

**RELIGIOUS PERIODICALS PUBLISHED IN THE
STRAITS SETTLEMENTS AND MALAYA:
1821 - 1940**

by

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The development of periodicals in the Malay Language in the Straits Settlements and Malaya appears to have begun at about the same time as the introduction of the printing presses by Christian missionaries in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It could also be said that the introduction of printed material in Malay and the technology of printing itself to the Straits Settlements and Malaya was more or less connected with colonial involvement in the area. This paper seeks to highlight two important issues. Firstly, publications of periodicals in the Malay language in the Straits Settlements and in Malaya owed its origins to the printing activities of Christian missionaries. Secondly, the emergence of Islamic religious periodicals in the first quarter of the twentieth century indicated that there was a need to consolidate and to strengthen the teaching of Islam as well as perceptions of Islam amongst Muslim in the midst of threat posed by the proselytizing activities of Christian missionaries in the Straits Settlements.

Printing had been introduced in the Netherlands Indies by the Dutch as early as 1629. A translation of the Gospel of Matthew by Albert Cornelius Ruyhl in 1629. A Dutch citizen was said to have been financed by the Dutch East India Company (VOC).¹ The publication was said to be "the earliest example in history of the translation and printing of a book of the Bible in a Non-European language as a means of evangelization". Ruyhl's effort was soon followed by a series of translations of the Bible. Throughout the eighteenth century Holland continued to lead in the field of Malay printing in Europe. It would not be wrong to presume that most of the translation work was still mainly limited to the lexicographical and Christian works. Some of the most important publications were the work of George Henrik

¹ See Annabel Teh Gallop, "Early Malay Printing: An introduction to the British Library Collections", *JMBRAS*, Vol. LXIII, Pt. I, 1990, p. 86.

Wendly, whose translations of the Heidelberg catechism and the Psalms entered several editions. Wendly was said to be responsible for the introduction of the romanized system in the printing of Malay works both in Europe and Indonesia.

Despite an early start, it was only in the nineteenth century that the Protestant missions began to launch their great evangelical enterprise using the printed word to convey their message in the Malay Language. Between 1815 and 1834, the Straits Settlements saw the establishment of a number of Christian missionary organization The London Missionary Society (LMS) was set up at Malacca in 1815, Penang and Singapore in 1819, and Batavia in 1822. The Baptist Mission was established at Bencoolen in 1818 and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions at Singapore in 1833. All these stations were equipped with printing presses.² Within the mission circle, printing of books and periodicals in the language of the natives would help to spread the Gospel to all nations. The London Missionary Society (LMS) also had other aims which were to publish and distribute the scripture in the vernacular language, and also to teach children of both sexes to read and write in school with the aid of the Catechism and the Bible.³

It is interesting to note that printing began in Malacca on 5 August, 1815 at the missionary station established there on behalf of the London Missionary Society, by William Milne. Milne's effort was the result of strong support which he had received from Robert Morrison, the first Protestant Missionary sent to China by the society in 1807. The London Missionary Society was first established with a view to convert China's millions. It planned for a Chinese mission at Macao and Canton in 1805 but due to strong opposition from the Portuguese at Macao and the Chinese authorities, Morrison had to contend himself by restricting his activities at Canton. It was Morrison who viewed the printing press as an important instrument to spread the Gospel. His famous words, "there also, let there be that powerful engine, the press", is testimony of his faith in printing as one of the chief means of achieving the aims of his mission.⁴

Morrison and Milne found that China was not at all conducive for the setting up of a missionary station nevertheless they were eager to spread the Gospel amongst the Chinese in China. An alternative station outside China had to be found and Malacca was said to be a conducive spot since Malacca was situated at the centre between China and India, and the

² Ian Proudfoot, *Early Malay Printed Books*, Kuala Lumpur, Academy of Malay Studies and The Library, University of Malaya, 1993, p. 9.

