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**MALAY BOOK PUBLISHING AND PRINTING  
IN MALAYA AND SINGAPORE  
1807-1949**

**VOLUME 1: TEXT**

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# INTRODUCTION

For a long time in Malaysia as in many other developing countries, book publishing and printing has been an area in which there has been little research done despite its accepted role in and contribution to the nation's development. In contrast with newspapers,<sup>1</sup> information on publishing of English or vernacular language books is very limited. Studies relating to its history and chronology, business and trade, organisational arrangement, technical development and its cultural aspect are markedly lacking. The absence of a comprehensive bibliography of early books makes it difficult to appreciate previous works. The handful of studies available are scattered and still at a preliminary stage.

One of the pioneering studies was carried out in 1970 by Byrd, who investigated the beginnings of printing in the Straits Settlements.<sup>2</sup> Byrd's research inspired Bloomfield to further explore the life and activities of A. B.

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<sup>1</sup> Among others see W. R. Roff, *Guide to Malay Periodicals, 1876-1941, With Details of Known Holdings in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Eastern Universities Press, 1961); W. R. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals Published in the Straits Settlements and Peninsular Malay States, 1876-1941, With an Annotated Union List of Holdings in Malaysia, Singapore and the United Kingdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); Khoo Kay Kim, *Majalah dan Akhbar Melayu Sebagai Sumber Sejarah* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Library, 1984); Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin, eds., *Lembaran Akhbar Melayu*, (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980); Iskandar Haji Ahmad, *Persuratkhabaran Melayu, 1876-1968*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1973); Lim Pui Huen, "A Survey of Newspapers Published in the Malaysian Areas", *International Conference on Asian History* (Kuala Lumpur, 1968); John A. Lent, *Newspapers in Asia: Contemporary Trends and Problems* (Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Cecil K. Byrd, *Early Printing in the Straits Settlements, 1806-1857* (Singapore: Singapore National Library, 1970).

Bone who in 1806 established the first newspaper and became responsible for introducing printing to the country.<sup>3</sup> A consistent survey on Malay publications has been carried out by Proudfoot. In one study he traced the trends in Malay language book publishing by using the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* and the *Federated Malay States Government Gazette* as his sources.<sup>4</sup> From these gazettes which recorded all the publications registered in the area, a profile of Malay language publishing from 1887 to 1920 was drawn. This profile provides a picture of how the Malay book publishing industry was developed during its critical stage. In another work, Proudfoot surveyed several major libraries in Europe and Southeast Asia to locate and record Malay printed books published from 1817 to 1920.<sup>5</sup> In a different work he analysed a catalogue issued by a Malay lithographer in 1897 and in this analysis he provides some idea of how the Malay lithographic book trade operated.<sup>6</sup> A recent study by Annabel Gallop described some of the main developments in the history of the early Malay language printing with reference to the collection in the British Library.<sup>7</sup> Other important works on

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<sup>3</sup> B. C. Bloomfield, *A. B. Bone and the Beginning of Printing in Malaysia* (London: India Office Library & Records Report, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> Ian Proudfoot, "A Formative Period in Malay Book Publishing," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 59 pt. 2 (1986): 101-132.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Proudfoot, "Major Library Holdings of Early Malay Books," *Kekal Abadi* 18 no. 1 (1989): 7-17.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Proudfoot, "A Nineteenth-Century Malay Bookseller's Catalogue," *Kekal Abadi* 6 no. 4 (1987): 1-11.

<sup>7</sup> Annabel T. Gallop, "Early Malay Printing: An Introduction to the British Library Collection," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 63 pt. 1 (1990): 85-124.

early printing include studies by Ibrahim Ismail,<sup>8</sup> O'Sullivan<sup>9</sup> and Hashimah Johari.<sup>10</sup> Both Ibrahim and O'Sullivan studied the contributions of the Christian Mission Presses in the Straits Settlements while Hashimah described the early Malay publishing by Malay publishers in Singapore.

Theses by Malaysian students at the Centre for Publishing Studies, University of Stirling are worthy of note. These are general studies of contemporary publishing on various aspects of the book trade in Malaysia.<sup>11</sup>

The present study attempts to trace the development of Malay book publishing and printing in Malaya since the appearance of the first Malay book in 1807 up to 1949 with the emphasis on its last twenty-eight years. Publishing in this research is viewed as a commercial or non-commercial venture involving the process of creating, producing and disseminating books along with financial management and administration. While most publishing firms exist to make profit, there are a few publishing operations considered non-commercial and not primarily aiming to make profit but to meet some

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<sup>8</sup> Ibrahim Ismail, "Missionary Printing in Malacca, 1815-1843," *Libri* 32, pt. 3 (1982), 177-206.

<sup>9</sup> Leona O'Sullivan, "The London Missionary Society: A Written Record of Missionaries and Printing Presses in the Straits Settlements, 1915-1847," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 57 pt. 2 (1984): 61-104.

<sup>10</sup> Hashimah Johari, "Early Book Publishing in Malay by Malay Publishers in Singapore and the Malay Peninsular until 1929" (M. A. Thesis, University College, London, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> Azizah Hamzah, "Scholarly and Academic Publishing in Malaysia" (1988); Kamaliah Shahid, "Text Book Publications in Malaysia" (1990); Firdaus Ahmad Azzam, "Piracy and Legislative Copyright Problems in the Publishing Industry: The Case of Malaysia" (1991).

defined needs on a subsidised basis. The term "printing", although taken in its traditional meaning which is synonymous with publishing, is more related to the particular technologies and resources in creating multiple copies of a work. "Malay book" refers to the work primarily in Malay language, directed mainly towards the Malay audience and "Malaya" as the place of publication and printing means the present Malaysia and Singapore including Sabah and Sarawak. Malay books published or printed outside the region, especially in the Middle East, are discussed separately in brief. Books in other vernacular languages (Tamil and Chinese) or in English are not included in this study but reference to them will be made when necessary.

The period covered for this study is from 1807 to 1949, a span of about one century and a half of publishing activities when Malaya was under the British. The emphasis is however from 1921 to 1949, an eventful twenty eight years of the immediate pre-war and post-war period leading to the nation's independence eight years later in 1957. The earliest Malay book published and printed locally, probably the effort of A. B. Bone in 1807, is taken as the starting point of the study.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the 1940s the political structure of Malaya underwent a transition and the British were forced to prepare the way for the Federation's independence. A strong Malay nationalist movement developed and this development was clearly demonstrated in, among others,

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<sup>12</sup> It is generally said that the probable earliest locally printed book in Malay was published in 1817 at Melaka Mission Press, a translation of *The Ten Commandments*. See A. H. Hill, "The Hikayat Abdullah, an annotated translation", *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, pt. 3 (1955):1-165; Byrd, "Early Printing," 10. However, the book published in Penang in 1807 is bilingual, in English and Malay, containing Arabic scripts or *Jawi* which qualifies it as a Malay book.

journalism and literary activities. The founding of a literary society called "Angkatan Sastrawan 50", popularly known as "Asas 50", in August 1950 in Singapore was the most significant event in the history of modern Malay literature immediately before the independence.<sup>13</sup> Stimulated by feelings of political resentment for colonial domination along with a yearning to promote the use of Malay language and its literature, a group of writers organised themselves to form a literary association devoted to modernising the Malay language and its literature and using them to uplift the quality of life of the people. In printing and publishing this period marked yet another new development.

This study also presents a catalogue of Malay books published from 1921 to 1949.<sup>14</sup> This twenty-eight-year period is chosen especially because it is crucial in the development of Malay publishing and printing. At the same time it will hopefully serve to continue a previous work by Proudfoot.<sup>15</sup> Although this bibliography may not be as detailed, it provides pertinent information as far as bibliographical documentation is concerned. A comprehensive catalogue of pre-independence Malay books irrespective of subjects is almost absent. The National Library of Malaysia only in the 1960s

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<sup>13</sup> Mohd.Taib Osman, *An Introduction to the Development of Modern Malay Language and Literature* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1986), 103.

<sup>14</sup> For the catalogue, see section one of the Appendix.

<sup>15</sup> Proudfoot's survey starts from 1817 and closes at 1920. It is based upon the holdings of thirteen public collections in Britain, the Netherlands, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. See I. Proudfoot, *Early Malay Printed Books* (Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1992). The report of the survey was first published in *Kekal Abadi* 8 no. 1 (March 1989): 7-17.



started the project of annual publication of Malaysian printed works under "Bibliografi Malaysiana".<sup>16</sup> For the purpose of this research two separate bibliographies have been prepared: one containing a list of books drawn from major libraries, museums and archives in Britain, Malaysia and Singapore and the other comprising books believed to be published but not located throughout the survey. For the former, not less than thirty public collections were consulted to locate and examine the relevant materials. Of all the collections consulted only a few were found to be of importance and the catalogue therefore is based mainly upon the holdings of these collections. For the latter, the list of titles was drawn from the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, the *Federated Malay States Government Gazette* and also the reviews and advertisements in various local publications. For titles from these sources, the author has reasons to believe that they were indeed published. While the first bibliography is furnished with bibliographical data, the second one lacks information simply because of the unavailability of the books for scrutiny.

Data for this study were obtained from several primary and secondary sources. The main sources include the gazettes, the books themselves,

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<sup>16</sup> Other available book catalogues or listings: Ismail Hussain, *Bibliography Sastera Tradisi Melayu* (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1990); Rogayah Abdul Rashid, *Bibliography Sastera Kreatif 1920-1967* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Pengajian Melayu, Universiti Malaya, 1977); Safian Hussain, Siti Aisah Murad and Fadzil Agussallim, *Bibliography Sastera Melayu Modern 1925-1980* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1985); Dinsman, "Buku-buku Drama Malaysia 1951-1974: Satu Senarai Rujukan" *Dewan Bahasa* (January 1975); 63-71; Pyan Husayn and Ramli Isin, "Novel-novel Melayu 1925-1973: Satu Senarai Rujukan," *Dewan Bahasa* (September 1974); 383-414. Zainab Awang Ngah, *Malay/Indonesian Dictionaries - A Bibliography*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya library, 1990). Except for the last one, all of these catalogues only cover Malay literary works.

newspaper records, public records, directories and private letters.

Both the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* and the *Federated Malay States Government Gazette* contain a considerable amount of bibliographical information which could be used to trace the development of printing and publishing.<sup>17</sup> All books and periodicals published or printed in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States were supposed to be registered under the law known as the "Book Registration Ordinance", enacted in 1886. The registrations were recorded and notified quarterly in the gazettes under the title called the "Memoranda of Books Registered in the Catalogue of Books Printed in the Straits Settlements". Similar memoranda began to be published in the Federated Malay States following the introduction of the law in Perak (1895), Selangor (1898) and other states. While great care must be observed because of its deficiencies involving accuracy, representativeness and consistency, this memoranda supply us with sixteen specific details of the publications which could be exploited. The pattern of the details is as follows:

1. Title
2. Language of publication
3. Author, Editor or Translator
4. Subject
5. Place of Printing
6. Place of Publication
7. Name and address of printer
8. Name and address of publisher
9. Date of issue from the press
10. Date of publication
11. Number of pages
12. Size

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<sup>17</sup> Proudfoot has provided a detailed account of the gazettes. See his "Formative Period," 101-132; and "Pre-War Malay Periodicals: Notes to Roff's Bibliography Drawn From Government Gazettes," *Kekal Abadi*, no. 4, Dec. 1985, 1-28.

13. Number of edition
14. Number of copies
15. Price
16. Name and address of holder of copyright

The books themselves are another rich source of information. A total of 1,739 titles of books are listed in the catalogue and a large number of them were perused to obtain specific data relating to the contents, objectives of writing, background of writers, target readers, marketing and distribution practices, copyright practices, printing and binding techniques, paper qualities and also information about printers and publishers. Many of these books, unlike books of the present time, carry advertisements and notices which further supply valuable information for this research.

Several Malay newspapers and magazines<sup>18</sup> of this period were also examined particularly for items such as book advertisements, notices and reviews, apart from news and articles on printing and publishing activities. Further information was sought through public and private records, particularly government annual reports, notifications of laws and enactments, companies' reports, personal letters and interviews.

The dissertation is organised into eleven chapters in three periods signifying three stages of development: 1807-1875; 1876-1920; 1921-1949. This is, however, not an attempt at periodisation but more to facilitate discussion and understanding. Beginning with a brief account of the historical background of book publishing before the advent of printing in Chapter One,

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<sup>18</sup> For the list of newspapers and magazines examined, see Bibliography.

the discussion passes on to Chapter Two, a review of Malay publishing and printing at its earliest stage in the Straits Settlements and other areas. This is largely the story of the Malay Department of the Christian Mission Presses, whose activities continued for more than fifty years without success in achieving their aim of converting the Malays. The demise of the London Missionary Society and later the death of Rev. Keasberry in 1875 halted the printing activities. Chapter Three discusses the second stage of the development marked by the emergence of Malay lithographers and the founding of Jawi Peranakan Company, the first Malay establishment to use movable type, in 1876. In the 1920s "Modern Malay literature" began to emerge in Malaya as well as Indonesia. While from the socio-economic point of view this decade is regarded as the watershed where modern Malaya began to take shape, in literature itself it is the decade of literary renaissance. Also in part two, a separate chapter is provided to discuss similar book production activities which took place in the Middle East and Turkey. Although these areas are beyond the scope of this study, attention must be given to them as they had certain influence on the local Malay book trade. Chapter Five to Chapter Eleven cover the pre-independence period which stretched from 1921 to 1949. Chapter Five provides the general profile of the industry followed by other chapters which discuss in detail, specific aspects such as the book contents, writers and their works, printers and publishers, law and regulations and marketing. Along with the discussions, some thoughts are also given to the historical circumstances that led to the sort of development and also to the literary background which is what gives book publishing its meaning. This is

not merely a matter of what is printed when but how the technology proved a handmaid to the cultural and social uplift of a society; how book publishing expanded intellectual horizons and how it played its part in the struggle towards national independence.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE BACKGROUND AND BEGINNINGS

### 1.1. HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The history of the present day Malay states can be traced back to the Kingdom of Melaka which in the fifteenth century dominated both sides of the straits. For a hundred years Melaka was the centre of leadership, trade and culture in the Malay Archipelago with Malay language as the lingua-franca. It was this particular language that carried Islam through and created a new civilisation. Beginning from the early sixteenth century, European powers started to take control, first the Portuguese followed by the Dutch and then the British. When Melaka fell in 1511, Johore tried to take its place but was restricted. As a result, the Malay states gradually emerged as sovereign units in their own right until the British arrived. Penang became the first British settlement in 1786, followed by Singapore in 1819 and Melaka in 1824. These were collectively known as the Straits Settlements which became incorporated into unified administrative units under the government of Bengal in 1826. The administration was freed from the dominion of India in 1867 and the Settlements became a separate colony of the Crown headed by a British Governor with headquarters in Singapore.

By the early 1890s each ruler of Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan had agreed to accept a British Resident who would give advice on matters relating to administration of the government. The four states were joined in 1896 in an executive and judicial federation named the Federated

Malay States with its capital in Kuala Lumpur. The British extended their sphere of influence to include the northern and eastern states with the signing of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty in 1909. The states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Johor became British protectorates under the tutelage of a British Advisor. They were collectively known as the Unfederated Malay States. The British Advisors of the Unfederated Malay States and the British Residents of the Federated Malay States were all responsible to the British High Commissioner, the Governor of the Straits Settlements. Meanwhile in Borneo, the Brook family and the Chartered Company of British North Borneo had acquired territories in Sabah and Sarawak respectively from the Sultanate of Brunei in the 1880s.

This arrangement remained essentially unchanged until the surrender of Singapore to the Japanese in early 1942. When Japan collapsed in 1945, the British were unable to resume their authority in the region. The Malays protested over the move to unite all Malay States and the Settlements into a Malayan Union under a strong central Government, which would have deprived the rulers of the Malay States of all but a nominal authority. As a result in 1948, a more acceptable scheme was introduced uniting the nine Malay States into a Federation called the Federation of Malaya under a Federal Government in Kuala Lumpur. Penang and Melaka were within the Federal framework but remained colonies of the British while Singapore continued as a separate colony under its own Governor. This state of affairs remained unchanged until Malaya achieved her independence in 1957.

While the British established themselves and consolidated their position

the population of the region increased and diversified. The rise of tin mines, rubber plantations and other industries accompanied by modern methods of communication and other technical and social innovations resulted in the growth of towns and populations. The inhabitants of Malaya increased from half a million people, largely Malays, around 1850 to a total of 3.36 million in 1921: Malays, 1.6 million; Chinese, 1.18 million; Indian, 0.48 million; and others 0.06 million.<sup>1</sup>

The Malays who formed the predominant ethnic group consisted of the natives and the Malay-related including the Javanese, Banjarase, Boyanese, Bugis and Minangkabaus who arrived from across the Straits; and also the Arab descendants and the "Jawi Peranakan"<sup>2</sup> who were the offspring of South Indian Muslim and Malay parentage. The last two groups and some of the Javanese descendants were highly enterprising in business and trade and among the Malays they were largely responsible for initiating the venture into printing and publishing. The Chinese were flocking in from mainland China after the opening of the Straits Settlements. In the west coast cities, their numbers were growing very fast and they easily outnumbered the Malays. In Melaka, the Chinese were already there and had been since the period of the Melaka Empire. Upon the foundation of Singapore and Penang, many of them migrated to these places. These locally-born Chinese were commonly known

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<sup>1</sup> C. A. Vlieland, *British Malaya: A Report on the 1931 Census and on Certain Colonies* (London: The Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1932).

<sup>2</sup> For readings on "Jawi Peranakan" see Helen Fujimoto, *The South Indian Muslim Community and the Evolution of the Jawi Peranakan in Penang up to 1948* (Tokyo, 1949).



as "Baba".<sup>3</sup> They adopted a certain Malay tradition and spoke little or no Chinese but speaking instead Baba Malay language. They did not call the language Baba Malay but Malay or *Melayu*, although it had special features of its own like all other Malay dialects which developed out of a particular kind of historical process. In the history of Malay publishing, the role of Baba writings in enriching the Malay language and literature cannot be overlooked.

The themes examined in this dissertation may be placed more easily in their proper perspective by an understanding of the historical background noted in the preceding paragraphs. It is, however, presented very briefly since enough has been written about the history of Malaya and repetition is not needed. The second part of this chapter concerning Malay manuscript publishing tries to show how the old publishing tradition moved to a new convention.

## 1.2. MALAY BOOK PUBLISHING BEFORE PRINTING

Malay book publishing before the advent of printing began with the arrival of Islam in the Malay Archipelago in the thirteenth century. The stress of Islam on the merits of the pursuit of knowledge is very well known. The first verse of Quranic revelation included the word 'pen' and a few derivatives from the root meaning of 'knowledge'.<sup>4</sup> The Prophet also made numerous assertions on

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<sup>3</sup> For readings on Baba Chinese see, Felix Chia, *The Babas* (Singapore: 1981); Tan Chee Beng, "Baba Malay Dialect," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 53, pt. 1, (1980): 1-3; W. G. Shellabear, "Baba Malay: An Introduction to the Language of the Straits-born Chinese," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 65 (1913): 49-63.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, Chapter 96:1-5.

the importance of seeking knowledge. One example is the following *hadith* or narration: "There shall be no envy but two: the person whom Allah has given wealth and the power to spend in the service of Truth, and the person whom Allah has granted knowledge of things and he judges by it and teaches it (to others)".<sup>5</sup> The Islamic era saw a phenomenal growth in the Islamic book trade which surpassed its predecessors. The volume of book production was due to the prolific work of a number of great authors. Many had hundreds of titles to their credit; among them were Jabir ibn Haiyan (d. 815), Ibn Hazm (d. 1063) and Abu al-Amaithal (d. 854).<sup>6</sup> Authorship and transcription were encouraged and stimulated. Great royal libraries were instituted such as those established by al-Ma'mum (reigned 813-833) of the Abbasid Caliphate, al-Hakam II (reigned 961-976) of the Umayyad in Spain, al-Hakim (reigned c. 1000) of the Fatimid in Cairo and Sultan Nuh ibn Mansur (reigned 976-997) of Bukhara.<sup>7</sup> In addition to these, many prosperous and learned citizens accumulated libraries of high reputation. All of these libraries employed staff to keep them, to copy, translate, illuminate and bind or repair the bindings of the books.

The tradition of accumulating libraries was also adopted by the Malay royals beginning from the thirteenth century when Islam had first exerted its

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<sup>5</sup> Maulana Muhammad Ali, *A Manual of Hadith* (London and Dublin: Curzon Press, 1988), 32.

<sup>6</sup> Jabir was said to have written more than three hundred books about the arts, Ibn Hazm produced about four hundred works while al-Amaithal wrote a thousand volumes of verses. See Gulnar Bosh, John Carswell and Guy Petherbridge, *Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, 1981), 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

influence. The focal point of the traditional Malay society had been the royal courts. Therefore it is natural that the Malay written tradition developed there. Royalties of the Malay Sultanate in Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Kedah, Terengganu, Siak, Pasai, Aceh, Perlak and Samudra would employ bards, scribes and theologians to write, translate, adapt or copy works on religion, law, history, romances and other narratives and poetry; or to compile chronicles of the ruling dynasties. Almost all of these manuscripts were written in Arabic script locally known as *Jawi*,<sup>8</sup> one of the most important contributions of Islam to Malay culture.

The oldest Malay manuscript extant is a handbook on Islamic theology used for teaching purposes. It is an Arabic text with interlinear Malay translation, written at the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Works of this nature, with interlinear Malay translations in the manuscript, were common for subjects on Islam. The Arabic texts usually originated from eminent savants and scholars and were then translated by experts serving the royal courts who were normally Muslims of Indian, Persian or Arab descent.

As the centre of great learning and study, the royal courts were also the scene of great literary activities. The diverse cultural influence exerted on

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<sup>8</sup> *Jawi* scripts are modified Arabic alphabets containing an additional five letters adopted from Persian and Barbar in addition to the twenty-eight original Arabic letters. See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam Dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1972), 41.

<sup>9</sup> For a critical analysis of this manuscript, see Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: a 16th Century Malay Translation of the Aqaid of al-Nasafi* (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Publication, Universiti Malaya, 1988).

Malay society throughout the centuries was manifested through the various forms of literary work during this period. Works of Persian origin were translated and adapted. The Malay versions of the Indian epics "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata" had given rise to Malay works with Muslim colourings, all written in *Jawi*. Hindu and Buddhist tales were modified and became part of the written literature.

At the close of the fifteenth century Melaka had established herself as the leading political, commercial and cultural centre in the region. But in 1511 when Melaka fell to the Portuguese, the centre of activities shifted to Aceh and royal personages escaped to places such as Pahang, Johor and other Malay cities across the Straits. Malay manuscript publications began to develop in these cities. The most prolific theologian-writer at this time was perhaps Sheikh Nuruddin al-Raniri of Gujerati origin who served the ruler of Aceh in the 1630s and 1640s.<sup>10</sup> He wrote not less than twenty titles on several branches of Islamic knowledge. Other scholars from Malabar, Egypt, Syria, Mecca, Medina and Hadhramaut who arrived to teach Islam to the Malays were also active writers. This led to the emergence of writers from among the locals; the most prominent ones included Shamsuddin al-Sumatrani, Abdul Rauf al-Singkel, Abdul Samad al-Falembani, Abdul Malik bin Abdullah, Hamzah of Barus and most particularly Hamzah al-Fansuri, the Sufi laureate of Aceh, one of the famous Malay "pujangga" who was the ideal model of an

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<sup>10</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *A Commentary on the Hujjat al-Siddiq of Nur al-Din al-Raniri* (Kuala Lumpur, 1986).

intellectual in the classical setting.<sup>11</sup> As a writer, poet, historian, religious expert and probably scribe, a "pujangga" provided intellectual stimulation to the court he was serving.

From the works of these local and foreign writers, it can be seen that book publishing thrived but there was no clear indication that activities were carried out on a commercial scale. They were mostly confined to the courts, and libraries were probably owned by the Sultan or the aristocracy who constituted the main literate population. Books were the privilege of the elite and not normally in circulation for the common people. But books were sometimes read to them on special occasions and on request. The *Sejarah Melayu*, a manuscript written in the seventeenth century, for example, mentioned that war chiefs and young nobles requested that the romances of Muslim heroes be read during the nights when Melaka was under siege by the Portuguese.

In the later centuries when "pondok" schools<sup>12</sup> emerged, books became more accessible. Malay religious texts known as *kitab jawi* were published by the teachers and sometimes students were asked to copy them for the school. A large number of titles were produced to meet the needs of "pondok" teachers and students. These teachers studied Islam in the Middle East for many years and returned to their hometowns to teach their fellow people.

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<sup>11</sup> Mohd.Taib Osman, *Bunga Rampai: Aspects of Malay Culture* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1984), 41.

<sup>12</sup> A "pondok" school is an old-fashioned learning institution comprising several small huts usually built near the house of the teacher, where the students board while receiving instruction on a wide range of Islamic knowledge.

Manuscripts continued to be published around the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and for some time they existed side by side with lithographed books. Raja Ali Haji of Riau,<sup>13</sup> almost the contemporary of Abdullah,<sup>14</sup> was probably the last "pujangga" serving the old Malay feudal court in the middle of the nineteenth century. Among the most productive authors of *kitab jawi* during this time were Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani, Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain al-Fatani, Muhammad Zain bin Mustaffa al-Fatani, Muhammad bin Ismail Daud al-Fatani and Zainal Abidin bin Muhammad al-Fatani. The most prolific, Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani, wrote more than fifty titles on jurisprudence, theology, sufism and other subjects on several branches of Islamic knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Many of his books were popular and are still being printed and read. A number of his works and other works by the above-mentioned writers were, however, written while the authors were in Mecca.

The contributions of the manuscript writers were significant, not only in the transmission of knowledge and the development of language and

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<sup>13</sup> For readings on Raja Ali Haji and his works, among others, see B. W. Andaya & V. Matheson, "Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition: The Writings of Raja Ali Haji of Riau," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, edited by A. Reid and D. Marr (Singapore, 1979); V. Matheson, "Tuhfat al-Nafis: A Nineteenth Century Malay History Critically Examined" (Ph. D. Thesis, Monash University, 1973); V. Matheson, "The Tuhfat al-Nafis: Structure and Sources", *BKI* 127, (1971); 375-392.

<sup>14</sup> See elsewhere in this chapter for a discussion on his background and printing involvement.

<sup>15</sup> Mohd. Saghir Abdullah, *Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani: Ulama dan Pengarang Terulung Asia Tenggara* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Hisbi, 1990), 55-92.

literature but also, as we shall witness later, in the book trade of the later period where their works were sought.

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PART ONE  
EARLY PUBLISHING  
AND PRINTING  
1807-1875

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE STORY OF THE MISSION PRESSES

Printing first made its appearance in Malaya in 1806 through a private undertaking initiated by Andrew Burchet Bone.<sup>1</sup> With printing experience in India as a printer to a Madras newspaper, Bone established a printing press in Penang which at the time had no printer and no newspaper. The East India Company granted him a printing licence to publish a newspaper, *The Government Gazette*, which made its debut on 1 March 1806. The press and the newspaper lasted for twenty-one years with two successive owners, namely B. C. Henderson and William Cox. The paper carried official announcements, news and advertisements.

The printing equipment, including the press and the types, was originally bought from Europe, and based on the publications it can be said that the stock of type was limited to three point sizes and a couple of display types. The illustrative blocks were also very limited. Some of the paper used was imported from Europe being Whatman watermarked 1801 and Budgen watermarked 1802 and 1803. But normally the paper used was of inferior

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of Bone's printing activities see B. C. Bloomfield, *A. B. Bone and the Beginning of Printing in Malaysia* (London: India Office Library, 1979); C. K. Byrd, *Early Printing in the Straits Settlements 1806-1858* (Singapore: National Library, 1970).

quality manufactured in India or China.<sup>2</sup>

Bone first ventured into book publishing in 1807 when he printed *The Prince of Wales Island Directory and Calendar for 1807*. This directory, according to advertisements in the *The Government Gazettes*, contained details of the East India Company and the establishments at Melaka and Prince of Wales Island; lists of shipping and inhabitants and also of agents for subscriptions in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. It is likely that the book was published but no copy seems to have survived.

In the same year Bone printed a book which became the first publication in the Malay language to be printed in Malaya. It was written by John Shaw and entitled *The Malay Language*.<sup>3</sup> This book, although designed for the Malay market as well, more importantly was intended for use by the Europeans; as stated on the title page, it was "...for the use of the civil servants of the East India Company and European gentlemen and settlers there". It is not clear who distributed the books and there was no record that Bone himself sold them. Bloomfield describes the printing types of this book as poor. The *Jawi* characters are all drawn by hand.<sup>4</sup>

Bone's company also offered printing and book-binding services. From advertisements in his newspaper, it is clear that he provided the stock-in trade

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<sup>2</sup> Bloomfield, *Beginning of Printing*, 26.

<sup>3</sup> The complete title of the book is *A Rough Sketch of Part of an Intended Essay Towards Ascertaining, Deducing, Elucidating, and Correctly Establishing the Rudiments of the Language Vulgarly Called the Malay language* (Penang: A. B. Bone, 1807).

<sup>4</sup> Bloomfield, *Beginning of Printing*, 12.

of the jobbing printer, forms, legal and government documents, and that he acted as agent for publications from India. He also engaged in book-retail of publications from his own press and more especially of imported ones. Apart from that he advertised himself as auctioneer, cargo and general trade agent.

Bone and his successors' printing activities, nevertheless, did not have any immediate impact on the indigenous people, as they were primarily intended to cater for the needs of the administrators and the colonial government and also for the colony's growing mercantile community. The publications were largely in English. It was the missionaries who started the development of printing in the indigenous language. The earliest missionary press in the Straits Settlements was in Melaka, established by the London Missionary Society in 1815. The press in Penang was opened by the Society in 1819 while in Singapore it was opened in 1822, three years after Raffles had landed.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.1 MELAKA MISSION PRESS

The Melaka station of the London Missionary Society was planned by the first Protestant missionary to China, Robert Morrison, but it was William Milne who established it. In China, Morrison faced great obstacles. He was not permitted by the East India Company into its area of influence because of the

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<sup>5</sup> Detailed accounts of the activities of the mission presses in the Straits Settlements are given in Byrd, *Early Printing*; Ibrahim Ismail, "Missionary Printing,"; O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society,"; W. Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China* (Malacca: Mission Press, 1920); W. H. Medhurst, *China: Its State, and Prospect, with Special Reference to the Spread of the Gospel* (London, 1938).

restrictions imposed by the authorities. The Portuguese, being Catholic, did not want a Protestant missionary in China and under the Chinese regulations it was forbidden to print foreigners' writings or to engage in any activities considered infiltration of Western thought into the country. Undeterred, he studied the language secretly until he was proficient enough to secure a job as secretary and translator to the Company. This position gave him the protection to remain in China to accomplish his missionary objectives. In 1810 he completed his translation into Chinese of the Acts of the Apostles which was subsequently printed xylographically in Macao.<sup>6</sup> This work was followed by another translation on grammar and vocabulary.

Meanwhile, Morrison was planning to establish a mission at the Eastern Presidencies, either Penang or Melaka. This mission would be a base from which missionaries could operate in East Asia. An institution of higher learning would also be established there where most local and English languages could be studied and religious as well as secular knowledge could be imparted. Such were Morrison's ideas and therefore when William Milne, an assistant he had requested, arrived from London in July 1813, and the Portuguese authorities strongly objected to his arrival, he persuaded Milne to undertake a missionary survey in Southeast Asia. In February 1814 Milne sailed to Java and then to Melaka and after nearly six months he returned to Macao. On his return, he and Morrison decided on Melaka as the location for the mission.

Melaka was chosen for several reasons: it had an established, although

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<sup>6</sup> Ibrahim Ismail, "Missionary Printing," 178.

small, Chinese community; books printed in Melaka could easily be taken by ships into surrounding countries, including China; the position of Melaka was more central between India and China; and there had been a printing press in Batavia owned by the Dutch. But under the London Convention of August 1814, Melaka was about to be returned to the Dutch. Melaka was in Dutch hands from 1818 until 1825 when the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 ruled that the settlement be transferred back to the British.

In April 1815, Milne set sail for the Ultra Ganges Mission, so named because it was to include all mission works in Asia, east of India. He brought with him his family, a Chinese printer, Chinese books, workmen and equipment for printing.<sup>7</sup> The mission arrived at Melaka on 21 May 1815. About three months later, in August, Milne and the Chinese printer produced the first piece of printing, *The Chinese Monthly Magazine*, a periodical produced xylographically and distributed gratis.<sup>8</sup> At the same time they were also engaged in pastoral duties for the Christian community at Melaka, preaching in the open air and from door to door; they even made attempts to spread their messages in Chinese temples.

Under the regulations, permission had to be obtained from the East India Company officials to carry out printing activities in the territory. This permission was accorded to Milne in January 1816 by the Governor in Council in Penang. They were also given a conditional grant of land by the English Resident at Melaka and free passage on vessels sailing under government

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<sup>7</sup> Milne, *Retrospect*, 140.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 154.

orders for members of the mission.<sup>9</sup> On receipt of permission, Milne wrote to Bengal ordering printing equipment. Soon he obtained a press, six printers, and founts of English and Malay types of Arabic characters with matrices.<sup>10</sup>

Munshi Abdullah in his autobiography described the arrival:

"...there arrived some printing materials and a printing press with a printer. The man in charge was named Mr. Huttman and six Bengalis under him worked the press. The compositors were a middle-aged man named Addington and a young man named Waugh."<sup>11</sup>

The Malay Department was opened with the arrival of Claudius Henry Thompsen, a Dane, who joined Milne in September 1815 to proselytise among the Malays. A year later he and his wife had to return to England because of illness. Thompsen came back to Melaka at the end of 1817 to resume his work. There arrived with him several pieces of printing equipment including English matrices, files and borers for making types.<sup>12</sup> Another member to join the Malay Department was Walter Henry Medhurst who arrived at Melaka in July 1817. Along with him was one more printing press for the mission. He was recruited into printing and upon arrival he relieved Milne of his duties in the printing press. In 1820 he was transferred to Penang and briefly worked with the mission there before moving on to Batavia in 1821.

The Mission Press in Melaka was primarily meant for the Chinese, which resulted in a vast amount of printed output in Chinese dialects.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibrahim Ismail, "Missionary Printing," 182.

<sup>10</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 65.

<sup>11</sup> Hill, "Hikayat Abdullah," 112.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

Publications in Chinese were at first printed by xylography, but later metal types were used when Morrison from Macao started sending them. These metal types were produced locally not long after that. In 1818 the mission had twelve men employed in Chinese printing while for Malay printing there were two.

English printing was restricted to annual reports of the mission or college and also several learned monographs and periodicals written by the missionaries. Several printings were done on a commercial basis and there were printing jobs coming from the government at Singapore and Batavia.

A long list of Chinese publications on Christianity, morals and linguistics was produced in the form of tracts, broadsheets and books. By 1819 a total of about 54,000 units was achieved while productions for Malay were 19,000.<sup>13</sup> A year later the productions in Chinese were more than doubled to about 140,000 and the amount in the Malay language was 20,500.<sup>14</sup>

In May 1817, two Malay titles were printed and these became the first books to be published in the Malay language by the Mission Press. They were the *Ten Commandments* and *Dr. Watt's First Catechism*.<sup>15</sup> Each consisted of no more than eight leaves with the first editions of 300 copies and 100 copies respectively. *The Ten Commandments* was reprinted in the same year for another 300 copies. The Catechism was printed again twice in 1819 for a total

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<sup>13</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 70

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Hill, "Hikayat Abdullah," 165.

of 1,600 copies.<sup>16</sup> Several other titles were printed before Thomsen went to settle in Singapore in 1822, working for the Malay Department there. Non-religious books were also printed, especially for schools. Two of the early school books were a forty-five-page Malay spelling book and a Malay-English vocabulary of ninety-six pages. The Malay spelling book was printed in *Jawi* in 1818 and went through several impressions with a total number of 5,200 copies within one year.<sup>17</sup>

For printing in *Jawi*, the types were obtained from Serampore Mission Press in Bengal. This press was initiated by the Baptist missionary, William Carey (1761-1834), at the end of the eighteenth century in the Danish settlement of Serampore in Bengal. It was probably the main oriental type-foundry of the East. Historians of Serampore Mission speak of exquisite founts of Persian and Arabic and other characters in most Indian languages produced by the workmen of this press for its own use and for sale to other printing establishments.<sup>18</sup> Thomsen also published a quarterly bilingual periodical with the Malay title *Bustan Arifin* and the corresponding English title, *The Malay Magazine*. The cover-title page in *Jawi* was printed from woodcuts and

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<sup>16</sup> Milne, *Retrospect*, 271; Ibrahim Ismail, "Missionary Printing," 193.

<sup>17</sup> Milne, *Retrospect*, 272.

<sup>18</sup> A. K. Priolkar, *The Printing Press in India: Its Beginning and Early Development* (Bombay: Marathi Samshodhana Mandala, 1958), 63-64; J. C. Marshman, "The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward Embracing the History of Serampore Mission," vol. 1 (London, 1959), 178-179; and George Smith, *The Life and Times of William Carey* (London: 1885), 101.



the Malay contents were mostly in Jawi.<sup>19</sup> This magazine is interesting because it proves that xylography was also used in Malay printing as well as its normal usage for the Chinese publications. A total number of six issues were published between January 1821 and April 1822. The format of this magazine was the same as his *Indo-Chinese Gleaner*, the English language quarterly which combined general knowledge and Christianity but was targeted more towards the younger group. With Thomsen himself as editor, Samuel Milton in Singapore and Thomas Beighton in Penang would contribute articles and translations for the magazine.<sup>20</sup> The publication ceased with the departure of Thomsen in 1822 to Singapore.

Under the mission's resolutions, a college called the Anglo-Chinese College was to be established and the year 1819 saw its opening. Contributions for the setting-up came from several sources, mainly the London Missionary Society itself, the East India Company, the Penang Government, and also individuals, including Morrison who donated cash and books for the library. The college was administered through a board of trustees and the staff were drawn from the missionaries sent from London, supported by Chinese, Malay and Siamese instructors. With the establishment of this college, the designation of the press changed to the Anglo-Chinese Press. But this was not always the case since other imprints were also employed, such as The Anglo-Chinese Mission Press, The Anglo-Chinese College Press or just The Mission Press,

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<sup>19</sup> Ibrahim Ismail, "In Quest of the Malay Magazine 1821-22," *Indonesia Circle* 21 (1980); 45-48.

<sup>20</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 73; Ibrahim Ismail, "Missionary Printing," 194.

which was the original designation.

Towards the 1830s, fewer new titles were published in Malay and other languages, and work consisted mostly of reprints if demand appeared. These were the declining years of the Mission Press in Melaka. In 1843 the mission and the printing establishment were closed following the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, which confirmed the cession of Hong Kong and the opening of Chinese ports to foreigners. The printing equipment was transferred to Singapore and other properties were arranged for sale by James Legge, who was then in charge.

The nineteen years of operation witnessed the establishing of Melaka Mission as an important centre of publishing and printing activities, not only for Christian literature but also non-religious materials in several languages. The Malay publications were largely Bible translations, Bible commentaries, catechisms and hymns. A few titles such as dictionaries and spelling books were produced for schools. Attempts were also made by the press to run on a commercial basis to help finance the mission, as shown by the printing of *The Malacca Observer* and probably *The Malacca Weekly Register*.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2 PENANG MISSION PRESS

Printing activities in Penang during the early period were not exactly dominated by the Christian missionaries as in Melaka. When Bone died in 1815, the press and newspaper were taken over by B. C. Henderson and later

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<sup>21</sup> Byrd, *Early Printing*, 12.

by William Cox, who continued publishing until 1827.<sup>22</sup> Then in 1828, the Penang Government established its own press.

The Government Press was set up because of the increasing demands for the printing of official publications, and the existing commercial press was thought to be inferior and charged high fees to the government.<sup>23</sup> In September 1828, printing materials including a press and types were sent from Bengal to the Penang Government. Together with the equipment there arrived three press operators and one compositor.

The government also purchased the press and equipment of *The Penang Register and Miscellany*, a paper which replaced the *Gazette* in 1827. Through this press the government printed all its materials besides offering jobbing printing on a commercial basis. The press later published a weekly paper entitled *The Government Gazette, Prince of Wales, Singapore and Malacca*, which made its first appearance on 25 October 1828. The contents of this paper included local and foreign news, advertisements, English literary works and government announcements. These announcements were sometimes translated and printed in *Jawi*.

The staff of the press soon expanded and within a year of its inception, nineteen workers were employed: seven compositors, six pressmen, one carpenter, one copying clerk, one bookkeeper and three peons.<sup>24</sup> In May 1829, the press began to be given a wider responsibility: all public printings for the

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Straits Settlements were to be done there.<sup>25</sup> But the press did not last long. The changes in the administrative structure forced the establishment to be closed in 1830.

The Penang Mission was started in Georgetown in February 1819 by Walter Medhurst.<sup>26</sup> In April Thomas Beighton arrived from Melaka to set up a mission to the Malays. He was joined by John Ince, a missionary for the Chinese. In November 1832 Beighton received a small wooden press from Thomsen in Singapore.<sup>27</sup> Earlier the Secretary of the London Missionary Society had sent him cutting and binding tools. More equipment came soon after that. Several individuals in Penang presented the mission with an iron printing press bought from Calcutta with fount of Malay types. A printer was then employed on a contract basis to run the press. Beighton also admitted a few Malay boys from his school to be trained in printing.

An account by Medhurst shows that nine titles in Malay were printed in the period of two years from 1834 to 1836.<sup>28</sup> Earlier, in 1832, immediately after he had received a wooden press, he printed a one-sheet tract entitled *Ibarat Perkataan*. Among the titles he published later were a reprint of *Malay Hymns*, a new work of *Malay Poems* written by "a Malay", *The History of John Knill*, *Religion of the Bible*, *Fourth Commandment*, the *Beatitudes* and other

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 90; Byrd, *Early Printing*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 90.

<sup>28</sup> Medhurst, *China*, 587-588.

titles for the preaching of Christianity.<sup>29</sup> Many of Beighton's publications contained controversial topics to attract the attention of the Malay audience. Examples are *Comparison of the Religion of Jesus with the Religion of Muhammad*, *The Rise of Christianity*, and his one-sheet tract entitled *Pengajaran* (Teaching). *Pengajaran* is a story about the conviction and the execution of a local Muslim by the authorities for his crime in stealing, murder, adultery and false testimony. It goes on to say that such acts were sinful and condemned by Christian teaching. Thousands of copies of this tract were distributed and soon it was reprinted. This tract was said to be offensive to Muslims and caused a sensation among the Malays. Beighton exploited the interest by publishing a sequel of sixteen pages entitled *History of Syed Abas or the Sin of Murder*." The little tract on *Comparison of the Religion of Jesus with the Religion of Muhammad* attempted to prove the superiority of the Bible over the Quran.

Muslim leaders considered the books in bad taste and some Malays were furious at the stream of unsolicited material arriving at their homes from the mission. They demanded that the Governor in Penang, S. G. Bonham, stop Beighton from circulating tracts of a similar nature.<sup>30</sup> The Governor interviewed Beighton but nothing positive was achieved because Beighton was able to prove that the tract was a translation from the original by a bishop whose church Bonham advocated. Bonham could only advise the resentful men to simply destroy or ignore the books as they arrived. Unsatisfied, some

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<sup>29</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 90-93.

<sup>30</sup> Byrd, *Early Printing*, 33.

leading Malays sent letters to Beighton arguing against his offensive tracts.<sup>31</sup>

In 1840 and 1841, several other tracts of similar nature were produced, including *The Story of Tom* and *The Lock Exploded*.<sup>32</sup> He also translated the famous classic by John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*; to make it appealing he gave the story a local flavour such as by substituting the names of places with local names. However, Beighton also printed his *Letter to Mahometans*, a clarification that his intention was to stimulate enquiry and never to offend them.<sup>33</sup>

Prior to the arrival of the press, Beighton sent his materials for printing elsewhere, especially to Melaka, Singapore or Batavia. Even in later years, this practice was sometimes done. Byrd's documentation mentions that some of the works in Penang, especially the sections in *Jawi*, were being lithographed while the *Rumi* sections were printed by letterpress.<sup>34</sup> There is no evidence that the mission in Penang had a lithographic press. Therefore these publications could have been done in other places, most probably by Benjamin Keasberry, who was operating such a press in the early 1840s for his Malay publications.<sup>35</sup> Another possibility is that a lithographic press could have been operating at this time among the Malays in Penang or Singapore. Not only were his tracts

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<sup>31</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 92.

<sup>32</sup> The first book is about Beighton's adopted child, a Malay whom he baptised, and the second book is the story of Ahmad, his scribe who had converted to Christianity. See O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 92-93.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Byrd, *Early Printing*, 22-38.

