

Review Paper

**The Development of Malay Religious Magazine in Pre-Independence Malaysia:
A Literature Review**

Annur Ramadhon Kasa*, Norhayati Hamzah & Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor

Department of Islamic History, Civilization and Education, Academy of Islamic Studies, 50603,
Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: 17162036@siswa.um.edu.my

Received: 30 December 2024

Accepted: 24 April 2025

Abstract: The period of pre-independence Malaysia witnessed distinct phases in the development of religious magazines. The first religious magazine, *al-Imam*, introduced Islamic reformist ideas inspired by Middle Eastern intellectuals. Subsequent publications, however, adopted different approaches to disseminating Islamic teachings through magazine publishing. Thus, this literature review aims to explore the development of religious magazines between 1906 and 1957, dividing it into two phases which are the pre-World War II period (1906–1941) and the post-World War II period (1945–1957). This article employs a narrative review approach, a form of literature review that seeks to provide a comprehensive overview. It is particularly suited for historical research, as it synthesises existing knowledge from a broad range of secondary sources in a descriptive manner. The review identifies several factors influencing the development of religious magazines, including the rise of the Islamic reform movement, awareness among religious scholars to propagate Islam, the earlier growth of newspapers, the emergence of intellectual groups, and advancements in printing technology. The pre-World War II period exhibited a more dynamic publication landscape, with 24 religious magazines produced compared to only 18 in the post-war period. This decline is due to the shift in Malay societal focus towards politics, leading madrasahs, associations, and clubs to reduce their magazine output in the second phase. Although various factors influenced the publication of religious magazines, a steadfast commitment to religion was the key factor for all types of publishers, contributing significantly to the development of Islamic publication culture during the period.

Keywords: Islamic reform; Malay history; Malay magazine; Malay publication; religious magazine.

Introduction

Historically, modern mass media in the Malay Peninsula began with the introduction of printing presses by the British colonial government in the 19th century. The earliest publication was *The Government Gazette*, a newspaper published in Straits Settlement, particularly in Penang on 1 March 1806 (Merican, 2021). Following this development, other forms of publications began to emerge, most notably magazines, which offered a more versatile platform for disseminating information, ideas, and cultural narratives (Richards, 2021). This new type of modern mass media provided a space for diverse content, ranging from religious and educational topics to news and literary works, marking the beginning of a significant transformation in media consumption and public engagement in the region (Warnk, 2022; Zara et al., 2023).

In the early 20th century, a magazine with a special focus on Islamic religious content, known as *al-Imam*, was published in 1906 (Sarwan et al., 2020). The release of *al-Imam* marked a significant milestone,

as it was a catalyst for the rapid development magazines in the Malay Peninsula. Since its inception, the landscape of Malay magazine publishing experienced a dramatic transformation, creating what Kim (1984) has described as a distinct “Malay world,” separate from the spheres of other ethnic communities. This “Malay world” refers to a unique cultural, intellectual, and social sphere that emerged, characterised by the consolidation of Malay identity, traditions, and Islamic values, separate from the influences of other ethnic communities. One of the identities of the Malay world was shaped by the content of these religious magazines, which focused exclusively on Islamic issues, matters relevant to the Malay community, and global affairs of the Muslim society (Mohamed, 2023). In this context, this article aims to revisit the development of Malay religious magazines in pre-independence Malaysia, highlighting the factors that influenced their emergence, their evolution over time, and their impact on Malay society.

