Malay women teachers deliberately wore Malay dress. The Modern Girl rejected traditional female roles and

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[108] The idea of the modern girl was entangled with that of the "New Woman". Modern Girl Around the World Research Group "The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device" in Modern Girl Around the World Research Group (eds), *The Modern Girl Around the World*, (2008) p10, though this association is disputed. Silverberg, "After the Grand Tour" in ibid, pp358-9.
[109] ibid.
[110] ibid.
[111] Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, "The Modern Girl Around the World", pp245-6.

transgressed racial boundaries, [112] threatening the symbols of "nation". [113] The Malay women teachers of Johor emphasised the importance of motherhood, and the need to preserve the distinct identity of the Malay race. As potential consumers of the cosmetics and clothes advertised in the pages of *BM*, the women of the *PPMJ* were not so far from the image of the "modern girl" as they may have supposed, especially bearing in mind the significant overlap between "modern girl" and "new woman." As Si Lin Lewis discusses in the Penang context, the "modern girl" was a visible sign of modernity, change and Western influence, but also represented attempts "to reconcile and reinvent cultural traditions to suit modern times and challenge traditional structures of authority"[114], practices which resonate throughout the writings of the *PPMJ*.

As the image of what a Malay woman should look like solidified over time, presentations of women within the pages of *BM* changed accordingly. Early magazine covers depicted Malay women dressed modestly in Malay style, though with sleeves sometimes rolled up. Their hair is in a neat bun, and they do not wear the *selandang* (a loose lacy veil which covered the hair). [115] Some women, such as the female Quran teachers, always wear the latter in photographs, [116] but many early depictions show women and girls with bare heads. By 1937, representations are mixed. By 1938, almost all depictions of

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[112] Ibid, p249.
[113] Modern Girl Around the World Research Group "The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device" in Modern Girl Around the World Research Group (eds), *The Modern Girl Around the World*, (2008), p16.
[114] Su Lin Lewis, "Cosmopolitanism and the Modern Girl: A Cross-Cultural Discourse in 1930s Penang" (*Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 43, Issue 6, November 2009, pp1385-1419), p1387. The article places significant emphasis on cosmopolitanism, and acknowledges that the newspaper on which the research is based, the *Straits Echo*, is a "unique venue" for many of these discussions.
[115] *Bulan Melayu*, 1.2 (1930). See Figure 5.8.
[116] Eg *Bulan Melayu* 1.10 (1930) pp271, 302. See Figure 5.9.

Malay women show them with covered heads. However, girls in school still appear without head coverings. In some cases their bare heads may be due to the wearing of Western-inspired uniforms, such as in a photograph of Girl Guides.[117] However, a family portrait in the same issue shows a bare headed girl in a Western frock. [118] As she is a schoolgirl, and younger than marriageable age, she is able to appear in a posed photograph in Western dress.[119] However, many students also wore Malay dress. [120] The *PPMJ* advocated that Malay women and teenage girls wear a *kain*, a *kebaya*, and a *selandang*, [121] visible markings of their Malay identity even as they embraced the opportunities presented by modernity..

[117] *Bulan Melayu* 9.4 (1938) p38. See Figure 5.10.
[118] ibid p4. See Figure 5.11.
[119] Taylor "Official Photography, Costume and the Indonesian Revolution" in Taylor, *Women Creating Indonesia*, (1997) p117. In private and in public as well once she reached marriageable age, it is likely that she would revert to Malay dress. ibid, pp117-8.
[120] See Figure 4.10.
[121] There was some recognition of different Malay dress across the Peninsula, (eg: *Bulan Melayu* 2.2 (1931) p34) however emphasis on a Malaya-wide identity required a degree of standardisation in accepted Malay dress.

Figure 5.8: Cover of *Bulan Melayu*. [122]

[122] *Bulan Melayu*, 1.2 (1930).

Figure 5.9: Female Quran teachers. [123]

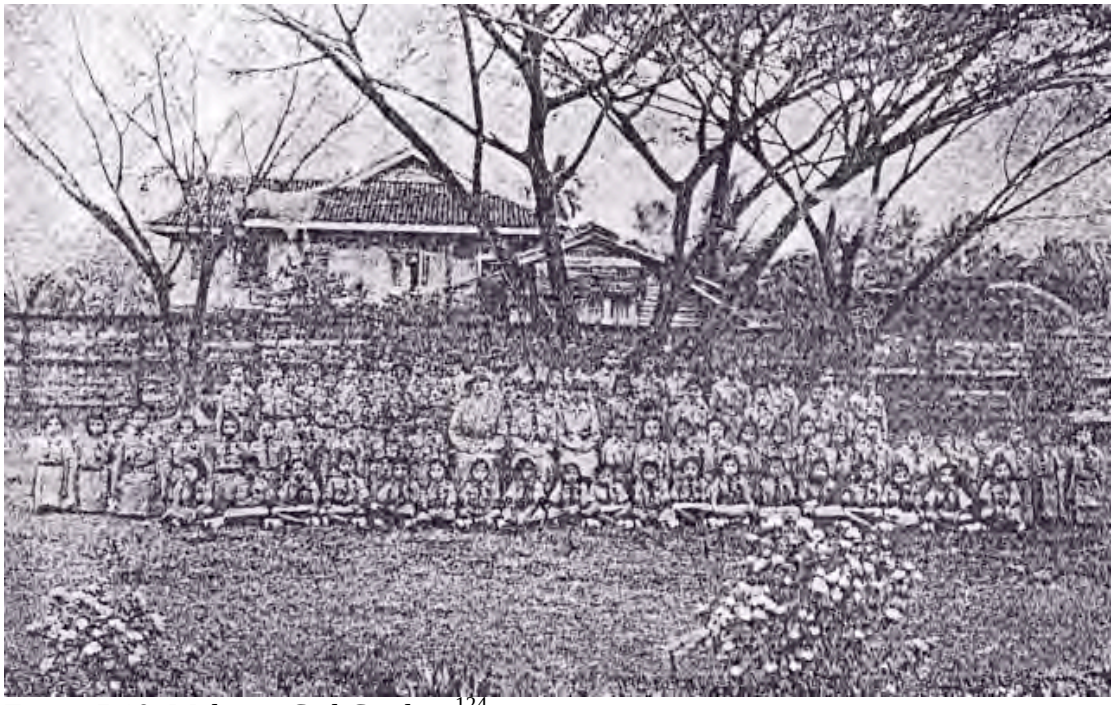

Figure 5.10: Malayan Girl Guides. [124]

[123] Image quality is poor in the original source. *Bulan Melayu* 1.10 (1930) p302.
[124] *Bulan Melayu* 9.4 (1938) p38.

Figure 5.11: Malay women of varying ages. [125]

In their choice of "traditional" Malay costume, the women of the *PPMJ* explicitly expressed a worldview that linked women to the preservation of culture and to the past. [126] As the organisation sought to modernise Malay women without stepping outside the boundaries of an ideology which regarded

[125] *Bulan Melayu* 9.4 (1938) p38.
[126] Taylor "Official Photography, Costume and the Indonesian Revolution" in Taylor, *Women Creating Indonesia*, (1997), p92.

Malay culture as superior and desirable, their choice of clothing was a method of demonstrating their "Malayness", irrespective of the modern ideas which they espoused. All of the photographs which appear in *Bulan Melayu* are staged. A particular picture of Malay womanhood is presented to the reader: Malay women are modest, covering themselves in accordance with the requirements of Islam.[127] The use of stockings and shoes rather than bare feet or slippers demonstrates that the teachers in question are modern Malays, displaying aspects of Westernisation and class distinction.

Marriage

One important topic of discussion from *BM* is marriage in the Malay community. Impending marriage was one of the main reasons given by parents for taking girls from school. [128] Zain and the *PPMJ* worried that Malay parents would remove their girls before they had completed primary school. [129] Articles on the subject were aimed at readers who were the "mothers of daughters" rather than at those who were getting married themselves. [130] One reason girls were removed from school before graduation was the common concern amongst Malay parents

[127] It is likely that Chinese and European conceptions of modesty also played a role in the development of Malay national dress, as they had done in Indonesia. ibid, p114.
[128] Marriage was one of the primary concerns of the Indonesian women's movements, with which the *PPMJ* had much in common. However, it was not the latter's main concern, except where polygamy and early marriage interfered with education.
[129] Malay girls still tended to marry young, often at around the age of 12 or 13. The first age of marriage for Malay girls rose sharply after Independence, but was still only 17 in 1950. Gavin Jones, "Malay Marriage and Divorce in Peninsular Malaysia" Three Decades of Change", *Population and Development Review*, Vol 7 No 2 June 1981, p265.
[130] *Bulan Melayu* 1.11/12 (1930).

that secular schooling would produce undesirable practices such as writing love letters or other inappropriate relations with the opposite sex. [131] This attitude required time to overcome, involving the combined efforts of the *PPMJ*, British educators and Islamic modernists. There seems to have been little direct discussion by the *PPMJ* on the effects of divorce, or much discussion on one of the main concerns of the Indonesian women's movement, polygamy.[132] The *PPMJ* avoided the subject by emphasising the need for similarity of interests and equality in marriage, aims which would be difficult if not impossible to achieve in a polygamous marriage. [133] They presented companionate marriage as the new ideal. [134]

BM was also against "*kahwin paksa*" (forced marriage) and the selection of a partner by one's parents. Authors thought it a significant problem that the likes and dislikes of children were not seen as important. [135] "*…biar mati anak jangan mati ada*t" (a Malay proverb meaning "let the children die rather than the custom") was no longer appropriate in the modern world, they stated, and to be married too young was bad for individuals and the Malay community.[136]

With regard to marriage, the *PPMJ* also made comparisons with women in other countries. They stated that women in Japan had realised that traditional marriage practices were no longer appropriate for modern times. [137] *BM*

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[131] Eg: *Bulan Melayu* 1.9 (1930) p261. See also British *Education Reports*.
[132] See Susan Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) for the Indonesian equivalent.
[133] I have not found any references to female circumcision.
[134] See Chapters 2 and 3.
[135] Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004), p61-2, no author mentioned.
[136] ibid.
[137] ibid, p65. The nature of these marriage practices is not stated.

discussed the relationship between marriage, work and the law in England. [138] America was cited as a place of high divorce rate and family breakdown. [139] Western examples were used in this context to demonstrate the superiority of Islam. Like Islamic Modernists, *PPMJ* authors argued that wholesale Westernisation would lead to a breakdown in the family unit but many of the examples used were inaccurate. Divorce was not easy to obtain in Western societies during the 1930s,[140] while divorce rates were significantly higher in Malay society. [141] The women of the *PPMJ* appear to have distorted numbers comparing Malaya and the West in order to strengthen their argument about the need to follow Malay and Islamic ways, and their superiority over Western societies. If such distortions were not deliberate, they indicate the limited information available to readers of *Bulan Melayu*. Otherwise, they illustrate the strongly ideological nature of the magazine. Either way, the *PPMJ* drew at times on international stories for negative comparisons with Malays and Malaya.

Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies and Women Around the World

One of the main sources of comparison for the *PPMJ* was the Netherlands East Indies. In both colonies there were debates on women's public image, campaigns for more schools for girls and a rise in publication of women's writings. *BM* focussed on individual examples, such as Raden Kartini (sic.). Kartini's fame as

[138] ibid, pp66-7.
[139] ibid, p66.
[140] Debra Friedman, *Towards a Culture of Indifference*, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995).
[141] G.W. Jones, "Trends in Marriage and Divorce in Peninsular Malaysia" *Population Studies*, (Vol 34 No 2 1980 pp279-292).

a Dutch-educated Javanese woman who had dedicated herself to promoting schooling of girls provided a powerful example to the women of the *PPMJ*, and she is frequently alluded to in *BM*. Writing in 1930, some 26 years after Kartini's death, the women of the *PPMJ* presented her as a guide to Malay women, leading women to progress. [142] There are a number of problems with this representation. Kartini did not strongly identify as Muslim, unlike the Malay women teachers of Johor. In fact, she was openly critical of Islamic precepts and cultural practices relating to women. She opposed child marriage and polygamy, and wanted young women to have the option of remaining single to pursue a career. She promoted elite schooling in Dutch for girls of her class. The *PPMJ* did not engage closely with her ideas, which were circulated widely in Indonesian/Malay translation from 1922, and did not even identify her correctly: *Raden* is a male title, *Raden Ajeng* was the correct title for unmarried women of her class. To the *PPMJ*, Kartini was a symbol for women's advancement to be admired in the abstract but not imitated in Malaya.

Bulan Melayu also discusses the example and experiences of women from other countries around the world. Zain briefly visited Persia and Egypt in 1934, and called the upper class women there modern, as beneficiaries of modern schooling. [143] Florence Nightingale was briefly mentioned in the context of being an unmarried woman in a nursing career. [144] Queen Victoria is held up as a positive example for Malay girls: "…*seorang raja yang bijaksaan terlebih daripada berberapa King Inggris*..." (a monarch who was wiser than several

[142] *Bulan Melayu* 1.7 (1930).
[143] Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), p27.
[144] *Bulan Melayu* 8.9 (1937), p25.

Kings of England). [145] The roles of English women during World War I as soldiers and engineers were raised, [146] though as I lack the relevant issue, I am unsure of the full context surrounding the discussion.

Bulan Melayu presented Turkish women as an example of Muslim women engaged in nation building, but Turkish women were also willing to take up weapons and fight in the army alongside their menfolk [147] during the Turkish War of Independence (1919-23). *BM* regarded the latter action as a less than ideal example for Malay women [148] or for Turkish women too, it would seem. The most likely interpretation for this dislike is that Turkish women were a little too radical, too secular due to Kemal's reforms. The *PPMJ*'s rhetoric about Malay women placed them in an idealised Islamic rural society where women's roles were distinctly different from men's. The women of the *PPMJ* were thus put in an awkward position: Turkish women were modern Muslims, but they could not be exemplars for Malay women. The *PPMJ* admired the firebrands and leaders of women around the world, but regarded the best examples as those who also retained explicitly female roles.

Bulan Melayu also sought to situate Malays and Malaya in an international context. Zain's first editorial was about the modernisation of Japan, including her assumption that modernisation had been achieved without loss of Japanese culture and ways of life. [149] Here was an example to Malays of what

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[145] Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), p26, author is most likely Zain.
[146] ibid, p27.
[147] ibid, p74.
[148] ibid.
[149] *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930). This was not the first time that Zain had expressed these views. See also Ahmad, *Majallah Guru*, (1975). Use of Japan as an example for successful modernisation by an Asian nation was common at this time. Laffan, "Another Andalusia" (2007), p690.

could be accomplished if due care was taken, she stated. The advances of Western civilisation did not have to overwhelm all that was good in a nation's culture. [150] This was not the only time that *BM* would discuss Japan. [151] The example of Japan was used to demonstrate how Asian ways of life were not incompatible with modernity rather than to provide information about that country. Once again, the use of overseas examples in *BM* illustrates either a selective use of evidence or restrictions on the information available to Malay women teachers, as profound changes had taken place in Japanese ways of life.[152] Nevertheless, inspiring stories of women from other countries were a favourite topic of authors.[153].

While Malay loyalty remained to their own sultan and race, there was also some consciousness of the position of the Malay States as a part of Britain's Empire. The readers of *BM* were informed of the death of King George V by a full-page black-bordered notice, expressing the sadness of loyal Malay readers at this unfortunate event. [154] The coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth was prominent in the June 1937 issue. [155] Articles with an international focus aimed to ensure that the modern educated Malay woman should have knowledge of world events and situations outside her own immediate

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[150] Authors did argue that under certain circumstances Westernisation could replace undesirable aspects of Asian cultures, such as not allowing women to be educated.
[151] Eg: *Bulan Melayu* 2.1 (1931), p13, on the beliefs of Ancient Japan. Considering it was the Japanese Occupation which finally ended the publication of *BM*, this admiring emphasis is not without some irony in retrospect.
[152] Sato, "Contesting Consumerisms in Mass Women's Magazines" in Modern Girl Around the World Research Group (eds), *The Modern Girl Around the World*, (2008), p268.
[153] *Bulan Melayu*, 2.3 (1931), p91. For Britain, see ibid, 1.1 for the example of Flora Klickman.
[154] ibid, 3.11.
[155] *Bulan Melayu* 8.6 (1937), cover image.

experience,[156] though not always in an unbiased or even particularly accurate fashion. Such articles situated Malaya in the Islamic world, as a part of Asia, and as a unit of the British Empire.

Colonialism and British Schools in Malaya

British schools for Malay girls provided the women of the *PPMJ* not just with an education and employment, but with some of the tools they desired to modernise Malay society and improve the position of Malays as compared to the Chinese. British influence can be seen in co-educational primary vernacular schools, and in the cultural consequences of an increasingly literate society obtaining information from British sources.

There was little need for the *PPMJ* to lobby the British for an increase in girls' schools by the mid 1930s. Administrators were convinced that this was a desirable outcome. [157] The most immediate concern for both Malays and the British became the need for more qualified teachers in order to staff more schools. The *PPMJ* thus concerned itself with attracting suitable young women to the teaching profession to help fill this need, as well as continuing to encourage Malay parents to send girls to school. British support helped them achieve these goals. Collaboration between Malay teachers and British administrators was seen as positive by both sides.

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[156] For example, ibid, 1.10 (1930) discussed the contents of the *North China Daily News*.

[157] See *Johore Education Reports*. The British also stated that prejudice against the education of girls had been almost entirely overcome. The ongoing work of the Malay women teachers in this area convinces me there was still some opposition in the Malay community.

Bulan Melayu devoted significant space to the formal curriculum of the Johor Malay girls' schools, as it played an integral role in shaping the Malay womanhood the *PPMJ* desired. The curriculum incorporated both traditional and modern skills and illustrates which areas the teachers emphasised (such as health and hygiene) and which they downplayed (such as sports). These variations provide a valuable insight into the priorities of the organisation. At the heart of the British curriculum and the goals of the *PPMJ* alike were the academic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, and the more practical components of domestic science, sewing, childrearing, hygiene, and handcrafts. [158]

When it came to health and hygiene, one of the primary concerns of *Bulan Melayu*, British influence was critical. A shift in colonial policy to an emphasis in public health on mothers and children meant that British administrators targeted women and especially women teachers as a means for improving the health of Malays as a whole.[159] Hygiene and health classes for schoolgirls were discussed and encouraged in the pages of *BM*, and many articles focussed on pregnant women, new mothers and small children. Topics ranged from the importance of cod liver oil [160] to a detailed two-part article on labour and giving birth. [161] Infant and maternal mortality were still at high levels, with

[158] I accept that to some degree this is an artificial division. However, it appears so frequently in sources and historiography that I will continue to use it as a useful way of conceptualising this area. *BM* also discussed broader Western developments, such as medicine, agriculture and engineering. Eg: *Bulan Melayu* 1.6 (1930) p152.
[159] Manderson, *Sickness and the State*, (1996). See Chapter 6 for a full discussion.
[160] *Bulan Melayu* 1.3 (1930) p59.
[161] *Bulan Melayu* 1.7 and 1.8 (1930). The articles were translated from English, and are marked as "All Rights Reserved".

infant mortality at 250 in every 1,000 during the early 20th century.[162] Zain and the *PPMJ* regarded improvement in this area as one of the primary goals of schooling for girls. *BM* also included regular articles on disease, childbirth and nutrition. [163]

Improvements in health were also linked to the availability and purchase of new products via advertisements in *BM.* Products such as sweetened condensed milk, seen as important for infant health by British and Malay mothers alike, were advertised in the pages of *BM* [164] So too were *jamu* (traditional medicines)[165] Use of products such as powdered milk was associated with class, as they were not cheap and required following specific instructions for use. Advertisements pictured healthy white babies and families, promising the improved child health associated with the West if the product was used. Purchasers had to be able to afford the item, regard its use as modern and desirable, and then to be able to mix it with clean water. Advertising was thus targeted towards groups such as Malay women teachers, who could fulfil these requirements.

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[162] See Chapter 6.
[163] Eg: *Bulan Melayu* 1.7 and 1.8 (1930). This area is discussed in depth in the colonial context in Manderson, *Sickness and the State*, (1996).
[164] See Figures 5.12 and 5.13.
[165] See Figures 5.15 and 5.15. The *PPMJ* did not entirely give up on Malay traditions.

Figure 5.12: Advertisement for Alpine Sweetened Condensed Milk. [166]

[166] *Bulan Melayu 8.8* (1937), p2.

Figure 5.13: Advertisement for Alpine Sweetened Condensed Milk. [167]

[167] *Bulan Melayu* 9.3 (1983), p2.

Figure 5.14: Advertisement for Java Tonic. [168]

[168] *Bulan Melayu* 7.1 (1936).

