

# Elementary Malay Vernacular Schools and School Libraries in Singapore Under British Colonial Rule, 1819-1941

*Lim Peng Han*

*Department of Information Science, Loughborough University, UK*

*Earlier research on school libraries in Singapore has stated that school libraries were established there recently. Lim (1970) wrote that school libraries in Singapore were largely a post-war innovation, and Ho (1998) wrote that published records related to the history of school libraries in Singapore were available only from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. This article presents historical information that shows that an official policy on school libraries was initiated in 1899. It also presents the historical record of the development of schools and school libraries under British colonial rule and related information about the Malay school book production.*

## Introduction

Singapore is a diamond-shaped island located at the southernmost tip of the Malaysian Peninsula. The island measures 42 km from west to east and 23 km from north to south. Its land area of 606.7 km<sup>2</sup> is about 38% of London's 1,580 km<sup>2</sup> or about the size of Greater Boston. To understand the beginning and development of Malay school libraries, we need to know the history of Singapore since its founding in 1819 and how schooling among the immigrant communities began, evolved, and developed in the colonial port city.

Table 1  
Population of Singapore by Race, 1871, 1891, 1911, and 1931

Year	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Eurasians	Europeans	Others	Total
1871	26,148 27.0%	54,572 56.2%	11,610 12.0%	2,164 2.2%	1,946 2.0%	671 0.6%	97,111 100%
1891	35,992 19.5%	121,908 66.0%	16,035 8.7%	3,589 2.0%	5,254 2.8%	1,776 1.0%	184,554 100%
1911	41,806 13.7%	219,577 72.3%	27,755 9.5%	4,671 1.5%	5,711 1.8%	3,660 1.2%	303,321 100%
1931	65,014 11.6%	418,640 75.1%	50,811 9.1%	6,903 1.2%	8,082 1.5%	8,275 1.5%	557,745 100%

Sources. MacNair, Waller & Knight, 1871; Merewether, 1892; Marriott, 1911; Vlieland, 1932.

Copyright of works published in *School Libraries Worldwide* is jointly held by the author(s) and by the International Association of School Librarianship. The author(s) retain copyright of their works, but give permission to the International Association of School Librarianship to reprint their works in collections or other such documents published by or on behalf of the International Association of School Librarianship. Author(s) who give permission for their works to be reprinted elsewhere should inform the Editor of *School Libraries Worldwide* and should ensure that the following statement appears with the article: Reprinted, with permission, from *School Libraries Worldwide* Volume 14, Number 1, January 2008, pages 72-85.

When Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore in 1819, “the population consisted of about 150 fisherman and pirates of whom about 30 were Chinese” (Newbold, 1839, p. 279). The immigrant communities to Singapore were from China, India, and the Netherlands East Indies. One feature of the population of Singapore that stands out clearly is the multiracial character of the people, which was observed even in the early days of the island’s history. From 1871 to 1931, the Malays formed the largest minority ethnic group. The percentage distribution has, however, undergone radical changes over the years as shown in Table 1) where Malays includes both Malays and Indonesian immigrants and Indians includes both Indians and Pakistanis. Singapore has never had a native population in the true sense of the word because the three main groups (Malays, Chinese, and Indians) came to the island as immigrants (Saw, 1969).

### Singapore Under British Colonial Rule, 1819-1941

To understand how Malay schools and school libraries were established, developed, and evolved since the founding of Singapore and before World War II, it is necessary to examine the four distinct periods of colonial rule.

1. Singapore under Bencoolen, 1819-1823, and Fort William, 1823-1825.
2. Singapore’s amalgamation into the Straits Settlements under the East India Company (EIC), and later British India, 1826-1867.
3. The Straits Settlements under the Colonial Office in London, 1867-1895.
4. The formation of British Malaya consisting of the Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States, and Unfederated Malay States, 1895-1942.

#### Singapore Under Bencoolen, 1819-1823, and Fort William, 1823-1825

After Raffles founded Singapore, he appointed Farquhar as the First British Resident (1819-1823) and supervised his administration fitfully from his post of Bencoolen in West Sumatra (Chew, 1991). In June 1823, Raffles left Singapore for the last time and made it a dependency of the Supreme Government of Calcutta. On June 24, 1824 Singapore and Malacca were effectively transferred to the EIC by the British Parliament, and both territories became subordinate to Fort William in India (Tan, 1999). Education was recognized by Raffles as one of the first needs of his new settlement (Neilson, n.d.). In 1819 Raffles (1991a) wrote in his first policies on education,

1. To educate the sons of higher order of natives and others;
2. To afford the means of instruction in the native languages to such of the Company’s servants and others as may desire it;
3. To collect the scattered literature and traditions of the country, with whatever may illustrate their laws and customs and to publish and circulate in a correct form the most important of these, with such other works as may be calculated to raise the character of the institution and to be useful or instructive to the people. (p. 33)

At a meeting of the principal inhabitants of Singapore at Farquhar’s residence on April 1, 1823, Raffles suggested the advantage and the necessity of forming an institution like a college (Philips, 1908). The proposed Singapore Institution was to consist of three departments.

- I. A scientific department for the common advantage of the several Colleges that may be established.
- II. A literary and moral department for the Chinese, which the Anglo-Chinese College affords, and

III. A literary and moral department for the Siamese, Malay, etc., which will be provided for by the Malayan College. (Raffles, 1991b, p. 75).

