

## A Nineteenth-Century Malay Bookseller's Catalogue

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**Abstrak:** Perpustakaan Universiti Leiden mempunyai sebuah katalog buku-buku untuk jualan yang dicetak oleh Haji Muhammad Siraj, seorang penerbit Melayu di Singapura. Katalog ini dapat ditetapkan tarikhnya pada 1897 atau 1898. Haji Siraj dan penjual-penjual buku Melayu terkemuka yang lain berhubungan erat dengan masyarakat Islam yang kuat di pasisir Jawa. Katalognya memberi sedikit gambaran tentang bagaimana perdagangan buku Melayu dikendalikan, dan apakah jenis buku-buku yang dijual. Haji Siraj menjual buku-buku yang khususnya diterbitkan oleh penerbit-penerbit lain di Singapura, walaupun beliau juga menguruskan langganan untuk akhbar-akhbar Arab dari Mesir dan akhbar-akhbar Melayu (rumi) dari Hindia Belanda. Katalog ini termasuk satu ruangan untuk buku-buku di bawah tajuk 'Kitab'. Anehnya buku-buku ini bukan berkenaan agama Islam malahan berupa buku-buku rujukan. Buku-buku berkenaan hal ehwal Islam adalah dalam bentuk syair, atau hikayat mengenai wira-wira legendari dalam sejarah Islam. Katalog ini menggambarkan bagaimana bahan-bahan popular ini diberi sebaran luas pada lewat abad kesembilan belas.

**Abstract:** Leiden University Library has a catalogue of books for sale issued by Haji Muhammad Siraj, a Malay publisher in Singapore. The catalogue can be dated to 1897 or 1898. Haji Siraj and other leading Singapore Malay booksellers had close connections with the strong Muslim communities of the Javanese pasisir. His catalogue gives some idea of how the Malay book trade operated, and what kind of books were on sale. Haji Siraj sold mainly books published by other Singapore publishers, although he also offered subscriptions to Egyptian Arabic newspapers and Netherlands Indies newspapers in romanised Malay. The catalogue includes a section of books classed as 'Kitab'. Interestingly these books are not Islamic manuals; rather they are reference books. Books dealing with religious themes are in syair form, or hikayats dealing with the legendary heroes of Islamic history. The catalogue illustrates how this popular material was given wide circulation in the late nineteenth century.

In the later nineteenth century, Singapore emerged as a centre of ferment in Malay intellectual life. The first stirrings of a new consciousness have been described by William Roff in his study of *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*.<sup>1</sup> The influence of this cosmopolitan commercial centre on surrounding Malay societies was both disturbing and stimulating. An important way in which new ideas and new religious attitudes were disseminated from Singapore was through the new medium of print.

The best-documented literary activity of this period of reform and change is the publication of

periodicals.<sup>2</sup> Journals like *Jawi Peranakan* were a revolution in communication, being both widely disseminated and topical. This innovation is associated with the creation of a literate elite and the burgeoning school system. But, alongside the publication of newspapers and magazines, we should not forget the role of book publishing. Books published in Singapore were not generally so topical as the periodicals. Nevertheless the availability of printed works of literature in the latter part of the nineteenth century contributed greatly to the creation of a climate of literate intellectual exchange.

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<sup>1</sup> Yale University Press, 1967: Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> W. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals*, Oxford University Press, London, 1972.



Newspapers and magazines were no doubt more influential in the long run, but books led the way.<sup>3</sup>

A fair number of the books published has survived, especially from 1887 onwards when the Colonial Secretary's office began registering books for copyright and requiring deposit copies.<sup>4</sup> Data culled from the books themselves, from the newspapers of the day, and from the Government Gazettes give evidence of an active publishing industry which was keenly commercial.

#### Haji Muhammad Siraj, publisher

Several Malay book publishers were active in Singapore at the end of the nineteenth century. Among them several shared a common background in the strongly Islamic *pasisir* regions of Java. Foremost was Haji Muhammad Siraj bin Haji Muhammad Salih al-Rambani (i.e. of Rembang, northern Java). Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Haji Ismail, active a decade or so earlier, came from Juwana, also in northern Java. Haji Siraj's most prolific contemporary colleagues were Haji Muhammad Said bin Haji Muhammad Arsyad of Semarang and Haji Muhammad Taib bin Haji Muhammad Zain of Pati, near Semarang. Two less active publishers, Haji Abdul Karim bin Suradin of Rembang, and Syaikh al-Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Mustafa of Purbalingga, Banyumas, in south central Java, could be added to the group.

No doubt Haji Siraj and other publishers participated in the *jawi pekan* or *jawi peranakan* community in Singapore described by Roff.<sup>5</sup> This group, which had a mixed Indian-Arab and Malay ancestry and strong overseas connections, was a bridge between the wider world and provincial Malay culture.

Haji Siraj published lithographs of many Malay works of the manuscript culture — *hikayat* and *syair* — though his repertoire included also religious

works in Malay, Javanese and Arabic. As well as publishing, he ran what was probably the largest Malay book store of the day. He marketed Malay books vigorously. His consistent advertising in *Jawi Peranakan* is not matched by any other publisher.<sup>6</sup>

Aside from advertising in the press, publishers used their own books to mention other titles they had in stock or were planning to print. Occasionally this form of advertising extended to lists of books for sale which were included at the beginning or end of one of the publishers' books. Haji Siraj frequently included such lists in the books he printed. Another form of advertising was the printing of catalogues, which were available to the reading public free on request.<sup>7</sup>

We are fortunate to have a copy of one of Siraj's catalogues. It has been preserved in the Leiden University Library. It was stored in a packet together with four issues of *Jawi Peranakan* and an invoice for sixteen works printed by Haji Muhammad Taib, another Singapore publisher. It is lithographed on one side of a large sheet the same size as a newspaper. It lists 124 book titles and 14 newspapers.

