

Post-Second World War Malay Magazine, 1945-1957: Analysis on the Circulation and Distribution

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Abstract

For a magazine to survive in the market, three elements must be strengthened—the editorial content, circulation or distribution, and income from the advertisement. The editorial content is responsible for attracting readers and thus will improve circulation. Increased circulation also often results in the increased revenue from advertising. Thus, these three pillars, namely editorial, circulation, and advertising are very important for the survival of the magazine. Circulation refers to the number of copies sold to the readers. A good magazine circulation depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing techniques, as well as the efficiency of distribution system used by publisher to deliver magazine to the reader. The publishers of Malay magazines after the Second World War are entirely dependent on circulation of the magazine to cover expenses and to expect profit. This article will discuss on the status of circulation and distribution practices of Malay magazine publishing after the Second World War and its impact on magazine in the market.

Keywords: Malay Magazine; magazine circulation and distribution; media after the Second World War; Malay press; media marketing system; Economy of publishing; magazine history;

Introduction

In Malay magazine publishing before World War II, publishers relied heavily on circulation or sale of copies to earn income. The income is used to cover the expenses of publishing, marketing and printing, while the surpluses will be considered as profit. Another source of income, the sale of a magazine to the advertiser is often difficult to explore by publishers because of the difficulty to obtain it.¹ Magazine or newspaper in the Malay language, let alone in the Jawi script is not common to general producer or manufacturer who could spend money on advertising. Most of them are generally Chinese and European traders who choose publications in English or Chinese for promotion of their goods or services.

The absence source of income from the sale of pages to advertisers causes instability for Malay magazine. To be stabilized, a magazines must have a good balance of three pillars, that the editorial content, circulation or distribution, and advertising revenue.² This is called the three legs of a stool, which is how the three elements help each other to allow the magazine to survive in the market. A magazine is well established if its editorial content managed to attract readers and the increased in circulation will in turn attract advertisers who want to introduce their product or service to the reader through the pages of magazine.

¹ Hamed M. Adnan, *Dunia Majalah Melayu Sebelum Perang* (The World of Pre-War Malay Magazine), Tanjong Malim: Institut Peradaban Melayu, 2014, pp. 68-74.

² Charles P. Daly, Patrick Henry & Ellen Ryder, *Magazine Publishing Industry*, New York: Allyn & Bacon, 1996. See also John Wharton, *Magazine Publishing*, London: Blueprint, 1992. Both sources discussed the state and the scope of the magazine publishing, particularly relating to the management of editorial, circulation and advertising.

But the task of selling magazine space to advertisers is hard for publication in the Malay language. Over the past until today, the commercial appeal of the Malay magazines always defeated by the magazine in English or Chinese. Although the circulation for Malay-language magazine is much higher, advertisers are more confidence to the segment of English and Chinese readers, since they are seen as being more capable in terms of purchasing power.³ It was felt in the period before World War II, when the number of Malay readers is lower and their economic position is behind away from others.

Since magazine is too dependent on circulation, various problems faced their publication. With the limited number of target readers, dependence solely on circulation will cause the publication of a magazine to be not viable. As such many magazine ceased publications soon as publishers feel that it may not be able to draw reasonable reader to survive in the market. This article discusses the status of circulation of the Malay magazines after World War II and customary practice in the magazine distribution of their magazine.

Post-War Readers of Malay Publications

Post-war period saw positive changes to the demographics reading of Malay society. Total literacy is increasing and the purchasing ability for them to buy is also increasing. Total Malay schools had increased to 2,238 in 1957 from 1,861 in 1952. In accordance with the number of students has increased to 431,544 pupils in 1957, compared to 311,099 pupils in 1952.⁴ In 1952, the number of schools was 1,861 to cater 311,099 pupils.⁵ It increased to 2,238 schools to accommodate 431,544 pupils in 1957 (*Federation of Malaya Annual Report on Education 1957*: 92-93). The rate of literacy among Malay society is increasing and the economics ability for them to buy is also increasing.