The foundation and policy of the Singapore Institution was intended for the whole region, the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, and the Indonesian Archipelago. Raffles' educational plans were designed to include not only the principal peoples of the Malay Peninsula, but also the Javanese, the Bugis, the Siamese, and the people from the surrounding islands (Hough, 1933). Hough recognized that the founding of the Singapore Institution was an amazingly advanced conception considering that it was not until 1871 that state-supported education was widely established. The 1870 Education Act received Royal Assent to compel children between the ages of 5 and 12 to attend school (Armytage, 1970).

John Crawford succeeded Farquhar as Resident of Singapore from 1823 to 1826 (Nunn, 1921). On February 7, 1826 Crawford reported,

The native inhabitants of Singapore have not yet attained that state of civilization and knowledge which would qualify them to derive advantage from the enlarged system of education held up by the Singapore Institution and that to prosecute under present circumstances that establishment on the footing originally contemplated would be to incur heavy expense without any prospect of corresponding and adequate benefit. (Chelliah, 1947, pp. 19-20)

### *Singapore's Amalgamation Into the Straits Settlements Under the East India Company and Later British India, 1826-1867*

In 1786 the British East India Company (EIC) took over Penang and established it as the Fourth Presidency of India. Its expenses always exceeded its revenue, and it was draining the Indian Treasury (Mills, 1925). In 1826 the Straits Settlements were formed by the amalgamation of the three Settlements of Singapore (including Christmas Island and the Cocos-Keeling group), Penang (including Province Wellesley), and Malacca (Jarman 1998). In 1832 the seat of government of the Straits Settlements was transferred from Penang to Singapore (McKerron, 1948).

On January 5, 1827 the trustees of the Singapore Institution were informed that the government subscription was to be appropriated solely to the establishment of elementary schools for the natives. For many years, however, the monthly allowance was withheld, and when repeated applications were made, it was reduced for a time to 100 dollars, later raised to 200 dollars, and never paid in full. Because funds were exhausted, the building, which was ill-constructed from the outset, was left unfinished and unused. In 1832 a local newspaper referred to it as "a ruin" and "an eyesore to the inhabitants" (Philips, 1908, pp. 269-270).

The Singapore Free School was founded in 1834 in an unoccupied house, with 32 students in the English classes, 18 boys in the Tamil classes, 12 in the Malay, and 12 in the Chinese classes (Buckley, 1902). The Singapore Institution building was not completely erected until 1837. The Malay class of the Singapore Free School increased to 50 in 1838 (Singapore Institution Free School, 1838). However, enrollment in the Malay department's attendance fell to about 16 in 1841 (Singapore Institution Free School, 1841), and the following year the Malay class was "abolished, since it was found that the teachers could not collect a sufficient number of Malay children to form even a tolerable class" (Singapore Institution Free School, 1843, p. 4).

The earliest accessible record of the proposed Singapore Institution and its library and museum appeared in the third annual report (1836-1837) of the Singapore Free School. The report contained a short list of books presented to the school, with the remark, "The few books which form the School Library are in constant circulation among the boys and their friends" (Singapore Free School, 1837, p. 8). The report also stated, "Funds will be required to furnish a library and museum, in which books given to the institution and all such specimens of the natural history of these regions as can be collected shall be kept" (pp. 8-9). This is the first known record of a school library for the English classes of the Singapore Free School (Hanitsch, 1921).

The fourth annual report (1837-1838) of what was now the Singapore Institution Free School (1838) stated,

The number of volumes already in the Library is 392. The principle upon which the Library is founded is as follows: Free admission is given to anyone. All subscribers and donors to the Institution, and the teachers and scholars therein, are entitled to remove books from the library for perusal, and any other party may acquire the same right on a monthly payment to the Librarian for 25 cents. (p. 13)

Missionaries from abroad were involved in the production of books in Malay from the earliest days of British colonial rule. The first missionary stations and presses of the London Missionary Society (LMS) were established in 1815 in Melaka (Ibrahim Ismail, 1982), in 1819 in Penang (Milner, 1980), and in 1819 in Singapore (Buckley, 1902). Starting in 1834, missionaries from the LMS station in Penang and Malacca supplied slates, pencils, and "a number of Elementary and useful books and printed sheets in the Malay" language (Singapore Free School, 1835, p. 4) and copies of "the Malay and English Vocabulary" (Singapore Institution Free School, 1838, p. 25).

From 1834 to 1843 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) established a station in Singapore for printing missionary works and religious books in Chinese and Malay (Coakley, 1998). In 1837 the ABCFM presented 100 copies of elementary books in Malay (Singapore Institution Free School, 1838). In 1839 the Rev. Keasberry supplied the Malay classes "with a small reading book in Arabic character containing short and familiar sketches of the history of the Patriarchs, Judges and Prophets mentioned in the Old Testament whom Mohamedans as well as Christians hold in reverence" (Singapore Institution Free School, 1840, pp. 11-12). Keasberry's illustrated book, attractively lithographed, proved interesting to his readers. In the same year Keasberry left the ABCFM to join the LMS and opened a small school at Rochore, where he taught printing to Malay boys (Hill, 1955). In 1847, when the LMS ordered all their men to China, Keasberry severed his connection with the society and remained as a self-supporting missionary, occupying himself with his school, his preaching, and the printing establishment by which he supported the school (Buckley, 1902). He produced many textbooks and translated them from English into Malay (Hill 1955).