#### Date of the catalogue

The catalogue is undated, but its date can be estimated quite closely. One key to the date is the list of newspapers available for subscription which appears at the end of the catalogue.

Of the newspapers listed, I am not able to identify *Matahari Terbit*. But where there is information about the dates of publication of the other titles, all pre-date 1897.<sup>8</sup> The last to begin publication was *Warta Kerajaan Perak*, actually in 1897. On the other hand, *Bintang Betawi* apparently ceased publication in 1906. Therefore the catalogue must fall between these dates. We also know that *Pewarta Bumi* failed

<sup>3</sup>I. Proudfoot, 'A Formative Period in Malay Book Publishing', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 59, pt. 2 (1986): 124-125.

<sup>4</sup>I. Proudfoot, 'Pre-War Malay Periodicals', *Kekal Abadi*, jil. 4, bil. 4 (Disember 1985): 1-2.

<sup>5</sup>W. Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp.44, 48.

<sup>6</sup>From 31 August 1891 until 7 March 1892, Siraj took a large weekly advertisement on the front page of *Jawi Peranakan* listing books for sale; thereafter he advertised frequently, announcing the availability of new titles.

<sup>7</sup>References to such catalogues will be found at Raja Ali Haji, *Salasilah Melayu dan Bugis*, Matbaat al-Imam, Singapore, 1329 [1911]: back cover; Haji Sulaiman b. Haji Muhammad Basyir, *Penambah Akal*, Haji Abdullah b. Haji Muhammad Said, Singapore, 1917: p. 32.

<sup>8</sup>W. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals; Katalogus Surat-Kabar Koleksi Perpustakaan Museum Pusat, 1810-1973*, Museum Pusat, Departmen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Jakarta, 1973; 3200 *Revue et journaux arabes de 1800 à 1965*, ed. Abdelghani Ahmed-Bioud, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, 1969; M. Hartmann, *The Arabic Press of Egypt*, Luzac, London, 1899.

Hartmann mentions two journals titled *Al-Firdaus*, no. 167 (Cairo, 1889+), a political weekly; and no. 44 (Cairo, 1898+) a weekly women's magazine. Siraj's catalogue lists a monthly.

*Wajah Silung* is mentioned in *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, Penang, 29 Ramadhan 1313 [±14 March 1896], p.401.



in the years 1900–1901. This leaves 1897–1899 and 1902–1906 as possibilities.

Another clue lies in the absence of any Singapore or Penang newspapers from the list of those offered for subscription. Since Siraj was willing to list *Warta Kerajaan Perak*, which was an edition of the Perak Government Gazette in *jawi* (Arabic script adapted to writing Malay), and was willing to import Batavian newspapers in the *rumi* (romanized) script unfamiliar to most of his readers, it seems unlikely that he would not offer more interesting fare to his readers if it were available. Indeed, earlier in the decade, Siraj had been the subscription agent for three *jawi* Malay newspapers.<sup>9</sup> For 1898–1899, however, there were no locally produced periodicals other than a Christian-mission monthly and a Sunday-school paper. This was not true of 1902–1906. Throughout this period *Chahaya Pulau Pinang* (October 1900+) was available, as were for some time *Lengkongan Bulan* (April 1900–March 1901) and the Singapore-produced *Taman Pengetahuan* (June 1904+). Taken all together, the list of newspapers available for subscription therefore suggests a date for the catalogue around 1898–99.

The books listed for sale are a less reliable source for inferring the date of the catalogue because early Malay book publishing is still less thoroughly documented. Nevertheless, comparing Siraj's catalogue with data collected from the *Straits Settlements Government Gazette* (SSGG) and a survey of major public library holdings, a few interesting points emerge. One is the absence of *Syair Haji Nailah* from the list. This title was published by Siraj on 4 December 1900.<sup>10</sup> It would surely be included if the catalogue were later than that date. It is more difficult to determine the

earliest possible date for the catalogue because most of the *syair* and *hikayat* titles listed were fairly constantly reprinted throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the listing of a letterpress edition of *Sejarah Melayu* is significant. The first such edition in this period was put out in 1896.<sup>11</sup>

In *Syair Haji Nailah* Siraj included a list of *syair* for sale. This stocklist generally corresponds with the *Syair* section of the catalogue, although a few titles mentioned in the catalogue are absent. On the other hand, the stocklist includes three *syair* which are not listed in the catalogue. Such differences are not necessarily significant, for we do not know that either of the lists is meant to be comprehensive. Nevertheless, one of the additional items in the stocklist is interesting. For two (*Syair Utusan Jambi* and *Syair Perang Pahang dan Ceritera Johor*) I can find no further information; but the third, *Syair Permata Nilam*, was published on 8 August 1900.<sup>12</sup> Its absence from the catalogue, but not from the stocklist, could point to an earlier date for the catalogue.