³ Gallop, "Early Malay Printing", p. 87

⁴ Ibrahim b. Ismail, "Missionary Printing in Malacca 1815-1843", *Libri*, 32.3 (1982), p. 181.

rest of the Malay Archipelago was accessible from there. At Malacca Milne was given the task of publishing a monthly Chinese periodical combining Christian and general knowledge. Although the missionary station in Malacca will be aimed at the Chinese nonetheless printing of other works in Malay and English was also in the program. With the help of a Chinese type-cutter, Leang Ah-Fah, Milne was able to produce in 1815 the first piece of printing, popularly known as the *Chinese Monthly Magazine* (ch'ai shih su mei yueh t'ung chi ch'uan). Two years after the publication of the *Chinese Monthly Magazine*, another English quarterly periodical publication. *The Indo-Chinese Gleaner* made its first appearance in May 1817.⁵ It contained, "various intelligence from China and the neighbouring countries; miscellaneous notices of the Indo-Chinese nations: translations from Chinese, Malay & c., essays on religious subjects; accounts of the progress of Christian missions in India; and the state of Christianity in general".

Although the desire to bring the Gospel to China proved abortive due to the political and social environment which was not suitable for missionary activities, nonetheless the idea of a mission aimed at the Chinese never lost its luster. The establishment of a mission station at Malacca together with its printing equipment paved the way for more active translation of the Bible and Christian tracts in the Straits.

Prior to the publication of the first Christian Missionary periodical in Malay at Malacca in 1821, the London Missionary Society like their counterpart in Batavia was more preoccupied with the printing of Christian tracts. In May 1817, two tracts by the Missionary Claudius Henry Thomson (the Ten Commandments and Dr. Watts First Catechism) were printed at the press of the London Missionary Society Station by Rev William Milne.⁶ The two works were printed on a wooden press which had arrived in Malacca in November 1816 from the Mission Press in Serampore. The printing of the translation of the Ten Commandments and Dr. Watts First Catechism was a historic event since it marked the first printing in the Malay Language in Southeast Asia outside Batavia. The activities of the LMS station at Malacca herald the wave of mission printing in Malay which was to spread throughout the archipelago.

Although the priority of the London Missionary Society at Malacca was printing in Chinese nonetheless a smaller number of Malay works published were mainly due to the

⁵ See Cecil K. Byrd, *Early Printing in the Straits Settlements 1806-1858. A Preliminary Inquiry*, Singapore, Singapore National Library, 1970.

⁶ Ibrahim, "Missionary Printing", p. 193.

efforts of C. H. Thomsen and his teacher Munsyi Abdullah.⁷ A few rare tri-lingual works in Malay, Chinese and English were also printed in Malacca including extracts from the Gospel and *The Sermon on the Mount*.⁸ The most significant development at Malacca in so far as printing of periodicals in the Malay Language is concerned was the publication of *The Malay Magazine* or the *Bustan Ariffin iaitu pengutib segala remah daripadajenis-jenis hikamt dan ilmu dan kepandaian dan warta dan sebagainya*.⁹ The *Bustan Ariffin* was printed in English and Malay. The title in Jawi was on the back cover. The first issue appeared in January 1821. Although six numbers were published quarterly until April 1822, *The Malay Magazine* or *The Bustan Ariffin* was designed with the sole purpose of furnishing the Malays with materials of useful knowledge, while at the same time it was to serve as an auxiliary to Europeans who wanted to study the Malay Language. Its contents consist of translations and treatises on all subjects such as universal history, biography, natural philosophy, religion, occurrences and also news that would be of interest to readers. News pertaining to an outbreak of small-pox in Malacca and a notice with regard to the prohibition of swimming in the sea of Malacca because of the presence of sharks were reported in the magazine.¹⁰ The printing of this magazine ceased with Thomsen's removal in May 1822 to work in the newly established mission at Singapore.

