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‘A Malayan Girlhood on Parade’: Colonial Femininities, Transnational Mobilities and the Girl Guide Movement in British Malaya

Jialin Christina WU

In 1938, news of a group of Malayan-Chinese Scouts venturing to China to aid the wounded during the Sino-Japanese War made the headlines in the English and the Chinese press in British Malaya.¹ *The Singapore Free Press* described the ‘supreme sacrifice’ and the ‘epic’ of these ‘doomed youths’ in the following manner:

The highest traditions of the Scout movement have been heroically fulfilled by 16 overseas Chinese Scouts from the Straits Settlements, ten of whom have been killed, two wounded and the remaining four reported missing while engaged in front-line service with the Chinese armies [...] Most of them came from families of high standing in the Peninsula. Led by capable and beautiful Miss Mack Swee Cheng, the only daughter of a wealthy Chinese sugar merchant in Singapore, the group reached Canton on Oct. 1, where they were sent for further first-aid and army training by the Overseas Affairs Commission Officials there [...] four remaining girls actually took part in guerrilla warfare while the Scouts were again occupied in dispatch-running and rescuing the wounded.²

This extract is intriguing on many levels. First, it commemorates the vigour of Chinese youth despite concurrent fears in the colony over ‘the superfluous energy of Straits-born Chinese’.³ Was it because these youths were acting within the colonial-sanctioned framework of Scouting? Second, the extract above draws attention to the ways in which youth movements facilitated the increasingly visible participation of the young in key international events. But perhaps the most arresting aspect of this report is the positive and glowing support of female participation at the front-lines. We should note that an adolescent Girl Guide is the leader of

this gender-mixed group of Scouts and Guides. We note further that these girls had even engaged in combat. How, then, can we reconcile these examples of youthful feminine agency with contradictory conventions in the interwar period, which dictated that Chinese girls were ‘not allowed out [...] had to stay at home and were not seen’?⁴

This paper argues that transnational youth movements such as Guiding opened up space for alternative expression and forms of girlhood and womanhood for indigenous girls and women in British Malaya.⁵ Initially established in Britain in 1910, Guiding quickly extended its reach beyond the metropole. By 1917, women educators and church workers, inspired by Guiding’s development and impact in Britain, had already inaugurated the movement in Malaya.⁶ As Guiding grew in strength and importance in Malaya, the movement introduced alternative social and cultural references of concepts such as the body, leisure activities, ‘proper’ womanhood and age – all of which had bearings upon indigenous girlhood. The flow and exchange of ideas concerning ‘proper’ girlhood and activities for Malayan girls were not one-directional, however. Guiding’s perspectives on ‘proper’ girlhood were also open to interpretation and used as tools by Malaysians to further their own purposes and aspirations.

In adopting a transnational approach concentrating upon the flows of ideas on girlhood through Guiding in Malaya, this paper adds to extant literature on gender and colonial studies. In the first part of this essay, our study of Guiding’s impact on concepts of ‘proper’ womanhood and girlhood contributes towards our understanding of power relations between colonials and colonised in Malaya. Specifically, this section analyses colonial aims of introducing and positioning Guiding, a ‘western’ activity for girls, as an ‘emancipatory’ and a ‘wholesome’ activity juxtaposed against other ‘unsavoury’ and traditional ‘oriental’ forms of indigenous girlhood. In doing so, this essay extends and builds upon the work of researchers such as Janice Brownfoot, who has argued that women educators (or ‘sisters under the skin’,

as Brownfoot puts it) used Guiding to ‘emancipate local girls within a “traditional” framework by schooling them to be competent, healthy future wives and mothers, able to run hygienic homes’.⁷ However, this essay differs from Brownfoot’s analysis by underlining that these colonial uses of Guiding were considered by some communities in Malaya as a ‘tentative to penetrate into the social and economic lives of the indigenous population’,⁸ as well as an encroachment into the domestic spheres of Malaysians. Power relations between colonials and colonised, as well as *amongst* indigenous girls, were also negotiated through Guiding. As the oral histories of indigenous Guides in our second section illustrates, Malayan Guides asserted themselves as the equals of European or British Guides/Guiders through Guiding. Through their status as Guides, some indigenous girls also positioned themselves as elites *vis-à-vis* their contemporaries who did not have the opportunity to become Guides.

Our focus on the negotiation and construction of girlhood in Malaya as transnational processes further allows us to delve into a more nuanced analysis of the similarities and differences between gender norms and women’s activities amongst colonial and colonised girls in Britain and the colonies. Consider, as case in point, Guiding’s introduction of ‘mothercraft’ and its impact upon indigenous girlhood in Malaya. While scholars have asserted that these elements of guide training were locked within a “traditional” framework’ and that in contrast, some ‘[British] girls wanted adventure, not “home training”’,⁹ the oral accounts of indigenous Guides challenge these viewpoints as indigenous Guides interpreted and considered ‘mothercraft’ not as a form of ‘traditional’ training, but as one of the many ‘skills’ or ‘proficiency badges’ which they could earn to prove their ‘efficiency’. The label ‘traditional’ also becomes problematic in the colonial context as Guiding’s ‘mothercraft’ training in equatorial Malaya consisted of non-conventional/non-traditional instructions such as preparing ‘English tea’ with tea cosies and the ‘British style’ of bed-making with several sheets – even though most Malaysians slept on mats in the equatorial heat of British Malaya

instead.¹⁰ Seen in this light, the use of a transnational approach – one encompassing the perspectives of indigenous girls – thus leads us towards a more careful and nuanced analysis of Guiding's programme of 'mothercraft' in its broad reach and 'pervasive appeal across British imperial culture and throughout the empire.'¹¹

The connections between Malayan Guiding and transnational events are further explored in the third section of this paper. This section discusses Malayan Guiding's development amongst girls of different ethnicities by analysing the movement's connections with international political developments, such as World War II and the rise of Communism in Southeast Asia. In particular, this section concentrates upon Malayan Chinese girls as a case study to illustrate the *unevenness* of Guiding's influence amongst indigenous girls of a 'disaporic' and multi-ethnic Malaya. Some of these regional politics complemented the changes that Guiding brought to Malayan girlhood. In other circumstances, however, these events also challenged the ideals or values that Guiding aimed to inculcate. Through these many ways, I argue, Guiding thus proved itself to be at the heart of negotiations and conceptions of femininity and indigenous girlhood in Malaya.

