

The Development of Malay Religious Magazine Publications in Malaysia Post-Independence, 1960-1970

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Abstract

Since the early 20th century, magazines have served as pivotal instruments in Islamic outreach, and their development continued to grow after Malaysia's independence. In this new phase for Malaysia, religious magazines underwent a significant phase of growth, marked by the emergence of various publications produced by different publishing bodies. This expansion was driven by an increasing religious consciousness within the Malay society, encompassing both government and non-government initiatives. However, the documentation and the history of religious magazine publications during this period remain insufficiently explored. Accordingly, this study examines the development of religious magazine publications between 1960 to 1970, highlighting their profiles as well as their content. This qualitative research utilises documentation as its primary data collection method and applies content analysis with an inductive approach to interpret the findings. The study reveals that a total of ten religious magazines were published during this period comprising five published by religious authorities, three by non-governmental Islamic organisations, and two by private and commercial entities. Despite originating from different publishing orientations, all these magazines shared a common objective which is to disseminate Islamic teachings and values through written works, fostering a deeper understanding of Islam and promoting Islamic outreach within the Malay community.

Keywords: Islamic publications, Islamic revival, Malaysia's history, magazine development, Malay magazines

Introduction

The post-independence period in Malaysia (1960–1970) marked a transformative era in the nation's sociopolitical and cultural landscape. Among the significant developments during this time was the growth of religious magazine publications, which played a pivotal role in shaping Islamic discourse and fostering religious consciousness within Malay society. These publications, anchored in their mission to uphold and disseminate Islamic values, demonstrated alignment with Malaysia's socio-political climate, which was increasingly oriented towards Islamic principles during that period.¹ This progress was marked by the establishment of organisations such as Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam SeMalaya (later known as the Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia - PERKIM), established at Tunku Abdul Rahman's residence on August 19, 1960.² Following this, Pertubuhan al-Rahmaniah was founded in 1963 by Uthman el-Muhammady (1943–2013) through a collaborative effort involving students from Universiti Malaya, Kolej Islam Malaya, and other higher education institutions within the Klang Valley.³

Another notable organisation in East Malaysia was the United Sabah Islamic Association (USIA), established on 14 August 1969, which aimed to unify Sabah's diverse ethnic Muslim communities and strengthen the position of Islam in the state.⁴ Following these movements, magazines emerged as an effective platform for spreading Islamic teachings and fostering awareness, valued for their reach, cost-effectiveness, and broad accessibility during a time when print media dominated communication

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¹ Hamed Mohd Adnan (2003), *Penerbitan Majalah di Malaysia: Isu dan Cabaran*, Shah Alam: Karisma Publication Sdn. Bhd., p. 7.

² Heri Kusmanto (2021), "A Comparative Analysis of Regional Political Model of Islamic Development in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues*, Vol. 24, Special Issue 1, p. 5.

³ Aizan Ali Mat Zin and Siti Hajar Aziz (2018), "Muhammad Uthman El-Muhammady: Analisis Sumbangannya dalam Penulisan," *Journal of al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 56-57.

⁴ Suraya Sintang, Budi Anto Mohd Tamring, Siti Aidah Hj. Lukin @ Lokin and Halina Sendera Mohd. Yakin (2019), "Fenomena Agama di Sabah," *Sejarah: Journal of History Department, University of Malaya*, Vol. 28, No. 2, p. 191.

channels.⁵ Malay religious magazine publications positioned themselves as a significant medium alongside other mass media, distinguished by their steadfast commitment to promoting Islamic values and principles. Although several religious magazines had been in circulation since the pre-independence era—such as *Pengasuh*, published by the Kelantan Islamic Religious Council in 1918; *Warta Jabatan Agama Johor*, published by the Johor Islamic Department in 1949; *Seruan Majlis*, published by the Perak Islamic Department in 1951 and *al-Qalam*, published by Qalam Press—the post-independence period saw a significant transformation in the publication landscape. This transformation was marked by a shift in editorial focus, driven by the need to address contemporary issues, promote Islamic values, and align with the changing sociopolitical context of the nation.⁶

Therefore, this study examines the development of Malay religious magazine publication from 1960 to 1970. This period marks a significant phase in the growth of Islam in Malaysia, characterised by the establishment of Religious Councils in each state, headed by a state Mufti who was empowered to assist and advise the ruler while exercising authority over all Islamic matters as stipulated by relevant statutory laws.⁷ Furthermore, this era also represents a pivotal point in the expansion of Islamic outreach movements in Malaysia, influenced by the rise of Islamic movements in the Middle East.⁸ Examining this period is crucial, as it encapsulates the early responses of religious publications to Malaysia's post-independence context.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, historical research design with an inductive approach. Primary historical sources were collected, focusing on published media from 1960 to 1970, with key sources such as newspapers like *Berita Harian* and religious magazines such as *al-Huda*, *Sahabat*, and *al-Islah*. For data analysis, the study utilises conventional content analysis, involving coding categories that are directly and inductively derived from the raw data. The analysis followed several essential steps. First, this present study engages deeply with the collected materials to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the content. Initial codes were developed based on emerging themes: “Religious Magazines Published by Religious Authorities,” “Religious Magazines Published by Non-Governmental Organisations,” and “Religious Magazines Published by Private Individuals and Corporations.” These themes were then interpreted to illustrate the development of each magazine in relation to the identified themes.

Religious Magazines Published by Religious Authorities

The movement towards Islam, initiated by both government and non-governmental efforts, prompted official religious bodies in several states to support this initiative by publishing magazines as instruments of Islamic outreach.⁹ These magazines also served as official platforms for disseminating information on activities, programmes, and decisions undertaken to elevate Islam at the state and national levels.

Among the earliest religious magazines published by official state religious bodies was *Suara Jabatan Agama Terengganu* (hereafter *SJAT*). This magazine, published monthly according to the Hijri calendar by the Terengganu Department of Islamic Affairs, began circulation around 1960.¹⁰ This magazine was managed by officials within the Terengganu Department of Islamic Affairs. In terms of production, the Terengganu Department of Islamic Affairs fully covered costs related to printing and publication as the magazine operated on a commercial basis and was sold at a price of RM 0.40 (including postage). *SJAT* promoted Islamic teachings through various sections, including a khutbah (sermon) section aimed at improving moral values, a Quranic interpretation section, a hadith section, and reports on local Islamic

⁵ “Percetakan: Alat Penting Dakwah Islamiyah,” *Berita Harian*, 16 January 1970, p. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ William Roff (1998), “Patterns of Islamization in Malaysia, 1890s–1990s: Exemplars, Institutions, and Vectors,” *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 217.