Improvement on literacy rate and student enrolment in schools had a positive impact on the circulation of Malay magazine. If the average of magazine circulation in the 1930s was 1,000 copies, it increased to 3,000 copies in the 1950's. While there is a magazine with quite low in circulation of only 400 copies, there were magazines with high circulation with 30,000 copies. *Pengasoh* (Guidance) recorded circulation as follows: 400 copies (Oct-Dec 1952), 500 copies (Jan-Mar 1954), 1,000 copies (Apr-Jun 1954), 500 copies (Jul-Sep 1954), 1,500 copies (Oct-Dec 1954), 600 copies (Jan-Mar 1955), and 800 copies (Jan-Mar 1957). Total circulation *Hiboran Kanak-Kanak* (Entertainment for Children) are as follows: 3,000 copies (Apr-Jun 1951), 1,000 copies (Apr 1952), 10,000 copies (Oct-Dec 1952), and 30,000 copies (Jan-Mar 1954). For the newspaper, although the circulation of *Warta Negara* (National Gazette) still revolves around 6,000 copies, *Utusan Melayu* (Malay Envoy) had reached a circulation of 25,000 copies, and the daily *Melayu Raya* (Great Malay) had reached of 30,000 copies on the height of Nadra Hertough issue in 1950.

With regard to 25,000 copies of *Utusan Melayu* circulation, Abdul Aziz Hussain (1959: 63) estimates the number of Malay readers in the decade 1950's is around 100,000 people. The figure is derived by assuming that each copy of the newspaper will also be read by the other three. Of the total of 100,000 readers, Aziz said that 40 percent consists of soldiers and police, teachers and 30 percent of youth, 15 percent of women, 10 percent of children, and five per cent of adults. Seventy-five percent of them are in Malaya, 20 percent in Singapore, and five per cent in North Borneo. Numbers of readers in order of importance states were Singapore, Perak,

³ A recent study found that the lower income in advertisement revenue for Malay magazine than English is due to lack of confidence among advertisers on the ability of Malay magazine to bring their messages to segments of readers who can afford to buy, as well as the inability of an publisher's own advertising staff who were unable to convince advertisers of their magazine. See Hamed M. Adnan & Heng Gek Koon, *Trend Periklanan Majalah Melayu dan Inggeris di Malaysia* (The Trend of Advertising in Malay and English Magazine in Malaysia), Bangi: Medium Publications, 2011, pp. 23-32.

⁴ *Federation of Malaya Annual Report on Education 1952*, Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, pp. 88-89; *Federation of Malaya Annual Report on Education 1957*, Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, pp. 92-93.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

Selangor, Penang, Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, North Borneo, Negeri Sembilan, Terengganu, Melaka, Pahang and Perlis.⁶

In general, all magazines are national in characteristics. People all over Malaya, Sarawak, Sabah, and Singapore can get the magazine favoured in bookstores of their respective city or nearby towns. Number of shops or stalls selling books or periodicals was growing, despite some major bookstores before the war like Haji Muhammad Siraj⁷ in Singapore and Federal Rubber Stamp in Kuala Lumpur has ceased operations. Based on the 30 to 40 book stores act as magazine representative at that time, total number of bookstore are estimated to 90 to 120. This is based on the assumption that each agent has three stalls or book stores to retail the magazine.

Magazine Circulation for Post-War Period

Records obtained from the *Federated States Government Gazette* 1948-1957 and *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* 1946-1957 offers some explanation of the Malay magazine circulation in the period after the war. Given some of the Malay magazines were not registered under the two laws, we are unable to obtain information about circulation of all 145 Malay magazines published after the war. Only 25 magazines registered in Malaya. The largest circulation was *Hiboran Kanan-Kanak* (January-March 1954) with 30,000 copies, and the least amount of circulation was *Pengasoh* with 400 copies (October-December 1952).

The other data of magazine circulation after the war are as follows: *Mujallah Guru* (Teachers's Magazine, 3,000 copies), *Juita* (Lover, 1,500 copies), *Dunia Film* (Film World, 3,000 copies), *Majalah Comic Melayu* (Malay Comic Magazine, 3,000 copies), *Mujallah Murid* (Pupil's Magazine, 2,000 copies), *Filem Juita* (Lover Film, 3,000 copies), *Pahlawan* (Warrior, 4,000 copies), *Chermin Pengetahuan* (Mirror of Knowledge, 2,500 copies), *Dewasa* (Adult, 3,000 copies), *Pedoman Kanak-Kanak* (Guides for Children, 6,000 copies), *Taman Bahasa* (Language Park, 2,000 copies), *Kenangan* (Memory, 1,000 copies), *Seruan Majlis* (Platform of Calls, 1,300 copies), *Suara Islam* (Islamic Voice, 600 copies), *Lidah Penuntut* (Student's Tongue, 2,000 copies), *Pembina* (Builder, 1,500 copies), and *Sinar Baru* (New Light, 600 copies).