Printing of books in Malay came to a standstill at the mission station because of Thomsen and Abdullah's departure from Malacca. Thomsen was said to have removed his printing office to Singapore. The London Missionary Society finally closed its mission at Malacca in 1843 to embark on bigger ventures in China.¹¹ Apart from Malacca, Penang was also another centre where printing in Malay was most apparent. Printing began at Penang in 1832 under the supervision of Rev. Thomas Beighton, a member of the London Missionary Society. In December 1832 he printed a one-page tract entitled *Ibarat Perkataan*. It was said that until his death in 1844, Beighton who had a good command of the Malay Language, produced at least 15 imprints. Many of his works are polemical diatribes against Islam such as *Tamthil, ia ini perbandingan agama tuhan Isa al-masih dengan agama Muhammad nabi orang Arab di Negeri Mekah*, a comparison between Christianity and Islam.¹² It would be of

⁷ Ibid., p.192

⁸ Gallop, "Early Malay Printing", p. 96.

⁹ See Ibrahim b. Ismail, "In Quest of the Malay Magazine 1821-22," *Indonesia Circle*, 21 (Mar 1980), p. 45-48.

¹⁰ Ibrahim, "In Quest of the Malay Magazine", p. 194 and Ahmat b. Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu Abad Kesembilan Betas*, Bangi, Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1992, p. 24.

¹¹ Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar*, p. 25.

¹² Gallop, "Early Malay Printing", p. 96.

interest to observe that during the early mission printing in Penang, Malay tracts printed in *jawi* always began with the invocation: *Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* (In the name of God, the Compassionate, The Merciful). Apart from the above Beighton would also use an invocation: *Bism al-Ab wa-al-Ibn wa-al-Ruh al-Qudus* (In the name of God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit) commonly used in the Middle East amongst Christian Arabs and missionaries.

Meanwhile printing in Singapore commenced with the arrival of Thomsen and Abdullah from Malacca in 1822. A considerable number of mission imprints in Malay were printed in Singapore such as a lithographed *Syair Injil* and a Christian poem composed in 1834 by a *pranakan* from Penang, probably a re-issue of a work published by Thomas Beighton.

Singapore was chosen by the mission press not only because of its strategic location but also because of its unsurpassed regional communications. The emergence of new industries coupled with an efficient colonial administration made Singapore a major regional centre for publishing. In the early nineteenth century the first substantial printing of Thai took place in Singapore. The same could also be said of materials in Bugis which were printed in Singapore. 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 Bataks of North Sumatra. Singapore was also an important base for the largest publisher of Christian religious material, the British and Foreign Bible Society.¹³ This society was said to have supported the Press of Rev. Benjamin Peach Keasberry during the 1850's and 1870's.

Keasberry arrived in Singapore in 1839. He refused to leave Singapore with other LMS missionaries for China in 1843 but on the other hand, "continued writing, printing, publishing and running his free school – where the trades of book-binding, printing and lithography were taught as well as reading and writing- until his death in 1875."¹⁴ Using *his* pupils as apprentices; Keasberry did some commercial jobbing (letterheads, bills of lading, etc.). He printed Singapore's first two Chinese newspapers: *Tifang Jih Jim Pao* (Local News, 1845) and *Jit Sheng* (Rising Sun, 1858). Perhaps Keasberry's contribution to Malay printing was his promotion of lithography as well as the publication of Malay books and periodicals. Keasberry had learnt the mechanics of lithography from Medhurst in Batavia in the 1830's.¹⁵

¹³ See Proudfoot, *Early Malay Printed Books*, p. 10.

¹⁴ Gallop, "Early Malay Printing", p. 97.

¹⁵ Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bihliografi Akhbar*. p. 25.