Keasberry was the first official translator and printer of Malay school books. In 1856 the Temenggong of Johore and the government each contributed an annual grant of \$1,500 to support Keasberry's Malay school institute, which taught Malay boys and girls the Malay and English languages, printing, lithography, book-binding, embroidery, and sewing. "From the fund above alluded to is provide the expense of publishing from Malay MSS, and for translating, printing, and publishing selections

from the Arabian Nights and other works calculated to instruct the Malay youth" (Jarman 1998, p. 88).

Part of the grant was used to establish two Malay vernacular schools, Telok Blangah Malay School and Sekolah Abdullah (Abdullah's School, Jarman 1998). Mills (1925) stressed that the EIC's interest and policy in the Malay Peninsula were purely commercial and that settlements like Penang, Malacca, and Singapore were regarded not as a nucleus of a Malayan empire but as trading centers. Therefore, little was done in the sphere of education despite Raffles' recognition that education was a primary need of his new settlement (Neilson, n.d.).

### *The Straits Settlements Under the Colonial Office in London, 1867-1895*

On April 1, 1867 the Straits Settlements were transferred from the control of the Indian government to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London (Jarman, 1998). In 1870 the first Governor of the newly established colony Sir Harry Ord appointed a Select Committee under the Chairmanship of Colonel R. Woolley to inquire into the state of education in the colony. The Committee recommended putting into effect the following.

1. To appoint the Inspector of Schools, Straits Settlements.
2. To reform the existing Grants-in-aid system, which mainly applied to English schools whether they be missionary or privately run.
3. To greatly extend and improve vernacular education, especially Malay vernacular education. (Wong & Gwee, 1980, p. 11)

The first Inspector of Schools was appointed in 1872, and he considerably extended secular government Malay boys' schools in the Straits Settlements. By 1901 about 21% of Malay boys aged 15 and under attended Malay schools. The first government Malay girls' school was established in 1884 (Hill, 1885), but by 1901 no more than 2% of Malay girls aged 15 and under were enrolled in Malay schools. At that time there were 141 boys' schools and 28 girls' schools in the Straits Settlements.

Keasberry's innovative printing work was one of the turning points in the history of Malay literacy. First, it was the first local demonstration of the potential of lithography. This printing technology had immense implications for the Malay-Muslim commercial press. Second, his books continued to influence the content and style of written Malay through the government Malay schools (Proudfoot 1988). Keasberry's death in 1875 brought an end to any extensive work in the Malay language (on the peninsula) for 20 years (Hunt, 1989). It halted the Mission Press activities in the production of Malay school books for the Straits Government because its press was sold to John Fraser and D.C. Neave in 1879 (Makepeace 1908). Under its new joint owners, the Mission Press became the Singapore and Straits Printing Office, which began to specialize in printing trade publications such as directories, guides, and company reports in English (Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak 1992).

The shortage of Malay school books resulted in the Straits government purchasing two Malay vernacular newspapers, *Jawi Peranakan* (1876-1895) and *Sekola Melayu* (1888-1893), both published in *jawi* (Arabic script), to be used in schools as they would "afford good practice in reading" (Jacobson, 1889, p. 216). Newspapers became an essential teaching medium in Malay schools.

### *The Formation of British Malaya, 1895-1942*

In 1896 the Federated Malay States (FMS) comprising Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang came under indirect British rule through a series of treaties and permissive letters (Khoo, 2001). In 1909 the signing of the Anglo-Siamese treaty transferred Kelantan and Trengganu, together with Kedah and Perlis, to British overlordship. These four northern states and Johore were collectively known as the Unfederated Malay States (Cheah, 2001). British Malaya thus consisted of three parts: the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the Unfederated Malay States (UFS), but all were effectively under British control (Carrington, 1956).

The first policy on Malay school libraries was formed in 1899 when R.J. Wilkinson, Acting Inspector of Schools, Straits Settlements, initiated the policy to supply every Malay school “with a small library such as in the hands of an intelligent teacher, would tend to foster a spirit of reading and to add greatly to the popularity of education” (Wilkinson, 1990, p. 136). However, little could be done, because in the same year the Government Malay Press closed. This press had been set up in 1885 to print and publish Malay books for Malay schools in the Straits Settlements and for “those of the Native States, Johor, Muar, Borneo, Sarawak” (Hill, 1894, p. 322). It “was found to be working at a cost exceeding the market value of the work done, and was abolished thereby effecting a considerable economy” (Wilkinson, 1900, p. 136).

Table 2  
Malay Literature Series, 1906-1920 and Reprints by  
Methodist Publishing House (MPH)