<sup>35</sup> Details on B. Keasberry are discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

printed in Melaka or Singapore, they were also corrected and edited, especially by Thomsen and Abdullah.<sup>36</sup>

The Malay Mission in Penang was terminated in 1844 by the death of Beighton. The printing equipment was transferred to Singapore. The wooden press was sold for twelve dollars to an unnamed buyer and the iron press was passed on to Keasberry in Singapore.<sup>37</sup>

### 2.3 SINGAPORE MISSION PRESS

The settlement in Singapore was founded by Stamford Raffles in 1819 and three years after that Milne, head of the Melaka mission, was granted land to establish a Malay and Chinese mission. Thomsen, who was a missionary to the Malays in Melaka, was transferred to Singapore in 1822. He joined Samuel Milton, a missionary to the Chinese, who had arrived earlier. Thomsen and Milton requested permission to establish a printing press and in January 1823, the government granted it.<sup>38</sup>

When Thomsen had first arrived in Singapore, he had brought with him a small press and workmen including compositors, pressman, typecutter and book binder.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Byrd believes that printing was carried out by Thomsen before he obtained the official permission from the government.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 90.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Byrd, *Early Printing*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

In the meantime, Samuel Milton went to Calcutta on Raffles' assurance to purchase printing equipment for the government. He arrived back with three printing presses, one fount each of English, Malay and Siamese types; English printing paper, an English compositor, printing ink, Malay matrices, Arabic matrices and many other accessories which made up a perfectly complete printing press that could print in five languages, namely English, Siamese, Malay, Arabic and Chinese. The purchase was unfortunately not authorised by the Society in London, which as a result refused to pay the bill when Milton wrote to them. But with the help of Robert Morrison, the affair was resolved and the money taken from the public subscription for the Singapore Institution was used to pay for the presses and equipment.<sup>41</sup>

The press, bearing the name "Institution Press" or "Mission Press", operated from Singapore Institution, a school established by Raffles in 1823. Under the supervision of Milton not much was printed. Three titles are recorded: a catechism in Siamese language translated from Milne's work, a translation of St John's Gospels and a Malay-English dictionary.<sup>42</sup>

When Thomsen left in 1834 he sold the presses and buildings to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions who established a station in Singapore in the same year. But this station was closed down in 1843 and the presses were handed back to the Society. During the period of nine years of existence, the American Board owned the largest printing press in the Far East. The board sent a large number of missionaries including Alfred

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>42</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 79.



North and Joseph Travelli, who were both proficient in the Malay language. North was responsible for printing the earliest edition of Abdullah's *Hikayat Pelayaran Abdullah* (The Voyage of Abdullah) with opposite pages in *Jawi* and *Rumi* script. John Stronach continued the work of revising and translating the New Testament for the second edition, which was previously done by Thomsen and Robert Burns.

Benjamin Peach Keasberry came from America to Singapore as a missionary to the Malays under the American Board but later in 1839 he joined the London Missionary Society.<sup>43</sup> Keasberry was soon to become an outstanding missionary to the Malays. Being the son of a British army colonel and Resident stationed at Java, he had a great understanding of the Malay language. He was educated at Mauritius and Madras and then attended theological school and church seminary in New Jersey. In Singapore Mission he was recruited by John Stronach and Alexander Stronach of the American Board, ordained brothers from Scotland who arrived in 1839.

Keasberry was certainly no stranger to printing. He received training in the craft, together with bookbinding and lithography, in Batavia under Medhurst, a missionary of the Society who was stationed there. In Singapore, Keasberry embarked on Malay printing by using a lithographic press loaned to him by the American counterparts. In 1843, he personally purchased two lithographic presses and stones from Germany. He also asked the Society for stones to be sent to him.

The activities of the Society in Malaya came to an end in 1846 following

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<sup>43</sup> On Keasberry, see Byrd, *Early Printing*, 16-17.

the Opium War (1838-1842). As a result of the war several Chinese ports were opened and Hong Kong was surrendered to Britain. All stations of the Ultra Ganges Mission in the Straits Settlements, including the Anglo-Chinese College of Melaka and the printing press in Singapore, therefore, were removed to Hong Kong which became the headquarters of the Chinese mission with branches in Shanghai, Amoy and other parts of China.<sup>44</sup>

The American Board had already made the move three years earlier. All the missionaries in the Straits Settlements were told to leave, but Keasberry refused. Most of the belongings of the Mission Press in Singapore were shipped to China, leaving Keasberry, after much insistence, with a few pieces of printing equipment, a lithographic press, an iron press from Penang and types.<sup>45</sup> With this he supported himself to continue his mission and his works in his printing office, also known as the "Mission Press", situated at Zion Hill. He was busy creating a new version of the Bible in Malay and printing more Malay books. He was always sought after by European traders to print bills of lading, letterheads and other business documents for them. Government publications were also printed here. For the schools he produced reading texts in Malay translated from the English. His commitment received sympathy from the British Foreign Bible Society, which resulted in the publication of the New Testament in 1852 using *Rumi* script. The *Jawi* edition was printed in 1856 and distributed not only in the peninsula but also in surrounding places in the

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<sup>44</sup> R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, vol. 2 (London, 1985), 429.

<sup>45</sup> Byrd, *Early Printing*, 16.; O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 96.

Archipelago. He also translated *The Book of Genesis*, *The Psalms*, *The Life of Moses*, and *The Life of Jesus*. In 1849 he lithographed *Hikayat Abdullah*, an autobiography of Munshi Abdullah, soon to become well-known. His other publications include a *Jawi* lithographed periodical entitled *Chermin Mata* (Mirror of the Eyes) in 1858.

In addition to Malay printing, Keasberry also made great contributions to the education of the Malays. In 1840 he opened a school in Kampung Gelam, although it was unsuccessful. In 1845 he founded a boarding school at Rochore for the Malays which offered printing courses in lithography, bookbinding and printing in addition to other subjects. This school was so successful that in 1851 it was expanded to admit Malay girls. Many children of the middle and the upper classes were educated here, including the two sons of the ruler of Johor, Abu Bakar and Abdul Rahman. Most officers serving the Johor Government between the 1860s and the 1880s were also educated at this school. In 1875 when Keasberry died the printing works was bought by John Fraser and David Chalmer Neave,<sup>46</sup> a partnership renowned for its business in aerated water. The name "Mission Press" was temporarily retained and one of the most important publications of the establishment was the annual *Singapore and the Straits Directory*. The printing side of the business later became a separate company, Printers Limited.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> W. E. Makepeace, *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, (London: John Murray, 1921), 194.

<sup>47</sup> See elsewhere in Chapter Three for information on this company.

## 2.4 ABDULLAH BIN ABDUL KADIR MUNSHI

Much has been written about Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi, popularly known as Munshi Abdullah, as a person and as one of the great innovators in Malay letters.<sup>48</sup> His works have been an inspiration to generations of Malays, although today he is criticised for his uncritical attitude towards the Europeans. The ensuing paragraphs give a brief account of his career as a writer, editor, translator and printer.

Abdullah was born in Kampung Pali, Melaka. His date of birth has never been agreed upon, but based on Abdullah's remark in the concluding part of his autobiography, *Hikayat Abdullah* it would have put the date at 1797. Abdullah's great grandfather was an Arab from Yemen who married a Tamil. His grandfather went to Melaka and married a woman, half Indian like himself. One of their sons was Abdul Kadir, Abdullah's father. Abdul Kadir studied at a Quranic school in Melaka, where he learnt to read and write Arabic and other languages until he became proficient in several languages. When he was a trader, he taught Malay to William Marsden, the famous lexicographer. Then he was employed as a captain for a government vessel before becoming an interpreter and Malay writer at Riau. Finally he returned

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<sup>48</sup> See Hill, "The Hikayat Abdullah"; A. C. Milner, "A Missionary Source for a Biography of Munshi Abdullah," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 53, pt. 1 (1980): 80-89; H. F. O'B Traill, "An Indian Protagonist of the Malay Language," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 52, pt. 2 (1979): 67-83; H. F. O'B Traill, "Aspects of Abdullah Munshi," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 54, pt. 3 (1981): 35-56; Kassim Ahmad, *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah ke Kelantan dan Judah* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1960); Mohd. Taib Osman, *An Introduction to the Development of Modern Malay Language and Literature* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1986).

to Melaka to become a petition writer.

Abdul Kadir's professional career was very stimulating because essentially it was what the career of his son Abdullah was to be. The inherited talents and the education he underwent implanted in him a passion for the written word which subsequently grew into an enthusiasm for literary adventure. However, Abdullah's path to fame was opened up by many factors.<sup>49</sup>

In 1818, when Stamford Raffles came to Melaka, he employed Abdullah to write letters to native rulers, copy and collect Malay manuscripts and write poetry. When Milne arrived, Abdullah became his teacher. Throughout the mission's operations from 1815 to the demise of the London Missionary Society Abdullah was there at the press working as an assistant to the missionaries and consultant on Malay language. Abdullah was also actively involved in the printing work of the American Board.

In his autobiography there is evidence to suggest that Abdullah was the first person among the Malays to have the opportunity to learn the technique of printing. He wrote vividly how he obtained the first lesson from Milne and Thomsen:

"...When the box of letter types arrived, Mr. Milne told me to pick out and group all the different letters...Then Mr. Milne taught me how to arrange the letters, how to hold the block and how to set the pages so that the printed sheets could be folded properly one after the other. After three or four months of practice in all these steps I could do the work on my own without his assistance. As time went on I became more and more conversant with the technique of printing and knew how to avoid slips when operating the press itself or in setting the type or in using too much or too little ink."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> For a critical treatment see Kassim Ahmad, *Kesah Pelayaran; O'B Traill*, "Aspects of Abdullah," 35.

<sup>50</sup> Hill, "The Hikayat Abdullah," 112.

On casting types he said:

"...Mr.Thomsen showed me how to cast type both in letters and in numerals. The required design is first cut in iron to make a punch, following which the punch is hardened. It is then hammered into copper to form a mould into which molten type metal is poured from a crucible, any surplus metal being cut away with a knife to level it off. The material used for making the type is not ordinary tin but an alloy of tin and other metals. By the grace of Allah I learned to perform all this operation myself and it was I who made up the types for figures and letters wherever there were deficiencies at the time."<sup>51</sup>

By this time the printing of the first Malay publication, the *Ten Commandments* was already completed and Abdullah helped to prepare the tract. Abdullah also helped Milne in the preparation of other work. When Thomsen sailed for Europe for a sick leave, Abdullah was asked to take charge of the entire printing establishment for about six months. The next book Abdullah engaged in printing was a vocabulary entitled *A Vocabulary of the English and Malay Languages Containing Upwards of 2,000 Words*. Together with Thomsen, Abdullah worked on several other titles in Melaka including the revision of a Dutch version of St. Matthew's Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. He contributed to the magazine *Bustan Arifin* in the translation of tracts. The *Jawi* calligraphy of the magazine's title page was probably done by him.<sup>52</sup>

When Abdullah went to Singapore with Thomsen in 1822, he produced the Malay text of Raffle's denunciation on gambling and opium farming. He found much work translating agreement and business documents for the English and

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>52</sup> Ibrahim, "Missionary Printing," 194.

Chinese traders. Once he worked for Edward Boustead, an influential trader, translating the rules of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce. His fluency in Tamil enabled him to translate a Hindu fable called *Pancha Tanderan* which he gave a Malay equivalent as *Hikayat Galilah dan Daminah*. It was lithographed in 1835 and became popular among the Malay readers. This translation was reprinted several times and the Dutch Romanised edition was published in Leiden sixty-nine years later. While in Singapore he would return to Melaka occasionally to help the missionaries at the Melaka press. In 1840 he moved permanently to Singapore after his wife's death to work with Keasberry and at the same time helped Stronach to edit and continue Thomsen's translation of the Gospels. As the editor of the translation Abdullah had this to say,

"It was full of mistakes. It contained incorrect renderings of the original meaning and its style was poor. These defects had arisen because of Mr. Thomsen's obstinacy and lack of understanding."<sup>53</sup>

Abdullah thought it would be best to prepare a fresh translation rather than a revision. Therefore, with Abdullah's advice, Stronach asked the Melaka Mission to abandon the edition of part one of the New Testament already printed.<sup>54</sup> However, he was very cautious about his reputation. Earlier he had had a problem with Thomsen in the revision of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles because Thomsen insisted on using expressions normally not permissible to Malay idiom resulting in Abdullah's being blamed.<sup>55</sup> In a few instances Abdullah threatened to quit teaching and editing because of

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<sup>53</sup> Hill, "The Hikayat Abdullah," 256.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Thomsen's insistence on his own style of idiom, spelling and choice of words.

Abdullah's bold attitude resulted in his being viewed suspiciously, at least by one missionary, Thomas Beighton, who was his former student. Beighton in Penang would send his translations to Singapore for correction and printing. In Singapore Abdullah was commissioned to edit these translation and at one point Beighton wrote:

"I sent some of the tracts to Singapore but have heard nothing of them since, so I suppose Abdullah condemned them, and they were not circulated."<sup>56</sup>

Beighton also thought that Abdullah, whom he referred to as an "artful Mahometan", disliked him with all his heart, daring to find fault with the translations he had to do with. In his autobiography, however, there is no evidence that Abdullah ever disliked Beighton. Beighton was concerned about the influence Abdullah might have on the translation of the New Testament.

The Mission Press under Keasberry was also printing several Malay manuscripts and Abdullah was given responsibility for editing them. Two of the classic manuscripts were *Adat Segala Raja-Raja Melayu dalam Segala Negeri* (The Customs of the Malay Kings) and *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals). The extant copies of several other manuscripts give evidence that Abdullah republished them in manuscript form and probably edited them in the 1830s and 1840s in Singapore or Melaka. Some of these works include *Kitab Khoja Maimun*, a tale translated from the Persian; *Hikayat Isma Dewa Pekerma Raja*, an ancient romance; *Hikayat Patani*, a history of Patani; *Hikayat Raja-Raja Johor*, the annals of the King of Johor; and *Syair Ken Tambuhan*, a romance written in

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<sup>56</sup> Milner, "Missionary Source," 53.



poetry.<sup>57</sup> Some of these manuscripts were lithographed several years later. On the frontpiece of all these titles there are references attributed to Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir. As an example, the colophon of *Hikayat Raja-Raja Johor* says "copied by Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, a learned and accurate native of Melaka, at Singapore, 1838."

Among the American Board's missionaries, Abdullah was very close to Alfred North. It was with North's encouragement that he wrote his *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah* (The Story of the Voyage of Abdullah) and *Hikayat Abdullah* (The Story of Abdullah). *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, an account of his experiences during his travel to the east coast in 1837, was printed the following year with the help of North in his printing press. Subsequently this book went into numerous editions and became a popular textbook in the vernacular schools. In 1849 it was published in Paris in French translation.<sup>58</sup> In 1840 Abdullah started writing his magnum opus, *Hikayat Abdullah*, which records the major historical events of his lifetime. It was completed in 1843 and lithographed for the first time in 1849 after going through several revisions under the advice of Keasberry. In 1854 Abdullah sailed on a pilgrimage to Mecca and died suddenly at Jeddah at the age of forty-seven.

## 2.5 BOOK CIRCULATION AND DISTRIBUTION

A complete inventory of Malay publications of the Ultra Ganges Mission Press

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<sup>57</sup> See *Catalogue of the Malay Collection* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Library, 1980).

<sup>58</sup> See Padma Daniel, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Books Relating to Malaysia in the Raffles Museum & Library, Singapore* (Singapore: Printers Limited, 1949).

in the Straits Settlements is rather difficult to make because of conflicting reports. Byrd mentioned different reports and tabulations by John Ince, Medhurst and Milne which were inconsistent with each other in number of titles and copies of print editions.<sup>59</sup> Milne, for example, reported that from 1815 to 1819 the Mission Press in Melaka had printed twenty Malay titles totalling 20,500 copies.<sup>60</sup> This means an average of five titles was published each year in Melaka with a thousand copies for each title. For Chinese books, from the year 1815 to 1819 a total of 140,000 copies were printed comprising thirty-three titles,<sup>61</sup> which means an average of about 4,000 copies each title. A few other Malay titles were printed in Penang and Singapore. The average number of copies per title for each edition of the Malay books remained about the same throughout the years, that is between 1,000 to 2,000 copies. Some tracts, such as *Pengajaran*, were reprinted for several times. For its first edition, Beighton printed 7,000 copies in 1837 in Penang. This tract, containing a sensationalised issue, was soon reprinted less than a year later in 4,000 copies in an enlarged edition. Within two years, 11,000 copies had been printed but this publication contains only two pages. However, it had a sequel containing sixteen pages with a circulation of 4,500 copies printed within two years in two editions.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Byrd, *Early printing*, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Milne, *Retrospect*, 267

<sup>61</sup> J. H. Haines, "A History of the Methodist Church in Malaya" (M. A. Thesis, Princeton Theology Seminary, 1956), 21.

<sup>62</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 92.

Most of Thomsen's works, including his revisions of the Gospels, had short lives. Only 1,500 copies of the final part of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles were printed. This was because the Society constantly shifted both their policies with regard to publication of Malay literature and their support of Thomsen's work.<sup>63</sup>

Not all of the Malay publications of the Mission Press were translations. There were a few original titles including *Malay Poems*, composed by "a Malay", described in the introduction of the book as a merchant and a scribe, a native of Penang of Arabian and Indian descent.<sup>64</sup> He is presumed to have been a Malay scribe named Ahmad who worked with Beighton. Some later tracts in verse were composed by this scribe, such as *The Lock Exploded or the Hidden Secret Treasury of Mahometanism Exposed and the Godhead of Jesus Manifested*. Ahmad's works were, however, very "minutely scrutinised and corrected" by Beighton and also by Samuel Dyer, who was then attached to the Chinese department.<sup>65</sup>

Book distribution in these early years of printing and publishing was facing major problems. All books printed in the Straits Settlements for public sale, with few exceptions, were in the English language. School books were distributed to the particular schools which were the mission's establishments. It is unclear if the schools requested the students to buy these texts. Some books on Malay language and other subjects written for the general public

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

were certainly put up for sale. But the market was limited to government officers, traders, sailors, and the literate locals. *Hikayat Abdullah*, for example, was purchased by the Governor of the Straits Settlements, William John Butterworth, twelve copies at the rate of four dollars per copy. He distributed six copies among the leaders of the Malay States and the other six copies he sent to the Bengal Government.<sup>66</sup> It was a high price to pay for the book, considering the selling price a few decades later was not more than one dollar for every new edition.<sup>67</sup> Apart from the nature of the work itself, the limited number of copies for a book of a considerably substantial number of pages printed by lithographic method probably resulted in high production costs.

Missionary publications on Christianity were largely distributed free of charge. Both tracts and Bible were given away whenever the opportunity presented itself. The missionaries would walk to every place to give out tracts to all who would accept them. Milne would make a journey from house to house, delivering materials to every door he passed along the way. Friends and correspondents were also used to help distribute.

A network of outlets through ships' captains, chiefs of junks and boats was established by Milne. He recorded that at one time nearly three thousand tracts and books were being distributed by more than a hundred junks.<sup>68</sup> It

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<sup>66</sup> Hill, "The Hikayat Abdullah," 31

<sup>67</sup> See *Straits Settlements Government Gazette's* "Memoranda of Books..." for the following book registration numbers: 1313, 1430, 1778, 1796, 2098, 2116 (all at sixty-five cents each), 2324, 3104, 3271 (all at ninety-five cents each), 3633, 3706 (both at a dollar each). All these editions were printed by letterpress.

<sup>68</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 97.

was reported that books had reached many states in the Malay Archipelago including Johor, Kedah, Penang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Pahang, Padang, Bangka, Borneo, Java, Moluccas, Celebes, Madura, Bencoolen and Manila as far as Malay publications were concerned. Books in Chinese, English and other languages reached as far as America and St. Helena as well as China, India, Tibet and Japan.

Thomsen and Stronach used the same method as their predecessor. They would board vessels in Singapore bound for various destinations, including the Middle East, to distribute materials to the captains and crews. With regard to Borneo, an island known for its numerous rivers, Thomsen recorded in his visiting book about two hundred rivers with a number of settlements to which books were sent.<sup>69</sup> The American missionaries went one step further. Instead of waiting for the boats and ships in the harbour, they chartered them and went for a voyage around the many islands of Malaya and Indonesia. This technique must have been costly and consumed much of their time.

It was realised that the distribution method produced no tangible effect. Many local residents became furious at receiving streams of unsolicited material. A succession of officials from the London Missionary Society and also from the American Board reported back to their headquarters that the thousands of pounds spent on Malay literature were being wasted. In 1837 one missionary made a visit for the London Missionary Society and reported as follows:

"...no place in the East has greater facilities for tract distribution and

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

perhaps at no point has this species of labour been carried out to a greater extent. Thousands and ten of thousands of tracts and portions of scriptures have been given away. Not only have Malay inhabitants been fully supplied but thousands of Bugis, Javanese etc. So early as 1830, the Singapore Christian Union reported that in Singapore and neighbourhood our friends have gone round, half a dozen times passing from house to house, and scattering tracts abundantly. Ever since, it has been vigorously maintained. Not a single Malay in Singapore has even made a nominal profession of Christianity: nor are there any hopeful catechumens."<sup>70</sup>

A reader of *The Singapore Chronicle* once wrote to the newspaper criticising the practice of giving away printed literature to people who could not read and said that he occasionally saw tracts in the orchards being used to protect fruits on the vines.<sup>71</sup>

Beighton in Penang complained that he occasionally found his own books, which were given away free, being sold by others at the entrance of the mission's building.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Keasberry had no idea where the copies of the Bible they distributed ultimately ended up. The effort to distribute the literature was amazing, but there was no clear evidence that the Malays could read it. The number of literate people was very low throughout the settlements and it was estimated that not more than one in 500 had the ability to read.<sup>73</sup> For this reason, Keasberry abandoned the practice of giving books away to all takers. Recipients of his publications had to demonstrate reading ability before

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<sup>70</sup> Haines, "History of the Methodist Church," 60, quoting the *Malaysia Message*, Official Journal of the Malaya Methodist Church, Singapore (October 1901): 92-93.

<sup>71</sup> *Singapore Chronicle* (23 September 1830), cited in Byrd, *Early Printing*, 18.

<sup>72</sup> O'Sullivan, "London Missionary Society," 97.

<sup>73</sup> Haines, "History of the Methodist Church," 61.

receiving the materials.

In reaching the audience, distribution was not the only aspect where difficulties surfaced. There were ongoing problems of providing readable materials. One of the complications related to the question of which dialect of Malay would best provide a basis for a common Christian literature to be used throughout the Malay world. The early Bible translation by Dr. Melchior Leidekker in 1691, made on the order of the Church of Batavia and sponsored by the Dutch East India Company, was written in the Malay language normally used in the Peninsular and in literature.<sup>74</sup> This could not be understood by many lay people, particularly those outside of the Peninsula. As a result H. C. Klinkert, a Dutch Mennonite minister in Java who had married an Indonesian woman, translated the New Testament into the lay language. But again in the lay language itself there are several variations and therefore his translation and the other translation in one Malay dialect attempted by John Emde in 1835 did not relieve the problem.

In 1863 Klinkert was commissioned to prepare a new translation using Johor-Riau Malay. This translation, completed in 1870, was published by the Netherlands Bible Society using *Rumi* script. However, it was found to suit only the Indonesian readers. Missionaries in Malaya complained that Malay

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<sup>74</sup> First published in the Netherlands in 1733 in *Rumi* script. The Batavia edition in *Jawi* was published in 1758. One copy is kept at the British Library, listed in Annabel Gallop, "Early Malay Printing: An Introduction to the British Library Collection", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 63, pt. 1 (1990): 85-124. See *al-Qawl al-Atiq iaitu segala surat perjanjian lama; Injil al-Qudus iaitu segala surat perjanjian Baru*, (Batavia, 1758).

readers in the peninsular would not be familiar with the dialect.<sup>75</sup>

It is difficult to assess the impact of the mission's Malay printing enterprise in the Straits Settlements. The mission had produced a number of experienced missionaries with a working knowledge of the Malay language and an understanding of the people, but it seemed that all their determined efforts generated little or no result in the way of converts to the Christian faith. Even Abdullah, who himself worked with the mission in translating, editing, publishing and printing the Christian tracts, remained a "determined Muslim". On the art of printing, however, a number of Malays had become skillful through employment and training at the mission presses and most particularly at the printing school. For the promotion of literacy it is undeniable that the mission presses, especially through the publication of non-religious materials, had provided sources of reading and learning. The *Jawi* alphabets, which were previously used exclusively in the Islamic *kitab jawi*, were broadened to be employed in Christian writings as well. The art of translation from English to Malay was also pioneered during this period.

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<sup>75</sup> Hunt, "The History of the Translation of the Bible into Bahasa Malaysia," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 62, pt. 1 (1989): 42.



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PART TWO  
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE  
1876-1920

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## CHAPTER THREE THE ADVENT OF THE MALAY BOOK INDUSTRY

### 3.1 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRY

The history of the Straits Settlements during the first few decades of its existence is told in the story of its rapid socio-economic development. The significant growth in agriculture and mining, and the swift increase in population, particularly through migration from Java, Sumatra, India and China, contributed to a major transformation in the socio-economic landscape of Malaya. Singapore, through the advantage of its geographical position, easily emerged as the most important trading centre in Southeast Asia. This colony was on the main east-west trade route and therefore goods from Europe and India could be brought easily for transshipment to China and for distribution throughout Southeast Asia. Among the items which could easily be obtained in Singapore as a result of these trading activities were paper, ink and other printing necessities. The importation of paper and paperware saw a tremendous increase in value over the decades. In the first few years of the nineteenth century, China, the United Kingdom and Austria were the major paper exporters to the Straits Settlements, but slowly India, Japan and the United States took a share.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The import value for 1908 was \$1.6 million and increased to \$2.2 million and \$2.3 million in 1910 and 1920 respectively. See the *Blue Book* for the years 1900-1920 (Singapore: Government Printing Office).

The trade and commerce which produced prosperity also brought the infrastructure which had to develop alongside the actual merchandise in order to facilitate transactions. Progress in areas such as communications, banking and postal services were of vital importance in the trade network that included printing and publishing. Roads and railways were built not only to the mining towns, harbours and plantation areas but also to towns linking the various states. In banking, the earliest financial institution to set up its office in Singapore was the Oriental Bank Corporation in 1848, followed by the Chartered Bank in 1859.<sup>2</sup> A local money order service was introduced in May 1871 and then expanded to the Malay States and the Dutch East Indies. Other postal services to be established were parcel post, postage at special rate for newspapers and express mail.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from these elements, there were other equally important factors in the growth of Malay book publishing and printing, particularly the development of literacy and of Islamic intellectual consciousness, the position of the language as the lingua-franca of the Archipelago and most significantly the introduction of vernacular school education. The roles of traditional education, the *pondok* and *surau* schools and also the Quran reading classes were significant in imparting Islamic knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Although it can hardly be

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<sup>2</sup> N. J. Ryn, *The Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), 111.

<sup>3</sup> W. E. Makepeace, ed., *One Hundred Years of Singapore* (London: John Murray, 1921), 144-145.

<sup>4</sup> "Surau" is a small Muslim chapel where there are too few worshippers for a mosque.

said to be responsible for the growth of publishing, it provided a fertile ground for a literate and knowledge-conscious society. The *ulama* or learned scholars on Islamic knowledge produced by the *pondok* schools owed a debt to the transmission of knowledge in writing. The second and third decades of the twentieth century saw the proliferation of works by such scholars.

A modern form of Islamic schools emerging at the turn of the century was the *madrasah*.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the *pondok* school, the *madrasah* had a set curriculum and an organisational structure much more in keeping with the secular schools. Although instruction in *madrasah* was primarily Islam, every opportunity was provided for the learning of English, mathematics, science and commercial subjects. The demand for textbooks for *madrasah* education was at first provided through imports from the Middle East, especially Egypt.<sup>6</sup> But when Malay language was also used, a pressure to produce textbooks locally emerged.

In the late nineteenth century, western style vernacular education was introduced. This introduction had been very decisive in paving the way for the growth of Malay book publishing activities. Initially, schools were established

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<sup>5</sup> "Madrasah" is an Arabic word meaning school. The Malay madrasah was an Islamic school usually attached to a mosque where the children were taught by scholars learned in Islam.

<sup>6</sup> An article in *Al-Imam* praised the Sultan of Johor for his policy on book export. The article says, [author's translation]: "...there are by now at one's disposal textbooks directly imported from Egypt through Muar. These books contain subjects on religious principles and ethics which are beneficial to our children. Indeed, this is due to the policy of His Highness, the Sultan." See *Al-Imam*, 27 December 1908. In 1920, the value of books from Egypt comprised about 3% of the total import of publications in various languages. Chinese books constituted the highest value (41%), followed by English books from Britain and America (33%). See the *Blue Book*, 1920, Section 20, 132.

by the Christian missionaries for the purpose of disseminating their religion. The first Malay school, a branch of the English-medium Penang Free School, which was missionary-aided, was opened in Gelugor, Penang in 1821.<sup>7</sup> In the 1870s, sixteen Malay-medium schools were in existence throughout the Straits Settlements, enrolling more than 500 Malay students. By the early twentieth century, more schools were opened giving wider opportunities for children's education.

Demands for teaching and reading materials in the vernacular language came with the establishment of these institutions. With suitable books very much lacking, the use of newspapers was forced into the school curriculum. Initially it was *Jawi Peranakan* (The Local Born Muslim) which played this role. A large number of its weekly edition of 250 copies were bought by the Government for use in local Malay schools. In 1888, a newspaper, *Sekola Melayu* (The Malay School), was founded with its prime objective to cater for the needs of the students. Another newspaper, *Al-Imam* (The Leader), established in 1906, was distributed free of charge to all non-government religious schools. Although it was put on sale at thirty cents for the public, those who could not afford to pay were invited to write in for free copies.<sup>8</sup> By this time, many newspapers had emerged, not only to serve schools but also for the growing literate audience in the Straits Settlements, the Malay States,

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<sup>7</sup> D. D. Chelliah, *A Short History of the Educational Policy of the Straits Settlements* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1960), 42.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Imam* (30 July 1908).

the Dutch East Indies and other areas which shared a common language. These people needed news and information and some a vehicle for the expression of literary, social and political views; this resulted in these publications mainly containing matters of literary, linguistic, social and political interest.

Religious issues began to be discussed and debated, especially in the media, through the influence of the Islamic reform movement in the Middle East under the leadership of Muhammad Abduh (1858-1905) and the rise of the Young Turks under Mustaffa Kamal Ataturk (1880-1938). These reforming ideas brought into Malaya by students returning from the Middle East sowed the seeds of Islamic intellectual consciousness, particularly among the urban Malays. The reformers - known as *Kaum Muda* as opposed to the traditionalists known as *Kaum Tua* - wanted to modernise Islam so that it could meet the social and economic challenges of modern society. Many religious writings started to be published in newspapers; this was pioneered by *Al-Imam*. Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin and Abbas Muhammad Taha, then editors of *Al-Imam*, were among the enthusiastic *Kaum Muda* writers who later turned to book writing and publishing. Others included editors and writers of *Pengasuh* (founded 1918), a magazine published in Kelantan.

### 3.2 RE-EMERGENCE OF THE MISSION PRESS

One interesting fact about Malay book printing and publishing activity at this period was the existence of enterprises which varied in their ownership, size, method of printing and type of books published. With regard to their printing

methods, lithography was initially used by some establishments, side by side with the use of letterpress. But lithographic printing slowly declined, beginning from the first decade of the twentieth century, after reaching its peak towards the end of the nineteenth century. In their ownership, almost all races were represented: the Malays, the Europeans, the Chinese and the Indians. The Malay or the Muslim presses belonged mostly to those of Javanese origin, the *Arab-Peranakan* or the *Jawi-Peranakan* communities, while the European presses were represented by the Government printing departments and several privately-owned companies.

Another member of the European group consisted of the mission presses, which re-surfaced during the last quarter of the nineteenth century after about three decades of reduced activity. When the London Missionary Society ceased operation in the Straits Settlements in 1843, missionary activities, especially in printing depended solely on the efforts of Keasberry. In 1885, the Methodist Episcopal Church was established in Malaya, appointing William F. Oldham to become its first pastor in Singapore.<sup>9</sup> Five years later the mission's printing press, which was to be one of the leading publishers and printers in Malaya, was founded by William Girdlestone Shellabear,<sup>10</sup> a soldier-turned-preacher who later became a prominent linguist.

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<sup>9</sup> Haines, "History of the Methodist Church," 25.

<sup>10</sup> Shellabear was born in Wells, England in 1862. He obtained his education at Haileybury and then at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. He was commissioned in the Royal Engineers as Lieutenant and was posted to Singapore in 1886. He was given command of a Malay company and this brought him into close contact with the Malays, enabling him to master the

It was through his effort that the Christian mission press came onto the scene again.

Because of his deep religious life and desire to become a missionary, and the mission's plan to start a printing press specialising in the Malay language, Shellabear resigned his commission in 1890. He returned to England to prepare himself for missionary services. In the meantime he studied printing and the art of matrix-making in London and Edinburgh. At the end of the same year he returned to Malaya. When he arrived, a press was set up in a rented shop-house in Selegie Road in Singapore. A considerable amount of money was donated by a contributor from Boston, and to honour her the press was called Amelia Bishop Press.<sup>11</sup> The machinery was bought from London and cost 250 pounds.<sup>12</sup> It consisted of a platen press, a hand-powered lithographic press, a proofing press, some Roman type and some Arabic type bought in Syria through the American Mission Press in Beirut. The press hired a few workers, including a Chinese Christian from Banjarmasin in Sumatra by the name of Pang Yan Wat, who could read and write Arabic fluently.<sup>13</sup> From this beginning and then with the help of several skilled European workers

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Malay language. He also had the opportunity to study Malay with one Ismail, an interpreter at the Supreme Court who had been one of Keasberry's pupils. For Shellabear's life story see W. G. Shellabear, "The Life of Rev. W. G. Shellabear," (unpublished typescript, n.d., MS 21116, Case Memorial Library Archive, Chicago); see also P. Hutton, *Make What I can Sell: The Story of Jack-Chia-MPH* (Singapore: Jack-Chia-MPH, 1978), 15-23.

<sup>11</sup> Hutton, *Jack Chia-MPH*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



such as W. J. Wager, C. W. Bradley and H. Rickard, who later founded his own printing company, the press progressed significantly.

Earlier, when Shellabear had had difficulty in getting Malay Arabic types to print *Jawi* books, he went to Beirut himself to work in the type foundry to master the art so that he would be able to introduce it to his own press. But he was unable to obtain matrices from the Mission Press in Beirut. He resolved to have them made in London and also to stay in Edinburgh to have practical lessons in typesetting. Malay Arabic types were sent from Beirut from which the matrix maker in London was able to 'grow' new matrices and new moulds. When Shellabear succeeded in getting all the equipment he returned to Singapore. The press in Singapore was then capable of casting the types needed for its own use and also for sale. Considerable outside orders for *Jawi* types were received and for a few decades many printing offices in Malaya were using *Jawi* types cast from Shellabear's matrices. For *Rumi* types, the press was an agent for Caxton Type Foundry.<sup>14</sup>

By 1908, with the professional efforts of W. T. Cherry who helped supervise the press, the establishment had transformed itself not only into a multi-faceted organisation - printing, publishing, bookselling, book distribution - but also in 1927 into a public stock company. Cherry, who arrived in 1900, was an experienced printer from the United States. But he was also a great businessman. His influence was responsible for its commercial success.

By this time, the press had twenty-one machines of various kinds and

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<sup>14</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1909.

nearly ninety men, of whom half were employed in the printing works.<sup>15</sup> In 1892 it had only ten workers.<sup>16</sup> By 1894 it had moved to new premises at Raffles Place and had changed its name to American Mission Press, obviously to link it clearly with the mission.<sup>17</sup> A few years later it moved again and the new offices at the corner of Stamford Road and Armenian Street comprised a three-storey building to house the printing department, the retail store, the Book Room, publishing agent's office and the stock room. With the completion of the building, *The Malaysia Message* spoke of the press as "the finest printing establishment in this part of the world."<sup>18</sup>

At the beginning, the press only printed Christian literature, as that was the aim of the publishing venture. The Malay materials were mostly the translation works of Shellabear. Then it started taking outside orders. The press was also kept busy with the publication of a newly founded monthly magazine in English called *The Malaysia Message*. Although religious works were the priority, under Cherry, who co-managed the press, a sizeable number of non-religious materials were printed, which resulted in his being under constant attack from people who thought that a mission press ought not to be printing non-Christian publications. But the press could not survive on the proceeds from religious works.

Shellabear, although occupied with supervision of the press, still

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<sup>15</sup> Hutton, *Jack Chia-MPH*, 29.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1894.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Hutton, *Jack Chia-MPH*, 32.

managed to write and translate books. He also produced his own works for schools. Among his early educational titles were a Malay grammar and a Malay-English dictionary. By the time of his departure, he had worked on more than twenty major Malay titles. In 1920, for health reasons, Shellabear left Singapore for the last time. He settled in the United States and continued his interest in the production of Malay literature in America. In 1947 he died at the age of eighty-four.<sup>19</sup> Cherry was offered the position of Government printer for the Straits Settlements, an appointment he held until end of the 1930s.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from Malay and English, the press also published materials in other languages, including Chinese, Javanese, Sundanese and other native languages for missionary works, local and abroad. Some publications in Javanese and Sundanese were also printed in *Jawi* characters. On the subject of Christianity alone, after a few years of operation, there were more than eighty titles appearing from the press in various languages and sizes ranging from a one-page tract to a large edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>21</sup>

The most important feature of the Malay work for the Methodist Church was said to be the Mission Press, which published mainly Malay literature. There were, however, other organisations belonging to the different denominations which were active. They included the Anglican Church, which

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>20</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory, 1938.*

<sup>21</sup> W. G. Shellabear, "Christian Literature For Malaysia," *The Moslem World* 9, no. 4 (October, 1919): 379-384.

cooperated with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Salvation Army and the Independent Churches. A few associations belonging to these Churches were involved in publishing Malay language materials as part of their efforts. The British & Foreign Bible Society was very productive and, in fact, the majority of the work among the Malays was carried out by them.<sup>22</sup> Benjamin Purdy, who worked for the society in Malaya for over forty years, was one of the longest-serving missionaries.<sup>23</sup> But it is unclear whether he wrote or published any work in Malay. The society also cooperated with the Methodist Church and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospels, for example in the hiring of Shellabear to be chief revisor and to work full time preparing a translation of the New Testament. Almost all of the society's Malay publications were printed at the Methodist Publishing House.<sup>24</sup> This Publishing House also printed materials from other bodies such as the Christian Temperance Union, whose publications included *Judi* (Gambling) and *Alkohol* (Wine).<sup>25</sup>

The Signs Press of Singapore was another missionary-based printing press, owned by the Seventh-Day Adventist Mission. In contrast with the

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<sup>22</sup> E. G. Tisdall, "Singapore as a Centre for Moslem Work," *The Moslem World* 8, no 1 (1918): 5-9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> See "Memoranda of Books," in the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* up to 1920.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Registration nos: 1103 and 1119. However, each contains a single leaflet, printed in a thousand copies.

Methodist Publishing House, most of its Malay publications were in *Rumi* using the Dutch-Malay spelling system, obviously intended for the Indonesian readers. Therefore some of them were printed in a larger number of copies.<sup>26</sup> The Signs Press in 1920 started its own Malay magazine called *Pertandaan Zaman* (The Signs of the Times), in addition to its other periodical, *Buku Pelajaran Sekolah Sahabat* (The Missions School Book). Both used *Rumi* script, with a circulation of about 1,400 copies monthly for the former and two hundred copies quarterly for the latter.<sup>27</sup> In Baba Malay, mission books were also published by some of the above-named organisations. Others include the Presbyterian Church whose missionary, Miss McMahon, successfully translated the Gospels of Matthew.

The existence of the Methodist Publishing House and the Signs Press made the distribution of Christian publications more organised and systematic, with the Book Rooms at the presses serving as retail stores. Many colporteurs took part in selling copies of the Scriptures. With the rate of literacy increasing, fewer materials were wasted. Similar to the previous practice, most of the printed publications were still given free of charge. A few were sold at low prices.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For example, the first edition of *Zaman Kita* (1920) by F. A. Detamore, containing 198 pages was printed for seven thousand copies. The book price was quoted in Dutch Guilders. See "Memoranda of Books" in the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Registration no. 1168.

<sup>27</sup> *Blue Book 1921*.

<sup>28</sup> For example, *Hikayat Yusuf* (1916) by Shellabear, containing thirty-two pages with a print-run of one thousand copies, was sold at five cents. See "Memoranda of Books" in the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Registration No. 965. A school-book of about the same number of pages by the

It was claimed that the average sales of Christian publications in Malay during the first decade of the twentieth century were fourteen thousand copies, while in the second decade there were more than twenty thousand copies, an increase of more than six thousand copies.<sup>29</sup> But it is highly probable that the buyers of these publications were the *Baba Peranakan* or the Malays of the Dutch East Indies.

However, as with the earlier attempts, evangelisation among the Malays on the whole proved to be a failure. Initially, the missionaries' difficulty was in obtaining Malay-speaking Christians as evangelists, for there were no Malay Christians in the country. But, even when they succeeded in recruiting Batak Christians from Sumatra, the Malays were still unimpressed. Browne, a missionary working among the Malays in 1936, admitted that there were practically no Malay converts to Christianity in the Peninsula. He wrote, "if there is any obstacle to evangelisation of the Malays, it must lie in their religion of Islam."<sup>30</sup> The Mission's conference in 1895 was told that a few adults and children were received but later they had all gone back.<sup>31</sup> In an article, Shellabear wrote that in 1905, there was only one Malay who professed Christianity but he was doubtful whether he would be prepared to engage in

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same press would normally be sold five times dearer and a lithographed *hikayat* by another company would be about three times higher.

<sup>29</sup> The total sales given for the years 1899-1907 were 112,752 and for the years 1908-1916 were 188,294. See E. G. Tisdal, "Singapore as a Centre For Muslim Work," *The Muslim World* 9, no. 1, (January 1918): 7.

<sup>30</sup> L. E. Browne, *Christianity and the Malays*, 52.

<sup>31</sup> Haines, "History of the Methodist Church," 64-65, citing *Malaysia Mission Conference Minutes*, Singapore 1895.

Christian work.<sup>32</sup> The Malays were always sceptical and opposed to the gospels. For centuries they have professed Islam and have a high regard for the religion. The British authorities, on the other hand, although indirectly, restricted and sometimes discouraged the work because the treaty with the Malay rulers gave complete jurisdiction to the rulers in matters affecting the Malay religion and customs.<sup>33</sup> Individual missionaries had sometimes been quoted as being prohibited from continuing their work. One missionary, J. Moore, had been asked by the District Officer to stop adopting the Malay dress and another missionary was asked to stop selling Scriptures among the Malays.<sup>34</sup> In the 1930s a new regulation was said to be enacted requiring a licence to sell the Bible.<sup>35</sup> The lack of knowledge among the missionaries about the language, religion and customs of the Malay people was another factor. With this inadequacy, they were less effective and the mistake of producing offensive literature was repeated.

Almost all the missions in Malaya, finding no success, eventually withdrew from Muslim work and devoted themselves entirely to work among the Chinese and Indians with tremendous success.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, evangelistic

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<sup>32</sup> *Malaysia Message* (November 1906), quoted in Haines, "Methodist Church," 66.

<sup>33</sup> The Pangkor Treaty of 1874.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander McLeish, "A Racial Melting Pot: Malaya," *The Muslim World* 31, no. 3 (July, 1941): 248.

<sup>35</sup> See McLeish, "Melting Pot," 248. The present author, however, could not confirm this from the gazettes.

<sup>36</sup> E. G. Tisdall, "A Plea For The Malays," *The Muslim World* 3, no. 2 (April 1913): 173.

work in the Malay language was chiefly among the Straits-born Chinese. Among the natives, the preaching was shifted to the Aborigines and the non-Malays and the results were not disappointing.

### 3.3 THE RISE AND DECLINE OF HAND-LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTING

At about the same time as missionary printing came to a halt in the 1860s, a new stage in Malay printing and publishing developed. This decade witnessed the emergence of the first indigenous Malay printers and publishers who made extensive use of hand-lithography instead of moveable type in their printing activities.

Lithographic technique was first established in Germany in 1789 by Johann Aloysius Senefelder<sup>37</sup>. In this method, a scribe writes with a grease pencil or a greasy ink on a flat surface that is adequately porous to retain the marks. The writing is then fixed with an acid solution, which also etches the unwritten areas of the surface. Next, the whole stone is washed over with water so that a film of water lies on the unwritten areas of the stone. Then the stone is rolled with a greasy printing ink before a sheet of printing paper is laid directly on to the surface of the stone and run through a suitable press, taking a reversed impression of the writing. Lithographic printing spread with remarkable rapidity and by 1820 it was practised in most of the European countries. Little is known, however, about its arrival in Malaya and Singapore.

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<sup>37</sup> Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 267.



It is recorded that in 1826 lithographic presses started to arrive in India from England to be used in the Government presses.<sup>38</sup> By 1827, a number of school books in various Indian languages (Maratha, Gujarati, Hindustani) and in Persian had been printed in these presses. The availability of locally manufactured printing ink and the discovery of superior quality stones required for lithographic presses at Kurnool in the Bellary District of the Madras Presidency<sup>39</sup> popularised the use of this printing technique in India. It is possible that lithographic presses in Malaya were obtained in that country by Malay traders or Malay pilgrims on their way back home.