Methodology

This article employs a narrative review approach, a form of literature review designed to provide a comprehensive overview of a particular topic or field by descriptively synthesizing existing knowledge. It involves a critical assessment of previously published studies, offering an evaluation of past research while identifying gaps in current knowledge (Ferrari, 2015). This study conducts a review by adopting several steps as recommended by Ferrari (2015) and Green et al., (2006). Firstly, defining the objectives. The primary objective of this study is to examine the development of Malay religious magazines from a historical perspective, with a specific time frame ranging from the early emergence of religious magazines in Malaya in 1906 to the pre-independence period in 1957. Secondly, conducting a literature search. This study employed search engines such as Google Scholar with three keywords (“Malay religious magazines” OR “Malay magazine” OR “Majalah Agama”), resulting in the identification of 292 sources (Liana et al., 2024). Additionally, a traditional search method was utilized by identifying relevant books and book chapters, acknowledging that historical research often written in this type of published materials. Thirdly, establishing selection criteria. The selected sources consist of articles, theses, books, and book chapters. Although the initial time frame for the literature selection ranged from 2000 to 2024, several studies published prior to 2000 were also incorporated, as they were authored by prominent historian scholars. Based on a wide range of sources, this study selects materials primarily grounded in historical sources, as they provide reliable insights for understanding the development of Malay religious magazines. Following that, this article conducts an initial screening to identify specific common themes, namely “factors influencing the development of Malay religious magazines” and “Malay religious magazine development in Malaysia before independence” (Fang & Chan, 2024). Finally, the review was conducted from a historical standpoint, analysing the evolution and progression of Malay religious magazines by synthesizing past studies and identifying the contributing factors behind their growth and the trends of the development as well as finding the gaps in the existing body of knowledge.

The Findings and Discussion

1. Factor Influencing the Development

Fundamentally, various factors contributed to the emergence and development of religious magazines in pre-Independence Day of Malaysia. The most influential factor was the rise of the Islamic reform movement. Historically, the Islamic reform movement in this region drew inspiration from Middle Eastern reformist figures, particularly Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), and Rashid Rida (1865–1935). The dissemination of reformist doctrines was facilitated through connections between these thinkers and Malay religious intellectuals, particularly those who pursued their studies at al-Azhar University in Cairo (Othman & Haris, 2015; Merican, 2024). These movement ideas latter were transmitted to the Malay world through the publication *al-Manar* magazine, first issued on 17 March 1898 and circulated until 1936. The content of *al-Manar* was divided into two main sections. The first section centred on Qur’anic interpretation, primarily reflecting the views of prominent Egyptian reformists, alongside fatwas and

discussions on Islamic practices which was central to call the Muslim back to the true path of Islam. The second section featured articles aimed at raising awareness among the Muslim community about the political, social, literary, historical, and civilizational challenges they were facing (Mohamed, 2023).

According to Azra (1999), the ideas of *al-Manar* were transmitted to the Malay Archipelago through three primary means: smuggling via ports with lax colonial supervision, returning pilgrims from Mecca and Medina, and Malay students who had studied at al-Azhar University. Against this backdrop, the first religious magazine in Malaya, *al-Imam*, emerged unexpectedly, with its content strongly influenced by *al-Manar*, as many of the articles in *al-Imam* were based on translations of material originally published in *al-Manar* magazine (Othman & Haris, 2015).

The publication of *al-Imam* magazine marked the beginning of the *al-Manar* group's influence in disseminating their reformist ideology to the Malay community. The Islamic reform movement in the Malay world later known as Kaum Muda (Young Faction), this group centred its intellectual movement on a return to the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, the reopening of the gates of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), and the rejection of religious innovations (Roff, 1994). Concurrently, they were highly responsive to the socio-economic challenges faced by the Malay community, advocating for change and efforts to improve living standards, particularly in the realms of economics and social development (Alias et al., 2023).

The key intellectual figures associated with Kaum Muda and the *al-Imam* magazine included Syed Shaykh al-Hadi (1864–1934), who fully endorsed and actively promoted liberal reformist thought inspired by Muhammad Abduh. On the other hand, Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin (1869–1956) represented a more conservative strand of Kaum Muda influenced by Rashid Rida, focusing on the purification of fundamental religious principles (Zakariya, 2019; Kasa & Ramli, 2024).

The introduction of *al-Imam* sparked a growing awareness among publishers about their responsibility to disseminate religious teachings through modern mass media platforms (Jalani, 2019; Majdin & Zakariya, 2024). This became the second key factor influencing the publication of religious magazines in the Malay Peninsula. This factor stems from the effectiveness of magazines as a medium for communication and expression because of their ability to reach a wide audience and convey diverse ideas (Hendra, 2019; Kasa et al., 2024). According to Adnan (2014), this awareness is evident in the way religious magazines, even those not aligned with Islamic reformist calls, included various religious lessons for the general public. Moreover, in the pre-World War II period, religious elements became an important feature frequently incorporated into other genres of Malay magazines to attract readership. This heightened awareness, as noted by Roff (1994), also influenced opposing factions of Kaum Muda known as Kaum Tua, a group characterised by its more conservative stance on religious matters. Motivated by their sense of responsibility, the Kaum Tua eventually published their own religious magazine, *Pengasuh*, in 1918, marking their contribution to the religious discourse of the time.