⁸ Firdaus Khairi Abdul Kadir, Asyraf Hj Ab Rahman, Hailan Salamun, Nooraihan Ali and Hammadah Ab Rahman (2020), “The Influence of Egyptian Reformers in 1950-1960 to the Da’wah Movement in Malaysia Years 1970s,” *International Journal of Management*, Vol. 11, No. 7, p. 431; Mohammad Redzuan Othman and Abu Hanifah Haris (2018), “Ikhwān Al-Muslimin dan Perjuangan Menegakkan Pemerintahan Islam di Mesir, 1948-1954,” *Jurnal al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Iskandar Ahmad (1973), *Persuratkhabaran Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 100

developments. As an Islamic outreach-oriented publication, *SJAT* outlined key roles for preachers, including calls to resolve religious disputes and to modernise Islamic outreach methods.¹¹ Regarding zakat, *SJAT* encouraged capable individuals to fulfil this obligation, emphasising zakat's benefits as an instrument for fair wealth distribution, a catalyst for social development, and a means of strengthening Islamic brotherhood between givers and recipients.¹²

Next, the Kedah State Islamic Religious Council published *Suara Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Kedah* (hereafter *SMAINK*) in 1965, led by officials from the institution and headed by Abdul Majid Mohd Noor (1924 - 2015), who later became *Yang Dipertua* of the Kedah Islamic Religious Affairs Council (equivalent to Mufti) from 1973 to 1978. The publication was financed through zakat funds collected in the state of Kedah, while Percetakan Siaran handled printing operations in Alor Setar.¹³ The primary aim of *SMAINK* was to eradicate the issue of religious ignorance, which was still prevalent among the people of Kedah. This was emphasised as follows:

*“Kita dapati sekarang, walaupun setiap kemunduran dan keduniaan disalahkan kepada agama, sudah banyak orang-orang yang meninggalkan perkara-perkara keagamaan atau pun sekurang-kurangnya meringankannya demi untuk kepentingan hidup dunia semata-mata.”*¹⁴

[Translation: “We find that now, although every backwardness and worldliness is blamed on religion, many people have abandoned religious practices or, at the very least, taken them lightly solely for the sake of worldly desires.”]

To address this, *SMAINK* focused on religious articles as its main content. It featured sections on Quranic exegesis, hadith, Islamic literature in the form of poetry, an anti-extremist ideology section addressing issues like communism, and a fatwa section to answer reader's questions about matters of faith and worship. Regarding zakat, *SMAINK* aimed to raise awareness among readers of its esteemed nature, encouraging zakat payers to feel pride in their contributions, as zakat funds help fellow Muslims overcome economic instability.¹⁵

SMAINK also reported on the institution's efforts to strengthen Islamic teachings in the state of Kedah. For instance, on September 1, 1966, the institution appointed three information officers to provide guidance on Islamic teachings to communities throughout Kedah, including Pulau Langkawi. In 1964, a total of 74 visits were conducted, reaching an audience of 11,100 individuals. This number increased in 1965, with 113 visits and reaching 69,532 listeners.¹⁶

Due to the high demand for *SMAINK*, the Kedah State Islamic Religious Council sought donations from readers to increase the magazine's circulation, as it was distributed free of charge. Through these contributions, *SMAINK*'s circulation was successfully increased from 1,000 to 2,000 copies beginning with its third issue in 1966.¹⁷

In 1966, the Masjid Negara (National Mosque), administered by the Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Malaysia (then known as JAKIM), launched a magazine titled *Suara Masjid Negara*. The publication of this magazine was the result of discussions held during a meeting of the Masjid Negara Administrative Committee, chaired by Tan Sri Abdul Jamil Rais (1912-1994) on May 19, 1966.¹⁸ Initially, the magazine was scheduled for release in August 1966 to coincide with the first anniversary of Masjid Negara's establishment, under the proposed title *Dewan Masjid Negara*. However, the launch was delayed, and the magazine was eventually published two years later. This delay was likely due to the newness of the publication management team in the field, coupled with the ongoing application process for publishing approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs.¹⁹

¹¹ “Tugas Muballigh,” *Suara Jabatan Agama Terengganu*, Vol. 1, No. 4, November 1960, p. 21-23.

¹² “Seruan: Zakat, Hukum Mengenai Hasil Pengeluaran,” *Suara Jabatan Agama Terengganu*, Vol. 1, No. 4, November 1960, p. 19-21.

¹³ *Kemajuan Ugama Islam Negeri Kedah* (1968), Alor Setar: Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Negeri Kedah, p. 13.

¹⁴ “Dari Pengarang,” *Suara Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Kedah*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1966, p. 3 & 16.

¹⁵ “Peranan Zakat terhadap Masyarakat,” *Suara Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Kedah*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1966, p. 21-23.

¹⁶ “Kegiatan Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Negeri Kedah,” *Suara Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Kedah*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1966, p. 8-9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “Majallah Ilmiah Agama Masjid Negara Sempena Ulangtahun Pertama,” *Berita Harian*, 30 May 1966, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

After two years, *Suara Masjid Negara* was published in conjunction with the celebration of the Prophet's birthday and distributed on Saturday, June 9, 1968.²⁰ The magazine was managed by Haji Abu Bakar Kassim, the head religious researcher at Masjid Negara, who played a significant role in Islamic activities at the mosque, including the preparation of Friday sermon texts. The first issue of *Suara Masjid Negara* was sold at RM 0.40 per copy and increased to RM 0.50 in its second year. This price increase indicates that the magazine's production was funded by the mosque rather than by zakat collections, as it was not distributed free of charge. Regarding its content and frequency, *Berita Harian* reported that the magazine:

“...mengandungi rencana-rencana khas mengai Islam dan kegiatan-kegiatan masjid Negara. Ia akan diterbitkan tiga kali setahun.”²¹

[Translation: “...contains special articles on Islam and activities at Masjid Negara. It is published three times a year.”]

It appears that *Berita Harian*'s report was accurate, as the first issue of *Suara Masjid Negara* stated the magazine's objective as follows:

“*Suara Masjid Negara...diterbitkan dengan aspirasi yang mendalam untuk menegakkan cita-cita Islam dan membentuk keperibadian masyarakat...Untuk memenuhi tujuan ini, Suara Masjid Negara, bermula dari keluaran ini, menyertakan artikel-artikel agama bersifat ilmiah yang bertujuan untuk membangkitkan dan menghidupkan semula semangat Islam.*”²²

[Translation:“*Suara Masjid Negara...is published with a fervent aspiration to uphold Islamic ideals and to shape the character of society... To fulfil this purpose, Suara Masjid Negara, beginning with this issue, includes scholarly religious articles intended to awaken and revive the Islamic spirit...*”]