Figure 5.15: Advertisement for "Economic Bangsa". [169]

Closely linked to the teaching of hygiene was domestic science, also known as domestic economy. Cooking was taught in the Malay girls' schools, and British administrators aimed to provide every girls' school with a properly

[169] *Bulan Melayu* 8.8 (1937), p24.

equipped kitchen,[170] including stove, oven and sink. Whether this involved the provision of gas, electricity and running water is not specified. One of the arguments against girls' schooling was that such skills could be taught just as well at home. As a way of countering such accusations, *BM* presented the latest rules for hygienic food preparation. [171] They showed and endorsed the use of facilities such as modern kitchens which would not have been standard in many Malay homes. Malay girls would carry on women's traditional tasks but in a modern and progressive way. *BM* even published basic recipes, such as a "Gold and Silver Cake". [172] The publication of such recipes was linked to proper nutrition for women and their families, a new and important scientific notion in the Malayan context. Hygiene was also linked to religion: "*Kebersihan itu satu tuntutan agama*" (cleanliness is one requirement of religion) was urged, not just in terms of washing before prayer, but for cleaning the house and body and for food preparation. [173] Again, class played a role: a modern kitchen would only have been available to upper and middle class families.

Other crafts taught in the vernacular girls' schools included sewing and crochet.[174] Such skills could change a Malay woman's earning potential and position in society and give her a greater degree of economic independence. [175]

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[170] See Johore Education Reports.
[171] *Bulan Melayu* 2.6 (1931), p185.
[172] This was a Western-style cake, using "baking powder" (the term is written in English) and flour, rather than a traditional Malay *kueh* made from rice. ibid, 2.5 (1931), p149.
[173] *Bulan Melayu* 1.6 (1930), p34.
[174] For needlework there were even specially qualified instructors. See Johore *Education Reports*.
[175] Malay women could sell the crafts they produced using skills learned in the schools.

Results were a matter of pride for the girls and schools involved. [176] Again, there was an emphasis on teaching these crafts in the most advanced way possible: sewing was as indicated in the "Encyclopaedia of Needlework", [177] using measurements in inches, feet and yards. [178] The title of this book was written out in English, implying that *BM* played an active role in imparting such information to Malay-speaking teachers. In this fashion *BM* and the *PPMJ* were mediators of new information to their readers. Sewing methods were set out step by step, beginning with how to hem a piece of fabric, followed by buttonhole stitch and decorative borders, and eventually leading to chain stitch and the production of a finished piece, an apron. [179] The latter was a brand new item of clothing for Malay girls, to be worn for cooking or cleaning in domestic science classes. Authors assumed that the women of the *PPMJ* already knew how to sew. Their articles aimed to show readers the best way to teach their pupils. Crochet was dealt with in the same way. [180] This emphasis on how to teach was similar to that of the MWTC curriculum. [181] Sewing, crochet and other handcrafts were all part of caring for a family and a home. They could also provide an opportunity to earn additional income. [182]

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[176] See for instance the photo of prize-winning crafts and their makers, *Bulan Melayu*, 1.2 (1930).
[177] ibid.
[178] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936), p68.
[179] *Bulan Melayu*, 1.2, 1.9, 1.11/12 (1930) are the issues with examples of these skills. See Figure 5.17.
[180] Eg: ibid, 1.5 (1930).
[181] See Chapter 6.
[182] Trading, which had traditionally formed one of the duties of the Malay woman, was also a means of acquiring further income, although it was not encouraged to the same degree in the syllabus. These skills are referred to in *BM* as "hand crafts". The link between traditional crafts and the possibility of additional income was even more obvious when considering adult classes in home economics, though this did not receive nearly as much emphasis in *BM* as

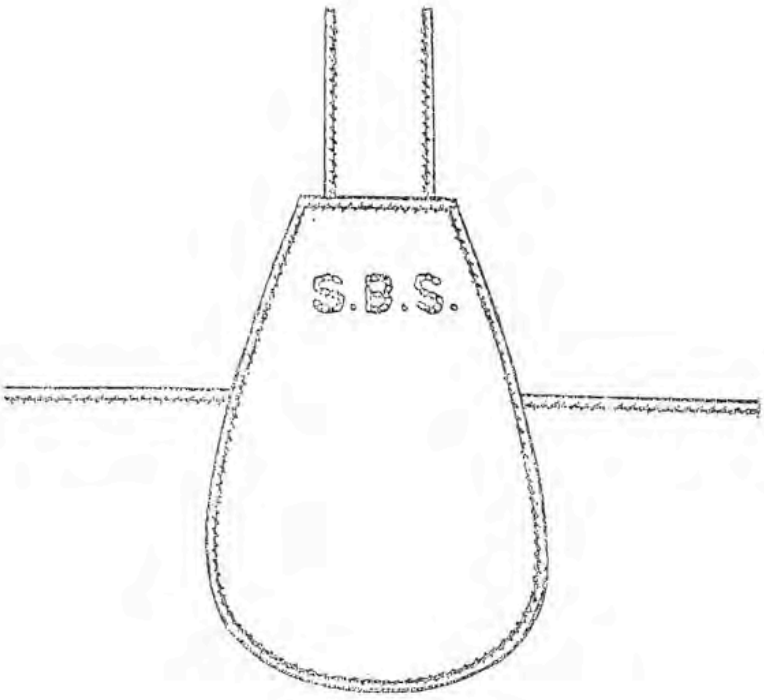

Figure 5.16: Design for finished apron. [183]

One of the most powerful representations of the vernacular curriculum in *BM* was in pictorial form – several of the early covers of *BM* dramatically represent the publication's goals for girls' education. [184] The first of these appeared with issue 1.2, and shows women teaching geography using a map of Malaya, cooking, knitting, sewing, looking after a child, reading a book and

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the academic curriculum for girls, possibly because the contents of the articles were often in themselves a form of continuing adult education. Such classes grew in popularity post World War II.

[183] *Bulan Melayu* 1.11/12 (1930), p321.

[184] The other common covers involve either an ornate calligraphic representation of the title or a landscape playing on the double meaning of *bulan*, which means both month and moon. By 1932, *BM* was tending towards landscapes rather than illustrations of people on their covers, and by 1937 covers were generally a photograph of a landscape or people, often not from Malaya. One possible reason would be to avoid showing the female face, although photographs within the publication continued to present images of women and girls.

writing in Arabic script. A typewriter sits on a desk to the side. [185] By issue 1.7, the pictured women are hanging out clothes to dry, writing at a desk, cooking, typing, and gardening. [186] In the following issue, one is making a telephone call, another sealing the letters being typed by the woman at the desk next to hers, a fourth serves a tray of food and in the centre *Bulan Melayu* is being written on a sphere. [187] *BM*'s position on curriculum is thus apparent before the magazine is even opened. [188] All of these variants include both academic and practical aspects of the *PPMJ*'s desired curriculum. For them, schooling should not be intellectual only, but directed to the needs of the everyday life of the pupils, their families and the Malay community as a whole. This practical emphasis has led some scholars to dismiss the girls' curriculum as not sufficiently academic. [189] Nonetheless, the curriculum taught domestic tasks and academic skills through modern technology. In theory at least, pupils could learn to use the telephone and the typewriter. The classroom portrayed on these covers of *BM* was a single sex environment where women both taught and learned.

[185] *Bulan Melayu* 1.4 (1930). See Figure 5.8
[186] ibid, 1.7 (1930). See Figure 5.17.
[187] ibid, 1.8 (1930). See Figure 5.18.
[188] See Chapters 1 and 3.
[189] Eg: Wong and Phang, *The Changing Pattern of Teacher Education in Malaysia*, (1975).

Figure 5.17: Cover of *Bulan Melayu*. [190]

[190] *Bulan Melayu* 1.7 (1930).

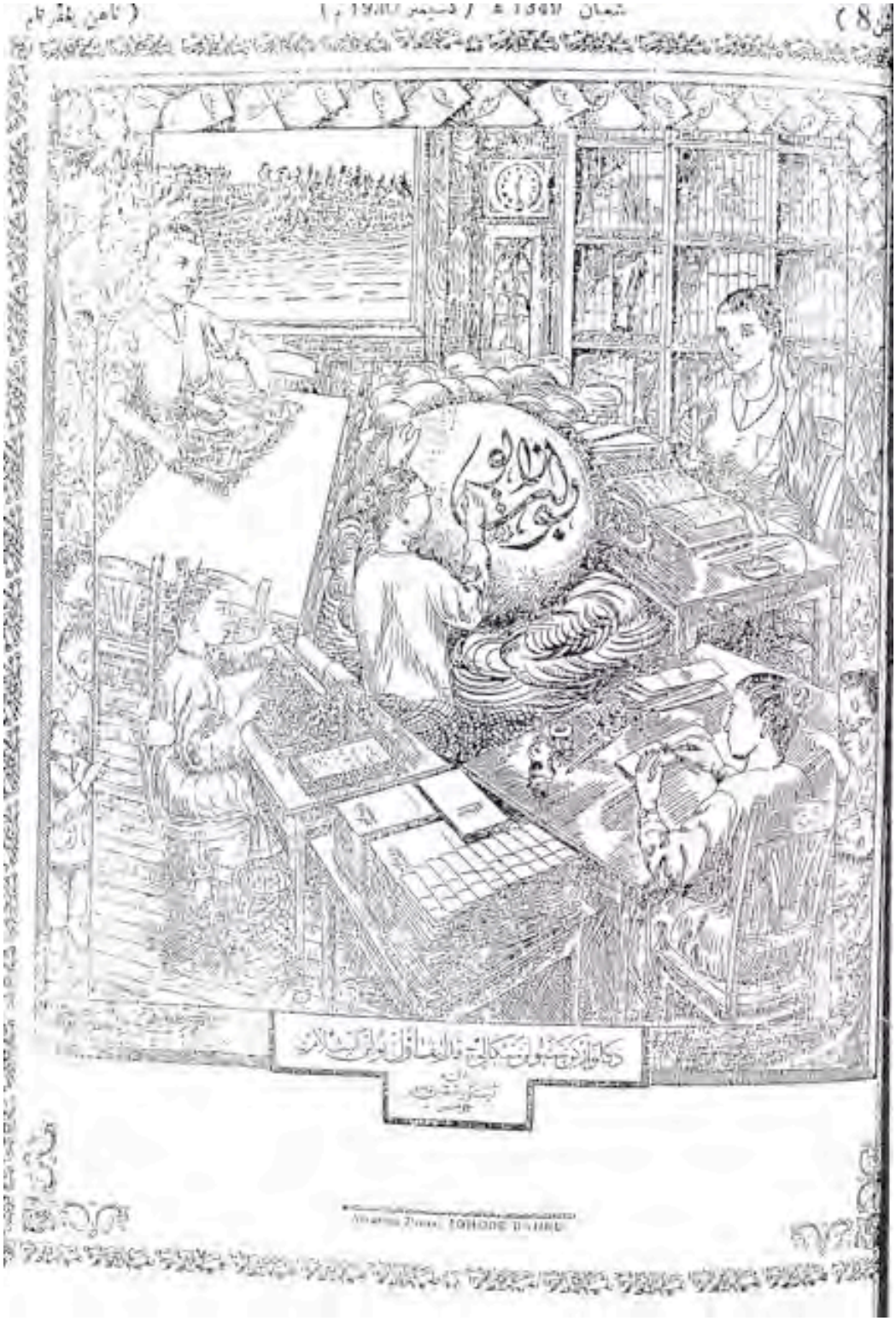

Figure 5.18: Cover of *Bulan Melayu.* [191]

[191] ibid, 1.8 (1930).

Bulan Melayu also published articles on academic subjects, which often applied as much to male children as female. [192] These pieces dealt with general learning principles, or with reading, writing and arithmetic, theoretically taught in the same way across the Malay vernacular schooling system. In these subjects Malay girls were taught from the same basic syllabus, and sat the same exams as boys.[193] The *PPMJ* argued that certain subjects should be taught according to current Western techniques: to teach science properly, students should carry out experiments in a laboratory. [194] However, when "science" was mentioned in the curriculum of Malay vernacular girls' schools during this period, it generally referred to either hygiene or domestic science. Bearing in mind that such schools were primary level, Malay girls and women were still linked by the British and the *PPMJ* alike to the domestic sphere, even when studying science or maths. [195]

One part of the school curriculum which did not appear much in *BM* was sport and physical education. As exercise for Malay girls was still a controversial topic even in girls' schools, due to the vigorous nature of the exercise and the possibility of male observers, it is likely that this absence was a tactical omission, an area which it was prudent not to emphasise. [196] When sport does appear in *BM*, it is part of discussions about a well rounded personality and education. The English proverb "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" is cited in a discussion of gymnastics, and sport appears again in an article on the need for

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[192] They simply use the term *anak-anak* (children) without specifying sex. Eg: *Bulan Melayu* 1.9 and 2.7.
[193] See also Education Reports.
[194] *Bulan Melayu* 1.2 (1930) p48, not attributed.
[195] See Chapter 6 for further detail.
[196] Al-Hadi links this attitude to Malay backwardness, and argues that physical education for both sexes is one of the things which helped Britain to become great. See Chapter 2.

girls to have a hobby. [197] A healthy body would lead to a healthy mind. [198] Sport may have been linked to making Malay girls healthier mothers, hence leading to easier childbirth, but this is not overtly stated. The *PPMJ* also advocated segregation between the sexes in sport, in common with many other educators – during the 1920s males were not allowed to watch girls play games or do physical exercise in convent or government English schools. [199] *BM* did not simply repeat the curriculum verbatim. Some areas were emphasised, others played down, according to their importance and relevance to these Malay women. They were selective and did not accept all British values equally or wholeheartedly.

Bangsa Melayu

The women of the *PPMJ* identified very strongly as modern Malay women and examined the roles such women should play in society. The idea of the *bangsa* was their legitimising discourse. [200] *BM* was referred to as a new voice for the women of Johor, as a bringer of light to overcome the night of Malay ignorance and apathy: "The time has arrived!" [201] The *PPMJ* was prepared to fight when

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[197] *Bulan Melayu* 1.6 and 1.11 respectively. While his name is not mentioned, the latter discussion has all the hallmarks of Cheeseman's work. For another example see *Chorus*, The Journal of the Singapore Teachers Association. (Singapore, Malaya Publishing House Limited) Vol II No 1, August 1935, p23.
[198] See Chapter 6.
[199] Khoo Salma Nastusion, Alison Hayes and Sehra Yeap, Zimbulis *Giving Our Best: The Story of St George's Girls School, Penang, 1885-2010*, (Penang, Areca Books, 2010), p21.
[200] A degree of self interest was also involved in emphasising the need for Malay women to help the *bangsa* to economic and social prominence. Female leaders would benefit from positions of power and wealth.
[201] *Bulan Melayu 1.1* (1930).

necessary, "…filled with one issue, one plan for Malay women. Now we want Malays to awake…" [202] Men and women must work together for the benefit of boys and girls.[203] This call for better education was described as "universal", but it was still targeted at the main audience of *Bulan Melayu*: the women and girls of "*bangsa Melayu*".[204] The *PPMJ* urged women to take advantage of the opportunities for schooling and advancement offered by the British colonial government and to overcome Malay economic disadvantage in the colony. *Bulan Melayu* was a "big sister", who would guide Malay women towards what was right. [205] Within this context, the *PPMJ* wanted to persuade parents to send their girls to school and expressed this aim in any way possible. Explicit comparisons in enrolment figures were made with the Chinese; [206] what it meant to be Malay was defined in opposition to immigrants. [207]

There was some question as to whether these women authors saw themselves primarily as part of the broader Malay *bangsa*, or as specifically women from Johor.[208] The support of Johor's royal family is often referred to, and the sultan was *penaung* (patron) of the *PPMJ*. Articles referred to events in Johor and this is where membership and the magazine were based. However, authors also regularly refer to themselves as "*perempuan Melayu*", "Malay women". Their identity is presented as transcending state borders: when they

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[202] ibid, 1.3 (1930). The rhetoric of these examples is a close match to Zain's writing elsewhere.
[203] ibid, 1.3 (1930), p53.
[204] ibid, 1.1 (1930).
[205] *Bulan Melayu* 1.3 (1930), p53.
[206] ibid, 1.6 p9. See p2 for Census figures.
[207] Even in traditional Malay texts, the term "*Malayu*" only appears when in comparison to a distinct other. Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, (2008), p80.
[208] It should be noted that whether these women thought of themselves as primarily Malay or as women of Johor, there is a definite sense of local identity, rather than just as a part of the global *ummat*.

refer to Malay women, they do not simply mean those of Johor. Malay identity at this point in time was fluid, [209] and only beginning to be associated with a particular colonial geo-body. [210]

Zain also called for Malay women to take their place in the colony's plural society: "Hah! Malay women are not ready to admit defeat! This is the country of the Malays. How many *Rajas* and *Datuks* have we produced? We will do so again. The Malays themselves will make things right. [211] With the aid of Allah, Malays will succeed. As the white people say, "Where there is a will there is a way". [212] Malays required a "consciousness towards Malays in order to start working towards security."[213] Malays must be strong hearted, yet also patient, and the *bangsa* needs to "be alive". [214] The same sentiment appeared in poetry: "My *bangsa* wake up quickly!!! / Our people and our *bangsa* are still in a mess". Their *bangsa* was the same as their homeland, people and place conflated in the writing of the Malay authors published in *BM*.[215]

Overt criticism of the British did not appear in the pages of *BM*. The British were presented more as allies than as enemies at this time, a view shared by many Malay elites. The British offered opportunities to obtain skills, positions of leadership and entry to the wage economy for Malay women within the

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[209] Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, (2008), p13**.**
[210] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, (1994).
[211] *Bulan Melayu* 1.1 (1930) p11.
[212] ibid, 1.2 (1930). Initially this read "When there is a will there is a way", but someone has crossed out "when" and substituted a handwritten "where".
[213] ibid, 1.1 (1930).
[214] Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), pp62, 52-3.
[215] Transliteration is from Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), author Ahmad Rajab:

Bangsaku bangunlah cepat-cepat!!!
Umat dan bangsa kita masih terkapar.
Dijauhkan tuhan mudah-mudahan selamatih
"Bangsa Melayu dan watannya"

British-run schooling system. The women of the *PPMJ* grasped and used these opportunities.

Bulan Melayu linked the importance of the Malay language with Malay identity. *BM* noted that English was popular amongst "*orang besar*", elites and foreigners. [216] Authors argued that Malay was the language of "*rakyat Tanah Melayu*", the people of the Malay lands, whom they increasingly defined as living within the boundaries of British Malaya. *Perempuan Melayu* were of the same stuff as *tanah Melayu*. [217] Malay girls must learn Malay first, they urged, as it was necessary to preserve Malay culture, [218] and their own religion and language. Learning other languages was desirable [219] after fluency had been acquired in Malay. However, *BM* articles also argued Malays had become lazy and illiterate, demonstrating that authors had internalised Western colonial discourse to some degree. [220]

The women of the *PPMJ* urged Malay women to overcome their disadvantage as compared to the Chinese. Throughout her articles, author Bunga Melor repeatedly stated her slogan "*wanita boleh!*", "women can!". [221] Melor was confident that efforts to create an educated class of women could succeed. Their numbers may pale in comparison to Chinese girls, but Malay girls should persevere for the sake of their dignity. Melor criticised the attitude of male

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[216] Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004), p68.
[217] ibid, p19, almost certainly Zain. The *Orang Asli* of Malaya were not mentioned in the context of this discussion.
[218] ibid, p68-9.
[219] Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), p60.
[220] *Bulan Melayu* 1.3 (1930). This has interesting resonances the writings of Mahathir **(**Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Publications, 1970). The name of the article's author is not mentioned.
[221] "Perempuan Melayu Dengan Pelajaran" (Malay women and education"), *BM*, 1.6, translation from Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010).

Malay reformers towards women, and stated that men should not be intimidated by the increasing number of educated women who would enjoy more freedom. Malay men and women had both failed to push for progress for Malay women, she claimed, and thus all Malays had been unable to advance. [222]

The Sultan Idris Training College (SITC) was another influence on the *PPMJ*. The college and its staff were particularly important in the ways that that teacher training made students aware of a Malay world broader than the individual sultanates and imparted an awareness of their common situation as Malays. [223] The presence of a colonial power and large numbers of immigrants, a growing wage economy and an urban/rural divide, as well as the shortcomings of Malay education were some of the issues which fuelled a growing Malay consciousness. [224] A similar situation applied to the women teachers of Johor. In addition, the SITC served as an example, a model of what could be achieved in the training of teachers. The MWTC, established in 1935 to train women teachers, was designed to answer the need for further training. [225]

Conclusion

Bulan Melayu was one of the primary ways that the women of the *PPMJ* expressed their vision for Malay womanhood. They believed that Malay women would serve as the first religious, moral and general educators of their children.

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[222] ibid.
[223] Tahir, *Modern Malay Literary Culture*, (1987) p28.
[224] ibid.
[225] See Chapter 6.

Their goals for Malay girls were 4-5 years of school attendance, where they would learn Malay, arithmetic, geography, hygiene, health, domestic science and handcrafts. Pupils would also study Islam, and wear Malay dress. As women they would continue to marry and raise children, but also be equipped to navigate the ever changing context of rapidly modernising Malaya, and work with Malay men in their mutual quest to advance the interests of the Malay *bangsa*. Malay women and the *PPMJ* would preserve Malay culture against excessive Westernisation, while also discarding aspects of tradition that hampered women's advancement. Malay girls and women would be able to become teachers, and as teachers and authors would be able to participate in the process of defining and creating a modern Malay identity, as well as spreading their ideas, ideology and goals throughout Malaya.