Only 28 magazines published in Singapore were registered with the lowest in circulation 2,500 copies was *Kesatuan Islam* (Islamic Unity) and largest circulation of 15,000 copies was *Film Raya* (Great Film) between June-September 1952 issues. Among others data on circulation of magazines published in Singapore are as follows: *Hiboran* (Entertainment, 3,500 copies), *Kenchana* (Gold, 4,500 copies), *Majallah Tawarikh* (History Magazine, 1,000 copies), *Sinaran* (Light) (5,000 copies), *Qalam* (Pen, 3,000 copies), *Film Raya* (15,000 copies), *Kanak-Kanak* (Children, 1,500 copies), *Film* (2,500 copies), *Aneka Warna* (Multicolour, 6,000 copies), *Rumaja* (Teenager, 3,500 copies), *Samudera* (Ocean, 1,500 copies), *Belia* (Youth, 3,000 copies), *Dunia* (World, 8,500 copies), *Majalah Kehidupan* (Life Magazine, 5,000 copies), *Fajar* (The Dawn, 1,000 copies), *Kesah* (Story, 3,500 copies), *Pelajar* (Students, 1,000 copies), and *Album Malaya Merdeka* (Album for Independence Malaya, 8,000 copies).

However, data registered in both gazettes does not represent the real Malay magazine circulation. More other magazines, even the more influential like *Mastika*, *Utusan Film & Sports* (Film & Sports Envoy) and *Majallah Bintang* (Star Magazine) are not registered in the gazette. Furthermore, the amount of "circulation" recorded in the gazette was actually the number of copies printed rather than the number of magazine copies being sold. It does not reflect the real circulation as a lot of unsold copies will be returned to the publisher. Sometimes, publisher makes statement on the circulation in the pages of their magazines, either in the form of advertisement

⁶ Abdul Aziz Hussain, 'Penerbitan buku2 dan majalah2 Melayu di Singapura di antara bulan September 1945 dengan bulan September 1958' (Publishing of Malay books and magazine in Singapore from September 1945 to September 1958). Graduation exercise, Department of Malay Studies, University Malaya, Singapore, 1959, pp. 64-65.

⁷ The book business for Hj. Muhammad Siraj was started at the end of the 19th century and until the early 20th century, it was the largest book store in Singapore. The store in No. 43 Sultan Road, Singapore provides a variety of reading materials from the whole of the Malay world. In 1898 alone, Hj. Muhammad Siraj had advertised 120 titles for sale in his shop and it has a network of sales agents in Johor, Muar, Malacca, Penang, Deli, Sandakan, Batavia, and then in Taiping and Kinta. For comments on the book catalogue, See Ian Proudfoot, "A Nineteenth-century Malay bookseller's catalogue", *Kekal Abadi* 6.4 (1987), pp. 1-11.

or in editorial page. For example, *Dunia* claimed that “Every issue of this magazine will ground breaking Malaya and Singapore. According to our representatives, people blamed us because the copy doesn’t adequate. Our readers said there is no other kind like *Dunia* magazine.”⁸ The advertisement is accompanied with a copy of a telegram (with blank sender name) who requests the publisher, Harmy to send 10,000 copies for the number three of *Dunia*.

In general circulation for entertainment magazines far surpass other types. In its first issue *Film Raya* (28 April 1951) was printed for 3,000 copies. A year later, on 19 April 1952 issue publisher states:

Obviously 3,000 copies cannot meet the need of our readers. In the first issue only all 3,000 copies were sold out and requests continue to pouring in to be added. So on the second and subsequent issues, copies of *Film Raya* were straightly increased to the figure of 17,000 copies a week as today.