After *Suara Masjid Negara*, the Pahang Department of Religious Affairs and Malay Customs published *Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang* (hereafter *WJAP*) in January 1968. *WJAP* was led by a religious officer in the department, Abdul Mutalib bin Ali al-Fakhwie, who later served as District Kadi of Pekan, was appointed as Chief Kadi of Pahang in 1984, and subsequently became Deputy *Yang Dipertua* of the Pahang Islamic Religious Council on December 1, 1991. *WJAP* was published annually and distributed free of charge, with printing operation managed by Timur Press in Kuantan. Given its free distribution, the funding was likely sourced from zakat collections. This was made possible due to the notable increase in zakat revenue in Pahang, with collections rising from RM17,314.55 in 1965 to RM23,438.61 in 1966.²³

The establishment of *WJAP* was praised by Pahang's sixth Chief Minister, Datuk Bentara Haji Yahya bin Haji Mohd Seth (in office from May 5, 1964, to August 31, 1972), as it provided the public with an unprecedented opportunity to follow the progress of Islam in Pahang.²⁴ According to Dato' Kurnia Bistari Abdul Aziz bin Ahmad, who at the time served as the Chairman of the Pahang State Committee for Religious Affairs and Community Welfare, *WJAP* carried a significant responsibility in shaping the Islamic community by publishing religious articles that were assumed to be effective in cultivating good Muslim character, as explained:

“*Bagi orang Islam yang benar-benar beriman, kesedaran yang diterima melalui agama Islam adalah lebih berkesan dari yang lain. Oleh itu, amat sesuai di saat yang seumpama ini lahirnya majalah Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang ini yang akan dimuatkan dengan bermacam-macam ilmu pengetahuan...Apakala umat mempunyai budi pekerti yang tinggi, bergerak ke arah kemajuan dan perdamaian, berkorban untuk kepentingan masyarakat dan negara, menunaikan tanggungjawab sebagai seorang warganegara yang setia kepada Islam dan tanah air...Saya rasa dengan jalan memberi kesedaran melalui*

²⁰ “Suara Masjid Negara Keluar Hari Maulud,” *Berita Harian*, 6 June 1968, p. 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² “Dari Meja Pengarang,” *Suara Masjid Negara*, Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1968, p. 1.

²³ “Penyata Kuitipan Zakat dan Fitrah,” *Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1968, p. 21.

²⁴ “Perutusan Menteri Besar Pahang,” *Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1968, p. 3.

siaran-siaran seumpama majalah warta ini akan dapatlah membentuk satu umat yang saya gambarkan di atas itu.”²⁵

[Translation: “For true believers in Islam, awareness imparted through Islam is more impactful than other sources. Therefore, it is highly appropriate that at this juncture the *Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang* magazine is introduced, filled with various types of knowledge... When the community embodies high morals, advances in harmony and peace, sacrifices for the welfare of society and the nation, and fulfils its responsibilities as loyal citizens to Islam and the homeland... I believe that by raising awareness through publications such as this magazine, we can shape the kind of community envisioned above.”]

To achieve this vision, *WJAP* provided dedicated sections emphasising religious knowledge, as follows (*WJAP*, 1968 January):

“Dalam berbagai-bagai ruangan yang disediakan termasuklah di antaranya ruangan tafsir al-Quran, persabdaan junjungan Nabi Muhammad, rencana-rencana mengenai ibadah dan yang berunsurkan agama, ruangan berita kemajuan agama, ruangan kemusykilan agama, ruangan khutbah jumaat, ruangan kata-kata hikmah.”²⁶

[Translation: “Among the various sections available are Quranic interpretation, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, articles on worship and religious matters, a section on Islamic progress updates, a section for religious inquiries, Friday sermon resources, and a section on words of wisdom...”]

In addition to offering religious articles, *WJAP* served as a medium of communication between the people of Pahang and the religious department. *WJAP* played a vital role in disseminating information about Islamic development plans in the state, with the hope of uniting society and aligning efforts toward common goals. For instance, in 1969, a total of 18 mosques, costing RM 492,000.00, and 47 suraus, costing RM 233,500.00, were reported to have been built across Pahang.²⁷

In December 1968, the magazine *al-Huda* was introduced by the Negeri Sembilan Department of Islamic Affairs. This magazine was published quarterly under the leadership of Muhammad Harun Fahmi bin Muhammad Taib. Each copy of *al-Huda* was priced at RM 0.40, indicating that its funding was covered by the department. Printing operations were entrusted to Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad printing company. *Al-Huda*'s publication marked the institution's initiative to engage in written Islamic outreach. As *al-Huda* stated:

“Kelahiran majalah *al-Huda* yang telah menjadi hasrat terpendam dalam siri perkhidmatannya selama ini dalam bidang memperluas saranan penerangan agama melalui tulisan kepada segenap lapisan masyarakat...sebagaimana pentingnya penerangan agama yang berbentuk lisan atau syarahan dan seumpamanya, bagi memberi bimbingan dan panduan masyarakat kita dalam bidang memperdalam dan mempertinggi syiar agama Islam di tanah air kita ini. Maka sesungguhnya tidaklah pula berkurangan perlunya penerangan-penerangan itu disampaikan dengan tulisan melalui siaran-siaran dan majalah seperti *al-Huda*.”²⁸

[Translation: “The birth of *al-Huda* magazine represents a long-standing aspiration to extend religious outreach to all levels of society through written media... Just as oral or lecture-based religious outreach and similar efforts in providing guidance and direction to our community in deepening and elevating the prominence of Islam in our homeland. Indeed, the need for such outreach to be delivered through written media like publications and magazines such as *al-Huda* is no less significant.”]

²⁵ “Kata-Kata Aluan,” *Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1968, p. 7.

²⁶ “Dari Meja Pengarang,” *Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1968, p. 9.

²⁷ “Masjid dan Surau,” *Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang*, Vol. 1, No. 3, December 1969, p. 34.

²⁸ “Dari Meja Pengarang,” *al-Huda*, Vol. 1, No. 1, December 1968, p. 1.

The release of *al-Huda* coincided with the celebration of *Nuzul al-Quran*, resulting in the first issue focusing on topics related to this event.²⁹ For example, *al-Huda* included the exegesis of Surah al-Hijr, verse 9, explaining the Quran as a divine miracle revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), offering guidance to all beings and protected from any alteration. Readers were encouraged to read the Quran regularly, as this practice brings rewards, even for those who do not fully understand its meaning. *Al-Huda* also proposed that *Nuzul al-Quran* should become an annual event similar to other commemorations observed by the Malay community:

*“Sebagaimana peristiwa Isra dan Mikraj, Maulud al-Nabi al-Sharif, malam nisfu Syaaban, hari Asyura dan seumpamanya daripada terjadi agama yang bersejarah dan mengandungi pelbagai pengajaran dan panduan itu, telah menjadi suatu tradisi yang sambung-menyambung diperingati setiap tahun dengan penuh minat dan penggalakkan oleh masyarakat kita. Maka adalah dipercayai bahawa usaha memperingati malam Nuzul al-Quran ini akan mendapat perhatian yang sewajarnya dalam masyarakat kita kelak kerana kitab suci al-Quran al-Karim yang telah diturunkan oleh tuhan kepada junjungan kita Nabi Muhammad S.A.W. adalah sebuah kitab suci yang menjadi panduan serta petunjuk yang terutama bagi mencapai dan mencipta kebahagiaan hidup.”*³⁰

[Translation: “Just as the events of Isra and Mi’raj, Maulid al-Nabi al-Sharif, Nisfu Shaaban, Ashura, and other significant religious occasions are commemorated annually with enthusiasm and encouragement by our community. It is believed that remembering the night of Nuzul al-Quran will likewise attract appropriate attention from our community, as the Holy Quran, revealed to our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), serves as a primary guide to achieving and building a happy life.”]