The women of the *PPMJ* sought to be proactive, to take advantage of new opportunities for Malay women within the colonial context. There was a great sense of optimism in their writings. *Bulan Melayu* would provide "Shining rays of light for this world and the next". [226] However, there were also some restrictions on the schooling which would be offered to Malay girls. It would be in Malay vernacular only, in single sex schools, with a focus on women as mothers of the next generation and an emphasis on advancing the Malays at the expense of the other races in Malaya. The women of the *PPMJ* used their class and the British colonial system as ways to achieve positions of power and influence for themselves, even as they aimed to use their prominence to increase opportunities for Malay girls and the Malays as a whole.

[226] Husain, "Peranan Bulan Melayu" (1987), p6.

It is hard to tell exactly how much impact the *PPMJ* had. The organisation provided an opportunity for Malay women to develop and articulate skills and ideas. Their agenda was being met to some degree: through working with British educationalists such as Winstedt and Cheeseman, carrying out their own activities, and founding and teaching in schools, an increasing number of Malay girls attended both secular and religious schools. The women of the *PPMJ* exerted influence on their pupils and students' families, on British administrators and eventually on the founding and operation of the MWTC, the subject of the next chapter. By the time the British returned in 1945, the energies of *PPMJ* women had been subsumed into the nationalist struggle. The women teachers of Johor went on to found, lead and follow the women's movements, the anti-colonial struggle and politics. Their concerns as expressed in *BM* continued to resonate throughout their own lifetimes and beyond.

This chapter has focussed on the agency of the Malay women teachers of the *PPMJ*. Vernacular schooling was the first step in this process. However, in order to form Malay girls into mothers of the Malay race, teachers had to be trained. The Malay Women's Training College was established in Melaka in 1935 to produce qualified Malay female teachers. While the institution demonstrates the collaborative nature of the relationship between British administrators and the Malay middle classes, it also illustrates the limits of Malay women's agency during the colonial period. How these dynamics played out and the results of the college process are the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

The Malay Women's Training College
Institut Perguruan Perempuan Melayu [1]

"May a training college of similar standing as the men's college be built for them…" [2]

The group of women that gathered around Zain developed and broadcast their ideas to the growing readership of *Bulan Melayu* (1930-1941). The Malay Women's Training College, established in 1935 by the colonial Education Department of the Straits Settlements, allowed these women educators to put some of their ideas discussed in *BM* into practice, by working with and through British officials. Zain had been calling for such a training college for girls since the 1920s. Senior British administrators, including the governor of the Straits Settlements, also canvassed the desirability of a women's college for several years. The decision to go ahead was taken in 1933, with 1935 as the target for opening the College. The MWTC was a laboratory for Zain and her colleagues, as it was for British education policy makers. It enrolled Malay girls from all over the Peninsula, and fostered among its graduates a sense that women were part of the process of forming Malay identity and modernising Malay society in the colony. In 1941, when the College was in its sixth year, the Japanese occupying forces closed it and turned the buildings into military barracks. The College re-opened after the war and is still in existence as the *Institut Perguruan Perempuan Melayu (*also known as the *MPPM)*.

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[1] *Instiut Perguruan Perempuan Melayu* is the modern name of the MWTC.
[2] Zain, quoted in Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation,* (ANU), p42.

The Sultan Idris Training College, founded in 1922 for young men, receives far greater attention in the scholarly literature. Historians focus on its role in developing Malay identity. By comparison, there is scant reference in the secondary sources to the MWTC. I seek to redress this balance. I will survey sources, discuss the founding of the College, the staff and the curriculum, and examine the nature of college life. The chapter will conclude by analysing the success of the MWTC.

Sources

Previous studies of Malay education and nationalism have drawn on colonial archives, but have overlooked documents relating to girls' education. The same colonial archives, however, yield considerable information on developments in girls' schooling and women's contribution to the process of forming Malay identity. The most complete sources on girls' schools and the MWTC are held in the British National Archives in Kew. They comprise published *Reports* and *Regulations* of Education Departments in the Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States, Unfederated Malay States, and correspondence between them and the Colonial Office in London. A further important source is the National Archives of Malaysia, especially the Kuala Lumpur and Johor collections. These official documents present a top down view. In the oral history collection of the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) and the archives of the MWTC, housed in Melaka, we can also find a record of student experiences and their subsequent careers. While *Bulan Melayu* was a forum for debating pedagogy, curriculum

and teacher training, it is not a source on the day-to-day workings of the College itself. [3]

There are no published full length academic studies on the MWTC. The most extensive mention is by Salleh in his book *Malay Secular Education and Teacher Training* (1979), where he records its founding and gives some information on the curriculum. [4] Often, when the MWTC is referred to in studies of education in Malaya, it is treated as an inferior institution to the SITC. Manderson's brief overview of the MWTC in her survey of girls' schooling during the colonial period highlights the College's lack of a library. [5] Other sources do not mention it at all. [6] Teacher training is generally discussed as an important step in developing Malay nationalism, and since the new Malay was generally thought of as male, the MWTC falls outside the discussion. Comparisons with the larger, better funded and longer lived SITC should not overshadow the significance of the MWTC and its graduates.

Establishing the MWTC

Prior to the establishment of the MWTC, individual states of the colony had teacher training programs for Malay women. [7] The Straits Settlements brought female teachers to residential centres in Penang, Melaka or Singapore for a few

[3] Shahazana, *Isu-isu Wanita*, (2004) briefly mentions this information being published, but I lack the issue in question.
[4] Salleh, *Malay Secular Education and Teacher Training*, (1979).
[5] The SITC had a well stocked library as well as a translation and publishing house.
[6] For example, Andaya, and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001). See also Chapter 1.
[7] See Chapter 3 for further details.

weeks at a time. [8] The Johor Education Department ran Saturday classes for women teachers in Johor Bahru [9] and Muar. [10] The Federated Malay States ran centralised teacher examinations. [11] Even within the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, teacher training was fragmented and there was a high failure rate amongst students. For example, sixteen teachers sat for examination in 1933, but only four passed. [12] British administrators argued that something must be done to improve the quality of Malay women teachers and hence of the girls' vernacular schools as a whole. Despite the Depression, the Colonial Office granted funds to establish a Malaya-wide female teacher training college.

The MWTC was different from existing teacher training for girls because it was single sex, residential and drew girls from all over Malaya. [13] The colonial authorities were aware that Malay parents would be reluctant to send their teenage daughters far from home. Cecil Clementi (1875-1947), Governor of the Straits Settlements, noted "The idea of taking Malay women into residence in an institution away from their homes is entirely new and the greatest measure of tact and care will be called for in addition to very close supervision." [14] Initially, the Colonial Office had proposed that the cheapest way of establishing the College would be to use the facilities of the SITC, a plan approved by the principal of the latter. However, British policy makers in Malaya itself opposed this option. Frederick Joseph Morten, for example, argued: "I do not think Malay opinion is

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[8] SS *Education Report,* 1933, p10.
[9] Johore *Education Report* ,1931, p17.
[10] ibid,1929.
[11] FMS *Education Report,* 1935, pp61-2.
[12] ibid.
[13] Government primary schools were often co-educational and male teachers conducted some training programs for women teachers.
[14] "It may be necessary therefore to employ two European Supervisors, one of whom will always be on duty." CO273/593/3, Clementi, 15/11/1933.

ready for a coeducational college and I think the thought would be a deterrent to many parents who might be quite willing to let their daughters enter a purely female establishment."[15]

In this respect, the views of British educators in Malaya meshed with those of the Malay women teachers themselves and the broader Malay community. Writing in 1927 in *Lembaran Guru,* Zain had stated:

> "Now the girls of our race have started to come forth to serve their country and their nation. Many of them have become teachers… not only in Johore but in all parts of the peninsula… May a training college of similar standing as the men's college be built for them, one which may even provide greater scope of learning than the men's college at Tanjong Malim or the Malay College Kuala Kangsar. [16]

Zain's pronouncement explicitly links women teachers to an ethos of service to Malays and Malaya, and argues that the training on offer to them should be more extensive than that in the men's college. The MWTC curriculum was not so expansive, but was nonetheless an important means of inculcating Malay women into an ideology which emphasised their importance in modernising Malays, as well as giving Malay girls secondary schooling and training them to become teachers.

It is also significant that the desired college was single sex. Both British policy makers and Malay organisations such as the *PPMJ* regarded a co-

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[15] Morten, 1933, in CO273/593/3. Morten was later the President of Raffles College.

[16] Quoted in Bamahaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation,* (ANU), p42. In the passage quoted, Bamahaj has translated "*bangsa"* to mean nation. I believe that it is too early in the development of Zain's ideas and Malay nationalism in general to think of "*bangsa*" in terms of a broader nation rather than an ethnic community.

educational college as not just counterproductive, but downright dangerous. Trainee teachers were unmarried teenagers, away from the custody of their families. To preserve the Malay custom of separating unrelated, unmarried youth it was imperative that girls should board and study at a single sex school. While a single sex college would also foster full participation of girl students, this was not the argument made by British and Malay interested parties.[17] The College was single sex for moral rather than pedagogical reasons. Students were separated from their families, villages, and the bulk of Malay society, and were further set apart by the wearing of a distinctive uniform.

The city chosen for the MWTC was Melaka. Education Department reports and Colonial Office correspondence indicate that Melaka was considered central, the most "Malay" settlement of the Straits Settlements and accommodation was available at low cost. [18] The British assertion of Melaka's special Malay character does not necessarily hold up under scrutiny. While Melaka was important in Malay history as the site of the Melaka Sultanate (1402-1511), it had been ruled by European powers for over 400 years, had a large Chinese population and significant intermarriage. [19] Without a sultan, Melaka Malays lacked a significant tie to traditional culture. In the colonial export economy, Melaka was home to a new Malay middle class who took on positions of leadership and built links with other Malays, bypassing the

[17] Both emphasised the undesirability of mixing between the sexes. Morten, 1933, in CO273/593/3.
[18] ibid. The Colonial Office decided that the college could not be established near Kuala Lumpur as the FMS Government was not in a position to support it financially.
[19] Andaya, and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), pp96-7.

traditional structures of authority. [20] Melaka was a hub for the Peninsular train system that ran down the West Coast. By 1935 it was part of a network of roads covering the Peninsula, although the city was never to regain its 19th century role as an export hub for tin. In establishing the MWTC in the most "Malay" of the Straits Settlements, British administrators were also situating "Malayness" in a specifically modern context. The College would be a vehicle for contributions by Malay women to the making of the modern Malay.

The College reflects the strong role played by the British in determining opportunities for Malay women. The degree to which Malay women should remain British led was contentious. The College's first principal, Purdom, had a low opinion of the abilities of Malay women, arguing that the British must keep firm control of Malay students at the College lest they slip back into what she regarded as "ignorant Malay ways". [21] Cheeseman, on the other hand, argued that the British role was to provide the tools for Malay women teachers to lead themselves, and he attributed the rising numbers of Malay girls in schools and the improving standards of these schools to the abilities of the Malay women teachers themselves. [22] At the time, male teachers were some of the leaders of the Malay community. MWTC students could likewise become future leaders.

The Malay Women's Training College

The MWTC was the first residential Malaya-wide training institution for Malay female teachers. It opened in 1935, in the old hospital buildings in

[20] Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, (2000), p61.
[21] MWTC Report in SS *Education Report*, 1935.
[22] 1933 *Report on Education in Johore*, CO717/98/5, p9.

Melaka. In 1936 it added a custom built facility at Durian Daun. [23] Initially taking 24 students a year, all single women aged at least 16, the College taught in the Malay language, and focussed on training Malay girls to teach using Malay as the language of instruction. Unlike the SITC, no academic entrance examination was required. Students were generally selected straight from school, either a standard school or one specialising in domestic science. [24] In the College's first year of operation, there were 14 students from the Straits Settlements, 8 from the Federated Malay States, and 2 from Johor. [25]

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[23] Salleh, *Malay Secular Education and Teacher Training*, (1979), p54**.**

[24] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A. In Singapore, they were often selected from *Sekolah Perempuan Rocco*, which ran a two year course on household management and child rearing to be taken in addition to the standard 4-5 years of primary vernacular schooling. The school also taught sewing, history, geography, Malay and English. No religious education was taught. NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 1.

[25] The full breakdown of students was as follows:

	1935-6		1937-8
Penang	6		6
Perak	3	3	
Selangor	2	2	
N. Sembilan	2		2
Melaka	5		3
Johor	2	2	
Singapura	3	2	
Pahang	1		3
Terengganu	-		1
Kelantan	-	1	

Nostalgia MWTC/MPPM, (Muzim MPPM), p13.

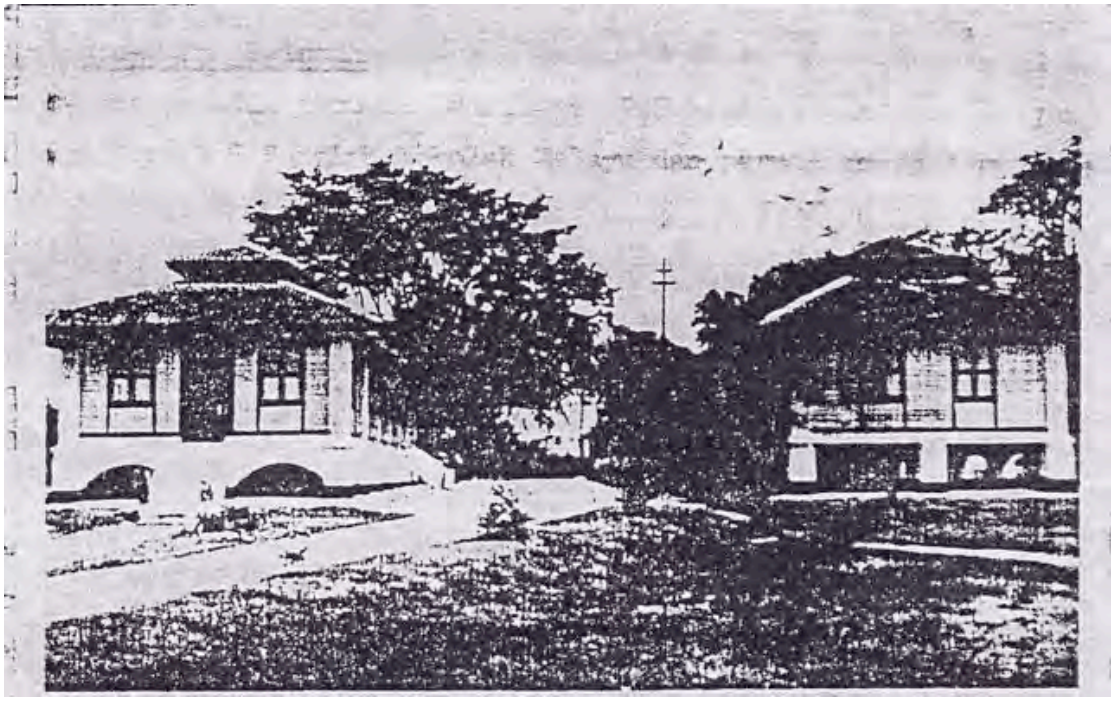

Figure 6.1: The MWTC, 1935. [26]

The College followed a model of single sex schooling where pupils were separated from their families, members of the opposite sex and the outside world.[27] It functioned like a boarding school based on the British system, although it was explicitly for the middle classes rather than elite members of Malay society. [28] The Sultan Idris Training College for male teachers offered a substantial library, tuition in the English language, and emphasised broadening the mind beyond the requirements of the curriculum. In contrast, MWTC students were taught to the requirements of the school syllabus, with an emphasis on practical skills. Nonetheless, the MWTC offered a more comprehensive

[26] Photograph from Arkib IPPM, reproduced with permission of IPGKPM.
[27] MWTC students were allowed to visit Melaka, but only in a uniformed group under the close supervision of College staff, and only to view certain carefully chosen sites, films and events.
[28] Thus I will refer to the teachings of the MWTC as still constituting "schooling" rather than "education".

course of study than state-based teacher training. [29] The College signified a move to a more centralised and formalised teacher training system for women and represented long-term planning for the future of the Education Departments in each state of Malaya.

Pedagogy was an important part of the syllabus at the MWTC. Students were expected to complete a certain number of practical lessons for teachers. At the MWTC, students were taught teacher training subjects by the headmistress, studying theory in first year and adding practice in the second. [30] Practical teacher training consisted of short visits from students attending surrounding schools, and

> "...every student taught and gave six criticism lessons during the year. These lessons showed vitality and even originality on the part of the teacher but the standard of teaching remained only fair owing to a lack of forethought and failure to grasp the child's difficulties." [31]

These lessons were an integral part of the teacher training of students of the MWTC as they were supervised, marked and critiqued by teachers. To facilitate this aspect of the syllabus, a primary school served by teacher trainees opened on the College site at the beginning of 1938, consisting of 95 pupils aged from six to fifteen. [32] From 1939 the MWTC also took over a rural girls' school at Ujung

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[29] See Chapter 3.
[30] This is another important area of the MWTC syllabus where I have been unable to find sufficient information. I have not been able to locate whether a specific textbook was used, and what handbooks I can find are related to recruitment of European teachers rather than information on local ones, eg: German, *Handbook to British Malaya*, (1926-35).
[31] FMS *Education Report 1936*, p115.
[32] *Sejarah MPPM* (Manuscript), p4.

Pasir. [33] Each second year student completed three weeks of practical training each term. During this time, students took complete control of a class [34] Graduate teachers were supervised by the headmistress of the school to which they were sent, continuing their learning process as probationary teachers. Pedagogy was thus an ongoing process.

Students lived together, worked together and completed the same course of study together. They were expected to do chores such as laundry, cleaning and assisting with preparing and serving food, [35] and were almost completely segregated from the outside world to the point that one student remembered entering the College as being like going to jail. [36] To graduate, a student had to pass examination in all subjects and obtain "… a certificate of character, good conduct and diligence from the Principal…" [37] Student fees were paid on the Colonial Estimates for the Straits Settlements, and by their respective governments if students came from the Federated Malay States or Unfederated Malay States.

Theoretically, the cost to their families of educating a daughter to the level required to work as a qualified teacher in the Malay vernacular schools was

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[33] Salleh, *Malay Secular Education and Teacher Training*, (1979), p54.
[34] ibid.
[35] They were divided into three Houses, Blue, Green and Yellow, each with eight pupils. First year students were housed in a wooden building, four to a room, and second year students in pairs, in a newer building, once the College had moved to its custom built premises. The newer buildings were of stone, two storey, with the hall underneath. The Headmistress had her own stone house. NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1991), Reel 4.
[36] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A.
[37] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936), p62. The College year was divided into 2 teaching periods of 18½ weeks and 2 holidays of 6½ weeks. Students were expected to be in residence for the full teaching period.

minimal, [38] a wonderful opportunity for those lucky enough to benefit. Girls attended free vernacular schools with free textbooks and the MWTC was also free. MWTC students were provided with travelling allowances (if from the Straits Settlements); all books and stationery; a mosquito net, blanket, sheets and a change of College uniform of *kain* and *kebaya*, as well as a sports uniform; crockery and cooking utensils; and three dollars a month to cover petty expenses such as soap (a new development in Malaya, linked to the teaching of Western hygiene), and stamps, [39] which were used to send letters to their parents. There is no indication that such letters were compulsory. Such correspondence represented an innovation in family life, as the colonial postal system kept families in contact despite geographic distance.

The families of students selected for the MWTC had responded positively to promotion of girls' schooling by influential opinion makers amongst the colonial administration, Islamic reformers in Malaya and advocates of secular schooling for Malay girls and boys. At this time, most Malay girls were married well before 16, and often had at least one child. As MWTC students, they were not only single, but sent alone to another state to continue their schooling and become a salaried professional. By the 1930s, acceptance of schooling for girls was rising, as demonstrated by the increasing proportion of girls in government primary schools. The families of MWTC students were aligning themselves to

[38] Malay families might lose the contribution of their daughter's labour to the household. However, in terms of cash, parents were discouraged from sending money to their daughters at the College.

[39] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936), p61. Some Assistant Supervisors were also taught at the College. Such probationers were taught as students on the footing of prefects, received $50 a month and, while attached to the College staff, were graded as Junior Malay Assistants. ibid p63.

the new opportunities that British colonialism was providing for the emerging Malay middle classes.

The oral history interviews stored in the National Archives of Singapore show that students who attended the MWTC remember themselves as being very lucky, as well as experiencing significant change in their lives. Many Malay girls were not even sent to school, yet MWTC students trained to become teachers.[40] Jumaiyah remembers the novel experience of catching a steam train. [41] Students were expected to look after their own bag, and to *"berdikari sendiri"* (stand on their own, not relying on anybody else). [42] It was something new to be outside their own state, and in the case of Jumaiyah, to see the thick jungles of Malaya and the *kampung* compounds for the first time. She was surprised to see women wearing the *selendang*, a loose white headscarf, as she regarded Singaporean Malay women as "more modern" since they did not cover their heads. Jumaiyah was sad at leaving her family and cried on the train between Singapore and Tampin, where she had to change trains. Then she decided to be "*tabah hati"* (stout hearted), and was able to complete the journey. [43] Jumaiyah's journey illustrates the importance of new transport technology in Malaya. Rail and road linked all of the Peninsula, making development of an institution like the MWTC possible. Attending the MWTC was an opportunity to be grasped, even though it meant substantial personal upheaval.