<i>Series</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>
1	<i>Gemala Hikmat</i> (1906, 1907, 1918)	Sulaiman Mohammed Nur
2	<i>Pelayaran Abdullah</i> (1907, 1909, 1913, 1915)	Abdullah Abdul Kadir Munshi
3	<i>Hang Tuah</i> (1908-9, 1913-16, 1917)	Shellabear, W.G., ed
4	<i>Abdullah</i> (1907-08, 1913-16, 1917)	Abdullah Abdul Kadir Munshi
5	<i>Awang Sulung Merah Muda</i> (1907, 1914)	A.J. Sturrock & R.O. Winstedt, eds.
6	<i>Cerita Janaka</i> (1908, 1914, 1917)	A.J. Sturrock & R.O. Winstedt, eds.
7	<i>Malim Dewa</i> (1908)	A.J. Sturrock & R.O. Winstedt, eds.
8	<i>Malim Deman</i> (1908)	A.J. Sturrock & R.O. Winstedt, eds.
9	<i>Sejarah Melayu</i> (1910, 1915)	W.G. Shellabear, ed.
10	<i>Raja Muda</i> (1914)	Pawang Ana; R.O. Winstedt, ed.
11	<i>Anggun Cik Tunggal</i> (1914)	Pawang Ana
12	<i>Pantun Melayu</i> (1914)	R.J. Wilkinson & R.O. Winstedt, eds.
13	<i>Pelanduk</i> (1915)	O.T. Dussek, ed.
14	<i>Teka-Teki</i> (1918)	O.T. Dussek, ed.
15	<i>Misa Melayu</i> (1919)	R.O. Winstedt, ed.
16	<i>Bayan Budiman</i> (1920)	R.O. Winstedt, ed.

Notes. Published by Methodist Publishing House (MPH) with the support of the Government of the Federated Malay States from 1906 to 1920 (Proudfoot, 1993).

Coincidentally, the Methodist Publishing House (MPH) was established in 1890 by William Shellabear (1862-1948), who for 12 years was its chief printer, author, editor, and manager (Hunt, 1996). Wilkinson, who had created a Malay Literature Series (MLS) for the government Malay Schools, promised the MPH as much work in romanized Malay as it could handle. From 1906 to 1920 MPH published 16 titles of the MLS (Proudfoot, 1993). Table 2 shows the titles published by MHP.

By the time British Malaya was established, there was a shift from using *jawi* to using romanized script. By 1894 all students in Malay vernacular schools were taught romanized Malay, and it does not appear to have interfered with the usual course of instruction in *jawi* (Isemonger et al., 1894). In 1904 the Director of Public Instruction R.W. Hullet (1905) indicated that he wanted the use of *jawi* to be gradually discontinued. He said,

The Arabic character, associated with the unintelligent study of the Koran, seems unsuited for the practical purposes of life. Besides which the Roman character will be useful not only to Malays but to Chinese and others, who may with profit attend a Malay school, where no other is available ... the English alphabet and the first principles of spelling will be an important step towards that universal study of English, which must come. (p. 594)

Wilkinson was appointed to head a committee to develop a system of Malay spelling (Conway et al., 1904). Largely through Wilkinson's efforts, romanized Malay was standardized for the first time, greatly facilitating both its teaching and its use in government regulations, textbooks, and general literature (Stevenson, 1975).

In 1906 control of education in the colony and the Federated Malay States was vested in one civil servant, the Director of Education. Between 1906 and 1942 several new posts were created to administer English education, Malay vernacular education, Tamil education, and Chinese education (Winstedt, 1923, see Figure 1). During this period, at an educational conference in 1925, "some talk took place on the subject of school and village libraries" (Winstedt & Watson, 1925, p. 12). Some suggested that "if schools were supplied with books to be returned to headquarters within a definite period, it was more likely that these books would be read both by teachers and other inhabitants of the *kampongs* (villages) than if each school were supplied with a small library of its own" (p. 12). However, "the meeting agreed that it would be better to have a small library in each school and suggested that Mr. Dussek should immediately proceed to obtain books to be sent to Inspectors of Schools for distribution for this purpose, the books previously to be bound" (p. 12).

Dussek gave a rough estimate that "something over 20" books would suffice (Winstedt & Watson, 1925, p. 12). In 1925 the books Dussek is likely to have gathered would be 12 titles of the MLS (1906-1920) and possibly some textbooks. From 1887 to 1920 Malay book publishing was largely in the hands of two large government-appointed European printing firms that produced typeset books predominantly in romanized script (Proudfoot, 1986). Throughout 1887 to 1929, indigenous Malay publishers in Singapore and the Malay Peninsular produced only one book in romanized Malay, *Bergaul dengan Kemalangan*, in 1927 (Hashimah Johari, 1988). However, Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak (1992) went through the *Straits Settlements Government Gazettes* from 1915 to 1920 and noticed that Malay school books such as *Jaya Waras*, *Baja Akal*, and *Pelampas Akal* had been published on behalf of the Education