Information about these early activities can unfortunately be extracted only from the publications themselves, of which very few are extant. One of the earliest Malay books locally lithographed was *Sirat al-Mustaqim*, written by Nuruddin al-Raniri in 1628. It was printed and published by Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Mustaffa Banyumas in Singapore on 7 August 1864. The work was edited by Tengku Ibrahim and the scribe responsible was Yusof of Terengganu.<sup>40</sup>

Apart from Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Mustaffa Banyumas, Malay lithographers at this early stage were Haji Muhammad Tahir, Haji Muhammad Ali bin Mustaffa, Abdul Rahman bin Haji Abdul Rauf, Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Ismail, Haji Yahya bin Muhammad Saleh, Haji Abdul Karim bin Suradin,

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<sup>38</sup> Priolkar, *Printing Press in India*, 94.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>40</sup> *Sirat al-Mustaqim* (1864), located at Oriental Collection, British Library. See also Gallop, "Early Malay Printing," 105.

Haji Tarmidi, a certain Encik Ibrahim and a certain Long.<sup>41</sup> Many of these publishers were of Indonesian origins from the island of Java, having settled in Singapore or Penang. Their interests in the book business were probably acquired through the influence of Arab traders who had links with the local trading communities. Some of these traders were dealing with the importation of books and magazines from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Europe.

From their lithographic establishments, printed works of Malay literature, Islamic treatises and other subjects became available. Many of these were reproductions of famous manuscripts written earlier in the Archipelago. Like the Malay manuscripts, lithographic works are almost exclusively in *Jawi*. While scribes were employed to copy the manuscripts, the same persons were needed to copy the text onto the printing stone. For about half a century, lithography as a link between the old and the new processes of book production, was an important printing method used by the indigenous printers. A few of the books showed work of good quality with nice calligraphy and illustration, using laid watermarked paper.<sup>42</sup>

On the whole, establishments using lithography as a method of printing were almost completely operated by the Malays. There are several reasons for this. The Malay scribes, reared in the manuscript tradition, could easily use their mastery in this new venture, which required simple skills of transcribing

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<sup>41</sup> For the list of lithographers working at this period and the later years see elsewhere in this chapter.

<sup>42</sup> See *Sirat al-Mustaqīm* (1864), *Furu al-Masā'il* (1874), *Tajwīd al-Qur'ān* (n.d.), *Peraturan Membuat Surat Kiriman* (1872), *Syair Terubuk Hendak Meminang Puteri Puyu-puyu* (1873), *Syair Indera Sebaha* (1891), all located at the Oriental Collection, British Library.

the text in special ink for transfer to the stone. The other reason was obviously the lower capital and production costs. The printery needed only a stone and a roller press. Lithographic stones, which are very fine-grained, compact limestone (calcium carbonate), are easy to prepare. Besides, they could easily be obtained from India. In contrast, the equipment for letterpress, including the *Jawi* types was expensive and hard to get. It had to be imported from Egypt, Beirut or India.

During the period when the lithographic presses flourished, between 1870 and 1905 there were more than twenty publishers led by a group of major establishments namely Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Mustaffa, Haji Muhammad Siraj bin Haji Salleh, Haji Muhammad Said bin Arshad (Saidah Press), Haji Muhammad Amin bin Abdullah (Amin Press) and Haji Muhammad Sidik. Each of them owned a printing press. Haji Muhammad Siraj employed at least ten people at his main office in Sultan Road, Singapore, with himself as manager. The branch office at the North Bridge Road was managed by Haji Muhammad Dahlan.<sup>43</sup> One interesting feature of the lithographic establishments is that they were very much family businesses, employing the family's children and relatives as workers or agents. Haji Muhammad Said, for example, had his sons Khalid as assistant manager and Muhammad as salesman and clerk. His other son was sent to Penang to manage the branch office there.<sup>44</sup>

Other active but less prolific publishers were Haji Muhammad Nuh,

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<sup>43</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory, 1909.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

Haji Muhammad Tahir, Haji Muhammad Ali, Haji Muhammad Taib, and Haji Idris. All of these publishers were operating in Singapore and all of them had their own printing presses. Most of the others were small-time publishers operating without their own printing machines who published only fleetingly.

Apart from Singapore, lithographic establishments could also be found elsewhere in Penang, Perak, Terengganu, Johor and even Sarawak. Haji Putih, popularly known as Saudagar Putih (Putih, the Merchant), was operating a press in Penang. A few titles published by his company were written and edited by him. In Terengganu, a press owned by the Malay authority was functioning by as early as 1904. A *kitab* entitled *Kauzul Ula* by Syed Muhammad bin Zainal Abidin, appearing from this press, is dated 1322H (1906).<sup>45</sup> Another government-owned press was in Johor, also operating with lithographic machines. A company called Lithographic Press, owned by one Bakar, was functioning in Sarawak around this time.<sup>46</sup> The extent of its activities is, however, not clear.

A different group of lithographic publishers came from among the non-Malays. These were the Chinese and the European printers, who maintained lithographic departments in their establishments as part of the entire printing operations, which were mainly using letterpress. This could be seen in the Mission Press, Kelly and Walsh, the Commercial Press, the Criterion Press, the International Press and Koh Lim Hean Press (see Table 3.1). However, many

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<sup>45</sup> See Sharif Putera, "Sejarah Percetakan Terengganu dan Peranannya Dalam Penerbitan Karya Sastra" (B. A. Thesis. University of Malaya, 1976).

<sup>46</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1891.

of these departments did not stay long. Most were abandoned after a few years.

TABLE 3.1: LITHOGRAPHIC PUBLISHERS/PRINTERS BEFORE 1921

Abdul Rahman bin Haji Abdul Rauf, Singapore  
 \*Commercial Press, Perak  
 \*Criterion Press, Penang  
 Haji Muhammad Amin bin Abdullah (Amin Press), Singapore,  
 Haji Abdul Karim bin Suradin, Singapore  
 Haji Abdul Rahman bin Haji Abdul Razak, Singapore  
 Haji Hassan, Singapore  
 Haji Idris, Singapore  
 Hajjah Khatijah, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Ali bin Mustaffa, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Hussain, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Idris bin Yahya, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Haji Ismail, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Mustaffa, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Salleh, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Said bin Arshad (Saidah Press), Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Sidik bin Muhammad Salleh, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Siraj bin Haji Salleh, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Tahir, Singapore  
 Haji Muhammad Taib bin Zain, Singapore  
 Haji Putih bin Sheikh Omar al-Khalidi, Penang  
 Haji Sulaiman, Singapore  
 Haji Tarmidzi, Singapore  
 Ibrahim, Singapore  
 \*International Press, Singapore  
 \*Kelly & Walsh Limited, Singapore  
 \*Koh Kim Hean Press, Singapore  
 \*Johor Printing Office, Johor Baharu Long, Singapore  
 Muhammad bin Haji Muhammad Said, Singapore  
 Muhammad Saidin & Muhammad Yahya, Singapore  
 Matbaah al-Attas, Kuala Kangsar, Perak  
 Matbaah Jambangan, Batu Gajah, Perak  
 \*Mission Press, Singapore  
 Munshi Muhammad Ali bin Ghulam al-Hindi, Singapore

PP Press, Taiping, Perak  
S.P.S.K Kadir Sahib, Penang  
Terengganu Press  
\*Union Press, Singapore

\* Letterpress establishment with lithographic department.

Sources: Various Library Catalogues, "Memoranda of Books" in the government gazettes, T. J. Chamberlain Collections at Cambridge University Library and *Singapore and the Straits Directory* before 1921.

It must be noted that around this time there were in circulation several Malay newspapers and periodicals printed using lithographic techniques; among them were *Shamsul Kamar* (The Sun and The Moon), *Nujumul Fajar* (The Morning Star), *Sekola Melayu* (The Malay School), *Jajahan Melayu* (The Malay Territories), *Lingkungan Bulan* (The Crescent), *Khazanah Ilmu* (The Treasure of Knowledge) and *Tanjung Penegeri* (Tanjung Penegeri).<sup>47</sup>

The role of scribes or copyists in lithographic establishments was very important in book production. Their work was not confined to copying the text onto the stone but also determining the layout and the physical appearance of the book. Therefore they had to also be artists and illustrators. A few lithographed books were richly decorated and finely illustrated. When books were recopied for subsequent editions, some scribes often took the liberty of adorning them with motifs and decorations to suit contemporary styles and tastes. Not many scribes are, however, known to us. Haji Muhammad Nuh bin

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<sup>47</sup> Roff, *Malay and Arabic Periodicals*, 30-58; A. M. Iskandar Haji Ahmad, *Persuratkhbaran Melayu*, 1-6.

Mustaffa had at least two scribes, namely Hussain Musa and Tengku Yusuf bin Tengku Terengganu, who worked with him.<sup>48</sup> Abdul Haji was a scribe for Haji Muhammad Tahir, while Ibrahim worked for Saidah Press.<sup>49</sup> Many publications appearing from the press of Muhammad Haji Siraj were the work of his own hands and sometimes he was assisted by Sidik bin Haji Abas, who did the embellishment.<sup>50</sup>

Proudfoot discovered that the production of Malay books between 1887 to 1920 by lithographic techniques accounted for about 39% of all titles published, which is equivalent to 27% of the total units.<sup>51</sup> Lithographic publishers sometimes sent their books to be printed by letterpress establishments but the numbers were insignificant.

From the titles, it is clear that the lithographic establishments were geared towards the production of highly commercial books, especially folk romances either in prose or in verse. Together, they constituted more than 50% of all titles published, forming the largest number of publications.<sup>52</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup> See *Syair Terubuk Hendak Meminang Puteri Puyu-puyu* (1290); *Sirat al-Mustaqim* (1281) and *Furu' al-Masa'il* (1874) all published in Singapore by Haji Muhammad Nuh Banyumas.

<sup>49</sup> See *Hikayat Ahmad dan Muhammad* (1860), published by Haji Muhammad Tahir; *Syair Ibarat Manikam Pari Di Tengah Laut* (1310H) published by Saidah Press).

<sup>50</sup> For example, the imprint of Muhammad Hassan bin Nasaruddin's *Syair Indera Subha* (1901) reads: "...yang menulis Haji Muhammad Siraj bin Haji Muhammad Salleh, yang menggambar Sadik bin Haji Abas." See Gallop, "Early Malay Printing."

<sup>51</sup> Proudfoot, "Formative Period," 105, 106.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

romances in prose included classics, such as *Hikayat Bakhtiar*, *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* and *Hikayat Raja Khandak* or the religious *hikayat* stories of the lives of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions and legendary heroes of Islam.

While most of the *syair* consisted of romantic tales such as *Syair Siti Zubaidah*, *Syair Abdul Muluk* and *Syair Burung Pungguk*, some contained topical and religious matter. This was obviously an attempt to diversify the contents and to capture the market. *Syair* and also *hikayat* books, although having religious elements were not the kinds of literature normally used in religious schools and by religious scholars. Islamic books generally used Arabic titles or sometimes carried the name *kitab* or *risalah*. More than twenty percent of all lithographed titles fell into this category,<sup>53</sup> signifying the increased importance of locally produced Islamic publications.

TABLE 3.2: LITHOGRAPHED BOOKS BEFORE 1920

Al-Durrat al-Muziyat, 1893  
Alif La Ila, 1907  
Alif-alifan Mukaddam dan Bacaan Sembahyang, 1918  
Azhar al-Tasdik, 1898  
Bidayah al-Talibin, 1893  
Cerita Pak Lui, 1915  
Ceritera Dari Hal Haji Sabar Ali, 1851  
Faiz al-Rahman, Singapore, 1894  
Firasat Kitab Babul Jima, 1891  
Furu' al-Masa'il, 1291H (1874)  
Hafid al-Islam, 1901  
Hikayat Abu Syahmah, 1901  
Hikayat Abu Nawas, 1288H (1871)  
Hikayat Ahmad dan Muhammad, 1860, 1892  
Hikayat Amir Hamzah, 1894

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



Hikayat Ambia, 1892  
 Hikayat Bakhtiar, 1888, 1902  
 Hikayat Budak Yang Bernama Tom, 1841  
 Hikayat Burung Nuri, n.d.  
 Hikayat Cendawan Putih, 1894  
 Hikayat Darma Taksiah dan Abu Nawas, 1892  
 Hikayat Dunia, 1855 or 1865  
 Hikayat Ganja Mara, 1886  
 Hikayat Ghulam, 1894  
 Hikayat Indera Bangsawan, 1871, 1892, 1901  
 Hikayat Johan Maligan, 1893  
 Hikayat Kalilah Daminah, 1868  
 Hikayat Kuris Mengindera, 1906  
 Hikayat Malik Saiful Yazan, 1894  
 Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah Perang Yazid, 1896  
 Hikayat Muhammad Ali Hanafiah, 1890  
 Hikayat Nakhoda Muda, 1891, 1900  
 Hikayat Nur Muhammad, 1871, 1901  
 Hikayat Pagar Madi, 1903  
 Hikayat Pelandok Jenaka, 1891  
 Hikayat Perang Stambol, 1902  
 Hikayat Raja Badar al-Basin, 1896  
 Hikayat Raja Budak, 1891  
 Hikayat Raja Khandak, 1900  
 Hikayat Raja Sulaiman, 1873, 1902  
 Hikayat Semaun Perang Abu Jahal, 1892  
 Hikayat Shah Mardan, 1891  
 Hikayat Si Miskin, 1871  
 Hikayat Sultan Bustamam, 1895  
 Hikayat Tengkorak Kering, 1896  
 Husnul Akhlak al-Mardhiah, 1906  
 Ittihaf al-Murid fi Ahkam al-Tajwid, 1891  
 Kamus Kecil Melayu Dengan Arab, 1892  
 Kebangkitan al-Masih, 1839.  
 Kifayat Khatam Quran, 1891  
 Kitab Benih Bahasa, 1917  
 Kitab Bustanul Katibin li Sibiyan, 1892  
 Kitab Hulyat al-An'am wa Akidul Iman, 1893  
 Kitab Majmu, 1901  
 Kitab Masalah Seribu, 1870  
 Kitab Mukhtasar Ta'bir, 1873  
 Kitab Munjiat, 1893, 1895  
 Kitab Nazam Melayu, 1896  
 Kitab Nujumuddin, 1896  
 Kitab Perukunan Besar, 1901  
 Kitab Rukun Sembahyang, 1889 (Ibrahim), 1893 (Md. Amin), 1889 & 1895 (Md. Taib), 1911 (Abdul Kadir),  
 Kitab Tarib Bicara Sembahyang, 1893

Kitab Teki-teki Terbang, 1859  
 Kitab Usul, 1892  
 Kurratobain, 1900  
 Majmu al-Amal al-Mardhiyah, 1894  
 Mukaddam Alif-Ba-Ta dan Bacaan Sembahyang, 1918  
 Mukhtasar al-Hikam, 1894  
 Pemimpin Johor, 1895  
 Perang Yarmuk, 1893  
 Perbandingan Agama Tuhan Isa al-Masih Dengan Agama Muhammad, 1839  
 Peraturan Surat Kiriman, 1872, 1888  
 Puji-pujian Yakni Tahlil Yang dinyanyikan oleh Orang Yahudi, 1839  
 Puji-pujian Yang Dinyanyikan Dengan Berbagai-bagai Lagunya, 1840  
 Risalah Majmu'ah al-Risalat al-Kafiat, 1893  
 Risalat al-Bahyat al-Mardhiah fi al-Qawaid, 1984  
 Risalat al-Haj, 1913  
 Saifulla al-Kawi al-Aziz al-Qahira, 1900  
 Salawat Sultan al-Aulia, n.d.  
 Sirat al-Mustaqim, Singapore, 1281 (1864).  
 Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ma'rifat al-Tariqat, 1895  
 Surat Terasul, 1900  
 Syair dan Ucapan Queen 50 tahun Jubilee, 1891  
 Syair Abdul Muluk, 1891, 1901  
 Syair Abdul Muluk Isterinya Rafiah, 1887 & 1892 (Md. Siraj), 1894 (Md. Tab)  
 Syair Air Mawar, 1887 (Ibrahim), 1899 (Md. Said)  
 Syair Aji dan Gharib, 1895  
 Syair Ala al-Din, 1890  
 Syair Anak Raja disambar Jerung, n.d.  
 Syair Ardan, 1891  
 Syair Badiat al-Zaman, n.d.  
 Syair Bah Singapura, 1891  
 Syair Bidasari, 1892  
 Syair Bunga Air Mawar (Syair Pungguk), 1286H (1869)  
 Syair Burung Nuri, n.d.  
 Syair Burung Pungguk, 1891  
 Syair Cermin Islam, 1907  
 Syair Cinta Berahi, 1881  
 Syair Dagang, 1888  
 Syair Dagang Piatu, 1887  
 Syair Dandan Setia, 1894  
 Syair Dewa Shahdan, 1889  
 Syair Haji Nilah, 1900  
 Syair Hakikat al-Islam, 1903  
 Syair Haris Fadillah Siti Zawiyah, 1888, 1900  
 Syair Harith Fadillah, 1870 (Ab. Rahman), 1890 (Ibrahim)  
 Syair Hidayat al-Muslimin, 1916  
 Syair Ibarat Manikam Pari di Tengah Laut, 1892, 1893  
 Syair Iblis Syaitan, 1888  
 Syair Ikan Terubuk, 1887

Syair Ikan Terubuk dengan Puyu-puyu, 1287H (1870)  
 Syair Indera Subha, 1891, 1901 (4th ed.)  
 Syair Jeragan Budiman 1870, 1894  
 Syair Jubilee Melaka, 1891  
 Syair Juragan Budiman Johar Manikam, n.d  
 Syair Kahar Masyhur, 1891  
 Syair Kahar Mashur Shahrum Alam, 1889  
 Syair Kawaid al-Islam, 1282H (1865)  
 Syair Kembang Cumbuan, 1890  
 Syair Ken Tabuhan, 1285H (1868)  
 Syair Kubur, 1902  
 Syair Lampung Karam, 1888  
 Syair Ma'rifat al-Salat, 1902  
 Syair Makdum dan Makdim, 1871  
 Syair Makkah Madinah, 1285H (1868), 1873  
 Syair Mayat, 1890  
 Syair Mukadimmah nazm, 1905  
 Syair Nabi Lahir, 1900  
 Syair Nasihat, 1284H (1867)  
 Syair Nasihat Daripada Bapa, 1900  
 Syair Nasihat Bapa kepada Anaknya, 1890  
 Syair Nyai Dasimah Dengan Tuan Edward, 1912  
 Syair Panji Semirang, 1874 (Md.Salleh), 1888 (Md.Tahir), 1889 (Md. Said)  
 Syair Pantun Seloka, 1887, 1892  
 Syair Pengantin Bergaduh Dengan Saudagar, 1904  
 Syair Pengantin Juragan Awal, 1887  
 Syair Perang Negeri Zaitun, 1893  
 Syair Perang Aceh, 1892  
 Syair Perang Stambul, Turki dan Russia, 1892  
 Syair Perhimpunan Makhluk di Padang Masyar, 1900  
 Syair Pungguk, 1901  
 Syair Puteri Akil, 1896  
 Syair Raja Hirmaya Anak Dewi Soja, 1893  
 Syair Raksi, 1903  
 Syair Rejang, 1893  
 Syair Sang Kancil, 1890  
 Syair Saudagar Besar, 1896  
 Syair Seri Bunian Selindang Delima, n.d.  
 Syair Shams Bahrin, 1891, 1892  
 Syair Silam Bari, 1288H (1871)  
 Syair Silam Bari Sinyor, 1889  
 Syair Sinar Alam, 1896  
 Syair Sinyur, 1873  
 Syair Sirajul Khalbi, 1916  
 Syair Siti Arbah, 1891  
 Syair Siti Zubaidah, 1891 (Ab. Rahim), 1893 (Md. Taib), 1894 (Md. Amin)  
 Syair Siti Zubaidah Perang Cina, 1892  
 Syair Sultan Abidin, 1889

Syair Sultan Mansur, 1891  
Syair Sultan Abdul Muluk, 1891  
Syair Sultan Madhi, 1891  
Syair Sultan Shams al-Alam, 1894  
Syair Sungging, 1892  
Syair Surat al-Qiamah, 1289H (1867), 1878  
Syair Tajul Muluk, 1285H (1868)  
Syair Terubuk Hendak meminang Puteri Puyu, 1873  
Syair Tuan Puteri Akil Namanya 1288H (1871)  
Syair Tuan Ulama Isteri Bernama Siti Lela, 1890  
Syair Umm al-Burhan, 1873  
Syair Unggas Bersoal dan Jawab, 1870, 1878  
Syair Yatim Mustaffa, 1894  
Tajwid, 1898  
Tahsil al-Ajur fi Ziarah al-Kubur, 1893  
Targhib al-Nas, 1873  
Tarkus Salah Manaqib, 1915

Sources: "Memoranda of Books" in the government gazettes before 1920,  
University of Cambridge Library, Oriental Collections of the British Library,  
University of Malaya Library.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, most of the lithographic publishers were ceasing to be active. This is reflected clearly in the rapid decline in production of Malay lithographed books at the time. A close examination of the gazettes' records reveals that from 1891 to 1899 the total number of titles published was ninety-nine. For the next nine years the number was reduced by half to fifty titles. Only twelve titles were published from 1910 to 1919.<sup>54</sup>

These dwindling figures indicate that the publishers failed to strive against their letterpress rivals, especially those European-owned companies which had the advantage of superior skill and technology. Although lithographic printing incurred a relatively lower production costs and thus had lower average prices per copy, its process could not sustain a longer print-run. Also, in terms of time, the lithographic printing process was slower. Readers, at the same time, were beginning to prefer typeset to lithographed printing. Although *Jawi* readers were probably better acquainted with the style of the lithographed text, the typeset reproductions were much clearer. Among the Malay publishers and authors, this preference also increasingly existed, especially for economic reasons. The worldwide recession which affected the Straits Settlements' economy was another factor in forcing these unprofitable ventures into closure. A few attempted to make adjustments by getting some of their publications typeset elsewhere instead of having them lithographed.

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<sup>54</sup> "Memoranda of Books," in the *Straits Settlements Government Gazettes*, 1891-1900.

### 3.4 LETTERPRESS ESTABLISHMENTS

In terms of ownership, the production of Malay books printed by letterpress was carried out by four groups of publishers, namely European, Malay, Chinese and Indian. In 1877, the *Singapore and the Straits Directory* listed seven European-owned printing enterprises, excluding the Government Printing Office.<sup>55</sup> Except for the Mission Press, which had acquired a new owner by this time, all other offices were dealing with English-language publications. In the 1890s the Mission Press changed its name to the Singapore and Straits Printing Office under its new joint-owners John Fraser and David Neave. Major publications of this press were no longer missionary materials but trade publications such as directories, guides and company reports. Another company owned by these men was Singapore & Straits Aerated Water, established in 1883. In 1898, both these establishments were incorporated into Fraser & Neave Limited. The printing business remained an important operation. Altogether, in 1891, twenty years after they took over the Mission Press, the company had fifty-nine workers in its printing department. Twenty of these workers were of Malay origin.<sup>56</sup> With increased business, the company established branches in major towns in Malaya. However, by 1903 the lithographic department was dissolved and only a few Malays were left working in the whole printing office.<sup>57</sup> In 1909, there were only two.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> They are the Mission Press, the Mercantile Press, the Colonial Press, the Singapore Press, the Straits Times Office, the Penang Gazette Office and the Observer Office.

<sup>56</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1891, 160.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1890.

In terms of book production, under the new ownership, this company showed less interest in Malay-language publications, although as we can see later, after 1920 it rose again to be one of the champions of Malay publishing. More dominant were two other establishments, namely the Methodist Publishing House<sup>59</sup> and Kelly & Walsh Limited. From 1886 to 1920, 47% of the publications coming from the European-owned presses were, significantly, from these two companies.<sup>60</sup> From 1915 to 1920 they both published 92 items which comprised 48% of the total production for the five-year period, 33% by the Methodist Publishing House and 15% by Kelly & Walsh.<sup>61</sup> These two giant publishers achieved their degree of dominance through several factors. The lucrative school book market was in their monopoly when the government appointed them as their printers, enabling them to print all of the government's approved textbooks including the publication of the "Malay Literature Series". With advanced technology and skill, which meant a higher level of investment, both had an economic advantage over the rest of the publishers.

Kelly & Walsh Limited opened their Singapore branch in 1889 under George Brinkworth, who represented the company in London. By the early twentieth century, he had moved to Shanghai to assume directorship along

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 1909.

<sup>59</sup> For the background and development of this press, see elsewhere in this chapter.

<sup>60</sup> Proudfoot, "The Formative Period," 105.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

with John West and John Morris.<sup>62</sup> Its first store was in Battery Road, Singapore. The printing works in Orchard Road were built in 1902 under the supervision of J. E. Tyler, who was succeeded by R. W. Chater.<sup>63</sup>

Less important publishers were Ribeiro & Company, Rickard Limited, the Singapore Printing Works and other establishments operated by various Christian associations. Ribeiro, the son of a mercantile assistant and Consul for Portugal, opened a printing business in Singapore in 1895.<sup>64</sup> Rickard, a skilled printer, came to Singapore to work for the Methodist Publishing House at the turn of the century. After several years, he joined Ribeiro as manager of the printing department before opening his own business.<sup>65</sup>

Jawi Peranakan Company was thought to be the earliest letterpress establishment to be set up by a Malay. Founded in Singapore in 1876, it started a Malay newspaper under the name *Jawi Peranakan*. However, this company was not involved much in Malay book publishing. The *Gazettes* recorded hardly any publications from the press. It nevertheless was actively involved in providing training in printing for Malay vernacular school leavers under its apprenticeship scheme. Malay students in the English-medium schools were also eligible to participate. Under this scheme, the apprentices were attached

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<sup>62</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1905.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Makepeace, *Hundred Years of Singapore*, 217

<sup>65</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1909, 1920.



to a printing establishment to obtain skills in printing and bookbinding.<sup>66</sup> In Kelantan, a printing press is thought to have existed in 1896, when the first Land Office in Kota Bharu was opened. In 1901, another press was installed in the capital by Nik Hassan, the *Orang Kaya Sri Akar*.<sup>67</sup>

Al-Ikhwan Press was founded by Syed Mahmud bin Syed Abdul Kadir in 1904 (this is a probable date taken from the first appearance of its newspaper) to publish a weekly newspaper called *Taman Pengetahuan* (Garden of Knowledge). He became joint-editor with his uncle and father-in-law Munshi Sheikh Muhammad Ali bin Ghulam al-Hindi. Although the newspaper existed only briefly, it proved to be popular throughout the country. By 1912, the company had printed a few periodicals including *Al-Islam*, published by Abdul Kadir bin Yunus. This is a Malay version of an English language magazine, the *Islamic Review*, based in London. In 1917, al-Ikhwan Press started to publish *hikayat* and *syair*. Among the titles recorded by the *Gazettes* were *Hikayat Penambah Akal* (The Enricher of the Mind) by Sulaiman bin Muhammad Bashir, *Syair Bandung* (The Story of Bandung) by Abdul Latif bin Haji Tambi<sup>68</sup> and a book by Abdul Kadir bin Yunus entitled *Syair Mazlan dengan Puteri Saiyidat al-Nisba* (The Story of Mazlan and Princess Saiyidat al-Nisba). The company also printed books for other publishers. An

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<sup>66</sup> "Annual Report of the Education Department," *Government Gazette*, 4 July 1879, 417-418.

<sup>67</sup> Abdul Rahman al-Ahmadi, "Notes Towards a History of Malay Periodicals in Kelantan," in William R. Roff, ed., *Kelantan: Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974), 1-3.

<sup>68</sup> About a decade later he established the Latifah Press in Melaka.

example is the Eastern Advertising Agency which published *Cerita Perang Dunia*, the Story of the World War by Abu Bakar, printed in 1919.<sup>69</sup>

Another Malay-owned establishment was the Malay Press of Singapore or Matbaah Melayu. It remains unclear when the press started but its earliest recorded publication, dated 1906, was a school reader entitled *Kitab Sempurna Pelajaran* (the Perfect Education) by Abbas bin Muhammad Taha, then Chief Editor of *Al-Imam* who was to be a prolific book writer in later decades. Not many titles were seen coming from this press after that. After a lapse of nine years, a new title on letter writing by Muhammad bin Muhammad Ali, *Pelita Menyurat*, appeared. Also founded in 1906 was al-Imam Printing Company which published the journal, *al-Imam*. A few editors and writers of this journal wrote religious books which were printed at this press.

In the first decade of the twentieth century the *Singapore and the Straits Directory* listed Syed Gulabshah as proprietor and manager of the Colonial Press, situated at Raffles Hotel Building in Bras Basah Road. Earlier, a press with the same name appeared, only with a different owner called D. Zuzarte. For several years, this company, among others, published the *Daily Import and Export* under the direction of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce.<sup>70</sup> However, these two presses were very little concerned with Malay book publishing.

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<sup>69</sup> "Memoranda of Books," *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Registration No. 1136.

<sup>70</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory, 1877-1900*.

The Chinese-owned establishments were led by Koh & Company, Koh Yew Hean Press, Kim Seck Chye Press, Koh Kim Hean Press, Kim and Company, the Criterion Press, and G. H. Kiat & Company. These were both publishers and printers whose Malay publications were of Baba literature. Although a businessman, Koh Hoon Teck, who owned Koh and Company,<sup>71</sup> was himself a creative writer. His most important work was *Pantun Dondang Sayang*, a collection of poetry in several volumes, each consisting of more than a hundred pages.<sup>72</sup> Koh Yew Hean Press, established in the 1870s, was owned by Lin Heng-nan, who was thought to be the same person as Lim Kong Chuan.<sup>73</sup> Although this establishment was associated more with a newspaper, *Sing Po*, which was founded in 1890<sup>74</sup> according to one of its advertisements, for the past twenty years it had been printing books in Chinese and English using the most up-to-date machines.<sup>75</sup> At least one book relating to the Malay language was written by Lin Heng-nan and entitled *T'ung i hsin yu*, literally "a book to learn the barbaric language". In 1883, it was rewritten and published under the title *Hua i t'ung yu* (A Chinese-Malay Dictionary).

Kim and Company was founded in 1904 by Chia Tiong Kim<sup>76</sup> and

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<sup>71</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1909, 163.

<sup>72</sup> See "Memoranda of Books", *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Registration Nos. 912, 948, 969, 981, 1170.

<sup>73</sup> Chen Mong Hock, *The Early Chinese Newspapers of Singapore, 1881-1912* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 54-55.

<sup>74</sup> Song Ong Siang, *History of the Chinese*, 259.

<sup>75</sup> *Sing Po*, 15 February 1890, cited in Chen Mong Hock, *Early Chinese Newspapers*, 54-55.

<sup>76</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1910.

managed by Lee Chiam Tong. By the year 1920, the press was taken over by Lim Chim Hay, who employed a new manager named Edward Theseira.<sup>77</sup> Koh Kim Hean Press and G. H. Kiat were both established through a partnership. Lim Bah Chee and Lim Cheng Seng owned the former while Tan Hock Ann and Goh Hood Kiat owned the latter.<sup>78</sup> In the next decades, these two companies were among the major Chinese-owned presses which remained on the Malay book scene. All these establishments made Singapore their base. Several companies had their agents in major towns, such as Koh and Company which listed Seremban, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka and Sarawak agencies.<sup>79</sup>

Similar to the Malay lithographers, many Chinese authors and publishers were also booksellers. Some authors relied on shopkeeping friends to get orders for book.<sup>80</sup> On the whole, *baba* book production was always low and irregular as a result of the limited market. Most publications, therefore, had low print-runs. *Pantun Dondang Sayang* was, however, printed at a thousand copies each volume.<sup>81</sup> Otherwise editions were not more than five hundred copies. Thus the Chinese publishers, like the Malays, had not been able to benefit from the economies of scale enjoyed by their European rivals, even though they had the advantage of superior technology.

As mentioned earlier, printing by letterpress became more viable in

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<sup>77</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1920.

<sup>78</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1909 and 1920.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 1909.

<sup>80</sup> Proudfoot, "Formative Period," 112.

<sup>81</sup> "Memoranda of Books," *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, 1915-1920.

contrast to printing by lithographic technique, although the capital cost of letterpress machinery was higher. Such presses had to be imported from Europe. By the early twentieth century this technology could be obtained more easily after a company in England, Linotype and Machinery Limited, established a branch in Singapore which also served as a depot for the Dutch Indies, Siam and Indo-China.<sup>82</sup> This company was a manufacturer of linotype composing machines, letterpress and lithographic printing machines.

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<sup>82</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1920, 196.

TABLE 3.3: LETTERPRESS PUBLISHERS/PRINTERS BEFORE 1920

Al-Ikhwan Press, Singapore  
Al-Imam Printing Company, Singapore  
Anglo-Chinese Press, Melaka  
Bains Press, Selangor  
British & Foreign Bible Society, Singapore  
Caxton Press, Selangor  
Charles Grenier, Perak  
Chinese Directory & Press, Singapore  
Colonial Press Limited, Singapore/Perak  
Commercial Press, Perak/ Selangor  
Criterion Press, Penang  
Denodaya Venthira Press, Singapore  
Eastern Advertising Agency, Singapore  
Esharat Khan & Company, Singapore  
Freeman Press, Penang  
Fraser & Neave Limited, Singapore  
Jawi Peranakan Press, Singapore  
Jitts & Company, Singapore  
Kelly & Walsh Limited, Singapore  
Kiat G. H. & Company, Singapore  
Kim & Company, 6B Battery Road, Singapore  
Kim Seck Chye Press, Singapore  
Koh & Company, Singapore  
Koh Yew Hean Press, Singapore  
Johor Printing Office, Johor  
Lembaga Melayu, Singapore  
Majlis Agama Islam & Istiadat Melayu, Kelantan  
Malay Press, Singapore  
Mission Press, Singapore  
Mercantile Press, Singapore/Penang  
North Borneo Printing Department, North Borneo  
Penang & Straits Press Company, Penang  
Pinang Gazette Press, Penang  
Perak Pioneer Press, Perak  
Perak Printing Office, Perak  
Pritchard and Company, Singapore  
Ribeiro & Company, Singapore  
Rickard Limited, Singapore  
Sarawak Printing Office, Sarawak  
Singapore Free Press, Singapore  
Singapore Press, Singapore  
Singapore Printing Works, Singapore  
Singapore Standard Press, Singapore  
Straits Chinese Printing Press, Singapore  
Straits Albion Press, Singapore  
Straits Times Press, Singapore

Thomas Publishing Company, Singapore  
Utusan Melayu Press, Singapore  
Yik Khuan Press, Selangor  
Yu Shing Press, Singapore

Sources: *Singapore and the Straits Directory, 1877-1920*, and the Government Gazettes, 1887-1920.

### 3.5 BOOK WRITING, PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

The various groups of people involved in publishing and printing ventures, as illustrated above, were also involved in writing activities. The Europeans, the Malays and the Chinese were all represented. Identifying authors, however, is not an easy task. A few writers preferred to remain anonymous, but even if the writers were known, some might not be the original authors. Classical *syair* and *hikayat* were mostly written by copiers, adapters or translators who produced their works based on stories handed down from previous generations. For fear of being self-seeking and narcissistic, some *kitab* writers refused to be identified. In cases of anonymity, the "Memoranda of Books" in the gazettes served as an important reference, as it has a rather extensive record of authorship.

The Malay writers mainly consisted of the publisher-writers or printer-writers. These were the lithographers of the *syair*, *hikayat* and religious *kitab*. As owners of the businesses, they would prepare the manuscripts themselves and print them through their own or other printing establishments. Their works were not normally original titles. They edited previously anonymous popular manuscripts of *hikayat* and *syair* and reproduced them in print using the lithographic technique. They also translated or adapted works from other

languages, especially Arabic. Figures such as Ibrahim, Haji Muhammad Amin, Haji Muhammad Siraj, Muhammad Taib, Muhammad Nuh and Haji Muhammad Said were not only proprietors of lithographic establishments but also editors, translators and adaptors of such works. Ibrahim published at least three of his *syair* works at his own establishment.<sup>83</sup> But altogether he produced more than twenty titles, including a few Islamic *kitab*, published and printed at various presses.<sup>84</sup> Haji Muhammad Siraj had at least ten works under his name, lithographed by himself and by other printers. Among his works were folk romances such as *Hikayat Nakhoda Muda*, *Syair Dagang*, *Syair Abdul Muluk*, *Syair Harith Fadillah* and *Syair Ken Tabuhan*, all of which were originally classical works of past generations. But he wrote original works as well, such as *Peraturan Surat Kiriman* (The Method of Letter Writing) in 1888, presumably intended for schools.

A few writers from other parts of the Archipelago preferred to get their works published or printed in the Straits Settlements or other Malay States. This is especially true for *kitab* authors such as Muhammad Salleh bin Umar, Abdul Salam, Hamzah, Muhammad Abu Yahya and Abdul Rashid. These were writers based in places such as Lingga, Semarang, Makassar and Surabaya in Sumatra. As *kitab* books in the Dutch East Indies were generally

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<sup>83</sup> *Syair Dagang Piatu* (1887); *Syair Air Mawar* (1887); *Syair Ardan* (1887).

<sup>84</sup> Examples are *Syair Perang Negeri Zaitun* (1893) and *Syair Ajib dan Gharib* (1895) at Amin Press; *Hikayat Abu Syahmah* (1901), *Kifayat Khatam Quran* (1891) *Kitab Bustanul Katibin* (1892), *Syair Dandan Setia* (1894), *Syair Harith Fadillah* (1890), *Syair Ken Tabuhan* (1873, 1890), *Syair Pantun Seloka* (1887, 1892), *Syair Pungguk* (1901), *Syair Shams Bahrin* (1891, 1892), *Kitab Usul* (1892), all at Saidah Press; *Syair Kahar Mansur* (1891), *Syair Abdul Muluk* (1891) and *Syair Siti Zubaidah Perang China* (1892) at Haji Muhammad Sidik's printing press.



written in *Jawi*, printing in Singapore or Penang would not have been a problem. Besides, there was the advantage of a potentially wider market, and distribution would be made easier.

Another group of Malay writers emerging at this period was the early product of the western education system introduced earlier. They comprised officers who held posts in the government departments. Among the prominent figures from this group were Muhammad Ibrahim Munshi, Syed Mahmud bin Syed Abdul Kadir, and Sheikh Muhammad Ali bin Ghulam Hussain, all of whom were of *Jawi-Peranakan*. Muhammad Ibrahim had received his education at the mission school of Keasberry before assuming a long list of posts including those of a translator and teacher and in various offices in government departments.<sup>85</sup> As a son of a great writer, Munshi Abdullah, he had inherited his talent and flair for writing from his father. His important works include *Pemimpin Johor* (Leader of Johor), *Benih Pengetahuan* (The Seed of Knowledge) and *Hikayat Pelayaran Muhammad Ibrahim Munshi* (The Voyage of Muhammad Ibrahim Munshi), all first published before the early twentieth century.

Syed Mahmud, who was born in Singapore in 1867, attended Raffles Institution and then worked with the Education Department as a translator and writer.<sup>86</sup> His works, which were mostly translations or adaptations, were especially written for school use. Among them were *Kejadian Selerah Anggota*

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<sup>85</sup> For his life background, see Mohd. Fadzil Othman, *Kisah Pelayaran Muhammad Ibrahim Munshi* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1980).

<sup>86</sup> Zaaba, "Modern Developments," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18 pt. 3 (1939): 143.

and *Urip Waras*, both primers on hygiene, *Ilmu Peladang*, a manual on agriculture, *Ilmu Dunia*, a geography of the world, and *Hikayat Tanah-tanah Besar Melayu dan Pulau Perca*, a historical geography of Malaya and Sumatra. *Kamus Mahmudiah*, the first complete dictionary in Malay, was his other work. In about 1903 he founded a printing company known as Al-Ikhwan Press especially to publish a newspaper, *Taman Pengetahuan*, first published on 6 June 1904.<sup>87</sup> Like Syed Mahmud and Muhammad Ibrahim, Syed Abdul Kadir's works were also primarily for school use, mostly translated from English texts on various subjects. The works of writers belonging to this group, together with the works of a few European writers such as Shellabear, constituted the early attempts at textbook writing.

By the early twentieth century, the Teacher Training Colleges in Singapore, Melaka and Perak had produced several batches of graduates, among whom a few demonstrated promising talent as writers. Among them were Sulaiman bin Muhammad Nur, Haji Muhammad Said bin Sulaiman, Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman, Raja Haji Yahya bin Raja Muhammad Ali, and later joined by Abdul Majid Zainuddin, Daeng Abdul Hamid and Syed Abdul Rahman. As teachers, they were appalled by the lack of textbooks and reading materials in schools while at the same time motivated by their European mentors or associates. Some even collaborated with them in producing works. Sulaiman bin Muhammad Nur compiled a collection of Malay proverbs, *Kitab Kiliran Budi*, with Shellabear in 1906. Another of Sulaiman's works which became popular in schools was *Kitab Gemala Hikmat* (The Magic Bezoar Stone),

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

published in 1907.

Several books by these budding Malay writers became very popular among students and general readers. *Matahari Memancar* (The Rising Sun) by Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman, *Hikayat Johor* (History of Johor) and *Hikayat Queen Victoria* (The Story of Queen Victoria), both by Haji Muhammad Said, and *Anak Kunci Pengetahuan* (The Key To Knowledge) by Abdul Majid Zainuddin are examples.<sup>88</sup> Most of these teacher-writers were proficient in at least one other language, especially Arabic or English, which enabled them to make translations. Many of the school readers they produced are in fact originated from works in other languages. Daeng Abdul Hamid's *Jawi Reader*, Syed Abdul Rahman's *Life of Sir Stamford Raffles* and Alang Ahmad's *Hikayat Penerang Hati* (The Enlightener of the Mind) were all based on English works. Alang Ahmad was a Malay translator and writer to the Resident of Perak during his later years and his above-mentioned work was a translation of a few hundred of Aesop's Fables.

The European writers consisted of missionaries and British administrators, especially the Education Department officers. The most productive missionary writer was W. G. Shellabear.<sup>89</sup> Like missionaries before him, Shellabear was indebted to his Malay teachers and proofreaders. The bulk of the Old Testament, for example, may have been done by Chew Ching Yong, a Straits-born Chinese who accompanied him from 1907 to 1913.<sup>90</sup> Earlier,

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<sup>88</sup> Zaaba, "Modern Developments," 149; Roff, *Malay Nationalism*, 134.

<sup>89</sup> For more discussion about him, see elsewhere in this chapter.

<sup>90</sup> Hunt, "Translation of the Bible," 55.

another Baba, Ta Cheng Poh had worked with him to translate the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Shellabear consulted Munshi Ibrahim, the son of Munshi Abdullah, on matters relating to language and literature. For five years he obtained help from Guru Sulaiman, a Malay teacher at the Normal School in Melaka.<sup>91</sup> They probably helped edit or proofread some of his works. As mentioned elsewhere, Shellabear also delved into the areas of linguistics and culture. Among his best known texts, used especially for schools, of which he was editor were *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals), *Hikayat Seri Rama* (The Story of Seri Rama) and *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (The Story of Hang Tuah).

It is undeniable that there was deep interest among colonial education administrators in the local literary forms and in vernacular Malay education. When R. J. Wilkinson was appointed Federal Inspector of Schools in 1903, a post he held for three years, he directed the publication in Malay of popular Malay folk stories using government funds. He also encouraged the production and purchase of suitable Malay books for schools. With the assistance of R. O. Winstedt and Haji Yahya bin Muhammad Ali, he introduced the "Malay Literature Series" in 1906. He also introduced the practice of setting up libraries in village schools to contain books on general literature in addition to other school readers. All these efforts directly helped to expand the book market, not only for educational publications but commercial books as well. Although the vernacular school system was the pillar of a few European-owned presses, this policy opened an opportunity for the indigenous publishers to expand.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Wilkinson was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge before joining the Straits Settlements Civil Service in 1889.<sup>92</sup> He was in Malaya for twenty-five years, assuming several administrative posts, during which time he published several works in English and Malay. His dictionary, *A Malay-English Dictionary*, published in 1901-1903, for a long time was considered as the largest and most comprehensive English-Malay lexicon. In spite of all his efforts, vernacular school-book publishing was, however, still regarded as poor. Wilkinson's work came to an end, with most of their publications lost, as soon as he left the department.<sup>93</sup> Shortages of books in school were still prevalent and teaching was often done using newspapers and a few classical Malay histories. In 1916, the government appointed an Assistant Director of Education with special responsibility for Malay schools who would, among other things, be in charge of the publication of Malay school-books.<sup>94</sup> R. O. Winstedt, who was given this responsibility, immediately commissioned the preparation of a new series of school readers and text-books dealing with various educational subjects such as arithmetic, hygiene, geography and general science. The unsuitable books of the past were discarded. He also instructed that the central education authority control the purchase of books and teaching materials instead of the individual school inspectorate. This made

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<sup>92</sup> For his background, see R. O. Winstedt, who wrote his obituary in *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (20 June 1947): 143-144.

<sup>93</sup> Personal communication between Dussek and Abdullah Sanusi, 13 July 1960, cited in Abdullah Sanusi bin Ahmad, *Peranan Pejabat Karang Mengarang* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1966), 73.