In addition to the two factors mentioned above, the development of religious magazines was also influenced by the role of Malay newspapers. Historically, the first Malay newspaper, *Jawi Peranakan*, was established to disseminate current news, promote education, and standardise the Malay language, which was under threat of change (Merican, 2021). Published in Jawi script, *Jawi Peranakan* made its debut in Singapore in 1876 and continued to serve readers for nearly 19 years, with issues released every Monday. However, the newspaper ceased publication in April 1895 due to financial difficulties (Anuar, 2020). Following *Jawi Peranakan*, a variety of Malay newspapers emerged, including *Nujum al-Fajar* (1877), *Shamsul Kamar* (1878), *Sekola Melayu* (1888), *Seri Perak* (1893), *Bintang Timur* (1894), *Tanjung Penegeri* (1894), *Pemimpin Warta* (1895), *Jajahan Melayu* (1896), *Warta Kerajaan Perak* (1896), *Warta Melayu* (1898), *Lingkungan Bulan* (1900), *Chahaya Pulau Pinang* (1900), *Jambangan Warta* (1901), and *Taman Pengetahuan* (1904) (Ahmad, 1973; Rozali, 2022). The vibrancy of Malay newspaper publications, which marked the literary world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, created a positive momentum for the growth of Malay magazines. According to Adam (1992), the emergence of newspapers played a crucial role in fostering literacy among the Malay population, gradually cultivating a reading society. Consequently, newspapers paved the way for the Malay community to embrace the arrival of magazines as a novel source of information, building on the

foundation established by newspapers (Rozali, 2022). The continuity from newspapers to magazines reflects a critical progression in the Malay publishing landscape. The early success of newspapers not only inspired but also facilitated the acceptance and proliferation of Malay magazines in the following decades.

Through newspapers, a group of Malay intellectuals from various backgrounds emerged, pioneering journalism as a medium for disseminating knowledge to the public. While these intellectual figures were primarily active in writing for newspapers, they also contributed significantly to religious magazine publications. Among them was Sayyid Shaykh al-Hadi, who not only founded the newspaper *Saudara* (1928–1941) but also earlier launched the magazine *al-Ikhwan* (1926–1931) (Akgun & Zakariya, 2019). Another notable figure was Abdul Rahim Kajai (1894–1943), who served as the editor for several newspapers, including *Majlis*, *Warta Malaya*, *Utusan Melayu*, and *Saudara*, while occasionally contributing articles to religious magazines such as *al-Ikhwan* (Abu Bakar, 1997; Sulaiman et al., 2011). Similarly, Zainal Abidin Ahmad (1895–1973), widely known as Za'ba, although not deeply involved in journalism, frequently wrote for *Utusan Melayu*, *Lembaga Melayu*, *The Malay Mail*, and religious magazines like *Pengasuh* (Rozali & Othman, 2010). The involvement of these intellectuals played a key role in the development of religious magazines by bridging the gap between newspaper discussions and religious publications. They also contributed articles to meet the magazine's editorial needs.

Meanwhile, the other factor influencing the development of religious magazines in pre-independence Malaya was the advancement in printing technology (Mohd Sharif et al., 2022). In the early 20th century, most newspaper and magazine printing operations were concentrated in the Straits Settlements, particularly in Singapore. This was due to the availability of essential printing equipment such as printing machines, paper, ink, and tin letters, as well as access to lithographic printing which were readily obtainable in the region (Mahfood, 2021). Furthermore, Singapore was home to a larger pool of skilled workers in the printing industry compared to other areas. As a result, the first religious magazine in Malaya was published in Singapore before the industry expanded to Penang. This development was supported by the presence of numerous publishing companies in both locations. In Singapore, for instance, there were establishments such as Ahmadiyah Press and the Al-Imam Printing Press, while in Penang, companies like Jelutong Press and Persama Press was well-known as a publisher of Islamic religious treatise (Ismail, 2015; Zakariya & Oktasari, 2019). Additionally, other states such as Johor and Kelantan also contributed to the growth of publishing activities due to the existing culture of publication. These states became home to various active publishers producing magazines across different genres (Hamid & Abdul Latif, 2013; Mahfood, 2021). Thus, the technological advancements and the presence of active printing hubs in these regions significantly facilitated the emergence and development of religious magazines publication (Mohd Sharif et al., 2022).