'Emerging from their seclusion': Colonial girlhood(s) and the introduction of Guiding in Malaya

Guiding's establishment in Britain in 1910 had an immediate ripple effect throughout the empire. In British Malaya, colonial society was quick to follow the movement's developments at 'Home' in the metropole.¹² Journals in the colony kept abreast of the debates in England over the 'appropriateness' of a youth movement for girls. For instance, in 1910, Singapore's *The Straits Times* published Agnes Baden-Powell's (co-founder of the Girl Guides) rebuttal to a series of angry criticisms made by Violet Markham in Britain over 'this rapidly growing army of young women.'¹³ Other reports and editorials on Guiding soon

followed. By the early 1920s, one newspaper observed that Guiding had generated such interest amongst the general public that ‘many in Singapore have wished to know the aims and ideals of the Girl Guide movement.’¹⁴ In many ways, international events and developments beyond Malaya motivated colonial officials and members of the English-speaking community to encourage Malayan Guiding in its early days. Metropolitan attitudes on the benefits of women’s work in ‘building up resources after the havoc of the [First World] War’,¹⁵ as well as concurrent beliefs that Guiding could train girls to become ‘worthy and useful citizeness[es] by imparting the ‘art of womanliness’ convinced colonials that ‘the necessity for such [Guide] training [was] urgent and pressing’ in the colony.¹⁶ Some thus declared their desire to ‘unblushingly commend’ Guiding as an ‘[object] to be supported’.¹⁷ Official endorsement also came in 1920 when the Foreign Office urged that ‘[a]ll possible encouragement and support’ should be given to the Guide movement in order ‘to foster a greater spirit of solidarity amongst the British communities in foreign countries and to make British ideals more generally known and appreciated by foreign nations’.¹⁸

Other than the target of creating useful ‘citizenesses’ and propagating British ideals for the purposes of empire, many also supported the movement because it represented a ‘British ideal’ of girlhood that was ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’. To them, Guiding’s ‘western’ or British version of girlhood was ‘emancipatory’, whereas indigenous girlhood was juxtaposed as ‘conservative’ and ‘shackled by age-old traditions and customs.’¹⁹ One example of this colonial-positioning of British/Guiding’s version of girlhood as ‘modern’ and superior can be seen from their use of quasi-technical terms such as ‘mothercraft’ and ‘domestic science’ to describe Guide training.²⁰ In relation, colonial assumptions that Guide training in ‘mothercraft’ would liberate indigenous girls because it ‘would at least be teaching the present generation how to look after their homes and babies’,²¹ presupposes that indigenous women were incapable of doing so themselves. For these reasons, Guiding’s advocates stressed the

value of introducing ‘a movement so wholesome, absorbing and useful’ because ‘a broader and healthier view of life and its possibilities is at once opened up.’²² In this way, Guiding brought about novel notions of a ‘modern’ and ‘progressive girlhood for indigenous girls in Malaya. As one writer opined in *The Malayan Saturday Post* in 1925:

It is of course traditional that women in the East have long suffered from disabilities from which their sisters in other parts of the world have long been free. This is due to the inert conservatism of the Chinese and of the other races which form the bulk of our populations; but that conservatism is steadily giving place to more free thought and to a wider idea of the possibilities of women’s emancipation [...] when women become fully enfranchised [...] there will be less chance of the growing scandal which has been the subject of so much Press comment lately – we refer of course to the question of prostitution, etc. There is, however, a very fine training ground for women of which they may take full advantage, and which is at present of topical interest. We refer to the question of the Girl Guides [...]²³

The ‘question of prostitution’ evoked above unveils another motivation for colonials to promote the movement. Guiding could help curb unsavoury, sexualised forms of indigenous girlhood which threatened ‘social hygiene’.²⁴ As the Social Hygiene Advisory Committee urged in 1925, ‘in the case of the Chinese child, who is said to have full knowledge of sex matters at a comparatively early age [...] the Committee refers to the value of recreation as the best antidote to sexual temptation; the provision of recreational facilities; the value of Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and the Y.M.C.A.’²⁵ Indeed, colonials were alarmed that Malayan children were both physically and sexually at risk because they could be forced to become child prostitutes, bondmaids, or ‘*mui tsais*’,²⁶ as well as child brides or ‘child-mothers’.²⁷ As one writer publicly complained to *The Straits Times* in 1924, the colony was ‘full of this sort of thing [...] A few months ago the courts were filled with girls of all ages suffering from

venereal diseases raked out from all sorts of nooks and corners.’²⁸ Others were equally shocked by cases of cruelty to *mui tsias*, such as in 1929 ‘when a terrified young Chinese girl [was discovered] hiding under [a Chinese man’s] bed and bleeding from a nasty wound on the head.’²⁹ Since colonials believed that ‘the domestic servitude of girls (the *Mui Tsai* system) has been a recognised institution of Chinese life’, which made it difficult for officials to intervene,³⁰ some thus urged the use of Guiding as a bridge for Western women to get closer to Asian women and effect changes for indigenous girls.³¹ One journalist openly appealed to Western women in this fashion in 1940: ‘A characteristic which is as strong in Asiatic people as in Europeans is the dislike of being interfered with in the home’, noted the author. ‘But perhaps one of the best ways of doing welfare work is indirectly through the children. An excellent medium is by means of “Brownie” packs and companies of “Girl Guides”.’³²

Women educators, missionaries, as well as the wives of planters and other colonials did come into closer contact with indigenous women and girls through Guiding. This was mainly due to the movement’s policy to admit all girls, ‘of any religion, race or nation.’³³ For instance, one Girl Guide Report noted with approval in 1922 that ‘[in] Perak is one of the most cosmopolitan companies to be found anywhere, one company in Taiping consisting of English, Malay, Chinese, Tamil, Cingalese [Sinhalese], Sikh and Eurasian girls, all of whom work happily together.’³⁴ When some indigenous girls in the Malay States were unable to join the movement due to technical obstacles such as Guiding’s proviso that girls had to be British Subjects, pioneering Guiders assisted the training of indigenous leaders and units which later independently mushroomed in vernacular schools throughout these states.³⁵ As Malayan Chief Commissioner Cavendish enthusiastically elaborated in her report on ‘Training Week’ at Penang in 1926, ‘everyone told us it was too big a risk to collect 45 girls of so many different Nationalities together. This, however, proved nonsense [...] It was really wonderful how all these girls of so many different nationalities and creeds mixed together, and were all so happy

and friendly'. Thus concluded Cavendish: 'It is only through Guiding that this could have been made possible, for they would never dream in their ordinary life before they became Guides of eating or sleeping together as they did [in camp]'.³⁶ However, while British Guiders such as Cavendish considered contact between European and indigenous Guides as a manifestation of Guiding's ideals of *equality*, Malayan Guides had different, but equally profound interpretations of this aspect of Guiding. As we shall see, Guiding's vision of establishing an 'international sisterhood' by enabling a girl to 'not only [be] a Girl Guide of Penang or Province Wellesley, but a member of the big Sisterhood which is spread all over the world,'³⁷ would also be utilised by indigenous Guides as a step up the colonial social ladder.

