Early Malay Printed Books
Early Malay Printed Books

A provisional account of materials published in the Singapore-Malaysia area up to 1920, noting holdings in major public collections.

by

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PREFACE

The first historical bibliographer of the Indo-Malay world, van der Chijs, always asserted that his work was but an attempt (proeve) to document the printed material which was its subject. Indeed he updated his classic bibliography twice as more materials came to light.\(^1\) Similarly, the most recent contributor to Indo-Malay bibliography, Salmon, modestly and wisely labels her work provisional.\(^2\) The present inventory does not pretend to match Salmon’s exemplary work either in scholarship or in resourcefulness. But it does share a consciousness of how imperfect our knowledge of early Southeast Asian publishing remains. Salmon’s work has awakened interest in a rather neglected area of literature. My hope is that the present inventory will do something similar. It may perhaps further resurrect the syair as an important mode of late-traditional literature, and make better known the books on Western science used in early Malay schools. Above all it may bring to notice the variety of scholarly and recreational works which appealed to Muslim readers in the nineteenth-century. Should new interest lead to the discovery of further material — as it is bound to — then this inventory will have served its purpose, and proved itself provisional.

In the task of assembling this inventory, my debt to Haji Ibrahim bin Ismail of the University of Malaya Library is profound. It was his enthusiastic professional concern for the University of Malaya’s National Collection and his personal support which led me into this field — in which he had already accomplished much. I am also deeply thankful to David K.Y. Chng, formerly of the Singapore National Library, who unreservedly shared his extensive knowledge of early Singapore bibliography with me. On my second visit to London I gained greatly from the facilities generously afforded by Annabel Gallop, Curator of Indonesian and Malay, British Library, and no less from her advice and lively discussions. Librarians generally met my onerous and sometimes puzzling demands with courtesy, and sometimes with interested enthusiasm. I should mention particularly Helen Cordell of the School of Oriental and African Studies, who introduced me to her own collection and to others; also Raja Masittah Ariffin of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Michael Pollock of the Royal Asiatic Society, and Samuri Mochtar of Perpustakaan Nasional Indonesia. My colleague in the Australian National University, Virginia Hooker, supplied valuable information on Riau.

And I should mention also Lee Yook, formerly of the Singapore National Library, who took a longer interest in my work and whom I must thank for delaying its completion considerably on two occasions.

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\(^1\) van der Chijs, Proeve eener Nederlandsch-Indische Bibliographie (1659-1870), with supplements.

\(^2\) Salmon, Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia.
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**LOCATIONS**

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<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>before location, indicates inference from secondary sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL HSS</td>
<td>British Library, Humanities and Social Sciences (main reference collection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL OIOC</td>
<td>British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFBS</td>
<td>British and Foreign Bible Society, now at the University Library, Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNP</td>
<td>Bibliothèque nationale, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCWM (UG P)</td>
<td>Congregational Council for World Mission Archives: (Ultrang: Penang), in the SOAS library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB</td>
<td>Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Kebangsaan Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOLR</td>
<td>India Office Library and Records, now in British Library Oriental Collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KITLV</td>
<td>Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Library of Congress, Washington D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLS</td>
<td>National Library of Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMS</td>
<td>National Museum of Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUS</td>
<td>National University of Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSA</td>
<td>Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology, Tylor Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNI</td>
<td>Perpustakaan Nasional Indonesia (National Library of Indonesia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNM</td>
<td>Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (National Library of Malaysia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUPP</td>
<td>Perpustakaan Umum Pulai Pinang (Penang Public Library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUL</td>
<td>Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOAS</td>
<td>School of African and Oriental Studies (including the Congregational Council for World Mission Archives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ULC</td>
<td>Cambridge University Central Library (including the library of the British and Foreign Bible Society)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKM</td>
<td>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKM IBKKM</td>
<td>Institut Bahasa Kesusasteraan dan Kebudayaan Melayu, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKM KAT</td>
<td>Koleksi Asia Tenggara, Perpustakaan Tun Seri Lanang, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>Koleksi Kebangsaan, Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya (National Collection, University of Malaya Library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM (Z)</td>
<td>Koleksi Za’ba, a part of Koleksi Kebangsaan, Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YKIS</td>
<td>Yayasan Kebudayaan Indera Sakti, Riau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS

DESCRIPTIONS

@ equivalent date in the Western calendar not derived by calculation
@ microform location of microfilmed or microfiche copy
<, << provenience, indirect provenience
? data unclear
--- data missing, blank
£ pound sterling
$ Straits dollar, unless otherwise specified
s Javanese script
±1902 about 1902
1902+ serial first appearing in 1902
au author (includes editor, translator, censor, illustrator, copyist etc.)
annot annotation
adv advertisement
As. Annas
bil. bilangan (number)

BKI Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (van Nederlandsch-Indië)
bt beginning of text
hbp behind title page
ː copyright holder, proprietor
CAB Catalogue of Arabic Books in the British Museum
cat catalogue
CBPP Catalogue of Books Published in the Bombay Presidency
cm centimetre(s)
col column; or
col; col244 colophon; colophon on page 244, etc.
edn edition
et end of text
fl Netherlands East Indies guilders
FMS Federated Malay States
FMSGG Federated Malay States Government Gazette
hal halaman (page)
hp running title on head of pages
ht heading of text
hpr half title page, short title
hub hubungan (continuation)
ibc inside back cover
ific inside front cover
jil jilid (volume)
JP Jawi Peranakan
JSBRAS Journal of the Straits Branch, Royal Asiatic Society
JMBRAS Journal of the Malay(s)ian Branch, Royal Asiatic Society
k Khmer script

ABBREVIATIONS

KKM Katalog Koleksi Melayu Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya
lhm left-hand margin
ms muka surat (page)
$n name of person etc. incidentally associated with a book (as its patron, its purchaser, etc.)
NBG Notulen van de Algemeene en Directievergadering van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen
n.d. undated
no., nos. number(s)
obc outside back cover
ofc outside front cover
:p page(s)
pp publisher, printer
p. pp right-hand margin
r Roman script
ru rupees
S seller, publisher’s agent
SS Straits Settlements
SSGG Straits Settlements Government Gazette
S Thai script
TBG Tijdschrift voor de Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde uitgegeven door het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen
tp., 1tp., 2tp. title page; first tp., second tp., etc.
VBG Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen
vol., vols volume(s)
SECONDARY SOURCES

PERIODICAL AND OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

Annual Reports on Education, Straits Settlements, 1878, 1888-1894, 1899; ... Selangor, 1894; ... Perak, 1901-1903; ... Federated Malay States, 1904; ... Straits Settlements & Federated Malay States, 1917-1920; ... Trengganu, 1916

Board of Education. Special Reports on Educational Subjects, vols. 8, 14 (Cmd 835, 2379 1905)


Catalogue of Books Published in the United Provinces, 1912.


Notulen van de Algemeene en Directie- (Bestuurs-) vergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1863-1920.


Straits Settlements Government Gazette, 1887-1921.

OTHER DOCUMENTARY SOURCES


[ABDULLAH bin Abdul Kadir,] Hikayat Abdullah, Jakarta: Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia, 1953.


Haji ABDULLAH bin Haji Muhammad Said, Daftar [Kitab], Singapore: Al-Ahmadiyah Press, 1925.


ANTOLOGI Syair Simbolik dalam Sastra Indonesia Lama, Jakarta: Proyek Pengembangan Media Kebudayaan, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, n.d.


BIBLIOGRAPHIE de M. F. Abbe Favre — see below, Favre.

EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS


Jacobus Anne van der CHUJS, Catalogus der Bibliothek van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, Batavia: Lange, 1864.


SECONDARY SOURCES


— Catalogue of Books in the Library of the late Mr. D. Logan ... presented by the Government of the Straits Settlements to the Penang Library, Penang: Criterion Press, 1911.


EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS


**GENERAL Catalogue of Bound Volumes in the Raffles Library, September 1st, 1877, [Singapore, 1877].**


Robert GREENE (comp.), *Penang Library, Catalogue under Authors’ Names. December 1922. Penang: Criterion Press, [1923].*


SECONDARY SOURCES


Hikayat Johor, Singapore: Malaya Publishing House, 1940.

A.H. HILL — see: Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir.


EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS


["Lijst van de onder mij berustende, gedeeltelijk het Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap, gedeeltelijk mij toebehorende, Maleishe handschriiden"], NBG 4 (1866): 190-201.


SECONDARY SOURCES


W. MAKEPEACE et al. (eds.), One Hundred Years of Singapore, 2 vols, London: Murray, 1921.


W.H. MEDHURST, "Journal of a Voyage up the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula", manuscript; reprinted in the London Missionary Society's Quarterly Chronicle, January & April 1830.