2. Development of Religious Magazine Publication

The development of religious magazines can be categorised into two developmental phases which are the pre-World War II period (1906-1941) and the post-World War II period (1945-1957). Both periods display distinct patterns of growth. According to Adnan (2014), during the first phase, 122 Malay magazines spanning various genres were recorded, with most publications concentrated in Singapore (45 magazines) and Penang (29 magazines). The remaining 48 were published across several locations in the states of Peninsular Malaya. Mahfood (2021) explains that the state of Johor featured several active publishing hubs, including Muar, Johor Bahru, and Batu Pahat, due to their proximity to Singapore, access to printing facilities, and ease of distribution to readers. These hubs also attracted a literate audience, given the relatively rapid development of educational institutions such as schools and madrasahs, which produced an educated class that actively participated in magazine publishing activities. Another prominent hub was Kelantan, where following the launch of *Pengasuh* in 1918, another 11 religious magazines were published in Kota Bharu and Pasir Puteh up to 1941 (Hamid, 2018). Other notable locations for magazine publishing included Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Kuala Kangsar, Taiping, Tanjung Malim, Kuala Pilah, Kuala Terengganu, and Alor Setar (Adnan, 2014).

Out of the 122 magazines published during this period, 24 were categorised as religious magazines. Their content predominantly covered Islamic teachings, including stories of prophets, Qur'anic studies,

Hadith, Tawhid, Fiqh, Islamic history, ethics, and question and answer sections on religious matters (Adnan, 2010). These magazines were produced by various categories of publishers, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 1. Number of Religious Magazines and Types of Publishers (1906-1941)

Type of Publisher	Number	Names of Magazines and Year of Publication
Private Companies	10	<i>Al-Imam</i> (1906), <i>Al-Ikhwan</i> (1926), <i>Puncha Pertikaian Ulama Islam</i> (1929), <i>Persahabatan</i> (1930), <i>Kehidupan Dunia Akhirat</i> (1935), <i>Pedomam Islam</i> (1935), <i>Medan Laki-Laki</i> (1935), <i>Dunia Islam</i> (1936), <i>Medan Al-Islam</i> (1936) & <i>Al-Islam</i> (1936).
Private Individuals	4	<i>Al-Islam</i> (1912), <i>Al-Kitab</i> (1920), <i>Semangat Islam</i> (1929) & <i>Majallah al-Kamaliah</i> (1930).
Official Religious Institutions	1	<i>Pengasuh</i> (1918).
Associations and Clubs	4	<i>Harapan</i> (1919), <i>Lidah Teruna</i> (1920), <i>Al-Johoriah</i> (1932) & <i>Wihdat al-Madaris</i> (1935).
Madrasahs	5	<i>Al-Raja</i> (1925), <i>Jasa</i> (1925), <i>Panduan</i> (1927), <i>Dewan Pergaulan</i> (1940) & <i>Seruan Ihya</i> (1941).
Total	24	

Source: Adnan (2002; 2014); Ahmad (1973).

Based on the table, the most active publishers were private companies, while official religious institutions were the least active. This trend is closely related to the previously discussed factors, namely the influence of the Islamic reform wave and the social responsibility to disseminate religious knowledge. For instance, *al-Imam* and *al-Ikhwan* were published under the influence of Islamic reform ideas from the Middle East (Hamimi & Saat, 2020). Consequently, while their content focused on religious education, they prominently advocated a return to the pure teachings of Islam as their editorial mission. At one point, both magazines were seen as opposing traditional Islamic teachings. This was due to their outspoken criticism of the ulama and the customary practices of the Malay community, which they viewed as superstitions or religious innovations (Zain & Ghazali, 2021). For example, *al-Imam* opposed the Malay community's practice of seeking help and wealth from graves, instead of striving to attain them through effort (Mat Ton, 2000). However, for magazines that did not align with Islamic reformist ideas like *al-Imam*, their content was primarily narrative in nature, with a focus solely on religious education. This trend was evident not only among magazines published by private companies but also by individual publishers (Adnan, 2010). This indicates that with the emergence of an Islamic atmosphere, amplified by the vocal voice of *al-Imam*, private publishers became the most active publishers in supporting and further promoting Islamic knowledge and reform within Malay society, in line with contemporary needs (Adnan, 2014).