More revealing is another stocklist appended by Siraj to *Hikayat Nakhoda Muda*, also published late in 1900.<sup>13</sup> This lists *hikayats* available for purchase from Siraj. Like the *Haji Nailah* stocklist, this list has much common ground with the catalogue, although it gives a rather wider sense to the category *hikayat*. Nine titles are found in this stocklist but not in the catalogue. Among those absent from the catalogue are an important group of school texts put out in late 1898 and 1899 at the instigation of R.J. Wilkinson. These titles are *Hikayat Sultan Ibrahim*,<sup>14</sup> *Hikayat Jaya Asmara*,<sup>15</sup> *Hikayat Marong Mahawangsa*,<sup>16</sup> *Hikayat Puspa Wiraja*,<sup>17</sup> and *Malai*

<sup>9</sup> In *Bintang Timor*, 13 October 1894, p. 3, Siraj advertised that he was the subscription agent for eight Malay-language newspapers, including three in 'Bahasa Melayu huruf Arab': *Jawi Peranakan* (Singapore), *Sri Perak* (Taiping), *Tanjong Penegri* (Penang); two of the eight were Singapore publications: *Jawi Peranakan* and *Bintang Timor*.

<sup>10</sup> *Syair Haji Nailah macam baru*, Haji Muhammad Siraj b. Haji Muhammad Salih, Singapore, 10 Sya'ban 1318 [± 3 December 1900]; registered at SSGG 19 April 1901, p. 662, where its date is 4 Dec 1900.

<sup>11</sup> *Sejarah Melayu*, ed. W.G. Shellabear, American Mission Press, Singapore, 1896.

<sup>12</sup> Sayid Abu Bakar, *Syair Permata Nilam*, Haji Muhammad Said, Singapore, [defective date]; registered at SSGG 19 October 1900, p. 2483 with publication date 8 August 1900.

<sup>13</sup> *Hikayat Nakhoda Muda*, Matba' Haji Muhammad Siraj, Singapore, 1318 & 1900. Registered at SSGG 19 April 1901, p. 663, with publication date of 10 November 1900.

<sup>14</sup> *Hikayat Sultan Ibrahim* [rumi], Kelly & Walsh, Singapore, for R.J. Wilkinson, Acting Inspector of Schools, Straits Settlements. The SSGG dates publication at 18 April 1899 (SSGG 1 September 1899, p. 1241).

<sup>15</sup> *Hikayat Jaya Asmara* [jawi], Singapore Government Press, for the Inspector of Schools, 1899.

<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Yusuf b. Nasruddin, *Hikayat Marong Mahawangsa yakni Salasilat Negeri Kedah Dar al-Aman* [jawi], Kim Seck Hean Press, Penang, for R.J. Wilkinson, Acting Inspector of Schools, Straits Settlements, 16 Nov 1898 = 2 Rajab 1316.

<sup>17</sup> R.J. Wilkinson (ed.), *Hikayat Maharaja Puspa Wiraja di Negeri Istana Pura Negara* [jawi], Singapore Government Press, 1899 (R.O. Winstedt, *A History of Classical Malay Literature*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1969: pp. 316, 318).



*Ridar* [Malay Reader].<sup>18</sup> School textbooks are otherwise well represented in the catalogue, so the absence of all these items points to a date before November 1898.

Thus we may infer that the most likely date for the catalogue falls between early 1897 and late 1898.

### Contents of the catalogue

Drawing on a survey of early Malay printed books in major libraries, I have tried to identify the last known edition of each work listed which was published before the end of 1898. I have added notes of the publisher's name and the date of that edition in the right-hand columns of the transcription of the catalogue. (Unless otherwise indicated, the place of publication is Singapore.)

From this information, a few main points emerge.

First, a very high proportion of the books Siraj offers for sale had been put out by Singapore publishers. We do not know of course whether in 1898 Siraj was still selling copies of a book published in Singapore in 1890. There may have been a Singapore reprint of which we are unaware, or the book may have been reprinted elsewhere — in Bombay, for instance.<sup>19</sup> Our knowledge of book publishing at this time is certainly incomplete. Nevertheless, the fact that nearly all the books listed in the catalogue had Singapore editions, strongly suggests that the great bulk of Siraj's stock was locally produced for sale on the local market.

The second point is that Siraj's own publications

make up only a small proportion of the stock he has for sale. The notes I have added to the catalogue suggest that only about 10% of all the titles listed are his own publications. Or, measured another way, his publications account for about 14% of those we know were published by indigenous Singapore printers. This probably understates Siraj's printing activity, for it stands to reason that among the books which have not survived from this early period, some will have been published by Siraj.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the Government Gazette registrations broadly corroborate this picture of Siraj's activity. Taking the registrations from their inception in 1887 until the date of the catalogue, we find Siraj credited in 15% of the registrations by indigenous publishers. In short, it is clear that the great majority of the books listed in Siraj's catalogue are not his own publications.

In fact it appears that a small group of publishers worked closely together. In the production of several bulky Javanese Islamic manuals, Siraj acted as editor (and probably calligrapher) for works published by Haji Muhammad Sidik. Examples of this practice are *Mukhtasar al-Hikam*,<sup>21</sup> *Kitab Munjiyat*,<sup>22</sup> *Majmuk al-A'mal*,<sup>23</sup> and *Majmuat al-Syariat*.<sup>24</sup> Slighter or more popular works were frequently put out first by one publisher and later by another.<sup>25</sup> Copyright seems to have been readily negotiable.

Thus it emerges that Haji Siraj was involved in several aspects of publishing, book production and retailing. His catalogue includes his colleagues'

<sup>18</sup> *A Malay Reader* (Romanized), Kelly & Walsh, Singapore, for R.J. Wilkinson, Acting Inspector of Schools, Straits Settlements. The SSGG dates publication at 11 April 1899 (SSGG 1 Sep 1899, p. 1241).

<sup>19</sup> Information about Malay *kitab* published in Egypt, Arabia and Turkey, and especially about *hikayat* and *syair* published in Bombay, is still rudimentary.