**PAGES FROM YESTERYEAR: A LOOK AT THE PRINTED WORKS OF SINGAPORE, 1819-1959, SINGAPORE: SINGAPORE HERITAGE SOCIETY, 1989 (DAVID K.Y. CHNG, FATIMAH SULAIMAN, ELANGOVAN; ED. LEE GEOK BOI).**

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**SECONDARY SOURCES**


— *De Roman van Amir Hamzah*, Leiden: Brill, 1895.


EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS

Dr. Reinhold ROST — see: Hanitsch.


EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS


J. TOMLIN, A Missionary Journal Kept at Singapore and Siam from May, 1830, to January, 1832, Malacca: Mission Press, 1832.


A Malay-English Dictionary (Romanised), Myrielle: Salavopoulos & Kindleer, 1932.


“Hikayat Puapa Wiraja”, JSBRAS 83 (1921): 96-103.


“Hikayat Si Miskin or Marakarma”, JSBRAS 85 (1922): 41-45.


Alexander WYLIE, Memorials of the Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: giving a list of their publications and obituary notices of the deceased, Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1867.
INTRODUCTION

SCOPE OF THE INVENTORY

This inventory lists 972 titles comprising 2069 editions, and locates 2635 items. It is restricted to publications in Malay and other Southeast Asian languages (including Arabic) which were issued in the Straits Settlements, the Malay States of the Peninsula, and immediately associated areas (Sarawak, Riau, Palembang, and Bencoolen under British rule).

LANGUAGE

The inventory covers both works directed to a Malay audience and works in Malay and other Southeast Asian languages. Hence, religious works in Arabic and Jawanese, which were alternative intellectual languages of Malay religiosity, are included as works directed to a Malay audience. At the same time publications directed to a local Chinese audience using the Baba form of the Malay language are also included.

Bilingual works in Malay and English are included only if they might be used by a Malay readership. Thus dictionaries and vocabularies are included as a rule, while grammars and other studies are included only if intended for use by Malay speakers.\(^1\) Manuals for English students of Malay are not included.\(^2\)

Publications in other Southeast Asian languages — Bugis, Sundanese, Balinese, Batak, Tagalog, Thai, etc. — are included, although it cannot be supposed that they were addressed to a Malay audience.

PLACE

The geographical scope of the Singapore-Malaysia region is taken broadly. It includes the Straits Settlements, the Malay states of the Peninsula, Sarawak, Riau, Palembang, and Bencoolen. Inclusion of the last three areas deserves comment. Close ties existed between the literary and publishing world of Riau and the neighbouring urban centre of Singapore. As an instance of these links, the Al-Ahmadiyah press of Penyengat-Indonesia, Riau, was re-established in Singapore after 1911.\(^3\) Similarly, a few works issued at Palembang were printed in Singapore. The relationship with Bencoolen is different: early English missionary printing before 1826 in Sumatra and particularly at Fort Marlborough, Bencoolen, may be seen as a precursor of mission printing in the Straits Settlements.

Works printed outside this region may have been intended for publication in Singapore or Malaysia, or at least for simultaneous release in the region. Some
EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS

Protestant missionary tracts printed at Parapatian, Batavia, fall into this class. Similarly Malay-language Islamic works published in Cairo, Mecca, and Istanbul may have been destined indirectly for the regional market. Even more specifically directed to Singapore outlets were Malay-language works printed in Bombay. However, such items have not been included in the survey unless the place of publication (rather than printing) is explicitly or unambiguously located in the Malaysia-Singapore region.6

Information on place of publication is not always available, however. Beside the books which survive in library collections, others are known through the advertisements inserted in their published books by Malay publishers advising of books available or in the press. While it can be established that most of these advertisements refer to Singapore editions known from other sources, for some few titles this is not evident.7 Such titles have nevertheless been included in the inventory, without library locations, in the knowledge that time will prove some to be Egyptian, Meccan, Bombay, or Batavian imprints.

TIME

The survey covers the period up to 1920. As the first Malay book printed in the region was probably published by the Mission Press at Malacca in 1817, the survey can be said to cover the first hundred years of Malaysian printing. The decision to close at 1920 was not, however, taken with this formality in mind. Rather, it was through the consciousness of a watershed in the development of Malay publishing which was crossed about 1917, the year in which the production of Malay newspapers exceeded that of commercially produced Malay books.8 From that time forward, a listing of books published becomes particularly inadequate to convey an impression of literate culture.

Undated material is included in the inventory only where there is reason to believe that it was produced before 1920.9

NON-BOOK MATERIALS

Newspapers and magazines are noted but not described, being dealt with generally by reference to Roff’s Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals or Proudfoot’s “Pre-War Malay Periodicals” if that suffices. The names of persons and institutions associated with their publication are included in the index of this inventory as well. A few early serials such as Cermin Mata and Bukan Arifin are more fully described because some of their material was also published in book form. On the other hand, Malay-language material in periodicals like Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and the Journal of the Indian Archipelago has been ignored. In the few cases where separate issues and off-prints of scholarly journals were sold as monographs, a note suffices.

In principle, non-serial non-book material finds a place in the inventory. Such items include posters, charts, invitation cards, and the like. In practice, the inventory is almost entirely concerned with books collected in libraries: non-book ephemera is less likely to have survived, and much of what has survived must lie yet undescribed in archives.

INTRODUCTION

RESOURCES

The information upon which the inventory is based is both empirical and inferred. Empirically, the inventory is based on surveys undertaken in 1982/83, 1985, and 1990 with the aim of identifying early Malay printed material held in major library collections. The key institutions at which which relevant material has been physically examined are:

British Library (Humanities and Social Sciences, and Oriental and India Office Collections)
Cambridge University Central Library (including the library of the British and Foreign Bible Society)
Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Language and Literature Council of Malaysia)
Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (Royal Anthropological Institute)
National Library of Singapore
National Museum of Singapore
National University of Singapore
Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology
Perpustakaan Nasional Indonesia (National Library of Indonesia)
Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (National Library of Malaysia)
Perpustakaan Umum Puan Pinang (Penang Public Library)
Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden (Leiden University)
School of African and Oriental Studies (including the Congregational Council for World Mission Archives)
Universiti Malaya (University of Malaya)

Information has also been deduced from certain secondary sources. These are principally library catalogues, both published and unpublished, and contemporary advertisements and notices. Given that an advertisement provides less reliable witness than does the physical evidence of a surviving book, care has been taken to distinguish empirical from inferred information. In conformity with this principle, books purporting to be held in library collections, but which have not been physically examined, are so noted.

The most important contemporary sources of inference are registrations of published books notified in Government Gazettes under various copyright laws.10 Such information is highly credible and detailed, though not always accurate, and far from comprehensive.11 Because of its importance it is reported fairly fully in this inventory. Other significant contemporary sources are the newspaper press, especially the Malay newspaper Jawi Peranakan, which carried extensive book advertising; the Annual Reports on Education; and advertisements for school books inserted in the Straits Settlements Government Gazette. Other less tractable contemporary sources are publishers’ catalogues and the notices and stock-lists found in surviving printed books.12 In a few cases, otherwise unattested editions or titles have been included in the inventory on the strength of such information.
Later sources of inference are published catalogues and book-lists. These often show up losses from surviving library collections, but rarely allow identification of otherwise unattested material. The most significant such source is the published quarterly accession lists of the Batavian Society library, which is now incorporated in the Indonesian National Library.

![Figure 1](image)

Library holdings
(editions by decades)

[BL] [SOAS] [RUL] [PNI] [NLS] [ULC] [KITLV] [UM]

I have characterised the major library holdings individually elsewhere. Taking a wider view of the collections, two outstanding features emerge. One is the dominance of the British Library collection; the other is the broad spread of extant editions across the libraries surveyed.

The dominance of the British Library collection rests on two pillars. In the 1830s and 1840s it rests on the Favre-Millies collection of mission imprints purchased in 1888. In the period after 1886 it rests on the deposit provisions of the copyright law applied in the Straits Settlements and later in the Federated Malay States. For the period after 1886, over 80% of the British Library holdings are copyright deposit items.

The distribution of the books extant in library collections editions is noteworthy for the wide dispersal of unique editions, that is of editions not held in any other of the collections surveyed. A fair degree of overlapping might be expected in the larger collections, simply because of their size. But this is only the case with the National Library of Singapore, which has a low proportion of unique items. The other larger collections — the British Library, the School of Oriental and African Studies, Leiden University, and the Indonesian National Library — all boast more than one-third of their collections as unique editions. This is because of the way in which the collections were built up. The Singapore collection was heavily dependent upon the copyright deposit provisions, and therefore shares much material with the better-preserved British Library collection. On the other hand, the divergence of the other collections reflects the independence of their sources: scholarly bequests, Christian mission archives, and the commercial book market. Diversity of independent sources also explains the great richness of the two middle-ranking collections formed more recently in Malaysia, at the University of Malaya and at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. Nearly half of each of these collections comprises unique editions, a proportion far exceeding that of any other collections surveyed.