Roff (1994) highlighted that the vocal criticisms in *al-Imam* towards traditional ulama led to the establishment of *Pengasuh* as a magazine aligned with the Kaum Tua to defend their position. Hamid and Abdul Latif (2013) detailed that, during its first year of publication, *Pengasuh* focused on raising awareness among the Malay community about their socio-economic backwardness. However, it neither exhibited a tendency to oppose the Islamic reform movement nor engaged in reformist discussions, such as criticism of blind adherence and religious innovations. Kushimoto (2012) emphasised that the fatwas published in *Pengasuh* reflected a clear preference for traditional approaches to resolving religious queries, with references to conventional texts of the Shafi'i school, the doctrinal foundation of the Kaum Tua scholars. Thus, Roff's (1994) assertion that *Pengasuh* was not merely a medium for disseminating Islamic teachings but also a bulwark against the ideas of the Kaum Muda which it deemed irreligious.

The development of magazines published by madrasahs, associations, and clubs followed a different trajectory. The number of publications from both these categories was relatively equal. This is because both viewed the dissemination of religious education as not solely intended for their students or members but also targeted at the general public (Adnan, 2010; Jalani, 2019). This orientation aligned with the discourse on religious education promoted by these publishers, which nurtured religious intellectuals capable of fulfilling

editorial demands. With access to printing technology funded by these respective organisations, they were able to publish their own religious magazines. Despite often disregarding economic considerations, their prioritisation of religious responsibility ensured the continuity of such publications (Adnan, 2010; 2014).

During World War II (1941-1945), a different scenario unfolded due to the Japanese occupation of Malaya. During the Malayan Military Administration (MMA), the Japanese took control of newspapers and magazines, using these media outlets as propaganda tools to gain the support of the Malay community (Adnan, 2016). The Japanese Propaganda Department also imposed strict censorship on publications, requiring all efforts to publish newspapers or magazines to obtain prior approval (Iqbal et al., 2013). As a result, no religious magazines were published during this period (Ahmad, 1973).

However, the situation changed significantly in the post-war period (1945-1957). This shift was driven by the emergence of nationalist ideas, particularly those promoting independence, freedom, and the concept of a nation-state (Mohamed et al., 2019). While it is acknowledged that such ideas were present as early as the publication of *al-Imam*, the first religious magazine, they remained marginal until they gained traction in the post-war period (Ibrahim, 2014). Aljunied (2019) links this to Islamic reformism, describing it as a movement that, while initially quietist and non-political, ultimately transformed Muslim perspectives on their role in society. He explains that Islamic reformism, though not explicitly anti-colonial, gradually fostered Muslim empowerment and independence from colonial rule, effectively acting as a form of disguised resistance.

Nevertheless, it was not the sole contributing factor, as there were other influences, including the widespread involvement of the Malay community in nationalist movements. This was particularly evident during the British proposal to establish the Malayan Union in 1945, which, for the first time, saw leaders of various Malay nationalist movements set aside their differences and ideological disputes to unite in opposition to the Malayan Union (Mohd Zain et al., 2011). As a result of this political focus, the publication of religious magazines experienced a slight decline compared to the pre-war period, as political issues became the dominant topic of discourse (Ibrahim, 2014). According to Adnan (2013), a total of 145 Malay magazines were published during this period, of which 18 were religious magazines. These magazines were produced by various categories of publishers, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 2. Number of Religious Magazines and Types of Publishers (1906-1941)