<sup>20</sup> This is particularly likely when we know that Siraj was an earlier publisher of a title which was subsequently put out by another publisher: e.g. *Hikayat Indra Bangsawan*, was published on 21 Syawal 1306 = 20 June 1889 by Haji Muhammad Siraj; then reissued on 12 Muharram 1310 [±1 November 1902] by Matba' Haji Muhammad Taib and noted thus for the catalogue; but subsequently again put out by Matba' Haji Muhammad Siraj on 1 Ramadhan 1319 [±12 December 1901]; and by Muhammad Idris on 20 Muharram 1323 [±27 March 1905].

<sup>21</sup> *Mukhtasar al-Hikam*, translated by Muhammad Salih bin Umar Semarang, Matba' al-Hajj Muhammad Sidik, Singapore, 1291 [1874-1875].

<sup>22</sup> *Kitab Munjiyat matik saking Ihyā 'Ulum al-Din al-Ghazali*, translated by Muhammad Salih bin Umar al-Samarani, 1st edition, Matba' al-Hajj Muhammad Sidik, Singapore, 30 Jumad al-thani 1310 [±19 January 1893]; [2nd edition] akhir Safar 1313 [August 1895].

<sup>23</sup> *Kitab Majmuk al-A'mal al-Mardhiyah*, Matbaah Haji Muhammad Sidik, Singapore, 15 Rajab 1311 [±22 January 1894].

<sup>24</sup> *Risalat Majmuat al-Syariat al-Kafiat lil 'Awamm*, translated by Syaikh Muhammad Yahya al-Samarani, Matbaat al-Hajj Muhammad Sidik, Singapore, 1309 [1891-92]; [2nd edition] awal Muharram 1312 [July 1894].

<sup>25</sup> An extreme example is *Syair Siti Zubaidah*, which was published by Haji Abdul Karim b. Suradin in 1874, by Haji Termidi in 1883, at Matba' Haji Muhammad Siraj in 1888, by Haji Muhammad Amin in 1889, and by Haji Muhammad Said again in 1889, by Haji Muhammad Siraj & Co. yet again in 1889, by Haji Muhammad Sidik in 1890 and 1892, by Haji Muhammad Taib in 1893, by Amin again in 1894, by Taib again in 1898, and by Amin again in 1900. There were additionally a couple of issues by unidentified publishers during this period.



and competitors' works as well as his own. It thus gains significance as an indicator of the book-buying public's taste in 1898.

### Book trade

The catalogue throws a little light, too, on aspects of the book trade. It gives some insight into marketing arrangements.

Haji Siraj's Penang agent, Haji Putih, was a publisher and bookseller in his own right. The catalogue itself lists two titles published by Haji Putih in Penang and a third printed in Singapore by Siraj on Haji Putih's behalf.<sup>26</sup> In his own publications, Haji Putih advertises his bookshop (*kedai kitab*) and describes himself as a bookseller (*herniaga kitab-kitab*).<sup>27</sup> The peninsular agents, on the other hand, were not known as booksellers, although two had other connexions with publishing. The Malacca agent, Munsi Muhammad Jaafar, had written a booklet *Syair dan Ucapan Queen 50 Tahun Jubilee* which Siraj published in 1891.<sup>28</sup> The Kinta agent, Haji Muhammad Yaakub, was associated with the Taiping newspapers *Seri Perak* in 1893, and later *Khizanah al-Ilmu* in 1904.<sup>29</sup> But neither they, nor Munsi Syaikh Nasir, the Perak visiting teacher, could be called professional booksellers like Siraj and Putih. In this period bookshops were probably found only in the commercial centres of Singapore and Penang.

Lack of a network of retailers makes Siraj's provisions for mail-order more significant:

The reference books (*kitab*), romances (*hikayat*), ballads (*syair*) and newspapers listed in this catalogue may be bought for the prices listed beside each title, paid in cash. Customers abroad wishing to buy these books should forward payment in advance together with the postal charges listed alongside each price. Money from abroad may be sent as bank orders or postal money orders as well as in the form of currency notes. We definitely do not accept stamps as payment for books. Money sent from anywhere in Java, Sumatra or other

places using Dutch currency should be converted at the rate of 1.25 Javanese rupiahs to 1 Singapore dollar. All correspondence and payments should be sent to the address given above. Alternatively, the address in English is: *H.M. Sirat, 43 Sultan Road, Singapore.*

The listing of postage costs alongside the price of each title, and the elaborate instructions for ordering by mail, indicate well-developed practice. Clearly the extension of colonial postal services in both British and Netherlands territories offered great potential to Siraj and other Singapore booksellers.<sup>30</sup>

### Format of the books

All but three of all the books listed in the catalogue are in *jawi*. The exceptions are quarantined in a separate classification headed *Kitab-Kitab Melayu huruf Inggeris*. Of these, one is a Government-published school book; and the other two are imported from Batavian publishers. Similarly with the newspapers available for subscription, only those from the Netherlands East Indies are in romanized script. Use of *rumi* script was already well established in the Netherlands East Indies, but by 1898 had made little impression on Singapore — or Peninsular — readers.

Most of the books listed were produced by lithography (*cap batu*). We see that typeset books (*cap timah*) are specially marked. The reason may be that use of type was a selling point, or that the relatively higher prices of such books needed to be explained. Probably both factors operate.<sup>31</sup> While lithographs were generally produced as cheaply as possible, the typeset books listed in the catalogue were of higher quality, printed on better paper, and better bound. Typeset books were produced at European-owned presses, at the various government presses, and in a few cases at presses used for newspaper publication.