How complete, then, is the surviving material? Do the major collections surveyed come close to fully representing publishing activity prior to 1920? The configuration of the holdings certainly gives no grounds for believing so. Although the copyright deposit procedures have been effective in preserving more than 80% of the material registered, the fact remains that only one-third of extant editions published in the Straits Settlements were registered. Furthermore, the significant proportion of unique material in every substantial collection surveyed (except that in Singapore) implies that we still have very far from a complete record of publishing activity. Particularly poorly represented are smaller ephemeral pamphlets, almanacs and booklets published both by Christian missions and by Muslims. Among the latter must be many printed devotional aids for Muslim brotherhoods (wirid, ratib), millenarian tracts (wasiat), and spells (jampi, azimat).

**INTRODUCTION**

An initial impression of the known extant material is that the first century of Malay publishing includes a great diversity of material.

There are translations of Christian tracts and Biblical passages alongside Islamic religious guides. Works of high court culture, like the Sejarah Melaka, are there as well as the humblest folk tales like the mouseedar stories. Legendary romances abound, set in the Middle East, Central Asia, ancient China and, in the case of the Hikayat Hang Tuah, in the Malay lands. A wide spectrum of reference works is found — dictionaries and thesauruses, manuals for letter-writing and ready reckoners, astrological guides and dream interpretations, popular scientific tracts, and elementary schoolbooks — along with weighty Malay translations of learned Muslim commentaries and the most frivolous fictional verse. Even what might be thought a modern genre of literature, the short story, is represented in a simple form. On the other hand some expected items seem to be wanting: there is but one printed Quran for instance.

Beside a variety of subject, there is variety too in the manner of presentation. The presses of the early Christian missions put out rather roughly printed typeset books, in marked contrast to the later quality typesetting of the typeset work of the turn of century. Another contrast lies between the fine, neat, multi-coloured lithographs of the Singapore mission press and their almost contemporary commercial counterparts, which were often crudely produced lithographs on poor paper with blurred and unduly print.
EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS

Throughout the period Malay was printed in both the modified Arabic script (jawi) and in Roman script (rumi). The Roman script was used in several spelling systems. The early mission system was revised later to become the approved Government spelling, used for school books. Meantime the missionary Shellabear devised a new spelling for ‘low’ Malay, while the Catholic mission in Penang followed another system. Surprisingly few books were published in the Dutch-based spelling current in the Netherlands Indies, and only two of these were intended for circulation in the Singapore-Malaysia region.

The alternatives of jawi and rumi and the different spelling systems overlay the varieties of Malay which found expression in print. Mission publishers made the distinction between ‘high’ Malay, used in works directed to the Malay community, and ‘low’ Malay, which approximates what is better known as ‘bazaar’ Malay, which was used to communicate in the Baba-influenced urban society. The translators of Chinese legendary romances were also conscious of the distinctiveness of their own dialect of Malay and contrasted it with the language of the Malay community. Within the usage of the Malay community further distinctions could be made between the registers appropriate for learned religious purposes and common use. Another further distinction in literary register lies between the various forms of prose on the one hand and verse on the other. Verse was characteristically in the syair form, which was popular with Malay speakers of all ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Jawi books of syair verse were indeed the popular literature of the late nineteenth century and the staple of the commercial printers. A related form of verse is found in the collections of panji, which however seem to have been directed to a mainly Baba audience.

CONCENTRATION OF PRINTING

This very varied material was overwhelmingly printed in Singapore. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Singapore’s preeminence is shared to a degree with the other Straits Settlements, as mission printing stations were located in each of these British territories. Thereafter Singapore comes into its own. For the later period of this survey, fully 85% of the editions published appeared in Singapore (90% in the Straits Settlements). From the 1840s onwards, Singapore became the principal urban centre in the Malaysian region, and provided a strong base for the rise of local commercial printing. The particular prominence of Singapore must be attributed to an array of linked factors. Among them are the urban mercantile environment of the Straits Settlements, with its higher levels of education and literacy, and the communications and trade networks radiating from these centres. In the field of government publication of course Singapore’s role as the supreme administrative centre of the British territories was decisive. For local commercial printing the key factor was Singapore’s place at the node of a commercial network based on Malay, Buginese and other local shipping on the one hand, and the steamer links to India, the Middle East and Europe on the other. This made Singapore not only ideally sited for the dissemination of information into the peninsula and archipelago, but also a staging point for pilgrims from the archipelago sailing to and

INTRODUCTION

from Mecca. A further factor which made Singapore a desirable location for Muslim publishers in Southeast Asia was that it lay in loosely administered British territory, beyond the reach of the Dutch administration with its draconian press laws, which required printers to deposit large bonds with the government and enforced pre-publication censorship, and a policy of active surveillance of Muslim activists. By contrast, under British rule, "a haji or a guru [could] circulate in the Malay lands as freely as an Englishman, coming to police notice only if he breaks the law."25

QUANTITY

It might be expected that Malay editions would increase in line with economic development and education. However an examination of the numbers of extant editions over the period shows that this was not so. Rather, there appear to have been two peaks of output: the earlier, lesser peak in the 1830s and 1840s, and the later peak around the 1890s. Finally, from the 1900s onward Malay-language book publishing is in decline.

Figure 2
Publishers (volumes annually)

The first low peak is supported by the early operations of the various Christian mission presses. For the first forty years, Malay printing was the preserve of the Christian missions, who alone had the technology of print at their disposal. In the period up to 1839, presses operated in Malacca, Penang, and Singapore, producing large numbers of tracts, scripture excerpts, an edition of the Bible in Malay, books for use in mission schools, and a couple of scholarly books. However this activity virtually ceased in the 1840s. Early optimism about the potential of the region as a mission field faded as energies were channelled into new opportunities in China in the wake of the Opium War.28 Large-scale mission printing revived in Singapore under Shellabear from 1890. He undertook much scripture printing for the British and Foreign Bible Society from the turn of the century.
EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS

But, as its fickle history reveals, Christian mission printing does not necessarily tell us very much about the demand for literary material or its consumption. From this perspective the second peak is more interesting, for the great contributor to this second peak was the Muslim commercial press. Muslim printing dates back to the 1850s and grew steadily through the 1860s and 1870s to a peak in the 1880s and 1890s, when we have evidence of a huge output of editions. While this outpouring from the Muslim presses coincides with the inception of copyright deposit in the Straits Settlements, the evident jump in output can be shown not to be merely an accident of the manner in which the extant material has been assembled. What we see in these last decades of the nineteenth century is an explosion of the manuscript tradition through the medium of print. The repertoire of the Muslim publishers of the period was by and large traditional. The variety of religious manuals (kitab), legendary romances (hikayat) and ballads (syair) committed to print were generally printed copies of manuscript texts reproduced using lithography in a form which closely resembled that of the manuscript. The torrent of printed books abated as a combination of impacts from the government vernacular schooling system, the availability of newspapers and magazines, changing print technology and offshore printing, especially in Bombay and later Cairo, all served to claw back local Muslim publishing. And this in turn is the main factor underlying the steady decline in global output in the early twentieth century.

It thus makes little sense to map total printing over time. Global output needs to be understood as the confluence of independently conducted streams of publishing activity.

PUBLISHING STREAMS

This notion of several independent streams of publishing activity fairly reflects reality. At any time through the period of the survey, publishers and printers can be assigned to one of several streams, the members of which share a social identity, a literary tradition, an audience, and a level of technology with others of the class, while at the same time sharing little or none of these with those outside the stream. At the highest level of generalisation, the streams may be conceived as:

(1) the European press, including mission and government presses and large commercial publishers operating under European or in a few cases Chinese ownership;

(2) Baba publishers, whose limited output was printed mainly on Chinese-owned commercial presses; and

(3) Muslim publishers.

Each stream is further described below.

The high degree of segmentation which characterises Malay-language printing shadows the plural society of the Straits Settlements under colonial rule — indeed of the colonial order in general — and the technological dualism upon which that plural social order was erected. The fact that all three of the classes of this colonial society produced

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Malay books, albeit of different kinds and for different purposes, demonstrates the vitality of Malay as a medium of communication in this culturally diverse community.

EUROPEAN

The introduction of printed material in Malay and the technology of printing itself to the Malaysia–Singapore area was more or less coeval with colonial involvement in the area. The Dutch had introduced printing much earlier into the Netherlands Indies, and a Malay translation of the Bible had been printed as early as 1629, issued at the cost of the Dutch East India Company. But it was only in the nineteenth century that the Protestant missions launched their great evangelical enterprise using the printed word that any substantial amount of Malay material was printed.