<sup>94</sup> W. R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), 137.

it possible for certain titles to be published in large editions and for distribution to be carried out more efficiently. However, this practice gave greater government control over school book production and served to benefit only a few appointed publishers, printers and distributors.

Winstedt's interest in Malay book writing was indicated in several of his works, including *An English-Malay Dictionary*, *Colloquial Malay*, *Cerita Jenaka* (Humorous Stories), *Kitab Tawarikh Melayu* (A Malay History) and several others. His elementary readers, such as *Jaya Waras*, *Baja Akal* and *Pelampas Akal*, published on behalf of the Education authority, all had a print-run of at least fifteen thousand copies for their first editions.<sup>95</sup> A Jawi reader translated by one of his students which he edited, was printed in twenty thousand copies.<sup>96</sup> These incredibly high print-runs, which could never be attained by previous publishers, or by indigenous publishers, were made possible by Winstedt's policy on publication. Further improvements in textbook production were made by his successor, O. T. Dussek, who joined the Educational Service in 1912.<sup>97</sup> Dussek's own works were also mostly school readers. Like Wilkinson and Winstedt, Dussek edited several Malay classics and the works of several Malay teacher-writers.

*Baba* books were generally written by the publishers themselves, as

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<sup>95</sup> See "Memoranda of Books," *Straits Settlements Government Gazettes*, 1915-1920.

<sup>96</sup> "Memoranda of Books," *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Registration No. 1112.

<sup>97</sup> See elsewhere in the next chapter for his effort in founding the Translation Bureau.

were most of the lithographed publications. A few of these authors had their own presses while others had to print elsewhere. For example, Koh Hoon Teck, who authored *Pantun Dondong Sayang*, was the proprietor of Koh & Company, one of the leading Chinese printers at the time. Cheong Guan Boon, a self-publisher, was another example. He had his works printed at Kim Seck Chye Press, another main printer. In the same category was Chan Kim Boon, who wrote under the popular pen name Batu Gantong, specialising in the translation of Chinese classics into Baba Malay. He was born in Penang but settled in Singapore. His major achievement in the literary field was the translation of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in thirty volumes, each consisting of a few hundred pages. Most of Kim Boon's books were also printed by Kim Seck Chye Press between the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

There were at least two Baba poets in this period, namely Lim Hock Chee and Na Tian Piet. Hock Chee translated *Wan Hua Lou* (The Pavilion of Ten Thousand Flowers), printed in 1890 by Denothaya Venthira Press, a company owned by an Indian Muslim. Tian Piet, who was originally from Bencoolen, published in 1896 *Syair Almarhum Baginda Sultan Abu Bakar di Negeri Johor*, the story of the wedding of the Sultan's daughter, the Sultan's illness and death. The Chinese publishers did not only engage in literary works. Some educational materials also appeared from their presses. Examples are *A Manual of Colloquial Malay*, *A New Guide to Learning Malay* and *A Bridge*

to *Understanding the Malay Language*.<sup>98</sup>

On the whole, book writing was never a full-time vocation. Most of the writers of the time had other permanent jobs especially in government departments, and some were self-employed in the book business or other sectors. As manuscripts accepted for publication were not normally paid for and writing was not a paid job, the combination of writer-printer, writer-publisher or writer-bookseller was quite common, so that the product could generate income for them. A few were writer-administrators, writer-teachers or writer-editors, working full-time in their respective companies, schools or departments.

The categories of books in this period, although mostly commercial in nature, encompassed a diverse range of types: Malay folk romances in the forms of *syair* and *hikayat*, Islamic religious treatises, Christian tracts, *Baba* classics, bilingual books, school readers and dictionaries. The commercial books, which consisted of *syair*, *hikayat* and general titles intended for the wider audience, according to Proudfoot's study, comprised almost 40% of all titles.<sup>99</sup> Next in size of 'editions' were the religious publications, with a total of 33%: 17% on the subject of Christianity and 16% on Islam.<sup>100</sup> Other categories in their descending order of importance were school books, the

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<sup>98</sup> "Memoranda of Books," *Straits Settlements Government Gazettes*, 1887-1889.

<sup>99</sup> Proudfoot uses the term 'edition' to mean separate publications including reprints. See "Formative Period," 104.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*



bilingual books and lastly the *Baba* books.<sup>101</sup>

The European publishers had a more diverse output than their indigenous counterparts, with school materials accounting for the highest percentage. This was followed by general, missionary and bilingual publications in descending order of importance.<sup>102</sup> Both *Jawi* and *Rumi* scripts were found to be used. The Chinese publishers, on the other hand, were characterised by *Baba* literature productions in *Rumi* script while the Malays were concentrated more on general and Islamic lithographed publications. It was discovered that no *Rumi* book had ever been produced by lithography except some titles from a missionary publisher in Sarawak.<sup>103</sup> The printer was probably Sarawak Lithographic Press.<sup>104</sup> This is understandable as *Jawi* was used in manuscript writing and lithographic printing was essentially an extension of that tradition.

In terms of volume of annual output, production of the Malay-language books saw a steady increase in the number of 'edition' and in bulk.<sup>105</sup> But there was a slump, especially in the period between 1896 to 1900, caused by the unfavourable economic climate as a result of worldwide recession.<sup>106</sup> In

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>104</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory, 1891.*

<sup>105</sup> The term 'bulk' is used by Proudfoot to denote 'the number of pages multiplied by the number of copies printed'.

<sup>106</sup> Proudfoot, "Formative Period," 116; Hashimah Johari, "Early Book Publishing," 29.

addition to this, the indigenous publishers also suffered from the shift in printing method from lithography to letterpress. There was, in fact, not a single title registered by them in 1897. In 1899 there was only one, by Saidah Press.<sup>107</sup> In 1916, the government spoke of a shortage in paper supply, affecting its printing activities. The Chief Secretary of the Federated Malay States, E. L. Brockman wrote:

"...there was considerable difficulty in obtaining paper and there was a great increase in cost. Efforts were made to effect some economy, for instance by reducing the size of forms. As an instance of what is possible in this was, it may be mentioned that telegram forms of which over a million are printed in a year, were reduced to half the original size, saving on this item alone nearly (one) hundred reams of paper. Although instructions were issued in the early part of the year that great economy in paper should be exercised, the effect has not been as great as was desired. The Gazette was altered from a weekly to a fortnightly issue for the sake of economy."<sup>108</sup>

The book trade in general, however, suffered no visible impact from this reported shortfall in supply and the rise in cost of printing paper. In fact, twenty-three titles were registered during this period, rising from seventeen the previous year.<sup>109</sup> The indigenous publishers, on the other hand, took a long time to recover from the previous slump. The departure of many lithographic companies had left a gap which remained unfilled by indigenous letterpress companies. Thus, only four titles appeared from their presses between 1916 to 1917, one from Haji Muhammad Idris, two from Saidah Press

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<sup>107</sup> "Memoranda of Books," *Straits Settlements Government Gazettes*, 1897 and 1899.

<sup>108</sup> *Federal Malay States Annual Report for 1916*, 23.

<sup>109</sup> "Memoranda of Books", *Straits Settlement Government Gazette*, 1916.

and one from a letterpress establishment, al-Ikhwan Press.<sup>110</sup>

In book distribution, lithographic publishers or printers were generally engaged in book retailing. They ran shops selling books in addition to other merchandise and provided services to support their publishing activities. Most of them also served as general commission agents. The books sold in their shops were, however, not limited to their own publications. From their catalogues, it is found that several materials from other publishers, local and foreign, were also put on sale. Among the local publishers there seemed to be close cooperation not only in the area of marketing by becoming agents for their counterparts but also in the publishing and printing of popular books. For example, a few books written by Muhammad Siraj were published by Haji Muhammad Sidik and Haji Putih.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, a few works by Muhammad Nuh Ismail appeared from the presses of Haji Muhammad Siraj and Hajjah Khatijah. More interesting, some of Ibrahim's similar works were found to be published by several different establishments. The letterpress publishers or printers were generally booksellers as well. In Singapore, the Methodist Publishing House, Commercial Press, Esharat Khan & Company, Kelly & Walsh and several Chinese-owned companies also listed themselves as booksellers.<sup>112</sup> In Johor, H. M. Shah and Company, which was neither a

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Examples are *Kitab Munjiat* (1895), *Peraturan Surat Kiriman* (1888) and *Syair Dagang* (1888). See "Memoranda of Books," *Straits Settlements Government Gazettes*, 1888-1895.

<sup>112</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1900-1920.

publisher nor printer, was one of the main book retailers active after 1900.<sup>113</sup>

When distant places were involved, the role of agents was important. Several companies had agents in major towns in the Straits Settlements, the Native States, Borneo, Java and Sumatra and other parts of the Archipelago. Some even had agents in Ceylon. This is not surprising because of the existence of Malay communities in this colony since the seventeenth century.<sup>114</sup> A large Malay bookshop in Colombo at this period was run by Baba Ounus Saldin, who was also a writer and publisher.<sup>115</sup> His newspaper, *Malay Wajah Selong* (Light of Ceylon) was in circulation from 1895 to 1900, not only in Ceylon but also in the Straits Settlements, the East-Indies and Holland. Lithographed books collected by Chamberlain and deposited in Cambridge University Library were in part bought in Colombo, probably from his bookshop.

Haji Muhammad Said had a branch in Penang, managed by one of his own sons, Haji Mujtahid, whose office was in Acheen Street, Singapore.<sup>116</sup> Haji Muhammad Siraj had agents in Melaka, Taiping, Kinta, Penang, Java and Deli in Sumatra. These agents were not necessarily professional booksellers. Malay Visiting Teachers were among important local agents for commercial

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 1920.

<sup>114</sup> For more information on the history of the Malays in Sri Lanka, see B. A. Hussainmiya, "Dunia Melayu and The Sri Lanka Malays," *Symposium on the Malay World*, Sri Lanka (1985).

<sup>115</sup> B. A. Husseinmiya, "The Rise and Fall of Malay Literature in Sri Lanka," *International Symposium on Traditional Malay Literature*, UKM Bangi 4-6 November (1982).

<sup>116</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1909, 191.

publishers. The job of these teachers was to visit several Malay vernacular schools in a particular area to supervise and guide teachers unfamiliar with the secular education system. They were able to promote and market books through their interactions with the local intelligentsia and the schools. The system of Visiting Teachers was replaced by a Group Teacher system under Winstedt's direction. In this new procedure, a senior Malay teacher, while remaining headteacher of a central school, was responsible for several other schools in his area. The role of book agents then was continued by some of these Group Teachers. The most significant category of books the Visiting Teachers or Group Teachers helped to promote and market was the privately published religious books, which were used in the government-sponsored afternoon Quranic classes.<sup>117</sup> The teachers' initiatives were, however, taken on their own and they were not paid by the government above their salaries as teachers.

An equally important way of marketing was through subscription and mail order. Subscribers were invited through advertisements in newspapers, books and magazines to enrol and sometimes pay in advance, even before the books were issued from the press. Under these circumstances, the payment, which was very much needed by small-time publishers, could finance the printing of the book. Mail order was also popular and this was made possible by the improvements in postal services. In areas where no book agents and book retailers operated, mail order played an effective role. Newly published books were advertised in newspapers or on the back covers of books. As with

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<sup>117</sup> Hashimah Johari, "Early Malay Publishing," 48.

subscription, mail order customers were normally required to send the payment, preferably cash, in advance.

## CHAPTER FOUR MALAY BOOK PRODUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND TURKEY

Printed books in the Malay language circulated in Malaya and Singapore were not merely the products of local publishers and printers. An examination of early Malay publications will reveal that publishing activities covered a considerable geographical spread.<sup>1</sup> Malay books also bore the imprints of publishers in cities in the neighbouring Malay-speaking East Indies, Europe, the Middle East, Turkey, South Africa, the Indian subcontinent and other places. The most elaborate operations outside Malaya and Singapore up to the Second World War took place in the Middle East and Turkey, and especially for Islamic publications, these centres played a significant role in the production of Malay language books and the dissemination of Islam. It is, therefore, worth observing their endeavours and contributions; this chapter examines their beginning and the subsequent development and also their relationship to local activities. A preliminary list of their publications covering a period of nearly ninety years from the 1850s up to the 1940s is also presented as an effort to document their works and to illustrate the extent of their activities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A study by Annabel Gallop also demonstrated this fact. See Gallop, "Early Malay Printing," 85-124.

<sup>2</sup> See elsewhere in Volume 2.

#### 4.1 MALAYS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Evidence suggests that the Malays started to travel to Mecca not long after their conversion to Islam. As early as the fifteenth or sixteenth century, increasing numbers of people went to the Middle East to perform Hajj and also to pursue Islamic knowledge. The centre of teaching in Mecca during the early period was the colonnades of Masjid al-Haram, the Great Mosque. Eminent scholars and professors gave classes to students after each of the five daily prayers. Apart from Mecca, Istanbul and several other Middle Eastern cities were also converged upon by Malay students from Malaya and the East Indies. *Kitab Jawi* writers spent much of their adult lives in cities such as Mecca, Madinah, Taif, Cairo, Jerusalem, Beirut, Istanbul or Alexandria to study under great Muslim scholars. While many returned home after study, a few stayed yet longer to work as teachers, writers and scribes. Some became permanent residents and held high posts as *Mufti* (chief religio-legal authorities of a State) and other religious leaders.

Among the famous early Malay writers based in Mecca at one time or another were Abdul Malik bin Abdullah (1678-1736), Muhammad Arshad al-Banjari (174?-1812), Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani (1814-187?), and Daud al-Fatani (1769-1847). These were prominent *kitab jawi* manuscript authors and later when printing presses were established in Istanbul, Cairo and Mecca, their works appeared in print from these presses. Snouck Hurgronje mentions that Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, who wrote in Arabic and Malay, sent many of his



works to the press in Cairo.<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows that lithography was operating in Mecca before the printing press arrived. A few of Daud al-Fatani's lithographed works were found in circulation. His Serampore editions were also available in Mecca.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.2 MALAY IMPRINTS

The high standard of calligraphy and the resistance of professional scribes had delayed the introduction of Arabic printing to the Middle East until 1729 when Ibrahim Muteferrika, a Hungarian convert, set up the first Turkish press in Istanbul.<sup>5</sup> The ban on printing in Turkish and Arabic by the authorities was another factor. The printing press, which was first introduced to the Middle East by Jewish refugees from Spain in 1493 or 1494,<sup>6</sup> was therefore confined to printing in Hebrew and European languages. Through the effort of Ibrahim and Said Helebi, the son of the then Turkish ambassador to Paris, the ban was relaxed. Ibrahim became the director of the first Turkish printing press, but it operated for only thirteen years and the books printed covered non-religious subjects. The press was reopened by Sultan Abdul Hamid 1 in 1784 and the

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<sup>3</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Mecca in the Latter Part of the 19th Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 271.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press), 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

development of printing proceeded rapidly.<sup>7</sup> By this time Syria had established its own press.<sup>8</sup> It was in these places that the works of Islamic scholars in Mecca, especially works in Arabic language, were later printed.

In Egypt, the first press was set up at Bulaq in 1822 at the request of the ruler, Sultan Muhammad Ali.<sup>9</sup> The Egyptian press had played a leading role in publicising and propagating the ideas of Muslims. No difficulties from religious opposition were encountered. Views on the revival, reform and unity of the Muslim community were promoted through the press. An increasing number of books, newspapers and magazines were published in Arabic, Turkish, English and Oriental languages. By 1909, there were eighty-four daily newspapers: thirty-nine in Arabic, six in other Oriental languages and thirty-nine in European languages.<sup>10</sup>

Malay printing and publishing activities in the Middle East entered a new stage in 1884 when Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain al-Fatani, a learned Malay, was appointed by the Ottoman Government in Istanbul as supervisor and editor of the newly established government press in Mecca.<sup>11</sup> Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain al-Fatani, popularly known as Ahmad al-Fatani, was born

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on the Turkish press, see Bernard Lewis, *Modern Turkey*, 50-53.

<sup>8</sup> P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 462.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 85, 99, 165.

<sup>10</sup> See "The Native Press of Egypt, *The Muslim World* 10, pt. 2 (1920): 185-191.

<sup>11</sup> Hurgronje, *Mecca*, 286.

in Patani in 1856.<sup>12</sup> Before leaving for Mecca he studied with his father and then at Pondok Bendang Daya, the largest *pondok* school in Southeast Asia at that time, established by his uncle. His Mecca-educated father was a religious teacher and a scribe. For a lengthy period Ahmad al-Fatani studied under several great scholars in Mecca and then in Jerusalem and Cairo. By the 1870s he had achieved a high reputation as a leading scholar in Mecca. He attracted many pupils from the Malay world. Many of his students became religious leaders and famous figures when they returned home.<sup>13</sup> Ahmad al-Fatani was not only an unusual and innovative teacher but a great scholar whose works covered a wide area of knowledge in Islamic Sciences and the fields of medicine, history and modern politics. His excellence earned him a title, 'savant of merit'.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout his supervision, the press produced a vast amount of *kitab jawi*, a realisation of his ambition to uplift Islamic literature through the use of the Malay language. He must have drawn up a well-organised plan in order to get into print as many quality books as possible. He diligently edited famous manuscripts of Nuruddin al-Raniri, Abdul Samad al-Falembani, Abdul Malik Abdullah, Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari, Muhammad Arshad al-Banjari, Muhammad bin Ismail Daud al-Fatani, Muhammad Zain bin Jalaluddin and

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<sup>12</sup> On his life and works see, Mohd. Saghir bin Abdullah, *Fatwa Tentang Binatang Hidup Dua Alam: Sheikh Ahmad al-Fatani* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Hisbi, 1990), 35.

<sup>13</sup> See elsewhere in Chapter Four for discussions on the life and works of some of his students such as Tok Kenali and Mahmud Zuhdi bin Abdul Rahman who became prolific writers in the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>14</sup> Hurgronje, *Mecca*, 286.

most especially of Daud Abdullah al-Fatani.<sup>15</sup> Ahmad al-Fatani was also entrusted with the task of editing several Arabic books by Arab scholars such as Abu Bakar al-Shata, Ja'afar Ismail al-Barzanji, Abdullah bin Uthman al-Makki and Sulaiman al-Jazuli.<sup>16</sup> While busy editing, he found time to work on his own books of which, starting from 1884, he successfully produced more than thirty in Arabic and more than twenty in Malay. His conviction highly encouraged other Malay students and teachers to publish their writings in the Middle East.

Ahmad al-Fatani's ambitions and enterprise were most likely responsible for the setting up of Maktabah Fataniah, which for a few decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was actively involved in book promotion and marketing. One of its offices and stores catering for local needs was at Qashashiah in Mecca.<sup>17</sup> It is likely that Maktabah Fataniah also operated as a publisher. Many of the books it listed in several of its advertisements were, however, printed by Matbaah al-Mir'iah.

The Malay reading audience in the Middle East consisted of students, teachers and also the pilgrims who made their trips to Mecca and Medina. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 resulted in the marked improvement in communication with the Middle East. Reports mentioned that in the mid nineteenth century around two thousand Malay pilgrims travelled annually to

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<sup>15</sup> See Mohd. Saghir Abdullah, *Ahmad al-Fatani*, 40-41.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> See the company's advertisements, for example on back cover of *Sabil al-Muhtadin* (Mecca: Matbaah Mir'iah, n.d.).

Mecca, and the number rose to seven thousand by the end of the century.<sup>18</sup> In addition to them, there were a few hundred Malays at this period who had become permanent residents. After the First World War, increasing numbers of Malays went to the Middle East. The years 1924-1927 saw the arrival of Malay pilgrims from Malaya in large numbers.<sup>19</sup> Also, a large number of Malay students were sent to Cairo, mostly to study at al-Azhar University. The boom in rubber prices led to the rise in the standard of living of some Malays and the increase in the number of well-to-do families who could afford a pilgrimage or an education abroad for their children.

Books relating to Hajj were frequently sought by the pilgrims who stayed in Mecca and Medina for several months.<sup>20</sup> Besides Malay readers in Mecca, Cairo and other parts of the Middle East, *kitab jawi* publications found ready buyers in Malaya, the East Indies and Southern Siam. Maktabah Fataniah was one of the main suppliers of materials to many *pondok* schools in Malaya, Indonesia, Patani and Cambodia. The import of books to this region was most likely made through pilgrims returning from Hajj or through pilgrim leaders whose consistent trips allowed for more well-planned consignments. The role of Arab communities was also important. The merchandise of Arab traders, among other things, included books and magazines from Egypt and

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<sup>18</sup> J. Vredembregt, "The Haddj," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 118 (1962): 93 and Appendix 11, 148-149, cited in Roff, *Malay Nationalism*, 38. These were, however, the Indonesian statistics.

<sup>19</sup> William R. Roff, "The Life and Times of Haji Othman Abdullah," *Peninjau Sejarah* 1, no. 2 (December 1966): 63.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Snouck Hurgronje mentions the use and demand of a "manasik-book". See Snouck Hurgronje, *Mecca*, 239.

Saudi Arabia. Among the Arab communities, there were usually Arab teachers, a school and a mosque which became the centre for the literate people.

Another active Malay publisher and distributor was Ahmad bin Abdullah Mujallid or Ahmad Mujallid, a Malay of Indian descent. In one advertisement which appeared in 1892, he listed nearly fifty Malay titles published by himself and written by various authors. He also identified himself as a publisher and bookbinder based at Babus Salam near Masjid al-Haram.<sup>21</sup> Most of the books he published were printed at Matbaah al-Karimiah and by looking at some of the titles, one can see that they originated from the works published by Ahmad al-Fatani or by Maktabah Fataniah. For example, *Ghayat al-Taqrīb* by Daud al-Fatani, which was printed by Ahmad al-Fatani in 1887, was reprinted by Ahmad Mujallid five years later in 1892 at Matbaah al-Karimiah. The publications of Matbaah al-Karimiah can clearly be distinguished by larger typefaces in bolder prints, reminiscent of *Jawi* imprints from the Indian sub-continent. His establishment was relatively large, offering a diverse range of Malay and Arabic titles at a certain time. While the significance of his role was undeniable, his activities were viewed by some people with suspicion, as there was a possibility that a number of publications appearing from his establishment were printed without permission from their copyright owners such as Daud al-Fatani and Ahmad al-Fatani.<sup>22</sup>

Ahmad al-Fatani died in 1908 at Mina in Saudi Arabia. It is not clear

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<sup>21</sup> See advertisement at back cover of Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani, *Gayat al-Taqrīb* (Mecca: Matbaah al-Karimiah, 1892), located at the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

<sup>22</sup> Author's interview with Mohd. Saghir Abdullah.

who succeeded him at the press. Maktabah Fataniah and Ahmad bin Abdullah, however, continued to be the leading Malay distributors and publishers in Mecca until the early twentieth century. At this time, *kitab jawi* in Mecca were also sent to other printers, including Matbaah al-Turki al-Majidiah.

The example of a Malay press in Mecca was soon followed by publishers in Egypt and Turkey. Although printing establishments in Istanbul and Cairo had previously printed Malay works, the Meccan press inspired them to move up to a larger scale. The presence of Malay students in Cairo in increasingly large numbers further motivated them. By the early 1920s and 1930s, there were several publishers and printers committed to producing and distributing *kitab jawi*. Among the successful ones were Mustaffa al-Bab al-Halabi and Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiah. A few companies were owned by Malays including Matbaah al-Marbawiah, established in the 1920s by Muhammad Idris al-Marbawi,<sup>23</sup> a renowned scholar who became a permanent resident in Egypt and Matbaah al-Ittihadiyah, set up by Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi al-Azhari in 1914.<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Idris al-Marbawi and Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi were among the leading Malay writers based in the Middle East at this period. They were involved in the editing of Malay periodicals published by Malay students. Between 1925 to

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<sup>23</sup> Author's personal communication with Haji Ismail bin Omar Abdul Aziz, presently the *Mufti* of Brunei.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed discussion about him, see the chapter on the writers and their works.

1940 there were at least four Malay magazines, three in Cairo<sup>25</sup> and one in Mecca.<sup>26</sup> Other writers of their contemporaries were Ahmad bin Abdul Latiff, a *khatib* of the Shafie order in Mecca who wrote four books between 1912 and 1927 (Volume 2, Part 3); and Hussain Nasir bin Muhammad Taib al-Mas'udi al-Banjari, who produced two books in Cairo and eight in Malaya after his return (Volume 2, Part One).

The publishing house of Mustaffa al-Bab al-Halabi was founded in 1859. For a long time it had occupied an office near the al-Azhar Mosque, with its printing press situated at Madinah al-Bu'uth al-Islamiah, not far from Addarasah al-Abbasiyah al-Qahirah, a residence for international students, including those from Malaya.<sup>27</sup> A brother of Mustaffa al-Bab al-Halabi, Isa al-Bab al-Halabi, was also involved in the book trade and was the founder of Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiah, another major publisher and printer in Egypt.<sup>28</sup> His publishing house, book store and printing press were located near Sayidina Hussain Mosque. Originally from Syria, these Halabi brothers came to Egypt with their parents, who were book merchants. Realising that Malay language publications had a potentially good market, especially in Malaya, Singapore and the East Indies, they started to print Malay works in addition to their Arabic publications soon after their presses were founded. As

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<sup>25</sup> *Seruan Azhar* (1925-1928), *Pilihan Timur* (1927-1928) and *Kitab Perbendaharaan Ilmu* (1929-?).

<sup>26</sup> *Perseruan Islam* (1937-?)

<sup>27</sup> Author's personal communication with Haji Ismail bin Omar Abdul Aziz.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*



publishers and printers of high reputation in Egypt and the Islamic world during that time, they easily found customers from among the booksellers in the Malay Archipelago. A few publishers in Malaya and Singapore even sent their manuscripts to be printed at their presses. Beginning in the 1930s, however, when local publishers and printers had proliferated, Malay book production in Egypt began to decline. Although the publishing houses of the Halabi brothers remain today and continue to be important publishers of Arabic books, the Malay departments lost their significance. New editions of Malay titles very rarely appear and Malay students in Cairo, for whatever reason, are no longer interested in book writing.

It is clear that the Middle East played a major part as the centre for and supplier of *kitab jawi* at least until the Second World War. As a centre of scholarship, it offered great opportunities and facilities for printing and publishing. *Kitab jawi* publishing in Malaya was in fact a continuation of the activities in the Middle East and Ahmad al-Fatani's commitment served as a great inspiration. Several establishments, such as Matbaah Riawyah in Sumatra and Matbaah al-Ahmadiyah<sup>29</sup> in Singapore, were in fact extensions of Maktabah al-Fataniah.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See elsewhere in Chapter Four for details of this press.

<sup>30</sup> Author's interview with Mohd. Saghir Abdullah.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A PROFILE OF THE BOOK TRADE

In order to obtain an overall view of the vigour of publishing and printing activities and their trends after 1920, a generalised profile of the book trade during the period is presented in this chapter. This profile, with statistics compiled from various sources illustrates the intensity of output and the main 'resources' including the authors, publishers and printers detailed discussions of whom appear in the subsequent chapters.

#### 5.1 VOLUME OF OUTPUT

Between 1921 and 1949, Malay book production in terms of titles came to 1,739 units<sup>1</sup> excluding reprints and new editions, generating a total output of up to 6.42 million copies<sup>2</sup> (See Tables 5.1 and 5.2). In the most general terms this means that an average of sixty new titles were published annually during the period, producing about a quarter million copies each year. Except for a very slight drop in 1924-1925, the number of titles was generally increasing

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<sup>1</sup> This figure equals almost three times the amount of books registered in the gazettes, which recorded 617 titles within the same period, excluding reprints or new editions. The discrepancies in the gazettes registration explain why the actual production was very much higher.

<sup>2</sup> From the gazettes, it is found that the average title had a print-run of about 3,658 copies and it is based on this figure that the edition size is assumed.

throughout the 1920s. Towards the end of the decade, the output had multiplied two-fold. This was largely due to the emergence of new publishing enterprises during this period, dealing with light fiction and Islamic publications, coupled with the activities of the Education Department in preparing large numbers of textbooks. Not less than a dozen new publishing establishments were founded during this period or started to be active to provide for the expanding demand in book consumption.

In the 1930s, while attaining a higher average level than the previous decade by about 40%, production growth was less steady. The number of titles at the beginning of the decade remained the same as the previous years, then increased slightly for the next four years before dropping. This fluctuation was related to the unfavourable economic conditions worldwide during this period. Although many publishers insisted on increasing their numbers of titles or at least maintaining them, they were forced to cut down the edition sizes. This is the reason behind the steady decline in numbers of copies in the first half of the 1930s. A few publishing houses were forced to cease operations, especially the remaining lithographic establishments, which seemed unable to withstand the economic setback. Several advertisements appeared in newspapers during this time offering large discounts and cut-prices to boost sales in the sluggish market. In 1936-1937 the total number of print-runs soared by almost 10% from the previous years, but it fell again in the following years, thus showing the long time taken to recover from the slump.

It is observed that production trends in terms of titles were inconsistent with trends in terms of edition size. For example, when the number of print-

runs was decreased by half in 1926-1927, the number of titles was increased by almost the same amount. Similarly, when the amount of titles was constant in 1930-1931, the corresponding figure for the edition size dwindled by more than 15%. Just before the Second World War broke, the number of titles reached a peak of 216 units, an increase of about five times in two decades. This was, however, not accompanied by an increase in the size of edition, which registered a decrease of about 2% from the previous years.

Publishing activities during the Japanese Occupation were very limited; only nineteen titles were recorded for the whole period from 1942 to 1945. This comprised only about 1% of the total production for the period from 1921 to 1949. The trade started to increase again in 1946 and the following three years saw a dramatic increase in both the number of titles and the size of editions. The total production for 1948-1949 was 237 titles with the total edition of 1.1 million copies reaching a record level representing 13.4% and 39.6% of the total output respectively. An average of eighty-one titles were published during the years following the war with 0.36 million copies produced annually. For the pre-war period, the yearly production was fifty-five titles which generated 0.15 million copies. Although several publishing houses disappeared as a result of the war, some became active again and when they combined with a few emerging enterprises, including those run by full-time writer-publishers, the trade escalated, signalling more promising growth in the future.

TABLE 5.1: BOOK PRODUCTION IN TERMS OF TITLES  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

YEAR	NUMBER OF TITLES	% OF TOTAL
1921	24	1.38
1922-1923	49	2.82
1924-1925	47	2.70
1926-1927	71	4.09
1928-1929	98	5.64
1930-1931	98	5.64
1932-1933	121	6.96
1934-1935	169	9.72
1936-1937	142	8.17
1938-1939	122	7.02
1940-1941	216	12.43
1942-1943	15	0.86
1944-1945	4	0.23
1946-1947	91	5.24
1948-1949	237	13.64
No date	234	13.46
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,738</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**TABLE 5.2: BOOK PRODUCTION IN TERMS OF EDITION SIZE**  
 (Source: "Memoranda of Books" in the Government Gazette, 1920-1949)

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NO. BASED ON GAZETTE (in 10,000 units)</b>	<b>% OF TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL NO. ASSUMED (in 10,000 units)</b>
1920-1921	5.53	2.44	15.738
1922-1923	8.78	3.88	24.987
1924-1925	8.47	3.75	24.105
1926-1927	4.50	1.99	12.807
1928-1929	18.63	8.25	53.021
1930-1931	13.60	6.02	38.705
1932-1933	12.97	5.74	36.912
1934-1935	12.08	5.35	34.379
1936-1937	32.18	14.25	91.584
1938-1939	31.52	13.96	89.970
1940-1941	26.08	11.55	74.223
1942-1943	-	-	-
1944-1945	-	-	-
1946-1947	11.82	5.23	33.639
1948-1949	39.56	17.52	112.587
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>225.72</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>648.057</b>

## 5.2 PUBLISHERS AND PRINTERS

There were about 170 publishers and 120 printers involved in the book trade during this period. These figures clearly overlapped, as did the roles of the establishments, which were difficult to distinguish. Less than 10% of these publishers were considered active, in the sense that they contributed more than 1% of the total output of titles for the period concerned. The sizes of the publishing houses ranged from one-man operators specialising in the production of a certain category of books to large organisations dealing with publications in a wide range of subjects in various languages and employing hundreds of workers. Although the majority of the small-time publishers produced only fleetingly and many disappeared after presenting one or two publications, some managed to remain in the business for a long time and, in the process, developed themselves into established organisations.

By the author's own categorisation based on ownership, Malay book publishers may generally be divided into various groups as follows:

i. Private indigenous establishments: publishing and printing houses privately owned by the Malays.

ii. Private non-indigenous establishments: private publishing houses owned by non-natives i.e. Chinese, Europeans and Indians.

iii. Association establishments: public or private, non-profit organisations including private educational institutions which formed publishing departments.

iv. Government establishments: Government departments and offices or government-sponsored institutions.

Based on Table 5.3, it is observed that the private indigenous publishers/printers formed the largest group, comprising half of the total number, while the government establishments numbered the fewest, accounting for only 6%. According to race, the Malays owned the largest number of establishments with 58%, producing more than 74% of the total output of titles. The Chinese, although they owned the second largest number of establishments with 21%, only captured about 10% of the market in terms of titles; while the Europeans, with 10% ownership produced about 12%.

Nearly 50% of these publishers/printers were concentrated in Singapore and 17% were in Penang. While in the previous period, publishing activities were almost non-existent in other states, by this time they had spread to Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Kelantan, Perak and especially Selangor where Kuala Lumpur became the centre of activities for the Federated Malay States and Klang serving as its most important port.



**TABLE 5.3: CATEGORY Of PUBLISHERS/PRINTERS**  
 (Sources: Malay Printed Books, 1921-1949 and Various Periodicals,  
 1921-1949)

TYPE OF PUBLISHERS/PRINTERS	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Private indigenou	122	50.21
Private non-indigenou	77	31.69
Association	20	8.23
Government	15	6.17
Unknown	9	3.70
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**TABLE 5.4: PUBLISHERS/PRINTERS BY RACE**  
 (Sources: "Memoranda of Books", in the Government Gazette, 1921-1949;  
 Various Periodicals, 1921-1949)

RACE	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Malay	142	58.44
European	26	10.70
Chinese	53	21.81
Indian	7	2.88
Unknown	15	6.17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**TABLE 5.5: CONCENTRATION OF PUBLISHERS/PRINTERS**  
 (Sources: "Memoranda of Books", in the Government Gazette, 1921-1949;  
 Various Periodicals, 1921-1949; Malay Printed Books, 1921-1949).

STATES	NO. OF ESTABLISHMENT
Singapore	119
Penang	41
Johor	26
Selangor	18
Perak	12
Kelantan	8
Negeri Sembilan	7
Melaka	4
Sarawak	2
Kedah	2
Terengganu	2
North Borneo	1
Pahang	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>243</b>

**TABLE 5.6: TOP MALAY BOOK PUBLISHERS**  
 (Source: Author's Catalogue)

% OF TOTAL NO. OF TITLES	PUBLISHER
7.1	Muhammad Ali al-Rawi
4.7	Translation Bureau/Education Dept.
2.9	Ahmadiyah Press
2.1	Abdullah Nurdin al-Rawi
2.8	Sentosa Store
2.1	Qalam Publishers/Kenari
1.7	P. Bm. P. B.
1.8	Methodist Mission
1.4	C. Dabab & Co.
1.0	Peranakan Book Coy.
1.0	Seventh Adventist Mission
0.9	Harmy
0.8	Majlis Agama & Istiadat Melayu

TABLE 5.7: TOP MALAY BOOK PRINTERS  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

% OF TOTAL NO. OF TITLES	PRINTERS
13.2	Persama Press
7.3	United Press
5.7	Ahmadiyah Press
4.2	Malay Press
3.7	Malaya Publishing House
2.8	Jelutong Press
2.8	Jawi Press
2.3	Khai Sing Press
2.3	Jamiliah Press
2.1	Muhammadiyah Press
2.1	Mercantile Press
1.9	Zainiah Press
1.3	Royal Press
1.3	Printers Limited
1.2	Annie's Printing Works
1.1	Asasiah Press
1.0	Malaya Signs Press
1.0	Aminiah Press
1.0	Al-Huda Press
0.8	Sungai Ujong Press
0.8	Khairiah Press
0.8	Anglo-Asiatic Press
0.7	Trio Company
0.7	Ahmad Press

### 5.3 EMPLOYMENT

The printing industry, when compared with sectors such as agriculture, mining, commerce and finance, was indeed very small in terms of employment. But, under the category of "Work in Material Substances and Electricity Supply", it offered about 20% of the job opportunities in 1931, just behind house building and painting, which offered more than 60%. Other jobs in this category were rubber goods manufacture, gas, water and electricity supply, and contracting and photography, all of which were much less developed.<sup>3</sup> Overall, in 1931, there were more than two thousand people employed in the printing and related industries as employers, managers, foremen, compositors, typesetters, machine operators, bookbinders and other related jobs. The majority of them were Chinese (48.8% of the total workers) followed by Indians (28.1%). The Malays made up only 13% of the total work force. In 1947, the Malay percentage decreased to 11.6% while the Chinese increased to 67.7%. This was due to the rapid development of the Chinese-owned printing presses compared to their Malay counterparts. The total number of workers altogether, irrespective of race, were increased by nearly 50%. The number of female workers of all races, except Indian, also increased, especially the Chinese which multiplied in leaps and bounds. As in all other professions, the number of Malay female workers in printing and publishing was very small. Their involvement could easily have stirred a bitter controversy. In 1927, when some women found employment in a printing press in Kuala Lumpur as compositors, intense criticism raged in the columns

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<sup>3</sup> Vlieland, *1931 Census*, 33.

of the Malay newspapers. Later, however, when Jelutong Press employed a Malay woman for a management post, it was praised for its effort.<sup>4</sup> Table 5.8 and 5.9 below show detailed pictures of the distribution of employment in printing and its related industries.

Printing workers started to form their unions only after the Japanese Occupation. In 1947, at least five associations were founded, namely Selangor State Press Workers Union, Indian Printing Employees Association, Penang Printing Association, Singapore General Printing Workers' Union and Government Printing Department Employees Trade Union. However, prior to these, at least one printing association had been established as far back as 1907. It was the Singapore Printers' Association.<sup>5</sup> It seems that this was an exclusively Malay organisation. All of the posts, including the president (Alli bin Ibrahim) were held by Malays. However, it is difficult to identify the names listed with any proprietor or manager of the printing presses of this period. The fact that the members were Malays implied that they aimed at consolidating themselves to protect their interests against the non-Malay printers who dominated the industry. The printing associations formed after the Second World War were founded following the introduction of the trade unions legislation of 1940, which came into force in June 1941. Many cases of disputes and strikes were reported from 1947 to 1949, a few of them involving employees of newspaper printers but none concerned book printers.

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<sup>4</sup> *Dunia Melayu*, 20 Februari 1929.

<sup>5</sup> *The Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1909, 103

TABLE 5.8: POPULATION IN PRINTING & RELATED INDUSTRIES IN  
MALAYA & SINGAPORE IN 1931

(Source: *British Malaya: A Report on the 1931 Census and on Certain Problems of Vital Statistics*)

RACE	BOOKBINDING & PAPERMAKING		PRINTING	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Malay	84	3	263	2
Chinese	277	9	1018	3
Indian	164	4	583	3
European	5	-	14	-
Other	54	-	192	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2070</b>	<b>10</b>

TABLE 5.9: POPULATION IN PRINTING & RELATED INDUSTRIES IN  
MALAYA & SINGAPORE IN 1947

(Source: *British Malaya: A Report on the 1931 Census and on Certain Problems of Vital Statistics*)

RACE	PRINTING & BOOKBINDING		NEWSPAPER PRODUCTION		PAPER MAKING & STATIONERY	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Malay	554	4	158	2	26	8
Chinese	2502	213	777	62	508	211
Indian	795	2	247	2	32	2
European	20	1	41	3	2	-
Other	167	8	93	6	18	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4038</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>1316</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>224</b>

#### 5.4 PRINTING TECHNIQUE

It is interesting to note that publications printed through the process of lithography were still appearing throughout this period. Although unpopular, this method contributed not less than 5% of the total production through the activities of not more than ten establishments. Still surviving from the earlier period were the presses of Haji Muhammad Nor, Haji Muhammad Amin and Haji Muhammad Idris. Among them, Muhammad Amin's Aminiah Press was the most active, producing fourteen titles. But towards the end of the 1920s, all of them discontinued their operations due to the old age of their operators and probably the difficulty in maintaining profitable operations. However, their demise did not mean the end of lithographic printing. A new generation of lithographic printers, led by the Jawi Press<sup>6</sup> which appeared during the middle of the 1930s, continued the tradition. Ironically, from their publications it is found that they did not generally offer many improvements in technique. The printing continued to lack clarity and neatness. Obviously, these new local lithographic printers were still unable to adopt the more sophisticated techniques introduced by some of their foreign counterparts such as Matbaah Muhammadi of Bombay, whose Malay works were of superior quality.<sup>7</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup> This press was probably owned by one Syed Hassan Hajeb together with Umar Muhammad Khan, who edited most of the publications.

<sup>7</sup> Matbaah Muhammadi was owned by Ali Bahai Sharafally, who had a publishing house in Singapore, Ali Bahai Sharafally & Co., probably founded around the first decade of the twentieth century. His Malay language publications mainly consisted of traditional literature and Islamic works; one of its earliest, *Shair Dagang Piatu*, was dated 1908.

spite of the inferior quality and other limitations, this method remained in use by certain publishers who produced *syair* and Islamic *kitab jawi*. A few of the *kitab jawi* were in the form of word-for-word, interlinear translations written obliquely in the wide spacing between the lines of the Arabic text. For many *nazam* or *syair*, each page had a central vertical divider which separated the parts of the rhymed couplets written on each line of the page. With the absence of artists and designers in the letterpress establishments, these layout conventions could only have been produced by transcribers' hands in lithographic presses.

## 5.5 AUTHORS

In terms of authors, the period saw the involvement of more than 700, a large number of whom contributed only one or two works each. Only 10% produced more than four works. Based on race, the Malays or the natives constituted the largest group, comprising of 91.6% of the total number of authors, followed by the Europeans with 5.4% and the Chinese with 2.7%. As we will see later, these native writers were coming from an educated background, not from among the Malay civil servants but mostly from among educators and journalists. As was previously the case, the majority of European writers were missionaries or the British Government officers serving in Malaya especially with the Education Department. The Baba writers who started emerging in the earlier period now increased in number and in the 1930s reached the peak of their activities, although with limited production.



TABLE 5.10: MALAY BOOK AUTHORS BY RACE  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

RACE	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Malay	677	91.61
European	40	5.41
Chinese	20	2.71
Other	2	0.27
TOTAL	739	100.00

TABLE 5.11: MALAY BOOK AUTHORS BY SEX  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

SEX	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Male	699	94.59
Female	25	3.38
Unknown	15	2.03
TOTAL	739	100.00

Obviously, book writing did not attract many female writers and their participation came tardily. They constituted 3.4%, only twenty-five of the total. Only three of them were non-Malays (i.e European) while all the rest were of Malay origin. None of them was listed in the top hundred writers except one, who was not of Malay origin. Although female teachers and journalists were present during this period, rarely did they have the opportunity to devote themselves to book writing, which was very much considered a man's field.

#### 5.6 KINDS OF BOOKS

The most important activity during this period was literary writing, especially prose in the form of novels or novellas. Nearly six hundred titles were published, which amounted to almost 40% of the total output. This is followed by Islamic works with 27% or 421 titles. The next most important categories were general non-fiction and school texts, which had 251 titles and 114 titles respectively. Although school texts comprised only 7% of the total titles, in terms of editions they had the highest share with more than 30%. Literary works which presented the high number of titles, had a 20% share in edition size, which was the third largest. Islamic books kept their position as the second most important category, both in terms of title and edition.

It is obvious from the figures that school texts were printed in larger quantities averaging 17,369 copies<sup>8</sup> each title, including reprints and new editions. On the other hand, a novel would generally be printed in only about

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<sup>8</sup> Calculated from the gazettes, 1921-1949.

2,192 copies, which is about the same as a *Baba* classic of several volumes or a work of general non-fiction. The category which had the highest average print-run after school texts was Christian material. Although in terms of titles it had only 2% of the total output, many of which were reprints and revised editions, and 4% in terms of total edition size, the circulation of a title averaged about 8,000 copies.

It is also observed from the figures that Christian literature together with *syair* and *hikayat*, which had formed the major categories of publications in the previous period, had now been replaced by school books, modern literary works and general works of non-fiction. The development in literary writing, the change in reading tastes and the emergence of new markets shifted the trends in a different direction. What remained the same was the status of Islamic publications, which continued to constitute an important sector of publishing. The *Baba* books sector also maintained its consistency in levels of production.

TABLE 5.12: NUMBER OF TITLES BY CATEGORY  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

CATEGORY	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Literature	687	39.5
Islam	455	26.2
Nonfiction	251	14.4
School Text	114	6.6
Language	80	4.6
Miscellaneous	35	2.0
Baba	56	3.2
Christian	38	2.2
Unknown	23	1.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1739</b>	<b>100.00</b>

TABLE 5.13: OUTPUT BY CATEGORY  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

CATEGORY	NO OF COPIES (Based on GG)	% OF TOTAL	NO. OF COPIES ASSUMED
School Text	701865	31.1	1997513
Islam	629221	27.9	1790767
Literature	459960	20.4	1309049
G. Nonfiction	186200	8.2	529926
Christian	110052	4.9	313208
Language	95200	4.2	270939
Baba	39899	1.8	113553
Miscellaneous	34800	1.5	99041
<b>Total</b>	<b>2257197</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>6423996</b>

## 5.7 BOOKS IN OTHER LANGUAGES

In this multilingual colonies, literary activities and publishing also reflected the presence and use of other languages namely Arabic, Tamil and a variety of Chinese languages. It is true that books in these languages could easily be imported from their homelands, which was indeed the case as books flowed into the country in large quantities, but books of these categories were also produced locally. This was largely to cater for the specific needs of the local readers. The growth of settled non-native communities and the need for information and knowledge also encouraged the development of non-Malay language publishing.