Despite colonial support, many indigenous parents were initially reluctant to allow their daughters and wards to join the movement. Myna Segeram, a Sinhalese Guide in Singapore during the 1930s, recalled her childhood struggle to join the Guides. '[My] aunty said: "Oh, no no no – you can't join *that*, those are not the right things for you to join. We are Sinhalese girls." We had to be quite sedate about these things. I was quite young and I couldn't fight against it.' According to Segeram, girls of her community were 'very strictly brought up [...] so [by joining the movement] I would probably be betraying the Sinhalese trust.' More importantly, emphasised Segeram, 'there might be people making remarks about it – that she [Segeram's aunt] wasn't bringing me up properly. Any *outside movement* wasn't seen as proper.'³⁸

Segeram's use of the word 'proper' is especially illustrative of the views held by some indigenous parents. To begin with, some labelled Guiding as 'improper' because of its 'Christian' and British connotations. In particular, they were wary that the movement would encroach into the privacy of their domestic spheres by converting their daughters to Christianity and jeopardising their daughters' religious faith. As Zanan binte Suleiman, the first Malay Guide, recalled: 'Everybody was against my father [who sent her to an English

school, where she became a Guide]. They said I would be spoilt and become a Christian [...] No other Malay girls were allowed to play with me.’³⁹ Second, Malayan parents and adults also felt that Guiding was not ‘proper’ because they believed Guiding was ‘tom-boyish’ and ‘un-ladylike’. Indeed, as Segeram’s memories illustrate, Guide activities harboured connotations of danger and inappropriate masculinity:

When I used to take my Guides out on a nature ramble, the person-in-charge would always howl out to me and say: ‘Bring them back alive!’ [...] Every time we went out we had wolf whistles and things, especially if we were going to camp with our knapsacks on [...] but we enjoyed ourselves and we didn’t bother about all that [...] My servants, when I used to go to camp, for instance, [would say] ‘Oh I know, now you’re a young soldier and you go to camp.’⁴⁰

Certainly, these labels contradicted indigenous ideals of girlhood and early Guiders felt pressurised to counter these allegations. To assuage religious Malay parents wary of Guiding’s ‘Christian values’, Guiders stressed that Malay Guides would ‘conform to Muslim religion where dress is concerned. Their uniforms will have long sleeves, keep their heads covered with berets and [the Guides will] wear long stockings.’⁴¹ Similarly, in order to play down Guiding’s ‘masculine’ qualities, Chief Guide Lady Olave Baden-Powell urged Guiders who, ‘knowing the customs and traditions of the people, could put our case tactfully before [Malayans], giving most especially the point of view that we are a women’s movement for girls, designed for developing health and homemaking.’⁴² Newspapers published articles in Guiding’s favour, emphasising that ‘there is nothing military about [Guiding] and the girls are trained to become future women citizens, home-keepers and mothers.’⁴³ Others persuaded parents not to ‘run away with the idea that the Girl Guides are pert young persons who look out for strangers’ – as ‘amongst the Girl Guides they were teaching mothercraft, teaching the girls to look after children, their health, and above all, their moral training.’⁴⁴

Although colonials and Guiders took pains to convince indigenous parents of the benefits of Guiding's 'modern training', certain parents remained hesitant because some activities purportedly beneficial for future womanhood clashed with indigenous notions of age-appropriate activities for girls at their physical stage of life. These activities did not only include stereotypically 'masculine' physical tasks such as drills, sports and exercise.⁴⁵ Parents considered various aspects of Guiding's 'modern feminine training', such as the use of sewing machines, to be physically debilitating and age-inappropriate because the machines implicitly 'excited' or stimulated sexual precocity in girls. Segeram explains:

In former days, ten-and-a-half to about thirteen were the very crucial years in a girl's life, [because of] puberty and things. Very often, conservative parents would say: 'Now, it's finished, that's finished. Now, it's risky for you to be out. Now you stay at home[...] No more jumping around, it's bad for the girl.' We were discouraged from using treadle [sewing] machines, for instance. Because apparently the pelvis – the pelvic region – shouldn't be all 'excited' [...] That was discouraged, [people were] saying: 'It's very bad for the girls. That's for men to use.'⁴⁶

Segeram's account draws our attention to another manner in which Guide training ran contrary to local conventions on the (female) body and age-appropriate activities. Since girls usually first enrolled as Guides at this particular age (ten to thirteen), Guiding directly competed with other traditional paths of girlhood such as 'child-marriages', which were often sanctioned by local religious beliefs that determined puberty as the threshold for womanhood – and marriage. According to Segeram, this explained why '[w]e used to have scores, thousands of [younger] Brownies, but the Guides were always *depleted*.'⁴⁷ At the same time, while Guiding was not completely accepted by Malayan parents in the beginning, the movement did introduce new visions of alternative girlhood in the colony early on, as the movement opened up possibilities of recreation and activity for Malayan girls at this critical

physical age/stage of life. On top of the introduction of Guiding as an alternative to child-marriages for some Malayan girls, the movement also had a more *immediate* impact upon child-marriages. For instance, in the 1940s, Singapore's first Malay District Guide Commissioner encouraged parents to let their daughters become Guides so that they could be taught 'mothercraft' – according to the Commissioner, Malay girls could 'learn to be good wives and mothers so as to make their homes more secure and cut down the high Malay divorce rate' which was believed to be linked to the prevalence of child-marriages in the colony.⁴⁸ In this way, Guiding gradually introduced not only new concepts of girlhood and age – its agenda of "mothercraft", as discussed earlier, was also (re)interpreted and appropriated by some Malaysians for the interests of their community.

Indigenous parental suspicions slowly eroded as prominent indigenous leaders, such as Malay Royalty, openly embraced Guiding. As some Malayan Guiders have explained, 'women of the Sultans' household in the Malaya states took to the Guide Movement enthusiastically', thereby giving 'a fillip to other Muslim women and girls' to join Guiding.⁴⁹ One striking gesture of Royal support is found in 1934, when the Sultana of Johore crafted and embroidered a flag in order to '[present] it personally to the First Johore Bahru Girl Guide Company'. At the meeting, the Sultana also 'entertained those present to a Malay "*makan*" [meal] following which the Johore National Anthem was sung.'⁵⁰ Malay Royals viewed Guiding positively as they believed the movement was also training girls to become future loyal Malayan citizens. Indeed, many interpreted Guiding's lofty ambitions of creating 'citizenesses' for their own purposes. As the above anecdote demonstrates, indigenous rulers did not see any contradiction in supporting a 'British method' to promote faithful Malayan citizens; notably, we observe that these Malay Guides and Brownies sung the Johore National Anthem in the presence of the Sultana, thereby pledging their loyalty to their State and monarchy. Yet another example of Royal acceptance of Guide methods is seen in 1931, when

the Sultan of Selangor, along with his entourage of equally esteemed Malay dignitaries, personally attended the enrolment of Malay Brownies gathered ‘in a fairy ring’.⁵¹ Through these Royal endorsements, some Malay parents came to accept Guiding as a legitimate activity for their daughters.