The missions were, in modern terms, international organisations. Although they profited by association with the colonial powers and local European enterprise, they had the ability to cross political boundaries and the facilities to marshal resources across great distances. Their long arm is evident both in the texts which they put into print and in the ways in which they organised publication. Titles printed by one mission were adapted and reprinted by others. As for the process of printing, the Catholic mission in Penang sent Malay devotional works for printing in Paris and Hong Kong. Protestant tracts in Malay were printed in Madras and Cairo. Similarly the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, working in Sarawak, had books printed locally, in Singapore, and in London. Singapore’s strategic location, its unsurpassed regional communications and, later, the industrial facilities it offered, together with its benign colonial administration, led to its emergence as the major regional centre for mission publishing. In the nineteenth century’s early days of optimism, the first Thai printing took place in Singapore as did the first printing of Bugis. Later, at the turn of the century the Seventh Day Adventists used Singapore to print for their mission in West Java, and the Rhenish Mission printed there for its mission to the Batak of North Sumatra. Singapore was also an important base for the largest publisher of Christian religious material, the British and Foreign Bible Society. That Society had supported the publishing of scriptures at a press operated privately by the missionary Keasberry during the 1850s to 1870s. But in its major publishing effort which began in the 1890s, Singapore became the major centre for its Southeast Asian publishing, though some of its Javanese printing was also done at Semarang. Under the British and Foreign Bible Society, Singapore produced scriptures in three registers and two scripts of Malay, in the three scripts of Javanese, in Balinese, in Bicol, Melano, and Tagalog (languages of the Philippines), in Vietnamese and in Khmer. This cost-conscious Society, which took care in placing its printing. The type for much of its Malay and Javanese material was set up in Singapore (at the Methodist Publishing House) or in Semarang but printed at Yokohama. Thus while the Society exploiting its world-wide network to the full, Singapore remained the key to its Southeast Asian operations.
EARLY MALAY PRINTED BOOKS

The other major branch of European printing in Malay is printing by the colonial government. This was significant only in the field of education. School-books had at first been published by the mission presses, but after 1876, the production of school-books was taken up by the Government Malay Press which operated as a special unit attached to the Education Department, enjoying a substantial subsidy. A few items were also printed by the Johor Government Press, which although technically under Malay control, functioned in this regard as an apparatus of the colonial administration. Later the Straits government disbanded its Malay Press, and the printing of school-books was contracted out to private European printers in Singapore who were otherwise little occupied with commercial Malay printing. Like the missions, the European commercial presses had the capacity to put out printing with off-shore presses as circumstances demanded. Presumably because of the very large print runs required, plates of the first standard reader *Punca Pengetahuan 1899* etc. were prepared in Singapore by the Methodist Publishing House in Singapore and sent to London for reproduction. Conversely London publishers had Malay printed in Singapore when expertise in setting Malay in Arabic script was required. Such books were destined mainly for European hands, and were priced accordingly.

Beside materials printed for school use, other official printing in Malay hardly deserves notice. Unlike the Netherlands Indies where the government press published extensive Malay translations of government regulations and other technical works, the Straits government took little trouble in this direction. The publication of government gazettes and enactments in Malay is more characteristic of the peninsular Malay States in the twentieth century than of the Straits Settlements, where for public purposes Malay remained merely one of three languages of practical communication — four if Tamil is included.

The importance of the mission and government presses in the history of Malay publishing lies in their relative immunity from the need to meet the expectations of a commercial audience. They did not enjoy total freedom from financial constraints, of course. The missionary Keasberry operated his press on a profit-making basis, and later Shellabear too was compelled to take in commercial printing on the American Mission Press, though he grudged the time it required. The British and Foreign Bible Society followed a policy of charging a nominal price for their publications in order to guard against profligacy, though this small charge was by no means intended to recoup production costs. Even the Government Malay Press was expected to meet costs through the sale of books in the Straits Settlements and peninsular Malay states, though it was in fact unable to do so. Yet when all is said, mission and government presses were capitalised and subsidised in order that they might innovate. Their purpose was to lead their audience, even to create an audience. By the same token, their insulation from the disciplines of the market-place carried with it the risk that they would not speak to the audience to whom they were directed.

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It is for this reason that the significance of early missionary publishing in the Singapore-Malaysia region is easily over-estimated. It has attracted scholarly attention because of its antiquarian interest and because it is well documented; but neither of these factors tells us anything about its effectiveness. In truth, while the long-term implications of the new technology were to prove immense, its initial impact was negligible. The press itself apparently excited some interest as a novelty and some early publications have the air of experimentation: the multi-lingual *Lexilogus* 1841 and *Pengajaran daripada Buku* 1842 produced at Malacca and the Singapore dual-script edition of *Pelayaran Abdullah* 1838 with jawi and rumi on facing pages are technically interesting. But these elaborate productions were not effective means of reaching any particular audience.

Indeed the uses to which print was put by the Christian missionaries were so often so far removed from the accustomed and limited uses of literacy in the Malay society of the day that they failed to engage their audience. The product of the early mission presses was difficult for Malay readers either to read or to understand. It was conveyed in clumsy jawi typefaces (or in an alien Roman script) and was expressed in sometimes bizarre Malay idiom. The terms and ideas the early mission publications expressed were bewildering. The Penang-based missionary printer Beighton poured immense energy into propagating observance of the Sabbath, an issue of reverence for English Puritans, but ill-judged to strike a responsive chord in Malaya. The purveying of printed text was itself unanchored in the local environment. Christian missionary hostility to Islam sometimes aligned the local intelligentsia against the new medium. But even when this was not the case, the kind of private literacy which Christian tracts and Bible translations assumed was not found in Malaysia at that time. Literacy rates were low, and the institutions by which religious instruction was transmitted relied on the social respect accorded the teacher and his personal relationship with his pupils. The impossibility of the missionaries’ techniques unlocking a doorway into this Muslim complex were recognised by Milne, who observed that Malays could not conceive of effective prayers to God being in Malay rather than Arabic, yet if the missionaries were to preach in Arabic (assuming that lay within their competence) then very few indeed would understand them.

To attack this problem of access at its roots, the missions set up schools to teach basic literacy and numeracy. The schools were not necessarily direct instruments of propagandising, though the underlying purpose of instruction in literacy was to equip the students to read the printed word of God with, so the missionaries believed, inevitable consequences. So the missions at Singapore, Malacca, and Penang all ran schools, and printed elementary texts on spelling, reading and arithmetic, as well as catechisms which could be used as instructional material. The most successful schools seem to have been Beighton’s in Penang. Although his approach to mission work was highly polemical, his schools succeeded for a time because he bowed to local expectations by operating from mosque premises and employing Muslim teachers. When the a Malay-medium program was offered in the first public school, the Singapore Free School, the texts used were those prepared by the missionaries: spelling books, tracts and Bibles.
provided by Beighton and the American Mission Press as well as new texts worked up by the missionaries North and Keasberry. This ambitious multi-racial school, with its bizarre teaching methods, was far removed from any current local experience or expectations, and the Malay stream failed after seven years.

Yet the work continued. Even among evangelical missions, the London Missionary Society was egregious in its reliance on the printing and circulation of books. Tracts in Malay and Bugis were distributed to ships anchored off Singapore “in the hope of thereby conveying the seeds of divine truth to other and distant lands.” Wide circulation was certainly achieved, but with what result can be seen by the following figures: over seven years the American mission at Singapore printed 14,000,000 pages of literature (not all in Malay) and reported the baptism of five adult Chinese. Disillusionment set in as new mission fields opened up in China, leading to the abandonment of the Malay campaign.

Large scale mission-sponsored printing was revived only when Shellabear arrived in Singapore with new printing equipment in December 1890 to establish the American Mission Press (later the Methodist Publishing House). This event marked a return to belief in the magical potency of the printed word. Shellabear had himself been converted by the chance private reading of a small printed tract entitled “A Gift, will you take it?” After his conversion, he had prepared himself for his mission by learning the printing trade. He went on to become a prolific missionary translator and printer, undertaking large commissions for the British and Foreign Bible Society over the next two decades. The Society printed enormous numbers of Gospels and Bibles in Malay and other Southeast Asian languages to be distributed among the unenlightened by colporteurs trekking across the countryside. At least by the turn of the century print literacy was a little more widespread, and the Malay publications of this era tend to be better targeted to the linguistic preferences of the variety of Malay-using communities. The American Mission Press, under Shellabear, issued parallel versions of tracts in Jawi and rumi, and designated a few as particularly written for Baba audiences. The British and Foreign Bible Society was similarly sensitive to the need to adopt the appropriate register in reaching different audiences, and the 1890s saw the concurrent printing of three parallel translations of the scriptures: one in so-called Low Malay (in this case meaning Baba Malay, in Roman script), another in so-called High Malay prepared by Keasberry and Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (printed in Jawi), and a revision of that by Shellabear (printed in both Jawi and Roman-script editions).