With lithography one could print Chinese characters, Arabic script or anything else without the trouble of casting fonts. Keasberry was said to have developed a style of lithography which imitated not the printed text, but manuscript. In 1849 working with Abdullah, Keasberry was able to produce "some beautifully decorated multi-coloured lithographs... At the technical level, these were the first printed books which could be comfortably read by literate Malay".¹⁶

With the skill which he had acquired, Keasberry began to produce a series of lithographed periodicals or magazines. His first periodical was *Taman Pungatauan* published in Singapore, between 1848-51.¹⁷ Since there was no known extent of the periodical it would be difficult to ascertain as to what were its actual contents. Nonetheless one thing was clear that the *Taman Pungatauan* was published by Keasberry and he was the editor of the periodical. It is probable that he had intended the publication of the periodical to be on the same style as the bilingual *Bustan Ariffin* or *The Malay Magazine*, published in 1821 at Malacca. Unlike the *Bustan Ariffin* the *Taman Pungatauan* were aimed unequivocally at a Malay-reading audience. Subsequently after the appearance of his first periodical, Keasberry went on to publish another periodical in Romanised Malay under the title *Pungutib Segala Remah Pungatauan* (The Malay Gleaner) printed at the mission press in March, 1852.

In its form, style and content the *Pungutib Segala Remah Pungatauan* is an extended version of the *Taman Pungatauan*. In the first edition of the *Pungutib Segala Remah Pungatauan*, Keasberry spelt out the aims and purpose of the periodical. He wrote:

Let readers who read this journal be informed that I have, till now, been the editor of this journal named **Taman Pungatauan**, for a span of four years, during which time four volumes have been issued. And now it is my wish that another journal be produced which I have named **Pungutib sagaia remah Pungatauan**. There is little difference between this journal and the previous one, except that its contents have been increased twofold, in addition to which have been included several types of science and knowledge, skill and learning; consequently, it will appear quarterly.

¹⁶ Gallop, "Early", p. 97.

¹⁷ *Pungutib Sagala Remah Pungatauan*, Vol. I, No. I. March 1852.

Above all, I lay my hope on the readers of the **Taman Pungatauan** and the forthcoming journal, since I know for certain that among the Malay people there has never been such a journal which can reveal the comprehension and the knowledge of men. On that account I implore to you dear readers to acquire from the above journals as provision for yourselves be they for affairs of the world or the hereafter, in order that they may become the good seed that will germinate to grow for generations to come.

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A close scrutiny of the first issue of the periodical also indicated that the periodical was targeted not only to the Malay-reading audience but also to the children of the Malay boarding school which was established around the same period. It was clearly stated at the rear section of the periodical that all monies collected from the sale of the periodical would be donated to the Malay Boarding School.

The contents of the *Pungutip Segala Remah Pungatauan*, appear to have been divided into three heading under the title "Hikayat" (prose), "Ilmu" (Knowledge) and "Agama" (Religion).¹⁹ Articles on general knowledge such as "Dari hal kapal asap" (The steam ship), "Adat raja-raja mati di negeri China". (Burial customs of Chinese royalty in China), "Kakoraan Dungan Injil"²⁰ (The Quran and the Bible) and important issues pertaining to various aspects of Malay society and the custom of the Malays found a fertile ground in the pages of the periodical. The *Pungutip Segala Remah*, like other missionary periodicals published during the same period also contain translation of articles from important Christian literature especially of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, entitled in Romanized Malay as "Pururjanaan orang munchari slamat"²¹ (The Story of a Man who seeks salvation) and also from the Bible "Deri Hal Adam" (The story of Adam).²² It would appear that apart from imparting knowledge the periodical was also aimed at proselytizing the Malays as well as the pranakan Chinese.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *Pungutip Sagala Remah Pungatauan*, Vol. I, No. 4, December 1852, p. 138-141.

²¹ Ibid., p. 126-131

²² *Pungutip Sagala Remah Pwzgatauan*, Vol. I, No. 1, March, 1852, p. 8-13.