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[40] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A. Teaching was a profession held in high regard. NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 1.
[41] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1991), Reel 4. She remembers that the train got soot everywhere and on everything.
[42] ibid.
[43] ibid.

The Malaya-wide nature of the College was also remarked on by students. Such an emphasis was new in formal schooling for Malay girls, although it was already established as part of the curriculum of the SITC. This perspective was also beginning to appear in women's writings of this era, including *Bulan Melayu*. In retrospect, students saw it as historic and "natural".[44] Attending the College was students' first experience of mixing with colleagues from elsewhere in Malaya. [45] The College curriculum studied Malaya as a whole, including the conditions of the country and its people.[46] The MWTC represented a significant change for the Malay women who attended, and the College both reflected and helped to drive the rapid pace of change in Malay society.

Staff regarded the standard of students on their arrival at the college as very poor. The first Report on the college concluded that "Any previous training possessed by the students on admission might be said to consist of some aptitude for careful workmanship in crafts with little or no ability in mental activities." [47]

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[44] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A. Irving and Lomas, the first two Heads of the College referred to this development in their writings. *Muka Surat,* (Muszim M.P.P.M.), p18.

[45] Halimah Ahmad was in Blue, and shared a room with students from Perak, Terengganu, and Kelantan. NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 1. In addition, she had friends from Perlis, Pahang, Johore, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor. ibid, Reel 2.

[46] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A.

[47] "2. All students find great difficulty in maintaining attention in academic subjects – their work being either extremely slow and laboured or thoughtless and hurried, the former caused through nervousness and an ardent desire to please, and the latter due to lack of concentration.
3. Progress in all school subjects can only be achieved by patient training and this is perhaps the most difficult work of the institution."
4. "Industrial subjects such as domestic science, crafts and needlework progress with satisfaction but the rest with only fair improvement. Students may be classified as follows: - four very good; eight good; eight fair and four rather weak."

Most students had only five years of primary schooling, focussed on practical rather than academic subjects. At the MWTC, academic requirements were more rigorous than in schools, and students were expected to master a complex curriculum. Should a student not fulfil the academic requirements of the college, she would be suspended.[48] As the Education Reports contain complaints about the standard of teaching in girls' schools, students may also have lacked expert teachers themselves. [49] The MWTC was forced to draw from a limited pool of candidates for teacher training.

Staff

At the time the college was established, it had four members on the academic staff, including two teachers from England: Miss Purdom (later Mrs Irving), the Headmistress and former Supervisor of Malay Girls' Schools, and Miss M. Lomas who had a Froebel degree and became Head in 1939. [50] There were also two Malay teachers, Fatimah Musa (from Selangor) and Aishah Hanum. [51]

Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education, (1936).

[48] MWTC report in ibid, p118.

[49] My interpretation is based on statements in the Education Reports, for example the SS *Education Report*, 1935.

[50] Other members of the SS Education Department sometimes assisted at the school when teachers were on leave. For instance, Miss D.F. Clark, European Mistress, acted as Headmistress when Lomas was on leave. SS *Education Report*, 1938.

[51] Each teacher taught a particular group of subjects. Initially *ilmu hisab* (maths), *bahasa Melayu* (Malay) and *ilmu alam* (geography) were taught by Fatimah Musa; *tawrikh* (history) and *pelajaran* (education, likely to have been pedagogy lessons) by Lomas; and *agama* (religion), *sains* (science, probably domestic science) and *pelajaran tanggan* (handcrafts) by Aishah. NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 2. This division of subjects is not exhaustive. It is likely that other subjects taught at the MWTC were grouped under these broad headings.

Malay teachers at the MWTC were under a British Principal and Deputy, although it is likely that this situation was related to the formal qualifications, skills and connections of these women as well as the specifically colonial context of Malaya. [52] Within the college, Malay women occupied positions of authority. The Malay women teachers of the MWTC were role models to attending students, an embodiment of what Malay women could accomplish through schooling. In addition to the academic staff, there was a Malay woman servant, a cook and house supervisor, and an assistant cook. Female staff lived in at the college. [53] MWTC students thus lived in a world of women.

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[52] The backgrounds of the MWTC teachers are of some interest. As Purdom, Principal of the MWTC, does not appear in the Malayan Civil List, it is difficult to trace the details of her career. She was only Principal by appointment, after her earlier retirement from the Education Department. The Principal at the College was paid $600 per month. This was equal to that paid to the Principal of the Raffles Girls' School and Pearl's Hill School, both in Singapore, and St George's Girls' School, Penang. *The Malayan Civil List 1936*, (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1936) p29. The Principal of the SITC was paid between $950-1000 and the Head of the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar $900 per month. The backgrounds of the Malay teachers at the College are also difficult to find as the civil lists only include European staff. However, the career of Lomas, the second (mostly Acting) Principal, can be traced. Lomas was born June 28, 1903, and attended the Wyggeston Grammar School for Girls in Leicester and the Froebel Training College in Bedford. Froebel emphasised child-centred learning and the idea that the education of the very young would not only influence their later achievements, but the health and development of society as a whole. Peter Weston, *Frederich Froebel: His Life, Times and Significance*, (London: Rockhampton Institute, 2000 2nd Edition). Lomas was classed as a European Mistress, employed by the Federated Malay States, and paid $400 a month. *The Malayan Civil List 1936*. She first came to Malaya in 1931, as Assistant Mistress at the Government English School in Kuala Pilah. She was also listed as fluent in Malay and at the end of 1934 was appointed Assistant Supervisor, Malay Women Teachers' Training College. By 1937 she was Acting Principal.

[53] *Nostalgia MWTC/MPPM*, (Muzim MPPM), p14**;** *Sejarah MPPM*, (Manuscript, Muzim MPPM), p3. Male staff also worked at the College, comprising 2 gardeners and a driver for the Headmistress's car.

The MWTC Syllabus

The syllabus of the MWTC is an important source for a historian studying vernacular schooling for Malay girls in the 1930s. It provides information on what was taught in Malay vernacular schools, and how such information was to be taught. The syllabus was designed by the British but to a limited degree is also reflective of the demands of Malay women. It did not include much information on Islam or the hard sciences. The syllabus also standardised teaching across the Peninsula, as graduates would teach state curricula from Standard I to V. It was a syllabus developed for Malay girls who were expected to become wives and mothers, as well as teachers who would help produce more knowledgeable girls.

Women's Roles: Wives and Mothers

The women of the MWTC did not see themselves only as future teachers. In line with expectations from both the British and Malay communities, they regarded the roles of Malay women as wives and mothers as of primary importance, both in their own lives and those of their students. Jumaiyah remembers that as MWTC students were trained in domestic science and handcrafts, they expected to find married life easier, and would already know how to look after a husband, a home and children more efficiently.[54] There was no expectation of conflict between these roles. [55] Graduates would have greater opportunities for a career than the bulk of the Malay population, but would also experience similar life events to many of their pupils. This emphasis on motherhood and making a good

[54] ibid.
[55] See Case Studies section at the end of this chapter for more discussion on the family lives of MWTC graduates.

wife is reflected in the curriculum, particularly in the subject of Domestic Science.

Domestic Science, Health, Hygiene, and Child Welfare

British administrators and the Malay women teachers regarded the teaching of domestic science to Malay girls as extremely important, although the syllabus itself was written by British educators. Classes in the subject aimed to equip Malay girls who attended vernacular schools for their likely role in society and focussed on skills including hygiene, cooking, nutrition and infant care. In this respect the college followed the lead of girls' schools in Britain. [56] This section of the syllabus did not always refer explicitly to the requirements of the school syllabi, in contrast with most subjects taught at the MWTC

In Britain, the life expectancy of the working classes rose to match that of the middle classes with the provision of sewerage and running water in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Malaya, life expectancy of the middle classes, and eventually rural Malays as well also rose as such services were implemented, along with increased access to medical care. [57] The teaching of domestic science further sought to replace native medicine and "superstition" with Western medical practices, an emphasis reflected in the syllabus itself.

In Malaya during the early 20th century, the teaching of domestic science had a profound urgency. Infant mortality at the time stood at around 250 in every

[56] An interesting further study would be to look in detail at how much of the Domestic Science curriculum across Malaya is related to working class schooling in Britain, and how much to the colonial context in particular. However, this is not the focus of this thesis.
[57] Manderson, *Sickness and the State*, (1996), p72.

1,000 births. [58] Information about health and hygiene could mean the difference between life and death for mother and child. Diseases such as yaws were endemic. For both British and Malay educators, the teaching of domestic science was central to the rationale for girls' schooling, impacting as it did on women's roles as mothers and responsibility for child welfare. Medical education was a concrete way of improving the lives and life expectancy of Malays. For colonial policy makers, improving public health demonstrated an Empire that served and raised up its subject peoples**.** No Malay sultan had taken on such a responsibility, which was now seen as a duty of municipal governments, first in Britain and then in the colonies. Including domestic science in the curriculum of girls' schools legitimised formal schooling for girls. The expansion of teaching domestic science in schools was also accelerated by the specifically trained graduates of the MWTC [59]

Domestic Science in the Syllabus

Domestic science in Malayan syllabi was taught according to the latest developments in Western medical and scientific knowledge. The teaching of hygiene and health had gendered dimensions. [60] The male students of the SITC had lessons on personal hygiene, food and common diseases.[61] They also studied basic anatomy and physiology, air quality and respiration, healthful foods,

[58] ibid, p204.
[59] ibid, p224.
[60] Attar notes that in Britain girls were taught human physiology, and the composition and nutritive content of food. Boys were taught physical geography, animal physiology, botany and mathematics. Attar, Wasting Girls' Time, (1990), p100. Malaya followed similar divisions.
[61] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education,* (1936), p49.

housing (ideal site and internal arrangements) and water in relation to health. The syllabus also dealt with physical education and with dangerous substances and behaviours related to intoxicants and "tobacca". [62] In their final year, students learned First Aid and studied causes and types of diseases, emphasising tropical diseases. [63]

The MWTC syllabus had a different focus. Students studied basic anatomy and had lessons linked to domestic science, such as personal cleanliness ("Hair, Teeth, Nails, Clothes"). [64] Their studies of the digestive system were presented in terms of food – types, methods of cooking, beverages ("their importance or danger") and invalid cooking. [65] Whether they used cutlery to eat at school, or fingers to preserve tradition, is not recorded. By their second year, MWTC students studied home nursing and child welfare as a part of the Hygiene course. Home nursing covered the sick room and suitable diet and the treatment of indigestion, fever, constipation, toothache and diarrhoea. Female students, as future wives and mothers, were taught how to take and chart temperature, respiration and pulse. They also studied household and native medicines; treatment for accidents; communal diseases; animal parasites and their relationship to disease, and treatment.[66] There is no specific mention of lice, even though Malay teachers regularly had to deal with outbreaks of head lice. [67]

The domestic science curriculum at the MWTC included laundry, both theory and practice, followed by a section on household cleaning. Topics

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[62] ibid, p50.
[63] ibid.
[64] ibid, p76.
[65] ibid, p77. SITC men studied types of food, but the MWTC women were also taught to prepare and cook it.
[66] ibid.
[67] Interview with Fadzilah Amin (19/11/07).

included the cleaning of food utensils, "The House" ("its cleaning and decoration, white-washing, cooling and lighting, and ventilation"), the Kitchen, the Sleeping Apartment, the Verandah, House Surroundings, and Personal Cleanliness (hair, teeth, bathing, daily habits, clothes). [68] Students also completed a unit on heat, particularly how it related to cooking. Second year students studied marketing and accounts, how to buy various foodstuffs, cleaning and cooking, and the planning of meals. In their final term, students learned to cook curries, vegetables, cakes and sweetmeats, how to make fruit drinks and other beverages, and studied "Invalid Cookery". [69] Previously, such skills would have been learned from family members. Now girls learned from books and a syllabus under supervision of a schoolteacher. In addition to cooking Malay foods they learned recipes for British meals and skills for different social and household situations. The College thus acted to modify Malay women's ideas and habits with regard to child rearing and family life. These modifications were desired by the women of the *PPMJ*, British administrators and Islamic Modernists including al-Hadi, as they would lead to healthier Malay children, and thus benefit Malay society as a whole.

With regard to child welfare, the MWTC had a detailed syllabus:

"1. Principal causes of infant mortality in Malaya.

2. Conditions necessary for health – fresh air, cleanliness, sleep and exercise.

3. Importance of milk, Comparison of human, tin and cow's milk.

4. Pre-natal care of mother.

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[68] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936), p72.
[69] ibid, p73.

5. Importance of skilled attention and cleanliness at birth.

6. Correct feeding. Food up to 5 years.

7. Washing, Weighing and charting weight of baby.

8. Clothing suitable for cool and hot climates. Danger of chills.

9. Training of infant in the right physical habits.

10. Ailments of small children and how to treat them." [70]

Changing existing Malay practices was the focus of this section of the syllabus. For example, infant feeding would now be focussed on the importance of milk, rather than early weaning onto foods such as mashed banana. [71] The syllabus presented Western medicine as the answer for childhood illness, and the first port of call for mothers, an emphasis that would be passed on to the girls taught by MWTC graduates. Domestic Science also encouraged a wider association between education, the role of women, family health and education services. [72]

Whether such hygiene lessons were fully implemented is another matter. Irving, the second headmistress of the College, stated that MWTC students were unable to follow the program regarding health and hygiene on their own. She argued that this state of affairs was not necessarily related to any inherent failing due to being Malay, but more related to their Malay upbringing:

"III. – Hygiene

1. The personal cleanliness of the students is far from satisfactory but in the main they now conform to the ordinary laws of hygiene, a result which was beyond anything that might be estimated during the first term.

[70] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936).
[71] References to traditional weaning practices are from Adibah Amin, *This End of the Rainbow*, (The Phoenix Press, 2006).
[72] Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, (2000), p225.

2. Much has been achieved by strict supervision and individual attention, but unless this is maintained with the same firmness and regularity throughout the whole… training, there can be no hope of the women continuing these cleanly habits in their kampongs, where the conditions are not so convenient as in the College." [73]

Village houses at this time lacked running water, unlike the city environment in which the College was situated. Maintaining, let alone teaching, such a regimen on their return to a village would have been difficult for MWTC graduates. [74] Nonetheless, the information imparted through the MWTC domestic science syllabus had the potential to significantly improve the health and life expectancy of Malays.

Handcrafts

Malay girls attending vernacular schools were taught a variety of handcrafts, centred on caring for home and family. MWTC women studied needlework, lace making (whether this was European-style lace or not is unclear), weaving, and plaiting baskets and mats from *mengkuang* (pandanus/screwpine leaves) and

[73] MWTC report in SS *Education Report 1935*, p118.

[74] According to Irving, the situation improved in the following years:

> "In matters of personal hygiene the very strictest supervision was still required: the example of the second year students was of more effect than much precept. In connection with hygiene lectures, second year students visited the Malacca Child Welfare Clinic in groups of three twice weekly; they observed the handling and care of babies and were enthusiastic to help."

SS/*FMS Education Report 1938*, p87.

rotan (rattan/cane). [75] These skills were important for family life, and also for supplementing household income. In contrast, the men of the SITC were taught skills including school gardening and rural husbandry as well as basketry, and selected students studied book binding, carpentry, net making and pottery. [76] The subjects taught at both institutions illustrate the rural bias of British administrators, as well as the fact that a majority of Malays still lived in rural areas. The emphasis on gendered skill divisions also continued into the way that arithmetic was taught at the MWTC

Arithmetic

Women's anticipated roles in the home were also linked to the way in which arithmetic was taught at the MWTC. Official British guidelines were that the curriculum for Malay girls' schools should "follow the curriculum of the Boys' Schools, except that less is expected of the girls in Arithmetic and Geography",[77] despite the fact that Malay women traditionally worked as market traders. Arithmetic was presented in the MWTC syllabus in a much more simplified and "practical" form than in the men's. The curriculum for MWTC students included making lists for market, long multiplication and estimating the materials required for needlework. When teaching Standard IV the primary focus was:

> "Recapitulation and extension of previous work with application to money, shopping lists, household accounts, railway and bus fares. Length: – Estimation for material, land measurement. Time: - Railway

[75] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936), pp79-81.
[76] ibid, pp51-4.
[77] ibid, p21.

> time-table, Malay and English Calendars. Weight and capacity: - Household supplies, buying of gold and silver ornaments." [78]

In the section on teaching Standard V, school records and home and school accounts featured, [79] as students were taught how to manage a household and a school. The MWTC curriculum continued to emphasise some existing roles of women, such as household supply, and the buying of jewellery, fabrics and land. On the other hand, it also emphasised the importance of functioning in a world of new mechanised transport governed by the English calendar, time calculation and timetables. The syllabus conceived of Malay women as homemakers and teachers rather than as petty traders, and thus focussed on teaching students home management, school administration and pedagogy.

Physical Activity

A more controversial inclusion in the MWTC curriculum was physical education, which had not been taught to Malay girls prior to inclusion in school curricula. MWTC women played games including badminton, tenniquoit and netball and learned to swim. [80] Students also learned country dancing, practised drill and rhythm, "and there was marked improvement in consequence in the grace and agility of the senior girls."[81] Despite resistance amongst some sections of the Malay community to girls exercising in public and to mixed sports, physical education was seen as extremely important by both British educators

[78] ibid, p69.
[79] ibid.
[80] ibid, p78.
[81] SS/FMS *Education Report*, 1938, p88.

and Islamic modernists. [82] Both groups made an explicit link between a healthy body and a healthy mind, and the importance of maternal health in raising healthy Malay children. The single sex nature of the MWTC also removed an additional objection to sport: inappropriate mingling of the sexes. [83]

MWTC students were given training in leading Guide and Brownie groups as part of the syllabus. Guiding in Malaya began unofficially in 1916 in Kuala Lumpur, and was officially registered in 1917, as a part of the movement in India. [84] Overall growth of the movement was slow, and during the Japanese

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[82] See Chapters 2 and 3.

[83] In comparison, the men of the SITC were taught games including Association Football, Hockey, Volleyball, Athletic Sports, *Sepak Raga* and rounders, as well as scouts, swimming, physical drill and military drill once a week. *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936), pp50-51.

[84] The Girl Guides were formally constituted in Britain in 1909, and were an offshoot of the Boy Scouts organisation. An emphasis on a separate identity and different roles and skills meant participants were called "Girl Guides" rather than the original "Girl Scouts". Initially, Guiding was attacked by critics as foolish or worse, as outdoor pursuits were not yet regarded as appropriate for the well-bred girl. Guiding emphasised its role in the training of better citizens, though it also seemed to aim at a rather subversive (for the time) degree of female self-sufficiency. A girl progressing through the movement would be a Brownie, then a Guide, then a guider (a leader) or a Ranger, or if seen as a future leader she could become a Cadet. Baden Powell's aims included raising girls to be appropriate companions for the kind of young men he felt the country needed. For "…girls don't want to be dolls, they have an ambition above that; and also men do not desire to have dolls as their wives – they want companions." (Robert Baden-Powell, *Girl Guiding: A Handbook for Guidelets, Guides, Senior Guides and Guiders*, (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1918). Girls should also contribute to national life in time of war and have skills to look after their families as well as playing a role in service to the nation (Britain). (ibid.) Guides should teach practical skills and civics, for the defence of an imagined nation/empire. The same year, 1909, a separate Singapore troop was registered in London. The Malayan Guides wore khaki, which was easy to acquire in wartime, and the same uniform as Indian Guides, while the Singapore Guides wore navy blue. By 1921 all Malayan and Singaporean Guides wore khaki dresses with large "Port Dickson" hats, and brown shoes and stockings. In 1951 the Guides changed to a blue uniform, though the Brownies remained in brown. By 1919 the movement had spread from Kuala Lumpur to Penang, where the first Malayan Cadet Company (1923) and Ranger Company (1924) were founded. 1924 also saw the first company in Negri Sembilan, and 1925 in Melaka. By 1928 the S.S. and

Occupation Guiding literature, badges and uniforms had to be hidden as such a British organisation did not fit Japanese plans for the region. The stated aim of Guiding was to spread "…goodwill, self-reliance, courtesy, kindness and service." [85] Malayan Guides and Brownies often wore the same uniform, regardless of which language was used for instruction. [86] On the other hand, ethnic differences were represented in the uniforms of the Guiders (adult leaders). An English-style uniform was worn by Europeans and Chinese, [87] while Indian Guiders wore a uniform sari and Malay women a sarong and kebaya. [88] Guides attended the same training, the same camps, completed the same badges and took the same oath. In theory, unlike the segregated school systems, here was an opportunity for girls of these different groups to mix together across ethnic boundaries. However, in practice Guides were generally divided depending on the language they spoke. [89]

F.M.S. governments paid an annual grant for the support and expansion of the movement throughout the Peninsula. This grant was scaled back during the Depression. Guiding was originally conducted in English. The first vernacular company was founded in 1930, a Malay Brownies group formed at the Malay Girls School, Kampong Baru, Kuala Lumpur. Chinese vernacular Guiding began in 1937 and Indian in 1937, both in Kuala Lumpur. Reports and correspondence tended to be in English, though official publications also included sections in Malay. The Girl Guides, *Report on Malaya 1931*, (Kuala Lumpur, the Caxton Press, 1931). Until the 1960s, reports to London on the Singapore and Malayan guide companies were combined under the heading of "Malaya".