When the British and American missions had moved on to China in the 1840s, Keasberry remained, taking over the running of the press and a mission school. It was still a small venture, but proved to have lasting influence. Keasberry’s school benefited from the increased leverage which the British now exercised in the peninsular Malay states, which enabled it to attract support moral and financial support from Malay royal houses where the Singapore Free School had failed. But ironically Keasberry’s larger success flowed from the weakness of his personal position. Keasberry was a talented individual, who after 1847 was no longer directly beholden to a home missionary society. He had thereafter to fend for himself, eventually receiving government funds for his school while supporting his missionary work through what he could make from his printery and the Malay agricultural settlement he supervised. Keasberry ran the printery as an adjunct to his school, with printing and book-binding subjects in the curriculum. Using his pupil-apprentices, Keasberry did some commercial jobbing (leatherheads, bills of lading, etc.), printed Singapore’s first two Chinese newspapers, and probably produced Misnik Marakarmah 1857 on commission. Thrown thus on his own devices, Keasberry was responsible for a major initiative in Malay publishing.

That initiative was his development of the technique of lithography. Keasberry had learnt the mechanics of lithography from Medhurst in Batavia in the 1830s. Medhurst valued the technique for its flexibility and cheapness. With lithography he could print Chinese characters, Arabic script, Javanese script or anything else without the trouble and expense of casting fonts. Indeed Medhurst’s use of lithography was as a substitute for type: the meticulously inscribed Jawi lithographs published in Batavia are almost indistinguishable from typeset works, so regular is the script and so faithful to the limitations of contemporary Arabic type-fonts. It was Keasberry’s responsiveness to local circumstances which led him to develop a style of lithography which imitated not the printed text, but manuscript. In so doing, he created a form which was not ungainly and alien in the eyes of literate Malays, but which deferred to accustomed scribal conventions. In 1849, Keasberry published the first of several major reference works using this new style of lithography.

These editions were a fine demonstration of the capacity of this medium to reproduce Malay text with grace and style, and in harmony with the manuscript tradition. Their effectiveness was enhanced by the fact that they were expressed in better Malay than any previous mission publications and, although their content was novel, did not evangelise directly. In getting them up, Keasberry drew heavily on the skills of Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir. In fact the first of these lithographed works was Abdullah’s autobiography, Abdullah 1849, copied in Abdullah’s own hand. Working with Abdullah, Keasberry went on to produce some beautifully decorated multi-coloured lithographs, giving a creditable imitation of the rubrication and illumination found in superior manuscripts. These were the first printed books which could be comfortably read by literate Malays.

Keasberry extended the reach of this technical innovation by producing a series of lithographed magazines. These presented monthly or quarterly miscellanies on Western civilisation and serialised stories. In this he revived and refined an idea which had earlier been put into action in Malacca with Buisine Ariffin 1820-22 also titled The Malay Magazine. Unlike the bilingual Malay Magazine which relied on European distribution, Keasberry’s magazines were aimed unequivocally at a Malay-reading audience. His first magazines, Taman Pengenalan 1848-51, Penghulu Segala Remah 1852 were intended for school reading, being issued in Roman script, but they were soon accompanied by parallel versions printed in fine lithographed Jawi with rubrication. In this form, the magazine could reach an audience beyond the school as
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well. This was also true also of Keasberry’s last and finest magazine, Cermin Masa 1858-59, produced solely in jawi. This “most spectacular imprint” was crafted in beautifully decorated multi-coloured lithography.

Keasberry’s innovative yet amenable printing marks not one but two turning points in the history of Malay literacy. It proved to have lasting influence both in the application of print technology and in the content and style of written Malay. On the first count, once the potential of lithography was evident, the technology was quickly adopted by Singapore Muslims. The immense implications of this development for the Malay-Muslim commercial press are discussed below. So far as the content and style of written Malay are concerned, the influence was exercised particularly through government Malay schools.

The Straits government assumed full responsibility for conducting Malay schooling in its territories in 1874, the year of the Pangkor Engagement. The government’s taking a direct hand in education thus coincided with the British forward movement, which saw European political influence increase markedly in line with commercial development. During the 1890s the peninsular Malay states under British control emulated the Straits Settlements school system. The result was a rise in the esteem in which Western-style government schooling was held concurrent with greatly expanded access to it. These developments allowed those who ran the government schooling system to wield significant cultural power, and they did so.

Within two years of its assumption of responsibility, the Straits Settlements Government had issued a range of text-books for use in the four levels (known as ‘standards’) at which Malay education was offered. This range of books included revamped versions of the same texts which Keasberry had used in the mission schools. So, as Gallop has observed, the first grade spelling book Panco Pengetahuan published in 1876 by the Inspector of Schools bears a marked similarity in content and format with the more imaginatively titled first grade reader Teki-Teki Terbang which Keasberry had reprinted several times from 1855 to 1869. Similarly Keasberry’s Ilmu Kepandaian, an introduction to Western technology, was updated and reprinted by the Johor Government Press and by Kelly and Walsh on behalf of the Straits Settlements Government as Jalan Kepandaian for use in government schools as the third standard reader. Such books remained current as texts until 1917 when Winstedt introduced what he termed the “new learning” which, besides prescribing basket weaving for Malay students, required a new range of textbooks more narrowly adapted to Malaysian conditions. But Keasberry’s legacy ran wider than the prescribed standard readers, for the two other major works by Abdullah which he had promoted continued to be used in schools throughout the period of this survey, and indeed until after Independence. The journal of Abdullah’s voyage up the East Coast, Pelayaran Abdullah, first experimentally printed by North, had been reprinted several times for school use in book and magazine form by Keasberry. It was subsequently reprinted for use in government schools by the Straits government in 1886 and kept continuously in print thereafter. Likewise

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Abdullah’s autobiography, first published by Keasberry in 1849, was reprinted for the Education Department by the Royal Asiatic Society in 1880, and by the Government Press in 1888-89, and thereafter kept continuously in print. These two works, together with two Malay court texts, Sejarah Melayu and Hang Tuah, formed the heart of the Malay Literature Series, which after 1907 embodied a government-sponsored definition of worthwhile Malay literature.

The message conveyed in the early school texts had two facets. On the one hand, the essays on technology demonstrated the superiority of Western civilization. This theme was fully developed by North and especially Keasberry in collaboration with Abdullah. It underpins the publication of summaries of natural history, geography, history, and technology which Keasberry put out as reference books and in his magazines. New technologies are not so much explained scientifically (hardly feasible in elementary readers) as used to conjure up images of the fantastic gas-lit world of Europe or America, conveying a strongly implicit statement of the rewards of adopting Western values. These school books also pick up an implicit attack on Islam which goes back to the earliest mission printing. Ward’s Ilmu Falak 1826 gives several proofs that the world is round, ostensibly to enlighten Malays in a matter of purely scientific interest but implicitly attacking prevailing Muslim cosmologies. The same essay was still doing service in the third-grade reader almost a century later in 1914. The second facet of the early school texts was an overt attack on Malay society. During the period of this survey, the text most frequently reprinted by mission and government alike is Abdullah’s Pelayaran Abdullah. Presented as a journal of Abdullah’s voyage up the East Coast of the peninsula, this work is in fact a concise critique of Malay society and its political institutions, comparing them unfavourably with British rule, and prescribing as the remedy the type of education the missionaries and later the government schools offered. The effect of Abdullah’s critique was magnified when the education department supplemented it with the two classical Malay court texts, Sejarah Melayu 1896 and Hang Tuah 1908. Both are set in the golden age of Malay sovereignty at Malacca, and inculcate feudal loyalty, a value which had become useful to British indirect rule. Both show Malacca at the height of its power, and conclude with its ultimate defeat at European hands. To prescribe these classical texts alongside Abdullah’s description of contemporary Malay polities is to compile a cogent case for British-guided reform.