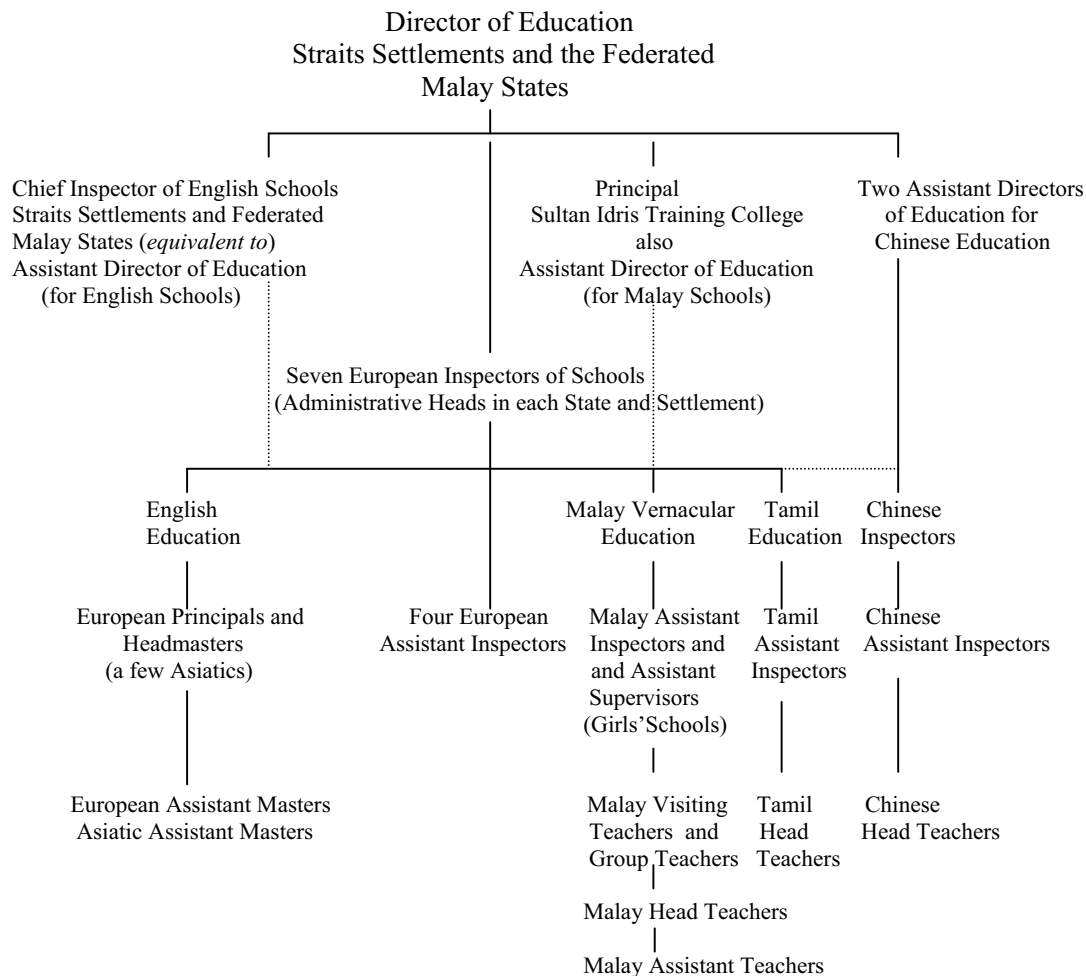


Figure 1. The direct sphere of control of the Department in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States, 1906-1942. Source: Neilson, 1934.

Department. All these books had print runs of at least 15,000 copies for their first editions. These large print runs could not have been made by indigenous publishers. Due to the continuing serious shortage of textbooks published in Malay (Firmstone 1919), two Malay vernacular newspapers, *Utusan Melayu* (1907-1922) and *Lembaga Melayu* (1914-1931), were used for teaching (Marina Samad, 1972).

In 1924 the Translation Bureau of the Education Department was transferred to the SITC at Tanjong Malim, Perak, with the aim of reviving textbook publishing in Malay (Awang Had Salleh, 1979). In 1925 the Bureau was reorganized under instructions from the Director of Education R.O. Winstedt and given a new name: Pejabat Karang-Mengarang (Office for the Publication and Printing of School Texts). However, the Colonial Office reports referred to it only as the Translation Bureau (Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak, 1992). Administratively, it formed an integral part of the College under its first principal, Dussek (Maimunah Mohd Tahir, 1987). Dussek vis-

ited the Dutch-controlled Netherlands East Indies (NEI) in 1931 to study the operations of Balai Pustaka (Bureau of Popular Literature, Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, 1966), a government-established printing and publishing house (Sulistyo-Basuki 1998). Dussek wished to develop the Malay Translation Bureau along the same lines as Balai Pustaka. His short-term aspirations were (a) to publish as many books as possible for Malay schools, and (b) to provide and issue extensive reading materials for the general Malay population. His long-term objectives were (a) to publish publications embracing all arts and sciences; (b) to publish sufficient books of secondary and higher standards; (c) to establish mobile libraries to reach the villages; and (d) to transport books to villages for sale.

He could not realize his short-term plans because approval to recruit and employ more editorial staff in the Bureau was denied (Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, 1966). According to available records, the maximum number of editorial staff in 1930 was nine (Winstedt, 1931). Therefore, from 1924 to 1936, 48 titles of the *Malay School Series* (MSS) were published (Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, 1966) in romanized Malay (Lie, 1968). From 1929 to 1934, 34 titles of the *Malay Home Library Series* (MHLS) were published in *jawi* (Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad 1966; Yazid Ahmad 1931). Balai Pustaka began to publish Malay books in 1919 (Zubiadah Isa, 1972). From 1926 to 1938, 628 new Malay books and 19 reprints were published by Balai Pustaka. Balai Pustaka, set up in 1908, became a fully fledged organization in 1927 with editorial, translation, and library departments and a fully equipped printing plant operated by 250 staff (Teeuw, 1972). To make up for this deficiency, the Malays bought much modern reading matter from the NEI, with the result that British Malaya was flooded with outside papers that were frequently unsuitable in style and not adapted to local needs (Yazid Ahmad, 1931).