As a religious publication, *al-Huda* included regular sections such as Quranic exegesis, hadith, sermon texts, a “*Taman Bahagia*” section which was simplified explanations of personal religious obligation (*fardhu ain*) knowledge in Romanized script.

Notably, *al-Huda* featured a dedicated section for women, “*Halaman Wanita*,” urging for gender equality and challenging stereotypes that labelled women as sources of misfortune. This perception stemmed from gender-biased and patriarchal interpretations of religious teachings. *Al-Huda* stressed that men and women share an equal creation purpose—to know one another, not to dominate or subordinate. Both genders have equal opportunities to attain high status through piety, rather than physical or mental advantages. Aligning with this gender-inclusive interpretation, *al-Huda* reminded readers that women have significant roles equal to men in shaping the country’s future. To bridge the gender gap caused by patriarchal cultural dominance, *al-Huda* advocated for equal educational opportunities for women, ensuring they did not fall behind in the fields of knowledge and technology.³¹

Initially, *al-Huda* was planned as a quarterly publication. However, its schedule did not align with these plans. In 1969, *al-Huda* was published four times—in February, May, September, and December. In 1970, it was released only once, in December, before a three-year hiatus. Finally, in December 1973, *al-Huda* resumed publication.³² However, this issue appears to have been the magazine’s final publication, as it was replaced by a new magazine titled *al-Nur* in April 1975.³³

According to *Berita Harian*, the reception towards the publication of religious magazines in this category was not particularly encouraging. This was attributed to the geographical limitations of the content, which was typically confined to the respective states where the magazines were produced.³⁴ Additionally, the content was often perceived as unappealing, primarily catering to a niche audience that included religious scholars within the same state. The small-scale circulation of these magazines, generally limited to around one thousand to two thousand copies per issue, further restricted their distribution, particularly in remote areas. Despite the modest circulation, unsold copies were sometimes distributed free of charge to the public.³⁵

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ “Memperingati Malam Nuzul al-Quran,” *al-Huda*, Vol. 1, No. 1, December 1968, p. 24.

³¹ “Peranan Wanita dalam Pembinaan Keperibadian Masyarakat,” (1969, February), *al-Huda*, Vol. 1, No. 1, December 1968, p. 8-9.

³² “Kata-Kata Aluan,” *al-Huda*, Vol. 1, No. 8, December 1973, p. 2.

³³ “Dari Meja Pengarang,” *al-Nur*, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1975, p. 1.

³⁴ “Nasib Suara Jabatan Agama Islam,” *Berita Harian*, 17 November 1961, p. 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

For religious magazines within this category, however, the perceived shortcomings in publication quality were not seen as a barrier to reaching their target audience. Deficiencies in design, presentation techniques, and content were not considered primary issues, as the main focus remained on disseminating religious knowledge to the Muslim community within their respective states. The segmentation of readership was adapted to the context and needs of local communities at the time, emphasising the function of these magazines as an Islamic outreach medium rather than achieving technical or aesthetic perfection.³⁶

Religious Magazine Published by a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)

Recognising the importance of fostering an Islamic environment, several non-governmental organisations (NGO) with an Islamic orientation undertook the role of publishing religious magazines. These publications served as a means to fulfil their responsibility of disseminating Islamic outreach and providing relevant information to specific target audiences aligned with the objectives of these organisations.³⁷

Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM), an organisation dedicated to Islamic outreach, was a pioneer in launching a religious magazine in the 1960s, titled *Sahabat*, in August 1964. *Sahabat* included sections dedicated to religious knowledge, such as Quranic interpretation, as well as updates on the development of Islam both locally and globally. As PERKIM's official publication, *Sahabat* reported the association's activities, such as conducting 32 specialised classes for new Muslim converts at the Missionary Training Centre in Jalan Ampang, along with open religious classes every Friday night in Kampung Pandan, Kuala Lumpur, throughout March and April 1965.³⁸

As an organisation aimed at spreading Islam to non-Muslims, the magazine *Sahabat* expressed concern over the growth of Christianity in Malaysia. According to *Sahabat*, Christian missionary activities were expanding and influencing some Muslims in Malaysia to the extent that a few converted (apostasy).³⁹ *Sahabat* did not provide precise statistics on this phenomenon but sought to draw the attention of official Islamic institutions in Malaysia, stating:

*“Kita tidaklah dapat menyalahkan kerajaan pusat kerana kepesatan pengembangan agama Kristian itu kerana kuat kuasa mengenai hal ehwal agama Islam adalah menjadi tanggungjawab negeri masing-masing...Kita letakkan tanggungjawab kepada pejabat-pejabat agama Islam di negeri masing-masing dalam negara kita ini atau dengan lain perkataan bahawa pejabat-pejabat agama Islam tidak begitu cergas dalam kegiatan mereka terhadap perkembangan agama Islam dan penyebaran di negeri ini.”*⁴⁰

[Translation: “We cannot entirely blame the central government for the rapid spread of Christianity, as the authority over Islamic affairs falls under the responsibility of each state... We assign the responsibility to the Islamic religious offices in each state within our country; in other words, these Islamic offices have not been particularly active in promoting and spreading Islam within the region...”]

Statements from *Sahabat* like the one above, aimed to alert religious institutions to take action to curb Christian missionary movements. *Sahabat* also pledged to cooperate with religious institutions in strengthening Islamic outreach as a defence against these activities.⁴¹

The efforts of PERKIM through the *Sahabat* platform were acknowledged by Malaysia's Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Tan Sri Dato' Senu bin Abdul Rahman (1919-1995), who held office from 1966 to 1969. He highlighted *Sahabat* as a valuable medium for disseminating religious knowledge to the general public, particularly as reading material for new Muslim converts and as a tool

³⁶ “Dari Pengarang,” *Suara Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Kedah*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1965, p. 5; “Dari Meja Pengarang,” *Warta Jabatan Agama Pahang*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1968, p. 9; “Dari Meja Pengarang,” *al-Huda*, Vol. 1, No. 2, February 1969, p. 1.

³⁷ 2011/0003868, *Dakwah Islam di Malaysia oleh Muhammad Uthman el-Muhammady, Setiausaha Agung Al-Rahmaniah, Badan Dakwah dan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Arkib Negara Malaysia.