Beyond these continuities of ideology, the government school books also continued to promote the new style of prose which had been pioneered by the missions. This was unmeasured expository narrative, and Abdullah was its prime exponent. His journal, Pelayaran Abdullah 1838, the account of Western technology, Ilmu Kepandaian, which he worked up with North, published the next year, and his autobiography, Abdullah 1849, are unprecedented works not only in content but also in style. As these works were constantly reprinted for school use in the Straits Settlements, Abdullah’s expository prose became a staple of European-run schools. Since its sources were in large part the translation of European journalism and, probably, Malay commercial correspondence, it was not too different from the style of early Malay newspapers, which drew on the same
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sources. Together, these books and the newspapers provided much of the reading material used in Straits government Malay schools. This style of prose was novel, too, in being adapted to a new reading environment. It was not for enjoyment aloud, as the contemporary popular verse (syair) and prose (hikayat) forms were; it made no appeal to the ear, being best suited to individual reading. It is for this reason that its rise is inextricably linked with printing, for only through printing could copies of the text be produced in sufficient numbers to offer the potential for individual reading. In schools of the Western type, the new style of printed prose was taught as a skill in reading and writing to be acquired and exercised by each individual. It was expected that each pupil would have an identical printed reader before his eyes, allowing one reader to lead in turn while the others followed in their books. Reading was taught in step with composition. Both these practices imply the development of the skill of private, silent encoding and decoding of written text. Both were a new experience for Malay pupils, at odds with the practice of the Quran school. In the Quran school, pupils practised translating written text directly into speech — or rather, to get the emphasis right, the pupil’s practice in proper oral presentation could be aided by the written form. If the hubbub of a Quran class struck Western observers as chaotic, then conversely the disciplined silence of students in a Western classroom must have struck early Malay observers as unnatural.

By no means was the whole of the audience for Malay literature ready to make this transition in taste and practice. Government schooling was still unevenly clustered around urban settlements. Furthermore, even though the practice of private literacy was taught in government schools, it did not automatically carry over to contexts beyond the classroom. In 1901, Wilkinson observed that "private enquiries addressed to about fifty vernacular school teachers elicited the fact that a large majority of them had never read any books except those used for their work for devotional purposes, and that only three of them possessed more than a shillingworth of literature in their private libraries." Wilkinson had reasons for painting a pessimistic picture, and took a very particular view of the proper uses of literacy, which did not include newspaper reading, for instance. Nevertheless, more than just access to schooling was necessary to engender a preference for private literacy. As private literacy changes the social context of literacy consumption, its adoption is not just a matter of the literacy skills acquired by an individual, but also of the occasions and milieux in which the skill might be applied. The fact that newspapers written in the new prose continued to be enjoyed by group audiences, in coffee shops for instance, is both an adaptation of manuscript reading habits and a product of low functional literacy (and low disposable incomes) in the community. Vast differences in literacy rates and in the opportunities for literary consumption between urban and rural areas and between generations ensured that there was no uniformity in the shift in taste and practice. But by the turn of the century, newspapers and the government-sponsored school system were beginning to set the agenda of future developments.

The most explicit piece of cultural engineering undertaken by the Education Departments of the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States was the promotion of

the Roman script. In the Netherlands Indies, the Roman script (in the Dutch spelling) had become the norm for printed Malay from the middle of the nineteenth century. Most Netherlands Indies Malay-language newspapers had been printed in this script from their first appearance in 1856. By the end of the century, the Roman script found favour with the British government for the same reasons that it had flourished in the Netherlands Indies: it was easily accessible to Europeans, and it had become the form of written Malay most used by the Baba and Eurasians and other non-Muslims for whom Malay was a second language of commerce and official dealings. The first Singapore Malay-language newspaper to use Roman script was the Baba-run Bintang Timur, which first appeared in 1894. In the Straits Settlements, the audience for commercially-published runi books lay among the Chinese, Eurasians, and Indians who had been educated in mission schools, or in the government English-medium and mixed-race schools, which lent on Malay as the lingua franca of the classroom and schoolyard, and used books in Malay in the Roman script both as study aids for learning English and for the study of Malay as a second language. The Selangor Inspector of Schools believed in 1894 that knowledge of Romanised Malay more than doubled a boy's chances of employment. In other words, the Roman script had made headway among the compradors of European interests, who were predisposed by their social and economic situation toward the cultural values and even the religion of the hegemonic culture.

Meanwhile the Muslim community and the government vernacular school system which served it remained the province of the Arabic script. It was not until the publication of a new series of runi readers in 1897 to 1899 that the Roman script was introduced into the Malay vernacular school curriculum. The plan was to begin with mainly jawi in the lower standards and to place increasing emphasis on runi in the higher standards. Change in the Malay states was slower, with runi taught in all standards in Perak only in 1906. The standard runi readers were at first supplemented by reprints of several Roman-script books which had been used in the Netherlands Indies, changing their spelling to conform to the English-based Straits Government standard. But a more sustained push for Roman literacy came in 1907 with the decision taken by the Federated Malay States government on Wilkinson's advice to sponsor a series of worthwhile Malay reading material printed in the Roman script, the Malay Literature Series. The argument for the new Series was that if sufficient worthwhile literature was not available, the Roman script would fail to appeal to Malaya because of shallowness of cultural experience it conveyed. Malays would then remain captives of the unwholesome commercial book market, which failed to propagate what Wilkinson and other European scholars identified as true Malay values. (This meant, as we shall see, that the commercial press did not inculcate deference to Malay rulers' status and respect for British power.) However the push in favour of Romanisation was not immediately successful, and the imperative for promoting acceptable values was achieved through the reissue of a few key items in the series — Pelayaran Abdullah (again!), Abdullah, Hang Tua, and Sejarah Melayu — in parallel jawi editions. It was in the form of these jawi editions that Sejarah Melayu and Hang Tua gained the status of
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classics of Malay literature in the minds of two generations of culturally-disoriented
Malays attending government schools.\textsuperscript{111}

Figure 3

Sciences
(editions annually)\textsuperscript{112}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1820</th>
<th>1830</th>
<th>1840</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
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<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
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--- all --- jawi --- remi

To summarise: in form, style and content the European press regularly failed to meet contemporary audience expectations of literature. Very few of its products would have survived as commercial propositions;\textsuperscript{113} they depended on financial subsidy or support from powerful social institutions. But from this position of privilege they were able to influence Malay literate culture, drawing it in the direction of the West — that is, in the direction of a literate culture conformable with higher rates of literacy and new ideas of individual participation in reading and writing. If audiences did not exist, they could be created through the same agencies which operated to create new levels of literacy. Wilkinson was guilty of self-deception when he argued that in conditions of rapid change, the government school system (and implicitly the literature it taught) acted as a conservative force.

The sudden establishment of a modern settlement in an old-world community such as that of the Malays brings about great social changes. ... The effacing of the old social landmarks brought about a demoralisation which it should be the object of public instruction to combat.\textsuperscript{114}

The reality was that his school system and the uses of literacy which it taught were capable of inducing severe cultural disorientation. When the high iconic text of Malay feudalism, \textit{Sejarah Melayu}, is included in the Malay Literature Series, giving unprecedented circulation to a text which, in its manuscript form, had been the preserve of the royal houses — and when this is done as a means of popularising the new Roman script favoured by colonial government and commercial interests, — then it is not, as Winstedt snidely suggests, incomprehensible that student teachers at the Malay College should believe that text they had been given to study had been written by its editor, the missionary Shellabear.\textsuperscript{115}

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BABA

The second stream of Malay-language publication is the publication of books for Chinese whose mother tongue was a dialect of Malay. As Figure 2 above shows, Baba publication has always been the poor relation in Singapore-Malaysian book publishing.

A small number of books for a Baba audience were published by non-Chinese. One instance is the anthology of recreational reading, \textit{Lautan Akal 1907+}, put out by a Penang-born Jawi Peranakan.\textsuperscript{116} Another non-Chinese source of Baba books was of course Christian mission publications, the most noteworthy being \textit{Bible: Matthew 1896} and translations made, under Shellabear's supervision, of the New Testament, \textit{The Pilgrim's Progress}, and \textit{Black Beauty}.\textsuperscript{117}

But understandably most Baba literature was published by Chinese.\textsuperscript{118} This was always an ad hoc affair. None of the Chinese printers of Baba literature were primarily book publishers. Typically, printing was undertaken on the order of the author by a Chinese commercial press — such as the Kim Seck Chye Press of Singapore.\textsuperscript{119} It fell to the author to act as publisher, to finance and distribute the work. Lau Say, the translator of \textit{Sun Pang 1904-06}, travelled to Malacca and Kuala Lumpur hawking his serialised translation and taking orders.\textsuperscript{120} With a touch of melodrama, Chan Kim Boon, the translator of five multi-volume historical romances, informed his readers that he faced bankruptcy if his most ambitious venture did not succeed.\textsuperscript{121} There was not sufficient sustained output to support an established market for Baba books or a distribution network. Authors had to rely on acquaintances among general merchants to handle their books, resulting in irrational patterns of distribution. \textit{Zheng Dong 1895}, for instance, was sold through three agents in Singapore, one in Malacca, one in Saigon, but none in Penang.\textsuperscript{122} In fact, the distribution arrangements for Baba books were generally so poor that they rarely extended beyond Singapore. Altogether agents are listed 49 times in 17 books. Of the 49, fully 41 have addresses within the Singapore town limits. Another 3 are located in Malacca, which for Singapore Babas was virtually an outlying suburb. Even more remarkable is that only two Singapore-published books list agents in Penang. There is no any mention of any Penang sales in the detailed information on how six hundred volumes of \textit{Sun Pang 1904-06} were sold.\textsuperscript{123} Since virtually all the Baba books in this survey were printed in Singapore,\textsuperscript{124} Baba book publishing emerges as a phenomenon very strongly focussed in Singapore.