Type of Publisher	Number	Names of Magazines and Year of Publication
Private Individuals	6	<i>Kesatuan Islam</i> (1945), <i>Masa</i> (1946), <i>Ehsan</i> (1946), <i>Al-Islam</i> (1950), <i>Kehidupan</i> (1956) & <i>Pembena Agama</i> (1957).
Private Companies	5	<i>Al-Taqwa</i> (1947), <i>Majallah Tawarikh</i> (1949), <i>Sinaran</i> (1950), <i>Al-Qalam</i> (1950) & <i>Al-Deen</i> (1953).
Official Religious Institutions	3	<i>Pengasuh</i> (1946), <i>Warta Jabatan Agama Johor</i> (1949) & <i>Seruan Majlis</i> (1956).
Associations and Clubs	3	<i>Peredaran</i> (1946), <i>Al-Ihya</i> (1947) & <i>Panduan</i> (1957).
Madrasah	1	<i>Risalah</i> (1954).
Total	18	

Source: Adnan (2002; 2013); Ahmad (1973)

Based on the table above, religious magazines were most frequently published by private individuals. Notably, the first magazine to be published after World War II was from this category, namely *Kesatuan Islam*, which was released in January 1946 in Singapore (Ahmad, 1973). For this category, the contributing factors are closely linked to the responsibility of disseminating Islamic knowledge (second factor), the role of intellectuals (fourth factor), and advancements in technology (fifth factor). Taking *Kesatuan Islam* as an example, the magazine was published by Syed Ibrahim Omar al-Sagoff, a member of the Hadrami Arab family well-known for their contributions to Islamic outreach programme in Singapore. Syed Ibrahim was also a prominent Islamic intellectual, having served as a member of the Legislative Assembly in Mecca before

relocating to Singapore (Aljunied, 2007). Despite his strong financial backing, which stemmed from his affluent family background, Syed Ibrahim lacked access to printing technology. As a result, he outsourced the magazine's printing to Ahmadiyah Press to fulfil this religious responsibility (Ahmad, 1973).

By contrast, magazines published by private companies, although entering the publishing scene somewhat later, gained significant popularity. This success can be attributed to the astuteness of these companies in managing editorial content by intertwining religious topics with contemporary socio-cultural issues affecting the Malay community. For example, *Sinaran* and *al-Qalam* were two notable magazines in the 1950s that became popular due to their responsiveness to current events, particularly the polemic over a Dutch girl named Nadrah who had converted to Islam and married a Muslim man (Abdul Manaf & Abdullah, 2024; Mohd Sharif et al., 2024). *Sinaran* was published by Muslim Publishing House Ltd. in Singapore, led by Karim Ghani, a politician from Burma who had relocated to Singapore. In Singapore, Ghani became a central figure in the Nadrah case, which led to the Nadrah riots in 1950. Following these events, *Sinaran*, which relied heavily on Ghani's expertise as editor, faced instability and ceased publication a year later, particularly after Ghani's imprisonment (Abdul Manaf & Abdullah, 2024). Meanwhile, *al-Qalam* was published by Qalam Press, also based in Singapore, and was headed by Syed Abdullah bin Syed Hamid al-Edrus, a well-known figure in journalism. Recognising his role as an intellectual and journalist, he provided an important social service by elucidating the issues surrounding Nadrah's marriage to Mansor Adabi. This became a central topic that opened up broader discussions on Islamic law (Mohd Sharif et al., 2024). This illustrates that the endeavour to publish religious magazines was not solely driven by religious responsibility and the role of intellectuals. For private companies, capitalising on trending issues provided an opportunity to boost magazine sales, as they relied heavily on revenue generated from these sales.

For magazines published by official religious institutions, funding was not a significant concern as their operations were supported by government resources (Kasa et al., 2024). This was evident in the case of *Pengasuh*, which, despite being first published in 1918, faced suspension in December 1937 due to financial constraints and cost-saving measures implemented by the institution. The publication resumed in 1946 once the institution's finances had stabilised (Yaacob, 2004). The awareness within official religious institutions to support the dissemination of Islamic knowledge also led to the publication of other magazines. For instance, the Johor Islamic Religious Department launched *Warta Jabatan Agama Johor* on 6 November 1949, funded through zakat collections from the state of Johor. Similarly, the Perak Islamic Religious Council began publishing *Seruan Majlis* in January 1956, with its costs fully covered by the institution (Adnan, 2013). Due to this financial backing, these magazines enjoyed greater longevity compared to other publications. *Pengasuh* remains in circulation to this day, *Warta Jabatan Agama Johor* continued until the early 2010s, and *Seruan Majlis* was published until the mid-1970s.