Table 3  
Recommended Malay Books for Malay School Libraries (for the Reference Library),  
as Published in the Education Code of 1936

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Printer/Publisher</i>
History	<i>Sejarah Alam Melayu</i> , Parts I - IV	Printers Limited
Composition and grammar	<i>Ilmu Bahasa Melayu</i> , Parts I & II	Printers Limited
Physical training	<i>Kitab Latehan Tuboh</i> , Parts I & II	Printers Limited
Elementary	<i>Kitab Ilmu Geometry</i>	Macmillan & Co.
Geography	<i>Ilmu Alam Asia</i>	Macmillan & Co.
	<i>Ilmu Alam Jajahan British</i>	Macmillan & Co.
	<i>Ilmu Alam Eropah</i>	Macmillan & Co.
	<i>Ilmu Alam America</i>	Macmillan & Co.
	<i>Ilmu Alam Africa</i>	Macmillan & Co.
Hygiene	<i>Kitab Kesihatan</i> , Parts I & II	Macmillan & Co.
	<i>Ilmu Bumi</i>	MPH
Scouting	<i>Ilmu Pengakap</i>	MPH
Others	<i>Kitab Kumpulan Nama</i>	Printers Limited

Source. Education Department, 1936; Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, 1966.

Table 4  
Recommended Malay Books for Malay School Libraries (for the Lending Library),  
as Published in the Education Code of 1936

Title <sup>1</sup>	Printer <sup>2</sup>	Remarks <sup>2</sup> (Retail Price) Malay Home Library Series <sup>2</sup>
<i>Sang Maharaja Singa</i>	1 (NA)	Translated from <i>Man-eaters of Tsavo</i> (NA)
<i>Hikayat Taman 'Ajaib</i>	2 (NA)	Children's stories (NA)
<i>Cherita-cherita Duka Shakespeare</i>	3 (Printers Ltd)	Four stories from <i>Lamb's Tales</i> (30 cents)
<i>Pelayaran Gulliver</i>	4 (Printers Ltd)	Translation from <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (12 cents)
<i>Sang Lomeri</i>	5 (Printers Ltd)	Translation from <i>Reynard the Fox</i> (\$1.20)
<i>Cherita-cherita Sherlock Holmes</i>	6 (Printers Ltd)	Translation from the <i>Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> (75 cents)
<i>Pulau Mas</i>	7 (Printers Ltd)	Translation from <i>Treasure Island</i>
<i>Cherita-cherita Suka Shakespeare</i>	8 (Printers Ltd)	Four stories from <i>Lamb's Tales</i> (\$1.00)
<i>Pertama Kali</i>	9 (Printers Ltd)	Detective stories (20 cents)
<i>Cherita Chendera Lela</i>	10 (NA)	<i>Cinderella</i> (Picture book) (NA)
<i>Cherita Aladdin</i>	11 (NA)	Translation from <i>Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp</i> (Picture book) (NA)

Notes. NA=Not Available. The Malay Home Library Series are published in jawi script.

Source. <sup>1</sup>Education Department, 1936; <sup>2</sup>Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, 1966.

There were no known reports on the status of Malay school libraries in the *Annual Report on Education in the Straits Settlements* or other documents until the 1935 *Annual Report*, which stated that there were 165 school libraries in Malay boys' schools in the Straits Settlements (Morten, 1936). In 1937 there were also 165 school libraries in the Straits Settlements (Keir, 1938). This meant that in 1937 about 95% of the 20 Malay vernacular boys' schools in Singapore had school libraries. There were no known school libraries in the six Malay vernacular girls' schools at that time.

According to the Education Code published in 1936 (Education Department, 1936), "Every school should have both Reference and Lending Libraries" and "school children and villagers should be encouraged to use both reference and lending libraries" (pp. 16-17). However, only 19 titles of reference books and 11 titles of lending books were listed. See Tables 3 and 4 for titles of the recommended books.

In 1938 it was reported,

Nearly every school had a small library and the boys were given every encouragement to borrow books. Most schools were supplied with a daily newspaper and a copy of *Majallah Guru* [Teachers' Magazine], the monthly organ of the Malay Teachers' Association in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. Villages were encouraged to borrow books and papers but there was not much response. (Linehan, 1939, pp. 38-39)

Table 5  
Comparing the Quantity of Malay Books in Vernacular School Libraries  
in British Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies

<i>British Malaya</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Netherlands East Indies</i> <sup>2</sup>			
Recommended Malay books for school libraries as in the Education of Code 1936	Javanese <i>Volksbibliotheek</i>	Sudanese <i>Volksbibliotheek</i>	Madurese <i>Volksbibliotheek</i>	Malay (Melayu) <i>Volksbibliotheek</i>
19 titles for Reference Library	417 titles in Javanese	291 titles in Sundanese	67 titles in Madurese	Not Applicable
11 titles for Lending Library	282 titles in Malay	282 titles in Malay	282 titles in Malay	328 titles in Malay
30 titles (total)	697 titles (total)	573 titles (total)	349 titles (total)	328 titles (total)

*Notes. In the Netherlands East Indies the school library was called Volksbibliotheek or Taman Poestaka, literally translated as "public library" (Sulistyo-Basuki 1998; Setiadi 1991).*

## Conclusion

This article demonstrates that there were school libraries in Singapore contrary to statements made by Lim (1970) that the "school libraries are largely a post-war innovation" (pp. vii-xii) and by Ho (1998) that little was published on school libraries in Singapore before the late 1960s. However, although the policy to have a library in every Malay vernacular school was initiated by Wilkinson in 1899, not many Malay books were produced due to the closure of the Malay Government Press. Between 1906 and 1920, only 16 titles of the *Malay Literature Series* were published by the Methodist Publishing House. Although the Malay Translation Bureau was established in 1924 to publish as many books as possible for Malay schools, it was a small translation and publishing department. The list of recommended Malay books for reference and reading purposes published in the Education Code of 1936 included no more than 30 titles. By contrast, in the Netherlands East Indies, Malay school libraries had a list of 328 Malay books published by Balai Pustaka. As shown in Table 5, Malay school book printing and publishing was not as developed in British Malaya as in the Netherlands East Indies.