On the whole, this sector of publishing was still very limited. The average output of non-Malay books was very much lower than that of Malay books. The total amount of all non-Malay publications combined together was less than 45% of the total amount of Malay language books.

It is observed that English language book publishers were more active than publishers of other non-native languages. Their annual output, however, never exceeded that of the Malay language production. Throughout the period, English language books accounted for 584 titles, only 33.6% of the total Malay production, presumably because most English language books were imported from the United Kingdom. The total number of Chinese books was eighty-eight and of Tamil and Arabic books sixty-nine and twenty respectively. These publications covered various subjects for various purposes, especially education. In terms of edition size, English books were printed between one thousand to five thousand copies, sometimes reaching up to 30,000 copies per

edition if used for schools.<sup>9</sup> Some Chinese titles for schools were printed for incredibly large quantities of up to 280,000 copies for one edition.<sup>10</sup> Several others were not less than 80,000 copies. It seems that during the post-war period, increasing demands for Chinese school books were met locally through a main publisher, Chung Hwa Book Company, and its printer, Tien Wan and Company, both of Singapore.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the above main languages, books also appeared in Batak, Dayak, Japanese, Annamese, Dutch, Siamese, Urdu and Gujerati, either for overseas readers or for their communities living in the country. Many of them were in the form of Christian literature produced by the missionary societies, whose presses in Singapore served to print their materials for distribution in this region. The number of titles of publications in these languages was, however, limited and the amount of copies depended on the kinds of books and the extent of their readership. Missionary books in the Batak<sup>12</sup> and

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<sup>9</sup> See for example see "Memoranda of Books", *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Registration nos: 3653, 3654, 3655 and 3656 which are *Vacation Course in English Exercise Book 1 to Book 4* (Singapore: Nanyang Book Co., 1946).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, for Registration nos: 3602 and 3610 which are Chinese readers and arithmetics for primary schools, all published by Chung Hwa Book Co.

<sup>11</sup> The 1921 Census of British Malaya reported that about 23,000 Chinese students under 15 years of age in fifteen towns attended schools. As this figure is too little for the number of textbooks supplied, it is presumed that some copies were exported to other Chinese-speaking colonies.

<sup>12</sup> See for example see "Memoranda of Books" in the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* for Registration nos: 1686, 1687, 1686.

Annamese languages,<sup>13</sup> for example, were printed in between 5,000 to 10,000 copies. Others, such as those in Japanese,<sup>14</sup> Gujerati<sup>15</sup> and Dutch<sup>16</sup> were produced as little as 300 copies either to be sold or distributed gratis.

## 5.8 IMPORTED BOOKS

The sluggishness of non-Malay language publishing activities was partly due to the easy access to imported books. A large number of foreign books of various categories, including educational books for school use, were brought into the country annually.

Table 5.15 illustrates the country's dependence on imported books. More than a million copies were brought in each year, mainly from the United Kingdom and China. In 1920 for example, the import from the United Kingdom in terms of value accounted for 27.3% of all imported books and from China 29.7%.<sup>17</sup> In 1924, the import from China dropped to 19.8%, while from the United Kingdom it increased to 31.4%. In terms of quantity, Chinese books represented 54.4% of the total import, while English books only 14.09%, this indicates that their average costs were much dearer than Chinese books.<sup>18</sup> Other major imports were publications from India, including in Tamil, which

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., for Registration nos: 2322, 2749, 2949.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., for Registration nos: 2297, 2302.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., for Registration no: 2326.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., for Registration no: 2325.

<sup>17</sup> *Blue Book, 1921, Section 20, 163.*

<sup>18</sup> *Blue Book, 1925, Section 20, 257-258.*

in 1920 had contributed 14.0% of the total quantity or 0.32 million copies of books. Arabic books from the Middle East, which were obtained through Egypt, constituted 2.2% in 1920 and 5.9% in 1924, which was equivalent to 0.1 million copies of books worth \$32,750.00 in the Straits Settlements currency. Increasingly important were English books from the United States and also books from Japan. In 1925 import from Japan was worth \$47,190.00 (5.08%) consisting of 0.49 million copies of printed material. It is not clear, however, if these publications were in Japanese or in other languages.<sup>19</sup> Books were also imported from other British colonies such as Hong Kong, Ceylon, Australia, Mauritius and South Africa and from other countries including France, Germany, Italy, the Philippines, Thailand and the Dutch East Indies.

A few of the imports from the East Indies were books in Romanised Malay. Malay publications from this colony circulating in the local market mainly came from religious publishers or general and school book publishers such as Balai Poestaka, Penjajaran Ilmu-Fort De Kock in Bukit Tinggi, and Tjerdas-Medan. Libraries of schools and teacher training colleges also purchased these books and students were encouraged to read them despite the fact that their spelling system or transliteration differed in some respects from that in use in Malaya. These publications became a supplement to the locally-produced printed materials. The situation was different in non-Malay language publishing. The over-dependence on imported publications was one of the reasons that local publishing, especially in those particular languages failed to develop in parallel.

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<sup>19</sup> There were about 8,000 Japanese living in the country during this period.



**TABLE 5.14: BOOK PRODUCTION IN MALAYA & SINGAPORE  
BY DIFFERENT LANGUAGES**  
(Number of titles based on the Government Gazettes, 1920-1949 only)

YEAR	ENGLISH	ARABIC	TAMIL	CHINESE
1920-21	21	-	-	-
1922-23	35	-	5	3
1924-25	23	-	4	2
1926-27	18	-	8	2
1928-29	20	1	6	7
1930-31	39	-	7	4
1932-33	51	1	7	1
1934-35	42	5	5	6
1936-37	64	5	10	4
1938-39	95	7	9	10
1940-41	75	1	3	11
1942-43	-	-	-	-
1944-45	-	-	-	-
1946-47	40	-	-	15
1948-49	61	-	1	23

TABLE 5.15: IMPORT OF BOOKS AND MAPS  
 (Source: *Blue Book*, 1920-1938)

YEAR	VALUE (Straits Settlements \$)	QUANTITY
1920	730,293	n.a
1921	483,690	n.a
1922	434,743	n.a
1923	502,306	n.a
1924	558,363	2,299,670)
1925	928,043	2,553,873)
1926	1,133,706	3,775,967)
1927	933,375	3,122,951)
1928	n.a	n.a
1929	n.a	n.a
1930	n.a	n.a
1931	n.a	n.a
1932	n.a	n.a
1933	n.a	n.a
1934	n.a	n.a
1935	n.a	n.a
1936	838,000	n.a
1937	885,000	n.a
1938	854,000	n.a

TABLE 5.16: IMPORT OF BOOKS AND MAPS  
FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES IN 1927  
(Source: *Blue Book*, 1927)

COUNTRY	QUANTITY (in individual units)	VALUE (Straits Settlements \$)
Australia	505	965
Belgium	730	284
Canada	72	1,440
Ceylon	8,315	2,650
China	1,990,845	239,612
Denmark	16	37
Egypt	82,500	40,175
France	1,445	1,566
French India	524	250
Germany	1,290	2,410
Hong Kong	126,075	26,962
India & Burma	487,627	267,914
Japan	52,962	48,629
Netherlands	5,078	1,803
Duth East Indies	36,574	14,874
Philippines	818	2,340
Sarawak	775	362
Thailand	175	127
United Kingdom	415,367	299,465
USA	19,050	17,804
Others	12	6

## 5.9 PRINTING PAPER AND MACHINERY

One of the ways to look into the extent to which paper and printing machines were used is to examine their level of import. However, statistics on this are too general and therefore they do not present a complete picture on their relationship to the book trade. The use of paper and paperware is not necessarily specifically for printing, for it could also be for packing, writing, blotting and for stationery. Likewise some amount of printing paper was consumed by the newspaper and magazine industries while some was for use in offices.

Also, some of this merchandise was distributed in neighbouring places, as Singapore is known for its position as an entreport. However, it is interesting to discover the amount which arrived in the country and the sources from which it originated.

About 10% to 20% of the paper and paperware were generally intended for printing. Thus in 1921, about \$0.33 million worth of printing paper was imported into the country. Throughout the period, the value of import fluctuated as a result of the instability in price, with the highest level at \$0.95 million in 1929. In 1924, about 0.1 million tons of paper were imported and in about a decade the amount increased more than ten-fold to about 1.79 million tons. Among the major importers in 1921 were the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Italy who each sold more than \$0.40 million worth of the material.<sup>20</sup> In 1926, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong remained the

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<sup>20</sup> *Blue Book, 1922, Section 20, 186.*

primary contributors, together with China. The United States of America, Sweden and Germany became increasingly important.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1930s, at least two European paper manufacturing companies operated in Singapore, namely John Dickinson and Co. and Spicers Ltd.<sup>22</sup> John Dickinson, who was famous for inventing a paper machine commenced business in 1801 and by 1804 was trading as a stationer in London.<sup>23</sup> By the early decades of the twentieth century he had opened branches in at least fifteen cities, including Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon, Cape Town, Sydney, Auckland, Shanghai, Buenos Aires and Cairo. By this time, too, he had established seven paper mills and factories in Britain and a few others in British protectorates namely Cape Town, Sydney and Kamarhatty in Bengal.<sup>24</sup> Together with Spicers Ltd., which was also based in London, Dickinson became one of the major establishments to supply printing paper.

Other companies also serving as paper importers included the Anglo-French & Bendixsens Ltd., Basrai Brothers, Koh Yew Hean Eng Kee Press, Lithographers Ltd., E. J. Mottiwalla & Co., Nanyo Printing Office and Printers Ltd., all in Singapore. There were also suppliers in Penang and Kuala Lumpur.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Blue Book, 1927, Section 20, 288.*

<sup>22</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory, 1920-1930.*

<sup>23</sup> For his company history, see J. Evans, *The Endless Web, John Dickinson & Co. Ltd., 1804-1954* (London: Cape, 1955).

<sup>24</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory, 1925.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

TABLE 5.17: IMPORT OF PAPER AND PAPERWARE  
(Source: *Blue Book*, 1921-1938)

YEAR	VALUE IN \$	QUANTITY IN TONS
1921	2,221,294	n.a
1922	1,544,157	n.a
1923	1,718,758	n.a
1924	3,634,925	107,144
1925	4,366,516	n.a
1926	5,358,820	132,255
1927	5,737,546	135,065
1928	5,438,418	n.a
1929	6,330,000	n.a
1930	4,923,328	n.a
1931	3,356,229	n.a
1932	3,635,209	n.a
1933	2,990,469	n.a
1934	n.a	n.a
1935	3,877,820	840,000
1936	3,767,207	858,000
1937	n.a	1,789,000
1938	n.a	1,285,000

TABLE 5.18: IMPORT OF PRINTING & BOOK BINDING MACHINES  
(Source: *Blue Book*, 1924-1928)

	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
United Kingdom	20	23	40	31	51
Japan	27	62	98	96	96
USA	3	7	24	20	21
Australia	-	1	2	-	-
China	17	-	56	67	67
Germany		-	9	14	14
Others	5	8	3	2	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>251</b>

As Table 5.18 shows, printing and book binding machines largely came from Japan and China, especially because of the relatively cheaper price and shorter distance. The United Kingdom also exported many of its machines to the country, mainly through its distributors in Singapore, namely John Dickinson & Co. and Guthrie and Linotype and Machinery Ltd. The main distributors for China and Japan were Nanyo Printing Office and Phu Yik & Co., who were active printers themselves.<sup>26</sup> The table above, while showing the trend of import in general, does not specify the types of machines, and therefore it is impossible to obtain a more detailed picture of the trend.

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<sup>26</sup> See *Singapore and the Straits Directory*, 1925 and 1937.

## CHAPTER SIX

# THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

When Japanese troops landed in the capital of Kelantan in December 1941, the invasion of Malaya began. Kuala Lumpur surrendered to the army in January the following year, followed by Singapore in February. Soon after the invasion, Peninsular Malaya, Singapore and Sumatra were put under a common Japanese military administration with its headquarters in Singapore.

It is generally agreed that the Japanese authorities exercised strict control over freedom of expression. The Propaganda Department or *Senden-Bu* was mainly responsible for all activities relating to the dissemination of information. Under this department, a censorship office scrutinised all publications and radio broadcasts. This control greatly inhibited the country's previously vivacious literary activities. However, immediately after the British forces capitulated, two newspapers - *Warta Malaya* and *Utusan Melayu* - were requested to continue their publication. The newspaper in Kuala Lumpur, *Majlis*, also resumed its publication with a new name, *Perubahan Baharu*. In December 1942, a four-day "Conference of Malay and Sumatran Journalists" was held in Singapore. One of the results of this conference was the establishment of *Malai Shimbun Sha* or the Malay News Agency, which combined *Warta Malaya* and *Utusan Melayu* into a daily called *Berita Malai*. The Agency's other publication was a monthly magazine called *Semangat Asia*. At the same time another magazine, *Fajar Asia*, was inaugurated by *Sensei Malai Kensetsu Sha* (New Malay Development Office), but in 1944 it was absorbed by



*Malai Shimbun Sha*. By then, it was only a supplement to the monthly *Semangat Asia* because of the shortage of paper<sup>1</sup> and the resignation of its chief editor, Ishak Haji Muhammad.

Altogether, there were not less than twelve journals on the market at one time or another during this four-year period, compared to twenty-five between 1937 and 1941. This indicates that there was a fair amount of activity considering the state of martial law and the fact that all information flows was closely guarded by the censorship office. While most journalistic operations took place in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and were controlled by the authorities, there were a few private periodicals, which had newly appeared and were produced elsewhere, namely *Matahari Memancar*, published in Muar by Harun Aziz; *Cermin Hidup*, published by Jamiliah Press under the editorship of Abu Bakar bin Ahmad Salim; and a weekly, *Sinaran Matahari*, of Melaka, published by Harun Aziz.<sup>2</sup> It was through these publications, private or government-owned, that literary writing was kept alive and a new tradition in poetry writing was initiated, emulating the previous development in Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> *Fajar Asia* (May 1944) inserted a notice in page four as follows, " Kerana berta'at setia kepada Pentadbiran Tentera Malai yang menjalankan politik 'jimat cermat' tentang hal kertas...maka kedua majalah kita - Semangat Asia dan Fajar Asia - digabong menjadi satu..." [Author's translation: In accordance to the campaign introduced by the Military Administration to reduce paper consumption...both of our magazines - Semangat Asia and Fajar Asia - are incorporated..."]

<sup>2</sup> See Drs. A. M. Iskandar Haji Ahmad, *Persuratkhabaran Melayu, 1876-1968* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1973).

At least two major literary gatherings were held in this period. One was in 1943 to establish an association called The Malay Language Society, Malai-Sumatra. It took place in Singapore, organised by Bakhtiar Affendi, then director of Soehara's Bolera,<sup>3</sup> and presumably it was attended by writers from Malaya and Sumatra. Very little is known about the extent of its activities. The other, a more international gathering, held on 15 August 1943 was organised in Tokyo and called "The Greater Asia Literary Conference". Zaaba was supposed to represent Malaya and Sumatra or the Southern Region at this conference, but for the concern of his own safety he only submitted a working paper entitled *The Mission of Malay Literary Men in Dai Toa*.<sup>4</sup>

The editorial objectives of *Semangat Asia* can probably best illustrate the contemporary goals of publishing in general, including the publishing of books. In its first issue, it clearly stated that among others, its objectives were, i. to introduce Nippon to the population of Malaya and Sumatra; ii. to inculcate the spirit of Greater Asia among various races in the Asian region; iii. to develop the Japanese and Malay languages; iv. to cultivate the Malay arts and culture; v. to provide reading material to the Malay people.<sup>5</sup>

While the fate of journal publishing can be considered fortunate, the book industry was in a sorry state. A statistical figure (Chapter Four) shows that book production in terms of titles had plunged from 216 in 1940-1941 to

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<sup>3</sup> See "Production of Vernacular School Books" in *Surat Persendirian 18*, located at the National Archives, Kuala Lumpur.

<sup>4</sup> See *The News Room Bulletin*, No 4, 2603 (1943).

<sup>5</sup> *Semangat Asia*, no. 1, yr. 1 (January 1943): 1.

fifteen in 1942-1943. In 1944-1945, only four were published - altogether a mere one percent of the total output from 1921 to 1949.

Prolific writers, namely Muhammad Said bin Haji Sulaiman, Zainal Abidin Ahmad, Ahmad bin Abdullah, Abdullah Sidek, Muhammad Salleh bin Alwi and Zainal Abidin Sultan Maidin only managed to get one or two of their writings into print. Abdullah Sidek's work, *Berjanji di Keretapi*, seemed to be the only novel printed during this time, and Muhammad Salleh's *Pertunjukan Islam* was one of the two Islamic publications produced. Apart from reference works for the learning of the Japanese language (four titles), the most frequently published books were those of a historical and sociological nature (seven titles). All contained strong Japanese elements and were used as tools for propaganda.

Muhammad Said had two works published, both on Japanese history, one used as a reader in Johor state schools. While many of his peers were put into detention camps or went into hiding, Zaaba was offered work with the Nippon Broadcasting Station and *Gunseibu Syonan-to* (the Department of Education and Religion) simultaneously. In the morning, he was an English news editor and in the evening he worked as a translator, receiving monthly combined earnings of \$300.<sup>6</sup> At the broadcasting station, Zaaba was expected to edit news received from the Domei News Agency in Tokyo before it was distributed to his assistants to be translated into various local languages. It was this work which probably greatly helped him to compose *Peperangan di Tanah*

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<sup>6</sup> See Abdullah Husain & Khalid Hussain, *Pendita Zaaba Dalam Kenangan*. (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1974), 68.

*Malai*, published by the New Malay Development Office, known as *Sinsei Malai Kensetsu Sha* in 1943. It expresses admiration for the efficiency of the Japanese army and the impressive administration the authorities had exercised in Malaya. The author was struck by how rapidly the country was reconstructed after the invasion. Zaaba also wrote two other books, namely *Permulaan Nahu Bahasa Jepun* (Elementary Japanese Grammar), a 365-page adaptation of McGovern's *Colloquial Japanese*, and *Semangat Nippon Menerusi Tawarikhnya*, a translation of *Nippon Spirit Through Her History* by Okamoto. Another book he prepared, in English, was called *Nippongo-English Vocabulary*. However, all these works were never published. Zaaba also wrote for newspapers and magazines and many of his articles appeared in *Perak Shimbun*, *Berita Perak*, and *Fajar Asia*.

A few writers, such as Abdullah Sidek and Ishak Haji Muhammad, resorted to short story or poetry writing for newspapers. They were joined by a new group of writers including a few Sumatrans. Names such as Bakhtiar Affandi, Zainal Abidin Ahmad, former editor of *Panji Islam* in Sumatra, and other writers from across the Straits started to gain popularity among Malay readers. Some of them settled in Malaya and later became involved in book writing. Bakhtiar Affandi, for example, had three novels published in 1948 and 1949 - namely *Cempaka* (Frangipani), *Pembunuhan di Kampung Gelam* (Murder at Kampung Gelam) and *Pisau Beracun* (Poisonous Dagger), all published by Army of Singapore.

It has been noted that only one novel appeared during the Occupation. No books of poetry, *hikayat* or *syair* were published. Numerous dramas were

said to have been written. Presented on stage for the public, they were vehicles for Japanese propaganda but after the surrender, all copies were reportedly destroyed by the writers concerned for fear of being seen as Japanese collaborators.

As regards printing machinery, many of the possessions of the Government Printing Department were either damaged or immobilised on instruction from the Government.<sup>7</sup> In Kuala Lumpur, about 40% was put out of action during the Occupation. Serious damage was inflicted in the Linotype and Monotype sections. The press room suffered several losses, including two high speed automatic "Miehle" machines, one double-crown standard "Wharfedale", one "Centurian" automatic, one hand guillotine, and one two-ton travelling crane, all of which was new plant installed in 1941. In addition, three old-type cylinder presses and three platen machines were said to have been damaged beyond repair. In the foundry, the hydraulic matrix moulding press was badly damaged. Many of these pieces of equipment were transferred to various parts of the country by the Japanese. For example, a "Victory Kidder" guillotine was moved to a Japanese paper factory. The reserve of paper delivered to the Kuala Lumpur Government Printing Press in 1940 and 1941, just before the arrival of the Japanese, was, however, left almost intact and it was inexplicable why they left it preferring instead an inferior product of local manufacture. The state presses of Johore, Kedah and Terengganu, too, suffered little or no damage.

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<sup>7</sup> See "Report of the Organisation and Work of the Printing Department", *Proceedings of the Advisory Council, Malayan Union, 1946* (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Union Government Press, 1948), C102-C104.

Equally, much of the private machinery and many printing materials were either confiscated or destroyed. Some were put into use by the new authorities. Very little commercial activity took place at the once resourceful Penang's Persama Press or the Kuala Pilah Malay Press. the presses in Kelantan - Kamaliah Press, Ismailiah Press and Hikmah Press - only managed to produced one or two titles each. The Malaya Publishing House was taken over by the Japanese. All the expatriate directors of this establishment were taken prisoners of war and many staff members fled or were killed.<sup>8</sup> Some machines were destroyed or removed but some were put into use for the Japanese propaganda programme. The building was badly used and some parts disintegrated owing to the total absence of maintainence and the bombing. Supplies of paper, ink and accessories, as in all other presses, were fast diminishing and new stocks never arrived. Frugal use of these reserves had to be strictly observed and broken equipment had to be mended by the staff themselves.

Public libraries, too, suffered heavy losses from bombing and looting. The Japanese authorities seemed to have no interest in preserving the books which survived destruction. It had been recorded that some soldiers used the building of the Kuala Lumpur Book Club as a cookhouse and the books to build fires for cooking.<sup>9</sup>

Overall, the Japanese occupation brought serious damage to the

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Hutton, *Make What I Can Sell: The Story of Jack Chia-MPH* (Singapore: Jack-Chia-MPH, 1978), 51.

<sup>9</sup> Nixon and Hawkins, *Malayan Library Journal* (July 1961): 13-16.

publishing infrastructure, which made immediate revival impossible for many individual publishers and printers. However, a few publishers, such as the Malaya Publishing House, were able to recommence almost immediately, even though they suffered significant loss. A few days after the arrival of the British troops in Singapore, a directors' meeting was held at Malaya Publishing House to assess the loss and to discuss future plans. Thus, business resumed although the press was working with old machinery and under a great deal of pressure. Despite all these factors, net profit for the period 1945 to 1947 was almost \$200,000.<sup>10</sup> This was mainly due to the company's services in printing and distributing school supplies, which were immediately continued on the government's request.

From the evidence, it can be suggested that the lack of resources, together with the government's strict policy, led to the failure of most publishers and printers to operate during the Occupation. Compared to the situation in Indonesia, which was in a certain way similar, publishing in Malaya was much less active. For example, more than two hundred titles of books on diverse subjects and about thirty periodicals appeared from several presses in Indonesia during the same period.<sup>11</sup> Balai Pustaka continued production and was actively used as a textbook publisher and distributor. A group of writers called Angkatan 45 (Generation of 1945) which made a significant impact on the Indonesian and Malay literary history, was also

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>11</sup> See John M. Echols, *Preliminary Checklist of Indonesian Imprints During the Japanese Period* (New York: Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1963).

founded at this time. The Japanese censorship, although strict, was obviously not viewed as an absolute obstruction to publishing and printing. No doubt, however, the contents of the writings were affected by the policy. All books containing anti-Japanese or anti-German elements were banned or destroyed and books in the Dutch language were not permitted to circulate.

The resources obtainable in Indonesia were scarcely available in Malaya and Singapore. Competent writers willing to work alongside the Japanese were not as abundant. The Translation Bureau had ceased to function effectively years before the occupation. Thus, Malay publishing and literary activities during this period were limited in scope, but it is generally considered that the experience under the Japanese in many ways initiated great development in post-war Malay literature and also in the life of Malay society as a whole.



## MALAY IMPRINTS DURING THE JAPANESE PERIOD, 1942-1945

### A. BOOKS

1. Abdul Hamid and Idrose Sulaiman. *Kamus Melayu Nippon*, n.p., 1942. Rumi.
2. Abdul Ghani bin Haji Yusof. *Takwim Pocket Book*. Kota Baharu: Ismailiah Press, 1944.
3. Abdullah Sidek. *Berjanji di Keretapi*. Kuala Pilah: Sentosa Store, 1942.
4. Ahmad Hashim. *Panduan Bangsa*. Penang: Persama Press, 1945.
5. Ahmad bin Abdullah. *Pemuja Semangat*. Kuala Pilah: Abdul Ghani Shamsuddin, 1942.
6. Jalal. *Bahtera Kemajuan*. Penang: Persama Press, 1945.
7. Muhammad Salleh bin Alwi. *Pertunjukan Islam*. Johor Baharu: Jabatan Agama Islam Johor, 1943.
8. Muhammad Said bin Sulaiman. *Ringkasan Tarikh Nippon*. Johor Baharu: P. B. M. P. B., 1943.
9. Muhammad bin Ibrahim. *Buku Cakap Melayu-Nippon Yang Sehabis-habis Mudah Bersekali dengan kalimah yang Mustahak*. Kota Baharu: Kamaliah Press, 1942.
10. Muhammad Salleh Fikri Musa. *Rahsia kejayaan Bahasa Melayu*. Kota Baharu: al-Hikmah Press, 1943.
11. Muhammad Said bin Sulaiman. *Semangat Nippon yang Sebenar Diuraikan*. Johor Baharu: Sheikh bin Shahab, 1942.
12. *Peladjaran Bahasa Nippon*. Singapore: Shonan Gunseikanbu Kokkugogako, 1942. Rumi.
13. Sihombing, M. A. *Seruan Kita Berkenaan "Selamatkan Asia Raya."* Ipoh: n. p., 1942.
14. Sukigawa. *Asia di Zaman Purbakala hingga Pecah Perang*. Kedah: Mitsurni Shimbun, 1943.
15. Syonan Denwa Kaiki. *Undang-undang bagi Persekutuan Syonan Telephone Bureau*. Singapore: Syonan Press, 1942.

16. Uthman bin Raja Yahya. *Hidayat al-Sibyan fi-ahkam Tajwīd al-Qur'ān*. Penang: Persama Press, 1945.
17. Yusuf Adil. *Pusparagam*. n.p., 1942.
18. Zainal Abidin Sultan Maidin. *Nipponese Pocket Dictionary*. Penang: Merchantile Press, 1942.
19. Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad. *Kisah Peperangan Di Tanah Malai*. Singapore: Sinsei Malai Kensetsu Sha (Pejabat Pembangunan Melayu Baru), 1943.

## B. PERIODICALS

1. *Berita Malai*. Singapore: Malai Shimbun Sha. 1943. Rumi.
2. *Berita Perak*. Ipoh: Syonan Shimbun Kai. 1944 - 1945.
3. *Cahaya Timur*. Ipoh: n.p.. 4 May 1942.
4. *Chermin Hidup*. Muar: n.p.. 20 June 1942. Rumi.
5. *Fajar Asia*. Singapore: Sinsei Malai Kensetsu Sha [Ahmadiyah Press]. 1 February 1943 - May 1944. Rumi.
6. *Matahari Memancar*. Muar: Penerbit Matahari Terbit. 1 June 1942.
7. *Mahasuri Shimbun*. Alor Star: Mitsurni Shimbun? 1943.
8. *Pancaran Matahari*. Penang: n.p.. 1942.
9. *Pinang Shimbun*. Penang: Penang Shimbun Sha. n.d.?
10. *Perubahan Baharu* (formerly *Majlis*). Kuala Lumpur: Selangor Press. 1942 - 1943.
11. *Semangat Asia*. Singapore: Malai Shimbun Sha. 1 January 1943 - 1944. Rumi.
12. *Sinaran Matahari*. Melaka: n.p. 24 August 1942.
13. *Suara Timur*. Singapore: Mara Kaisha. 1 October 1942 - 1943. Rumi.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE WRITERS AND THEIR WORKS

Malay book writing was very much dominated by people in certain groups of professions. Teachers, journalists and religious scholars, being literate, more informed and part of the intelligentsia, were responsible for stimulating the development of Malay literature. As in the field of journalism, these groups of people also controlled book writing activities. Many, in fact, started as article contributors to newspapers and journals as part of their interests. Others were businessmen or civil servants by profession with a literary bent who managed to find time for writing. Figure 7.1 shows the distribution of profession among top 100 authors by number of titles published in the period 1921-1949.

TABLE 7.1. MALAY BOOK AUTHORS BY PROFESSION  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

OCCUPATION	% OF TOTAL
School Teacher	26
Islamic Teacher/Officer	30
Journalist	17
Publisher/Printer	7
Government Officer	7
Others	6
Unknown	7
TOTAL	100

TABLE 7.2: THE TOP 100 AUTHORS

NUMBER OF WORKS	AUTHORS
48	Dato' Haji Muhammad Said bin Haji Sulaiman
34	Ahmad bin Abdullah
29	Wan Boon Seng
27	Abdullah Sidek
21	Shamsuddin Salleh
21	Syed Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi
20	Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al-Edrus
20	Umar bin Muhammad Khan
19	Ahmad Ismail
17	Mansur bin Raja Abdul Kadir, Raja
15	Sulaiman bin Ahmad
15	Harun bin Muhammad Amin
14	W. G. Shellabear
14	Ahmad Murad Nasarudin
14	Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad
13	Ahmad Nawawi Muhammad Ali
13	Muhammad Taib bin Hashim
12	R. O. Winstedt
12	Syeikh Muhammad Tahir Jalal al-Din
11	Muhammad Ali al-Wahidi
10	Muhammad Zain bin Haji Ibrahim
10	Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi al-Azhari
9	Sheikh Uthman Jalaluddin
9	Abdul Aziz bin Hassan
9	Haji Wan Sulaiman bin Wan Sidek
9	Haji Muhammad Said bin Muhammad Taib
9	Ahmad Muhammad Rashid Talu
9	O. T. Dussek
8	Hussain Nasir bin Muhammad Taib al-Mas'udi
8	Muhammad Samin Taib
8	Muhammad Amin bin Haji Abdullah
8	Abu Bakar bin Haji Hassan
8	Ismail bin Haji Muhammad Said
8	Asbiran Yaakob
8	Muhammad Salleh bin Alwi
8	Roger Altman
8	Uthman al-Ma'suli
7	Seow Chin San
7	Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani
7	Muhammad Yusuf bin Sultan Maidin
7	Salleh bin Abdul Ghani
7	Shaharom bin Hussain
6	Abdul Ghani Abdullah

6 Ahmad Azam bin Hanafiah  
6 Ahmad Nor Abdul Shukur  
6 Muhammad bin Dato' Muda  
6 R. A. Blasdell  
6 Mas'ud bin Haji Zainal Abidin  
6 Abdul Halim Hassan Binjai Sumatra  
6 Tiga Serangkai  
6 Abdul Kadir Adabi Ahmad  
6 Abdul Latif bin Haji Tambi  
5 Zainal Abidin bin Daud al-Sulaimani  
5 Abdullah bin Raja Haji Hassan  
5 Muhammad Yusuf Awang al-Kenali  
5 Haji Abdul Malik bin Muhammad Yunus  
5 Ishak bin Haji Muhammad  
5 Muhammad bin Muhammad Salleh  
5 Muhammad Salehuddin  
5 Muhammad Salleh bin Haji Awang  
5 A. W. Hamilton  
5 Bakhtiar Djamily,  
5 Abdul Samad Ahmad  
5 Umar bin Ismail Nuruddin  
5 Suhaimi bin Ismail  
5 Abdul Kuddus bin Muhammad  
4 Abdul Halim Sabir  
4 Syed Ahmad bin Sheikh  
4 Zulkarnain bin Yaakob  
4 Margaret M. Saunders  
4 Haji Shamsuddin bin Muhammad Yunus  
4 Muhammad bin Hamid  
4 Burhanuddin bin Muhammad Nor al-Helmy  
4 A. V. Klaus  
4 Ismail Abdul Karim  
4 Khoo Peng Yam  
4 Ibrahim Mahmud  
4 Muhammad Yusuf bin Saleh al-Kelantani  
4 Abdullah Hussain  
4 Tor and San  
4 Haji Abdul Hamid bin Ahmad Melaka  
4 Abdul Rashid bin Muda  
4 Muhammad Arif  
4 Sufar bin Idris  
4 Muhammad Shahid bin Haji Jamaluddin  
4 Kasmin bin Haji Muhammad Amin  
4 Abdul Rahim Kajai  
4 Zainal Abidin bin Sultan Maidin  
4 Muhammad Basyuni Imran  
4 Yusuf Ahmad Lubis  
3 Dabab bin Haji Muhammad Salleh

3	Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain al-Fatani
3	Ahmad bin Yaakob al-Johori
3	Mahmud Zuhdi bin Tengku Abdul Rahman
3	Yazid bin Ahmad
3	Muhammad Zain bin Haji Ayub
3	Abu Bakar al-Asha'ri bin al-Azhari
3	Bakhtiar Affandi
3	Muhammad Yunus Abdul Hamid
3	Muhammad Shafie bin Abdullah

## 7.1 MALAY AUTHORS

Ironically, the most productive writer during this period did not come from any of the three dominant professional groups. At the peak of his writing career, Dato' Haji Muhammad Said bin Sulaiman<sup>1</sup> was Private Secretary to the Ruler of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim ibni al-Marhum Sultan Abu Bakar. At the same time, he was also in the service of the Johor Military Force. The catalogue lists forty-eight different titles from his pen published during the period, including two new editions of works written before 1910 (see Chapter Three). If works in English and those produced after 1949 are included, he wrote about sixty book titles altogether. It took much effort for him to write so many books in that span of time considering that he had two other jobs to carry out. Writing

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<sup>1</sup> Dato' Haji Muhammad Said was born in 1876 in Teluk Belanga, Singapore. He went to Teluk Belanga Malay School at an early age and at the same time learned the Quran. Then he studied at Raffles English School and Singapore Anglo-Chinese School until the age of sixteen. From 1894 to 1898 he worked with the British and Foreign Bible Society as a clerk and for the next four years he was attached to the Johor Treasury Department. Then he joined the Department of Post until 1910 when the Sultan of Johor appointed him as Private Secretary. He remained in this job for the rest of his life. He died in 1955 at the age of seventy-nine. Like the majority of other Johor Government servants, Muhammad Said was involved in the State Military Force which was founded in 1885. For his contributions to the Force, he was awarded the title of Lieutenant and then promoted to the rank of Major.

about him, one granddaughter says, "...as far as I can remember, my grandfather was forever writing. Writing was his life and blood. In his study which was adjacent to his bedroom, there were bookshelves covering the wall. There was a bed made of bronze in one corner. His writing table near the window overlooked a park. Numerous pencils were on the table. Bottles of sweets and biscuits were also there to be offered to us when we visited him..."<sup>2</sup>

Several of Muhammad Said's writings dealt with aspects of the Malay language, especially grammar, spelling and vocabulary, as illustrated in *Penokok dan Penambah Dalam Bahasa Melayu* (Preformative Syllables in the Malay Language), *Buku Ketetapan Ejaan Melayu* (Malay Spelling Methods), and *Jalan Bahasa Melayu*, which he translated into English in 1947 under the title *Manual of Malay Language and Grammar*. He also produced five different dictionaries for various Eastern and Western languages.

Muhammad Said, through his numerous works, attempted to educate the public in general in the proper use of the Malay language. A few of his writings were considered among the most important works of the time. *Buku Katan*, a Malay-Malay dictionary published in 1936-1937, for example, was said to be the best dictionary available.<sup>3</sup> This is a two-volume book in twelve successive parts, consisting of more than a thousand pages. However, this work was also considered by some "...still very imperfect and elementary. It

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<sup>2</sup> Kamariah binti Abdul Kadir, "Datuk Saya Dalam kenang-kenangan", *Major Datuk Haji Muhammad Said bin Haji Sulaiman dalam Kenangan*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Library, 1984), 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Zaaba, "Recent Malay Literature," 16.



has not fulfilled even half of what Malays generally desire and expect in the way of a compact, concise Malay dictionary for ordinary use."<sup>4</sup> A number of his other works received similar criticism. *Jalan Bahasa Melayu* was said to be "a crude attempt to present and adapt the English system of grammar in the Malay language."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, his attempts on historical themes<sup>6</sup> were claimed to be sketchy and superficial and not to deserve the 'history' label<sup>7</sup>. Realising these deficiencies, Muhammad Said in his books often offered apologies, saying that the books were only introductory, part-time efforts and hurriedly done.<sup>8</sup>

However, a few of his books were used in schools in Johor, while some were accepted by the Education Department of the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States to be used in their schools.<sup>9</sup> He wrote one book on Islam entitled *Pohon Agama Islam* (Fundamentals of Islam), a compilation of writings on basic teachings of the religion. This book was intended for use in schools in Johor. His seven works of poetry in the form of *syair* and *nazam*,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> His works dealing with history were *Tawarikh dan Manusia* (1938), *Tawarikh England* (1948), *Kisah Sejarah Melayu* (1939), *Hikayat Semenanjung Tanah Melayu dan Negara-negara Berhampirannya* (1939), *Bangkok Kepala Negara Siam* (1939).

<sup>7</sup> Abdul Hamid bin Hassan, "Peranan P. Bm. P. B.," 43-44.

<sup>8</sup> See introductions, *Tawarikh dan Manusia* (1938), *Negeri-negeri Dalam tanah Melayu, Bah. 3* (1939), *Tanda-tanda bagi Perhentian* (1940).

<sup>9</sup> The three titles are *Punca Ilmu Alam* (1932), *Alam dan Bangsa Melayu* (1935) and *Hikayat Johor* (1926, 1928, 1940).

containing between twelve to fifty pages each, all with Islamic themes,<sup>10</sup> were intended for the general public.

Muhammad Said's books were printed by several different printing companies in Johor (the Government Press, al-Attas Press, Boon Hong Press, Lembaga Malaya Press, Annies Printing Works and Jamiliah Press), Singapore (Ahmadiyah Press, Ahmad Press, Rickard Limited and Malaya Publishing House) and Penang (United Press). There was, however, only one publisher responsible for producing the majority of them, which was the Pakatan Bahasa Melayu dan Persuratan Buku-buku di-Raja (P. Bm. P. B.) or the Royal Society of Malay Literature of Johor, a literary association which was dominated by him. It was, in fact, the committee of this association that helped him compile most of the dictionaries and vocabularies, which answers the question of how he managed to produce some of the extensive dictionaries.

Other top writers not from any of the three professional groups were Shamsuddin Salleh<sup>11</sup>, Umar bin Muhammad Khan<sup>12</sup> and Muhammad Taib

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<sup>10</sup> *Syair Simpulan Iman* (n.d.), *Surat Timbalan Bagi Berzanji Nathar* (1937), *Syair Panduan Perkahwinan* (n.d.), *Syair Keadaan Tuhan dan Manusia Dunia dan Akhirat Jua* (1936).

<sup>11</sup> He was born in 1905 in Siak and came to Singapore in 1927. He had his education at the Malay School and then attended a Dutch School. In 1926 he was employed in the Royal Department of Justice but was soon dismissed because of his involvement in extreme politics. From 1930 to 1935 he was in the service of the Political Intelligence Bureau in Singapore, travelling extensively throughout the country and Southeast Asia. He resigned from his work to concentrate on writing. See Zaaba, "Recent Malay Literature"; *Wajah*, 578-682; Li Chuan Siew, *Bird-eye's View*, (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1970), 37-41.

<sup>12</sup> He was very much associated with the Jawi Press. Most of the lithographs appearing from the press were edited or written by him, but he never held the copyrights of his works. Instead, they were given to one S.

bin Hashim.<sup>13</sup> Shamsuddin Salleh wrote nearly two dozen books within less than a decade. Working full-time, he was the second most productive fiction writer, whose works were generally stories of religious, political and nationalist activists, spiced with romance and love scenes. For example, *Hidup Yang Derhaka atau Rahsia Yang Sangat Rahsia* (Living in Treachery or The Mysterious Secret) related the adventures of a secret agent working for the Dutch East Indies Government, who met a tragic death and caused the death of her sister while spying on the activities of her own husband and his associates. Very similar in theme and plot to *Hidup Yang Derhaka* (Living in Treachery) were *Pemimpin Sulit* (Secret Agent), *Bingkisan Rahsia* (Secret Gift), *Pelarian Yang Cerdik* (Wise Escape) and *Tiga Bulan Dalam Penjara* (Three Months in Prison)

His only non-fiction work was *Umat Melayu Dengan Masyarakat* (The Malay People and Society), which chronicles the arrival of foreign people into Malaya and the reactions of the natives. Some of his writings were self-published and printed at various presses. Even while working as manager at the Ipoh Malay Press at the end of the 1930s, he sent his works elsewhere, probably because the press was too busy.

Umar bin Muhammad Khan was not so much a writer as an editor or adaptor. He edited and adapted many *hikayat* and *syair* and printed them

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Hassan Hajeb, who was presumably the proprietor of the press.

<sup>13</sup> He was born in 1894 in Alor Gajah, Melaka. He had his English education at Melaka High School and studied Arabic and Islam under his father his uncle, Abdul Latiff Haji Tambi, who later became his father-in-law. Abdul Latif, a prominent businessman who owned a printing press, made him editor of its publication *Suara Benar* in 1932.

lithographically. As a member of the last surviving generation of lithographers, he managed to present twenty titles of traditional literature, all in the 1930s.

The teacher-writers were represented by Ahmad bin Abdullah<sup>14</sup>, Abdullah Sidek<sup>15</sup>, Harun bin Muhammad Amin<sup>16</sup> Ahmad Murad Nasaruddin<sup>17</sup> and Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad,<sup>18</sup> all of whom had more than

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmad bin Abdullah, popularly known as Ahmad Bakhtiar, was born in 1902 in Kajang, Selangor. His early education was at the Malay School Semenyeh and the Malay School Kajang. In 1919 he went to the Melaka Teachers' College. In 1923, he joined SITC after a brief stint at Jenderam Malay School. He was in the profession for more than thirty years and his last appointment was as Headmaster of the SITC. Zaaba described him as a man of many strange parts, being a clever conjurer, a soap-maker, a flute-playing enthusiast and a Malay medicine-man. He died in 1961 in Tanjung Malim at the age of fifty-nine.

<sup>15</sup> He was born in 1913 in Segamat, Johor and educated at Johor Baharu Malay Training College. When the College was closed in 1929, he moved to Tanjung Malim and graduated in 1931.

<sup>16</sup> He was born in 1907 in Teluk Kurau, Singapore. He joined the SITC in 1924, graduating in 1926. For achieving the best result in the final exam, the College appointed him a teacher. In 1939 the British Authority transferred him to Brunei to isolate him from his political activities. He served in Brunei as Director of Education until the war broke out. He was accused of collaborating with the Japanese during the Occupation and was forced to retire at the age of thirty-nine. Jobless, he returned to Singapore but his writing talent and experience allowed him to turn to editing and publishing. He joined the editorial staff of *Hiburan* (Entertainment) published by the Royal Press. He also edited a few other magazines, including his own *Tunas* (Sprout) and *Belia* (Youth). He died in 1986.

<sup>17</sup> He was born in 1910 in Bagan Tuan Kecil in Seberang Perai. He had his early education at Malay, Arabic and English schools. He joined the Translation Bureau in 1928 as trainee under the supervision of Zaaba. He was appointed a translator the following year and at the same time did part-time teaching at SITC. In 1956, he was transferred to Penang to join a teachers' college there until his retirement in 1963. Ahmad Murad died in 1974.

<sup>18</sup> Popularly known as Zaaba, he was the most outstanding contributor to the development of the Malay language. He was born in 1895 in Negeri Sembilan and went to study in Malay and English schools. In 1916 he taught at the Johor Baharu English School and after two years was transferred to the

a dozen published works. Ahmad bin Abdullah, with thirty-four books, eighteen of which were novels, was the most productive fiction writer. Some of his novels, such as *Perwira Bentan* (Bentan Warrior), *Korban Keris Melaka* (The Victim of Melaka Kris), *Rahsia Keris Putih* (The Secret of the White Kris), *Keris Melaka* (The Melaka Kris) and *Kerana Tun Jemala* (On Account of Tun Jemala) which were based on *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) or *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (The Story of Hang Tuah) had historical tendencies. Like most novels written during this period, his novels were short works consisting of between fifty and one hundred pages. His longer novel was *Rahsia Seorang Gadis* (The Secret of a Maiden) published in two volumes. One of his writings, *Nyanyian Kanak-kanak*, a collection of nursery rhymes, was acquired by the Translation Bureau to be published in the Malay Home Library Series.