Subsequently, on 29 September 1953, the *Film Raya* published a one page advertisement which consists of a letter from its auditors, Smalley & Co. stating the amount of the magazine circulation. Presented by the auditor “This is to certify that's the net circulation of *Film Raya* published twice monthly for the year ended 31 March 1953 was 19,609 copies per issue.”⁹ Although *Utusan Film & Sports* is not registered under the government gazette, it claimed to have circulation of “dozens of thousands.”¹⁰ Another entertainment magazine, *Bintang* (March 10, 1953) is said by the manager, Abdullah Hussain:

When the first issue of *Bintang* published, it stirred the position of *Film Raya* and *Utusan Film & Sports* published by Utusan Melayu. The first issue printed 5,000 copies and it finished before reaching Johor Bahru. ... Newspaper sellers in Singapore, especially in Geylang Serai rush to take the magazine when they heard it was published by P. Ramlee... We printed 7,500 copies for the second issue, 10,000 for third, and for the fourth 5,000 more copies were printed. Although we are only a small magazine, but we manage to arouse anxiety among the publishers of *Film Raya* and *Utusan Film & Sports*.¹¹

Other entertainment magazines rarely state the amount of their circulation or print copies. This is due to the low in circulation. It will only tarnish the image of the magazine in the eyes of the reader if the editor or publisher revealed it. This is similar to publisher who often offered unsold magazine to readers with a discount. *Juita* for example often advertise copies of back issues to its readers. It stated for example, “If you never read of *Juita*, please send us money of RM5.00. You will get 12 issues including postage costs from Sentausa Store.”¹²

In addition, the low circulation will cause advertisers to turn to other magazine which has greater in circulation. Dealers or representatives will also reluctant to take it for distribution or sale. But there are also magazines that directly disclose the bad response from the readers, and thus open the shame of their magazine. Complaints by the editor of *Suloh Kemajuan*, M. Karim Ghani is deserved to give our attention. He stated:

This newspaper (?) is a new type which published feature and idea from the author. The world today is weird, it's the reverse. If we publish the love story, investigative stories or publish half naked pictures everyweek, we know that it will sell like hot cakes. Our chief editor had worked long in newspapers... a writer with 23 years of experience. But for this newspaper we don't expect to sell many copies. What we expect is a group of Malays who can think and can acquire knowledge. This newspaper is for giving guidance. That is why the progress is slow.”¹³

⁸ *Dunia*, 29 January 1956, p. 5.

⁹ *Film Raya*, 29 September 1953, p. 20.

¹⁰ *Utusan Film & Sports*, 3 November 1953, p. 2.

¹¹ Abdullah Hussain, *Sebuah Perjalanan* (A Journey), Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1982, p. 354.

¹² *Juita*, September 1952, p. 16.

¹³ *Suloh Kemajuan*, 12 June 1948, p. 3.

A reader tells of small available copies of *Majalah Perkawalan* (Guard Magazine). “We cannot find the magazine in the Federation, which means that this magazine is not read by police force in the Federation, and they do not know the existence of this magazine.”¹⁴ Such misrepresentation made by the editor who feel disappointed by the response of readers and want to gain sympathy from public, but it failed to save the survival of the magazine. *Majalah Perkawalan* has to cease publication only after 16 issues in the market.¹⁵

Selling by Subscription

Magazine circulation relies heavily on the marketing system used by the publisher. Just as before the war, the post-war Malay magazine was marketed by two ways. One is direct sales to public through a subscription system, and the other, which was more popular, is trading relationship between publisher and selected book stores who act as the agent to magazine. Number of magazine subscriptions among readers was extremely limited, despite for magazine published by the organization. Circulation for *Mujallah Guru* was only 3,000 copies, whereas the total number of membership for the organization who published it in the year 1950/51 was 6,488 persons. The highest membership is from Perak (1,257 persons), followed by Johor (907 persons), and Kelantan (631 persons). The small subscription copies lead its editor to consistently urge the reader, especially among teachers to subscribe to the magazine.¹⁶ In June 1951, *Mujallah Guru* says, “When *Mujallah Guru* published in Penang the circulation was 1,500 copies, but today is has increased to 3,500 copies. It means that nearly 4,500 teachers who should be a subscriber cannot subscribe.”¹⁷

The postal rate at that time is not so high to blame as a factor causing small response for subscriptions. Shipping charges for magazines or newspapers in 1952 was 4 cents for 2 ounces and 4 cents more for each additional 5 ounces. The package rate is about 60 cents for weight below three pounds, RM1.00 for not more than seven pounds, RM1.40 for below eleven pounds, and 2.20 for weight below than 22 pounds.¹⁸ In a typical subscription system, those who are interested to buy by subscription should pay to publisher prior to the magazine subscription period chosen, whether three months, six months, or twelve months. There are publishers, such as the Qalam Press, publisher of *Qalam*, *Aneka Warna*, *Film*, *Children*, and *Wanita* (Women) who reject subscriptions less than six months (from July 1950) and then did not receive the subscription term of less than six months (since February 1951).