After the publication of *Taman Pungatauan* (1848-51) and *Pengutib Segala Remah* (1852) Keasberry's last and finest magazine, *Cermin Mata* (1858-59) or *Cermin Mat a bagi segala orang yang menuntut pengetahuan* was produced solely in Jawi. This "most spectacular imprint" was crafted in beautifully decorated multi-coloured lithography.²³ The periodical first appeared in April 1858 and lasted until 1859. The contents of the periodical seems to adopt the style of the other two periodicals published earlier by Keasberry with the exception that there were additional articles on the autobiography of Francis Drake and also Napoleon's war with Russia and Europe. Abdullah's *Hikayat* and his *Pelayaran* (Travels) together with episodes from the Adventures of Robison Crusoe were also apparent and appeared in almost every series. Equally important were articles which highlighted the conversion of a Lahore Prince into Christianity, "Seorang Anak Raja Lahore Telah Masuk Masehi" and also "Seorang Haji Telah Masuk Masehi" (Conversion of a Haji to Christianity).²⁴

Keasberry's innovation yet amenable printing marks two turning points in the history of Malay literacy. His style of printing influenced the later printing technology adopted by many Muslim commercial press in Singapore. At the sometime the content and style of written Malay had enormous influence particularly in the Government Malay schools.

Beginning from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1940's a considerable number of Christian missionary tracts, books and periodicals had been published either by the mission press at Malacca, Keasberry's printery at Bukit Zion or at the American Mission Press (Later the Methodist Publishing House) in Singapore. Large scale mission sponsored printing began when W.G. Shellabear arrived in 1890. The American Mission Press began its operation in December the same year.²⁵ It was the Christian missionaries who first realized the importance of the printed word to convey the messages of the Bible and the Gospel. At least by the turn of the century print literacy was a little more widespread. An enormous amount of Gospels and Bibles in Malay and other Southeast Asian Language were distributed either in the form of pamphlets, books or periodicals. They were distributed among the unenlightened by colporteurs tracking across the countryside. Hence between 1821 to 1940 a number of periodicals were being published by Christian Missionary organization in Singapore and they

²³ Proudfoot, *Early Malay Printed Books*, p. 15.

²⁴ See Nor Hayati bt. Salleh "Cermin Mata: Satu Kajian Manuskrip Majallah Orientalis Di Negeri-Negeri Selat", *Latihan Ilmiah Ijazah Sarjana Muda Pengajian Islam Dengan Kepujian*, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, 1992/93.

²⁵ W.G. Shellabear, "Singapore. As Strategic Centre", *The Moslem World*, Vol. VII. 1918, p. 183-185.

include titles like *Sahabat* (1895-1905), *Plajaran Skola Agama* (1896), *Warta Melayu* (1898-1899), *Pertandaan Zaman* (1919) and *Warta Ceredja* (1926-1929). With the exception of *Cermin Mata* and *Warta Melayu* which was printed in both jawi and Roman script, all the other periodicals published between the two period appeared in *Rumi*. Apparently, the Malay that were being used in some of the periodicals were "Low" Malay.²⁶ The Romanized version of the *Warta Melayu* was highly influenced by *Baba Malay*. One could presume that this was done to capture the interest of the *Baba Chinese* or *Pranakan*.

It was evident that the message conveyed in the essays of the periodicals or in the early school text was meant to proselytize. The essays on technology were intended to demonstrate the superiority of Western civilization. The new technology that was prevalent in western society meant that there were rewards of adopting Western values.²⁷

In so far as essays on religion were concern most would pick up an implicit attack on Islam. One good example is the essay on the universe published serially in the periodicals were not only to enlighten the Malays on purely scientific matters but also was an attack on prevailing Muslim cosmologies.