Harun bin Muhammad Amin, although contemporary to Ahmad Abdullah, Abdullah Sidik and Ahmad Murad, started writing seriously in the 1940s when he was forced to take early retirement from teaching and became a full-time editor. His earlier work, including *Melur Kuala Lumpur* (The Jasmine of Kuala Lumpur) published in 1930, was said to be unsuccessful, eclipsed by other good literature. However, his later works, many of which had historical themes, were of high value, according to some critics. All of these writers

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SITC. He was then sent to the Translation Bureau in 1923 where he remained until 1939, when he was sent to Singapore to work at the Information Department. During the war he worked with the Japanese Authority in broadcasting. In 1947 he became a Malay language lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and was then appointed head of the Malay Studies Department, University of Malaya in Singapore. Zaaba, who was awarded the title *Pendita* (Sage) in 1956 by the Third Malay Language and Literature Congress, died in 1972.

were still active in the 1950s, and except for Ahmad Bakhtiar who died in 1961, each continued writing in the 1960s.

The most productive and popular religious writer was Sheikh bin Ahmad al-Hadi. Although more than 50% of his works were light novels, which earned him the title of the "Father of Modern Literature", he was remembered more as an Islamic reformist. His books on Islam had high social content in order to change the attitude of the Malays towards their lives. His light romances, *Hikayat Setia Ashyik Kepada Mahsyuknya*, published in 1925, although in the form of adaptations from Egyptian works, were considered the first novels in Malay. Some of his novels were flippant and even erotic, but they were written in order to finance his more serious writings. As Zaaba said, "..he did admit to me that he wrote these unholy novels just to get money to publish his more serious works".<sup>19</sup> At the time when materials for light reading were few, al-Hadi's novels were highly sought after and followed with enthusiasm by their readers. When he stopped for some time the series of *Anak Dara Ghassan* (The Daughter of Ghassan), some fans sent him furious letters demanding that he continue.<sup>20</sup>

The next most prominent writers of religious background were Ahmad Ismail, Ahmad Nawawi bin Muhammad Ali and Muhammad Zain bin Haji Ibrahim, who, like al-Hadi, all translated and adapted many works from

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<sup>19</sup> S. H. Tan, "The Life and Times of Syed Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi" (B. A. Thesis, University of Malaya, Singapore, 1961), 120.

<sup>20</sup> See preface of *Anak Dara Ghassan* (1928-1929). This novel consisted of ten volumes, each containing about 100 pages and had a print-run of between 1,000 to 2,000 copies.

Egyptian writings. Ahmad Ismail's works, comprising nineteen titles, were more varied, covering romances, history, general literature and poetry but with an absence of serious religious subjects.

Ahmad Nawawi bin Muhammad Ali worked on a total of thirteen books. His translations, such as *Puteri Palsu* (The Phoney Princess), *Waris* (Inheritor), *Tarzan atau Mawas Putih* (Tarzan or The White Chimpanzee), *Korban Pesona* (The Victim of Enchantment) and *Jambangan Berita* and *al-Garā'ib*, were compilations of various facts, news and anecdotes. His more historical stories were *Andalus*, the story of a Muslim warrior, Tariq bin Ziad, who led the conquest of Andalusia; *Jaafar al-Barmaki*, a narration of the marriage of Jaafar to Harun al-Rashid's sister and the Caliphate's murder of Jaafar; and *Anak Dara Quraish*, a story set during the rule of Uthman, the third Caliph of Islam. Ahmad Nawawi, according to Zaaba, had written a Malay-Arabic dictionary, *al-Fanus fi Mukhtasar al-Kamus*, in 1927 but unfortunately this dictionary could not be traced during this research. Zaaba also mentioned that Ahmad Nawawi produced seven other works which were never published for various reasons.

Serious Islamic subjects are found in the works of writers such as Tahir Jalaluddin,<sup>21</sup> Fadhlullah Suhaimi,<sup>22</sup> Hussain Nasir bin Muhammad Taib al-

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<sup>21</sup> He was born in 1869 in Bukit Tinggi Sumatra and went to Mecca in 1880. Between 1893 to 1895 he went to al-Azhar and graduated in astronomy. He was editor of *al-Imam* until he left the journal in 1908 to serve the State of Perak. Between 1914 and 1918 he was inspector of religious schools in Johor. In 1920 al-Hadi invited him to join the teaching staff of Madrasah al-Mashor in Penang. In 1925 he left for Johor and remained there for five years as Head Teacher of a religious school. In the 1930s he was editor of *Saudara*, a newspaper in Penang. He was also involved in the management of al-Zainiah Press during this time. Sheikh Tahir died two months after Malaya achieved independence in 1957.

Mas'udi<sup>23</sup> and Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani.<sup>24</sup> If Arabic works are included, these four writers each wrote more than a dozen books in various fields of Islamic knowledge including philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, ethics and astronomy. Unlike many religious writers, Tahir and Fadhlullah had degrees from al-Azhar and for a long time devoted themselves to teaching in schools.

Daud al-Fatani, a classical writer, maintained his reputation throughout the century through his writings which acquired a lasting place in the madrasah curriculum and in the informal system of education. Seven of his books were republished by various establishments during this period. The continued popularity of his works, totalling more than fifty titles in Malay and Arabic, has earned him an entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.<sup>25</sup> Hussain Nasir had eight books published, one of them a new version of his earlier work

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<sup>22</sup> He was born in Singapore in 1886. At the age of about twenty he travelled to Indonesia, India and Mecca to study. In 1911 he went to al-Azhar, graduating in 1914. He was editor of *Al-Ittihad*, a Malay language journal published in Cairo. He founded his own printing press in Cairo in 1914. In 1925 he left to Singapore and, with the help of Syed Hassan bin Ahmad al-Attas, a prominent figure, he founded Kuliah al-Attas (al-Attas College) in 1931 in Johor Baharu, and Kuliah Firdaus in 1937. With the help of Syed Sheikh Omar Bamadhaj, he established Madrasah al-Maarif al-Islamiah in 1936. During the Japanese Occupation, Fadhlullah went to Kelantan to serve the Majlis Agama Islam and Istiadat Melayu. He also contributed to the founding of a few madrasahs there.

<sup>23</sup> Not much is known about the background of this writer, but from the word al-Banjari attached to his name, it is clear that he was from the province of Banjar in Java. He spent some time in the Middle East to study and presumably to teach. Two of his undated works on the Islamic tenets and the articles of faith (see Figure 4.1) appeared from the press of al-Halabi in Cairo.

<sup>24</sup> Refer to Chapter Four.

<sup>25</sup> See under 'Dawud', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 2 (London & Leiden, 1960), 183.



printed in Cairo.<sup>26</sup> His writings, mainly on the basic principles of Islam, were specially directed to students for their use in *madrasah* schools.

In addition to the above-mentioned names, there were other Malay writers who, although not equally prolific, were considered of high standing. Muhammad bin Dato' Muda (six titles) and Abdul Hadi bin Haji Hassan (two titles, one of them containing five volumes), for example, were outstanding historians whose works were the products of original research. There were also writers and translators of specialised fields; among them were Sheikh Uthman Jalaluddin (six works), Raja Uthman bin Raja Yahya (three titles) and Muhammad Zain bin Haji Ayub (three titles) whose works were highly regarded.

## 7.2 NON-MALAY AUTHORS

Among European writers, W. G. Shellabear was the most productive, with fourteen titles, followed by R. O. Winstedt<sup>27</sup> (12 titles), O. T. Dussek (9 titles), Roger Altman<sup>28</sup> (8 titles), R. A. Blasdel<sup>29</sup> (6 titles), A. W. Hamilton (5 titles),

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<sup>26</sup> *Hidāyah al-sibyan fi ma'rifah al-Islām wa al-īmān*. Local imprint was dated 1935.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Olof Winstedt, the son of a naturalised Swede and an English mother, was born at Oxford in 1878. He was once described by the representatives of the teaching profession as 'a second Raffles' on account of his love for the Malays and their language and his enthusiasm for their progress. For further information see Chelliah, *Short History*; John Bastin and R. Roolvink, *Malayan & Indonesian Studies*.

<sup>28</sup> A missionary of the Malayan Union Mission of the Seventh Day Adventists Church.

Margaret Saunders (4 titles) and A. V. Klaus (4 titles). Although Shellabear had left Singapore for America by 1920, his works remained on the market for the next few decades; Malaya Publishing House reprinted them and schools in Malaya continued to use them. *Sejarah Melayu* (the Malay Annals), which he edited, was printed for the fourth time in 1921 and then went into at least five other reprints with several editions in the following years. His *Syair Puji-Pujian*, hymns for school and church, in 1941 went into its twelfth reprint.<sup>30</sup> In Romanised version, this book contained 241 pages, with a print-run of 1,500-3,000 copies each printing.<sup>31</sup> Altogether, half of his Malay works were for preaching purposes and distributed in Malaya and other Malay-speaking areas, while the remaining half were intended for school use.

Winstedt was considered the last and the greatest of the British Colonial scholars of Malay. He stayed longer in the country than many of his counterparts and his interest in Malay studies was more comprehensive and penetrating, covering all aspects of language, history, religion, culture and many fields. His Malay books were mostly written for students' references and included readers concerning grammar and vocabulary, folk literature, history and geography. His *Cerita Jenaka*, a collection of Malay folk stories published

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<sup>29</sup> A Methodist missionary, Blasdell arrived in Malaya in the 1920s, among other reasons to supervise a hostel for Malay girls in Melaka. In 1929, he and his wife, a daughter of Shellabear, were sent to the Hartford Seminary Foundation in the US for the study of Arabic, Malay and Islam. They returned in 1931 and began work in Seremban and Melaka, especially at the mission's Malay schools until the outbreak of the Second World War.

<sup>30</sup> See "Memoranda of Books", *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Registration no: 3339.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. See also Registration nos: 1195, 1360, 1830, 2046, 2803 and 3708.

under the Malay Literature Series, was reprinted and revised many times and became a standard reader.

TABLE 7.3: NON-MALAY AUTHORS

A. E. Coope  
A. J. Sturrock  
A. Keir  
A. M. Waddel  
A. R. McIver  
A. S. Rajah  
A. V. Klaus  
A. W. Hamilton  
Alex Josey  
Anthony Brook  
B. L. Milne  
Boey Teik Huat  
Chan Yen Pai  
Charles Gamba  
Charles Otto Blagden  
Charles Cuthbert Brown  
Chiew Tian Sang  
E. Bagot  
E. W. Fritchley  
F. A. Sweetenham  
G. W. Wells  
Goh Hood Keng  
H. R. Cheeseman  
H. W. Miller, H.W.  
J. B. Neilson  
J. Le Prevost  
J. W. Rowland  
J. Pearce  
J. S. Lay  
Johnny Koh  
Khoo Peng Yam  
Koh Choon Kwang  
Koh Hoon Teck  
L. D. Whitfield  
Lee Eng Seng  
Lee Seng Poh  
Lim Hok Sun  
Lim H. Louis  
Lim Siew Him

Lim Eng Hock  
Lim Eng Siang  
M. A. Sihombing  
Margaret Saunders  
Mubin Sheppard  
Nona Nanci  
O. T. Dussek  
Poh Tiang Siew  
R. O. Winstedt  
R. F. Cottrell  
R. W. Munson  
Robert Allen Blasdell  
Roger Altman  
Seow Chin San  
Sophia Blackmore  
Sukigawa  
Uriah Smith  
V. E. Hendershot  
W. G. Shellabear  
W. Dunman  
W. E. Chambers  
W. T. Cherry  
Wan Boon Seng

### 7.3 FEMALE AUTHORS

As mentioned earlier, book writing did not attract many female writers, who constituted only 3.4% of the total. Among them only Margaret Saunders, a non-Malay, is listed in the top hundred writers. The native female writer with the greatest number of works is Rafeah binti Muhammad Yusuf,<sup>32</sup> whose novel, *Cinta Budiman* (Wise Love), published in 1941 by Annies Printing Works, emerged as the earliest original novel attempted by a woman. Her other writings were *Masak-masakan Indonesia*, a collection of Indonesian recipes, and *Mutiara Rumah Tangga*, a guide to a happy family. Aishah bt. Raja

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<sup>32</sup> Her background is not known.

Sulaiman,<sup>33</sup> Che Fatimah<sup>34</sup> and Kamariah Saadon<sup>35</sup> all wrote two books each.

Before 1920 there were at least two female writers, namely Sharifah Alawiyyah binti Syed Teh al-Habshi and Wok Aminah, whose works were in the form of *syair*. In the 1920s, three female writers appeared. A female missionary, Sophia Blackmore,<sup>36</sup> wrote *Pelajaran Melayu* (Malay Lesson) in 1923, followed by Wok Eshah Haji Nik Idris, who published *Shair Tuan Humpreys* in 1928, and Raja Afifah Tengku Raja Haji Ali, who in 1929 produced her *Hikayat Sultan Malik Fadlullah*. In the 1930s eleven more female writers surfaced, but like the rest, they did not write a large number of books. The situation did not improve in the following decade, which saw the appearance of fewer than ten new faces and the disappearance of all of the previous writers from the scene.

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<sup>33</sup> A member of the Riau Royal family, she was involved in the Rusdiyah Club. She was married to Raja Khalid Hitam, another club activist who narrated the journey of Sultan Mahmud of Riau in *Syair Perjalanan Sultan Riau* in 1894, published by Matbaah al-Riawyah. She is said to have had published four books including *Shair Khadamuddin* in 1927.

<sup>34</sup> A teacher at al-Huda Religious School, she was probably married or related to Dabab bin Haji Muhammad Salleh, a publisher and businessman who founded the United Press.

<sup>35</sup> Her background is not known.

<sup>36</sup> A missionary based in Sydney, she first arrived in Singapore in 1887 to begin her service among women and girls in Malaya. She pioneered the efforts in girls' education and was the first to start the mission's boarding school for girls. While other missionaries would come and go, Sophia Blackmore stayed in Malaya for forty years, devoting her life to the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. See Haines, "Methodist Church in Malaya," 32-43.

The paucity of women writers was primarily due to several cultural setbacks. Many parents still viewed girls' education with prejudice. Even if girls were sent to school, they were expected to set up homes at a young age and devote themselves to household duties and married life, which left them very little time and opportunity for book writing. In journalism, the situation was more encouraging. By 1930, there was at least one periodical published and edited by women. Called *Bulan Melayu*, this magazine was the house organ of the Malay Women Teachers Association of Johor. Although intended for the general public, it became an important forum for women to try out their talent in writing.

#### TABLE 7.4: FEMALE AUTHORS

Afifah Tengku Raja Haji Ali, Raja  
 Aishah Sulaiman Riau  
 Alfi Zahara Samin Taib  
 Che Fatimah  
 Fatimah Wahab  
 Hairani Osman  
 Jah Lelawati  
 Kalsom binti Tengku Khajaki  
 Kamariah Sa'adon  
 Khalidah Adibah binti Hj. Amin  
 Mariam Muhammad Hashim  
 Margaret M. Saunders  
 Nona Nanci  
 Putih Khatijah, Raja  
 Rafeah bt. Muhammad Yusof  
 Rusima (Darik) binti Abdul Wahid  
 Safiah Abas  
 Salmah Sheikh Hussin  
 Salmah Aini  
 Sharifah Azizah bin Syed Ahmad al-Mashur  
 Sophia Blackmore  
 Siti Radiah Muhammad Salleh

Wok Eshah binti Haji Nik Idris  
Zabariah Alang Ismail  
Zainab Hussain

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE PUBLISHERS AND THE PRINTERS

It is always difficult in the Malay context to define publishers or printers in terms of their roles and their relationships, as the distinction between a publisher and a printer was not clear. Very frequently a publisher was also a printer and therefore some of the functions of a publisher overlapped with or were transferred to a printer. Very often, a printing shop emerged as one of the stages in the life-cycle of a publisher. Very often, too, a writer or a bookseller would expand his or her operations into publishing and printing. Thus, in this situation we see author-publishers, bookseller-publishers, printer-publishers or publishers combined with other yet related professions.

As mentioned in Chapter Five, Malay book publishers, in terms of ownership, can generally be divided into various groups such as private indigenous and non-indigenous publishers, association-publishers and government publishers.

### 8.1 INDIGENOUS ESTABLISHMENTS

A large number of indigenous publishers operated on a limited scale with limited staff, sometimes consisting of only one person. Some were temporary publishers or 'ad-hoc publishers', producing books for various purposes such as to raise money for charity, to get funds for *madrrasah*, to honour a respected religious teacher, to fulfil the demands of someone's will or to commemorate



anniversaries.<sup>1</sup> These types of publishers normally produced only one or two books before disappearing from the scene. Some individual publishers, however, would slowly expand and became very enterprising, venturing into bookselling and acquiring their own printing presses.

In several cases, a publisher began as a writer and then embarked into book publishing and book selling without giving up writing. A few writers were displeased with the way many publishers treated them, especially with regard to payment. Generally, there were no agreed methods of remuneration. Royalties were almost unknown among indigenous publishers. The normal practice was to offer several copies of the printed book, instead of cash, up to 100 copies depending on the price of the book. For books with a retail price of less than twenty-five cents, about fifty copies were normally given to the author. For books of a higher price, the number given was higher.<sup>2</sup> All these books were, however, just enough to go round to friends and relatives, and none were left for the author to sell. Some publishers who could afford it paid a small amount of money as a token for the manuscripts submitted by the writers. Annies Printing Works, for instance, rewarded Ishak bin Haji Muhammad with \$6 for his early novel, published in 1935. However, in 1937, he was paid \$200 for his outstanding literary work, *Putera Gunung Tahan* (Son of Tahan Mountain). Abdullah Hussain received \$15 for his second novel,

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of books for these purposes are *Pedoman Islam* (1948), by Wan Ahmad bin Sheikh, *Bahtera Keselamatan* (1947), compiled by Harun Salleh, *Tuhfat al-Asiah* (1930), by Ahmad Shahabuddin al-Idris and *Salām al-Tarshid fi Ahkam al-Tajwid* (1932), by Haji Muhammad Salleh.

<sup>2</sup> Author's interview with A. Samad Ahmad and Ishak Haji Muhammad; see also Abdullah Hussain, *Sebuah Perjalanan*, 214.

*Kasih Isteri* (Wife's Devotion) published in 1946.<sup>3</sup> For the most part, the practice of rewarding writers with complimentary copies remained until the 1940s.<sup>4</sup> There were also cases where unscrupulous publishers retained for some time, keeping the authors in the dark as to whether their works had been accepted. Only later it would emerge that they had been published under different titles and a few alterations.<sup>5</sup>

By getting involved directly in publishing, quicker distribution could also be guaranteed. The writers would be able to ensure that their books could reach the reading public without much delay. It was for these reasons that individuals such as Abdul Ghani Abdullah, Shamsuddin Salleh, A. Samad Ahmad, Abdullah Sidek and a few others decided to publish their own works themselves. Despite their inadequate finance, their early experience in printing or in journalism and, more particularly, their talents in writing provided them with much confidence to venture into the publishing world.

Abdul Ghani Abdullah<sup>6</sup> started his career in printing in 1923 at a Malay press in Tanjung Malim, Perak. He began as a typesetter and rose to the post of assistant manager. He moved to Muar in 1934 for a brief stint with the journal *Neraca* before joining the Sungai Ujong Press in Kuala Pilah to publish

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<sup>3</sup> Abdullah Hussain, "Penggalak Daya dan Peningkatan Mutu Novel", *Dewan Sastera* (July 1973), 37-42; Abdullah Hussain, *Sebuah Perjalanan*, 214.

<sup>4</sup> Abdullah Husain, *Sebuah Perjalanan*, 214; Harun Aminurashid, *Pembangkit Semangat Kebangsaan* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1982), 122.

<sup>5</sup> Author's interview with A. Samad Ismail and Azzam.

<sup>6</sup> Born 1912 at Lubuk China, Melaka, and attended a Malay School in Melaka before becoming a temporary teacher for a short period.

several fictional works by various writers. At the same time he was editor of *Usaha Melayu*, a journal produced by the same publisher. Then he joined al-Rauthah Press in Seremban leaving in 1938 to move back to Perak to work with the Ipoh Malay Press, again for a short period. Then in 1939, after repeated switches, he was determined to launch his own press at Kuala Pilah calling it the Malay Press and sharing an office for a long time with a transport company.<sup>7</sup> The printing equipment it used comprised only two sets of letterpress machines and a binder; all were used machines imported from Hongkong. These limited resources were nevertheless offset by his past experience, which enabled him to be in close contact with other publishers, printers and writers. It was with the help of some of these people in one way or another, financially or morally, that his company progressed. Close writer-friends would send manuscripts or he wrote his own. Whenever his machines were busy or unable to print, he could easily send them to other printers he knew well who would charge him reasonably or arrange payments so that they would be spread over several installments. In addition to the press, Abdul Ghani also had to manage the Sentosa Store, which served as a publishing department and a marketing agent.<sup>8</sup> Sentosa Store and the Malay Press contributed about 4.2% of the total output of titles in 1921-1949.

Shamsuddin Salleh was another writer-publisher who, like Abdul

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<sup>7</sup> Only in 1975 did it move to new premises. See Muhammad Jamin bin Lebai Din, "Percetakan Melayu Kuala Pilah," (B. A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1976), 25.

<sup>8</sup> Several books were published as early as 1935 by the Sentosa Store, indicating that it was founded prior to the establishment of the press.

Ghani, worked at various publishing houses before establishing his own. He initially joined the Johariah Press in Muar in 1936, a company owned by one Pak Tahar. This was where he published and printed his first story, *Kasih Berbalas* (Love Recompensed). He then went to Ipoh to work with the Ipoh Malay Press, producing a few titles of his own fiction, after which he moved to Kuala Pilah and set up his own publishing house, called Penolong Masyarakat, which survived only briefly. Another short-lived company he had set up, together with A. Samad Ahmad, another writer-publisher, was the Persahabatan Publishing Agency<sup>9</sup> in Klang. Both Shamsuddin and Samad Ahmad did not eventually own a printing press; instead they rented one, The New Klang Press, owned by Tengku Haji Uthman, then Chief Religious Officer of Selangor. Shamsuddin Salleh, a highly prolific writer, placed in the same position as Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi, seems to have been unsuccessful in publishing. Although his works were equally popular, they did not generate enough money and this coupled with the lack of resources meant he failed to stay in the business as long as he should have.

Other writers who expanded into publishing, printing and bookselling were Muhammad Yassin Pileh, Zainal Abidin Daud al-Sulaimani and, more importantly, Abdullah Sidek, Syed Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi, Ahmad Ismail, Abdul Latif bin Haji Tambi and Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin. Significant factors influencing these writers to involve themselves in the book trade were their passion for writing and strong belief in the profession.

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<sup>9</sup> See the introductory page of *Bingkisan Rahsia atau Percintaan Kerana Siasat* (Klang: New Klang Press), 1937.

Muhammad Yassin Pileh founded the Teruna Press in Seremban and Zainal Abidin Daud al-Sulaimani initiated the Tanjung Malim Malay Press, both around the middle of the 1930s. Muhammad Yasin's works, in the form of novels, were *Bermalam di Kota Melaka* (Spending a Night in Melaka), *Ayah Yang Derhaka* (A Father Who Betrayed), *Pengorbanan Terakhir* (The Last Offering) and *Pembina Tanah Air* (The homeland Builder). The works of Zainal Abidin Daud al-Sulaimani were non-fictional in nature and they included *Pelayaran Dulukala* (Ancient Voyage), *Taman Penghidupan* (Garden of Life) and *Riwayat Tanjung Malim* (The History of Tanjung Malim). Curiously, he never printed his writings at his own press but instead at The Malay Press, the Teruna Press and the United Press. Some were published by Abdul Ghani and Dabab bin Muhammad Salleh. Abdullah Sidek and Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi, who were among the top ten authors at the time and highly distinguished in the Malay literary world, were operating in Johor and Penang respectively. Both Sheikh Ahmad's Jelutong Press and Abdullah's Jamiliah Press were responsible for introducing and promoting the production of modern popular fiction. Equally prolific was Ahmad Ismail, whose publishing house, Asasiah Press, was a top publisher and printer in Kelantan. Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin joined Muhammad Zain Isa Ismail to establish Zainiah Press in Penang and Perak, chiefly to deal with Islamic publications.

Later publishers of this category included Syed Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al-Edrus, Ahmad Azzam Hanafiah and Harun Aminurrashid, all of whom began operation after the Japanese Occupation, towards the end of the 1940s. Like their earlier counterparts, these publishers were highly prolific

writers; in fact, Harun Aminurrashid had been one of the most important school book writers and editors during the Translation Bureau years. Through his own publishing house, Harmacy,<sup>10</sup> he became even more productive, specialising in literary writing.

Syed Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al-Edrus, popularly known as Ahmad Lutfi, had earlier worked as a compositor at the Anglo-Asiatic Press once he migrated to Singapore from Banjarmasin, in Kalimantan.<sup>11</sup> When the press was changed to Warta Malaya Press, he was promoted to the post of proofreader and then became assistant editor. The first book he published cost him \$550, which he borrowed.<sup>12</sup> His company, Qalam publishers, established in 1948, became one of the major publishing houses specialising in the production of novels. In 1951 the company managed to acquire its own printing machines.

It was from these small-scale companies that Malay literary activities emanated. Together, publishers of this category produced no fewer than 25% of the total titles published during this period, many of them works of fiction.

Another group of publishers in this category were business-minded individuals who started their careers as booksellers or dealers in other provisions. The two most 'successful' of them were the enterprising booksellers originally from Rawa in Sumatra, but who settled in Penang,

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<sup>10</sup> Co-founded by Harun Muhammad Amin and Muhammad Yusuf of Ahmadiyah Press in 1948.

<sup>11</sup> Li Chuan Siu, *Modern Malay Literature*, 109.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

namely Muhammad Ali bin Muhammad al-Rawi and Abdullah bin Nurdin al-Rawi. Both started as high street booksellers and agents in the early twenties. As early as 1927, each had published at least one book. In 1934 Muhammad Ali acquired the Persama Press,<sup>13</sup> which was at the time owned by Tuan Haji Sulaiman Rawa and managed by his son Haji Muhammad Idrus Sulaiman<sup>14</sup>. It is unclear when this press started but the earliest printing was done in 1928. A journal published by this press, *Bahtera*,<sup>15</sup> was edited by Othman Kalam and managed by Muhammad Idrus himself. This was the press at which Muhammad Ali had earlier printed the majority of the books he published. An advertisement announcing his ownership claimed that the press was well-equipped with types of various scripts, capable of printing in several languages, namely Malay, Arabic, Tamil and English. The Arabic types were said to have been purchased in Beirut and Egypt.<sup>16</sup>

At about the same time, Abdullah Nurdin al-Rawi acquired the United Press from Shamsuddin bin Muhammad Yunus. Together, Muhammad Ali and Abdullah Nurdin published about 10% of the total output of titles.<sup>17</sup> Both became the leading publishers during this period, producing largely non-fiction and Islamic publications. Their respective presses, Persama Press and

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<sup>13</sup> See notice at back cover of *Sejarah Pergerakan Islam* (1935) by Muhammad Yusuf Idris.

<sup>14</sup> See the notice in *Majallah Guru* (February 1932): 39.

<sup>15</sup> Started on 1 January 1931 and terminated in August the following year. See Roff, *Malay and Arabic Periodicals*, 46.

<sup>16</sup> See back cover of *Kitab Aqā'id ad-Diniyah* (1937).

<sup>17</sup> Their productions as publishers. See Table 4.6 in Chapter Four.

United Press, became the two most productive printers, surpassing all other printers in output of titles with a combined contribution of 20.5%.<sup>18</sup>

The person who originally set up the United Press in 1928 was Dabab bin Haji Muhammad Salleh.<sup>19</sup> In about 1925, he joined with Syed Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad al-Habshi to form a publishing company called C. A. Dabab & Company. However, within a year the company split when Dabab sold all his shares, probably because the press was not doing well.<sup>20</sup> Only two titles appeared from this press. Subsequently two new companies emerged, one owned and managed by Syed Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad al-Habshi, called the British-Malay Company, and another by Dabab bin Haji Muhammad Salleh, called C. Dabab & Company.<sup>21</sup>

Through the press, Dabab published a monthly journal called *Dunia Melayu*, with himself as editor. Its first issue appeared at the end of the year, with Muhammad Ali Ahmad al-Johori as manager and assistant editor and Muhammad Nur bin Abdul Rahman as special assistant. Muhammad Nur resigned after three issues and Raja Hassan bin Abdullah al-Rawi replaced

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<sup>18</sup> This figure is based on the total production of Persama Press and United Press. See Table 4.7 in Chapter Four.

<sup>19</sup> His early background is unclear but in the early twenties he had operated his own business in Penang and Perak, dealing with general merchandise.

<sup>20</sup> See notice in *Malaya* (November 1926): 24. The demise of C. A. Dabab & Co. was also advertised in *al-Ikhwān*, (16 November 1926): 63.

<sup>21</sup> See notice in *Malaya* (March 1927): 15, It referred to Dabab's company only as stationers, book-binders, rubber-stamp makers, brass and seal makers and commission agents.



him.<sup>22</sup> In the same year United Press started to publish books. Dabab's first own writing on moral education, entitled *Kitab Taman Pengetahuan dan Pelajaran Bagi Ramai* (Garden of Knowledge and Learning for All), was one of the earliest to come from the press. His journal, constantly facing difficulties, was dissolved not long after its inception.

Dabab also dealt in other business to earn his living. He was a distributor of perfumes, toilet products and oils. A few years later he founded a subsidiary company, The United Trading Company, dealing with general merchandise. It also became a supplier and agent for United Press, apart from being a publisher. But apparently only one book was produced, namely *Kamus Melayu* by Shamsuddin bin Muhammad Yunus, in 1935.

By 1935, the ownership of United Press was transferred to Shamsuddin bin Muhammad Yunus, a government pensioner who had earlier been Supervisor of Post in the Penang General Post Office.<sup>23</sup> In addition to *Kamus Melayu*, he also wrote *Pedoman Majlis-Majlis Mesyuarat, Bahas dan Syarahan* (A Guide to Meeting, Debate and Speech), *Hikayat Keramaian Silver Jubilee* (The Silver Jubilee Celebration) and *The Concise English-Malay Dictionary*, which was published by H. M. Shah.

The successes of Ali, Abdullah and Dabab in publishing were not only attributed to their enterprising ways and literary bents but also to their more stable financial situations. Interestingly, all of them, like most other Malay publishers, had few books to their credits. They were also responsible as

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<sup>22</sup> See notice in *Dunia Melayu* (20 April 1929): 98.

<sup>23</sup> Zaaba, "Recent Malay literature," 15.

editors for some of the books they published.

Another important, private, indigenous publisher was Ahmadiyah Press, which was among the leading Islamic book publishers alongside Muhammad Ali and Abdullah. Ahmadiyah Press was founded in 1920 by a group of individuals who had earlier established al-Ahmadiyah Company at Pulau Tujuh in Singapore in 1915.<sup>24</sup> Apart from commercial success, the objective of the establishment was also to serve as an extension to the activities of Maktabah al-Fataniah<sup>25</sup> in Mecca run by their progenitor, to disseminate and preach Islam.<sup>26</sup> At least three people from the royal family in Riau were responsible for founding Ahmadiyah Press, namely Raja Ahmad, Raja Hassan and Raja Ali. They had been active in Riau and even involved in Matbaah Ahmadiyah at Pulau Penyengat and also in a literary association, the Rushdiah Club. Some of the early books from their Singapore press were reprints of those published by Matbaah Ahmadiyah in Pulau Penyengat.

## 8.2 NON-INDIGENOUS ESTABLISHMENTS

The private, non-indigenous publishers were mainly run by Europeans and Baba Chinese; a few of them began in the last century. The leading publisher among the Baba Chinese was The Pranakan Book Company, owned and

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<sup>24</sup> See MS 1104, "Akta Syarikat al-Ahmadiyah," 6ff, a handwritten company act located at the National Library, Kuala Lumpur. See also "Peraturan Matbaah al-Ahmadiyah," a handwritten prospectus, personal possession of Muhammad Saghbir bin Abdullah.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>26</sup> Personal interview with Muhammad Saghbir Abdullah.

managed by Wan Boon Seng, a prominent author and editor of Baba literary works. Other Baba publishers with whom Wan Boon Seng used to publish some of his writings were Sing Seng Book Coy, Seng Poh Huat Co., Chin Hoo Bros., and Chin Inn, all in Singapore. Not all of these publishers owned printing presses. They sent most of the work to the Chinese presses. Very few were printed at the Malay-owned printing houses.

Among the European publishers, the significant ones were Malaya Publishing House, Printers Limited and Fraser & Neave. These European publishers, who each owned a printing press, functioned more as printers than as publishers. All three of them, in fact, were given the exclusive rights to print school publications produced by the Translation Bureau and the Education Department and also to print some government materials.

For Malaya Publishing House, this period was the most important stage in its development as it saw the transformation of its outlook. When it became a public stock company in 1927, it changed its policy from religious oriented to become more secular and business-motivated. William Cherry was succeeded by Frank Sands, not a missionary like all his predecessors. The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the new limited company were signed on 24 December 1927.<sup>27</sup> Yearly profits in the 1920s and 1930s were

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<sup>27</sup> The subscribers were Frank Cooper Sands (printer and publisher), Edwin Ferdinand Lee (treasurer of the Methodist Mission), Baldwyn Lowick (chartered accountant), Stephen Michael Tracey (bookseller who joined the company in 1926 as manager of the Book Department), Stanley Granville Rode (assistant printer), Paul Storr (solicitor and advocate, later Mr. Justice), and Lionel Margoliouth (insurance manager). The board of directors consisted of Sands, Lee, Margoliouth and Gaw Khok Khiam, R. G. Pash and Dr. Chen Su Lan; the last two joined about a year later. See Hutton, *Jack Chia-MPH*, 37.

between \$15,000-\$35,000.<sup>28</sup> The firm's assets stood at more than a quarter of a million dollars. Although almost all of its printing was commercial in nature, its relationship with the Methodist Mission was still a close one. Article 87 of its Memorandum said that "so long and so often as the Secretary of the Methodist Episcopal Building and Location Board...shall hold shares in the Company of the nominal value of \$24,000 he shall have the right to appoint one director of the Company."<sup>29</sup> Methodist schools were for many years one of the major sources of income for the company's book department, which supplied bulk orders according to the requirements of school principals. It also became the supplier of other vernacular school books, especially Malay. There was also great activity in wholesale and retail bookselling and plenty of jobbing work for the printing department. Type-founding and engraving were important aspects of the business. One advertisement proudly presented an excellent selection of types for the commercial printing office which include Roman faces, Bold faces, Gothic and Malay Arabic types.<sup>30</sup>

### 8.3 ASSOCIATION-PUBLISHERS

The association-publisher group consisted of non-profit organisations aiming at various objectives of religious, social and literary nature. Teachers associations in several states and a few *Madrasah* running publishing activities

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>30</sup> Advertisements promoting its offers sometimes appeared in the *Singapore and the Straits Directory*.

to disseminate Islamic knowledge through print are also included in this group. Examples of the latter included Madrasah Muhammad Taib Kedah, Kuliah al-Attas and Madrasah al-Mashyur. Madrasah al-Mashyur had its own Translation Department, called Lujnah al-Tarjamah wa al-Tahrir.<sup>31</sup> This department was run by a board of seven members led by Ibrahim Mahmud, who also assumed the post of editor. Other members were Abdul Karim Isa, Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah Baldran, Sheikh Ahmad bin Abdulah Baldran, Muhammad Kassim Hassan, Ahmad Arif Yahya and Muhammad Mukhtar Abu Bakar, presumably teachers at the school.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately this department failed to function as it should have due to the lack of funds as it depended on private contributions.

The most vigorous association-publisher was the Royal Society of Malay Literature of Johor or Persatuan Pakatan Bahasa Melayu dan Persuratan Buku-buku di-Raja Johor (P. Bm. P. B.).<sup>33</sup> As it aimed at promoting and developing the Malay language and literature, the society's publications were primarily related to grammar, spelling, idioms and dictionaries, published largely under

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<sup>31</sup> See the preliminary pages of *Zikri al-Hijrah al-Nabawiyah* (1938) by anonymous author. See Author's Catalogue.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> This society was originally founded in 1888 under the name Pakatan Belajar-Mengajar Pengetahuan Bahasa or Society for Learning and Teaching Linguistics. Its primary objectives were to develop, promote and propagate the Malay language among the public in an attempt to achieve its recognition as the official language of administration. Datuk Abdul Rahman bin Andak, then Private Secretary to Sultan Abu Bakar, was the society's first President but when he left in 1909 to settle down in England the society stood idle. In 1934, through the initiative of Datuk Haji Muhammad Said bin Sulaiman, the society was reformed.

the *Peredar* (a coined word meaning learned journal) Series. From 1936 to 1940, two dozen titles were published for this series, mostly under the name of Datuk Haji Muhammad Said bin Sulaiman. In addition to these, there were several other books on general subjects. These books were distributed free to all members who paid a yearly fee of \$4.00. It was partly from this source and from sales that its publications were financed. Each book was normally printed in a thousand copies.<sup>34</sup> Three hundred copies would be distributed gratis to members<sup>35</sup> and the rest were put on sale. Some books were granted government aid,<sup>36</sup> which was made possible through the society's royal status and Muhammad Said's close association with the Sultan. Works which were acquired by the Government to be published for school use would be paid royalties and these probably became an important additional source of finance. Another literary association, but less active in terms of book publishing, was Persatuan Sahabat Pena Malaya (PASPAM), officially translated as the Brotherhood of Friends of the Pen.<sup>37</sup> Unlike P. Bm. P. B, this literary association was not confined to a particular state but more widespread,

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<sup>34</sup> See for example see "Memoranda of Books", in the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette*, Registration nos: 3301, 3302, 3300, 3322, 3323, 3324.

<sup>35</sup> In 1940 it had 287 members. See *Perihal Pakatan Ini* (1940).

<sup>36</sup> See preface of *Jalan Bahasa Melayu: Panduan Bagi Hejaan* (1936).

<sup>37</sup> Begun as a newspaper correspondence club for young people to promote Malay literacy and interest in Malay language and literature, this association was formally founded in 1934. For further details see Roff, *Malay Nationalism*, 211-221; Abdul Latif Abu Bakar, "Paspam: Pertubuhan yang Berkaitan Persuratan yang Pertama Di Bumi Pulau Pinang," in *Warisan Sastera Pulau Pinang*, edited by Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar (Kuala Lumpur: Biro Penerbitan Gapena, 1985), 134-151.

drawing up to 12,000 members during its peak. In 1938, a Language Council in Johor Baharu was set up by the Central Committee which had ambitious plans, among others to publish books on Malay language, history and customs. But this plan was not fulfilled as no more than four books came into existence.

Christian associations such as the Methodist Missions, the Seventh Day Adventists and the British & Foreign Bible Society continued their publishing activities throughout this period but with much less intensity, due to the decreased focus on Malay proselytisation. After 1940, their level of activity became negligible.

#### 8.4 GOVERNMENT PUBLISHERS AND PRINTERS

As we saw earlier in Chapter Three, the government is one of the oldest publishers and printers. As it established itself, one of its main concerns was to print varied forms of documents, proceedings, brochures and other, similar materials. Thus the importance of the printing department. In most cases the publications were limited in scope and extent, but in several instances they were significant in the fields of general publishing as in the works of the Department of Information, school book publishing as in the case of the Education Department, and religious publishing as characterised by the works of the State Religious Departments.

One of the earliest government book publishers was the Religious Council Press or Matbaah Majlis Agama Islam of the Kelantan State Government. Started in 1917, its productions were initially to support religious

work in the state schools.<sup>38</sup> The Majlis purchased a press from one Jaafar bin Haji Mahmud for \$1,000.<sup>39</sup> Jaafar, who presumably had good experience in printing, was appointed manager of the press. Under him were three members of staff; a typesetter, Haji Wan Abdul Hamid; a binder, Haji Wan Zain; and a peon, Abdul Hamid.<sup>40</sup>

In the same year the Majlis established the Department of Translation, which was to be managed by Umar bin Ismail Nuruddin and Haji Wan Muhammad Daud Patani.<sup>41</sup> Translators were appointed to work in this department to prepare text books and to translate Arabic books into the Malay language.<sup>42</sup> The production of a variety of literature was thus begun. Several of the Majlis' officers had been assigned to engage in writing, translation, editing and production. Heading the editorial board of text book publication was Muhammad Yusuf bin Ahmad, popularly known as Tok Kenali, who at the same time was editor of *Pengasoh*, which was to be one of the longest continuous periodicals in the history of Malay journalism.

A year after its inception, the text book publishing section had produced several titles on moral education including *Kitab Cahaya Purnama* (Moon Light), *Semangat Kehidupan* (Spirit of Life), *Jambangan Melayu* (Malay Nursery), *Lunas*

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<sup>38</sup> Roff, *Malay Nationalism*, 143.

<sup>39</sup> Abdul Rahman al-Ahmadi, *Tokoh dan Pokok Pemikiran Tok Kenali*. (Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kebudayaan Belia & Sukan, 1983), 11.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Roff, *Kelantan*, 144.



*Pengetahuan* (Fundamental Knowledge) and *Jalan Sejahtera* (Ways to Prosperity). Except for *Semangat Kehidupan*, which was an original work of Haji Wan Muhammad bin Wan Daud, the rest were adaptations and translations from Arabic. Students were required to purchase these books for their use in school.

By 1920, the Majlis had become a large organisation employing numerous staff including writers, editors, translators, composers, proofreaders and book-binders. The press was very profitable from the sale of publications and job-printing. *Pengasuh* had a yearly profit of about \$1,500, while book selling earned more than \$200.<sup>43</sup>

The most active government publisher was The Malay Translation Bureau, an organisation which attended to the work of producing and providing suitable school books for use in Malay vernacular schools. This organisation was under the administration of the Sultan Idris Training College at Tanjung Malim, which was opened following the closing down of the existing colleges in Melaka and Matang. The Bureau was first created in 1924 as a branch of the College, but it had its origin long before the College itself came into existence in 1922. The Bureau was, in fact, a development of the old method of supplying textbooks and readers to the Malay schools whereby some outstanding Education officers, during their tenure, would prepare the materials themselves or with the assistance of a Malay translator working part-time or full-time. Where this was not possible, they would request other writers and experts to write for them in English or Malay and then have the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 145n.

manuscript translated or edited and published.

The man to whom the Bureau owed its inception was O. T. Dussek. He was the first principal of the College and remained in the position for seventeen years, from 1922-1939. Dussek had a great passion for the Malay culture and language. With this advantage the Bureau grew. In 1925 the Bureau was reorganised under the instruction of R. O. Winstedt,<sup>44</sup> then Director of Education, and given a new name, Pejabat Karang-Mengarang. However, the Colonial Office reports referred to it only as the Translation Bureau.

With the existence of the Translation Bureau, school book publishing became more organised, with a larger and specialised staff, instead of one man and one assistant Malay translator. The work of preparing and editing the books was now done by members of the Bureau under the direction and supervision of the Principal of the College who assumed the post of General Editor. In his capacity as Assistant Director of Education for the Malay Section, he usually invited the opinion and criticism of the various Inspectors of Schools and Superintendents of Education in the States Settlements on the works so prepared. The translators themselves were all locally engaged Malays who, besides having passed the highest standard in the Malay schools in their earlier days, had also gone through the secondary standard of the English Schools. On appointment, they had to undergo a probationary period of training for two years, during which time they learned by practice, exercise and instruction the art and technique of translation work as well as the general

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<sup>44</sup> For his life and background see Chapter Six.

work of literary composition.<sup>45</sup>

Zaaba, who was teaching at the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, was transferred to Kuala Lumpur in 1924 to be appointed as Malay Translator when the Bureau was founded. Upon reorganization, he was promoted to Chief Editor and Senior Translator, working along with O. T. Dussek, who was editor. Assistant translators were employed and the number increased each year. They had earlier attended the translation course conducted by the Bureau which offered one or two places at a time. In 1935, the Bureau had a staff of nine people, including two Senior Translators and three Assistant Translators. An Assistant Translator received a monthly salary of around \$90, a Translator obtained between \$160-170, while Senior Translator was paid up to \$300.<sup>46</sup>

The first effort of the Bureau was directed towards the improvement of the old readers and textbooks for the various standards. This was done by revising the books already in use - not so much in respect of their subject matter as in their style, arrangement, literary form, treatment and presentation. All the books were carefully revised to adapt them to the needs and ages of the children by whom they were used. Difficult passages were simplified, and new and more lively lessons were written and introduced. Where it was felt that any particular books were unsuitable with respect to their subject matter or mode of treatment and presentation, they were put out of commission and new ones were written in their place. On the other hand, many of the old

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<sup>45</sup> Zaaba, "Production of Vernacular School Books," in *Surat Persendirian* 18.