Beside the limited amount of Baba literature published in Singapore there was a vastly greater literature in Romanised Malay produced by the Chinese Peranakan of Java.\textsuperscript{125} It is difficult to gauge how much access the Baba of the Straits Settlements enjoyed to this treasure. Reportedly Chan Kim Boon, whose father traded with Sumatra, had become interested in translating Chinese historical novels into Baba Malay after seeing that Indonesian translations of such novels were selling well in Malaya.\textsuperscript{126} The first burst of activity in such translation occurred in the early 1880s in Batavia,\textsuperscript{127} preceding parallel Singapore versions by half a decade. The differences in spelling conventions would not have been a great barrier. \textit{Tinu Nasib 1897}, which specifies its
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spelling and script as 'huruf Inggris', nevertheless anticipates circulation in Batavia, Deli, and Padang Panjang, as well as Singapore and Penang, though it is untypical in this regard. Conversely three works were printed in Singapore in the Netherlands Indies spelling, but by authors from the Netherlands Indies.

A sign of what a small pond the Singapore Baba literature made is that it was possible for a single writer to achieve a dominating role, as Chan Kim Boon did. Chan was born in Penang and educated in both English and Chinese, attending the Penang Free School and the Foochow Naval School. He moved to Singapore in 1872 to work in a lawyer's office. There, writing under the nom de plume 'Batu Gantong', he translated five Chinese historical romances, his major work being a 30-volume translation of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. At one time he had in prospect a further sixteen or so translations, but pointed out that his further work depended upon the viability of his main project, the translation of the Three Kingdoms. By the time he had reached volume 22 of this immense undertaking, he rue'd his earlier ambition, stating that "because this translation of the Story of the Three Kingdoms has demanded so much brain-wracking exertion, I wish to announce with apologies that I have not the strength to translate any further Chinese stories." However, he did go on at a slower pace to translate two further romances, the Water Margin (Song Jiang 1899-1902) and the Journey to the West (Xiyou Ji 1911-13), so that by 1913 he had published some 9,000 pages of printed text. In the period of this survey, more than half of all Baba fiction flowed from the pen of this one man.

As well as being limited in bulk, Chinese-published Baba literature was confined to a rather narrow repertory. This comprised principally translations from Hokkien Chinese into Baba Malay of cerita dahulukala, that is of popular Chinese novels or tongku xiashuo, based on the exploits of folk heroes — the most famous being the Romance of the Three Kingdoms (San Guo), and the Water Margin (Song Jiang). Altogether twenty such titles were published in Singapore, all in Roman script, the earliest appearing in 1889. These constitute a new genre in Malay without precedent in the older manuscript tradition. Yet while new to Malay, they have deep roots in Chinese popular culture. They were the stock-in-trade of itinerant story tellers and provided episodes for the renowned Wayang Macau (Cantonese Opera), which was exceedingly well patronised by the Chinese and all other communities in Malaya at the turn of the century.

The rediscovery and translation of these historical romances was part of a redefinition of Baba identity. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Baba community was adapting to both the rise of British capital and to more intense exposure to China. Ever larger numbers of new arrivals from China and the great improvements in communications which allowed Chinese of all linguistic backgrounds to follow current events in China tended to make the Baba more self-conscious participants in both Malay and Chinese cultures. Analogous developments were occurring elsewhere in the Chinese diaspora, and in the Netherlands Indies the Chinese Peranakan had a substantial

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Malay-language literature by the turn of the century, including slightly earlier translations of the popular historical romances also published in Singapore.

Prior to this Baba renaissance, Malay-speaking Chinese had been participants in Malay oral and manuscript literature. Their contribution to supposedly traditional Malay manuscript literature is not susceptible to disaggregation. Earlier in the nineteenth century, Chinese were among those who showed an interest in jawi publications put out by the missions. They are believed to have been associated with the operation of manuscript lending libraries in Batavia, Palembang and probably elsewhere, but the materials stocked by the libraries which have been studied seem not to diverge from the popular tastes of a Malay readership. It is known that syair tales like Abdul Mutuk and Zabudiah were favourites with Chinese readers, but so they were with ethnically Malay readers too. This older literary orientation was losing ground late in the nineteenth century when Baba works begin to appear in print. Nevertheless a few publications do reflect the older affinities. Among them, the interesting religious works published at Palembang (though printed in Singapore), Yuli Baochao 1877 and Wenchang Dijun 1882, which emanate from a Chinese community still reading Malay in the jawi script. Published in the Roman script, but exhibiting a deference to Islamic popular tradition is the peculiar Ilmu Nasib 1897, apparently edited by a Chinese Muslim. Another embodiment of Baba participation in Malay-language literary expressions are the collections of pantun enjoyed in musical soirees by Baba Chinese and ethnic Malays alike. The major collection, Dondang Sayang 1911-16, is tailored to such use by grouping pantun thematically and listing suitable violin accompaniments. In the period of this survey, printed pantun collections are a peculiarity of the Baba and European scholars. It is interesting that the earliest printed collection of pantun, Pantun Karang-Karangan 1889, was edited by a Chinese Muslim.

However the terms of Baba participation in Malay culture began to change as the Baba, always a comprador class, adjusted to a new hegemonic culture under British rule. Symptomatic of this accommodation are an interest in English education (as indeed English began to displace Malay as the Baba mother tongue) and the whole-hearted adoption of Roman script for writing Malay. The complexity of the new adjustment is conveyed in the form and content of the new Baba published literature. It is a literature without precedent in the manuscript tradition, expressed in the Baba dialect of Malay, printed in the English script, on subjects dear to Chinese popular culture. The multiple linguistic orientation of the Baba community is also conveyed by the explanatory notes added to the translations of the historical romances, which may give equivalents to court titles and kinship terminology, for instance, in Chinese, Baba Malay, and Johor Malay. Indeed a keen linguistic self-consciousness is evident in these works, which stems only in part from the fact of their being translations. Sensitivity to the varieties of Malay springs also from the unstandardised nature of Baba Malay, which until the advent of print had no separate literary tradition.

Yet while it is interesting to see how a new Malay-language literature could thus serve to reinforce Chinese identity, it was increasingly English that was favoured by this comprador class. The shift in favour of English is reflected in linguistic works. In this
category, nineteenth century guides to Malay for Chinese speakers designed to equip newcomers with the linguistic skills of the Baba give way to twentieth century guides to English for Malay-speaking Chinese. In a letter to the translator of San Guo 1892-96, a correspondent, writing in English, reveals the close affinity in his mind between reading English and Malay in the Roman script: “I wish to mention to you that nearly all the Chinese Babas of Penang, who can read English, and who do not know the story of Sam Kok in Chinese, are very glad to read these books of yours, and spend most of their leisure in reading the said books.” The same work contains English poetry, definitions of Chinese terms in English, English-language novels, and a list of ten words of great length in English, even bilingual sentences. Translation into Malay could be seen as lacking the prestige attached to the colonial language. Chan Kim Boon’s Three Kingdoms received faint praise from one correspondent, who wrote: “It is a work that should appeal to every Straits-born Chinese man, and perhaps more so the Chinese ladies, many of whom are not yet sufficiently advanced to appreciate English literature.” In the last volume of the last work Chan translated into Malay is a rather sad epitaph to his massive literary endeavour. There he published a letter from his nephew asserting that his uncle would gain greater fame if his translations were into English.

More than the books of any other stream of Malay-language publishing, Baba books are remarkable for their appeal to the eye. This is immediately evident in the profusion of illustrations accompanying the translations of the historical romances. The main characters and sometimes incidents in the unfolding story are illustrated in these typeset books with interlaced or appended lithographic pages. Such illustration, found in a majority of Baba books, is very rare in Malay-language publishing overall. Among the handful of non-Baba illustrated books the foremost are, interestingly, translations of works which became popular through stage performances mounted by the colonial theatre. In these instances the illustrations might have been a way of revising visual memories of the stage performance, a function which illustrations in the Baba translations certainly have shared. The illustrations included in the Baba translations echo the strong graphic tradition of the popular literature form which they were translated. It is also noticeable that although the illustrations included in the Baba translations are lithographed, they are drawn in the style of wood-cuts, the traditional form of illustration in Chinese xylographic printing. Realising the appeal of illustrations to Baba readers, Shellabear used illustrations of the main incidents in his Baba version of Pilgrim’s Progress to give the story a Chinese setting, though he did not try to replicate the woodcut style.