Perhaps one of the consequences of adopting the new print media introduced by the missionaries especially at the turn of the century was the demise of Malay manuscript writing. It left the Malay copyist idle without much to do. Promotion of the Roman script in schools as well as in the publication of periodicals and text books would subsequently lead to the decline in the use of Arabic script. The new style prose pioneered by the missionaries would undoubtedly have its impact on Malay society. In schools of 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. Reading was taught and writing would be emphasized. These new developments of skill appeared to be at odds with the practice of the Quran School.

In the midst of challenges posed by Christian missionary activities in the Straits Settlements and elsewhere in the Malay Archipelago, in 1906 a small group of four religious educated Malay Intelligentsia began to surface at Singapore. A majority of them were educated in the Middle East particularly in the cities of Mecca and Cairo. It was during their stay in the Middle East that they began to observe and subsequently became involved with the

²⁶ See Proudfoot, *Early Malay Printed Books*. p. 6 and Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu*, p. 70.

²⁷ Proudfoot, *Early*, p. 16.

fundamentalist movement. Although fundamentalist ideas in the Middle East initially originated from the writings of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab (1703-1791) in Arabia nevertheless such ideas became apparent in Cairo with the emergence of Syed Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1839-1897), Syeikh Muhamad Abduh (1849-1905) and Syed Muhammad Rashid Ridza (1865-1935) The reformist movement which was based in Cairo, had its own periodical *Al-Manar* (The Lighthouse) published by Rashid Ridza between 1898-1935. Fundamentalist ideas espoused in the *Al-Manar* left lasting influence in the minds of these young Malay intelligentsia.²⁸

Al-Imam (The Leader), the first Islamic religious periodical which made its appearance in Singapore in July 1906 was the effort of four members of the urban Malayo-Muslim community of Singapore who had had extensive contacts with the Middle East. They were Syaikh Mohd. Tahir b. Jalaluddin Al-Azhari, originally from Minangkabau, the first editor; Sayyid Syeikh b. Ahmad Al-Hadi, a Malacca born Malay-Arab; Haji Abbas b. Mohd. Taha of Geylang road, Singapore, the second editor and Syeikh Mohd. Salim Al-Kilali, an Achenese merchant who was director (Mudir) of *Al-Imam* during its first two years. *Al-Imam* was said to closely resemble the fundamentalist periodical *Al-Manar* for it was from this periodical that the writers and sponsors of *Al-Imam* derived their fundamentalist ideas.²⁹ A scrutiny of the articles which appeared in *At-Imam* revealed that it was a radical departure in the field of Malay publication. In terms of its journalistic quality *the Al-Imam* was said to be far ahead of the other periodicals which were published earlier. Equally important was the fact that it had a coherent philosophy of action for a society faced with the need for social and economic change. In many ways Singapore in the first quarter of the twentieth century represented for Malays an alien world which was increasingly controlled by an alien and highly competitive people. Hence in the first issue of the periodical one envisaged that the periodical's concern was with religion and not directly with social or political change. Almost all of the thirty-one issues of the periodical contain at least one article analyzing the ills of the community. *Al-Imam* points to the backwardness of the Malays, their laziness, their complacency and their inability to cooperate for the common good. The Malays were not alone for it is one shared by the whole Islamic world. The cause of decline of the Islamic peoples is that "they have ceased, in their ignorance, to follow the commands of God as expressed through the mouth

²⁸ See Abu Bakar Hamzah. *Al-Imam: Its Role in Malay Society 1906-1908*, Kuala Lumpur, Media Cendiakiawan, nd.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

and the life of the Prophet Muhammad".³⁰ In relation to the above an article in the introductory issue of the periodical entitled "The Proper Task: What is Most Needed for Our People", one writer wrote:

Perhaps it may be said that we are most in need of skills of craftsmanship and agriculture, or knowledge of how to rescue us from the slough of apathy and indolence, or that we must learn to unite for the common good... All that is true. But the one thing that will strengthen and realise all our desire is knowledge of the commands of our religion. For religion is the proven cure for all ills of our community.