In 1898, none of the main indigenous book publishers of Singapore, Penang, or the Peninsula owned letterpress equipment. The exception was the *Jawi Peranakan* company, which produced few

<sup>26</sup> *Hikayat Sultan Bustamam*, Haji Putih Sya'ia (at Freeman Press), Penang, 6 Dhu'l-hijjah 1312 [±31 May 1895]; *Hikayat Ganja Mara*, Haji Putih Sya'ia (at Freeman Press), Penang, 15 Ramadhan 1314 = 17 Februari 1897; *Surat Terasul*, Matba'ah Haji Muhammad Siraj, Singapore, dengan suruhan Haji Putih, Penang. *Syair Dagang* is a similar joint publication, 1 Rabi' al-akhir 1305 [±17 December 1887].

<sup>27</sup> *Hikayat Ganja Mara*, title page.

<sup>28</sup> *Syair dan Ucapan Queen 50 Tahun Jubilee*, Matba' Haji Muhammad Siraj, Singapore, 1891.

<sup>29</sup> W. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals*, p.31 (no. 17).

<sup>30</sup> I. Proudfoot, 'Formative Period', p.101.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111.



books but established a precedent for typeset newspaper production. The *Jawi Peranakan* staff published *Syair Kampung Boyan Dimakan Api*<sup>32</sup> on this press; and Siraj used it to print *Hikayat Ala'uddin*.<sup>33</sup> On another occasion, he used the American Mission Press to print *Risalat Peraturan Bola Sepak* (listed in the catalogue as *Peraturan Bermain Bola Sepak Futbul*).<sup>34</sup> Makhдум Sahib printed *Hikayat Gul Bakawali* at the Denodaya Press, which was better known for its Baba (romanized) publications.<sup>35</sup> These few cases are the only ones in which indigenous book publishers used the letterpress technique. In all other cases, such books were put out by European or official presses.

The method of marking the typeset books in the catalogue reflects this state of affairs. In general, it assumes lithography: it is the typeset books which are specially indicated. However this assumption does not hold good for two classes of publication. The books in romanized script (*Kitab-kitab Melayu Huruf Inggeris*) and the newspapers were exclusively typeset. In these categories the catalogue does not mark the use of type, for here the readers of the catalogue will have assumed that letterpress was used.

#### Range of titles

If this catalogue indicates what readers were buying in 1898, it is remarkable that no Islamic manuals are included in the catalogue. We might expect to find such works under the heading *Kitab*, but in the catalogue this category comprises ready-reckoners and school books. It is true that books of Islamic doctrine, in both Arabic and Malay, were more often published in Cairo, Mecca, Istanbul and Bombay,

than in Singapore.<sup>36</sup> But notices in Singapore-printed books tell us that such books were readily available in Singapore book stores,<sup>37</sup> and indeed Siraj himself sold them.<sup>38</sup> Their absence from this catalogue is therefore noteworthy. In the catalogue, books dealing directly with religious topics are in *syair* form: *Syair Sifat Duapuluh*, *Syair Syariat*, *Syair Mekah*, *Syair Nur Muhammad*, *Syair Mayat*, *Syair Makrifat al-Islam*, etc. Among the *hikayats* are several dealing with the exploits of the legendary heroes of early Islam: *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah*, *Hikayat Semaun Perang Abu Jahal*, etc. This focus prompts us to believe that for the general book-buying public, Islamic values and identity were transmitted through popular Islamic literature rather than through dogmatic treatises. The same observation could be made about the selection of Arabic newspapers offered for subscription: they deal with general news of the Islamic heartland; they are not journals devoted to religious matters.

At the same time, it is striking that a number of books of Western knowledge appear as *Kitab* in the catalogue. Many are government publications intended for the 'vernacular' Malay schools of the Straits Settlements. Their prominence in this commercial bookseller's catalogue suggests that they may have reached a wider audience. No doubt Siraj sold some of these school textbooks to teachers in the government schools of the peninsular states. It is significant that his agent for Taiping-Larut is a visiting teacher (that is, a Western-trained Malay school inspector). Populous and wealthy Perak was the leader in developing a network of government schools on the Peninsula, and its early schools relied on text-

<sup>32</sup> Pengarang Jawi Peranakan, *Syair Kampung Boyan Dimakan Api*, Singapore, 1883.

<sup>33</sup> *Syair Alauddin*, Haji Muhammad Siraj, Singapore, 1890, printed at Matbaah Jawi Peranakan.

<sup>34</sup> Sayid Mahmud, *Peraturan Bola Sepak*, Haji Muhammad Siraj, Singapore, 1895; SSGG 1 May 1896, p. 640.

<sup>35</sup> The Denodaya Press was, however, run by Makhдум Sahib b. Ghulam Muhyiddin Sahib.

<sup>36</sup> V. Matheson & M.B. Hooker, 'Jawi Literature in Patani', *JMBRAS*, forthcoming 1988.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. *Syair Rejang*, Haji Muhammad Said, Singapore, 27 Januari 1893, at front: 'Bahwa adalah hamba maklumkan di bawah satar ini ada sedia jual syair dan hikayat dan kitab-kitab cap dari negeri Mekah al-Masyrifah dan taba' Mesir macam-macam'; *Hikayat Ganja Mara* (see note 27), title page: 'Kedai nombor 52 di Jalan Acheen Street sedia bermacam-macam kitab-kitab Arab dan kitab-kitab Melayu taba' Mekah, Stambul, Mesir, Bombai, dan lain-lain demikian lagi berjenis hikayat dan syair-syair dan berbagai-bagai pula surat-surat cerita yang indah-indah ...'; *Syair Nyai Dasima*, Muhammad b. Haji Muhammad Said, Singapore, 2 Rajab 1330 = 17 Jun 1912, back cover: 'Menjual serba jenis kitab-kitab Arab, Melayu dan Jawa daripada Cap Mekah, Stambul, Rusyini, Mesir, Bombai dan berbagai-bagai jenis azimat dan gambar wafak rumah dan kebun'.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. the Iklan of *Hikayat Abu Sammah*, Haji Muhammad Siraj, Singapore, 1304 [1886-1887], p.2: 'Telah dijual kitab-kitab dan hikayat-hikayat dan syair-syair daripada bahasa Arab dan bahasa Jawa istimewa pula daripada bahasa Melayu...'. Siraj then (p.39) lists his stock in three columns of equal length: one lists *Kitab* dealing with Islamic teachings, one *Hikayat*, and one *Syair*. Also *Syair Taj al-Muluk*, Ofis Haji Muhammad Said & Haji Muhammad Siraj, Singapore, Dhulkaedah 1304 [July-August 1887], p.88: 'kitab-kitab cap Mekah bahasa Melayu macam-macam karangan Syaikh Daud Patani dan Syaikh Arsyad Banjar ...'.