As always, the money will be the security for publisher. For *Mujallah Guru*, subscription depends to the state branch of the teacher’s organization. It depends to the initiatives of each branches, for example, the Kelantan branch has managed to increase the circulation in the state. In February 1949, the editor of *Mujallah Guru* recorded the infinite thanks to Mohd Yusof Mustafa, the General Secretary of the Kelantan branch for his role “to encourage members from Kelantan to subscribe to *Mujallah Guru*.¹⁹”Till at first only 99 copies only, but today up to 229 copies per month.” Through the system, publisher will send copies of magazine on a regular basis to every branch before claim the payment later. *Tunas* (The Buds) follow the same strategy, which is to send copies of magazines to certain individuals before sends the bill payment. However, these measures were carried out at the early stage, i.e. at the time when the magazine was not well known. Beginning 12 February 1953, *Tunas* began to collect payment from them.

However, this system proved costly for *Mujallah Guru*. In 25 Mac 1948, it said that “thousands of ringgit” is yet to be paid by subscribers. “And now”, according to the editor, “*Mujallah Guru* only printed because of the duty and courage of the manager.”²⁰ In 25 April 1949, *Mujallah Guru* reminds its reader that “the

¹⁴ *Majalah Perkawalan*, January 1955, p. 557.

¹⁵ Hamed M. Adnan, *Direktori Majalah Melayu Sebelum Merdeka* (Directory of Malay Magazine before the Independence, Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 2002, p. 215.

¹⁶ Ali Hj. Ahmad, ‘Muhamad Yusuf Ahmad and *Majallah Guru*’, Ph. D Thesis, Monash University, 1970, p. 88.

¹⁷ *Mujallah Guru*, June 1951, p. 5.

¹⁸ *The Malayan Post Office and Telegraph Guide Malaya*, 1952, pp. 10-15.

¹⁹ He managed to increase subscription n Kelantan from 99 copies to 229 copies a month. See *Mujallah Guru*, February 1949, p. 3.

²⁰ *Mujallah Guru*, 25 March 1948, p. 4.

job to publish the magazine is the job of Federation. Therefore we should help each other. If you have received the magazine, please also send the money to the Secretary or the Treasurer.”²¹

By selling copies for subscription, publisher does not have to give them discount. This means that publishers will get a bigger profit for not deducting 20-30 percent off the magazine. Yet sometimes subscription price may reduce to some readers, for example to school pupils as done by *Ar-Raja*. The religious magazine gave discount up to RM2.50 per year (normal is RM3.75) and RM1.50 for six months (normal RM1.90).

Method payment for subscription made in several ways and sometimes it creates confuses. This situation has forced publishers to do some explanations. Sabirin Hj. Mohd Ani, publisher for *Majalah Comik Melayu* for example, in several occasions has to explain on how the payment should be made. Among the explanation given is as follows:

1. Write down the complete address and clear enough to avoid confusion.
2. All letters must be accompanied with enough stamps, i.e. 10 cents.
3. Never put the money in the envelope.
4. Remittance s done by Malayan Postal Order (MPO), which can be purchased at any post office, and write on it the name Zawyah Publishing House, Post Box 29, Johor Bahru.
5. Remittance is safe and secure by the way of register, but the cost is quite expensive. Please send it by MPO as described above.

There are magazines that are given for free although the real purpose of the publisher is to stimulate his other business. Yahya Ariff which publishes monthly *Ibu Melayu* (Malay Mother) for instance offers free copies of the magazine for nine issues. However, the issue is only given to students who register to study English and Arabic by mail with other Yahya's company. The offer is one of the campaigns to expand his education business by posts.

To attract readers, various methods are used by publishers, including offer prizes that sometimes unreasonable with the publisher's ability. *Al-Ikhya* published by El-Ehya Madrasah Al-Syariff, Gunung Semangol offering a reward of RM6,000 per year to subscribers of the magazine. However, a common way is to advertise in a newspaper or magazine whether self-published by publisher or by others. In those advertisements, statements on the grandeur of the magazine are presented. *Warta Jabatan Agama Johor* (WJAJ) or Johor Religious Department Gazette in their own ads in the magazine stated six reasons why readers should subscribe to the magazine.