[85] *"Pemandu Perempuan Malaysia" Annual Report of the Girl Guides Association Malaysia*, 1965.

[86] Malay girls did not always wear the standard uniform: see Figure 6.2.

[87] No sources state why Chinese Guiders did not wear a distinctive style of uniform. Perhaps many had come through the Missionary schools and were used to Western-style dress, the adoption of which could have been a way to appear explicitly modern.

[88] See Figure 6.3.

[89] The response of Islamic leaders to guiding tended to relate more to whether women were undertaking gender appropriate activities in appropriate dress. Hooker, *Indonesian Islam*, 2003 pp136-7. The MWTC was under British control, and Guiding was a British activity.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 6.2: Girl Guides in Johor, 1930s. [90]

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 6.3: Malayan Guiders. [91]

Guiding, like Scouting, was closely linked to the imperialist project for Britain and its colonies. In Britain, both organisations aimed to produce young men and women fit for service to the Empire. As the two movements spread

[90] Photograph from the archives of Girl Guiding UK, removed for copyright reasons.
[91] Photograph from the archives of Girl Guiding UK, removed for copyright reasons.

through British dominions, organisers hoped that the movements would similarly produce leaders amongst the colonised. Some Guiding officials saw the relationship in explicit terms of benefits bestowed upon the natives. One wrote, for example: "Our rule was humane and impartial, respecting the customs, beliefs and feelings of the many different races. Splendid progress was made…"[92] Guiding thus helped to inculcate a sense of Malaya as part of the British Empire in the minds of trainee leaders at the MWTC. The syllabus as a whole also helped to impart a sense of a distinct Malay identity among MWTC students.

Malay Identity

The contents of the MWTC syllabus went beyond teaching girls skills such as childcare, hygiene, handcrafts, arithmetic and sport. History, language, literature and geography all contributed to building a sense of Malay identity amongst students. The syllabus emphasised similarities between Malays living in different sultanates, and the idea that the Malays as the native people of the Peninsula were owed a special degree of pre-eminence in their dealings with the British and more recent immigrant ethnic groups. The Malaya-wide emphasis at the SITC and MWTC promoted nation building. However, the development of a new concept of Malay identity during the 1930s should not be seen as something imposed by the British. A discourse on identity was also developed and disseminated by Malays, male and female, teachers, journalists and religious

[92] Unnamed official, personal recollection held in archives of Girl Guiding UK.

reformers, in newspapers and pamphlets, school, and youth clubs. [93] The emerging geo-body of Malaya fostered a concept of national identity, rather than reflecting an already existent polity.

Such a conceptualisation of a unified Malaya and a distinctive Malay ethnic group began with the teaching of history. The first syllabus entry at the MWTC was History, primarily Malayan history, and at the SITC "Malay Language, Literature and History". The SITC drew on a number of Malay texts to teach this subject. The history text used was *Sejarah 'Alam Melayu*, with a stated assumption in the curriculum that all students had already read and were familiar with *Hikayat Abdullah*. [94] On the other hand, MWTC students were taught according to the requirement of the school syllabus, beginning with "Dramatic Stories from Malay History", followed by "Stories from World History to illustrate man's progress…" and "…the life stories of famous men in Asia…". [95] In their second year, MWTC students studied Malayan history. Topics and time periods included "Primitive Tribes" to the "Kings of Malacca", and concluded with "How the Europeans first came to Malacca", "How the British became the rulers of The Straits Settlements", "How the Federated Malay States are formed" and individual sections on each of the Unfederated Malay

[93] Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, (2000).
[94] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936), p41. *Sejarah 'Alam Melayu* is a series of textbooks published from 1925 by Abdul Hadi bin Haji Hasan, a graduate of the Melaka Teacher Training College (for male teachers). *Hikayat Abdullah* is the autobiography of Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, completed in 1843, in which the author discusses his time in Singapore and Melaka and interactions with British officials including Stamford Raffles and other topics. The book was first published in *rumi* script by the Methodist missionary Shellabear in 1915.
[95] ibid, p64.

States, as well as Labuan and Brunei. [96] The syllabus defined Malaya as a single country, and covered the history of each state. History and literature were taught in Malay. [97] Students learned about other countries through the geography syllabus, which took a "people and products" approach to "Life and Work in Other Lands", eg: "India – Irrigation and Growing of Crops… New Zealand… A Sheep Farm… U.S.A. – City of New York… Wales – A Coal Mine". [98]

Geography also helped to create an understanding of Malaya as a territorially defined space and imparted a sense of Malaya in a world of nation states. The MWTC syllabus first approached geography in terms of animals from different areas (elephant, tiger, camel, sheep, whale, kangaroo, etc). The syllabus then moved on to the peoples of Malaya and their work in classic plural society terms: "The Rice Planters (Malay), The Rubber Tappers (Tamil), The Tin Miners (Chinese)". [99] The MWTC syllabus reflected the labour recruitment systems which had generated economically differentiated ethnic groups in Malaya by the 1930s. The syllabus thus inculcated teachers and pupils alike into particular definitions of Malaya and Malays, contributing to a rise in a sense of "Malayness" and Malaya. [100]

An emphasis on Malay language at the MWTC was also another way of encouraging an ethnic Malay, rather than a multi-ethnic Malayan, identity. Unlike at the SITC, MWTC students were not taught English for a variety of

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[96] ibid, p64-5.
[97] ibid, p71.
[98] ibid.
[99] ibid, p70.
[100] This ethnic identification was shared by students even if they were relatively recent immigrants: Halinah's father was born in Hong Kong, her paternal grandfather was Bugis, and her mother Javanese. NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 1.

reasons. Malay, not English was the language of instruction in the primary vernacular schools, and subjects requiring competence in English, such as science, were not taught to MWTC women in depth. A Malay translation bureau and publishing house at the SITC supplied basic school books in Malay. The short education given to women students was insufficient to produce literacy in English. The limited goal of the College – training Malay women to teach, focussing on domestic science and childcare – did not call for English language study. Nevertheless, the lack of English limited a graduate's career options. [101] In addition, both the Malay women teachers and British administrators gave priority to teaching Malay girls in their own language, religion and culture first, which had the effect of restricting graduates' ability to function in the new urban society of the colony.

Both *rumi* and *jawi* scripts were taught at the MWTC [102] Teaching in only *rumi* may have been more practical, as it was cheaper to print books in Latin script. However, *jawi* could not be removed from the syllabus while it still played an important role in the Unfederated Malay States. The script served as a link to Malay traditions and religion. At the same time, *jawi* was being adapted to function in the modern world of printed matter through standardised punctuation, sentence structure and paragraphs, and transliteration of new vocabulary. In addition, religious books were written and printed in *jawi* script.

[101] See Chapters 2 and 3.
[102] See Chapter 1.

Religious Instruction

Religious instruction was regarded by the Malay women teachers as an essential part of schooling. They argued that knowledge of the Quran was needed for raising children and that women with modern educations should be responsible for teaching Islam to Malay girls. The SITC syllabus included a specific section on religious instruction, while the MWTC did not. The SITC men studied scholastic and dogmatic theology, rules regarding daily prayers, fasting, *zakat*, and the hajj, as well as practice in reading the Quran and a history of Islam. In their second year they moved onto Quran phonetics, laws relating to buying and selling, Islamic property law and the "moral duties of man as a member of Society". In their final year, they studied Islamic law relating to marriage, divorce and the maintenance of wife and children, Islamic law on common crimes, the administering of justice by a "Kadzi" and religious holy days. [103] Religious schooling for both boys and girls began to take place in schools and colleges, rather than mosques, and control increasingly rested with teachers in the vernacular schools, whether male or female, rather than a local *alim* or *kadzi*.

It is a safe assumption that religious instruction at the MWTC was not to the same level as the SITC, if for no other reason than the course of study was shorter. The lack of a specific religious curriculum at the MWTC raises the possibility of a greater degree of autonomy available to the women who taught the subject than was available to the male teachers of the SITC. Thus the Malay women teachers' commitment to girls' right to schooling and to women as leaders of other women could also have been imparted to students through religious education. The absence of a religion syllabus also placed control for

[103] *Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education*, (1936), pp54-5.

religious instruction firmly within the single sex world of the MWTC, and thus outside the control of the male *ulama* in broader Malay society. Religious teaching in girls' vernacular schools thus could conceivably impart a female interpretation of the Quran, renew definitions of Arabic terms and concepts and generate new translations. However, I do not have enough evidence at this time to make conclusions about such an important area, especially in view of the fact that religion could be absent from the MWTC syllabus for no other reason than graduates were not sufficiently qualified to teach theology. The sex segregation, which marked religious teaching in the MWTC also extended throughout the rest of life at the College.

College Life and Discipline

The importance of discipline and a strictly controlled college life at the MWTC was twofold. On the one hand, strict sexual segregation served to make the College more acceptable to Malay parents. On the other, removing students from their existing life and environment helped to re-socialise them in the ethos of the College. Students were separated from their families and outside friends, as well as almost all males. Irving stated: "I anticipate no trouble with regard to students' conduct unless it be through correspondence with their own kampong friends or relatives. There has been no serious evidence of this up to date." [104] Eventually these students would go to villages, towns and cities to teach, but for now the influence of home was seen as unnecessary and even unhealthy.

[104] ibid, p73.

Discipline in the College was explicitly linked to the experiences that students would have had in their homes, as compared to the College.

> "During the first term the novelty of residential life was sufficient to keep individual interests within the daily routine of the centre; but the students have passed this stage and now show signs of adolescent changes and developments in accordance with the demands of their age which is well beyond the usual time for marriage among Malays." [105]

In view of their status as unmarried Malay girls, they were not allowed to write to or to receive letters from boys and men. Only family communications were allowed and the Principal acted as a censor: all incoming and outgoing letters had to go through her.[106]

Every minute of every day at the MWTC was planned, closely managed and supervised in an extremely tight schedule. [107] Teaching periods were three

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[105] ibid.
[106] NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 2.
[107] The routine of life at the MWTC was very strict:

"6-00	Rising Bell.
6-30 – 7-00	Dressing and Airing of Beds.
7-00 – 7-45	Gardening; Housework; Cooking; Laundry (4 divisions).
7-45 – 8-15	Bath and Dressing.
8-15	Coffee and Bread.
9-00 – 11-15	Three Periods (*Friday: Free).*
11-15 – 11-30	Interval (*Friday: 12-00 to 12-30: Religious Instruction).*
11-30 – 1-00	Two Periods.
1-15 – 1-45	Lunch.
1-45 – 3-45	Ironing Clothes: Laundry Section. Crafts: other sections.
3-45	Tea.
4-00 – 5-15	Preparation.
5-15 – 6-15	Games and Drill: Badminton, Tenniquoit or Basket-ball – 3 evenings. Drill and Rhythm – 3 evenings. Brownies – 1 evening. (*Friday: Inter-school matches*).
6-15 – 6-30	Bath.
6-30	Prayers.

quarters of an hour each, other than Malay and religion, which each ran for one hour. A gong was sounded as the signal to move between activities. [108] Students mixed only with each other and their teachers, doing the same activities every week. The schedule also reveals that the organisation of the MWTC was closer to a secondary boarding school than a tertiary institution.

Students' movements outside the College were restricted. They were only permitted to leave the College grounds on a Friday (to visit Melaka sites in a group with at least two teachers), and sometimes to visit family. They were not permitted to leave the grounds on their own. [109] If outside the College, for instance visiting the cinema, they had to be polite and orderly. Shopping was rarely allowed, and when the students visited a Melaka festival involving dancing and singing they did not take part. [110] Graduate Jumaiyah remembers that they could hardly even look left or right when outside. [111] In the first MWTC report, administrators state that the conduct of students outside the College was all that could be desired without strict rules of obedience. "A few words of guidance from the European-in-charge is all that is required." [112]

While MWTC visits to Melaka required strict discipline, staff regarded them as essential. The prime purpose of these visits was educational: "During the year on Fridays students visited places of historic interest in Malacca, were allowed access to the Post Office, an Aerated Water Factory, etc., and received

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7-00 – 8-00	Supper and Washing of Dishes.
8-00 – 9-00	Crafts and Indoor Games.
9-30	Lights out."

Regulations for Malay Vernacular Education, (1936), p62.

[108] NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 2.

[109] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A.

[110] NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 2.

[111] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1991), Reel 4.

[112] MWTC report in SS *Education Report* 1935, p119.

instruction during these visits; they also witnessed many films suitably chosen."[113] The importance of the outings continued throughout the 1930s:

> "Weekly walks to places of interest were arranged and there were one or two outings (to girls' schools, to the Picture House, to the All-Malayan Guides Camp, etc) that proved popular. These formed part of the effort, already mentioned in the preceding sections of this report, to widen the horizon, to extend the experience and to broaden the minds of the students, whose environment before they entered the College was very restricted." [114]

These trips gave students a glimpse of the modern city and different ways of life, altered by modernisation and new technology.

Students were further set apart from the rest of Melaka society by the requirement to wear the College uniform. Within the College, this was a *baju* and long trousers, as well as a sports uniform when required. [115] Outside, they wore a white *kebaya*, gold *kain songket* (an expensive and high status item of clothing) and a blue hat. [116] Visually and mentally, they were set apart from the other

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[113] SS *Education Report*, 1935, p120. At this time it was unusual for women to go to the mosque on Fridays.
[114] SS/FMS *Education Report*, 1938, p88.
[115] See Figure 5.4. I have been unable to find any images or descriptions of the MWTC sports uniform. It was likely to have been in Western style.
[116] The type of hat is not stated, and students are bare headed in photographs. NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 2. The uniform did not include covering the hair, despite the fact that women such as Zain were asserting their right to veil in schools. A *selandang* was not widely worn by Malay women, and in some cases was seen as specifically anti-modern. NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1991), Reel 4. In photographs until the 1960s students remain bare headed, even though some of these women were heavily involved in Islamic women's organisations. By the 1980s, both past and present students wear *tudung*.

residents of Melaka. A particular, modern, partially Westernised interpretation of Malay identity was presented through the uniform of MWTC students.

Figure 6.4: MWTC teachers and students prior to World War II. [117]

As far as the College administrators were concerned, the link between appearance and discipline achieved results.

> "Aesthetic appreciation is no longer unknown and most of the students were fastidious about dress and appearance. Discipline was excellent, not the discipline of restraint but of happy freedom and of ready co-operation in the duties as well as the pleasures of community life." [118]

While some students regarded the strict discipline as an imposition, they still took part in the life of the College. They also remember being taught about the development of character and how to behave in a manner appropriate to a young

[117] Photograph from Arkib IPPM, reproduced with permission of IPGKPM.
[118] SS/FMS *Education Report*, 1938, p87.

Malay Muslim woman, [119] as defined by Europeans and many Islamic Modernist Malays alike.

Segregation at the College left a strong impression on MWTC students. They remember discipline as being very strict, and that they were closely guarded.[120] The College was surrounded by a stone wall and males were rarely allowed inside. [121] All of the staff with whom students associated were female. [122] If a family member came to visit, he or she would have to go to the residence of the principal and the student in question would be called to meet their family there. [123] Such visits were not encouraged by the College staff. Before students went to sleep, the principal would make her rounds to check that the rooms were clean and all students were present. Then the mosquito nets would be closed, and the doors locked, [124] from the outside. The MWTC was a self-contained world for the students who lived and learned there, a means of re-socialisation into new, modern Malay teachers.

Was the MWTC Successful?

The MWTC was a success on a number of levels. At the most basic level, the College was expected by British and Malays alike to produce properly trained Malay women teachers for the vernacular schools. For the women who attended

[119] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A.
[120] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1991), Reel 4.
[121] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A.
[122] NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997), Reel 2.
[123] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1997), Reel 2 Side A. Students were not kept entirely out of contact with the outside world. They were allowed to listen to the radio, and were aware that the war was going on. NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1991), Reel 4.
[124] NAS Interview with Jumaiyah Masbin (1991), Reel 4.

the College, it was an extremely memorable experience which set them up in their future careers. Before the Japanese military rulers closed the College, some 160 students graduated, a small but still significant cohort considering the number of schools and state-trained teachers, [125] and many graduates took on senior roles in schooling, politics and culture. However, others disappeared from the official record, through death, marriage, or moving into another profession during the Japanese Occupation.

The Education Departments and the Colonial Office regarded the College as a success on more than one level.

> "The only trained teachers were... from the Malacca College.
>
> Their influence began to be increasingly felt in many directions. These teachers are not required to cease teaching on marriage. Most of them marry soon after their return from Malacca, their ability to earn forming a powerful attraction in the marriage market." [126]

British administrators saw MWTC graduates as the best hope of the girls' vernacular schooling system, the key to spreading modern ideas. To retain trained staff, the British provided confinement leave when female teachers gave birth. [127] Such practices also indicate the middle class status of teachers. For a mother to go back to work while children were young required servants or other relatives to take on the role of childrearing, in direct opposition to the tenets of

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[125] For example, the 1938 SS/FMS *Education Report* states that 350 trained women teachers were teaching in girls' schools, and 86 in mixed schools (p80).
[126] SS/FMS *Education Report*, 1938, p80. Teachers in Britain did not have to resign either on marriage, though the majority of female teachers in England remained unmarried. Purvis, "Women Teachers", p267.
[127] *Johor Records of Service and Leave*, Arkib Fail Peribadi 13/1715.

domesticity which these women taught. Such a practice does not seem to have been frowned on by either the British or Malays.

British administrators also regarded the College as justified by its impact on individual students. However, such progress was linked specifically to British paternalism:

> "I am convinced that the experiment justifies itself in the happiness of the students, their adaptability to this residential school life and the improved health of the pupils, but it is quite evident that no progress in mental, domestic or leisure time activities can be assured without a staff prepared to give personal interest and strict supervision throughout the daily training of these students." [128]

Such comments could be made of any school, not necessarily only those in a colonial context. Nevertheless, these arguments were part of British rhetoric, linked to the assertion that Malays were unable to advance themselves and required British leadership and care. Many interactions at the MWTC were thus presented as an explicit part of colonialism, providing evidence of British superiority and the benefits of empire. Reports from following years were not nearly so patronising about the abilities of the Malay students at the College. Graduates were regarded as fully trained women teachers and leaders of the Malay vernacular girls' schools, contributing to the existing vernacular system.

Whether the Malay community regarded the MWTC as a success requires use of a different set of criteria. Not all parents were adverse to further schooling and teacher training for their daughters. However, it is only after the Japanese

[128] SS *Education Report,* 1935, p120.

occupation that the full effects of the MWTC on Malay vernacular schools and Malay society can be seen. My research has uncovered a pattern in the life stories of graduates. They often rose to the rank of Senior or Head teacher, and sometimes Visiting Teacher, a supervisory role. While the MWTC had a Malaya wide focus, most graduates taught in their home state, which had paid for their time at the College. It is significant how many MWTC graduates that I know of completed the hajj, indicating their relative wealth as well as piety, and how many were members of Islamic women's organisations. The pilgrimage shows the College's success in teaching graduates to be good Muslims**.** The link between Malay identity and Islam continued to grow and to be an integral part of the lives and careers of these modern Malay women.

Biographies of graduates often note their marriages and children, an indication that they fulfilled traditional roles as wives and mothers, as well as their new positions as teachers. Their large numbers of children surviving infancy can perhaps be partly attributed to College lessons in health and hygiene, though extended family and servants also contributed to raising teachers' children. MWTC graduates' children, both male and female, tended to go on to further education, suggesting that attitudes to education continued through their families as well as having some impact on the wider community. Many MWTC graduates also founded, led or participated in Girl Guides, Islamic groups, political parties and community organisations, particularly after Independence, and a number received awards at state and federal level.

In general, the most extraordinary individuals of what was already a select group have been highlighted in sources and this thesis. Only 160 teachers had graduated from the MWTC before the Japanese Occupation, when the

College was turned into a barracks for soldiers. [129] Nonetheless, these examples illustrate that the MWTC was a source of influence on Malay women, and had some impact on Malaysia's history and Malay women's movements. The achievements of the College and its graduates also validate the programs advocated by Zain and the *PPMJ*, and the success of at least some of their plans.

Case Studies

The experiences of MWTC graduates can be found in a variety of sources. The College itself has produced commemorative publications, several of which contain short biographies of some graduates. [130] Information on other graduates was found in the pages of academic articles and theses, or even in *Bulan Melayu*. The National Archives in Singapore also holds recorded interviews for several graduates who lived in Singapore. Used together, this wide range of sources can approach a useful sample of the achievements and lives of MWTC graduates.

A number of case studies indicate the broader impact and successes of the MWTC. Halimah Ahmad, from Singapore, (MWTC 1936-7) became a teacher at the *Sekolah Perempuan Kampong Glam*, and then *Guru Besar* (Head Teacher) at *Sekolah-Sekolah Tang Ling*, *Teluk Kurau*, *Kampung Melayu* and *Sekolah*

[129] After the end of the Occupation, administrators made efforts to locate students who had not finished their training. Some had married (ruling them ineligible to return), some were missing, some had died and others had disappeared. However, others returned to the College to finish their course of study.