books published in the Straits Settlements.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, many of the books published for the government schools will have had a wider appeal. Some also represented good value for money.

### Conclusion

This catalogue is a precious record for Malay intellectual life at an important time of transition. It conveys an impression of the book-buying

public's taste and the reading materials which were — in part — forming their world-view.

It throws light on the role of the cosmopolitan Singapore Muslim community in disseminating new ideas, both from the centres of the Islamic world and from the West. But it reminds us, too, that the intellectual revolution which began last century stemmed at first from the wider dissemination of traditional materials as well as from exposure to the new.

[Transcription of the catalogue with added notes of the publisher's name and date in the right-hand column]

## HAJI MUHAMMAD SIRAJ BIN HAJI MUHAMMAD SALIH Tukang Cap Nombor 43 Sultan Road Singapura

Surat-surat dan wang-wang yang dikirim hendaklah dialamatkan kepada Haji Muhammad Siraj tukang cap nombor 43 Sultan Road Singapura: H.M. Sirat 43 Sultan Road, Singapore		Wakil-wakil menjual
	di Melaka:	Munysi Muhammad Jaafar, kerani Residen
	di Taiping-Larut:	Munysi Syaikh Nasir, visiting teacher
	di Kinta-Papan, Perak:	Haji Muhammad Yaakub bin Raja Bila
	di Pulau Pinang:	Haji Putih Enkampeni, saudagar kitab
	di Labuhan Deli:	Haji Muhammad bin Nakhoda Abu Bakar

Adapun sekalian kitab-kitab hikayat-hikayat dan syair-syair serta surat-surat khabar yang tersebut di dalam daftar ini boleh dapat dibeli dengan wang tunai menurut harga yang ditentukan di sebelah nama kitab-kitab itu. Jika pada lain-lain negeri berkehendak kitab-kitab itu hendaklah dikirimkan wang harganya terlebih dahulu serta wang belanja posnya menurut yang dinyatakan di sebelah harga-harga itu. Maka sekalian wang-wang yang dikirim daripada lain-lain negeri hendaklah dikirimkan dengan beng wesel atau mani odar. Maka pada negeri-negeri yang tiada dapat wesel dan mani odar memadailah dengan mengiriskan wang kertas sahaja. Maka tiada diterima sekali-kali setem-setem pos dijadikan wang bagi membeli kitab-kitab itu. Maka sekalian wang-wang yang dikirim daripada seluruh tanah Jawa dan Pulau Perca serta negeri-negeri yang pakai belanja wang Belanda hendaklah mengiriskan dengan hitungan tiap-tiap seringgit (\$1) Singapura dengan satu rupiah duapuluh lima sen (f 1.25) Jawa. Sekalian surat-surat dan wang yang dikirim hendaklah dialama[t]kan kepada nama yang tersebut di atas itu. Jika berbahasa Inggeris demikian: H.M. Sirat, 43 Sultan Road, Singapore.

[column 1]

Kitab-kitab	Harganya Ringgit sen	Posnya sen		
*Urip waras	30	4	<i>Singapore Gov't Press</i>	1891
*Benih pelajaran	10	4	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1895
Terasul	10	1	<i>Haji Putih, Penang (printed by Haji Muhammad Siraj, Singapore)</i>	1887
Teladan menyurat	10	2	<i>[Inspector of Schools, S.S.]</i>	1889
*Jalan kepandaian, kitab sekolah nombor 3	35	5	<i>Johor Gov't Press</i>	1885
*Jawab ilmu kira-kira Tuan Hall	35	4	<i>[Inspector of Schools, S.S.]</i>	?
*Jioghrafi	30	2	<i>Johor Gov't Press</i>	1884
*Cakap rampai-rampai bahasa Melayu Johor	\$1.00	5	<i>Neth. Indies Gov't Press, Batavia</i>	1868
*Sifir Muhammad	5	1	<i>Johor Gov't Press</i>	1886

<sup>39</sup>On sale of textbooks in the Malay States, see *Straits Settlements Annual Report on Education, 1899* (by R.J. Wilkinson), §13; also the *Isemonger Report, 1894* (at p. 22 of F.H.K. Wong & Gwee Yee Hean, *Official Reports on Education in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States 1870-1939*, Pan Pacific, Singapore, 1980.)