‘Being Somebody Grand’? Indigenous perspectives of Malayan Guiding

While some Malayan parents were initially doubtful about Guiding, many indigenous girls seemed to have needed little persuasion to join the Guides. First, indigenous girls considered Guiding to be special or even ‘elite’ because prominent leaders and personalities were actively involved. We see this in the two examples above, as Malay Guides and Brownies had the unique opportunity of interacting with Malay Royalty. Similarly, as Chan Siok Fong, a Chinese Guide in Kuala Lumpur in the late 1940s reminisced, Guiding enabled her to interact with ‘high society women’ and the wives of ‘high-ranking [British] officials’ such as the Chief Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur. According to Chan, her involvement with Guiding also permitted her to enter colonial spaces otherwise restricted to her in the 1940s. As Chan explains, she was able to ‘hike along the Lake Gardens path, a very famous place in K.L. [Kuala Lumpur], with [the Chief Commissioner’s] permission [...] It made me think at that time – “Wow, as Guides you really get special privileges to be able to walk on the fields of this *posh* Lake Gardens.”’⁵²

Malayan girls esteemed Guiding to be elite because each Guide became ‘part of a great sisterhood’ after having ‘made the same promises of service and friendship.’⁵³ Interestingly, Guiding’s non-sectarian aims of equality, ‘applying equally to the children of our manufacturing towns, to the native girls of India and to the girls of the feminine equivalents of Eton and Harrow,’⁵⁴ paradoxically made Malayan Guides elite because they were thus on an equal footing with European girls. One example of how indigenous girls

perceived the social elevation that Guiding offered them can be seen in the memories of Elizabeth Choy, who became a Guide in Sandakan (and later, in Singapore) in 1925. Choy described herself as ‘the first wild woman from Borneo [who was] given a private audience with the Queen’ when she was in London to accept the Girl Guide’s Bronze Cross for her wartime efforts from Lady Baden-Powell herself.⁵⁵ To Choy, such an honour would not have been possible but for the fact that she was a Guide. Another example of how Guiding also emboldened Malayan girls as equal partners can be seen in Chan’s experiences. In the capacity of the first Chief Commissioner for Singapore in the 1950s, Chan had to test some British girls on their outdoor cooking. She recalled:

Now, British girls, they were so used to being superior, the boss [...], because they were the colonialists. Asians, somehow, [were] second grade to them. But I went down to test these girls and I remember these girls took their test along Changi Beach. And one blast of wind came along. The sand went into her food. And secondly, by the side of her fire, there were bushes of *lalang* [tall weeds] – it was very dangerous. I learnt that when I was a Guide [...] So I failed her. When I failed her there was a big hullabaloo that I failed the British girls. It went *right up to England*. The Chief Commissioner of England wrote to me, want[ing] me to write a report [on] why I failed these girls, so I wrote a report and they were satisfied [...] I laid out every point and said: ‘Now, *you* tell me, do *you* think these girls can be passed?’ So she [the Chief Commissioner of England] wrote back a letter to apologise.⁵⁶

Chan’s choice of words is particularly illuminative. First, we observe that even as late as the 1960s, some Guiders felt they were treated as ‘second grade’ despite the movement’s non-sectarian claims. Yet, importantly, Guides such as Chan were able to rise through the ranks and were even able to use their experience in Guide training (note her expressions: ‘I learnt that when I was a Guide’) to assert her authority (‘so I wrote a report and they were satisfied’;

‘I laid out every point and said: “Now, *you* tell me [...]”’; ‘she wrote back a letter to apologise’) *within* the organisational framework of Guiding.

The Girl Guide uniform was another aspect of the movement which attracted Malayan girls. As Myna Segeram puts it: ‘I wanted very much to be a Brownie [...] they were playing games, they were singing, they had a uniform on and that *really* got me.’⁵⁷ Her choice of words reveals the priority and importance of the uniform in comparison to the other allures of the movement. Through the recollections of other Guides, we also note that the uniform was important because it made local Guides feel important – or, as one Guide put it, ‘somebody grand’.⁵⁸ Myra Cresson, a Eurasian Guide in the 1920s, recalled her childlike excitement:

[W]hen we had this Girl Guide uniform – this Brownie uniform – we thought it was fantastic: Oh! We were somebody grand, we were always looking forward to be dressed up [...] When you come to think about it you’ll laugh instead – these big shore hats turned up one side, we had stockings and we had these big sand shoes [...] when we came home it [our feet were] all stuck to this rubber – oh it was horrible – Ah! [But] sure, we loved our uniform, we thought we were grand [...]⁵⁹

Indigenous girls regarded Guiding to be exclusive as not every girl had the chance to become a Guide. In the case of girls who did not become Guides, sources indicate that Guiding kept its appeal and became even more coveted. As Rani Arumugam, an Indian schoolgirl growing up in Johor Bahru (Selangor) in the 1930s, admitted:

I didn’t have the opportunity to join the Girl Guides or the Brownies [...] Fortunately, my sister was also very keen. She managed to get into one of the Malay schools in the neighbourhood and she became a Guide. I used to follow her sometimes and *envy* her secretly. I wished, *one day*, that I too would be a Guide [...] Though I was not in the Guides, I was so keen to have a copy of the photo [of the Guides] that I ordered it.⁶⁰

‘Envy’, the word used by Arumugam to describe her disappointment in not being able to become a Guide, curiously also appears in Segeram’s recollections and impressions of how her other non-Guide schoolmates regarded Guiding:

[I]n fact they looked up to us, because they thought we were special [...] In school we had quite a number of girls who were not allowed to join Guides [...] They were probably from more conservative families. [Their parents] said: ‘No, you can’t go, you go to school and you come back. That’s quite enough.’ [...] So in that way, we felt that those girls sort of envied us. And they sort of felt they were losing out on something [...] now that I look back, I feel that we were privileged because we were able to do a lot of things that they weren’t able to do.⁶¹

The accounts above also demonstrate that Malayan girls were aware that Guiding opened new avenues and possibilities for indigenous girls. As Segeram declared, Guides ‘were able to do a lot of things that they [non-Guides] weren’t able to do.’ Indeed, she also stressed Guiding’s unique position and capacity in enabling girls to do what they wished:

Our proficiency badges ran to about a hundred, and all sorts of abilities were stressed there – which [we] could acquire according to our own wishes – [there were] girls who took the astronomer’s badge [...] or the nature badge; tree cutting, felling trees and things. That wouldn’t be the usual thing that women would go for. But they are available to the Guide [...] you could do what you felt [...] There wasn’t any other place where you could do that [...] I think to an adolescent girl, you want to do things, at their own level, and still feel that you’re being rewarded for that.⁶²

Similarly, we observe this sentiment through the memories of Elizabeth Choy, who recalled with admiration how her fellow Guide Isabel Low, ‘who was a slave girl who was redeemed from the *towkay* [boss]’ had ‘earned so many badges [...] learned how to play the piano [...]

and tennis' through the movement.⁶³ For these Guides, the movement had empowered them to reach goals which would have otherwise been unattainable.