Malay vernacular schools did not advance beyond the primary level and had a rural bias with an emphasis on gardening and crafts such as basketry. Vernacular education for Malay boys had three broad objectives:

1. To teach the dull boy enough reading, writing and arithmetic;
2. To prepare the intelligent boy for an English education if he is to aspire to well-paid business or Government job;
3. To give the bright boy with a bent of manual work for prosecuting such work profitably. (Wolff, 1922, p. 212)

The existence of libraries in Malay boys' schools fulfilled the functions of recreational reading and reading for literacy. No known libraries were in Malay girls' schools, possibly because the curriculum had a definite bias towards domestic sci-

ence and life at home: the girls were taught needlework, cookery, laundry, and housewifery (Purdom, 1931).

This article traces the history of school libraries in Malay vernacular education in Singapore before World War II, but there were also English and Chinese school libraries in Singapore before the war. The history of these libraries also deserves to be told, but limitations of space would not permit this in this article.

## References

- Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad. (1966). *Peranan pejabat karang mengarang: dalam bidang2 pelajaran sekolah2 Melayu dan kesusasteraan di-kalangan orang ramai* [Office for the Publication and Printing of School Books: in the area of Malay school, education and literature for the student population]. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Armytage, W.H.G. (1970). The 1870 education age. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 18(2), 121-133.
- Awang Had Salleh. (1979). *Malay secular education and teacher training in British Malaya: With special reference to the Sultan Idris Training College*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Buckley, C.B. (1902). *An anecdotal history of the old times in Singapore: From the foundation of the settlement under the honourable East India Company on February 6th, 1819 to the transfer of the Colonial Office as part of the colonial possessions of the Crown on April 1st, 1867*. Singapore: Fraser & Neave.
- Carrington, C.E. (1956). *Singapore and Malaya*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Cheah, B.K. (2001). The Unfederated Malay States. In B.K. Cheah (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of Malaysia: Early modern history, 1800-1940* (pp. 92-93). Singapore: Archipelago Press.
- Chelliah, D.D. (1947). *A history of the educational policy of the Straits Settlements with recommendations for a new system on vernaculars*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Press.
- Chew, E. (1991). The foundation of a British settlement. In E.C.T. Chew & E. Lee (Eds.), *A history of Singapore* (pp. 36-40). Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Coakley, J.F. (1998). Printing offices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1817-1900: A synopsis. *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 9(1), 5-34.
- Conway, H. et al. (1904). *Romanised Malay spelling: being the report of a committee by the government of the Federated Malay States to discuss the subject of writing Malay in the Roman character, together with a list of Malay words according to the system recommended*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printing Office.
- Education Department. (1936). *Education code, part V; Regulations for Malay education in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States* (2nd ed.). Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Firmstone, H.W. (1919). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1918*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Hanitsch, R. (1921). Raffles library and museum, Singapore. In W. Makepeace, G.E. Brooke, & R. St.J. Braddell (Eds.), *One hundred years of Singapore* (vol 1, pp. 519-566). London: John Murray.
- Hashimah Johari. (1988). *Early Malay book printing in Malay by Malay publishers in Singapore and the Malay Peninsular until 1929*. Unpublished master's thesis, University College London.
- Hill, A.H. (1955). The Hikayat Abdullah: An annotated translation. *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 28(3), 1-345.
- Hill, E.C. (1885). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1884*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Hill, E.C. (1894). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1893*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Ho, B.Q. (1998). *A historical case study of Singapore school libraries*. Unpublished master's thesis, Nanyang Technological University.
- Hough, G.G. (1933). Notes on the educational policy of Sir Stamford Raffles. *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 11(2), 166-170.
- Hullet, R.W. (1905). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1904*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Hunt, R. (1989). The history of the translation of the Bible into Malay. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 62(1), 35-56.
- Hunt, R. (1996). *William Shellabear: A biography*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malay Press.
- Ibrahim Ismail. (1982). Missionary printing in Malacca, 1815-1843. *Libri*, 32(3), 177-206.