But it is not only through illustrations that Baba books address the reader’s eye. The typography of the Baba translations is most complex. One of the earlier translations, San Guo 1895, addresses readers on the page following the title page with an outline of typographic conventions which will be used in the book, and informs them further that the contents of letters will be printed in italics and that numbers in brackets refer to the illustrations. Evident here are both typographic coding and manipulation of the structure

of the printed book. The degree of typographic complexity which was reached could be high. On a page of San Guo 1892-96 may be found four type fonts, italics, parentheses, small caps, double and single inverted commas, daggers and asterisks, interspersed with Chinese characters. The title pages of Baba translations were riotous displays of fancy typefaces, reminiscent of advertising hand-bills. And indeed this typographic excess was feasible because the books were printed at commercial presses which customarily produced advertising material of this kind. But the reasons for typographic variation may lie deeper, if it is true that for Chinese literate in the logographic script (which would include the translators and the press operators) “European script produces ... the same impression of monotony and lack of distinctiveness that [Europeans] might experience if faced with pages printed entirely in the dots and dashes of morse code.” Whatever the explanation, the effect is a visual one. This extends beyond typefaces. The page layout was also structured, with running head, text and footnotes, as was the organization of the book itself. Chapter headings and subheadings abound. The front cover of Erdu Mei 1889 details the number of parts, number of pages, number of illustrations, number of pages including illustrations, and the presence of an index. All this information on organisation, structure and typography, assumes that the book will be read in a certain way. Since most of this is visual information, most of which cannot be translated into words, it conveys meaning to readers, not to listeners. This is not to deny that the Baba romances were read aloud; indeed colophons mention listening as well as reading, and books of this kind were recommended for reading aloud in the family circle. But the emphasis on visual communication is especially evident in ancillary elements. The cartoons, maps of war movements, mathematical puzzles, play with Chinese characters, and much else included in San Guo 1892-96 cannot be taken in by ear. All this suggests the primacy of individual reading over listening. This is emphasised by some structural features. Indexes, glossaries, cross-referencing to plates, and tabulated information imply not only visual consumption, but non-sequential reading.翻强23

The Baba books have other qualities which are associated with private literacy. One is the salience of the author or translator. Intimate information about the author-translator’s personal circumstances were vouched for readers when this was quite incidental to the theme of the book. Chan Kim Boon, for instance, not only told readers of his trials and tribulations in arranging the publication of his works, related his financial woes, and bewailed his fourth son’s typhoid fever, but also provided photographs of himself and his assistants, introduced his eldest son and published his son’s drawings. Lau Say, as we have seen, detailed his travels promoting his books, and Na Tian Piot, in his syair in praise of Sultan Aba Bakar, not only included an autobiographical introduction and a photograph of himself but advised readers who doubt the veracity of his account to confirm it with his son, who was a clerk in Robinson’s, the well-known department store in Singapore. Tan Beng Tock is less assertive,
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Another distinctive characteristic of the Baba press is its proclivity for serialisation. In this it prefigures the modern form of the magazine. In part serialisation can be understood as a predictable consequence of the combination of long texts and struggling publishers.164 (The hope was that early sales would finance the printing of later volumes. In practice, however, the author-publishers and their financial backers had to carry considerable stock.)165 But beyond these economic factors, the serial format seems to have been attractive in its own right. It is hard to imagine any other reason why Zhuang Zixu [1889], a slight work amounting to some sixty pages, should have been issued in six parts. Other Baba books were also issued serially: the Dongdang Supang 1911–16, 1915–16 pantun collections (in five instalments), and an anthology of recreational reading Lautan Akal 1907+ (in four parts). The contents of the latter work recall other Baba anthologies of recreational reading, comprising fantastic, topical or humorous stories in prose. Examples are Jinsi Qisan 1889, and the later Rencana Plana 1916, and Abu Nawas 1916, 1917 with Cerita Rampai-Rampai 1916. It is a small step from a serialised anthology like Lautan Akal 1907+ to the more modern magazine. It is interesting to observe how the long-running serialisation of San Guo 1892–96 took on the aspect of a fixed-term magazine. It began as fairly straight monthly instalments of the translation but soon took on some of the qualities of a magazine, running a bonus anthology of humorous and amazing stories alongside the main feature,166 and including news reports on the disastrous progress of the Sino-Japanese war, along with a miscellany of medicinal recipes, brain teasers, jokes and the like. A further approximation to the magazine is the interaction set up between reader and editor, and between reader and reader, through the publication of readers’ letters commenting upon previous issues. Chan Kim Boon welcomed, indeed orchestrated, such contributions.

The inclination to serialise is almost wholly confined to Baba publishing throughout the period of this survey. A number of multi-volume works were published by both European and Muslim presses, but only three were serialised.167 The more common practice of Muslim publishers was to issue long texts either in single very large volumes168 or in simultaneously released multi-volume sets.169 The financial advantage accruing from serialisation would have been just as welcome to poorly capitalised Muslim publishers as it was to Baba author-publishers. Why then did Baba publishers so frequently serialise, and Muslim publishers so rarely? There are, I believe, several answers. One is simply that supplying regular instalments of a serial was quite feasible if nearly all the customers lived in Singapore town. It seems that this was more or less true of Baba book-buyers, but we shall see that it was certainly not the case for purchasers of Muslim books. Another factor is that the serialised Baba publications were appearing in Malay for the first time, whereas the long texts issued by Muslim publishers were almost all established in the manuscript tradition before print. Some of the Baba serials were therefore published in instalments as the translation proceeded.170 This was not only a practical work process, but it also gave the buyers the sense that they were sharing in a contemporary experience which they shared uniquely with other purchasers of the serial. This sense of audience solidarity could be reinforced by devices like the publishing of letters from readers discussing the shared experience of previous instalments. This

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solidary potential can be generated by serialisation only with newly appearing material. If the text to be published is already in the public domain, the psychological dynamic of serialisation is weak. It is interesting that two of the handful of works serialised by Muslim publishers have this quality of novelty; namely, Al Faihah wa Faihah 1876–79 and Quran: al-Kitaab 1920. The attraction of the serial form to Baba readers may well also be a by-product of their familiarity with newspaper reading, which provided similar psychological rewards. In any case, it is a novel use of the print medium.

MUSLIM

It is through Muslim publishing that we can gain the fullest appreciation of the cultural ecology of the Singapore-Malaysia region and beyond. It has this significance because of the early rise of Singapore to a dominant position in Muslim publishing in Southeast Asia and the interest of the extensions and transformations wrought by Muslim printing on the nineteenth century Malay manuscript tradition.

The earliest Muslim printing in the region dates back to at least 1854, five years after Keasberry’s first success with lithography. In 1854 a Muslim from Pelambang purchased a lithographic press in Singapore and began printing copies of the Quran with introduction and notes in Malay.171 This early date must be appreciated in context of Muslim printing elsewhere. The first Muslim typographic printing of Arabic dates from Egypt in 1822. The first known use of lithography for Arabic printing occurred in Baghdad in 1830, and it is actually not until 1883 and 1885 that printing begins in Mecca and Medina respectively.172 As for Muslim printing in Malay or Javanese, the first indisputable product of Singapore included in this survey is dated 1860.173 In the following decade, nineteen Malay titles are known to have been put out by Singapore Muslim printers. Some Muslim religious texts were also printed in the Netherlands Indies from the late 1850s and early 1860s, but there is no evidence of the activity which characterised Singapore.174 Beyond the archipelago, Muslim printing in Malay arrives later. Malay books were printed in Bombay as early as 1874. In Mecca, Snouck Hurgronje found the earliest Malay-language works available there had been printed in 1876 and 1880 in Bombay and possibly in Cairo. The printing press at Mecca began issuing Malay language works only in 1884.175 Singapore thus emerges early as the leading centre of Muslim publishing in Southeast Asia during the nineteenth century, and as the first centre of Malay-language Muslim printing anywhere in the world.

Muslim publishing surpassed the European stream in the number of editions issued, and in the variety of texts committed to print.176 It could not, however, match government and mission presses in terms of pure bulk.177 But putting considerations of bulk and variety aside, Muslim publication is the most revealing for our understanding of the cultural ecology of the nineteenth century Malay world. It is so for two reasons. The first is that it developed in a field previously the domain of the Malay manuscript literary culture. In this it differs from most Baba printing as well as from most of the innovative and intrusive mission and school printing. The second is that throughout its evolution it has been a commercial enterprise. The European press, we have seen, operated at the