³⁸ “Pertubuhan dan Kegiatannya,” *Sahabat*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April-May 1965, p. 6.

³⁹ “Kegiatan Pengembang-Pengembang Agama Kristian,” *Sahabat*, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1964, p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ “Penyiaran untuk Islam Tak Berjalan Lancar,” *Berita Harian*, 23 October 1964, p. 4.

for fostering unity among Muslims.⁴² As reported by *Berita Harian*, *Sahabat* proved to be an effective PERKIM platform that resonated with non-Muslims, successfully encouraging a considerable number to embrace Islam during the period from 1964 to 1967.⁴³

However, since *Sahabat* was published on a bi-monthly basis and distributed free of charge, it faced challenges in maintaining continuity.⁴⁴ It underwent a three-month hiatus in 1966 due to the lack of a dedicated editorial team to manage its production.⁴⁵

Next, the Pertubuhan al-Rahmaniah published *al-Nur* in 1965, a religious magazine initiated by Muhammad Uthman el-Muhammady to expand Islamic outreach through written discourse, in alignment with his advocacy for modernising Islamic outreach methodologies to address contemporary challenges.⁴⁶ The magazine was led by Uthman himself, who at the time was a student at the Universiti Malaya. It was first published in March 1965 as a monthly publication.⁴⁷ However, due to the editorial team's academic commitments, including preparations for university examinations, the magazine later adopted a less regular schedule, combining certain issues, such from January to February 1966, and October to December 1966.

The magazine was priced at 40 cents per copy, with an additional 10 cents for postage. It was published by an individual, Ariffin Suhaimi, on behalf of the General Secretary of Al-Rahmaniah, operating from Masjid al-Rahman, Kuala Lumpur. The primary objective of *al-Nur* was to serve as a medium for Islamic outreach, as the organisation believed that Islamic outreach formed the backbone of Islamic movements. The publication argued that the socio-economic stagnation of the Malay community at the time stemmed from a lack of vigorous Islamic outreach activities. Consequently, *al-Nur* provided a platform for disseminating Islamic teachings through written media, aligning with its motto to “uphold the ideals of Islam.”⁴⁸

The magazine's content included Quranic exegesis and hadith commentary, advice for the youth, and foundational Islamic education. Reflecting the influence of global Islamic movements during the 1960s, it featured translated articles by prominent reformist thinkers such as Abu A'la al-Maududi (1903-1979), discussions on Islamic reform movements in Pakistan, and translations and commentaries on the works of Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938).⁴⁹ Additionally, *al-Nur* included updates on the activities of Pertubuhan al-Rahmaniah further emphasising its role as a platform for reform and religious engagement.⁵⁰

The United Sabah Islamic Association (USIA) introduced *Sinar USIA* in March 1970 as a quarterly magazine. Its motto was “a magazine of Islamic news and knowledge,” and it was sold for RM 0.50. The editor-in-chief was Haji Mohammad bin Haji Ahmad, who was also USIA's Chief Information Officer.⁵¹ According to *Sinar USIA*, it was the first magazine to adopt a religious concept published in Sabah.

Thus, this publication aimed to disseminate information about USIA's missionary activities, as the sole Islamic association in Sabah, while also promoting Islamic knowledge and elevating the stature of Islam in the state.⁵² The publication of *Sinar USIA* received praise from the *Tuan Yang Dipertua* (Governor) of Sabah, Pengiran Tun Haji Ahmad Raffae bin Pengiran Haji Omar (in office 1965–1973), for addressing the religious needs of the Sabah community at the time. He commended the magazine for its valuable content and concluded it was worth reading.⁵³

⁴² “Peranan Sahabat Mendapat Penghargaan yang Tinggi dari Menteri Penerangan dan Penyiaran Malaysia,” *Sahabat*, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1964, p. 1.

⁴³ “877 Orang Masuk Islam dalam 4 Tahun,” *Berita Harian*, 17 July 1967, p. 2.

⁴⁴ “Majalah Sahabat Muncul Semula,” *Berita Harian*, 29 December 1966, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ 2011/0003868, *Dakwah Islam di Malaysia*.

⁴⁷ Iskandar Ahmad, *Persurathabaran Melayu*, p. 116-117

⁴⁸ *Al-Nur*, Vol. 1, No. 8-10, October-December 1966, p. front.

⁴⁹ “Sistem Susila Islam Sayyid Abu Ala al-Maududi,” *al-Nur*, Vol. 1, No. 8-10, October-December 1966, p. 2-10; “Sariwarta dan Komentari,” *al-Nur*, Vol. 1, No. 8-10, October-December 1966, p. 18-21; “Iqbal dan Islam,” *al-Nur*, Vol. 1, No. 8-10, October-December 1966, p. 22-23.

⁵⁰ “Berita al-Rahmaniyyah,” *al-Nur*, Vol. 1, No. 8-10, October-December 1966, p. 42-43.

⁵¹ “Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,” *Sinar Usia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1970, p. 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ “Restu Dari T.Y.T. Yang Dipertua Negeri Sabah,” *Sinar Usia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1970, p. 4.

In its inaugural issue, the magazine focused on elaborating the objectives and direction of USIA while providing an introduction to the association members and mission. Alongside these foundational insights, *Sinar USIA* featured local news, including a report on 495 pilgrims from Sabah journeying to Mecca by ship from Kota Kinabalu Port.⁵⁴ It also contained sections on Islamic knowledge, such as columns dedicated to zakat, Islamic history, and Islamic poetry.⁵⁵ Moreover, *Sinar USIA* addressed the concept of progress, emphasising the need for the people of Sabah to prioritise understanding and practising Islamic teachings as the cornerstone for overcoming challenges and achieving societal advancement. This focus underscored the importance of grounding development in a thorough comprehension of Islamic principles before attempting to address areas of weakness.⁵⁶

Sinar Usia later transitioned into a biweekly newspaper on January 2, 1973, and eventually became a daily publication (except on Sundays) by March 1973.⁵⁷ This evolution was enabled by USIA's authority, granted by the Sabah state government, to establish a fund for collecting donations from unions or individuals within legal parameters. Additionally, USIA received a logging concession of 34,800 acres, valued at nearly RM 31 million, and secured consistent funding through the Sabah Islamic Religious Council, with its annual allocation increasing to RM 2,718,280.00 by 1972.⁵⁸ These financial resources significantly strengthened USIA's economic position, enabling the implementation of its programmes and facilitating rapid growth in membership and branches. By 1973, USIA had expanded to 299 branches statewide, with 51,321 members.⁵⁹ This financial stability allowed USIA to establish a dedicated publishing bureau equipped with its own studio, library, research unit, and photography unit.⁶⁰

Generally, the publication of religious magazines by Islamic outreach organisations was not widespread due to various constraints, particularly financial limitations. Uthman el-Muhammady underscored these challenges in his description of Islamic outreach movements in Malaysia during the post-independence period until the late 1960s, stating:

*“Jika diteliti gerakan-gerakan dakwah dalam tanah air...semuanya berpusat di Kuala Lumpur; maka kita dapati badan-badan ini tidak mempunyai sumber kewangan yang terjamin, tidak mempunyai pekerja-pekerja yang tetap dan terlatih dengan baik dan perjalanannya tidak teratur...”*⁶¹

[Translation: “If we examine the Islamic outreach movements in the country... most of them are based in Kuala Lumpur, and we find that these organisations lack secure financial resources, do not have permanent and well-trained staff, and operate in an unorganised manner.”]