Sales through direct subscription provide a lot advantages to the publisher. Subscription monies received will be used as working capital for magazine publishing. As such, publishers are able to plan better of this magazine. Total income received is far greater than if they sell the magazine through middle man of agents or sales representatives. With direct subscription, publishers do not have to give discount. The price of the magazine will be paid in full by the customer. In addition, the number of subscriptions will be an indicator for publisher to determine the number of copies to be printed in an issue. Since the amount of subscription will be final buyers, publishers are able to make a more realistic budget and the risk of unsold copies can be reduced.

However, the subscription management is sometimes too trivial and burdensome. Publishers had to make a variety of tasks such as to do promotion, to process forms of subscription, to receive and updates record of payments, to maintain the records, to send copies, and so on. Therefore, the focus to prepare editorial content and productions of the magazine will eventually displaced by this work. Since publishers are small and simple in organization with a limited number of staff, routine tasks for subscription had to be done by editorial staff, while at the same time they have to prepare the next issue of the magazines. As a result a lot of magazine could not be published on time. *Pengasoh* states, "To our customers and fans, we state our sense of remorse and sorrow since *Pengasoh* not always published on time; however it will reached our subscribers and those who are loyal followers.”²²

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Pengasoh*, 21 June 1955, p. 5.

The Use of Sales Agent

Direct subscription is not the main distribution channels for magazine. The most important channel is the agents or sales representatives which consist of bookstores in the city or town. The common practice in the period before the war was the publisher made an offer openly in the magazine for anyone to be his agent. The practice is becoming less used in the period after the war, but still practice by some publishers. During this period, typically bookstore will send a letter to the publisher and offered to be dealers or agents for the magazine. Publisher also writes to the bookstore to influence them to be an agent. The letter explains the concept of the magazine and its contents in general and the strength or intensity of magazines, as well as trading terms to be complied with.

Such letters or other information about new magazine is a boost to the dealers or agents to order to magazine. Number of copies ordered by the store or agent will be an indicator for publisher to decide the number of copies to be printed. To fulfill orders from all agents, publishers send magazine copies by mail or by land transport. The method for delivery is varies. Common practice in Singapore was using a small car or van. In Malaya, the most commonly used is the van or truck and rail. The leading magazine publisher in Singapore, for example hire a transport company, either private or shared to bring the magazine to the agent or dealer. *Bintang* for example, used lorry own by Hock Cheong Transport Company which also distributes magazines published by Melayu Raya Press who produce *Film Raya*—the rival for *Bintang*.

Problems once arise when the carrier refuses to bring *Majalah Bintang* as "... they (the competitor) will cancel the agreement with us if we take your magazine." problem was resolved when the publisher paid a bribe to the driver to bring along the *Majalah Bintang*.²³ Nevertheless, the postal service is given more attention by publisher and usually shipping expenses will be incurred by them.

Agent or bookstore earns profit as they are given commission or discount by publishers. As for pre-war periode, agents received between 20 to 40 percent from the sales price of the magazine sold. It depends to the number of copies sold by the agent and also to the trade relationship between the two parties. Publisher may give more discounts to agents who has good track record, especially on the matter of payment. As in the previous period, the transaction is usually done on agent-orders (on-orders) or consignment). For on order transactions, agent will order the number of copies from publishers, and they are not allowed to return the unsold copies. For consignment, publishers send copies directly to agent without waiting for orders, and agent shall return the unsold magazine with their own costs. Payment of the sold copies will be made by agent after deducted to the agreed discount. The time for the payment has agreed upon, either once a month for weekly magazine or every three or six months for the monthly magazine.

Most publishers use agent as sales representative and not sole representative. In the early 50's, among the active magazine agents in Malaya were Al-Habsyee (Mile Road, Melaka), Hj. Abdullah Fakeh (Riverside, Melaka), Aneka Store (Seremban), M.N. Abdul Hamid (Batu Road, Kuala Lumpur), H.M. Amin (Main Street, Kajang), A. Yusof Hj. Ibrahim (Banting), S.A. Aziz Brothers (Railway, Kelang), Omar Hj. Ali (Kuantan), Toko Md. Mokhtar Bakrie (Ipoh), Buyung Yunos (Teluk Anson), Az-Ziniah Press (Pasar Melayu, Taiping), Timur Store (Pulau Pinang), H.A. Abdul Majeed (Alor Setar), Yahya Basheer (Pekan Rabu, Alor Setar), A. Abdul Rahim (Jalan Ibrahim, Johor Bahru), N.S. Sulaiman (Jalan Maharani, Muar), Alias A. Bakar (Segamat), N.A.H. Maideen (Port Dickson), and Zainab Store (Kota Bharu, Kelantan). In Singapore, active agents are Hasyim Abdullah (Arab Street), S.M. Shariff M.M. Ibrahim (Kampung Baru Road), M. Abdullah (Bussorah Street), and Mohamad Bookstore (Serindit Road).