*Ilmu peladang	25	3	<i>not known</i>	1892
*Ilmu kira-kira	35	3	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1898
*Ilmu kira-kira Tuan Hall	45	6	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1893
*Peraturan bermain bola sepak futbol	25	1	<i>Haji Muhammad Siraj</i>	1895
Pemimpin Johor (kamus)	45	2	<i>Haji Muhammad Amin</i>	1895
Punca pengetahuan, kitab sekolah nombor 1	10	1	<i>Thomas Trusty</i>	1892
*Pohon pelajaran, kitab sekolah nombor 2	25	3	<i>Singapore Gov't Press</i>	1893
*Kamus al-Mahmudiah	75	10	<i>Singapore Gov't Press</i>	1894
Kamus Arab Melayu dan Bugis	75	5	<i>Haji Abdul Karim</i>	1893
*Kejadian selera anggota manusia	25	3	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1891

#### Hikayat-hikayat

Abu Sammah	10	1	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1891
*Acara manusia atau Penerugi akal	\$3.50	10	<i>E.J. Brill, Leiden</i>	1891
Ahmad dan Muhammad	15	2	<i>Haji Hasan</i>	1892
Alf laila wa laila 1001 malam, 5 jilid	\$2.50	15	<i>Thomas Trusty</i>	1894
Amir Hamzah	\$3.50	25	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1889
Indera Bangsawan	15	2	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1892
Bakhtiar	25	4	<i>Haji Muhammad Siraj</i>	1888
Badr al-Basim	25	3	<i>Haji Muhammad Amin</i>	1896
Bustamam	\$4.00	20	<i>Haji Putih, Penang</i>	1895
*Taman Melayu atau Berbagai-bagai hikayat, 2 jilid	\$3.00	15	?	
Tengkorak kering	12	1	<i>Haji Muhammad Said</i>	1896
*Jahidin	25	5	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1888
*Ceritera Tanah-tanah Melayu	35	4	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1892
Cendawan putih	30	3	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1894
Derma Tasiah dan Abu Nawas	15	2	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1898
*Dunia dan ilmu jioghrافي	50	5	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1894

#### [column 2]

Raja Budak	15	2	<i>Haji Abdul Karim</i>	1891
Raja Handak	15	2	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1889
Raja Sulaiman	10	1	<i>[Haji Muhammad Siraj later edition 1902]</i>	
*Sejarah Melayu	\$2.50	10	<i>American Mission Press</i>	1896
Semaun perang Abu Jahal	15	2	<i>Haji Muhammad Amin</i>	1892
Si Miskin Marakarmah	50	4	<i>Thomas Trusty</i>	1894
Syah Mardan	40	3	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1897
*Abdullah munsi, 2 jilid	\$1.00	20	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1897
*Ala'uddin (memakai gambar-gambar)	40	3	<i>Haji Muhammad Siraj</i>	1890
*Ilmu kejadian, Ilmu bintang, 2 jilid	60	8	<i>not known</i>	1887
Gholam	50	6	<i>Haji Abdul Karim</i>	1894
*Perang Jerman dan Perancis	\$1.00	6	<i>Ofis Cap Kerajaan Lingga</i>	1888
Pegar Madhi, jilid yang pertama	40	6	<i>[Haji Muhammad Said 2nd edition 1903]</i>	
*Pelayaran Abdullah	50	5	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1891
*Gul Bakawali	50	4	<i>Makhдум Sahib</i>	1893
*Galila Damina	50	5	<i>Inspector of Schools, S.S.</i>	1897
Ganja Mara	\$3.00	20	<i>Haji Putih, Penang</i>	1897
*Lima temenggung	40	3	<i>Neth. Indies Gov't Press, Batavia</i>	1898
Muhammad Hanafiah perang Yazid	50	6	<i>Haji Muhammad Amin</i>	1896
Malik Saif al-Yazan, 2 jilid	\$1.00	8	<i>Haji Muhammad Amin</i>	1894
Nabi mikraj	10	1	<i>no publisher given</i>	n.d.
*Nabi Yusuf	10	1	<i>Neth. Indies Gov't Press, Batavia</i>	1871
Nakhoda Muda	50	4	<i>Haji Muhammad Siraj</i>	1891



# Syair

Iblis syaitan	5	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1888
Indera Seba (memakai gambar-gambar)	40	3	Haji Muhammad Siraj	1896
Anak raja ditelan jerung	7	1	Ibrahim	1887
Air mawar	5	1	Haji Muhammad Hasan	1897
Ikan terubuk	5	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1887
Badiat al-zaman	20	2	Haji Muhammad Amin	n.d.
Burung unggas bersoal-jawab	7	1	Haji Muhammad Siraj	1887
Burung punggung	5	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1891
Burung nuri	10	1	Haji Abdul Karim	n.d.
Bah Singapura	3	1	Haji Muhammad Siraj	1891
Bidasari	20	2	Haji Muhammad Sidik	1892
Taj al-muluk	15	2	Haji Muhammad Said	1898