As a result, religious magazines often faced limitations in circulation and publication frequency, with some even ceasing publication temporarily. This aligns with the challenges faced by *Sahabat* and *al-Nur*, except for *Sinar Usia*, which benefitted from stable financial resources. This phenomenon demonstrates that while the objective of Islamic outreach served as the foundation for the publication of religious magazines, financial constraints and editorial management challenges led to the slow-paced and small-scale production of magazines by Islamic organisations. This trend is somewhat similar to the religious magazines published by religious authorities, though differing in terms of financial resources. However, magazines published by religious authorities mostly were funded by their respective institutions, enabling them to have a longer lifespan compared to those published by Islamic organisations.

Religious Magazines Published by Private Individuals and Corporations

The limited market demand during the 1960s deterred private publishers from producing religious magazines due to economic considerations. The popularity of entertainment magazines at the time

⁵⁴ “Hampir 500 Naik Haji Tahun Ini Dari Sabah,” *Sinar Usia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1970, p. 41.

⁵⁵ “Zakat Fitrah,” *Sinar Usia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1970, p. 33-34; “Ilmu Sains, Kedokteran, Falak, hisab, Kertas, Asalnya daripada Orang-Orang Islam,” *Sinar Usia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1970, p. 36-38; “Sajak-Sajak Islam,” *Sinar Usia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1970, p. 47-48.

⁵⁶ “Cara-Cara Memajukan Umat Islam di Negeri Sabah,” *Sinar Usia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1970, p. 39-40.

⁵⁷ Muhiddin Yusin (1990), *Islam di Sabah*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 53.

⁵⁸ Hamdan Aziz (2013), “Peranan USIA dalam Pendidikan, Dakwah, dan Politik di Sabah, Malaysia, 1969 – 1976,” *Susurgalur: Jurnal Kajian Sejarah & Pendidikan Sejarah*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 173.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Muhiddin Yusin (1990), *Islam di Sabah*, p. 53.

⁶¹ 2011/0003868, *Dakwah Islam di Malaysia*.

marginalised religious publications, which were perceived as less competitive and economically unviable.⁶² Furthermore, most religious magazines published during the 1960s were distributed free of charge by official religious bodies and Islamic outreach organisations. As a result, private and commercial entities only began publishing religious magazines in the early 1970s, aligning with the rising momentum of Islamic movement, which was likely driven by its economic viability.⁶³

On February 15, 1970, Yusof bin Abdullah al-Rawi (1922–2000) launched the biweekly magazine *al-Islah*, dedicated to serving the cause of Islam.⁶⁴ Yusof bin Abdullah al-Rawi, also known as Yusof Rawa, was actively involved in writing for *Warta Jenaka*, *Warta Malaya*, and *Warta Ahad*, and owned his own printing company, Syarikat Percetakan al-Rawa. Additionally, Yusof Rawa ventured into politics in 1969, defeating Tun Dr. Mahathir in the contest for the Kota Setar Selatan parliamentary seat, where Dr. Mahathir lost by 989 votes to Yusof Rawa. Given Yusof Rawa's experience in publishing and his active involvement in politics, particularly his inclination towards Islamic political movements, Hamidah asserts that the choice of the name *al-Islah* reflects Yusof Rawa's aspiration to promote Islamic reform and renewal within Malay society.⁶⁵ This aligned with *al-Islah*'s stated publishing objective:

*“Selain menyeru umat berbuat baik dan melarang dari melakukan perbuatan-perbuatan mungkar, maka al-Islah bercita-cita ingin mengabdikan dirinya dalam bidang dakwah al-Islamiyyah dalam bentuk tulisan.”*⁶⁶

[Translation: “In addition to urging the community to do good and forbidding wrongful acts, *al-Islah* aspires to devote itself to dakwah *al-Islamiyyah* in the form of written works.”]

In *al-Islah*, Yusof Rawa emphasised the importance of establishing an Islamic state to create peace and balance within Malaysia, a multi-ethnic nation. He urged society to support the implementation of Islamic law for several reasons: (i) to replace colonial-era laws, (ii) because Islam is the country's official religion, (iii) Islamic law represents a divinely ordained legal system free from error, and (iv) although Malaysia is a multi-ethnic nation, many countries enforce laws based on the religion of the majority population without undermining the loyalty of citizens to the state.⁶⁷ This appeal reflects Yusof Rawa's position as a political figure committed to Parti Islam SeMalaysia's (PAS) vision of establishing an Islamic state since Malaysia's independence, which PAS interprets as religious freedom realised through the application of Islam in personal, social, and national life according to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.⁶⁸

As a magazine oriented toward advocating Islamic reform, *al-Islah* criticised the socio-economic underdevelopment of Malay society, which it attributed to a colonised mentality influenced by Western culture, leading to the stigma that Islam is a barrier to progress. According to *al-Islah*, Islam does not obstruct the pursuit of wealth and development but emphasises a balance between spiritual and material aspects. Economic success, it argued, should be achieved without neglecting spiritual responsibilities, such as prayer and zakat.⁶⁹ Most critically, *al-Islah* highlighted a prevailing misconception within society, illustrated by the proverb “*secupak tidak akan jadi segantang*” (a small measure cannot become a large one). *Al-Islah* interpreted this proverb as a metaphor often misinterpreted by Malays as a justification for complacency. Instead, the proverb should be understood as an encouragement to work diligently and achieve maximum results to strengthen household economies.⁷⁰ As a privately published magazine, *al-Islah* relied on sales revenue to sustain its operations, with each copy priced at RM 0.30. It targeted a local readership while expanding distribution to audiences in Brunei and Medan, Indonesia. The launch edition of *al-Islah* reached a circulation of 3,000 copies, and due to high demand, this circulation was increased to 5,000 copies. Ultimately, *al-Islah* ceased publication in August 1974 over concerns that it might evolve into a medium for PAS propaganda.⁷¹

⁶² “Banjir Majalah Hiburan,” *Dakwah*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1977, p. 28-29.

⁶³ Hamed Mohd Adnan (2003), *Penerbitan Majalah*, p. 28.

⁶⁴ “Tokoh PAS Terbitkan Majalah,” *Berita Harian*, 21 February 1970, p. 10.