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An analysis of the message in the article revealed that it was by going back to the real teaching of Islam that the ills of Malay society could be resolved. In addition to providing numerous articles expounding the true Islam, *Al-Imam* also proposed that a reformed system of religious education be established so that it could serve as a barrier to the proselytezing activities of Christian missionaries. To achieve this it was proposed that the old system of religious education had to be restructured and in its place a new curriculum should be formulated so as to place it in line with the changing educational environment.³² In their endeavour to achieve this goal the fundamentalist clashed with the traditional *ulama* or the *Kaum Tua* who accused them as *Kaum Muda* or "*Kaum Al-Manar*", the *Al-Manar* faction.³³ Despite strong opposition not only from the *Kaum Tua* but also from the religious establishment, the fundamentalist insisted that their actions were influenced by the desire to defend Islam.

³⁰ William R. Roff., *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, Kuala Lumpur. Penerbit Universiti Malaysia, 1980. p. 57

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³² Syeikh Tahir Jalaluddin, "Membetulkan Perjalanan agama atau Peraturan Perjalanan Kaum Islam", *Al-Ikhwani*, Peng. 3, Jil. 1, (16 Nov., 1926), p. 41-45; Peng. 4, Jil. 1, (16 Dec., 1926), p. 65-69; Peng. 5, Jil. 1 (16 Jan., 1927). p. 85-89.

³³ Roff., *Origins*, p.59.

The clarion call initiated by *Al-Imam*, to revitalize Malay Society by means of religion and to rid the religion itself of all its ills so as to make it more competitive with the new world order, appears to gain support from other Islamic religious periodicals. *Neraca* (The scale) 1911-1915, published immediately after the closure of *al-Imam* also contain fundamentalist ideas especially when Haji Abbas b. Mohd. Taha who had been the last editor of *Al-Imam*, became its editor.³⁴ Though local affairs were reflected to some extent in its correspondence columns and in editorial comment, the great bulk of its news came from the Middle East and had a strong pan-Islamic flavour. In the 1920's a considerable number of periodicals published in Penang such as *Al-Ikhwān* (The Brotherhood) 1926-31 and *Semangat Islam* (The Spirit of Islam) 1929-31 also expressed similar views. *Al-Ikhwān*, which came out regularly for a little over five years, was essentially an Islamic periodical with a fundamentalist purpose. It was also a social and even a political campaigner, and wrote in a lively and informed fashion about subjects as diverse as the emancipation of women and the provision of more English education for Malays. As a fundamentalist periodical *Al-Ikhwān* appears to have participated fully in all the controversies of the time.³⁵ The *Semangat Islam* (The Spirit of Islam) on the other hand was a periodical of somewhat less influence but had roughly equal circulation as the *Al-Ikhwān*. It appeared in Penang in 1929 and lasted for about eighteen months. Espousing a fairly politicized kind of fundamentalism, the periodical was sometimes contributed by Malay students at Al-Azhar in Cairo. It is in some ways reminiscent of the two Malay-Language periodicals *Seruan Azhar* (1925-1928) and *Pilihan Timour* (1927-1928) published by Malay and Indonesian students in Cairo, which also circulated in the peninsula at this time.³⁶

Roughly speaking however there appear between 1916 and 1941 some two dozen religious periodicals in Malay (and a further six in English) of a markedly Islamic kind. These periodicals could easily be divided into three groups i.e.: general Islamic periodicals, those associated with educational institution (mainly madrasah), and those associated with religious clubs or society. The gradual increase in the number of religious periodicals published after 1906 indicated that issues pertaining to Islam could easily attract the attention of individuals. Subsequently there was prevalent amongst Muslim not only in the Straits Settlements and

³⁴ See William R. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals published in the Straits Settlements and peninsular Malay States 1876-1941*, London, Oxford University Press, 1972, p.7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Malaya but also in the other parts of the Islamic world that as a religion Islam is fluid and it could easily adapt itself to the changing order of the day.