[130] In terms of selecting students to discuss, such publications do not seem to have distinguished between graduates who followed public or teaching careers, or those who stopped work during the Japanese Occupation or shortly thereafter, and stayed home to raise their children instead. Examples of both can be found in the publications of the College.

Perempuan Gelang. [131] Also from Singapore, Hajah Jumaiyah Bte Masbin (1939-40) taught at *Sekolah Tangin Besar*, *Sekolah Geylang Craft Centre*, *Sekolah Scotts Road*, *Sekolah Perempuan Keluk Kurau* and *Sekolah Perempuan Kampung Gelam*, where she was the Acting Head. In addition, Jumaiyah was a member of a number of associations in Singapore including *Pemudi Islam Singapura* (Young Islamic women of Singapore), *Persatuan Seruan Islam Singapura Jamiah* and *Persatuan M.P.P.M. Singapura* (the MWTC Association in Singapore). She also broadcast radio programs on *Radio Warna* (94.2 FM).[132] Examples of other Straits Settlements graduates are Hajah Che Noh Bte Ahmad (MWTC 1935-6), from Melaka, who taught at a number of schools. [133] Hajah Bibi Bte Ahmad (MWTC 1935-6), from Penang, was active in the Girl Guides.[134]

Hajah Saniah Bte Haji Januddin (MWTC 1938-9), from Melaka, attended a Malay school, while her brothers attended English language schools. [135] After graduating from the MWTC, she taught at the *Sekolah Umum Perempuan Jasin, Melaka*, and became *Guru Besar* at the same, and later at the *Sekolah Kebangsaan Terantang Jasin Melaka*. She participated in education reform, corresponding with the Education Office and Tun Abdul Razak (the second Prime Minister of Malaysia), and was the Secretary of the Union of Malay Women Teachers, Melaka. She was also a member of the Women's Association in Daerah Jasin, *Perempuan Islam (*Islamic Women*)*, 1988-90. In addition she

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[131] NAS Interview with Halimah Ahmad (1997).
[132] *Introspeksi MWTC/MPPM 60*, (MPPM Arkib), p49.
[133] ibid, p67.
[134] ibid, p69.
[135] Considering her later achievements and family background, it is likely that she had some knowledge of English, though not to the same formal degree as the males of her family.

received the medal *Jasa Kebaktian* (for loyal service), Melaka, in 1964, and the honorific title "*Ibu Mithali*" (Exemplary Mother) Melaka, in 1993.[136]

From Selangor, Hajah Zabidah Bte Haji Shahid (MWTC 1935-6) became a trainee teacher at *Sekolah Kebangsaan Kajang*, then a teacher at *Sekolah Melayu Beranang* and *Sekolah Perempuan Melayu Setapak*, and Head Teacher at *Sekolah Melayu Kampung Baru* between 1952 and 1970. She was a member of *Ahli Lembaga Sekolah Kebangsaan Kampung Baru* and *Ahli Jawatan Kuasa (AJK*, a committee member) of *Lembaga Wanita Islam Selangor* (Islamic Women's Institute, Selangor), had 13 children, and in 1988 received the honorary title "*Ibu Mithali*" from the *Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM)*. [137] Hajah Kalthum bte Haji Mahd Saman (MWTC 1938-9) was a Head Teacher from 1947-56, and became the Acting Supervisor of Girls' Schools for Selangor. She also became the Assistant Manager *Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Negri Selangor* and the head of the *Muslamiah Masjid Al-Syalarin*, (Women's mosque) Gombak from 1980. She was also a member of *Jamiah Dakwah Islamiah Selangor* from 1993. [138] Hajah Salmah Bte Haji Mohd Salleh (MWTC 1939-40) taught at *Sekolah Perempuan Bkt Istana Klang* and *Sekolah Perempuan Kampung Baru Kuala Lumpur*. In 1947, she married Haji Shamsuddin Bin Dato Haji Mohd Siddin, a District Officer, and accompanied him to London, where she taught Malay. After her return, she became *ADUN* (State Assembly Member) for Selangor Semenyih (1969-79). She also became the Head of the Association of MWTC Graduates, the Permanent Chair of

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[136] *Ibu Mithali* is an award for mothers who had gone through significant hardship in raising their children. ibid, p72 .
[137] ibid, pp60-61.
[138] ibid, p48.

Pergerakan Wanita UMNO Bahagian Gombak and Deputy of *Lembaga Kebajikan Perempuan Islam Malaysia.* She received the ANM (a national award) and the SMS (Selangor, both for loyal service). She also had six children, all of whom were educated, and was a Girl Guide leader. [139]

Hajah Maliah Hussin (MWTC 1935-6) taught at the *Sekolah Melayu Tanjung Ipoh*, and became *Guru Besar* at *Sekolah Perempuan Kampung Batu* and Acting Head at *Sekolah Perempuan Kampung Tanjung, Sekolah Perempuan Kampung Tengah, Sekolah Perempuan Kampung Terentang* and *Sekolah Kebangsaan Kampung Baru*. Her awards include the Medal of Loyalty from the Sultan of Negri Sembilan in 1971, *Tokoh Guru Daerah Rembau,* 1982, *Tokoh Guru Negri Sembilan,* 1993, and *Tokoh Guru dan Pendidik* at the 50th Anniversary of the MWTC [140] All are awards for teachers. Hajah Jauhariah Bte Haji Salam (MWTC 1935-6) went on to teach at *Sekolah di Daerah Kuala Pilih, Sekolah Melayu Tanjung Ipoh, Sekolah Melayu Ampuan Tinggi, Sekolah Melayu Terani* and two schools in Daerah Seremban. She was also a head teacher for Negri Sembilan, covering *Sekolah Melayu Kampung Tengah, Seri Menanti, Sekolah Melayu Perempuan Lenggeng* and *Sekolah Melayu Kuala Kelawang, Jelebu*. She married a graduate of the SITC, and they had seven children. [141]

Johor

In Johor, the *PPMJ* were strong supporters of the MWTC. It answered their calls for a teacher training college for Malay women, and Johor was the first

[139] *Introspeksi MWTC/M.P.P.M. 60,* (M.P.P.M. Arkib), p74.
[140] ibid, p62.
[141] ibid, 66.

of the Unfederated Malay States to send students to the College. [142] One of the first Johor students to attend the College had a fairly typical, though unfortunately short, career. Khadijah Bte Haji Idris (MWTC 1935-6) did her traineeship at *Sekolah Melayu Parit Setongat, Muar*, in 1939 became *Guru Besar* of *Sekolah Perempuan Parit Bakar, Muar* and in 1941 Head of the *Sekolah Perempuan Melayu Serom, Muar.* She died in 1942.[143]

MWTC graduates were also prominent in publishing. Mas Neng, born in Sandakan, had her course of study at the MWTC disrupted in 1941 by the Japanese Occupation. She was an adopted daughter of Zain, who encouraged her literary ambitions. Her writing was first published in 1939 in *Pancaran Pena*, *Juita* and *Cerita*, and later in *Fajar Asia, Kencana, Suara Johor, Juita* and *Merdeka* (the official publication of UMNO). Throughout her published articles, Mas Neng called for women to strive for progress. Toward the end of the Japanese Occupation, she joined the anti-Japanese Force 136, and fought against the Communists immediately after the Japanese surrender. [144] By 1957, she had become head of the Singapore branch of *Kaum Ibu* UMNO.

At least one of the Johor students who attended the MWTC went on to play a prominent role in the state. Hajah Kamariah Bte Saadon [145] attended *Sekolah Perempuan Ngee Hing,* and *Sekolah Agama Ngee Hing* in Johor Bahru, and was chosen by Zain to attend the MWTC from 1935-6. After her graduation, she returned to *Sekolah Perempuan Ngee Hing* as an assistant teacher, on a

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[142] Johor students are also the only examples I have been able to find of MWTC graduate biographies from the Unfederated Malay States.
[143] *Introspeksi MWTC/M.P.P.M. 60,* (M.P.P.M. Arkib), p69.
[144] Musa, "The 'Woman Question'", (2010). The article does not go into any more detail about what such fighting involved.
[145] Romanised spellings vary - Kamariah Bte Saadon and Qamariah Bte Saadun are the most common.

salary of $34 a month. The school was where *Bulan Melayu* was based, and she was soon published therein under the name "Qamar", meaning moon. She also wrote for *Lembaga, Lembaga Melayu, Warta Ahad* and *Warta Jenaka dan Hiburan*.[146] Throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, she was an acting head teacher and Headmistress at various schools in Johor Bahru, and then at *Sekolah Melayu Bandar Pontian, Johore.* At the latter she formed the first Girl Guide group in Pontian. [147] She then travelled with her husband to Muar, where she became *Guru Besar Sekolah Melayu Parit Setongkat, Muar*. They had ten children, all of whom were educated and entered professions such as teaching and engineering.

During the Japanese occupation, Kamariah and her family returned to Johor Bahru where they went into business. When schools reopened after the war, she resumed teaching, becoming the *Guru Besar* for a number of girls' schools in Johor: *Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Johor Bahru, Sekolah Perempuan Tambatan Rendah, Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Rendah* and *Sekolah Perempuan Bukit Senyum.* In 1958 she was made Visiting Teacher for Pontian and in 1963 Central Pontian, in charge of 60 schools, both boys' and girls'. Kamariah was also a member of the Pen Friends, Malaya. Her associations with Zain continued throughout the latter's life: she was on the Committee of the *PGGPJ* and was the treasurer of the *Kolej Puteri Tengku Ampuan Mariam, Johor*, the College founded by Zain. In 1970 she received the Sultan Ibrahim Medal and in 1975 the

[146] See Chapter 5.
[147] *Introspeksi MWTC/MPPM 60*, (MPPM Arkib), p64-5.

Medal of the Circle of Friends. [148] The MWTC thus played a role in the development of the *PPMJ* and in girls' schooling in Johor as a whole.

Conclusion

Malay girls who attended the MWTC, an institution demanded for more than a decade by Zain and other Malay women teachers, entered a very different life to that of their childhood. They were taught a variety of subjects by Europeans and Malays in a sexually and ethnically segregated environment. The College emphasised the importance of Malay identity across state boundaries; of Western knowledge, particularly relating to health and hygiene; Islamic identity; and taught its students about both the modern city that was Melaka and the skills they would be expected to teach to their students. Melaka was a central space where transport links converged, a city without a sultan, where Malay middle class ambitions could flower. The College was important enough to the British that state governments still found the funds to build the institution and send female pupils for training during the Great Depression. The College also demonstrates the limitations on Malay women's agency during this period – it was the British who opened and ran the College, and who had final authority over what took place there. Graduates went on to lead schools and determine education policy; publish their writings in journals such as *Bulan Melayu*; complete the hajj; join UMNO; and found both Girl Guide troops and Islamic women's organisations. In joining UMNO, the controlling political organisation since Independence, MWTC graduates positioned themselves close to power and government,

[148] ibid.

becoming part of the Malay establishment. British educational policy and the *PPMJ*'s aims converged in the systems and students of the MWTC which still exists today as a tertiary teacher training institution.

Like Zain and the PPMJ, the MWTC set about instilling a new perspective in Malay Muslim women. In the context of the British educational system, the last word was always that of the colonisers. Nonetheless, the College presents evidence for the proactive role of Malay women teachers: the curriculum included *jawi*, the religious education portion of College teachings was not set out in the syllabus, leaving room for teachers to determine content, and Malay women supervisors including Zain were involved in the formation of the College and selection of students.

The graduate of the MWTC was an extension of the ideal woman desired by Zain and the *PPMJ*. She would have another two years of schooling (on top of four or five years of primary school), and a knowledge of subjects such as maths, science, geography, history, Malay language, pedagogy and domestic science, with an emphasis on teaching the curriculum and the role of Malay women as mothers of the next generation. The MWTC illustrates an ongoing trend in Malay and even British writings of the time: a rising sense of ethno-nationalism, the importance of the Malay race and their position in Malaya. The creation of the MWTC contributed to spreading these ideas to a wider proportion of the Malay population, and ensuring that they became part of public knowledge. Students had a network of friends and colleagues all over the country and were encouraged to think of Malaya as a single entity. The idea of the *bangsa* became a legitimising discourse for these women: the most powerful argument for their schooling and leadership roles was that it would benefit all

Malays. A MWTC graduate would thus lead Malay women towards mental, spiritual and physical health, as well as towards further, though still limited, opportunities in the modern world. A similar service was performed by Malay language periodicals, including *Bulan Melayu*. This ethnic identification was also encouraged by the British who used it as a means to legitimise the ongoing British presence in Malaya, claiming to help Malays to overcome disadvantages and to achieve their potential.

Graduates of the College had a number of experiences in common. MWTC students tended to come from towns and even cities, rather than small rural villages. All were on scholarships, paid for by their respective states. On graduation, they generally returned to their parents and home, although they did display some mobility around their state and even beyond. They tended to marry soon after graduation, often to other teachers. [149] MWTC graduates taught in a variety of schools and a substantial number completed the hajj. [150] They were involved in educational policy, in publishing and received a number of awards at state and federal level. Within the context of British colonialism and Islamic Modernism, the MWTC and the students who attended it continued to define and expand Malay girls' schooling.

The MWTC also shows some of the limitations which applied to Malay women teachers. They took on positions of authority within the schooling system and as leaders of other Malay women, but within certain constraints. Teachers had to conform to appropriate behaviour for Malay women in Malay culture, as

[149] ibid.
[150] I have been unable to calculate exact figures as the sample of successful graduates is small and skewed towards those who have made significant contributions in the educational and political spheres.

well as submit to the strictures of Islamic modernists and to British conventions regarding women. They had to work within a set curriculum for teaching girls. Some of these constraints apply to every school system, such as following a set curriculum and being dependent on state funding for schools. However, the nature of the colony's plural society and ethnic identities, as well as the control of a British minority over a substantially larger population of subject peoples, and the need to justify an ongoing British presence, added an additional layer of control and constraints to the vernacular schools and the MWTC.

The fact that women teachers learned and taught in the Malay language meant that opportunities and information available to MWTC students and graduates were limited. Teachers worked as best as they could within the frameworks of the colonial system, for their own advantage in terms of career and prestige, as well as more altruistic goals, and were able to function relatively freely as long as they shared the goals of the Education Departments.

The profession of salaried teacher offered a new opportunity for Malay women. Some women had been Quran teachers in the past but not in such numbers or with such relative mobility throughout their home state and Malaya as a whole. Nonetheless, there was a tension between the tenets of domesticity, which Malay women teachers were to inculcate in their students, and the circumstances of their own lives. Girls in the vernacular schools were to be taught how to be better mothers, downplaying their traditional roles in the economy in favour of a British middle class ideal of woman as homemaker. In practice, the opposite happened for MWTC graduates: since they were not expected to give up their roles as wives and mothers, other members of their families or servants would raise their children so that women teachers could

return to work and continue to earn a wage. The latter were a select group, from the middle classes and educated families, and their experiences of schooling in the vernacular system were non-typical. MWTC graduates internalised British discourses on the position of Malays, Europeans and other Asians in the colonial context, and passed such ideas to their pupils.

One of the contributions of this thesis is to study the MWTC in greater depth, specifically for its impact on female schooling in Malaya. I also argue that the College had an impact on the history of Malaya and Malaysia as a whole. The emphasis in many histories on post-Independence developments in schooling and a focus on the SITC means MWTC graduates' contributions to Malayan and Malaysian history tend to be downplayed. Nonetheless, the MWTC was a significant step in the development of Malay girls' schooling. Graduates of the MWTC have an important and generally unacknowledged role in the history of Malaya and Malaysia. Like "Ibu Zain", the way that their contribution is presented and recognised has changed over time, and forms the subject of the final chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Zain's Legacy and Research Conclusions

"Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail"[1]

This thesis is based around the historical life of Zain, a campaigner for Malay rights, girls' schools, and the importance of Islam in Malay society. Her life spanned much of the 20th century. She grappled with rapid changes in technology and society, the impacts of the colonial economy, with British values and policy, Islamic modernism, Malay ethnic identity, and the transition from colony to sovereign state. Studying Zain and her colleagues demonstrates the new possibilities colonial rule opened up to Malay women, and their contribution to defining a new Malay identity in which modernity was defended, but Malay cultural traditions were also respected. [2] However, Zain and her compatriots are barely mentioned by scholars of the colonial period. In order to understand more fully the position of women in contemporary Malaysia, it is necessary to study the earlier era.

Contemporary Malaysian revisionism emphasises a nationalistic and anti-British history. The current historical dichotomy between events pre- and post-World War II also does a disservice to Malay women. Many of the issues women pioneers grappled with during the 1920s and 1930s are still current today, and further development of their arguments can be traced throughout Malaysia's recent history. In addition, studying Zain and the women of the PPMJ illuminates the ways that Malay women are addressed in histories of Malaysia. The historical Zain, an educator and fierce promoter of Malay interests against the Chinese, has

[1] Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".
[2] Lewis, "Cosmopolitanism and the Modern Girl" (2009), p1397.

become a nationalist symbol of tolerance and forgiveness in contemporary Malaysia. She was and is a convenient figure for building a narrative of an independent multi-ethnic Malaysia as well as an anti-colonial past similar to those of other Southeast Asian nations. She has become a symbol of national pride and unity, rather than of Malay primacy.

Zain's respect for members of other ethnic groups is highlighted in her contemporary presentation. She is remembered by her children as having friends of all races: "My mother never had a racist bone in her… Neither did my father. Chinese, Indians, all came to our house. She loved them all." [3] She was awarded many public honours, including the Sultan Ibrahim Medal (1947), an honorary degree from the University of Malaya (1979) and made Commander of the Order of the Crown of Malaysia, [4] which comes with the honorific title of *Tan Sri*. [5] Zain has since been acclaimed as a Malaysian nationalist campaigner. [6]

Why was Zain chosen as this figurehead of Malaysian Independence and women's rights? She was not the only historical figure suited for the role, although she was one of the most vocal and prolific in emphasising her own reputation and legacy. Zain may have been selected in order to give Malaysia an equivalent to Indonesia's "Ibu Kartini", proclaimed a national heroine in 1963 by President Sukarno. The real Kartini was Dutch educated and strongly opposed to polygamy, but she is celebrated in today's Indonesia, instead, as a pioneer of nationalism and girls' education. Zain was a fierce promoter of Malay rights but

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[3] Adibah Amin in ibid.
[4] *Panglima Setia Mahkota* in Malay.
[5] Commander of the Order of the Crown of Malaya is the second highest Malaysian federal honour.
[6] Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail"; CTRA Production "Ibu Zain, the Musical" (2008/2009 http://ibuzaineng.blogspot.com/ Accessed 30/04/09).

is remembered as tolerant of all races. Both women have come to symbolise a nationalistic sense of independence in Malaysia and Indonesia, in contrast to the historical realities of their lives. Both serve a specific purpose in the presentation of their respective nations. This representation of Zain's life, which differs significantly from the activities and achievements of her early career, has been called into political service in the demographic context of contemporary Malaysia.

The ethnic makeup of Malaysia has changed significantly since the 1920s and 1930s. Malaya's population by 2010 was 28.3 million: 53.3 per cent Malay, 26 per cent Chinese, 11.8 per cent "indigenous", 7.7 per cent Indian, and 1.2 per cent "other". [7] By contrast, in 1931 a population of 4.3 million was 39 per cent Chinese, 37.8 per cent Malay, 14.2 per cent Indian, 7.2 per cent "other Malaysians", 1.3 per cent "Other", and 0.8 per cent European/Eurasian. [8] The Malays now represent a far greater proportion of the Malaysian population than during the early 20th century. Government population policies have encouraged Malays to have large families, while discriminatory aspects of the New Economic Policy have been a factor in increased emigration by Chinese Malaysians. Some 60 per cent of Malaysia's population now identifies as Muslim, [9] and Malaysian society as a whole has taken on a more Malay and Muslim cast. How did Malaysia get to this point? And what did women like Zain contribute to such changes?

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[7] US Dept of State, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2777.htm.
[8] *Malayan Census*, 1931.
[9] US Dept of State, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2777.htm.

Towards Independence

The transition to Malaya's Independence in 1957 is generally presented by commentators as relatively late, smooth and non-violent. Independence was granted by colonial overlords, not gained through violent conflict against them. [10] As such, Malaysia lacks the overarching narrative of resistance that gives a sense of nationalistic identity in many other Southeast Asian countries. In order to build such a nationalist narrative, Malay politicians and nationalists have sought public figures who could be portrayed as great nationalist campaigners. "Ibu Zain" is one such figure.

This revisionist process began with the way that the Japanese Occupation is characterised. Preferential treatment of Malays over Chinese and Indians continued under the Japanese. Malay authors tend to remember the period as galvanising Malay self-esteem and presenting the prospect of nationhood, [11] rather than recalling atrocities against the Malayan Chinese. Japan's "Nipponisation" programs targeted the Malays, urging them to "awaken" and take their place in a nation under Nippon. [12] Historians such as Bamahaj present World War II as the spark which ignited Malay women's participation in public

[10] Owen (ed), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, (2005). The fighting that took place was between British Commonwealth forces and guerrillas of the Malayan Communist Party. It was not to suppress independence, but to prevent it occurring under a communist government.
[11] Wang Gungwu, "Memories of War: World War II in Asia" in Huen and Wong (eds), *War and Memory in Malaysia and Singapore*, (2000), p20.
[12] Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Cultural Policy in Malaya and Singapore, 1942-45" in Goodman (ed), *Japanese Cultural Policies in Southeast Asia During World War Two*, (1991), pp130-1.

life, [13] proving that the British could be beaten and encouraging a Malay conceptualisation of nationhood.