- Isemonger, E.E. et al. (1894). *Report of a committee to enquire into the system of vernacular education in the colony*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Jacobson, R.C. (1889). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1888*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Jarman, R.L. (Ed.). (1998). *Annual reports of the Straits Settlements 1855-1867: Volume I: 1855-1867*. London: Archives Editions.
- Keir, A. (1938). *Annual reports on education in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States for the year 1937*. Singapore: Government Printing Press.
- Khoo, K.K. (2001). The formation of the Federated Malay States. In B.K. Cheah (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of Malaysia: Early modern history, 1800-1940* (pp. 80-81). Singapore: Archipelago Press.
- Lie, T.S. (1968). A bird's-eye view of the development of modern Malay literature, 1921-1941. *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, 2(3), 1-15.
- Lim, E.H.T. (1970). *Libraries in West Malaysia and Singapore*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Library.
- Linehan, W. (1939). *Annual reports on education in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States for the year 1938*. Singapore: Government Printing Press.
- MacNair, J.F.A., Walker, C.B., & Knight, A. (1871). *Report of the census officers, for the settlement of Singapore, 1871*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Maimunah Mohd Tahir, Ungku. (1987). *Modern Malay literary culture: A historical perspective*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Makepeace, W. (1908). The press. In A. Wright & H.A. Cartwright (Eds.), *Twentieth century impressions of Malaya: Its history, people, commerce, industries and resources* (pp. 253-266). London: Lloyd's Greater Britain.
- Marina Samad. (1972). Early Malay journalism: Jawi Peranakan and the first Malay newspapers. *Leader*, 1(1), 18-22.
- Marriot, H. (1911). *Report on the census of the Straits Settlements, taken on the 10th March, 1911*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- McKerron, P.A.B. (1948). *Report on Singapore for the year 1947*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak. (1992). *Malay book publishing and printing in Malaya and Singapore, 1807-1949*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Stirling.
- Merewether, E.M. (1892). *Report on the census of the Straits Settlements taken on 5th April 1891*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Mills, L.A. (1925). British Malaya: 1824-1867. *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3 (2) 1-198.
- Milner, A.C. (1980). The sultan and the missionary. *Jebat*, 9, 1-15.
- Morten, F.J. (1936). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1935*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Neilson, J.B. (n.d.). *A history of Raffles Institution: extracted from the "Rafflesian," 1927-1929*. Singapore: Raffles Institution.
- Newbold, T.J. (1839). *Political and statistical account of the British settlements of the Straits of Malacca* (vol. 1). London: John Murray.
- Nunn, B. (1921). The government: Some account of our governors and civil service. In W. Makepeace, G.E. Brooke, & R.St.J. Braddel (Eds.), *One hundred years of Singapore* (vol 1, pp. 82-95). Singapore: John Murray.
- Philips, C.M. (1908). Raffles Institution, Singapore. In A. Wright & H.A. Cartwright (Eds.), *Twentieth century impressions of British Malaya: Its history, people, commerce, industries and resources* (pp. 269-272). London: Lloyd's Greater Britain.
- Proudfoot, I. (1986). A formative period in Malay book printing. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 59(2), 101-132.
- Proudfoot, I. (1988). *The print threshold in Malaysia*. Clayton: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies.
- Proudfoot, I. (1993). *Early Malay printed books: a provisional account of materials published in the Singapore-Malaysia area up to 1920, noting holdings in major public collections*. Kuala Lumpur: Academy of Malay Studies and the Library, University of Malaya.
- Purdom, N. (1931). Needlework and craft instruction in Malay girls' schools. *Overseas Education*, 2(4), 172-178.
- Raffles, T.S. (1991a). Minute by Raffles. In Lady Sophia (Ed.), *Memoir of the life and public services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (pp. 23-38). Singapore: Oxford University Press.

- Raffles, T.S. (1991b). Singapore institution. In Lady Sophia (Ed.), *Memoir of the life and public services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (pp. 74-86). Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Saw, S.H. (1969). Population trends in Singapore. *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 10(1), 36-49.
- Singapore Free School. (1835). *The first report of the Singapore Free School 1834*. Singapore: Singapore Free Press.
- Singapore Free School. (1837). *The third report of the Singapore Free School 1836/37*. Singapore: Singapore Free Press.
- Singapore Institution Free School. (1838). *The Singapore Free School 1837/38*. Singapore: Singapore Free Press.
- Singapore Institution Free School. (1840). *The Singapore Institution Free School sixth annual report 1839/40*. Singapore: Singapore Free Press.
- Singapore Institution Free School. (1841). *The Singapore Institution Free School seventh annual report 1840/41*. Singapore: Singapore Free Press.
- Singapore Institution Free School. (1843). *The Singapore Institution Free School eighth annual report 1842/43*. Singapore: Singapore Free Press.
- Stevenson, R. (1975). *Cultivators and administrators: British educational policy towards the Malays, 1875-1906*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Sulistyo-Basuki, L. (1998). The rise and growth of libraries in pre-war Indonesia. *Library History*, 14, 55-64.
- Tan, K.Y.L. (1999). A short legal and constitutional history of Singapore. In K.Y.L. Tan (Ed.), *The Singapore legal system* (pp. 26-66). Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Teeuw, A. (1972). The impact of Balai Pustaka on modern Indonesian literature. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 35(1), 111-127.
- Vlieland, C.A. (1932). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1899*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Wilkinson, R.J. (1900). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1899*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Winstedt, R.O. (1923). *Education in Malaya*. Singapore: Fraser and Neave.
- Winstedt, R.O. (1931). *Annual education report of the Straits Settlements 1930*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Winstedt, R.O., & Watson, J. (1925). *Report of the proceedings at an educational conference held in Singapore, July 21st-25th 1925*. Kuala Lumpur: Federated Malay States Government Printing Office.
- Wolff, E.C.H. (1922). *Annual report on education in the Straits Settlements for the year 1921*. Singapore: Government Printing Office.
- Yazid Ahmad. (1931). The work of the Translation Bureau. *Overseas Education*, 2(3), 133-136.
- Zubiadah Isa. (1972). *Printing and publishing in Indonesia, 1602-1970*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University.

### Author Note

Lim Peng Han began work in serials management in a medical library after completing his master's in information studies in 1998. Later he was employed in an academic library doing reference services and acquisition management. He is presently attached to the Department of Information Science, Loughborough University, as a research student (doctoral candidate) investigating international models of school library development.