<sup>46</sup> See Zaaba "Staff of the Malay Translation Bureau", c.1939, and Letter from Zaaba to Head SITC, 1 June 1961, both in *Surat Persendirian* 18; *Cenderamata*, no. 25 (September 1935): 117.

books were retained and kept in use but in revised form. Thus in a few years from its start the Bureau revised and brought up to date most of the old books, while at the same time it published a number of new ones including readers for the lower standard, text books on elementary Malay grammar and composition, history, geography, arithmetic, hygiene, basketry, agriculture and so on. All these were included in the "Malay School Series", which by 1940 had reached a figure of almost fifty titles.<sup>47</sup>

Another series known as "The Malay Home Library Series" was launched in 1929 to supplement the school books proper. These mostly consisted of translations of stories and light literature. Most of the translations were from well-known Western authors, among whom Shakespeare, Jules Verne, Conan Doyle, Washington Irving, Mark Twain, Grimm, Lamb, Ballantyne, Stevenson and Edgar Wallace were represented by selections from their works. In addition, some of the famous mythical tales of classical Greece and some well-known fairy-tales, as well as a few stories from the Arabian Nights had also been translated or re-told. The translation of a profusely illustrated version of *Reynard the Fox* (Sang Lomeri) prepared by A. W. Hamilton, a European Malay scholar, and edited by the Bureau was one of the first to be produced. Some plays or dramatic writings had also been presented or re-told in simple Malay and published. These include *The Black Mask*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth* and *Faust*. But all of these had to be adapted and abridged to meet local school conditions.

Some of the Malay classics and well-known romances in the form of

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<sup>47</sup> Zaaba, "Vernacular School Books," 2, in *Surat Persendirian* 18.

*hikayat* and *syair* were also published by the Bureau. These include *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, *Hikayat Bustamam*, *Hikayat Ganja Mara*, *Syair Siti Zubaidah*, *Syair Dandan Setia* and other works of such nature which had been widely published about half a decade before by stone lithographers. Works of Abdullah Munshi were also reprinted.

Through the work of the Bureau, school book productions progressed tremendously. Under the old one-man system, the supply of old books had always been inadequate or behind schedule. Many times, books had run out of print or remained unrevised for many years, despite advances in the theory and practice of education. The officers who started the work never remained for long in the same appointment. When they left, their successors did not necessarily possess the same enthusiasm or literary forte to drive the work forward. So, years would elapse before a new officer came along to revive interest and see that the old books were revised or replaced and new books were produced.

However, with a small number of staff the Bureau was always under great pressure to supply more readers and text books and to revise and improve existing ones. The situation was made more critical by the fact that the Bureau had to do translation works for the Government Secretaries in the form of Bills, Enactments and other legal documents, which were sometimes voluminous and all very pressing.<sup>48</sup> In consequence, much of the work for which the Bureau was originally called into being, that is the production of Malay school books, was retarded or left in abeyance. Some of the readers,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 6.

especially the Malay classics and romances were republished unchecked and unedited because of the lack of time and staff.<sup>49</sup>

The Bureau's aim was actually a modest one - that is the production of books suitable for use in the Malay schools. It did not aim at catering for the growing taste for reading of the Malay public or even at educating them or disseminating useful information. But its benefits were extended to the public as a whole.

### 8.5 PUBLISHING AND PRINTING PROCEDURE

While a few publishers had their own printing presses, many had to send the manuscripts to outside registered printers. As for the Translation Bureau, it had no printing press of its own. Therefore, all of its works had to be given to private printers. Whenever a work was ready for the press, a circular was sent round to all Inspectors of Schools and Superintendents of Education enquiring as to the number of copies of the book they were likely to require each year for a certain period of time, normally five years.<sup>50</sup> On receipt of their estimates, a selected printing house was asked for a quote of their lowest possible selling price per copy of the book if they printed an edition of so many thousands according to the total number required by the Inspectorate of Schools. The only condition was that the printing house should stock the book and sell it to the Inspectors and other buyers. Frequently they were also asked what royalty they were prepared to pay the Government for each copy

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 7.

sold. If the quotation was accepted, the printing was put in hand forthwith, the Bureau seeing the work through the press, doing the proofreading and checking and making all necessary corrections. When the book was ready, the printers were instructed to place the book on sale to the public and a second circular was sent round to all the Inspectors and Superintendents advising them to that effect.

The size of an edition depended largely on the requirements of the schools. The average always lay between 2,000 and 10,000, copies which normally took a few years to exhaust. A best selling book sometimes would reach about 40,000 copies in one edition.

In the arrangement described above, the Bureau paid nothing for the printing and the schools were supplied with the necessary books free. The Bureau was also relieved of the annoying drudgery of storing the enormous stock and handling orders. Everything was left in the hands of the printers. All that the Bureau had to do was to prepare the manuscript, obtain the estimate of the quantity required by the schools and then get the book printed at an agreed price. The various governments only spent money through their State Education Departments buying the books at that price.

It is clear that in this way, school book publishing was monopolised by the selected printer and there was no way the business could benefit others. The printers were given business and employment for their staff and at the same time were practically sure disposing of all the copies in a certain number of years and of making a certain margin of profit in return.

The situation was different for the private, individual publishers who

dealt with general books. Their relationships with the printers were more personalised, and a few publishers took an active part in going through the processes of typesetting, designing, supervising the printing and even packing to ensure that the finished products turned out as required and the process went smoothly. While some publishers did the marketing and selling, others left those tasks to the printers. This depended on what had been agreed about the roles of each establishment.

Printing time very much depended on the size of the press and the nature of work. A small press with one typesetter and one printer would take about a month to print a thousand copies of a hundred-page book. Some bigger presses took less time, between ten to twenty days. Setting alone for a small press would take about ten days, at a rate of ten pages a day.<sup>51</sup>

## 8.6 LOCAL SET-BACKS

Numerous local set-backs were encountered by the publishers and printers. The first and primary difficulty arose out of under-capitalisation, which was more acute in the private indigenous sector. Initial capital for investment was generally very limited. There were extreme cases, such as those of Ahmad Azzam Hanafiah, A. Samad Ahmad, Abdullah al-Edrus, Shamsuddin Salleh, Abdul Ghani Abdullah and a few others who started with no money or a very small amount borrowed from friends or relatives. Equally, limited companies faced the same problem of insufficient funds to be able to employ skilled workers and to install equipment. To the business community, the trade was

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<sup>51</sup> Personal interview bin Ahmad Azzam.



considered unprofitable and therefore not to be ventured on a large scale basis.

For those who were willing to invest, such as the Ahmad Press<sup>52</sup> and Anglo-Asiatic Press were in a constant state of worry about maintaining a continual flow of jobs. Orders from the government and private printing jobs were largely controlled by the few commercial non-indigenous competitors or handled by the government-owned printing houses.

Another persistent problem was the lack of trained and specialised staff. Copy-editors, designers, proof-readers, typographers and illustrators were almost unknown in the industry, especially in the indigenous sector, and the works had to be returned to the publishers, the printers or the authors.<sup>53</sup> This situation resulted in generally poor quality publications where spelling errors, inconsistencies and evidence of slipshod production were prevalent.<sup>54</sup> Illustrations and pictures were always avoided. This quality was made worse with the use of newsprint paper, which easily turned yellow. The low selling price was another factor which resulted in the the low quality of production in terms of physical appearance as well as editorial standards in books published by the indigenous publishers. On the other hand, textbooks and

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<sup>52</sup> By 1935, this press had installed modern automatic machines, occupied a relatively large building and employed about forty workers. See concluding pages of *Silver Jubilee, King George (1935)* by Sulaiman Ahmad, which shows pictures of the inside views of Ahmad Press.

<sup>53</sup> However, *pentaskhih*, which generally means evaluator was already present at this period; his services were commonly used for Islamic publications. Apart from evaluating the manuscript he would also edit and proofread the manuscript, but more importantly he served to verify the contents.

<sup>54</sup> Frequently, a list of corrected errors had to be attached to the book.

*Baba* books generally had a better physical quality. Textbooks had a ready market, and *baba* books had buyers who were relatively prosperous. In terms of editorial standards, the better quality production of textbooks was due to the well-trained editors of the Bureau.

# CHAPTER NINE

## BOOK CONTENTS AND FEATURES

### 9.1 LITERARY CONTENTS

A prevalent trend after 1920 was the growth of modern literary writings, replacing the traditional *syair* and *hikayat*. There was obviously a keen interest in novel writing or more generally in fiction writing, apparent if one looks also in periodicals which included short stories as part of their regular contents. Reasons behind this development have been dealt with in various accounts.<sup>1</sup> Books, largely in the form of light novels, constituted 30% of the total number of titles in all categories. This figure is almost equivalent to the total number of Islamic books or double the number of school texts.

In the category of literature alone, it accounted for more than 70% of the total titles. Other than novels, fictional writings such as drama and collections of short stories were very rarely published in book form. Both *syair* and *hikayat* made up about 20% of the total literary titles or less than 10% of the total overall titles, compared to about 40% for the period prior to 1921.<sup>2</sup> The findings also show that poetry, folk stories and biography/memoir were the

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Li Chuan Siu, *Modern Malay Literature 1921-1941*, 2-7; Li Chuan Siu, *Modern Malay Literature 1942-1962*; Zaharah Ibrahim, ed., *Sejarah Kesusasteraan Melayu Jilid 1-2*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1990); Mohd. Taib Osman, *Modern Malay Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> Proudfoot's study found that out of 496 titles recorded between 1887 and 1920, 180 (36.3%) were of *syair* and *hikayat*. See his "Formative Period," 104.

least popular literary varieties.<sup>3</sup> Each genre registered less than 6% of the total literary writings. If added to a few literary works grouped under school text, the figure remained very low.

Malay novel writing can generally be said to comprise two areas: one, works translated from Egyptian sources and popular western literature; and two, original novels with local characters set in the contemporary Malay social background. The theme of the Egyptian adapted works as a rule conveyed the message of progress and advancement interwoven with the subjects of love and marriage. Thus, questions such as the emancipation of women, the pre-marital code of conduct and the role of youth, often raised with highly didactic elements and flavoured with love affairs, were typical. The supposedly first original novel to surface, in 1927, was a work of Ahmad bin Muhammad Rashid Talu.<sup>4</sup> Called *Kawan Benar* (True Friend), this 177-page novel with local characters and settings is a story about an unfaithful husband who repented.<sup>5</sup> Like *Kawan Benar*, most early original writings emulated the Egyptian adaptations in themes, but later they progressed into more diverse issues.

The adaptations and translations of English and other western literary works such as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *Cinderella* and *Julius Caesar* were undertaken primarily for school purposes by the

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<sup>3</sup> See Table 8.1.

<sup>4</sup> Born in Penang in 1889. In 1932 he worked for *Bahtera* (The Ark), a periodical published in Penang. Two years later he published his own series of short stories, *Kawan Bercakap* (A Companion to Converse), but for financial reasons the series was soon terminated. As one of the pioneers in fiction writing, Ahmad wrote nine novels written between 1927 and 1935.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad bin Muhammad Rashid Talu, *Kawan Benar* (1928).

Translation Bureau. A few private publishers such as Kenari and Asasiah Press attempted a few series of thrillers and adventure stories. Generally, it was popular works rather than serious literary writings from English and western literature which made an impression on the writing of Malay fiction. As a consequence, the finer points of Western literary conventions continued to be remote to the Malay audience.

Novels or modern Malay literature as a whole until the outbreak of the Pacific War, were said to be lacking in originality and of low standard in content or in style. Mohd. Taib Osman ascribed this inferiority to the fact that literature was generally perceived by writers more as a medium of expression than as a form of creative art.<sup>6</sup> Zaaba believed that "...almost every Malay author seemed to be able only to translate or reproduce foreign stories and ideas."<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, both agreed that there were gratifying traces of literary growth at this period and the writings did show signs of meeting the literary needs of a society which was undergoing a transformation.

While a few post-war novels continued the conventions of the 1920s and 1930s, many writings demonstrated a different pattern. More original works appeared and more of them were concerned with ethical and moral issues such as the perils of the free mixing of men and women, the dangers and temptations of city life, the evils of alcohol and gambling and so on. On these issues, a few writers such as Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al-Edrus went so far that some critics denounced some of his works as pornographic. Works such

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<sup>6</sup> Mohd. Taib Osman, *Modern Malay Literature*, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Zaaba, "Vernacular School Books," 7.

as *Pelayan* (1948) and *Bilik 69* (1949) contained a few suggestive bedroom scenes which the writer claimed were meant to demonstrate certain moral ills in society.

Political matters, although touched indirectly, also began to be raised to stimulate feelings of nationalism. This was done by portraying utopian characters who made sacrifices for the country, exhibiting the greatness of the legendary Malay heroes and also by displaying the misery of war.<sup>8</sup> More extreme elements are to be found in Ishak Haji Muhammad's works, which questioned the motives of the colonial authorities.<sup>9</sup> This trend was attributed mainly to the impact of the Japanese occupation, the inspiration from the revolution movement in Indonesia and the changes imposed by the British regarding the administration of the country.

While Malay literature was revolutionised in this period, *Baba* literary works remained constant in form and content. *Baba* fiction continued to consist of translations and transcriptions of the Chinese classics.

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<sup>8</sup> Examples are *1374 Hari Berjuang* (1948), *Balik Dari Medan Perjuangan* (1948), *Sisa Neraka Dunia* (1948) *Bangkai Bernyawa* (1948) all by Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al-Edrus, *Tersungkur di Tengah-tengah Masyarakat* (1948) by Abdullah Sidek, *Siapakah Yang Bersalah* (1949) by Harun bin Muhammad Amin.

<sup>9</sup> See *Anak Mat Lela Gila* (1948) and his earlier work *Putera Gunung Tahan* (1937).

TABLE 9.1: CONTENTS OF LITERARY WORKS, 1921-1949  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

	NO. OF TITLES	% OF TOTAL
Syair	71	10.3
Poetry	37	5.4
Hikayat	57	8.3
Folk Story	3	0.4
Fiction	513	76.7
Biography/Memoir	6	0.9
TOTAL	687	100.0

TABLE 9.2: CONTENTS OF BABA LITERATURE  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Poetry	8	14.3
Fiction	46	82.1
Others	2	3.6
TOTAL	56	100.0

TABLE 9.3: CONTENTS OF ISLAMIC WORKS  
(Source: Author's Catalogue)

	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Theology and Philosophy	214	47.0
Pillars	43	9.5
Quran and Hadith	41	9.0
Prayers and Invocations	22	4.8
Law	31	6.8
History & Civilization	53	11.7
General	51	11.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 9.2 ISLAMIC CONTENTS

For the purpose of this study, Islamic works are divided into seven categories, as shown in Table 8.3. The category of theology and philosophy occupied a prominent place in the works of religious authors. Nearly half of the contents of Islamic works were of this nature. Great efforts were made to explain and discuss the attributes and essence of God, the prophets, the angels and the jinns. Other common theological themes were the origin and the creation of man and the universe, the characteristics of man, paradise and hell and the articles of the Islamic faith.

The second most important subject (11.7%) is categorised under 'History and Civilisation', which covers writings on Islamic society, politics and history; and biographies of the prophets, the companions and other Islamic figures. The 'general' category, which was the third most important subject (11.2%),



consisted of any other works, but they were mainly *nazam* or stories written in verse. Works grouped under 'Pillars' are related to any of the five pillars of Islam, namely the declaration of Divine Unity and Prophethood of Muhammad, establishment of five daily prayers, payment of *zakat* (obligatory charity), fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*, and pilgrimage to the holy places of Mecca and Medina. This category formed about 9%, almost identical to the category of 'Quran and Hadith'. Other less important subjects were prayers and invocations, and law.

Most works of *kitab jawi* are translations or adaptations from Arabic. For this reason *kitab jawi* works were frequently criticised by some orientalist as having no new and fresh ideas, and being very standardised and stereotyped.<sup>10</sup> It must be realised, however, that these texts were reworkings and their publication was undertaken so as to make available to Malay readers Arabic texts which could be readily understood. Furthermore, these texts were written by religious teachers to be used with their students for the purpose of study. In these collections, nevertheless, original works and local views can be found in a number of books, especially those relating to *fatwa* and contemporary issues. The *Kaum Tua - Kaum Muda* conflict, apparent in newspaper and magazine writings, was in fact expanded to books and thus we find invigorating ideas in these works, very much relevant to Muslim society during that time. These books, unlike *kitab jawi*, were written more to a general audience to resolve controversial issues. *Risalah Penting Pada Masalah Jilat*

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<sup>10</sup> See for example C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka*, 181; Robert Allen Blasdell, "Mohammedan Literature," 60-67.

*Anjing* (A Critical Tract on the Question of Dog's Saliva) by Abbas Taha, *Hoki dan Silat Perempuan* (Women in Hockey and Martial Arts) and *Tanbih al-Muslimin*, both by Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi, *Tanbih al-Tulab fi Ahkam al-Kilab*, published by Pejabat Kuliah al-Attas, are but a few examples of such works.

### 9.3 NONFICTIONAL CONTENTS

The third most popular kind of work as we have seen in Chapter Four, was the category of nonfiction, comprising of social science, history & politics, science & technology, arts & culture, and cookery, in descending order of importance. The procedures of marriage, questions of morality and ethics, the role of women, and social evils were among the most widely covered subjects categorised under sociology. These were generally presented in the form of simple exposition and description on how to lead a socially acceptable way of life within the boundaries of Islam. Such presentation with highly didactic objectives was also extensive in books under the category of education, which included manuals for parents and advice on teaching. Books on other subjects of social science such as geography, economics, communications and psychology, although very low in number, were beginning to appear.

The themes chosen by the writers reflected their concern for the ethical and moral crises which to their minds were confronting society. Besides exhorting the Malays to seek advancement, these writings also suggested ways and means for readers to better themselves. As in literary writings, questions on colonialism were rarely touched in nonfiction. Works under the category

of politics were focused on foreign situations, such as the political conflicts in the Middle East,<sup>11</sup> the confrontations in Europe and Africa<sup>12</sup> and the achievements of some prominent foreign statesmen.<sup>13</sup> While hostile to anti-British figures, these writings were obviously intended to portray the superiority of the colonialists. Subjects related to local politics were directed to safe discussions on the genealogy and the state administrations of Malay rulers.<sup>14</sup> After 1945, a few nonfiction writings began to call for unity among the Malays and to be more critical about rulers' positions.<sup>15</sup> Publication of

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<sup>11</sup> Examples are Abdul Ghani Hashim, *Pemberontakan Syria & Lebanon* (1948), Ahmad Ismail, *Turki Baharu: Tarikh Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Turki dan Kebangkitan Mustaffa Kamal Atatürk* (1940?), Ahmad Ismail, *Tarikh Perjalanan Mustaffa Kamal Basha* (1932).

<sup>12</sup> For examples see *Tarikh Peperangan Itali dan Tripoli* (1936) by Abdul Halim Hassan, *Riwayat Perang Besar yang Kedua* (1941) by Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al-Edrus, *Pusat Kekuasaan Inggeris Di Dalam Laut Mediterranean* (1938) by Abdul Thani bin Raja Kecil.

<sup>13</sup> *Siapakah Mussolini* (n.d.) and *Rahsia kejayaan Hitler* (1936) both by Ahmad bin Sheikh, *Turki Baharu* (1940?) by Ahmad Ismail and Sun Yat Sen's *Dasar Tiga Kerakjatan* (1946), translated by M. Abdoelmadjid.

<sup>14</sup> See *Sentosa Ketakhtaan Selangor* (1938) by Abdul Hamid bin Tengku Haji Muhammad Salleh, *Tarikh Raja-raja dan Adat Istiadat Zaman Purbakala Negeri Perak Darul Ridzwan* (1934) by Wan Abdul Karim bin Wan Abdul Hamid, *Sejarah Tanjung Besar atau Keturunan Pembesar-pembesar Pahang* (1932) by Ahmad bin Kotot.

<sup>15</sup> Examples are *Bersatulah Sekarang* (1947) by Ishak bin Haji Muhammad, *Perjuangan Kebangsaan dan Perlembagaan Negeri* (1949) by Ahmad Mahir Ismail al-Azhari, *Bual Abang Adik: Fasal Kedudukan Kita di Tanah Air* (1946) by Muhammad Ali bin Abu Bakar and *Perjuangan Kita 17 Oct. 1945 - 17 Oct. 1946* (1946) by Burhanuddin Muhammad Nor al-Helmy. One work categorised under Islam is on the question of Islamic democracy and how it was practiced throughout the history. See *Dasar Demokrat Dalam Islam* (1947) by Syed Jaafar bin Hassan Albar.

*Kamus Politik*<sup>16</sup> and similar works showed that interests in the knowledge about politics began to develop.

The trend in the contents show that the early concern was with religion. Thus, we see that Islamic books were the most important nonliterary publication (Table 4.9) and that the most dominant issues under social science, although subcategorised under sociology (47.5%) were primarily related to questions of morals and ethics. Social issues such as poverty, racism, independence and so on were absent. History and politics, though equally significant (36.3%), were uncritical towards the rulers and administrations. Current happenings, such as special edition to commemorate the anniversaries of the English king or the Malay sultans were sometimes produced. *Silver Jubilee* (1935), compiled by Sulaiman Ahmad, for example, recorded all activities around the country to celebrate the anniversary of King George V. Its contents include a long prayer supposed to be read to the congregation in all mosques, asking God to forgive his sins and to grant him long life.

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<sup>16</sup> Written in two volumes by Muhammad bin Hanif and printed at the United Press.

TABLE 9.4: CONTENTS OF NONFICTIONAL WORKS

CONTENTS	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Social Science	101	40.2
History & Politics	91	36.3
Science & Technology	27	10.7
Arts & Culture	20	8.0
Cookery	12	4.8
TOTAL	251	100.0

TABLE 9.5: CONTENTS OF WORKS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE

CONTENTS	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Sociology	48	47.5
Psychology	4	4.0
Geography	2	2.0
Economics	7	6.9
Education	36	35.6
Communication	4	4.0
TOTAL	101	100.0

TABLE 9.6: CONTENTS OF WORKS ON LANGUAGE

CONTENTS	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Linguistics	39	48.1
Dictionary	42	51.9
TOTAL	81	100.0

#### 9.4 JAWI VS RUMI

Based on the Catalogue (Volume 2), both religious and non-religious books, were mainly written in *Jawi*. Books intended for vernacular schools along with Christian mission publications were written either in *Jawi* or *Rumi*. Both scripts were taught side by side in the Malay schools. Among the older generation and in some of the conservative Malay States such as Kelantan, Kedah and Terengganu, *Jawi* was preferred because of its traditional background and its association with the Muslim religion. If a book was written for the public and intended to reach a large circle of readers, it had to be written in *Jawi*. However, towards the later period, *Rumi* was increasingly gaining in popularity and sometimes even more often preferred by some authors and publishers.

Normally all books on language and literature produced by the Translation Bureau such as grammar, composition and fiction were printed in *Jawi*. On the other hand, books with numerous European terms such as works on sciences, geography and arithmetic, were produced in *Rumi*. As for readers, both scripts were provided, each having a reader prepared in it and each standard or form having a *Jawi* reader and a *Rumi* reader which differed in content and subject matter. Every student had to know how to read and write *Jawi* and *Rumi*.

The demand for *Jawi* books was obviously much higher during this period but as vernacular education progressed, teaching tended more towards the use of *Rumi*. A few titles originally in *Jawi* were transliterated into *Rumi*. These included Munshi Abdullah's works and a few popular *hikayat* which

were published as new editions in *Rumi* in the later years.

This tendency towards using *Rumi* was regretted by some scholars. Zaaba in 1929 wrote in a preface of a book,<sup>17</sup> ironically published by the Education Department, of his disappointment at the increasing usage of *Rumi* at the expense of *Jawi*. The reason for his grievance was not merely due to the change itself, because whatever the scripts, Malay language would still be maintained. He was more concerned with the probable demise of the *Jawi* tradition, which started centuries ago, and with the effect it would have upon the religious publications and teachings. He even speculated that within twenty or thirty years time, *Rumi* would dominate and *Jawi* would eventually disappear.<sup>18</sup>

This concern was not well understood by the European educationists in Malaya. Dr. L. Richmond Wheeler believed that the use of both *Jawi* and *Rumi* in the Malay school curriculum caused the Malay pupils to suffer grievous disadvantage compared with those of other races.<sup>19</sup> A. W. Hamilton, who had written several Malay books, had the view that *Jawi* was inherently difficult to read and gave an inaccurate rendering of Malay sounds because of the omission of half the vowel sounds, in which Malay is particularly rich. He recommended that *Rumi* be used in schools and that if *Jawi* was to be taught

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<sup>17</sup> *Kitab Rahsia Ejaan Jawi*, first published in 1929 for 500 copies. Its third edition appeared in 1931 combined with its second part, printed in 1,500 copies.

<sup>18</sup> See preface, *Kitab Rahsia Ejaan Jawi* (1931), page jim.

<sup>19</sup> L. R. Wheeler, "Future of Youth in Malaya", *British Malaya* (June 1944): 18.

at all, it should be relegated to the area of religious instruction in the vernacular schools as an introduction to the study of the Quran.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, M. Blanche Lewis, a girls' school teacher, thought that the method of writing *Jawi* "...although based on certain laws, had all the appearance of being arbitrary, made teaching a drudgery and letter-reading a harassing puzzle".<sup>21</sup> Other colonial officers went to the extent of criticising some state governments who insisted on using *Jawi* in their states and even suggesting that the Quran be translated into Romanised Malay. To the Malays, these ideas would not only have been unacceptable but also seditious because the Arabic script like the Arabic language, as used in the Quran are considered divine. The learning and teaching of this script and language are therefore obligatory for a Muslim.

When *Sejarah Alam Melayu* (A History of the Malay World), appeared in 1926, it was complimented for its contents but, on the other hand, it was also criticised for using *Rumi* because general readers would not be benefited.<sup>22</sup> This book was intended mainly for school use but was also useful to the public. Similarly, *Kitab Pengajaran Solah* (Guide to Prayer), compiled by Tuan Husin bin Ahmad, a teacher of the Bandung Islamic Society (Persatuan Islam Bandung), had its first part printed in *Rumi* while its subsequent part was in *Jawi* because of pressure from readers.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See his letter to the Editor, *British Malaya*, November 1944, p. 85.

<sup>21</sup> See her letter to the Editor, *British Malaya*, January 1945.

<sup>22</sup> See *Majallah Guru* (January 1927): 20. Lewis later published a work on *Jawi* called *A Handbook of Malay Scripts: with passages for reading and a list of commonly-used Arabic words*, published in 1954 in London by Macmillan. 1954).

<sup>23</sup> See *Majallah Guru*, (November 1931): 25.



After the war, a few publishers slowly turned to *Rumi*. One publisher, MIBS, speculated that *Rumi* would gain importance in the near future. Therefore, through the *Pujangga Muda Series* it produced books in *Rumi* to prepare young readers to master the script. It also called other publishers to be more aware of the situation. Its first book in this series was *Rahsia Syarikat Naga Hitam* (The Secret of the Black Dragon Company) by Jaafar H. Hussain. The publisher's note claimed that *Rumi* was used in accord with the existing trend not only for marketing reasons but also to further promote the script.

"...kita berazam menerbitkan buku-buku Pujangga Muda ini dalam tulisan Rumi walaupun diketahui benar bahawa buku-buku yang diterbitkan dalam tulisan Jawi itu lebih luas pasarannya di Malaya sekarang. Dalam hal ini kita tidak memandang ke jurusan penjualan sahaja tetapi kita memandang selapis lagi ke hadapan dalam mana tulisan Rumi akan mempunyai kedudukan yang penting di Malaya.

"...yang demikian, harapan kita terutama kepada penerbit-penerbit buku, hendaklah sambil kita mencari keuntungan di dalam mengeluarkan buku-buku Jawi, janganlah diabaikan pula penerbitan Rumi. Terbitkanlah sebanyak-banyaknya buku-buku pelajaran, pengetahuan, cerita dan sebagainya di dalam Rumi supaya pembaca-pembaca dapat banyak latihan membaca Rumi."

[Author's translation:"...we are determined to publish books for this Pujangga Muda Series using Romanised script even though we understand that publications in *Jawi* have a wider appeal in Malaya today. This is because our consideration is not for merely fast selling but also for the position that Romanised script will have in the future.

"...therefore, our plea to other publishers is that while striving for profits by producing *Jawi* books, they should not ignore publication of *Rumi* books."]

Additionally, in its introduction, the publisher further affirmed his optimism about the future of *Rumi*.

"...Pujangga Muda ini telah menaruh kepercayaan Tulisan Rumi ini penting diketengahkan dan dimajukan di persada perpustakaan Bahasa Melayu. Mengikut kepercayaan saya, memang pada satu masa akan datang yang tulisan Rumi tetap menjadi tulisan perantaraan di seluruh alam Melayu. Oleh itu sudah terwajib kepada tiap-tiap pujangga yang memang sedar dan memandang jauh yang mengerti tulisan Rumi itu akan mengambil bahagian

besar menggantikan tulisan Jawi. Maka sudah sepatutnya tulisan rumi itu dimajukan dari sekarang..."

[Author's translation: "...It is the conviction of Pujangga Muda that Romanised scripts should be put forward into the Malay literature. We believe that the scripts will become the medium of writing in the whole of the Malay world. Therefore authors claiming to be concerned and far-sighted must take main responsibility to replace the Jawi scripts. It is imperative that *Rumi* be developed from now on..."]

However, Qalam and Harmacy, two important literary publishers at the end of the 1940s were not interested in such ideas. Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al-Edrus published his sensational and erotic novels in *Jawi*, obviously because he was more concerned with circulation and therefore profit. He knew that he would not be able to capture a wide audience through *Rumi*. Harun Muhammad Amin, an educationalist who was supposed to sympathise with the call, did not do so. He too, printed his publications in *Jawi* at al-Ahmadiyah Press, a printing house well-known for its religious publications.

## 9.5 FORMAT AND STYLE

It has been suggested that the lack of trained and specialised production staff resulted in the low physical quality of publications. As implied by the word *risalah*, meaning tract, many Islamic publications were simply made up of a title page and text pages, omitting the cover page, preliminary pages and end pages. In extreme cases, even the title page was non-existent. The title only appeared in the form of a heading in display types, covering a small area on top of the first page. The trend for using simple graphics was not typical of Islamic publications in other languages; they were usually distinguished by

elaborate decoration and ornamentation. This is also different from the earlier Malay lithographed works, a few of which bore embellishments on the title page or the colophon.

However, drawings and photographs were sometimes used in popular works and school books. Many novels had enticing illustrations on their front covers, sometimes in bright colours to attract readers. A few nonfictional publications inserted photographs of the writers themselves, in addition to pictures relevant to the contents, usually reproduced from foreign journals, resulting in blurred images.

A title page, if provided, sometimes appeared as an end page, a format traditionally used in Arabic publications. A few additional pages at the ends of the books were sometimes provided to be filled with advertisements and notifications which also appeared in the front inside covers or the back covers.

Especially in light fiction, a few works were published in series. In the early twenties, novels in large volumes was common, including in *Baba* literature. After the war, the trend continued but in a different form. The stories were no longer continued from one volume to the next. A book contained a complete story by itself but carried a similar theme to other works of the same series as found in the series of *Pujangga Muda* and *Dewan Pujangga* by MIBS and Army respectively. The *Dewan Pujangga Series*, in fact, carried the motto: "Buku Cerita Bulanan mengandung cerita tamat pada tiap-tiap kali terbit" [A monthly story publication containing a complete story in every edition].

It is obvious that the style of writing of religious books on Islamic

sciences was greatly influenced by Arabic. As these authors were educated in Arabic schools in the Middle East, they tended to emulate Arabic with regard to sentence construction. The spelling is sometimes more concise than *Jawi* spelling and therefore difficult for ordinary people to read smoothly. Arabic words and phrases were frequently adapted, due to their greater abstract qualities and carried over into Malay. Many of the accepted Arabic terms today originate from the long period of translation activities.

Some Islamic books maintained the traditional style of combining one small *kitab* with a bigger one. The smaller *kitab* was written in the margin of the bigger *kitab* so that both might be studied together. However, the number of *kitab* using this format was diminishing and can only be found in some lithographed works.

## 9.6 PAPER TYPE

The chief qualities required for printing papers are smooth surface, good colour, not too hard sized, evenness of texture and fairly opaque so that the ink does not show through when the sheets are printed on both sides. These qualities are generally found in school books published by the Education Department. They lasted longer and did not easily tear when used by children. They were also suitable for books with drawings and illustrations. Also using better quality paper were *Baba* publications<sup>24</sup>. Although sold at relatively higher prices as a consequence, *Baba* readers, in general, could afford them. Other books, especially the products of indigenous publishers used paper of

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<sup>24</sup> See Chapter Seven.

cheaper grades, including newsprint paper. This paper, made from a very high proportion of mechanical wood and sulphite or chemical wood-pulp, easily discolours and quite a number of books examined show signs of disintegration.

Printing paper during this period came from various sources, mainly the United Kingdom, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Japan. These countries, in the 1920s, exported more than one hundred tons each to Malaya annually. Cheaper paper is found to have come from Austria (\$205 per ton), Norway (\$208 per ton), Italy (\$212 per ton) and Germany (\$230 per ton). Curiously, paper from China, Hongkong and Japan cost more (each recorded more than \$400 per ton). However, smaller amounts were imported from China and Hongkong.<sup>25</sup>

## 9.8 BINDING

In 1935, there were thirteen bookbinders in the Straits Settlements and Malay States; in 1940 the number increased to seventeen.<sup>26</sup> Almost all of these bookbinders were printers and, curiously, none of them was Malay. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that Malay language books were seldom bound which is a process involving the elaborate work of pasting in, guarding, sewing, gluing, attaching board, lining the backs, casing, blocking and finishing. Regardless of their categories, Malay publications were generally

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<sup>25</sup> *Return of Imports and Exports of Malaya, 1927* (with figures comparing the years 1925 and 1926). Values are in Malayan dollars.

<sup>26</sup> These figures are based on *Singapore and Malaya Directory 1935 and 1940*.

published in paperback. While many books used a slightly thicker paper or cardboard paper as covers, a few used the same quality of paper as used in the text pages. As the books generally had a small number of pages, not exceeding a hundred-page crown octavo, they were stabbed with wire staplers or sewn with threads. The wire staples soon rusted and became brittle and this damaged the books.

A few Islamic books with larger page size consisted of loose leaves, so that the teacher and student might take out any single page that they were studying. However, this format was not as commonly used as in *kitab jawi* publications appearing from some of the presses in Indonesia for the use of *pondok* schools.

Good quality binding was clearly absent in the indigenous publications, including Islamic works, although Islamic books in general, especially those in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, had a long and rich tradition of being ornamented, treasured and preserved. However, several of the Malay imprints from the Middle East and Turkey were beautifully bound, sometimes with fore-edge and pentagonal envelope flaps to cover the book. Various kinds of material such as leather, textiles and paper were used for the coverings, which were normally decorated in various patterns, painted in gold.

Locally bound books can generally be found in the publications of the Malaya Publishing House, Kelly & Walsh and other European establishments which had their own binding departments. Some classical works such as *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Abdullah*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, dictionaries and Christian publications were found to be neatly bound with coloured paper or cloth.

Hand decorated paper was also used and it was possibly waterproofed and protected from soiling and fading by the application of a wax coating to the surface.

Book binderies actually began to exist in the Straits Settlements as early as 1808, immediately after the first printing press was established. It was owned by A. B. Bone himself, who offered binding services in addition to printing. The first advertisement which appeared in the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* dated 16 January, 1808, said that its binding could be performed in "the neatest manner of the Gazette Office". In another advertisement (13 February, 1808), prices were given as follows.

Specification		Price (in Spanish Dollars)
Folio:	whole ditto	4.00
	half ditto	3.50
Quarto:	whole ditto	3.00
	half ditto	2.50
Octavo:	whole ditto	2.50
	half ditto	2.00
Duodecimo:	whole ditto	2.00
	half ditto	1.50

In spite of its early beginning, the binding trade did not prosper and Malay binders could scarcely be found when Malay lithographed publications thrived and even after 1920 when indigenous publishers and printers became increasingly dynamic.

## CHAPTER TEN

# THE TRADE AND THE LAW

An episode in the history of the dissemination of literary culture can certainly be viewed from the legal point of view. This chapter describes some of the laws relating to printing and publishing with respect to their development and impact on the growth of the industry.

### 10.1 PRESERVATION AND REGISTRATION OF BOOKS

The earliest law governing the book trade in the Straits Settlements was enacted in 1886 and known as "The Book Registration Ordinance 1886."<sup>1</sup> This Ordinance, which was "to provide for the preservation of copies of such books", was consistent with the British Copyright Act of 1842, Section Six of which provided *inter alia* that a free copy of every new book be delivered to the British Museum within twelve calendar months. This provision was introduced with the intention of acquiring copies of books published anywhere under British rule, whether the work was subject to copyright protection or not.<sup>2</sup> Under the Ordinance for the Straits Settlements, two more copies had to be delivered to the Colonial Secretary's office in addition to the one deposited in the British Museum. The Secretary retained one copy and the other was to be sent to a public library in the Colony. To extend the provision so that it

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<sup>1</sup> Ordinance No. 15 of 1886. See *Ordinances of the Straits Settlements* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1887), 114-116.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Barrington Partridge, *The History of the Legal Deposit of Books Throughout the British Empire* (London: The Library Association, 1938), 147.



would cover the printing and publication of other printed materials, this law was later accommodated in the new Ordinance introduced in the Straits Settlements in 1921, cited as Ordinance No. 2 (Printers and Publishers).

In 1895, the State of Perak passed a similar law on the registration and preservation of books<sup>3</sup>, followed by Selangor in 1898.<sup>4</sup> Both the Perak Order in Council and Selangor Enactment were repealed and superseded by the Federated Malay States Enactment passed in 1915<sup>5</sup>, which operated also in Negeri Sembilan and Pahang. These two states had no such legislation prior to the passing of the 1915 Enactment. The situation was similar in the State of Johor. A law with similar objectives to preserve and register printed materials was only introduced there in 1931, known as The Printing and Publication Enactment.<sup>6</sup> In Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Perlis, there seemed to be no separate legislation on the subject of book registration and preservation. In Perlis the absence is understandable, as printing activities were negligible. Printing works by the few private religious publishers were normally done in Penang.

In Kelantan, the requirement was accommodated first in the Printing Presses and Seditious Publication Enactment of 1931 and then in the Printing

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<sup>3</sup> The Order in Council No. 12 of 1895.

<sup>4</sup> Enactment No. 6 of 1898.

<sup>5</sup> Enactment No. 17 of 1895.

<sup>6</sup> Enactment No. 9 of 1931. See Notification No. 577 in *Johore Government Gazette*, 16 September 1931.

Presses Enactment of 1940.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in Kedah and Terengganu it was provided for under the corresponding Enactment.<sup>8</sup>

Two of the most cogent reasons why the registration was not more successful were that many publishers cared little about the law and no stringent action was taken for non-registration. It is doubtful if the fine of \$25 was ever imposed on publishers and printers who failed to comply with the provision. This research finds that 64.8% of the titles published from 1920 to 1949 were not registered. The assumption that many religious publishers believed that Islamic books were not under the jurisdiction of the non-Muslim authority were said to answer the question of why many Islamic books were found unregistered.<sup>9</sup> By book category, however, it was fictional book publishers who avoided registration most. This was especially true for publishers in the states other than the Straits Settlements. The school text category obviously recorded the highest percentage of registration, as these books were mostly published by the government and printed at the European-owned presses in the Straits Settlements.

Although the law granted copyright ownership as an incentive for registering publications, the attitude of some publishers and printers towards the procedure remained indifferent. This was made worse by the apathetic stance of the government. The Ordinance which required that book

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<sup>7</sup> See Enactment No. 5 of 1931 and Enactment No. 5 of 1940.

<sup>8</sup> For Kedah, see Enactment No. 16 of 1348H (1929), and for Terengganu see Enactment No. 6 of 1352H (1933).

<sup>9</sup> Proudfoot, "A Formative Period," 101-132.

registrations be recorded and notified quarterly in the government gazettes was consistently complied with only by the Straits Settlements government. Notifications from other state governments appeared very infrequently. Also, it is uncertain whether the Secretaries of the individual states other than the Straits Settlements kept a proper "Catalogue of Books", as required by the ordinance.

## 10.2 COPYRIGHT

After the Berne Copyright Convention of 1886, almost every nation belonging to the Copyright Union revised its copyright laws. Great Britain took the step in 1911 by introducing the Imperial Copyright Act. In the Straits Settlements, a modification of the law was made in 1914.<sup>10</sup> For the purpose of the application of section 14 of the Imperial Copyright Act 1911, the Registrar of Imports and Exports performed the duties otherwise given to the Commissioners of Customs and Excise of the United Kingdom with regard to the importation of copies of works into the Colony. Under section 2(d), any work which was prohibited from being imported, if brought into the Colony, had to be forfeited and might be destroyed. Any person who was involved in bringing or who acquired possession of such works would be fined treble their value for each offence or \$1,000. Section 4 specified that the penalty for dealing with infringing copies of a work for which a copyright subsisted was a fine not exceeding \$25 for every copy dealt with in contravention of the law, but not exceeding \$500. A person who made or had in his possession plates for the

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<sup>10</sup> Ordinance No. 140 of 1914.

purpose or making infringing copies would be liable to a fine not exceeding \$500.

Despite the indifferent attitude displayed by some of the publishers towards the preservation ordinance, many were very concerned about their copyright ownership. This can easily be confirmed in the copyright notices written on the cover page or on the colophon. Below are examples of these notices by various publishers to show how they read and the degree of attention paid to the law by the publishers and authors.

i. Aminiah Press

"Adapun syair ini telah diregisterkan menurut undang-undang government Straits Settlements. Janganlah kiranya seorang pun mengecap atau menyalin naskah ini bahkan jika diringkaskan atau dilanjutkan kisahnya serta menyimpan atau menjual cap yang ...ini sekalipun sesungguhnya terdakwalah tuan kelak hingga ke mahkamah kerajaan kerana ini menjadi hak dan milik hamba selama-lamanya al-hakir Haji Muhammad Amin bin Haji Abdullah."<sup>11</sup>

[Author's translation: This *syair* has been registered in accordance with the Straits Settlements law. No one shall reprint or recopy this publication or even condense or expand it or retain or sell...would be charged in the government court because the rights of this publication infinitely rest upon me, al-hakir Haji Muhammad Amin bin Haji Abdullah].

ii. Muhammad Ali bin Muhammad al-Rawi

a. "Tiap-tiap naskah yang tiada bercap dengan cap pengarangnya yang didapati atau dijual oleh seseorang maka iaitu berhak pengarangnya menjalankan dakwa menurut undang-undang negeri."<sup>12</sup>

[Author's translation: All copies not bearing the author's seal which are found or sold would be liable to litigation by the author in accordance with the state legislation].

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<sup>11</sup> See title page, *Syair Bunga Pakmar Kembang Berdentum* (1928).

<sup>12</sup> See back cover, *Tarikh Peperangan Itali dengan Tripoli* (1936).

b. "Tiada dibenarkan mengecap kepada sesiapa melainkan dengan kebenaran pengarangnya."<sup>13</sup>

[Author's translation: No reprint is permitted unless with the author's consent].

iii. Qalam Publishers

"Hak mencetak bagi penerbitnya."<sup>14</sup>

[Author's translation: Printing rights reserved to the publisher].

iv. Ahmad Press

"Hak mencetak bagi pengarangnya."<sup>15</sup>

[Author's translation: Printing rights reserved to the author].

v. Malaya Publishing House

"Hak mengecap bagi pengarang."<sup>16</sup>

[Author's translation: Printing rights reserved to the author].

vi. Wan Boon Seng

"All Rights Reserved."<sup>17</sup>

From these examples, it can be seen that the notices ranged from a simple general statement to a lengthy announcement to warn that any attempts to reprint the book without permission or possession of such book

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<sup>13</sup> See cover page, *Hidayah al-Sibiyan* (1947).

<sup>14</sup> See cover page, *Universiti di Malaya* (1949).

<sup>15</sup> See cover page, *Riwayat Peperangan yang Kedua* (1947).

<sup>16</sup> See cover page, *Kitab Rahsia Ejaan Jawi* (1931).

<sup>17</sup> See cover page, *Chrita Dulu kala Ow Liat Kok Chee atau Penghabisan Liat Kok* (1931).

were tantamount to breaking the law and were liable to prosecution. The notice by Aminiah Press, a lithographic establishment is interesting not only because it is rather extensive but also because it appeared three times in the same book, only in different forms. This practice of putting repeated reminders on various pages, such as the cover page, the title page and the back page, was also carried out by some other publishers. This concern was justified by the fact that infringements occurred during this period and action was rarely taken against them. The general idea that religious authors would normally give up copyrights for religious reasons encouraged republications without prior permission. The Islamic teaching repeatedly urges that those possessing some knowledge should impart it to others.<sup>18</sup> The responsibility for advancing the knowledge of fellow Muslims in all aspects is considered *jihad fi-sabilillah* (struggle in the way of God) and is, therefore, of great religious importance.

Indeed, a few religious authors insisted on not revealing their names for fear of committing the sin of arrogance in the eyes of God.<sup>19</sup> To these authors, Copyrights were not important since what they sought were rewards in the Hereafter. However, this was not true for all religious authors. Some would use religious-sounding phrases in order to affirm their rights. In all these cases, the authors and publishers were well aware of the benefits, especially financial

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<sup>18</sup> Among others see *al-Qur'ān*, 16:125; 3:186; 41:33.

<sup>19</sup> The authors of Book 2 and Book 3 of *Miftah al-Jannah's* (n.d.) four volume, for example remained anonymous because of this reason. This volume is compiled by Muhammad Taib bin Mas'ud.

ones that might be derived from such ownership.