The most significant impact of the nationalist movement on religious magazine publications was observed among publishers associated with madrasahs, associations, and clubs. Prior to World War II, their combined publications amounted to nine, but this number declined to only four in the post-war period. For example, before the war, Madrasah al-Ihya had been responsible for publishing *Seruan Ihya* in 1941 (Adnan, 2013). However, the madrasah abandoned its publishing aspirations entirely after the war. A magazine named *al-Ihya* was introduced in 1947 which had connection to the madrasah, but its management was handed over to the Lembaga Pustaka al-Ihya association, and it also did not last long (Ahmad, 1973).

This decline can likely be attributed to the involvement of madrasahs in political movements and the emergence of politically oriented associations, which became more popular than religious organisations (Aljunied, 2019). Religious scholars associated with madrasahs began engaging in formal politics, exemplified by the establishment of *Hizbul Muslimin* on 14 March 1948. This party aimed to drive the independence movement, realise Pan-Islamic ideals, and establish an Islamic state (Haris, 2014). The party was spearheaded by Madrasah al-Ihya al-Sharif, as its founders were the same individuals, notably Abu Bakar al-Baqir (1907–1974). The party also garnered support from other madrasahs, including Madrasah Al-Insaniah in Teluk Intan, Madrasah Al-Huda Wa al-Bushra in Sitiawan, Madrasah al-Ulum al-Syariah in Bagan Datoh, Madrasah Yahyawiyah, and Madrasah Diniyah in Padang Rengas (Saat & Ariffin, 2022). Consequently, the focus shifted

from religious publishing to political matters, especially with the rise of various Malay political parties such as *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* in 1945, United Malay National Organization (UMNO) in 1946, and Parti Islam SeMalaya (PAS) in 1951, reflecting the growing political consciousness (Hamimi & Saat, 2020). As a result, the publication of religious magazines waned significantly during this period for this type of publisher.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of religious magazine publications in pre-independence Malaya reflects the dynamic interplay of religious, intellectual and socio-political influences. From their inception, these magazines served as powerful platforms for disseminating Islamic knowledge, promoting educational awareness, and addressing societal issues. The early phase of publication was deeply influenced by the Islamic reformist movement, which introduced new ideas on religious and social reform through platforms such as *al-Imam*. This period also witnessed the involvement of intellectual figures and private publishers who championed the responsibility of spreading Islamic knowledge, despite financial and technological constraints. The post-World War II period marked a shift as nationalism and political movements began to dominate public discourse, resulting in a slight decline in the publication numbers of religious magazines. Institutions such as madrasahs and associations, which had previously supported these publications, redirected their focus towards political activism. However, this did not significantly affect private individual publishers, private companies, and official religious institutions due to their unwavering commitment to disseminating Islamic knowledge.

As highlighted in the review above, the researcher has identified a significant gap in the study of the history of religious magazine publishing in Malaysia. Out of approximately 24 religious magazines published during the pre-World War II period and 18 in the post-World War II era, fewer than five magazines have been the subject of scholarly research. Furthermore, these studies have predominantly focused on well-known magazines such as *al-Imam*, *al-Ikhwān*, *Sinaran*, and *al-Qalam*. This concentration on popular publications has resulted in the marginalisation of lesser-known magazines, leaving a considerable gap in the historiography of religious media in Malaysia. Such an imbalance not only restricts a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual and religious landscape of the time but also overlooks the contributions of smaller, yet equally significant, publications. Future research should, therefore, adopt a more inclusive approach by exploring these understudied magazines to construct a more nuanced and holistic narrative of religious discourse in Malaya.

Acknowledgement: Acknowledgment is extended to Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya for the provision of the *Geran Khas Penyelidikan API* under the reference UMG002L-2024, titled *Konsep Islah di Era Kebangkitan Islam dalam Majalah al-Mustaqim* (1972-1982).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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