⁶⁵ Hamidah Jalani (2019), *Majalah al-Islah dan Idea-Idea Pembaharuan*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 139.

⁶⁶ “Dari Hati ke Hati,” *al-Islah*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 15 February 1970, p. 3.

⁶⁷ Hamidah Jalani (2019), *Majalah al-Islah*, p. 214-216.

⁶⁸ “Amanah Merdeka Yang Dipertua Agung PAS,” *Suara Islam*, Vol. 1, No. 12, November 1957, p. 4.

⁶⁹ Faisal @ Ahmad Faisal and Hamidah Jalani (2011), “Majalah al-Islah dan Masyarakat Melayu tahun 70-An,” *Jurnal al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 133-135.

⁷⁰ Hamidah Jalani (2019), *Majalah al-Islah*, p. 241.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 142-143.

Following *al-Islah*, the magazine *Utusan Kiblat* emerged in September 1970, published and printed by Syarikat Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad under the motto “toward the goal of piety”. Its first editor-in-chief, Ikhwan Nasir, was a journalist with *Utusan Melayu* before becoming the political secretary (1970–1973) to Tun Dr. Ismail, who was then the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia.⁷² The magazine was sold at a price of RM 0.60 and received widespread support and popularity among the Malay community. Based on the magazine’s content, *Utusan Kiblat* appears to focus on Islamic outreach through written media, featuring regular sections with religious themes such as Quranic exegesis, religious inquiries, stories from the Quran, updates on the global Muslim community and a Malay-Arabic language dictionary.⁷³

Utusan Kiblat also viewed the government’s efforts to develop the Malay community positively. It recommended that religious scholars support government policies and not limit their roles solely to religious outreach, as expressed in the following statement:

“Rancangan pembangunan yang sedang berjalan di negara kita sekarang hendaklah difahami oleh masyarakat Islam sebagai satu perbandingan yang tidak jauh bezanya dengan apa yang berlaku di zaman Rasulullah...ulama haruslah...memainkan peranan yang lebih berkesan ke arah untuk meninggikan tarafhidup umat Islam. Seruan pemimpin-pemimpin kerajaan kita mahukan supaya umat Islam mengejar semua peluang yang disediakan itu seharusnya diambil perhatian oleh ulama-ulama kita.”⁷⁴

[Translation: “The development plans currently underway in our country should be understood by the Muslim community as closely comparable to what occurred during the time of the Prophet... Islamic scholars (ulama) must play a more impactful role in elevating the living standards of Muslims. The call from our government leaders for Muslims to seize available opportunities should be heeded by our Islamic scholars.”]

Utusan Kiblat further endorsed the implementation of the Islamic Economic Congress 2.0 held from April 7 until 9, 1972, advocating for scholars to be given opportunities to address economic issues related to Islamic law, such as the legalities surrounding bank interest and the obligation of paying zakat fitrah.⁷⁵

Factors Driving the Development of Malay Religious Magazines

Based on the aforementioned analysis, the development of religious magazines during this period was influenced by the Malaysian government’s emphasis on a return to Islamic values, particularly under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj (in office from 1957 to 1970). One such effort was the formal recognition of the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong as the Head of State responsible for safeguarding the status of Islam and the Malays, which was established on 2 September 1957.⁷⁶ This was followed by the formation of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwat Ugama Islam Malaysia), approved by the Majlis Raja-Raja Melayu on 17 October 1968.⁷⁷ Efforts to reinforce Islamic values within the society also received positive responses from local media. For instance, Radio Malaya launched a series of lectures titled “Islamic Civilization,” reflecting the growing recognition of the need to address religious issues.⁷⁸

In the researcher’s view, the government’s efforts have significantly influenced the publication of religious magazines, particularly those issued by religious authorities. This influence is evident in five key aspects. Firstly, the objectives of magazines such as *SJAT*, *SMAINK*, *Suara Masjid Negara*, *WJAP*, and *al-Huda* were aligned with promoting Islamic outreach and serving as platforms for religious discourse. Secondly, the chief editors of these magazines were individuals serving in official religious institutions under the supervision of the government. Thirdly, these magazines were funded by government allocations through official religious institutions or through revenues collected from *zakat* contributions. Fourthly, the content of these publications was predominantly localised, reflecting their

⁷² “Tun Ismail gets New Political Secretary,” *Singapore Herald*, 31 December 1970, p. 7.

⁷³ *Utusan Kiblat*, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 1.

⁷⁴ “Peranan Umat Islam,” *Utusan Kiblat*, Vol. 2, No. 20, March 1972, p. 1.

⁷⁵ “Ekonomi Islam dalam Pembangunan Negara,” *Utusan Kiblat*, Vol. 2, No. 20, March 1972, p. 2-3.

⁷⁶ “Royal Installation,” *The Straits Times Annual*, 1 January 1959, p. 44-45.

⁷⁷ “Majlis Kebangsaan Hal Ehwat Ugama Islam Giat Disiapkan,” *Berita Harian*, 21 January 1969, p. 5.

⁷⁸ “Radio to Broadcast Talks on Islam,” *The Straits Times*, 17 August 1960, p. 9.

efforts to instil Islamic values tailored to the specific sociocultural contexts of their respective states and areas of circulation. Lastly, the commitment to supporting the government's Islamic initiatives inspired other religious authorities to follow suit. For instance, the Melaka Islamic Religious Council published *al-Mustaqim* in 1972, the Selangor Islamic Religious Council published *al-Ehsan* in 1974, and the Sabah Islamic Religious Council published *al-Hikmah* in 1977.

The Malaysian government's efforts also significantly influenced the publication of religious magazines by non-governmental organisations and corporations. This is because these organisations and corporations maintain close connections with the government. For instance, PERKIM was established by Malaysia's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, and its leadership continues to operate under the supervision of government authorities.⁷⁹ This organisation also served as a platform for Islamic outreach within the framework of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), reflecting the governing party's strategy of separating political activities from Islamic outreach efforts.⁸⁰ Similarly, USIA shared comparable foundational motivations, being influenced by PERKIM's orientation while focusing on assisting the government in Islamic outreach initiatives, particularly in East Malaysia.⁸¹ Another notable example is *Utusan Kiblat*, a publication by Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad, which was frequently utilised by the government as a medium to promote its agenda.⁸² Given the similar founding factors of these organisations, the researchers contend that this shared foundation cultivated a collective awareness that led PERKIM and USIA to align with and support the government's Islamic initiatives. These magazines also carried a common objective of fostering greater understanding among Muslims in Malaysia while simultaneously advancing economic and educational development within the Malay-Muslim community.