By using agent as a sales representative, publishers can control the distribution of magazine and has the prerogative power to appoint other dealers in the area that already has one. This decision making is important if one the dealer creates problem for under performance in distribution or default of its payment to the publisher. If a sole representative is appointed instead of sales representative, publisher will be too dependent on their performance. Consequently, if they cause problems, publisher will face the consequences.

Agent or sales representative usually appointed in the city or large town. Most of them are bookstores owned either by Malay or Muslim Indian. Because they are normally the biggest bookstore in the town or city, several publishers will appoint the same dealer to for their magazine. No specific characteristics required by publishers to attract bookstores in Malaya and Singapore to become agents despite the popularity of publisher might be motivating for them to ask for the agent. *Bintang* (Star) which first published in March 10, 1953 by the

²³ Abdullah Hussain, 1985, op. cit., p. 355.

Bintang Publishing House, for example attracting a large number of agents from all over Malaya and Singapore. The magazine which is financed by a group of actors, led by P. Ramlee has managed to attract 50 dealers with nine of them in Singapore, eleven agents in Johor, eight in Perak, six in Negeri Sembilan, four in Malacca, and 13 in Selangor.

Sole distributors were also used by publisher at this period. Among the major sole distributors in the 1950s are Malayan Magazine Distributors, Singapore which distributes magazines published by Geliga Publications Bureau as *Asmara* (Love), *Rumaja* (Teenager), and *Irama* (Rhythm) and News Distributors, Johor Bahru. Besides distributing magazines by Geliga Publications Bureau, the company also distributes *Kritik* (Critiques), *Pedoman* (Guidelines), and *Pati* (Extracts) published by Pedoman Press. Published in Kota Bharu, *Pengasoh* has appointed Abu Bakar Al-Ahmadi, Kota Bharu as “sole distributor across Malaya, and any dealer please deal with him.”²⁴

To protect magazine from any risk, most publishers require their sole agent to pay a deposit. Deposit will be held by the publisher and the value of dealer’s transaction at any one time will depend on the value of the collateral. The value of the underlying collateral will decide the number of copies can be taken. However, the requirement for deposit money is not so rigid, as to the transaction value of magazine at any time. Typically, publishers provide the flexibility to the dealers. Personal relationships of trust or their honesty counts more important.

Conclusion

The practice in Malay magazine’s circulation and distribution after the Second World War was no different from the previous period. While the subscription system is becoming increasingly important, yet the use of representative or agent continues to dominate the distribution of the magazine. Publishers need their service to enable their magazines to be available in the city or town in the whole of Malaya. Dealers are normally independent, in the sense they may act as representative of several publishers at the same time. At the same time, publisher did their own way to sell copies of magazine and not solely rely on the dealer. Some publishers sell their magazine directly to the readers through subscription and even most of them opened their office door to sell direct to the reader.

But just like before the war, the issue of outstanding debt continues to entice publishers in the postwar period. In the ideal business practice, once the magazine printed, publisher will send the copies to dealers either by mail or by using their own transportation. Delivery and acceptance of magazine copies were done with the realization that when the time is up (usually a month for weekly publication or three months for monthly), dealers will pay the price of the magazine sold after deducted with commission agreed upon. Agent or sales representative should know of their own task to pay without waiting the publisher claims.

At the same time, publishers are also suffered of outstanding money from the subscription. A lot readers who subscribe directly from the publisher did not fulfill their promise to make payments when due. The issue of payment seems to be dominant in the history of Malay magazine publishing. The problem of debt outstanding or unpaid is the biggest problem faced by publisher.²⁵ And this is a problem that is responsible to kill most of the Malay magazine.

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²⁴ *Pengasoh*, February 15, 1953, p. 2.

²⁵ Hamed M. Adnan, *Dunia Majalah Melayu Selepas Perang: Editorial, Sirkulasi dan Iklan* (The Post-War Malay Magazine: Editorial, Circulation and Advertising), Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 2013, p. 96.

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