Unfortunately, many authors and publishers did not seem properly to understand the enactment. Some copyright notices were found to contradict the provisions, especially with regard to ownership and the term of copyright. The law clearly specified that the author of a work should be the first owner of the copyright and that the owner could assign the right and might grant any interest in the right by licence in writing, signed by the owner of the right or his agent. Based on the notices, it was found that the right was normally assigned to the authors or their immediate heirs. But sometimes the publishers or the printers claimed to own the right. At times, the identity of an owner of a work was unclear. Some works which were first published by one establishment were later put out by another. In this case, either infringement had been committed or the right had been negotiated. A few popular religious works or *syair* and *hikayat* books were in this category.

The term of copyright, as provided by the enactment was the life of the author and a period of fifty years after his death. Due to ignorance, some authors or publishers claimed that it existed forever. The notice by Aminiah Press quoted above is an example of such a claim.

### 10.3 SEDITION

The Seditious law was introduced in the Straits Settlements when the international world was in the midst of war. The colonial authorities in Malaya were increasingly cautious about anti-British sentiments, including the German conspiracies in the East in collaboration with Indian revolutionary

schemes and the possibility of Muslim alliances, especially after Great Britain declared war on the Ottomans in November 1914. Given the Straits Settlements' and the Malay States' position on the periphery of the German subversive activity, and given the Ottoman Sultan's position in the Islamic world, Malay hostility would be probable. The British were anxious to maintain surveillance of sources potentially inclined to foment discontent. Therefore, the government censored news reports concerning the war intended for publication in Malaya. Early in the conflict, news-agency telegrams to the local press were restrained to avoid the prospect of provoking Muslims' feelings and to prevent the circulation of any anti-British propaganda.

The law relating to the prohibition of the publication and importation of seditious books, newspapers and other documents was first enacted under Ordinance No. 11 of 1915 and then as Ordinance 151 (Seditious Publications). It went into several amendments in 1928,<sup>20</sup> 1930,<sup>21</sup> 1932.<sup>22</sup> Under this law, any publication which might have a tendency to incite murder or violence, to bring into the Government hatred or contempt, to incite interference with the administration of the law and to cause any person fear would be considered seditious.

Sufficient caution to the Malays' dissatisfaction can be discerned in the government's eagerness to manipulate this law by banning numerous Islamic

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<sup>20</sup> No. 26 of 1928.

<sup>21</sup> See No. 11 of 1930. This was an insertion of a new section numbered 7A on the forfeiture of printing presses used for the printing of seditious materials.

<sup>22</sup> No. 4 of 1932.



publications from entering the country. Among them were *Jehan-i-Islam*,<sup>23</sup> a weekly newspaper published in Istanbul; *The Future of the Muslim Empire, Turkey*,<sup>24</sup> written by Mushir Hussain Kidwai and published by the Central Islamic Society; *Bolshevism and the Islamic Body-politic*, written by Muhammad Barakatullah; *Muslim Outlook* and *Islamic News*,<sup>25</sup> published by the Islamic Information Bureau, London; and the *Muslim Standard*,<sup>26</sup> published in Berlin by M. Wali Khan. Other publications which contained revolutionary ideas and were banned from entering the country were related to various issues of nationalism, socialism and some internal problems of certain countries. Many of these publications originated in Germany, Switzerland, China and the Indian sub-continent.

In the Federated Malay States, checks on seditious publications were originally established in regulations made by the High Commissioner under the Public Emergency Enactment 1917, which prohibited the possession, importation or sale of certain specified publications, subject to a sentence of penal servitude for life or other punishment. Further regulations were then made in 1919 of a much more comprehensive character, an adaptation of Ordinance No. 10 of 1915 of the Straits Settlements. But the regulations were made under a law which was only temporarily operative, and there was uncertainty as to how long it would remain in force. Therefore, new legislation

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<sup>23</sup> Gazette Notification No. 3668, 29 July 1921.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Gazette Notification No. 1144, 20 February 1925.

was needed.<sup>27</sup> Hence the establishment of the Seditious Publications (Prohibition) Enactment in 1919, which was an adaptation of a similar law passed earlier in the Straits Settlements. In 1932 the enactment was amended as a result of the recommendations of the Defence Committee which noticed that the law contained no punishment for seditious writings against the ruler of any of the Unfederated Malay States if the offence was committed in the Straits Settlements or the Federated Malay States.<sup>28</sup>

The adoption of similar enactments then took place in other states such as Johor in 1922,<sup>29</sup> Kedah in 1348H (1929).<sup>30</sup> and Sarawak in 1938.<sup>31</sup>

In 1938, an ordinance to provide for the punishment of sedition was enacted in the Straits Settlements.<sup>32</sup> Under Section Four of this ordinance, a person who printed, published, sold, offered, distributed or reproduced any seditious publication would be guilty of an offence and liable for the first offence to imprisonment not exceeding two years, or a fine not exceeding

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<sup>27</sup> *Proceedings of the Federal Council of the Federated Malay States for the year 1919 with Appendix* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printing Office, 1920), B65.

<sup>28</sup> *Proceedings of the Federal Council of the Federated Malay States for the Year 1932* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printing Office, 1933), B12; See also Notification No. 3521 in the *Federated Malay States Government Gazette*, 20 May 1932.

<sup>29</sup> Enactment No. 16 of 1922. See *Johor Government Gazette*, 1 November 1922.

<sup>30</sup> Enactment No. 23 of 1348H. See Notification 91 in *Kedah Gazette*, 19 July 1930.

<sup>31</sup> Cited as Order No. S-4 (Sedition) 1938. See *Sarawak State Orders Enacted During 19138* (Kucing: Sarawak Government Printing Office, 1939).

<sup>32</sup> Ordinance No. 18 of 1938.

\$1,000, or both along with the forfeiture of the publication. For a subsequent offence, the punishment would be raised to a maximum of three years imprisonment. In Ordinance 151, the term 'sedition' was mainly related to elements of 'disaffection', which were defined as '...all feelings of enmity to any person in the Colonies or in the United Kingdom'. However, under Ordinance 18 of 1938, the word 'intention' was more important. Thus, a seditious publication was meant 'a publication having a seditious intention'. Similar enactments were established in the Federated Malay States<sup>33</sup> and in Kedah<sup>34</sup> the following year. In Kelantan, one was established in 1940.<sup>35</sup>

Reported cases relating to sedition were, however, not common. Overall, this Ordinance was more frequently used to deal with foreign publications.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, two works entitled *Pilihan Kata: Mengandung Beberapa Perkataan Pendita* (Selected Sayings: Containing Wise Sayings of Wise Men) and *Kata Kebenaran: Menyatakan Hukum Ziarah Perkuburan* (Authentic Sayings: Stating the Ruling on Visits to Graves) did not meet the approval from the Perak religious authority because they deviated from the true teaching of Islam.<sup>37</sup> As a result, these works were said to be published outside Perak, but during this research, no evidence was found that the books were printed.

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<sup>33</sup> Enactment No. 13 of 1939.

<sup>34</sup> Enactment No. 25 of 1939.

<sup>35</sup> See Enactment No. 7 of 1940.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see Notification No. 3668 (29 July 1921) and Notification No. 8014 (30 November 1923) of the Straits Settlements' *Blue Book* which listed numerous foreign publications prohibited from entering the colony.

<sup>37</sup> Zainal Abidin Ahmad, "Recent Malay Literature", 4.

Two of Zaaba's own books were banned, one in Perak and the other in Johor, on the grounds that they were contrary to the orthodox teaching of Islam. The work banned by order of Sultan Iskandar of Perak was a translation entitled *Pendapatan Perbahasan Ulama Berkenaan Qada' & Qadar* (The Outcome of the Debate by the Ulama on Destiny), which was claimed to be tainted with the Mu'tazilite doctrine of free will. But Zaaba maintained that the translation "contains nothing extraordinary. It only gives the ideas of Imam Ghazali, Imam al-Haramain and one or two other independent thinkers such as the famous reformer Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taimiyyah and Sheikh Muhammad Abduh of Egypt. It must be because of these two latter names that they have condemned the book. It makes me laugh to see the stupidity of these old fashioned *orang alim* to condemn a comparatively innocent book and keep silent over a more daring one."<sup>38</sup> This book aroused the wrath of Sultan Iskandar, who sent Mr. Cator, the British Resident, to Tanjung Malim to acquaint Zaaba with the *murka* (anger) of the Sultan and to extort from him an abject apology for having dared to publish such a pernicious book advocating the heterodox doctrine of free will. He was also required to appeal to the Sultan to pardon him for having strayed from the path of orthodoxy.

The other book, *Umbi Kemajuan atau Falsafah Takdir* (The Source of Progress or The Philosophy of Fate), published in 1932, was prohibited by the Government of Johor in 1935 under the Seditious Publication (Prohibition)

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<sup>38</sup> Zaaba's personal letter to Abdullah of Seremban, 4 March 1934, in *Surat Persendirian* 18.

Enactment of 1922.<sup>39</sup> In other states, this work was heavily criticised by some religious figures, and national newspapers such as *Warta Malaya* and *Majlis* published much of this criticism.

These were not the only works which raised much fuss. His removal from a teaching position in 1923 for transferral to another department was the direct result of the authority's apprehension about some of his 'anti-British' writings which 'corrupted the minds' of his students. As for the book *Umbi Kemajuan atau Falsafah Takdir*, Zaaba was warned by the Director of Education that in future he should not print or publish any matter without prior permission in writing from the Principal of the Sultan Idris Training College.<sup>40</sup>

It seems that the ban on these works acted as a form of censorship and seditious law was used, presumably under the pretext that such publications would incite acts of hatred or violence or perhaps they would encourage disloyalty towards the rulers who were supposed to be the guardians of Islam.

#### 10.4 PRINTING PRESSES ORDINANCE

Ordinance No. 1 (Printing Presses) of 1920 aimed at regulating the keeping of printing presses and the printing of documents. Under Section 3 of this ordinance, a printer had to obtain a licence from the Colonial Secretary to keep and use a press, and this licence might have been withdrawn at any time by

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<sup>39</sup> See *Johor Government Gazette*, Notification No 911, 11 September 1935.

<sup>40</sup> Confidential letter No. 4/35 to Zaaba from the Director of Education, Straits Settlements and Advisor on Education, Malay States, 15 August 1935, in *Surat Persendirian* 18.

the Secretary. There was an exception, however, specified in Section 19, which said that "the Governor in Council may by notification in the Gazette exclude any documents or any printing press from the operation of the whole or any part of this Ordinance.". Gazette Notification No. 1200 of 1920<sup>41</sup> announced the exclusion of the following companies.

- i. The Straits Times Press, Limited.
- ii. The Singapore Free Press, Limited.
- iii. The Straits Albion Press, Limited.
- iv. The Penang Gazette Press, Limited.
- v. The Criterion Press, Limited.

Section 3 was amended in 1930 so that the licence had to be renewed every year.<sup>42</sup> Besides acquiring the licence, a newspaper printer and publisher had declare in a Newspaper Register before printing or publication and pay a certain fee for the declaration.<sup>43</sup> Another amendment was made in 1939 which required that another permit be obtained for a newspaper to be printed in addition to the licence issued for the printing press, as mentioned above. It is interesting to note that these procedures were, however, not regarded as obstacles by newspaper publishers. During this particular year alone, no fewer than eight new journals appeared on the market in Penang and Singapore,

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<sup>41</sup> See the *Subsidiary Legislation of the Straits Settlements enacted under the Printing Presses Ordinance, 1934*.

<sup>42</sup> No. 7 of 1930, Printing Presses (Amendment) Ordinance, 1930.

<sup>43</sup> Gazette Notification No. 751 of 1920 announced the amount, which was \$5.

including *Utusan Melayu* and *Utusan Zaman* which remain today.<sup>44</sup>

Section 4 of this ordinance required that every document had to print legibly, on its first or last printed leaf, the name of the printer. However, it is found that a number of books did not comply with this provision. Not only did the publishers often fail to name the printer, they also did not care to put their own names and to furnish other bibliographic data.

In Kelantan, the law on printing presses was incorporated with the Seditious Publications Enactment, which was passed in 1931.<sup>45</sup> This enactment was repealed in 1940 and reappeared as two separate pieces of legislation, namely the Seditious Enactment<sup>46</sup> and the Printing Presses Enactment.<sup>47</sup> The Enactment for Terengganu was modelled on the corresponding Kelantan Enactment.

## 10.5 UNDESIRABLE PUBLICATIONS

The law known as the Undesirable Publications Ordinance was introduced in the Straits Settlements in 1938 to prevent the importation, distribution or reproduction of undesirable publications from abroad.<sup>48</sup> Under this law, a publication was considered undesirable if its circulation was contrary to the

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<sup>44</sup> See Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals*; see also A. M. Iskandar Haji Ahmad, *Persuratkhabaran Melayu (1976-1968)*.

<sup>45</sup> Enactment No. 5 of 1931.

<sup>46</sup> Enactment No. 7 of 1940.

<sup>47</sup> Enactment No. 5 of 1940.

<sup>48</sup> Ordinance No. 19 of 1938.

public interest. If the Governor in Council was of the opinion that such an element was present, he was empowered to prohibit importation.

Similar laws were introduced in the following year in the Federated Malay States<sup>49</sup> and in Kedah.<sup>50</sup> In Kelantan one appeared in 1940.<sup>51</sup> These laws were effectively employed to outlaw the importation of a vast number of books and newspapers in various languages into the states. For example, in February 1941, the Federated Malay States Government under this enactment issued an order to prohibit the importation of about hundred titles in different languages such as English, Mandarin, Hindi, Urdu, Gurmukhi and Japanese. This order also listed a number of publishers and presses whose publications in whatever forms and languages were all banned. Many of these establishments, in one way or another, were associated with the labour unions, the Communist Party, the Mujahidin and Islamic associations, the nationalist movements and the movements for independence.<sup>52</sup>

Previously, Seditious Enactments were exercised to deal with a similar situation including publications from abroad. Seditious tendencies and seditious intentions were difficult to prove. In the Undesirable Publication Ordinance, the opinion of the Governor in Council that publication would

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<sup>49</sup> No. 12 of 1939.

<sup>50</sup> Enactment No. 24 of 1357H.

<sup>51</sup> Enactment No. 6 of 1940.

<sup>52</sup> Notification No. 781, *The Government Gazette of the Federated Malay States*, No. 4, Volume 32, 1 February 1940. Other lists are found in Notification No. 4927 (18 September 1940), Notification No. 2935 ( 7 July 1941), Notification Nos. 368, 368 ( 18 January 1941).



jeopardise the public interest was enough for him to impose the prohibition.

This law was sometimes used together with the Seditious Enactment. For example, the State of Johor denied the entry of *Tanah Melayu* (The Malay States) and *Syurga Dunia* (The World's Paradise) by using this law.<sup>53</sup> The reason for this is difficult to discover as these publications could not be located and their contents are not known.

Regulation 17 of the Emergency Regulations, 1939 of the Federated Malay States had given power to the High Commissioner to make necessary orders. It was in exercise of this power that another provision to restrict importation was introduced. Cited as the Emergency Regulations (Publications) Order 1939,<sup>54</sup> this law prohibited the importation of newspapers in any language other than English. This was given in Section 2, while Section 3 stated that no person should print or publish any newspaper in a language other than English, unless it had been previously submitted to and approved by the appropriate officer, such as the Protector of Chinese for a Chinese language newspaper, the Director of Criminal Intelligence for a newspaper in Malay or Gurmukhi and the Deputy Controller of Labour for a Tamil newspaper.<sup>55</sup> As a result of consultations with an advisory panel on which sat representatives of commerce and trade, the government presented two

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<sup>53</sup> Notification No. 911, *Johor Government Gazette*, 11 September, 1935.

<sup>54</sup> See Notification No. 4390 in the *Government Gazette of the Federated Malay States*, 1939.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

kinds of prohibitions, namely absolute prohibition and conditional prohibition.<sup>56</sup>

During a Federal Council sitting in 1940, the Federated Malay States government was questioned about the rationale for preventing the inhabitants of Malaya from reading any publications from countries outside the 'sterling group'.<sup>57</sup> This enactment was said to have caused exasperation and annoyance to the public. While realising that the restrictions might be irksome, the government maintained that they formed part of the policy throughout the Empire for controlling the use of foreign exchange. In order to simplify the working of this restriction, the government also responded that the names of addressees who were in regular receipt of publications were taken, general permits were issued and the post offices were informed of the issue.

In 1948, another Emergency Regulations Ordinance was devised to confer power on the authority to make regulations on occasions of emergency.<sup>58</sup>

With regard to publishing, Section 4(2)(a) of this Ordinance specified the power of the Governor to make regulations relating to the "...censorship and the control and suppression of publications, writings, maps, plans, photographs, communications and means of communications." Three different regulations appeared as a result of this provision, namely The Emergency

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<sup>56</sup> Gazette Notification 6565 and 6566 of 1939.

<sup>57</sup> See *Proceedings of the Federal Council, Federated Malay States, 1940*, (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1941), 14B.

<sup>58</sup> Ordinance No. 17 of 1948.

(Publications - Import Control) Regulations 1950, The Emergency (Publications - Control of Sale and Circulation) Regulations 1950 and the Emergency (Publications - Control of Sale and Circulation) (Advisory Committee) Rules, 1950.<sup>59</sup>

## 10.6 OTHER LAWS

There were other laws such as the Libel Law and the Official Secrets Enactment which were also introduced during this period, but like some of the laws described above, they were rarely referred to as far as book publication was concerned. The Official Secrets Ordinance was enacted in 1935 in the Straits Settlements to prevent the disclosure of official documents and information.<sup>60</sup> Section 3 of this ordinance specified that any person for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the British Empire (such as by publishing or communicating any information useful to an enemy or a foreign power) should be guilty of an offence and should be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years, and should also be liable to a fine not exceeding \$10,000. In the Federated Malay States a similar enactment was introduced in 1922 (Enactment No. 15 of 1922), in Johor in 1923 (Enactment No. 3 of 1923), in Kedah in 1939 (Enactment No. 11 of 1358H), and in Kelantan in 1940 (Enactment No. 11 of 1940).

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<sup>59</sup> See *Reprint of the Emergency Regulations Ordinance, 1948* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1951).

<sup>60</sup> Ordinance No. 25 of 1935.

The Libel Law was first introduced into the Straits Settlements in 1915 (Ordinance No. 7 of 1915) to prevent the publication of any blasphemous, seditious or indecent matter. A few libel cases were reported to have been brought to the court during the period under study but they were concerned with newspapers in English and other vernacular languages, not with any Malay publications.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## BOOK MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION

### 11.1 READING PUBLIC

The British Malaya Census of 1921 showed that about 30% of Malays were "able to read and write a letter". This comprised 25.4% of the Malay population in the towns of Penang, Singapore and Melaka and about 35% in selected towns in the Federated Malay States, with the highest number in Taiping (38.5%) and the lowest in Kota Bharu (12.3%).<sup>1</sup> The figures for other races showed higher rates. For example, 73.8% of the Eurasian population in Singapore, 48.1% of the Chinese in Kota Bharu and 88.8% of the European in Johor Baharu were literate. If the assumption made by the Straits Settlements' Inspector of Schools that only a quarter of the population in 1894 were able to read and write was accurate,<sup>2</sup> the increase in three decades was very low, illustrating the area's slow development in literacy. The 1911 Census indicated that literacy among males of all ages in selected areas was as low as 6.6% (in Temerloh) and as high as 27.9% (in Kuala Kangsar).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. E. Nathan, *Census of British Malaya 1921* (London: The Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1922). The selected towns in the Federated Malay States were Johor Baharu, Bandar Maharani, Kota Bharu, Ipoh, Kampar, Klang, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, Taiping and Teluk Anson.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Roff, *Malay Nationalism*, 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911* (Kuala Lumpur, 1912).

The 1931 Census showed that 42.8% of the total Straits Settlements male populations was able to read and write; the percentages for the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States were 42.5 and 34.5 respectively. Of the individual states, Negeri Sembilan recorded the highest rate (45.6%) and Kelantan showed the lowest (8.6%).<sup>4</sup> During this period, increasing opportunities appeared for children to attend school with the establishment of more schools throughout the country. However, these opportunities drew mainly boys, and the number of girls, although increasing, remained relatively low. Similar to the previous censuses, the literacy rate for the female population in 1931 was much lower. Singapore which recorded the highest, had only 13.2%.

In Kelantan it was as low as 0.7%. It is ironic that Kelantan, which had a lively publishing community, especially in Kota Bharu, and a state government that vigorously promoted literacy among the population, showed the lowest literacy rates during these censuses. Indeed, the state was well-known for its traditional support of the *pondok* and *madrasah* schools system in the country. Its generally low level of literacy indicated that a large part of the state remained backward despite exuberantly progressive activities in certain quarters. Overall, the figures for 1947 showed a considerable increase in literacy, including among the male Malays. An average rate of 59% was indicated in Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Singapore. The rest of the states averaged at 34% of the total population. Among the

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<sup>4</sup> C. A. Vlieland, *British Malaya: A Report on the 1931 Census* (London: The Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1932).

female Malay population, the overall figure averaged at 14%, less than one-third of the figure for the male.

While it can be said that by 1921 a moderate proportion of the Malay population were beginning to be familiar with reading materials in their language, it is difficult to get a detailed profile of the contemporary book audience and to assess its exact size. But if newspaper reading is an index, in the main it can be said that members were from the elite group of Malays, Jawi Peranakan, Arab and Baba Malays living in urban areas. Many were young and employed in educational, clerical and administrative jobs, commerce and journalism; many others were students in schools. In the rural areas, the Malay teachers and students at vernacular and religious schools, although small in number, formed the main group of the reading public.

## 11.2 LIBRARIES

Unlike in the Netherlands Indies, there scarcely existed a public library system, formed either by the government or the Malays themselves during the pre-World War period. The first library to be established in Malaya was a small subscription library in Penang in 1817. Similar kinds of libraries were then established in Singapore in 1844, in Melaka in 1881 and in Kuala Lumpur at the turn of the century. These libraries charged an entrance fee and a monthly subscription. They were formed as independent bodies and were managed by a committee, elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. These libraries were later given annual grants by the government which became an additional source of income. Membership tended to be exclusive in the early years. For

example, a member was accepted on condition that his or her application obtained a certain majority in a ballot by members. Slowly, these libraries attained more public characters. Membership was increasingly flexible and free reading rooms were opened for the public. However, they continued to cater for those literate in English, as reflected by their collections of books. Thus, membership among the locals were low. For example, the 1924 record for Raffles Library and Museum showed that among its 848 subscribers, 634 were of British origin, ninety-three were Chinese, forty-eight were Eurasian and only five were Malay.<sup>5</sup> In 1934 Malay subscribers increased to twelve, while the British members doubled and the Chinese tripled.<sup>6</sup>

By the early decades of the twentieth century, a number of reading rooms existed in major towns. Most of these facilities, however, were attached to social, literary or religious associations such as the Straits Chinese Literary Association (founded in 1911) and the Kuala Lumpur Book Club (founded around 1900). The German Reading Club was in existence in the early decades of the twentieth century and the club's house, situated in Battery Road in Singapore, was open on weekdays and Saturdays at specified hours.<sup>7</sup> Organised by the German Council, this reading club was presumably for German-speaking members. A few Malay associations were in existence during this period, such as the P. Bm. P. B (founded 1888), Darul Adab Club

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<sup>5</sup> See *Annual Departmental Reports of the Straits Settlements for the Year 1924*.

<sup>6</sup> See *Annual Departmental Reports of the Straits Settlements for the Year 1934*.

<sup>7</sup> *Singapore and the Straits Directory, 1905-1909*.



(founded 1894) and Darul Khair Club (founded 1899).<sup>8</sup> The involvement of the last two clubs in promoting reading among the Malays is not clear, but a few names listed in the committees of these bodies can be associated with the publishing and printing community.<sup>9</sup> Other associations founded later, such as Sahabat Pena and Persatuan Kemajuan Pengetahuan are well-known for their literary inclinations, but obviously they did not have library facilities to offer.

Several public libraries were later founded in various towns. For example, in Ipoh, the Ipoh Library funded by the Town Council was established in 1931. In Kota Bharu, the Carnegie Corporation of New York contributed a grant of \$8,500 towards the establishment of Kota Bharu Library in 1938.<sup>10</sup> But these libraries rarely stocked Malay titles in large numbers. If Malay language publications were to be found, they were in the Malay school libraries.

In most Malay schools, libraries were set up but on a small scale. Although books in these libraries were for the pupils, the teachers were also encouraged to loan them out to the villagers. While most of the supplies of books came from the schools' own purchases, a few were donated by the teachers themselves or by other individuals, including booksellers and publishers.

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<sup>8</sup> See *Singapore and the Straits Directory for 1909*, 92.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> K. D. Ferguson, "A Survey to Ascertain the Existing Available Reading Materials in the Federation of Malaya and the Present Provision of Books and Other Literature." Mimeograph (Kuala Lumpur: British Council, 1950): 11.

When O. T. Dussek became the first principal of Sultan Idris Training College, he had planned to start travelling libraries and bookshops for the Malay public as soon as the Malay Translation Bureau had translated enough material. But his plan did not materialise because of lack of support from the Education Department.

By this time, too, a special kind of 'library' became fashionable, especially among the Chinese community. These 'libraries' were in the form of book vendors, selling as well as renting books to customers. A small fee was charged for books read on the spot. Books lent out for home reading would be charged at a higher rate. A few Malay book vendors were found to have adopted this form of activity. One such book lender was the Persama Store, a bookseller and newsagent in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>11</sup> This shop offered various categories of books on literature, Islam and general nonfiction for sale and for loan to customers.

### 11.3 SALES ORGANISATIONS

The combination of book publisher-seller or book printer-seller continued to be among the most common commercial organisations during this period. Authors, too, were increasingly involved in the process of distribution as selling agents, as some of them were involved in the publishing and printing processes. From this period, 179 booksellers and distributors of Malay

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<sup>11</sup> See a flier prepared by the company, inserted in *Majallah Guru*, 1 January 1934, entitled "Orang Melayu Mesti Tolong Melayu" (A Malay Must Help Fellow Malays).

language publications have been traced throughout the country. The figure is not claimed to be precise as it was arrived at through examination based on advertisements and directories of this period. It is evident that some agents never advertised and therefore their existence could not be discovered. A few establishments had branches in several towns and as long as they maintained a similar company name, they were counted as one. For example, M. Muhammad Dzulfakir & Company, whose main shop was situated at the North Bridge Road in Singapore, had three branches, two in Singapore and one in Kuala Lumpur. Peter Chong and Company maintained four branches in Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Melaka and Penang. The only Malay bookseller in Sarawak, Abdul Rahman & Bros. (founded in 1928), a relatively active establishment and an agent to almost all major publishing houses in the peninsula, operated in two places, Kucing and Sibul.

The establishments were of various sizes, mostly native, small, independent and sometimes comprising merely an individual part-timer, but together they formed a fairly good network for book marketing and distribution. The terms book distributor and bookseller are, however, not easily distinguished, for frequently a book distributor also had shops, selling books to ordinary customers. Here, as is apparent in the whole printing and publishing trade, the degree of specialisation was very low. While there were shops specifically selling printed materials, the majority of bookshops continued to have sidelines to supplement their incomes. Many sold stationery and became distribution agents for some Malay periodicals. A few made bookselling their sideline, such as M. Kob Singer Sewing Machine and S. A.

Kecik Private Dispensary (both in Kedah), who dealt with other merchandise as their primary business.

TABLE 11.1: BOOKSELLERS AND DISTRIBUTORS 1921-1949  
(Sources: Malay Printed Books, 1921-1949 and Various Malay Periodicals, 1921-1949)

STATE	NO. OF ESTABLISHMENTS
Singapore	54
Penang	37
Perak	20
Selangor	19
Johor	16
Kedah	10
Melaka	5
Kelantan	4
North Borneo	3
Negeri Sembilan	6
Pahang	2
Terengganu	2
Sarawak	1
TOTAL	179

More individuals, normally teachers and government servants, became book agents. Without bookshops or proper premises, they advertised themselves in the local papers and some used their school or office addresses for their business correspondence. Figure 11.1 shows the distribution of booksellers and distributors throughout the country, irrespective of their sizes. Distributors and sellers for Malay publications were also found in places such as Patani, Sumatra, and Brunei, indicating the continuing access to Malay

books from other areas outside the country. These included agents of religious books, who served the needs of *madrasah* and *pondok* in these areas.

Any individual or establishment would normally become an agent on appointment by or application to the publisher. Supplies of books were sent in person or by post in the case of distant places. A trade discount of 20% to 30% was given to customers who bought in *kodi* or scores.<sup>12</sup> Credit purchase could easily be negotiated and together with direct dealing with publishers, deliveries usually went smoothly. However, relations between publishers and agents were sometimes strained by late payments, the difficulty of recovering debts or late deliveries.

#### 11.4 MARKETING

Authors, booksellers and publishers were increasingly concerned with the best way to publicise, promote and market their publications. Apart from advertisements, mail order and subscriptions,<sup>13</sup> which continued to be used, book discussions and reviews in periodicals were increasingly popular. Critical reviews first introduced to a Malay magazine, *Majallah Guru* (Teachers' Journal), by Zaaba during this period received much attention. Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of a book, its relevance to readers, notes on the background of the writer and information on a publication's page-size, binding method, paper quality, place it could be purchased and recommendations to improve the work were found to be informative and helpful and to stimulate

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<sup>12</sup> One *kodi* or score equals twenty units.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter Three.

curiosity. Books reviewed were not necessarily confined to works of interest to teachers but also included more general ones. This was, however, the voluntary effort of a magazine owned by a teaching association which felt responsible for instilling reading habits among society despite the financial restraint. Zaaba and other reviewers were writing their reviews without any monetary benefit. The lack of time and space often hindered the reviews appearing consistently. The critical contents were not always welcomed by some publishers and authors. At least in one case, the reviews were intercepted several times and Zaaba had to rewrite them, sending the third attempt through recorded delivery. At this point he cynically explained,

"Ini kali yang ketiga dihantar reuiu karangan-karangan baharu yang di bawah ini. Dahulu daripada ini telah dihantar dua kali perkataan lebih kurang seperti ini juga tetapi kedua-dua kalinya tiada sampai kepada majalah Guru. Nampaknya ada hantu mengendap dan memenyakkan surat-surat ini kerana mereka tiada gemar mendengar perkataan yang terus terang berkenaan dengan kehendak-kehendak kemajuan sekarang ini. Sekali ini dikirim dengan register. Jika hilang juga akan dikirim lagi sekali dengan jalan yang lebih selamat pula."<sup>14</sup>

[Author's translation: This is the third time the following reviews of new titles are sent. Prior to this, two almost similar reviews had been forwarded, but they failed to reach *Guru* magazine. Seemingly, ghosts had crept and snatched the letter because of unwillingness to accept its forthright views about current needs. This time [these reviews] are sent by a registered letter. In case they go missing again, another will be sent through a more secure way.]

Later, book reviews also appeared frequently in other periodicals but they were normally very brief, consisting of no more than a few statements of bibliographic data.

More recurrent advertisements were found during this period in

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<sup>14</sup> See *Majallah Guru*, June 1928.

periodicals and in books themselves. The inside and outside back covers of a book, if it had them, were seldom left empty. Publishers viewed them as strategic spots for their book advertisements or to list other titles appearing from their presses. Persuasive journal advertisements with emotional appeals also appeared. In several cases, readers were lured to buy the books not because of their contents but because of their discounts and low prices and because such purchases would help boost the writing and publishing efforts of individuals or companies belonging to their own race and religion.

The use of *pentaskhih* (reader or editor) as a promotional tool also occurred. A *pentaskhih* is normally a renowned and educated person who would be requested by the author or publisher to evaluate or edit the book and to write a note in recognition of the book. It was this recognition that was exploited and the name of the *pentaskhih* would normally be written prominently on the cover, the title page or other introductory pages while the notes themselves would be published within the books. The category of books which generally employed this method was those with Islamic contents.<sup>15</sup> A slightly similar way was through the use of the name of the authority who permitted the book to be circulated among a particular audience, as in the case of school publications produced by private indigenous publishers.

The use of sales gimmicks such as competitions also applied especially to books from the fictional category. Some book publishers would insert the competition forms or else print them as part of the pages, as found in some

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<sup>15</sup> The services of *pentaskhih* were widely used in *kitab jawi* published in the Middle East and Turkey and also in some nineteenth century lithographed works published locally.

of the publications of the Qalam Publishers.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, some booksellers would offer prizes such as crockery to lucky customers.<sup>17</sup>

Government publishers' printing and distributing activities were carried out by the appointed printers. Therefore it is obvious that different marketing agents were not needed to sell the books. As these books were for the schools, the Inspectors of Schools bought them with Government money and supplied them to the institutions. Private bookshops throughout the country also bought a few dozen copies of each book to sell to their customers or obtained positions as selling agents through negotiations with the printers. Such was especially the case with books of fiction and light literature, for these were eagerly bought by the Malay reading public. But usually these bookshops also kept a small stock of text books and readers, as some local school children occasionally lost their books and had to replace them. Foreign students of the Malay language also frequently asked for these books from bookshops for study purposes. Apart from this, however, there was no selling organisation of any kind and no advertising. The Translation Bureau issued a list of its publications only once a year, giving the price of each book to the Government and to the public and describing briefly the nature of each book and where it was to be obtained. Such lists regularly reached the desks of journal editors,

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<sup>16</sup> An example was 'spot the ball' competition.

<sup>17</sup> For example, *Majallah Guru*, November 1932, had an advertisement offering prizes to customers. This advertisement was put up by Haji Muhammad Idrus bin Haji Sulaiman, whose bookshop was situated at Batu Road, Kuala Lumpur.



who would subsequently publish them. *Guru* magazine frequently gave favourable comments and reviews on the Bureau's publications.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For example, see *Majallah Guru*, March 1934.

## CHAPTER TWELVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Malay printing and publishing began in the early nineteenth century, when the London Missionary Society arrived and set up its printing department in the Straits Settlements to produce Christian literature in the vernacular language. After three decades of work, the missions had established little influence among the Malay population. Along with this failure to attract Malay converts, the relaxation of restrictions on entry into Chinese ports resulted in the termination of the missions' operations. However, their literary activities had contributed to introducing the art of translation from English into Malay and in broadening the use of *Jawi* alphabets to the Christian tracts. Through employment, training and consultation, some Malays had evidently become skilful in editing, printing and production.

The temporary demise of missionary presses was compensated for by the emergence of lithographic establishments, which occupied the second stage of Malay publishing and printing. These presses were mainly owned by publishers and printers of Javanese origin, specialising in the production of the popular traditional literature of *syair* and *hikayat*. At this period, books started to be sold commercially, with marketing roles undertaken by the publishers and printers themselves together with their agents, all of whom formed an organised network of distribution. The local book scene was further stimulated by imports of Malay language publications on Islam and traditional literature

published in the Middle East, Turkey, India, Ceylon and the Dutch East Indies.

Towards the end of the century, the American Methodist Church founded its printing press in Singapore; this was to become a major printing establishment in the region. It started with the publication of Christian materials to initiate the re-emergence of missionary publishing, but soon, especially when it turned into a public stock company, it changed its outlook to become more secular and business motivated. The company became involved in wholesale and retail bookselling, securing plenty of jobbing works in addition to a continuing contract with the government to print and supply textbooks. Type-founding and engraving also became an important part of the business.

Beginning in the early twentieth century and especially after the First World War, the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States witnessed a tremendous economic development, which led to commercial stability and growth in infrastructure. This presented great advantages to the publishing trade. The establishment of vernacular schools in towns and rural areas, together with the rise of Islamic intellectual consciousness and literacy provided a wider market for materials in the Malay language. Hence, the growing production and emergence of new categories of books such as school texts, works on Islamic religion and general nonfiction. *Baba* literature for the Malay speaking Straits Chinese was also increasingly produced by publishers from the community concerned.

By this time, the book industry had been transformed into its modern

form. At this new phase, its outlook was radically changed with respect to its orientation, organisational set-up, marketing pattern, literary contents and technological methods. Publishing and printing centres expanded to other towns in the Federated and Unfederated States and the trade became more varied and competitive. The shift of printing methods from lithography to letterpress and the use of modern, high speed, automatic machines facilitated improvements in the quality, quantity and rapidity of production. The intensity of activity, the number of people involved and the amount of output, in comparison to the small Malay-speaking population, clearly indicated genuine literary interest and endeavour.

The establishment of the Government publisher, namely the Translation Bureau, made possible the publication of vernacular school books in large quantities. Its printing and distribution works, performed by appointed European printers, were efficiently managed. Various state religious authorities also played a role in book publishing and printing to cater for the needs of the schools they sponsored as well as for the general market.

The activities of the private native establishments which were founded in the 1920s and 1930s began to flood the market with light fictional works, many of them stories and romances either translated or adapted from Arabic literature and European languages. This was followed by the production of original fiction based on local life and other materials for light reading, replacing the traditional *syair* and *hikayat*.

Altogether, the quantity of new books and the number of publishers and printers increased remarkably after 1920. From 1921 to 1949, about 1,700

titles of books on various subjects appeared, generating a total output of more than six million copies. Literary works, mainly consisting of light novels, appeared to be the most highly produced in terms of titles, followed by works on Islamic religion, general nonfiction, and school texts. *Baba* and Christian literature were the least produced. In terms of edition size, school texts, followed by Islamic books, had the largest number, while *Baba* and miscellaneous publications had the lowest.

Educational policy was crucial in promoting interest in writing and reading among the Malay population. But, as far as book writing is concerned, it was not the pure Malay vernacular education that led to literary achievement. Outstanding literary developments were linked more with those who had knowledge of Arabic or English and who at a certain part of their lives had gone through English education or Arabic education. Thus, we saw that the prolific and successful writers were mostly coming from this environment.

The post-1920 period witnessed the emergence of outstanding and prolific native writers such as Muhammad Said Haji Sulaiman, Ahmad Bakhtiar, Abdullah Sidek, Zainal Abidin Ahmad, Ahmad Ismail, Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin, and Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi. Non-native writers such as Wan Boon Seng, R. O. Winstedt, and O. T. Dussek were also prominent. While numerous works were translations and adaptations from Arabic and other languages, a few were original works based on personal research and observation. Authors of European origin mainly wrote or edited school readers, while the *Baba* Chinese adapted and transcribed classical Chinese

works into the *Baba* Malay language.

With regard to publishing and printing organisation, this period saw the emergence of individual entrepreneurs who began their careers in selling, publishing, printing or writing and expanded into private companies performing more than one of these activities. This transformation led to the existence of author-publishers, printer-publishers and bookseller-publishers among the Malay and Chinese operators. Other organisational set-ups were in the form of association-publisher and government publisher. Private European publishers functioned more often as printers as far as Malay publications were concerned. A few of them were given exclusive rights to print and distribute the profitable school publications.

This period also saw the introduction and amendment of some legislation relating to the industry. A few laws were introduced before 1920. These were modifications of British laws with provisions typical of those operating throughout the British empire. While in some states, the laws were utilised fairly effectively - such as the Undesirable Publications Ordinance, Seditious Law and Book Registration Ordinance - in others they were not. In several cases, stringent action was not taken for violation of the law. For example, a number of books published in the Federated and Unfederated States were not registered and notified, and many publications did not print the names of printers or even the names of writers and publishers. While many publishers were increasingly concerned with the question of copyrights, a few did not fully understand them.

Under the Japanese, book trade activities were greatly reduced. The

diminishing resources, the strict policies of the Military Government and the destruction of machinery led to the failure of most publishers and printers to operate. However, the experience under the Occupation in certain ways initiated great development in post-war Malay literature in general.

Throughout the period, *Jawi* script continued to be used in most books, although there were efforts by the government to promote Romanised alphabets. After the war, a few private publishers of light literature attempted to use *Rumi* following the greater emphasis on the use of the script in schools and to continue the practice during the Japanese period, but for wider appeal *Jawi* remained in popular use as shown in the Catalogue (Volume 2). In physical form, Malay publications were generally modest, containing less than a hundred page crown octavo, few illustrations, low paper grade and simple binding. From this, we can at least gather that the purchasing power of Malay readers was limited. This was one of the many problems facing the book industry during this period.

Another major problem was under-capitalisation. Many native establishments had low survival rates because of the lack of resources. From among the number of publishers operating prior to 1921, only a few were still managing to continue their businesses in the subsequent decades. Similarly, after the Japanese occupation, several Malay publishers failed to re-emerge. Many faded away after struggling for a few years and producing a couple of books. Some insisted on continuing in the industry in the hope of recovering from debts. This problem resulted in their inability to expand, to employ trained staff, to obtain modern equipment and machinery and to be able to

make long-term planning. Publishing on a large-scale basis was not regarded as an adequately profitable venture by the indigenous private sector. Sophisticated printing facilities were limited to non-indigenous printers and their Malay counterparts were reluctant to invest heavily or modernise for fear of insufficient demand. Therefore, technically speaking, advancement seemed to be rather slow compared to the growth of production over the period.

Due to the under developed nature of the industry, there was a curious overlap of functions. The distinction between publisher and printer was not clear. Some of the functions of publishers were shifted to printers. Many booksellers expanded their operations into publishing. Similarly, some writers expanded into bookselling and publishing or even printing. It was not abnormal for a printing press to operate as a publishing house or a distribution agent. The result was not always satisfactory. The level of specialisation one would expect in a book industry was not clearly developed at this point.

Most of the native printers, contrary to their non-native counterparts, did not employ properly trained personnel. Workers were underpaid, untrained or unskilled and the printing establishments generally lacked proper organisation. With regard to trained staff, some specialised professions such as those of book designer, proof-reader, copy-editor, typographer and illustrator were almost unknown, or at least training in such skills was not readily available. The designing of a book, the proofreading and the editing were consequently left to the printer, author or publisher. The one-man show in the printing press sometimes was disrupted when the owner was taken sick



or faced other personal problems.

One worry of the ordinary printer was the uncertainty of a continual flow of jobs. As tenders for large government orders were dominated by a few, established, European printers or done by government printers, many relied on small-scale private works for which payment was not normally prompt.

Writing was generally considered a part-time job. Textbook writing, which seemed to be the most rewarding job, was in fact not so for the writers. Writers in the Translation Bureau were teachers who were paid monthly for their work. Writing was merely their official work and there were not many incentives in material terms. In the case of promising and ready selling books, a royalty was paid by the printers, not to the writers but to Government revenue and was collected at the end of each year. Islamic book writing was regarded as a religious obligation and therefore worldly rewards were not considered important.

When payment was involved, relations between writers and publishers at times were strained. The remuneration system and the rates of royalties were irregular. There was no agreed method of payment among publishers. Many publishers only offered complimentary copies. Some who could afford it, paid only a little sum, and only after the books had been sold or after persistent requests.

Similarly, there were no agreed standards of trade discounts among publishers and agreements of cooperation among them, if they existed, were only on personal basis. Relations between publishers and booksellers were

often tarnished by concern over their own financial turnover. Books were normally accepted by booksellers from the publishers on a credit basis, but publishers were often forced to accept delayed payment when the books were not selling well. Even if they were selling, some publishers failed to recover their debts. On the other hand, in some cases advance payments were made by the booksellers, but the publishers failed to follow up with the promised supply of books.

The publishers' success or failure depended largely on how well their publications sold. Sales depended on effective promotion and distribution. Although there were some channels for publishers to promote their books, such as advertisements and notices in newspapers and magazines, word of mouth of friends and book agents, they were not widespread. The direct mail system was expensive, involving postage, time and clerical work. Book reviews were in the introductory stage. The lack of skilled and constructive reviewers and the scarcity of discussions on books by interested groups both contributed to the general lack of reading interest.

Sales also depended on literacy and buying power. A few publishers and booksellers had high turn-over, but they dealt largely in religious books and some school textbooks.

In the main, the Malay book market was limited to the elite group of Malay speaking people living in urban areas. In the rural areas the market consisted of teachers and students at vernacular and religious schools.

Public libraries, which could have become both potential book buyers and campaigners for reading culture, were rare. General booksellers, therefore,

could not depend on casual buyers to earn enough profit to pay their staff, rent and other recurrent expenditure.

Despite the numerous problems facing book printing and publishing, the industry continued to intensify during the pre-independence period, meeting new challenges and adjusting to a new environment. The period after the Japanese Occupation saw great changes in the life of Malay society. The attempt by the British colonial government to impose its plan for a Malayan Union on Malaya in 1948 kindled the flame of nationalism. The Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949) had a significant impact on the feelings of the Malays with regard to their own future. It inspired the Malays to be united and more organised, and they also began to realise that their language and literature could be used to free them from colonial suppression. Thus, the founding of a literary society called 'Angkatan Sasterawan 50' or, for short, 'Asas 50', on 6 August 1950, dedicated to modernising the Malay language and its literature and using both to promote unity and to instill awareness of a better quality of life economically, socially and politically. It was at this period that Malay literary convention began to take a different shape, as the product of an era characterised by socio-political agitation and a complex interplay of social, economic and political forces. After independence in 1957, a completely new phase in the history of the country began, and aspirations to establish the process of Malayisation developed. In publishing and printing, these developments presented an entirely new challenge to authors, publishers, printers and book distributors.

It is essential, therefore, that subsequent developments in publishing and printing as an economic, intellectual and cultural activity be studied and documented to gain a meaningful, overall picture of the Malay book industry; this study demonstrates that its previous history is unique and fascinating with its rich and varied experience.

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