The Occupation caused significant disruption to the lives of all Malaya's peoples and changed the course of Malay organisations and the lives of many Malay women. Pre-Occupation associations and parties, including women's groups, were closed by Japanese military order, although many were re-formed when the British returned to Malaya in 1945. The British aim was to create a unified Malayan state (excluding Singapore) by centralising all power in preparation for transfer to a Malayan government, and conferring citizenship on all races equally. This Malayan Union plan, unveiled in 1946, was strongly opposed by Malays, as it presented the potential for full political rights for non-Malays. The Malay political response eclipsed anything predating the Japanese Occupation. Malay leaders created a mass Malay movement, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) to fight the union. Within 18 months the scheme was abandoned. [14]

Nonetheless, continuities exist between Malay organizations from before and after the Japanese Occupation. For example, organisations remained segregated on the basis of race. Most Malay organisations retained their focus on performing social, recreational or welfare roles, although literary, quasi-political and political associations took on a more nationalist outlook. A division remained between organisations associated with government servants and bureaucrats (many of whom belonged to the Malay elite) and the teachers, journalists and other graduates of Malay schools. Some concentrated on political

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[13] Bamahaj, *"The Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya on Malay Society and Politics 1941-1945"*.
[14] Owen (ed), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, (2005), p318.

associations, others on literary and cultural associations, although all were committed to protecting Malay privileges. [15]

Zain's career trajectory can be viewed in the context of these broader trends. During or shortly after the Occupation, she formed the *Kumpulan Ibu Sepakat* (*KIS*, the United Women's Association) in Johor in response to a plea from Johor's head of religious affairs, who feared that the moral standards of women had fallen due to the war. [16] As a leader of the *KIS*, Zain travelled from village to village urging women to join together, help their children, educate themselves, get political experience and not "leave it all to the men". [17] In the 1920s and 1930s, as a Malay teacher and school Supervisor, she had also travelled, urging Malay families to send their girls to school. This time, Zain had a more explicit political agenda. Soon the association had several thousand members. [18] Like all Malay women's associations of the time, *KIS* aimed to improve the status of women, particularly by establishing religious classes, encouraging loyalty, unity and participation, and later in opposing the Malayan Union. [19] The emphasis by *KIS* on the traditional roles and skills of Malay women was soon to be channelled into more formal nationalistic campaigns.

It was the campaign against the Malayan Union that spawned Malay women's mass participation in politics and nationalism. [20] Malay women were in the thick of opposition to Britain's concept of the Malayan Union. Zain's *KIS*

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[15] Weiss and Hassan (eds), *Social Movements in Malaysia*, (2003), pp27-8.
[16] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987) states that the organization was formed post-Occupation; Musa, "The 'Woman Question'" (2010) that it was during.
[17] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987), p89.
[18] ibid.
[19] ibid.
[20] Owen (ed), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, (2005), p318.

became part of Dato Onn's *Pergerakan Melayu Semenanjung Johor* (Johor Peninsular Malay Movement) in May 1946. [21] When UMNO was formed in September 1947 by joining together a number of existing groups, *KIS* members became part of *Kaum Ibu* (*KI*) UMNO, the party's women's branch. [22] For Zain and many other Malay women, *KI* UMNO was their introduction to engagement in public politics. Linking themselves and their careers with UMNO meant that the Malay women teachers placed themselves close to the centre of political power in the run-up to Independence, though still within the ethos of service to the Malay community.[23].

The official version of "Ibu Zain's" life states that she was an asset to the Independence cause. [24] She had a talent for writing "rousing nationalist songs", often adapted into school songs during her time as Supervisor. [25] Zain is presented as a fearless campaigner, unworried about whether she could be

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[21] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987), p89.

[22] UMNO was not the only option for Malay women to participate in opposition to the Malayan Union, although the party was one of the largest and longest lasting. From 1946, the Malay Nationalist Party included *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (*AWAS*, the force of awakened women). *AWAS* was banned in 1948 for being too left-leaning politically (and therefore potentially sympathetic to the Communists), and colonial administrators cultivated UMNO instead. Ng, Mohamad, and Beng Hui, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia*, (2006), p17.

[23] See Manderson *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980).

[24] "When I was older, I often followed her to meetings and heard her speak for the Independence cause. Her speeches were unique and until today no one can emulate her style… She spoke without a text. And she would intersperse her speeches with songs to rouse her audience's spirits. Allah gave her a melodious voice, so it was like a lullaby… She would speak for over an hour before crowds of 200 to 300, addressing them as *Tuan Tuan dan Puan Puan tanah air* (Gentlemen and Ladies of this homeland)… She was brave. She didn't care about being arrested by the British. We were in the midst of *ghairah merdeka* (independence fever)."

Shakib Amin in Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".

[25] Samah, *Emancipation of Malay Women*, (1960), p61.

arrested by the British. However, arrest was an unlikely possibility, given that the British arrested few Malay women and UMNO was a mainstream organization. Zain's campaigning continued throughout the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), the Communist insurgency which led to stringent security measures and an end to social democratic parties drawn from the various ethnic groups. [26] Zain's activities during the Emergency added to her public positioning as willing to sacrifice herself for the greater good. During August 1950, when the train she was in was attacked by Malayan Chinese Communists [27] near Labis, Johor, Zain's was shot in the leg. [28] Zain thus sported a literal wound, gained in her quest for Malayan Independence which she sought as part of an explicitly Malay political organisation.

The *KI* was defined by slow, incremental change, a lack of power in UMNO and limited goals. [29] UMNO continued to emphasise traditional roles for women as wives, mothers and supporters of Malay men. [30] *KI*'s primary objective was to strengthen UMNO, oppose the Malayan Union, and push for an independent Malaya that would entrench Malay dominance in politics. [31] *KI* leaders stated that women were only just beginning to become accustomed to political activity and were not ready for drastic changes in their role as homemakers. [32] The *KI* also took on a significant role as fundraiser for UMNO.[33]

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[26] Owen (ed), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, (2005), p319.
[27] Rahiman, *Pergerakan Kaum Ibu U.M.N.O.* p46.
[28] Muashor, *Tan Sri Hajah Zainon Bt. Sulaiman.*
[29] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987), p153.
[30] Ng, Mohamad, and Beng Hui, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia*, (2006), p27.
[31] Dancz argues that many Malay women of the 1940s and 1950s were conservative, and not yet ready for radical changes in women's roles. Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987), p100.
[32] ibid.

Members of the *KI* argued that, by having their own branch of the party, Malay women could best look after their own interests. They argued that as many women were shy and would not express themselves in front of men, women could have a bigger impact if they were organized in a separate association. [34] The means of attracting women to UMNO were gender specific: cooking, sewing and religious classes, lectures on health, childcare and politics, as well as patriotic appeals. [35]

Zain was a founding member of *KI*, and the *Ketua* (President) from 1950-1953, when she retired from the post on the grounds of ill health. [36] Zain saw the women's wing as a form of support for the party structure, with a special role as fundraisers, and argued that UMNO would be a "crippled bird" without its *KI* wing. [37] In leading the *KI*, Zain relied on her close working relationship with Dato' Onn and Tunku Abdul Rahman (the second President of UMNO as well as Malaya and Malaysia's first Prime Minister). [38] Onn's support was critical to the *KI* UMNO, as was his support for Malay women taking part in public activities.

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[33] ibid p95.
[34] ibid p90.
[35] Early *KI* membership was largely limited to illiterate village women with little leadership experience. By 1950, many *KI* leaders had begun visits to the provinces, and membership rose from 10,486 in 1949 to 12,898 in 1950. Literacy remained a problem: Zain estimated that some 50 per cent of members were illiterate, despite membership at that time including some 2,000 teachers. As a result, *KI* programs placed a heavy emphasis on literacy and the education of Malay girls and women. High levels of illiteracy among party members also explain why the *KI* had to rely so heavily for leaders on schoolteachers, the wives of UMNO officials and aristocratic Malay women. ibid, p99. See also Manderson *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980), pp86-90.
[36] In leading *KI*, Zain relied in part on her strong working relationship with Dato' Onn and Tuanku Abdul Rahman, the second President of UMNO. After the UMNO crisis of 1951, when Dato' Onn withdrew from the party with many of his supporters to found the IMP (Independence of Malaya Party), Zain had to work hard to build up *KI*. ibid.
[37] Quoted in ibid, p170.
[38] ibid p170.

He argued that "little can be achieved without their co-operation." [39] When in 1952 the Council of Ulama banned Malay women from taking part in politics, arguing that increased public activities would lead to excessive mixing of the sexes, political connections helped to protect the *KI*. Zain argued that "If women take part in politics, men will be inspired to work hard". Rahman also gave the *KI* his full support. [40] This incident provides more insight into Zain's approach to Islam, which she cited to support her and to suit her personal ambitions. During 1952 she set herself in opposition to Islamic experts and sought the right to professional lives in the public sphere for women of her class. At the same time, she emphasised Islamic dress, *jawi* Malay, and women's primary responsibility for home and family life. To achieve her ends and maintain support against the *ulama*, she used her professional and political links to the beneficiaries of British rule, the important and influential Malay men of UMNO.

In the lead-up to Independence in 1957 and in the years following, women's participation in Malay politics continued to increase. Zain took on more prominent political roles, both before and after Independence. In 1948 she was appointed as an unofficial member of the Johor State Council, along with Azizah binti Jafaar. [41] From 1956 she was a member of the *Kongres Bahasa dan Persuratan Melayu* (Malay Language and Literary Congress), until it created the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (The Institute of Language and Literature) in 1958.

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[39] ibid pp89-90.
[40] ibid p96.
[41] The latter was the first Malay Domestic Science Mistress in Johor, and founder in 1941 of the Johor Malay Women's Association, a self-help improvement organisation for Malay women. ibid, p93. She was the sister of Dato Onn. Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980) p51. The Johor State Council was an advisory and legislative body, originally appointed by the sultan. "Unofficial" members of the Council played an advisory and consultative role, while "official" members held executive positions.

She was elected as a Federal Legislative Counsellor in 1959. [42] She also continued to expand her contact with prominent male Malay politicians. Even once Zain retired from politics, her daughter claimed "She phoned Dr Mahathir and Hussein Onn whenever she was upset over something. And they would listen to her politely. She called them 'her boys'". [43] Zain carved a role for herself as an elder stateswoman and, after 1963, as a representative of Malaysia. In return, Zain's life and achievements were used by the political establishment to help create a narrative of Malay progress and tolerance.

The New Economic Policy and the Plural Society

The period in which Zain's public representation really began to change from Malay teacher to symbol of Malaysian togetherness was during the development of the New Economic Policy (NEP, a series of economic plans from 1971-1990), when significant political effort was focussed on building a nationalist past for Malaysia. Following attacks by Malays on Chinese Malaysians and their

[42] Zain was elected as the representative for Pontian in Johor, presumably as an UMNO candidate. Zain ran in an area hard hit by terrorism and unrest, poor living conditions and low wages, and with a large Chinese population whom it was feared would not be willing to vote for a woman. She was elected by a significant majority. Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, (1980), pp152, 248. After Independence, women took on increasing political roles. The first woman minister was Fatimah Haji Hashim, appointed Minister of Welfare by the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. However, Wan Azizah indicates that women have tended to be appointed to ministries "suitable" for their roles, such as the Ministry of Welfare or Ministry of Women and Family Development, or to junior roles, such as Culture, Youth and Sports. The exception is Rafidah Azaz, appointed Minister of International Trade and Industry in 1987. Wan Azazah in www.idea.int "Women in Politics: Reflections from Malaysia". Women in politics are still seen as supporters rather than leaders.

[43] Fadzilah Amin in Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail". They were the fourth and third Prime Ministers of Malaysia respectively.

property and businesses in Kuala Lumpur during 1969, the Malaysian government formulated the NEP. The policy was also the result of pressure from urban, educated Malays, many of whom were members of UMNO and who resented Chinese economic dominance in Malaysian society. [44] The primary goals of the NEP were the eradication of poverty, regardless of ethnic community, the reduction of interethnic tensions by raising the skills and living standards of the rural Malay population, reserving certain sectors of the national economy for Malays, as well as preferential treatment in the allocation of government contracts and loans. [45] The NEP aimed to eliminate the link between ethnic group and economic position, and was responsible for immense changes in Malaysian society. [46] One of the main focuses of the policy was schools.

NEP policies on schools and higher education facilitated increased Malay participation and Malay was prioritised as the language of instruction and scholarship. In 1965 the Primary 6 Exam (marking the end of primary school) was abolished, meaning that any child who completed primary school could now enter secondary school. Certificate exams to enter the University of Malaya were no longer exclusively in English, but also in Malay. [47] By the period between 1980 and 1985 Malay students comprised some 65 per cent of enrolments in universities (27 per cent were Chinese, and 6 per cent Indian). [48] These developments had a significant impact on Malay women. By 1994 female students were 49.5 per cent of enrolments in universities, and made up more than half the enrolments by 1999. The sexual segregation of the Islamic revival

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[44] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p302.
[45] Ong, "State versus Islam", (1990), p259.
[46] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p303.
[47] ibid, p291.
[48] ibid p312.

movement encouraged increasing calls for female doctors. Women constituted as many as 25 per cent of doctors by 1988. The civil service was soon 40 per cent female, and women were the largest group amongst primary and secondary school teachers. [49]

The NEP also developed policies to restructure the Malaysian economy: by 1990 Malays should own 30 per cent of share capital in commerce and industries, other Malaysians (Chinese and Indians) 40 per cent, and foreigners 30 per cent (at that time the economic share was 1.9, 22.5 and 60.7 per cent respectively). [50] Between 1970 and 1990 the Malaysian economy tripled in size. In 1970 only 27 per cent of the population lived in urban areas. By 1991, the figure was 51 per cent. By 1991, the labour force was over 40 per cent female, and 44 per cent of women were in paid employment. [51] The rise of wages under the NEP also expanded the Malay middle class. Thirteen per cent of professional, technical, administrative, managerial, clerical and sales positions were filled by Malays in 1970. By 1990 Malays held 27 per cent of these positions. [52]

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad [53] aimed to remould Malays and Malay society, creating a new society and a new kind of Malay, the "*Malay baru*". He aimed to redefine Malays in terms of rationality, sensitivity, pragmatism and innovation. Stivens states that, while there are variations in the ways that

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[49] ibid, p311.
[50] Owen (ed), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, (2005), p418.
[51] ibid, pp419-20
[52] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p315.
[53] Born 10 July 1925, Mahathir Mohamad was the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, holding the position between 1981 and 2003. He had a very particular vision for Malays and Malaysia, which was set out in his 1970 book *The Malay Dilemma* (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Publications, 1970). Mahathir urged government support for Malays so that they could overcome characteristics he considered genetic and cultural and catch up with the Chinese. In government he introduced quotas favouring Malays in higher education and business.

politicians and commentators thought about the new Malay, this new Malay was implicitly male, [54] as was the stereotypical Malay in narratives of history and nationhood. Frith emphasises the way in which women in NEP Malaysia were designated as the bearers of family moral and religious worth, tradition, and national identity. Political rhetoric referred to the importance of Malay women in nation-building, but at the same time emphasised their role and importance in the home. The "new Malay woman" was urban and educated, a professional and a member of the middle classes, but public rhetoric focussed primarily on the private rather than public sphere. [55] This rhetoric sought to personify a nostalgic vision of femininity and family, in contrast to the urbanised and industrialised reality of many Malay working class women. [56] Zain was a perfect example of the forerunner of this modern Malay, ripe for political use.

This focus on a particular type of Malay femininity continued to influence government policy. The Mahathir government aimed to protect "the special needs and interests of women and the special virtues of femininity... the responsibilities of motherhood and family life." [57] However, this emphasis overlooked Malay women's longstanding workforce participation and ignored the range of middle class women's occupations. [58] Educated middle class women were encouraged to marry and have large families, [59] were taught home economics and handcrafts, and were encouraged to hand on "progressive" values

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[54] Frith, *Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood*, (2002), pp4-5.
[55] ibid, pp4-5.
[56] ibid, p6.
[57] ibid, p8. The quote is drawn from the "National Policy on Women" and so could apply more broadly than to just Malay women, although Frith's and my own focus is on Malays.
[58] ibid, p8.
[59] ibid, p7.

to their children, [60] children who would be the hope of the nation. [61] These values increasingly were bound up with the role of language in Malaysian society, schools and universities.

Language

Language policy in Malaysia has been problematic since colonial times. The British emphasis on Malay language primacy in schools for Malay children, as well as Malay nationalists' linking of Malay language to Malay identity, have had long lasting effects on education in Malaysia. Zain was an ardent advocate of Malay as the language of instruction and *jawi* as the preferred script for Malay girls, in order to raise their consciousness of identity and nation and solidify Malay rights in the colony's plural society. But her educational policies of the 1920s and 1930s did not equip Malay girls for jobs in the modern sector of the colonial economy. Rather, they condemned Malay girls to be backwards, similar to Winstedt's goal to make Malays better farmers. Malay girls would be unable to function in the modern world without educational policies which discriminated in their favour, despite the switch in Zain's emphasis from *jawi* to *rumi*.

Zain also addressed the role of English in Malaysian society. Her daughter Adibah Amin remembers Zain's attitude post-Independence as being strongly supportive of learning English: "She supported the use of Malay as the national language. And if English should be second to the national language, it should be

[60] Ong, "State versus Islam", (1990), p266.
[61] Frith, *Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood*, (2002), p8.

an excellent second." [62] Nevertheless, throughout her life, Zain supported the idea that Malays should first and foremost be fluent in their own language.

The importance of the Malay language in schools fluctuated throughout the post Independence period. Immediately post-Independence, government emphasis was on Malay as a unifying force, the one national language. This policy retreated during the 1990s, when Mahathir's emphasis on globalisation brought English language education to the fore. The latter policy aimed at genuine bilingualism. [63] In addition, emphasising the English language and Latin alphabet would enable Malays to compete with the economic dominance of the Chinese in Malaysian society.

Nevertheless, there was a continuing underlying concern that without protection, the Malay language would be swamped by English and Chinese. Many Malays regarded their language and the customs and attitudes it represented as a fundamental part of identity, an essential element which drew Malays together. Debates about language were not only about language or even the dominance of Malays, but about the survival of Malay culture. [64] The continued existence of English language schools (progressively converted into Malay medium after 1970) remained an indication of government ambivalence towards English education. In these schools, integration of various ethnic groups was most easily achieved through mixing between individuals from different backgrounds and the primacy of a language not linked to any one Malaysian

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[62] Aznam, "Ibu Zain's Blazing Trail".
[63] Norani Othman, Mavis C. Puthucheary, and Clive S. Kessler, *Sharing the Nation: Faith, Difference, Power and the State 50 Years After Merdeka*, (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2008), p83.
[64] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), pp290-1.

ethnic group. The prestigious English language schools were also the best in the country, training future leaders. However, many Malays considered the continuing prestige of the colonial language denigrating and prejudicial to the status of Malay as the national language. [65] The Malay language also remained closely linked to Muslim identity.

Islam, *Dakwa* and Dress

The 1970s and 1980s saw the flourishing in Malaysia of *dakwa*, an international Islamic movement communicated through visiting Muslim emissaries, electronic and other media, and financed by Saudi Arabia. It directly responded to the social changes stimulated by NEP policies,[66] as domestic events of the 1970s led to the mobilisation and politicisation of an Islamic consciousness, along with a focus on Muslim behaviour rather than converting non-Muslims. [67] *Dakwa* was an attempt to articulate the Muslim modernity of its time, and in the specific context of Malaysia [68] it encouraged greater conformity to Islamic principles and public behaviours, and emphasised the role of women as mothers in a period of rapid urbanisation of previously rural Malays and growing disparities in wealth among Malays.

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[65] ibid, pp291-2.
[66] Ng, Mohamad, and Beng Hui, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia*, (2006), p86.
[67] Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Enthicity in Malay Politics*, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp73-4.
[68] Judith Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and their Roots*, (Vancouver: University of British Colombia Press, 1984), pxviii.

The rise of *dakwa* posed challenges for the UMNO-dominated *Barisan Nasional* (National Front, an alliance of political parties including UMNO, the Malaysian Chinese Association and the Malaysian Indian Congress, among others). The government focussed on Islam as a means to preserve and protect Malay interests, [69] and instituted Islamic programs including: increased funds for religious education; the creation of dedicated government organisations for religious causes; broadening the reach of shariah law for Muslim citizens; and passage of statute law covering Islamic banking and insurance. These were mostly symbolic matters, [70] and Islam was mainly prominent in UMNO political discourse during election periods. [71] Nonetheless, the *dakwa* movement was presented by the state as supporting modernity and development.[72] NEP education policies targeted Malay women, who were encouraged by the state to attend university and pursue careers outside the home. *Dakwa* appealed to this new class of urban, educated young Malay men and women, a number of whom attended overseas universities through NEP programs. The *dakwa* movement offered them cultural refuge and a means to preserve their identity through the familiarity of their Islamic heritage.[73]

In *dakwa*, Malay nationalism and Islam intertwined. Malaysian *dakwa* was an alliance of Malay ethno-nationalism and Islamic supremacy. Islam was politicised and given more prominence in public discourse via the argument that

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[69] Mutalib, *Islam and Enthicity,* (1990), p156.
[70] ibid, p49.
[71] ibid, p35. An emphasis on Islam was necessary for UMNO to counter the electoral threat presented by Islamist parties.
[72] Ong, "State versus Islam", (1990), p260.
[73] Ng, Mohamad, and Beng Hui, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia*, (2006), p86.