The researchers also opines that the religious magazines from 1960 to 1970 were influenced by the Islamic movement such as *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* movement in Egypt and *Jamaat al-Islami* in Pakistan. During this period, a phenomenon of Islamic revivalism emerged, driven by student movements in higher education institutions in Malaysia, which were inspired by the ideas and struggles of prominent Islamic movement figures such as Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949), Syed Qutb (1906–1966), and Abu A'la al-Maududi (1903–1979).⁸³ According to Ahmad Zaki, figures from Pertubuhan al-Rahmaniah were among the students who received direct guidance from the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* and frequently conducted discussions modelled on the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* at Masjid al-Rahman, Kuala Lumpur.⁸⁴ This group later merged with the Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia (PKPIM) to establish a more influential Islamic outreach organisation in the 1970s, namely the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM).⁸⁵ This influence can be observed in the *al-Nur* magazine, published by Pertubuhan al-Rahmaniah, which featured articles inspired by the ideas of *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* and *Jamaat al-Islami* figures.⁸⁶

This influence became even more prominent with the publication of *al-Islah*. For *al-Islah*, the influence is evident through the ideological alignment of its chief editor, Yusuf Rawa, who was sent by PAS to establish political connections with the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* and received guidance from its prominent figures.⁸⁷ As a result, Yusuf Rawa's writings were deeply influenced by the works of Ikhwan al-Muslimin thinkers such as Hassan al-Banna and Syed Qutb.⁸⁸ Consequently, *al-Islah* consistently included translations of Syed Qutb's exegeses, excerpts from his books, and frequent reproductions of writings inspired by Hassan al-Banna and al-Maududi.⁸⁹

⁷⁹ Heri Kusmanto (2021), "A Comparative Analysis," p. 5.

⁸⁰ Badlihasham Mohd Nasir (2003), *Da'wah and the Malaysian Islamic Movements*, Semenyih: Synergymate Sdn. Bhd., p. 86-87.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Zainuddin Maidin (1989), *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad., p. 105.

⁸³ Ahmad Dzulfahmi Muhamad, Kamaruzaman Yusoff and Mansoureh Ebrahim (2021), "The Political Thought of the Ikhwan Muslimin Leadership," *Geopolitics Quarterly*, Vol. 17, Special Issue, p. 138-153.

⁸⁴ Ahmad Zaki Abd Latiff (2003), "Pengaruh Gerakan Islam Timur Tengah dalam Perkembangan Pemikiran Agama dan Politik Masyarakat Melayu (1971-1998)," PhD Thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya, p. 173-174.

⁸⁵ Badlihasham Mohd Nasir, Ahmad Syukran Baharuddin and Norhidayu Muhamad Zain (2019), "The Role of Islamic Movements in Enhancing Da'wah Work: The Malaysian Experience," *Kemanusiaan*, Vol. 26, Supplementary 1, p.138-139.

⁸⁶ Ahmad Zaki Abd Latiff (2003), "Pengaruh Gerakan Islam," p. 173-174.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

⁸⁸ Faisal @ Ahmad Faisal Abdul Hamid and Hamidah Jalani (2018), "Haji Yusof Rawa dan Penerbitan Majalah al-Islah (1970-1974)," *Jurnal Usuluddin*, Vol. 46, No. 2, p. 153.

⁸⁹ Hamidah Jalani (2019), *Majalah al-Islah*, p. 147-177.

This study posits that two primary factors—government efforts toward fostering Islamic values and the growth of Islamic movements—contributed to the content of religious magazines from the 1960 to the 1970 being more focused on Islamic knowledge and issues relevant to the local and global Muslim community. This focus stands in contrast to general magazines such as *Dewan Masyarakat*, first published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 1963. *Dewan Masyarakat* adopted a more academic tone, targeting a younger audience, particularly those pursuing higher education. Its content is largely centred on educational topics, making it a staple reading material for university and pre-university students preparing for exams.⁹⁰ Another prominent magazine of the 1960s and 1970s was *Mastika*, published by Utusan Melayu. According to Hamed, *Mastika* featured engaging societal stories, including crime and mystery narratives adapted from foreign sources. At the same time, it covered current political, economic, and social issues, all presented in a manner that catered to the public as leisurely reading material.⁹¹

In this context, religious magazines focused predominantly on issues affecting Muslims especially in Malaysia. This made them unique in their dual role as platforms for religious education and as instruments for shaping an Islamic socio-cultural ethos.⁹² While general magazines like *Dewan Masyarakat* and *Mastika* targeted a broader demographic with diverse interests, religious magazines catered specifically to readers seeking spiritual and intellectual growth grounded in Islamic teachings. Unlike the other magazines, which often leaned on entertainment or practical knowledge, religious magazines offered a rich blend of theological insights, moral guidance, and reflections on societal issues through an Islamic lens. Their alignment with Islamic revivalist movements added a layer of ideological depth, as seen in their inclusion of translations of works by prominent Islamic thinkers and their discussion of pressing issues within the Muslim society. This distinctive characteristic not only differentiated them from other publications but also positioned them as critical tools for the intellectual and spiritual development of the Malaysian Muslim community.

Conclusion

The development of religious magazines between 1960 and 1970 witnessed significant growth, particularly among official religious bodies. Before independence, only three religious magazines were published by these institutions—*Pengasuh*, *Warta Jabatan Agama Johor*, and *Seruan Majlis*. However, post-independence, this expanded with the publication of magazines by other state religious bodies, such as *Suara Jabatan Agama Terengganu*, *Suaran Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Kedah*, *Suara Masjid Negara*, *Warta Jabatan Agama Johor*, and *al-Huda*. The expansion was further supported by non-governmental organisations, with several Islamic outreach organisations publishing their own religious magazines, such as *Sahabat* by PERKIM, *al-Nur* by Pertubuhan al-Rahmaniah, and *Sinar USIA* by USIA. However, the trend of religious magazine publication by private and commercial entities only on 1970. This was, likely due to economic factors as religious magazines began demonstrating economic profitability for publishers in the rise of Islamic movements. This phenomenon illustrates that magazines played a pivotal role in the dissemination of Islamic outreach and the cultivation of Islamic values through written works. This role gained increasing prominence, marked by a significant rise in the publication of religious magazines throughout the 1970s to the 1990s. Notable examples include *al-Mustaqim* (1972) by the Melaka Islamic Religious Council, *Dakwah* (1977) by the Yayasan Dakwah Islam Malaysia (YADIM), *Risalah* (1985) by the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), *Dunia Islam* (1988) by Zin Publications and *Tamadun* (1994) by al-Muttaqin Publications. Thus, the publications from 1960 to 1970 served as pioneers, paving the way for subsequent publishers in the context of post-independence Malaysia.

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⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68-69.

⁹² Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, Ummu Zainab Al-Abidah Binti Zainal Abidin and Nusaibah Binti Nasaruddin (2018), “Features of Islamic Children’s Books in English: A Case Study of Books Published in Malaysia,” *Publishing Research Quarterly*, Vol. 34, p. 552.

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