## [column 3]

Takbir mimpi	5	1	no publisher given	1893
Tuan Ulama	10	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1890
Juragan budiman Johar Manikam	15	3	Haji Sulaiman	1894
Jubilee Melaka	5	1	Haji Muhammad Siraj	1891
Johan Maligan	20	3	Haji Muhammad Taib	1898
Cinta berahi	5	1	Haji Abdul Karim	1891
Haris Fadhillah Siti Dhawiah	15	2	Haji Muhammad Said	1890
Dagang piatu	5	1	Haji Muhammad Taib	1889
Dandan Setia	\$1.20	12	Haji Muhammad Said	1894
Dewa Syahdan	20	3	Haji Muhammad Sidik	1889
Raja Madhi	25	4	Haji Muhammad Taib	1891
Rejang	7	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1893
Siti Arbah	15	2	Haji Muhammad Said	1891
Siti Zubaidah perang Cina	50	6	Haji Muhammad Taib	1898
Seri Banian Selindang Delima	15	2	Haji Muhammad Hussain	1892
Sultan Mansur	25	4	Haji Muhammad Amin	1891
Saudagar bodoh	10	1	no publisher given	1880
Surat al-kiamat	10	1	Haji Muhammad Tahir	1891
Sungging	20	2	Haji Muhammad Taib	1892
*Suluh pegawai	25	1	Gov't Press, Lingga	1891
Silambari Sinyor	10	1	Haji Muhammad Taib	1889
Sinar alam	35	4	Haji Muhammad Amin	1895
Syariat tarikat dan hakikat	7	1	no publisher given	1881
Syams al-Alam, 3 jilid	\$1.20	9	Haji Muhammad Taib	1894
Syams Bahrin	40	5	Haji Muhammad Said	1891
Sifat duapuluh	5	1	no publisher given	1892
Ibarat manikam pari	7	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1893
Abdul Muluk Siti Rufiah [=Rafiah]	25	3	Haji Muhammad Amin	1894
Ajib wa Gharib, jilid yang pertama	30	3	Haji Muhammad Amin	1894
Ardan	50	6	Haji Muhammad Said	1891
Ala'uddin	20	2	Haji Muhammad Said	1890
Puteri Akil	10	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1896
Perang Aceh	5	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1892
Perang Setambul Turki dengan Rusia	5	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1892
Perang Zaitun	30	3	Haji Muhammad Amin	1893
Pengantin Juragan Awai	10	1	Haji Muhammad Said	1887
Pelanduk jenaka	10	1	Haji Abdul Karim	1891
Pantun seloka	5	1	Ibrahim	1892



[column 4]

Panji Semirang	45	5	<i>Haji Muhammad Siraj</i>	1888
Kahar Masyhur	20	3	<i>Haji Muhammad Sidik</i>	1891
Kumbang cumbuan	10	1	<i>Haji Abdul Karim</i>	1891
*Kampung Boyan terbakar	10	1	<i>staff of Jawi Peranakan</i>	1883
Ken Tabuhan	20	3	<i>Haji Muhammad Said</i>	1890
Lampung karam	10	1	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1888
Makrifat al-Islam	7	1	?	
Mekah Medina	10	1	<i>Haji Muhammad Sadik</i>	1889
Mayat	8	1	<i>Haji Muhammad Said</i>	1890
Nasihat bapa kepada anak	8	1	<i>Haji Muhammad Said</i>	1890,1900
Nur Muhammad dan Maulud Nabi	8	1	<i>Haji Muhammad Taib</i>	1889
Hirmaya	30	3	<i>Haji Muhammad Siraj</i>	1893
Yatim Mustafa	15	2	<i>Haji Muhammad Amin</i>	1895

Kitab-kitab Melayu huruf Inggeris

Kitab Pelajaran	20	2	<i>Singapore Gov't Press</i>	1886
Hikayat duabelas cerita	35	3	<i>Neth. Indies Gov't Press, Batavia</i>	1889
Hikayat Robinson Crusoe	50	4	<i>Neth. Indies Gov't Press, Batavia</i>	1891

Surat-surat khabar

harga setahun

Ringgit sen

(Melayu huruf Arab)				
Wajah Silung, 14 hari sekali	\$2.00		<i>Columbo, ±1896</i>	
Warta Kerajaan Perak, sebulan sekali	\$2.50		<i>Taiping, 1897+</i>	
(Melayu huruf Belanda)				
Bintang Betawi, tiap-tiap hari	\$14.00		<i>Batavia, 1894–1906</i>	
Perca Barat, seminggu dua kali	\$9.00		<i>Padang, 1893–1919</i>	
Pemberita Betawi, tiap-tiap hari	\$11.00		<i>Batavia, 1884–1916</i>	
Pewarta bumi, 14 hari sekali	\$4.50		<i>Amsterdam 1892–1899, 1902–1923</i>	
Matahari terbit, sebulan sekali	\$3.50		?	
(Arab betul)				
Al-Mawa'id, tiap-tiap hari	\$22.00		<i>Cairo, 1892+</i>	
Al-Fallah, seminggu dua kali	\$17.00		<i>Alexandria, 1886+; Cairo 1888+</i>	
Al-Ra'id al-Misri, seminggu dua kali	\$13.00		<i>Cairo, 1896+</i>	
Al-Mahrusah, seminggu sekali	\$11.00		<i>Alexandria 1877+; Cairo, 1880+</i>	
Al-'Adl, seminggu sekali	\$7.00		<i>Cairo, 1895+</i>	
Al-Ma'lumat bergambar-gambar, seminggu sekali	\$13.50		<i>Cairo</i>	
Al-Firdaus, sebulan sekali	\$5.00		<i>? Cairo, 1889+</i>	

[ini harga surat khabar dengan setem posnya]

Tiap-tiap kitab yang bertanda demikian (\*) iaitu dicap dengan huruf timah dan yang tiada itu dicap di atas batu.



سورة آذان و اذان  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
الحمد لله رب العالمين  
صلى الله على سيدنا محمد  
وآله الطيبين الطاهرين  
الطاهرين

[illegible]

**نیل بجی**  
میشی بچہ جو کڑی کرکدین  
ملکہ۔  
برسا کا نواسہ بیچ لڑنے سنائی پنج ناصر مستیع سے چھا  
برسا کا نواسہ بیچ حاج محمد یعقوب بن راج بیلا  
حاج فو زید انکر خدی کو در کرکدین  
فوز بیخ

[illegible][illegible]

تشیق آتشاب و غیر تنگ و ممکن (\*) بجاییت دجف دغن حروف نیمه دان بقیادایت دجف داتس بانو