Malay primacy was required in order to uphold Islam. [74] The resulting Islamic nationalism sought preservation of the Malay community in a racially divided society. Such emphasis led to concern amongst non-Malays that the principles which underpinned the multicultural Malaysian state were under threat from Malay nationalism and Islamic supremacy. [75] The NEP already had a negative impact on non-Malays by discriminating in the areas of education and commerce. *Dakwa* conferred the eminence of Islam over a substantial Muslim minority, some 40 per cent of the population.

The *dakwa* movement promoted Islamic dress for women. Covering the hair and neck, and dress that concealed the body's contours, had already been practised by some pious Malay women including Zain. A hyper-ethnicised Malay identity, the "veiled, modest, maternal Muslim-Malay woman" came to the fore under *dakwa*. [76] Women were presented by the movement as the key to success in recasting ideological foundations and women's agency was used to refashion Malay-Muslim identity. The *tudung* was a visual representation of the division between the Islamised Malay woman and "others", both Malays and non-Malays. [77] Women's roles as wives and mothers were regarded as important in replenishing the Islamic moral community in both physical and moral terms, as well as possessing and transmitting Malay cultural resources. [78] Young women bore the moral burden of Malay society. [79] For them, *dakwa* meant

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[74] Othman, Puthucheary and Kessler, *Sharing the Nation*, (2008), p17.
[75] ibid, p22.
[76] Ng, Mohamad, and Beng Hui, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia*, (2006), p23.
[77] ibid.
[78] Frith, *Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood*, (2002), p15; Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, (1984), p99.
[79] Ong, "State versus Islam", (1990), p265.

domestication through veiling and subdued conduct. At the same time, Islamic dress became the "office dress" of career women. It enabled them to pursue careers without reproach and so gave Malay women a new sense of economic empowerment. The *dakwa* movement also promoted the development of leadership capacities in women because of its emphasis on segregation of the sexes in public life.

Malay Muslim womanhood remained a focus of Zain throughout her life and she used her school, which predates Malaysia's *dakwa* movement, to promote her agenda. *Kolej Puteri Tuanku Ampuan Mariam*, with Zain as Principal, opened in 1963. [80] The move to an Islamic college was a progression in her views on appropriate schooling for Malay girls. Zain aimed for a religious modernity in which Malay Muslims would be able to resist wholesale Westernisation. The school closed in the early 1980s, and Zain blamed its failure on Malay parents for not understanding her vision. [81] The style of female dress in Malaysia today ("Southeast Asian Islamic") could be seen at least in part as a realisation of Zain's views on a clothing style to induce Islamic behaviour and advertise Malay identity.

A consequence of the *dakwa* movement was that women became the site of the struggle between revivalist Islam and state power. Government rhetoric proclaimed women as bearers of cultural values, carriers of tradition, symbols of the Malay community and participants in state programs to strengthen Malay economic power in Malaysia. For *dakwa* activists, such presentation was also an explicit statement of the Islamic credentials of individuals and the badge of an

[80] Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*, (1987).
[81] Mahmuddin, "Ibu Zain: Ingin Melahirkan Puteri Islam", (1982).

observant Malay community within the state. [82] Existing roles of women were increasingly justified according to Islamic values: the devout Muslim woman encouraged and supported Muslim men. Such a woman did not have individual claims in the private, social and political domains, and should obey her husband in all things. With his permission, she could work in fields such as education or healthcare. At all times she should be modest, chaste, religious and a good example to other Muslim women. [83] The idea of educated Malay Muslim women as leaders of their communities can also be found in the publications and achievements of Zain.

The question of women's roles in Muslim societies is under continual discussion in Islamic nations around the world, and Malaysia is no exception. An increasing number of parents send their sons to madrasahs in countries such as Pakistan, and conservative Islamic views on the position of women influence Malaysian Islam. Will Zain's successors be able to ensure a place for Malay women in public? The answer is uncertain, but NEP policies that privileged ethnicity over gender and religion have had a significant impact. By 2004, female undergraduates in Malaysia outnumbered male students in public universities and female academics outnumbered male, although male academic staff dominated private institutions. Wealth and class have triumphed over gender and religion throughout Southeast Asia. In neighbouring Muslim Indonesia, where only 13 per cent of high school graduates go on to university, the ratio of female to male students is almost equal.[84] The position of Malay

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[82] Frith, *Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood*, (2002), p3.
[83] Nilufer Narli in ibid, p13.
[84] UNESCO (2006) Higher Education in Southeast Asia, Bangkok http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001465/146541e.pdf**.**

women in public life seems secure, though defining Malay womanhood remains controversial.

Conclusion

It is clear from my research that Malay women teachers were pioneers in changing the face of Malaya and the later state of Malaysia, and in expanding the roles of women in society. Post-Independence, the right of Malay women to work, enter politics and attend schools and higher education in a similar manner to Malay men was rarely questioned. The NEP and the *dakwa* movement entrenched the importance of Malay women in national identity and nation building, as well as in contributing to the economic prosperity of Malaysia as a whole. Government and bureaucrats still saw Malay women as crucial in their aims to raise the welfare of all Malays. Public figures such as "Ibu Zain" function as heroines and role models for tolerance in multi- racial Malaysia. But these Malay women and their ideas did not spring fully formed from the ashes of the Japanese Occupation. They were firmly grounded in the early part of the 20th century.

The aim of this thesis was to use a study of Zain as an entry point to examine girls' schools and educational opportunities for Malay women within the rapidly modernizing colony of 1920s and 1930s British Malaya. I also set out to discover the agenda of colonial-era Malay women schoolteachers and to determine how – or whether – their goals and achievements were recorded in published histories. I further sought to discover the ideas of Zain and her fellow Malay women teachers through examining their own publications, especially

Bulan Melayu, and then to establish the degree to which their ideals were realized. My research also illustrates the importance for scholars of acquiring research fluency in *jawi* script. The historian also needs to look beyond the 1920s and 1930s and assess the impact of these women and their ideas on contemporary Malaysian society.

The results of this research lead to two contrary findings. Firstly, giving Malay girls a limited education in *jawi* Malay and emphasizing the roles of wife and mother meant that many Malay women did not have the intellectual or practical experience and equipment to participate in Malaysian society on an equal footing with the women of other ethnic groups. Their participation required a national constitution which privileged Malays in political, religious and cultural terms, as well as the New Economic Policy and quotas favouring Malays for access to tertiary education, jobs, loans and contracts.

The second, contrary finding of this research is that the women who wanted Malay girls to stay in rural villages with an inferior education were those who fled the villages for more advanced education, salaries, jobs in the public sector, national and international travel and national recognition in the form of honours and awards. Such women relied on other women, less-educated and village-bound, to run their homes and raise their children. Zain and her colleagues did not themselves live the pious domesticity they advocated for other Malay women. By linking themselves to UMNO and Muslim Malay national identity, these women achieved some power in their Muslim society, outstripping Malaysian Chinese and Indian women, even as they left many other Malay women unable to participate fully in the globalizing Malaysian economy.

I have used biography and the study of *Bulan Melayu* as a way to unearth the voices and experiences of these women teachers that are otherwise obscured or overlooked in current histories and discourse. James Warren's work on Singapore showed how the lives of the poorest could be gleaned from coronial inquest records. [85] I have similarly attempted to reconstruct the lives of people often left out of the formal historical record, using a range of sources and both British and Malay perspectives. In this way, biography has proven a powerful means of exploring and illuminating lives and events. The voices of the Malay women teachers emerge in their own words, in as complete a context as I can manage, given the gaps in both primary and secondary sources. The entirety of this research has been informed by the relationship between biography and history, and the ways in which the life of one outstanding individual, such as Zain, can both illustrate and even drive changes through society as a whole.

Paying close historical attention to a particular group of Malay women illuminates important issues neglected in many publications and the discourse of nationalism in Malaysia, as well as illustrating new ways of looking at Malaysian nationalism, particularly the creation of a gendered and specifically Islamic Malay identity. Women need to be written into the history of Malaysia for its own sake, as well as theirs. The prospect of being involved in a new enterprise, such as defining the *bangsa* and the role of women within it, was immediately appealing to Malay women teachers. The activities of such women illustrate the collaborative nature of empire, as well as illuminating the ways in which the differences between the various male nationalist groups, based on social status, language of instruction and religious identification, did not necessarily hold true

[85] Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie*, (1986).

for the whole of Malay society. The women's writing also helps to chart the penetration of Malay society by new ideas such as nationalism.

Studying Zain also illustrates how history is manipulated for nation-building, in this case ethnic nation-building, as well as to give Malaysia an anti-colonial past. My use of a relatively unknown source, *Bulan Melayu*, illustrates changes in Malay outlook, the growing perception of a new state stretching beyond the boundaries of the Malay sultanates, and Malay women's thinking and writing on what it meant to be Malay. This research helps to fill a gap in historical knowledge. It opens the way for re-thinking the colonial period as a whole, and the findings have the potential to influence how the development of Malay identity and the role of Malay women in that historical process are understood in contemporary Malaysia. Malay women are often still left out of very recent scholarship. [86]

My research also helps to illustrate the fluidity of Malay identity. The process of defining, developing and performing Malay identity has always been in flux, responding to external and internal stresses and inspirations, in the context of external "others". As Kahn discusses, Malaysian history has come to take on the form of the national story of an indigenous race, the Malays, disadvantaged and marginalised by colonialism and foreign immigration before being rescued by the independent state guaranteeing Malay rights. [87] The definition of what it means to be "Malay" has continued from the colonial

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[86] Including Anthony Milner, *The Malays*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Lim Keck Ghee, Alberto Gomes, Rahman Azly (eds), *Multiethnic Malaysia: Past, Present and Future*, (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2009); Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Modern Muslim Identities: Negotiating Religion and Ethnicity in Malaysia*, (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2011).

[87] Kahn, *Other Malays*, (2006), pxv.

period, [88] but is not simply imposed by outside forces. Malay identity is developed and owned by Malays, in opposition to the other ethnic groups of Malaysia. Nationalist Malay narratives work to enforce ethnic differences, as well as the idea of "race" as the primary means of identification, [89] a viewpoint shared with the colonial period.

This thesis has also considered the special place of Johor in the history of Malaysia and of the Malay women teachers. Several of the currents identified throughout the course of this research still apply to the state. Johor has maintained strong links to Singapore, particularly in regard to the transfer and use of technology. In 2006, the *Iskandar Malaysia* was created, a special economic zone designed to capitalise on Johor's links to Singapore and its strengths in manufacturing and services. Johor still has a strong emphasis on education, including tertiary study and teacher training, and on Islam. All Muslim school students are required to attend Islamic religious schools as well as the standard national schools. *Jawi* is still used regularly for Islamic religious and Malay cultural matters, and the importance of the state in the history of Malay politics is recognised. Johor supports a strong Malay Muslim identity, and encourages Malays, male and female, to enter further training. However, increasing Malaysian homogeneity means that Johor may no longer provide such a unique environment for the growth of Malay women teachers as it did during the 1920s and 1930s.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify the effect that Zain and the Malay women teachers of Johor had on Malay society, especially post-

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[88] Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2001), p340.
[89] Hoffstaedter, *Modern Muslim Identities*, (2011), pp35, 49.

Independence. There are links between their earlier accomplishments and later developments in the roles of Malay women. The pioneering teachers of the colonial era went on to become politicians and bureaucrats, and they formed alliances with the male Malay politicians who shaped modern Malaysia and entrenched Malay political primacy within that nation state. However, it is hard to trace how much influence can be directly attributed to the Malay women teachers. Their goals were always limited. They sought only a primary level vernacular language education for Malay girls, and emphasised the primacy of women's roles as wives and mothers. They did not set out to remake Malay society, but to modify it to women's advantage by extending the scope of Malay women's roles within it. Their primary focus was addressing Malay women in the context of the Malay world. So many influences had similar effects on various groups within Malay society that it is nearly impossible to quantify how much the acceptance of schools for girls in independent Malaysia can be attributed to women such as Zain, to the political need for Malay primacy, to economic diversification and the importance of growing the Malaysian economy, or a combination of all of the above.

This research raises a number of avenues for future study. A full scholarly biography of Zain remains to be written, and further research on the degree to which the ideas, ideals and practices of the Malay women teachers affect policy and practice in contemporary Malaysia could be fruitfully undertaken. Further comparative studies of Malay women teachers and Malay women's organisations would also be useful. I have considered Johor and the Malay Women's Training College of Melaka; Mahani Musa has studied Kedah and some aspects of Singapore in depth. However, comparable studies remain to be done for the other

states of Malaysia, and there is no in-depth study of girls' schools and women teachers in Malaya and Malaysia as a whole. It would also be desirable to carry out a deeper exploration of British educational policy towards Malay girls from the perspective of the coloniser. Finally, it would be of significant interest to consider in more depth the ways in which Malay women wrote about Malay men, and vice versa.

It is important to emphasise the achievements of the Malay women teachers of the 1920s and 1930s, and to acknowledge that they did not act alone, but as part of broader movements reshaping Malayan society and Malay identity in the rapidly changing context of the colony. Such women are part of broader narratives which have been given varying prominence in Malaysian history. Zain has gone from being a teacher in the vernacular educational system who worked closely with the British to achieve advantages for Malay women and an advocate of Malay rights, to being a symbol of Independence, ethnic inclusion and Malaysian Islamic modernity. Both the real woman and the myths which grew up around her are fascinating, and deserving of further study. Like the publication they founded, Zain and her colleagues shine a light on and for Malay women, and their history and participation in public life. Zain's legacy is richer and deeper than her public persona suggests, and her achievements continue to resonate in contemporary Malaysia.

GLOSSARY

adat	Malay customary law, customs and traditions.
agama	Religion.
aided school	Schools which received government funding, but were not part of the government administered system.
Alam Perempuan	"Women's World", column in *Al-Imam*.
Al-Imam	Singapore-based modernist journal founded in 1906 by Al-Hadi.
alim	Singular form of *ulama.*
Bahagian Perempuan	The women's section of the magazine *Majallah Guru.*
bangsa	"Race", "nation" or "ethnic group". The idea of the *bangsa* arose under colonialism and in comparison to other ethnic groups. The term "*bangsa*" is linked to the construction of the idea of a Malay "race" on the Malay Peninsula.
Barisan Nasional	"National Front", an alliance of political parties including UMNO, the Malaysian Chinese Association and the Malaysian Indian Congress, among others.
Bulan Melayu (BM)	"Malay Monthly", journal founded by Zain in 1930
bumiputra	"sons of the soil", term covering male and female Malays.
dakwa	International Islamic revivalist movement, flourishing in Malaysia during the 1970s and 1980s.
fatwa	Islamic legal pronouncement in response to a question.
fiqh	Islamic jurisprudence.
Hadith	A collection of sayings on belief and practice attributed to Mohammad.
hajj	Pilgrimage to Mecca.
imam	Leader of prayers in mosque.

Institut Perguruan Perempuan Melayu (IPPM)	Current name for the Malay Women's Training College.
Islamic modernism	revival movement dating from late 19th century, centred on Al-Azhar Mosque, Cairo
jawi	Malay written in modified Arabic script.
Johore/Johor	Colonial and modern spellings respectively for the state of Johor.
Johor Bahru	Capital city of Johor, alternate colonial spelling is Johore Baharu.
kadi	Muslim judge.
kampung	Malay village.
kaum muda	Literally "new group" or Younger Generation, Malayan Islamic modernists.
Kaum Ibu UMNO (*KI* UMNO)	Women's wing of the United Malays National Organisation.
kaum tua	Existing Malay political and religious elites, main opponents of the *kaum muda*.
kerajaan	"Kingdom" or "government", refers to traditional Malay system of administration based on rule by a sultan.
khutbah	Sermon delivered in mosque on Friday.
Kolej Puteri Tuanku Ampuan Mariam	Islamic girls' school, founded by Zain in 1963.
Kumpulan Ibu Sepakat	United Women's Association, founded by Zain in Johor during or shortly after the Japanese Occupation.
Lembaran Guru	Teachers' magazine
madrasah	School for advanced studies of Islam.
Majallah Guru (*MG*)	"Teacher's Journal", published 1924-41.
Majlis Ugama dan Adat Isti'adat Melayu	The Council of Religion and Malay Culture, formed in 1915 in Kelantan.

Malacca/Melaka	Colonial and modern spellings respectively for the state of Melaka.
masok Melayu	To become Malay, to convert to Islam.
muezzin	Mosque official who summons the faithful to prayer.
mufti	Interpreter of Islamic law.
orang cina	Malay term for a Chinese person, has derogatory overtones in modern usage.
perempuan Melayu	Malay women.
Pergerakan Melayu Semenanjung Johor (PMS)	Johor Peninsular Malay Association.
Persekutuan Guru-Guru Perempuan Johore (PGGPJ)	Women Teachers' Association of Johor, see *PPMJ*.
Persekutuan Perempuan Melayu Johor (*PPMJ*)	The Malay Women's Association of Johor, founded by Zain in 1929.
pondok	Islamic boarding school for students.
rumi	Malay written in the Roman alphabet.
surau	Small Muslim prayer house.
Tanah Isteri	"Wives' Garden", column in *Al-Imam.*
Tanah Melayu	Malaya/Malay lands.
tudung	Headscarf which closely covers the hair, ears and neck, but leaves the face exposed.
ulama	Muslim scholars trained in Islam and Islamic law. Collective term for *alim.*
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation.

PERSONALIA

Abduh, Mohd	1849-1905, Egyptian scholar and reformer, founder of Islamic Modernism.
Abu Bakar, Sultan	1833-1895, Sultan of Johor, reigned 1862-95.
al-Afghani	1838-1897, Islamic modernist scholar and activist.
Al-Hadi, Sheik Syed	1867-1934, Malayan Islamic modernist and founder of a prominent *madrasah* as well as the Singapore-based modernist journal, *Al-Imam*.
Amin, Adibah	Teacher and journalist, eldest daughter of Zain, born 1936.
Amin, Fadzilah	Lecturer and columnist, middle daughter of Zain, date of birth not recorded in sources.
Amin, Shakib	Accountant and teacher, Zain's youngest son, born 1941.
Amin, Qasim	1863-1908, Egyptian Islamic Modernist who published discussions of the rights of Egyptian women.
Cheeseman, H.R.	Harold R. Cheeseman, British teacher and administrator.
Clementi, Cecil	1875-1947, Governor of the Straits Settlements 1929-34.
Elcum, E.C.	First Director of Education for the Straits Settlements, 1895-1915.
"Ibu Zain"	See Zain
Ibrahim, Sultan	1873-1959, Sultan of Johor, reigned 1895-1959.
Onn, Dato'	1895-1962, Government official, newspaper editor, author, and founder of UMNO.
Purdom, Miss	First Headmistress of the MWTC, later know as Mrs Irving. Details of her life are lacking in sources.
Rida, Rashid	1865-1935, Egyptian Islamic modernist.
Shellabear, William	1862-1848, Methodist missionary and translator of the Bible into Malay.
Sulaiman, Amin	Author and bureaucrat, husband of Zain.

Swettenham, Frank Athelstane	1850-1946, British administrator well known for his interest in the Malay language and as the first Resident General of the Federated Malay States (1896-1901) and Governor of the Straits Settlements (1901-4).
Wilkinson, R.J.	1867-1941, British educator and administrator, he held a number of positions in education and schools, and was later Resident of Negeri Sembilan and Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements.
Winstedt, Richard Olaf	1878-1966, prominent educator and author of the Winstedt report. Straits Settlements Assistant Director of Education (Malay) from 1916 to 1921, and Director from 1924-31.
Za'ba (Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad)	1895-1973, one of the best known SITC graduates and authors. From 1924-39 he was employed at the SITC as a translator.
Zainon Munshi Sulaiman/ Zain Sulaiman	1903-1989. Malay schoolteacher, Supervisor, author, editor, nationalist campaigner, politician and contemporary Malaysian heroine. Founded the *PPMJ* and edited *Bulan Melayu*. Known in contemporary Malaysia as "Ibu Zain".

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CO273/601/23 *Proposed Training Centre For Malay Women Teachers at Malacca* 1934

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CO273/616/14 *Education Policy and Memorandum* 1936/7

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CO273/655/14 *Education Department Mistress 2nd Class* 1939

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CO717/102/15 *Education Report Johore* 1933

CO717/107/6 *Education Code*

CO717/111/12 *Education Report Johore* 1934

CO717/112/1 *Education Policy Johore*

CO717/117/9 *Education Report Johore* 1935

CO717/119/1 *Education Report Federated Malay States* 1935

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