In relation to the above, some Malayan Guides also believed that Guide activities made them stronger women. Through Guide training, they could be 'proud to be a woman, [for] you are able to look after yourself and others – not necessarily being envious that the males, the boys, had all the privileges – [as] you could make a stand for yourself and enjoy living.'⁶⁴ Indeed, it is striking that indigenous Guides saw the movement's goals of teaching girls to be 'home-keepers and mothers' not as limiting them to 'female subordinate roles' – but simply or quite practically, as one of the many training opportunities for them to 'prove their efficiency and climb up the Guide hierarchy. As Segeram elucidates, 'it was grand that in Guides, we were taught how to sweep and how to dust [and] how to wash clothes – [it was] all part of our training, our proficiency badges.' When questioned if the Guides were thus conforming to 'female subordinate stereotypes' because of the emphasis on 'good housekeeping', Segeram interjected: '*that* wasn't the idea in our minds, as girls, when we joined. You got that badge, and that other badge, so you were *efficient* in that. It's a *proficiency* badge – that means you're *proficient* in it.' To Guides such as Segeram, it was thus the act of obtaining a badge and recognition, as well as proving one's capabilities (proficiencies) which mattered. Furthermore, Segeram adds:

[Homemaking] wasn't the only quality we emphasised. We emphasised also the outdoor [...] Although some people sort of looked at us and said: 'Now, those are the tomboys going about', there were others who said, 'Well, they are not doing anything bad – it's much better doing that rather than going to a cabaret or something like that.' So there were people who were getting a bit more broad minded and now, of course, it's the accepted thing that a Guide – *that a girl* – can just go off on her own [...] But it

was something that was developed, [it] was new. Doors were being opened to feminists[...]⁶⁵

Her experiences also reveal to us how some indigenous girls saw Guiding retrospectively as a propeller of ‘broad-mindedness’ and ‘feminism’ in the colony. As Segeram emphasised, members of the public gradually came to defend Guide activities previously judged as ‘tom-boyish’. Furthermore, her account of how some Malaysians commented that ‘it’s much better doing that [Guiding] rather than going to a cabaret’ also reflects her impressions of Guiding’s growing reputation as a ‘wholesome’ activity as compared to other undesirable or ‘vulgar’ and sexualised forms of girl/womanhood. More importantly, as Segeram highlights in her account, some of these changes in public attitude also extended to other non-Guide indigenous girls. Indeed, some in the colony praised the new image of ‘modern Malayan girlhood’, emphasising that ‘women [had] left the seclusion of their homes, throwing off the dusty and heavy mantle of tradition, to enter a new world just as their Western sisters had done.’⁶⁶ As the recollections of Malayan Guides demonstrate, Guiding thus created space for negotiations on indigenous girlhood by effecting changes to traditional cultural mind sets in the colony.

‘If you wear khaki you are less likely to see red’: International Politics and the Case of Malayan Chinese Guiding (1930s – 1960s)

As Guiding made inroads in Malaya, its development was *uneven* among the diverse ethnicities in the colony. This unevenness was especially acute amongst girls in vernacular (non English-medium) schools, since Malayan girls in English schools had more opportunities to become Guides. As case in point, while Chinese vernacular schools formed their first Guide company in 1938, their Malay counterparts had already started Guiding by 1931 – almost a decade earlier.⁶⁷ To understand these discrepancies in Guiding’s progress, it is essential to keep in mind that many in Malaya largely identified themselves along racial and religious

lines. Consequently, ethnic communities in Malaya had different motivations, attitudes and interests in Guiding and girlhood at large. Furthermore, the ‘diasporic’ nature of some important Malayan towns (such as Singapore) also meant that the various ethnic communities were intimately aware and connected to Malaya’s bigger and more influential regional neighbours such as India, Indonesia (Dutch East Indies) and China – where many had emigrated from.⁶⁸ Thus, other than the differences of culture and traditions between these ethnic groups, political events related to India, Indonesia and China also influenced Guiding’s growth in Malaya.

World War II was one such event which had dissimilar impacts on indigenous Guides of various ethnicities in Malaya. To illustrate these differences, while the War did not have an immediate repercussion on Malay girls, Malayan Chinese girls were profoundly affected because they were given more freedom, visibility and importance as China became increasingly involved in the War (or the Sino-Japanese War).⁶⁹ Some of these new liberties for Malayan Chinese girls came with the inauguration of Nationalist China’s ‘New Life Movement’ (新生活运动) in 1938 in Malaya.⁷⁰ Chinese girls and womanhood were thrown into the spotlight as influential figures such as Madame Chiang Kai-Shek (Song Meiling) who spearheaded the Movement, reported that ‘many girl students [were] receiving military training’ and ‘lead[ing] the life of a soldier [...] All this was just only a fraction of what the women of China have done for their country during the war.’⁷¹

Malayan Chinese Guides were directly as well as doubly influenced by the growing attention and new expectations of Chinese girlhood in the exigencies of war. First, these Guides were prominent in the colony because of their uniforms and the fact that they were organised into collective units or ‘companies’. Their visibility thus made it easy for others to point them out as a representative body for Chinese girls in the colony. Furthermore, in their

capacity as visible ambassadors of Malayan Chinese girlhood, Guides were targets for rousing nationalistic slogans, which emphasised good citizenship and ‘loyalty to their country’ – basic tenets in Guiding’s Promise and Laws. Guides were thus implicated in the war, as exemplified in a number of Malayan newspapers, which emphasised: ‘The [Chinese] Girl Guides are also playing their part in the war. Of the 78,793 Girl Guides enrolled in China, 241 are giving service at the front.’⁷²

Second, Malayan Chinese Guides were also influenced by their sister Guides in China, who were under the immediate control of Chiang Kai-Shek’s Guomintang (国民党) as early as 1927.⁷³ An example of this influence, as well as the close connection between Malayan Chinese and Chinese Guides, can be seen in the warm Malayan reception of Yang Hui Min, a Shanghainese Girl Guide who had ‘risked her life [...] while the Japanese were still firing’ to smuggle a Republic of China flag and other essential supplies to besieged soldiers.⁷⁴ While some would have considered Yang’s front-line exploits as inappropriately dangerous and ‘masculine’ before the war, Malaysians now held up the Shanghainese Guide’s example as a model of ‘modern’ Chinese womanhood. Through the Guide movement, Yang, much like her fellow Malayan Chinese Guides (Mack Swee Chang and her comrades in our opening example), were thus active agents at the forefront of this shift in traditional cultural norms and ideals of womanhood in Malaya.

The rise of Communism in Asia also had profound, albeit different, repercussions for Malayan Chinese Guides and Chinese girlhood-at-large. Once again, Malayan Chinese girls appear to be more affected by this regional development as compared to girls of other ethnicities. For one, Communism’s expansion in the region, which culminated in the declaration of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, inspired Malayan Chinese nationalists and fired the imaginations of impressionable Malayan Chinese youths of a future Communist

Malaya. British colonials were acutely sensitive to this politicisation of youths in post-war Malaya. Indeed, on top of Communism's quick progress amongst young Malaysians, colonials were aware that their authority had been shaken by their defeat at the hands of an Asian power, Japan, during World War II in Asia. In these circumstances, colonials saw the latent potential of youths as two-fold: youths could help empire and stymie the tide of Communism, or be manipulated in turn as vanguards of Malayan Communism.

To many colonials, Communism's spread in Malaya gave rise to another type of girlhood diametrically opposed to Guiding's ideals. One difference was the 'morally corrupt' nature of Communism's form of girlhood/womanhood, which contained 'unsavoury' sexualised undertones. Indeed, while Guiding was presented as a moral compass for girls, Communism was branded as an 'evil influence [...] who seek[s] to corrupt the minds of young children and use them as tools for their own purposes,'⁷⁵ such as by indoctrinating Malayan Chinese girls to seduce men over to the Communist camp. An example of these purportedly 'Malayan Communist femme fatale' ensnarements was reported in 1950, when Wong Ong Kee, 'a frail, bespectacled 19-year-old schoolgirl [...] used her wiles to win men over to the Communist Party' and 'smiled cynically [as she] received a maximum sentence of three years rigorous imprisonment.'⁷⁶ Whether real or imagined, colonials dreaded the festering of this 'moral decay', pointing out that 'this is the type of intelligent girl who is fostering this insidious propaganda amongst our school children.' Another similar case was taken up by the press barely a month after Wong's trial, when one of Wong's comrades, described as 'a small, bright and quite attractive schoolgirl [...] was placed in a Girls' Home as an "experiment" [which] failed, for she became an extremely evil influence in the Home, and in every way unmanageable.'⁷⁷

Other than Communism's undesirable sexualised connotations and influence on Malayan girls, some also regarded the ideology as morally corrupt as it had 'no respect for

filial piety'⁷⁸ – a cornerstone of Confucian teachings. This emphasis on Communism's irreverence for parental authority was starkly juxtaposed against Guiding, a movement training girls to be future good mothers/home-makers and active, disciplined youths through drills, exercise and 'mothercraft'. Newspapers whipped up parental anxieties, warning parents that Communism developed 'stonehearted-ness' in their children by enticing them to coldly forsake their families to further the Communist agenda.⁷⁹ For instance, one article in 1957 featured a moving photograph of a tearful Chinese mother with the arresting and ominous caption: 'This mother was too late to stop her son from sailing to Red China.'⁸⁰ Yet another newspaper informed readers:

The drama at the Singapore dockside on Wednesday, when a father strove desperately to prevent his daughter vanishing forever behind the Bamboo Curtain, serves to remind us that the first aim of international Communism is the *smashing of family ties*. Communism demands complete and unswerving loyalty to the State; there must be no *loyalty left over to give to the home*. When the girl's father pleaded with his daughter to return home, she abused him. She had heard that life in China was wonderful and she wanted to go there, even if it meant *saying goodbye to her family forever*. Poor misled girl! [...] The party newspaper, Kwangming Daily of Peking, admits that the Chinese authorities have encouraged students to *denounce parents and relatives* [...] The seed of evil has been planted.⁸¹ (Emphasis mine)

The emotive language employed here illustrates the extent of anxieties over Communism's 'evil' subversive effects upon the family unit. In the midst of these uncertainties, Guiders declared they would 'stress the family and international aspects of Guiding.'⁸² Thus, while the internationalism of Communism 'smashed' family ties by imposing ideology and State as priorities, the internationalism of Guiding aimed to create a peaceful 'global sisterhood'

(which, subtly, capitalised on the metaphor of family) and to reinforce the family unit by ‘mak[ing] efficient women citizens, good home-makers and mothers.’⁸³

Communism also directly threatened Guiding as colonial authorities believed that ‘red cells’ in Chinese schools were clandestinely recruiting school children under the guise of Guiding. Indeed, some were afraid that Guiding could provide a blanket of legitimacy for ‘politically sponsored Chinese bodies aping the BP [Baden-Powell] Movement’.⁸⁴ Others identified school and after-school activities as breeding grounds for Communism,⁸⁵ pointing out that ‘real danger lies in the fact that these rebellious students are ready modelling clay [because older students] are able to influence the younger students.’⁸⁶ These suspicions eventually pushed colonial authorities to pre-emptively ‘shut down’ Guiding in Chinese schools for a brief period in 1948.⁸⁷ At the same time, in order to counter the ‘diabolical cleverness in the utilisation of youth for the purposes of the Malayan Communist Party,’⁸⁸ some colonials put forward the utility of Scouting and Guiding in this ‘struggle for the mind of youth.’⁸⁹ This strategy was hardly new. As early as 1929, some had already proposed both movements as effective counterweights against Communism, declaring that ‘if you wear khaki you are less likely to see red’ since the ‘[u]niformity of clothing may lead to uniformity of action and ideas.’⁹⁰ While it is difficult to pinpoint ‘youth agency’ or to quantify how much of their actions were self-motivated or adult-initiated, we find a poignant example of Scout/Guide agency in Singapore in 1950. Despite Communist threats and reports of intimidation in schools,⁹¹ youths, led by 500 Scouts, participated in the Education Week parade ‘guarded by the strongest police contingent ever seen.’⁹² Through this emphatic public display, we can infer that the movement made Scouts and Guides the foremost representatives of youth by giving them opportunities to act and express themselves visibly. Indeed, in the post-colonial era, they would continue to occupy these roles as prominent youth representatives for the purposes of nation-building.

Conclusion: Guiding and the ‘Youthfulness of Asia’

Dressed in Guide uniform, Tungku Budriah, the Raja Perempuan (Queen Consort) of Perlis, gingerly embarked the ship *Gorgon* along with ‘three Malay Princesses and two Sherifahs (descendants of Prophet Mohammed)’ and 41 other Malayan Girl Guides in order to represent Malaya at the 1950 Guide Jamboree in Australia. The 26-year-old Queen, who was ‘leaving seven children behind with her husband’ had ‘confided that she was a little afraid of being sea-sick as it was her first journey outside Malaya.’ In contrast, ‘little 17-year-old Teh Khoon Tseng, of Ipoh, Leader of the Robin Patrol and proud holder of the First-Class Badge and eight Proficiency Badges,’ chirped: ‘I have been excited for weeks’. In the presence of the crowd which ‘thronged the quayside’ to bid them a safe journey, Lady Gimson, wife of the Governor and a Guide herself, delivered a speech reminding the contingent that ‘[we] in the Girl Guide Association are all members of one large family, and you, fortunate ones, are going to visit relations within the family circle in their own land. Make friends with them, learn all you can while you are away [and] let others learn through you the finest characteristics of your own homeland.’⁹³

The scene above encapsulates what Guiding meant for very different groups of people in Malaya. For colonial authorities, European Guiders and indigenous leaders, the movement was a force for peace and a ‘teen-age League of Nations’ which allowed youths to ‘represent their country’ in a ‘happy, youthful gathering, where they made many deep friendships with girls of every creed and colour.’⁹⁴ Guiding was thus flexible and malleable enough to be (re)interpreted and (re)appropriated by adults to direct youths for the purposes of empire, ideology or nation-building.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the movement’s non-sectarian internationalism meant that colonials could legitimately claim they were equal partners in a sisterhood where colonials effectively played the role of ‘Big Sister’. This same understanding also meant that indigenous leaders could also employ youths as ideal ambassadors to represent their new,

fledgling post-colonial nation-states on an equal footing with other countries upon the international stage. On the other hand, Malayan Guides were more motivated by the freedom that Guiding offered them. Many were interested in the movement's exciting promise of 'a life-time of adventure' and the prospect of gaining recognition or 'proving themselves' through Guiding. In these many ways, we note that Guiding introduced and established alternative visions of indigenous girlhood for different groups and communities in the colony. While it broke down certain traditions of girl/womanhood, age and the body, the movement also oriented Malayan girlhood towards the direction of internationalism and the transnational agenda of creating a 'universal sisterhood'.

Guiding's transnational agenda and reputation as a credible training method for youths also captured the attention of Malayan politicians in the post-colonial period. Other than the movement's crucial role in 'the tug-of-war' against Communism,⁹⁶ local leaders were also keen on the movement's utility as a rallying-point and training ground for half of the Malayan population, which was under the age of twenty-one.⁹⁷ In the unsteady political climate of post-war reconstruction and Communist agitation, many also deliberated whether youth would prove to be 'a keg of dynamite or a symbolic dynamo geared to future good citizenship.'⁹⁸ To some extent, these questions over Malayan youths on the eve of independence were inspired by 'the very youthfulness of Asia, [which] makes it more and more susceptible to the influence and pressures of our young people.'⁹⁹ Under these circumstances, the Guide movement positioned itself as a leading organisation for youths, stressing that "greater emphasis is being placed on the training of youths than ever before."¹⁰⁰ It established itself as an incubator for future Malayan leaders and played an essential part in establishing relations with other youths in the region through activities such as Jamborees, which promoted regional peace and cooperation. Through the movement, the Girl Guides continued to be active, visible participants in Malayan social life as leaders and representatives of a strong, dependable force

for the future – a position they have attempted to maintain from colonial times into the post-colonial future.

1 'Supreme Sacrifice of Singapore Boy Scouts', *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile*

Advertiser (7 July 1941): 12; '星州华童战地服务团：十六人中－十四人已殉国', Sin Chew Jit

Poh, 星洲日报, (9 June 1937): unnumbered. One journalist, Edna Lee Booker, who was based in China during the war, was so inspired by the actions of these 'ardent young patriots' that she 'left the hospital [where she had interviewed one 'Boy Scout hero'] sick at heart, bitter against war, but thrilled over the heroism of Young China.' E.L. Booker (1940) *News is My Job: A Correspondent in War-Torn China* (New York: The Macmillan Company), p. 331. Local newspapers in the neighbouring British colony of Hong Kong also featured this story. P. Kua (2011) *Scouting in Hong Kong 1910 – 2010* (Hong Kong: Scout Association of Hong Kong), pp. 200 – 1.

2 'Singapore Scouts and Guides Die For China,' in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (13 June 1938): 9.

3 'Boys' Club for Straits Chinese Youths Urged,' in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (26 September 1940): 2.

4 J. Brownfoot (1990) 'Sisters under the skin: imperialism and the emancipation of women in Malaya, c. 1891 – 1941' in J.A. Mangan (ed.) *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialization and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 55.

5 Throughout this essay, I use the loose term 'British Malaya' to refer to three administrative entitles, also known as the Straits Settlements (comprising Singapore, Penang, Malacca), the Federated Malay States (Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Pahang) and the Unfederated Malay States (Johore, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu).

6 *The Straits Time* informs us that Guiding was inaugurated in October 1914. See 'General Notices', in *The Straits Times* (14 March 1925): 8. However, most sources indicate that Guiding was established in Malaya in 1917. See A. Abd. Malek and H. Hamsah A. (2007), *Persatuan Pandu*

Puteri Malaysia (Selangor: PTS Publications & Distributors Sdn Bhd), 13 and S.F. Chan, C. Alvis and M.R. Segeram (2001), *Guiding in Singapore: A Chronology of Guide Events 1917 – 1990* (Singapore: Landmark Books), 11.

7 Brownfoot, 'Sisters under the skin', p. 53.

8 F.A. Noor (2002) 'Commémorer les femmes, oblitérer l'Empire' (L. Chamlou, trans.) in M-E. Palmier-Chatelain and P. Lavagne d'Ortigue (eds) *L'Orient des femmes* (Lyon : ENS Editions), p. 252.

9 Brownfoot, 'Sisters under the skin', p. 53 and T. Proctor (2005) "'Something for the Girls': Organised Leisure in Europe, 1890 – 1939", in M.J. Maynes, B. Sølund and C. Benninghaus (eds) *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1750 – 1960* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 245.

10 Interview, S.F. Chan by J. Chan, A/N: 002842, Oral History Center (Singapore, 21 February 2004).

11 C. Devereux (2005) *Growing a Race : Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 39.

12 The growing popularity of the Boy Scouts in the early 1910s also helped cut a path of entry for Guiding since both movements shared similar aims. See K.Y.L. Tan and M.H. Wan (2002) *Scouting in Singapore: 1910 – 2000* (Singapore: Singapore Scout Association & National Archives of Singapore), pp. 13 – 5.

13 'Girl Scouts: Miss Baden-Powell's Defence of the Movement', in *The Straits Times* (12 January 1910): 2. For further information on Agnes Baden-Powell and the movement in Britain, see H.D. Gardner (2011) *The First Girl Guide: The Story of Agnes Baden-Powell* (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing); T. Proctor (2002) *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia:

American Philosophical Society), p. 26.

14 'The Girl Guides', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (7 October 1924): 6.

15 'Girl Scouts', in *The Straits Times* (12 January 1910): 2 and 'The Girl Guides: Singapore Headquarters', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (12 March 1925): 7.

16 'The Girl Guides', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (9 January 1919): 22.

17 'A Phrase of Education', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (23 February 1923): 6.

18 'British Subjects Abroad', in *The Straits Times* (4 May 1920): 9.

19 'Malay Girls "Surprise" Guide Commissioner: Mrs Heath (M.B.E.) Looks Back', in *The Straits Times* (2 January 1958): 4.

20 'Malayan Girl Guides' in *The Straits Times* (14 January 1921): 9, 'A Generation of Adventure', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (4 July 1932): 4 and 'The Girl Guides', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (7 October 1924): 6.

21 'Should Planters' Wives Do Welfare Work?' in *The Straits Times* (1 February 1940): 1.

22 'The Girl Guides: Singapore Company', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (13 July 1920): 7.

23 'Women and the State', in *The Malayan Saturday Post* (25 July 1925): 14.

24 'Social Hygiene', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (1 May 1929): 10.

25 'Social Hygiene', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (27 August 1925): 14.

26 For reasons of brevity, this article will not go into details. See S. Pedersen (2001) 'The Maternalist Moment in British Colonial Policy: The Controversy over "Child Slavery" in Hong

Kong 1917 – 1941’, in *Past & Present*, No. 171 (May), 161 – 202 and K. Yuen (2004) ‘Theorizing the Chinese: The Mui Tsai Controversy and Constructions of Transnational Chineseness in Hong Kong and British Malaya’, in *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 6, 2 (December), 95 – 110.

27 J. Brownfoot (1992) ‘Emancipation, Exercise and Imperialism: Girls and the Games Ethic in Colonial Malaya,’ in J.A. Mangan, *The Cultural Bond : Sport, Empire, Society* (London : Frank Cass & Co. Ltd), p. 87.

28 ‘Help for Young Girls’, in *The Straits Times* (31 July 1924): 10.

29 ‘Cruelty to Mui Tsai: Heavy Sentence For Chinese Woman’, in *The Straits Times* (9 November 1929): 11.

30 ‘Mui Tsai Commission’s Report’, in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (1 March 1937): 3.

31 Brownfoot, ‘Emancipation, Exercise and Imperialism’, 86 – 7.

32 ‘Should Planters’ Wives Do Welfare Work?’ in *The Straits Times* (1 February 1940): 1.

33 ‘Guides – What Are They?’, in *The Straits Times* (2 October 1924): 9.

34 ‘Girl Guides in Malaya’, in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (5 May 1923): 7.

35 ‘The Girl Guides: Singapore Company’, in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (13 July 1920): 7.

36 ‘Malaya Girl Guides’, in *The Straits Times* (27 February 1926): 11.

37 ‘Girl Guides Rally’, in *The Straits Times* (17 January 1923): 2.

38 Interview, M.R Segeram by C.Chiang, A/N: 000586, Oral History Center (Singapore, 16 – 30 July 1985).

39 'Malaya's Joan of Arc', in *The Straits Times*, (30 July 1933): 10.

40 Interview, M.R. Segeram.

41 'Malay Girls Can Help Cut Divorce', in *The Straits Times*, (11 February 1949): 3.

42 'Malaya's Women Emerging From Their Seclusion: Lady Baden Powell's Message', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (18 January 1935): 6.

43 'Guides – What Are They?' in *The Straits Times* (2 October 1924): 9.

44 'Malayan Girl Guides', in *The Straits Times* (14 January 1921): 9.

45 Interesting, British Guiders such as Agnes Baden-Powell also shared similar fears about exercise as appropriate activities for girls. In particular, she warned that “violent jerks and jars” could “fatally damage a woman's interior economy” and that ‘too much exercise led to girls growing moustaches.’ J. Hampton (2010) *How the Girl Guides Won the War* (London: HarperPress), 4.

46 Interview, M.R. Segeram.

47 Interview, M.R. Segeram.

48 'Malay Girls Can Help Cut Divorce', in *The Straits Times* (11 February 1949): 3. Also see 'The Good Mother is a Good Citizen', in *The Straits Times* (8 August 1962): 9.

49 Chan, Alvis and Segeram, *Guiding in Singapore*, p. 14.

50 'Johore Girl Guides', in *The Straits Times* (22 February 1934): 12 and 'For Girl Guides: Flag Made by Sultana of Johore', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (23 February 1934): 3.

51 'First Malay Brownies: Enrolled in the Presence of Sultan of Selangor', in *The Straits Times* (18 May 1931): 17.

52 Interview, S.F. Chan.

53 'Guides – What Are They ?' in *The Straits Times* (2 October 1924): 9.

54 'Malayan Girl Guides', in *The Straits Times* (14 January 1921): 9.

55 Interview, E. Choy by S. Sng, A/N: 002827, Oral History Center (Singapore, 23 April 2004).

56 Interview, S.F. Chan.

57 Interview, M.R. Segeram.

58 'Schoolday Memories', in *The Singapore Free Press* (14 October 1959): 7.

59 Interview, M. Cresson by C. Chiang, A/N: 000594, Oral History Center (Singapore, 28 August 1985).

60 Interview, Rani Arumugam by S. Sng, A/N: 002837, Oral History Center (Singapore, 6 May 2004).

61 Interview, M.R. Segeram.

62 Interview, M.R. Segeram.

63 Interview, E. Choy.

64 Interview, M.R. Segeram.

65 Interview, M.R. Segeram.

66 'Chinese Women in Field of Athletics', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, (11 August 1937): 15.

67 'Chinese Girl Guides', in *The Straits Times* (25 April 1938): 7. Note that we are referring here to vernacular schools which often only admitted girls of one specific ethnicity.

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- 69 See T. Harper (1999) *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 33 and C.F. Yong and R.B. McKenna (1990) *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912 – 1949* (Singapore: Singapore University Press).
- 70 'Chinese Educated Women Want Own Club', in *The Straits Times* (22 May 1938): 5.
- 71 'Madame Chiang on Women's Heroism', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (10 January 1939): 4.
- 72 'China's Womanhood', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (2 April 1941): 5.
- 73 J. Wasserstrom (1991) *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 160.
- 74 'Doomed Battalion Girl's Big Singapore Reception: Heroic Life Dash to Troops Recalled', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (21 July 1938): 2.
- 75 'Join "War" Against Subversion – Chew', in *The Straits Times* (30 October 1956): 7.
- 76 'Red Cell in Local School', in *The Straits Times* (17 May 1950): 1.
- 77 'Girl Sent Back to Peking', in *The Straits Times* (7 June 1950): 7.
- 78 'Modern Youth Need Religion and Morals', in *The Singapore Free Press* (15 March 1957): 5.
- 79 'Opinion: Hearts of Stone', in *The Singapore Free Press* (11 March 1957): 4.
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- 82 'Guides Leave on Trip to Perth', in *The Straits Times* (19 July 1950): 7.
- 83 Singapore Girl Guides Association (1968) *Golden Jubilee Souvenir Magazine, 1917–1967* (Singapore: Singapore Girl Guides Association), 29.
- 84 'Big Scope for Chinese Scouting', in *The Straits Times* (16 April 1948): 5.
- 85 Interview, A.L. Cheng by B.L. Tan, A/N: 000088, Oral History Center (Singapore, 7 May 1982).
- 86 'Inside the Mind of a Rioting Student', in *The Straits Times* (31 October 1956): 4.
- 87 Interview, M.R. Segeram.
- 88 'Malayan Communists a Serious Problem: Seeking to Hinder Britain in Prosecution of War. Chinese Patriotism Being Used to Disguise Work', in *The Straits Times* (11 March 1940): 10.
- 89 'Criminals or Good Citizens?' in *The Straits Times* (20 January 1939): 10.
- 90 'Politicians in Uniform', in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (7 February 1929): 6.
- 91 'Students Turn Against The Reds', in *The Straits Times*, (15 October 1955): 7 and 'Schools War is on', in *The Singapore Free Press* (17 May 1956): 3.
- 92 'Historic Day on Crowded Padang', in *The Straits Times* (14 May 1950): 1. The festivities essentially celebrated colonialism, as students took part in a 'pageant depicting the landing of Sir Stamford Raffles [founder of the colony] in Singapore in January 1819.'
- 93 'Guides Leave On Trip To Perth', in *The Straits Times* (19 July 1950): 7 and 'Malay Royalty Goes To Australia With Party of Malayan Guides', in *The Straits Times* (18 July 1950): 4.
- 94 'Zailan, Lilian found it cold but fascinating', in *The Straits Times* (31 August 1952): 4.

95 'Malay Girls "Surprise" Guide Commissioner: Mrs. Heath (M.B.E.) looks back', in *The Straits Times* (2 January 1958): 4.

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97 'Seeking Adventure', in *The Straits Times* (27 May 1955): 7.

98 'Our Youths Dismal Face Fate', in *The Singapore Free Press* (20 August 1957): 4.

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