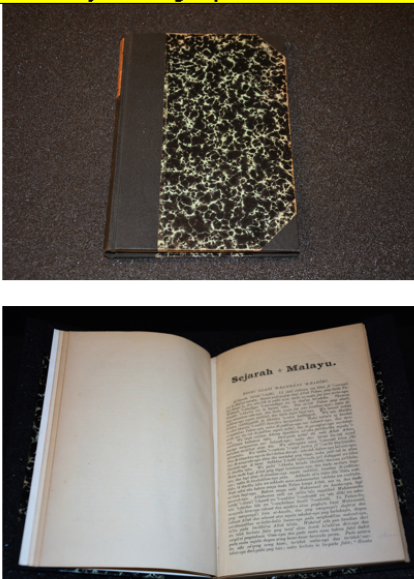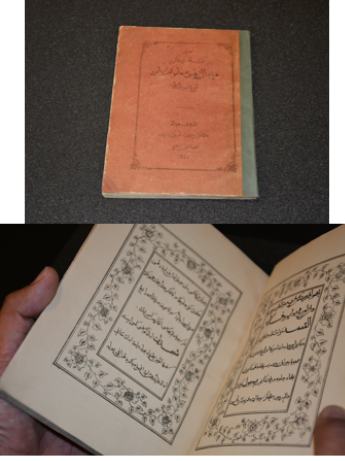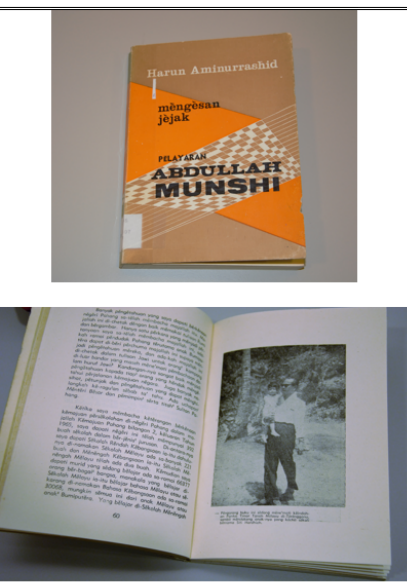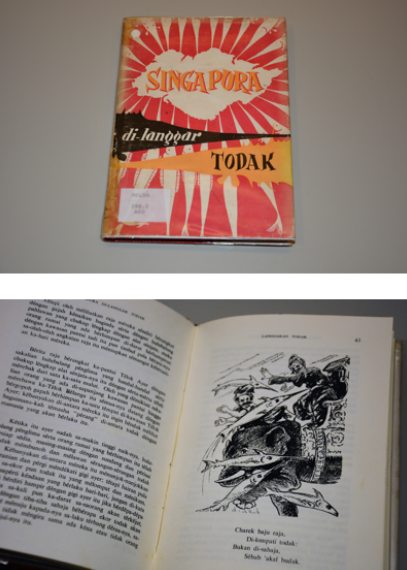# The First Print: Stories and legends of early Singapore display

Singapore, 16 January 2019

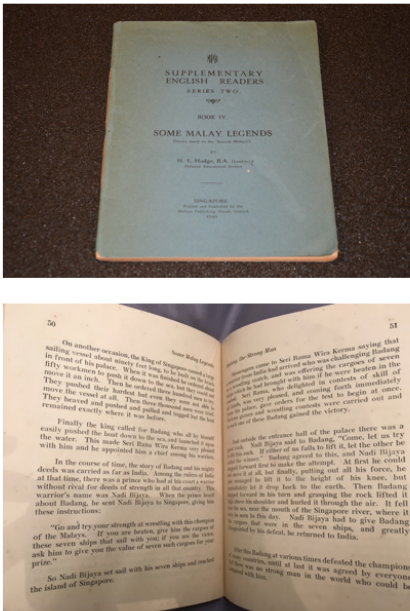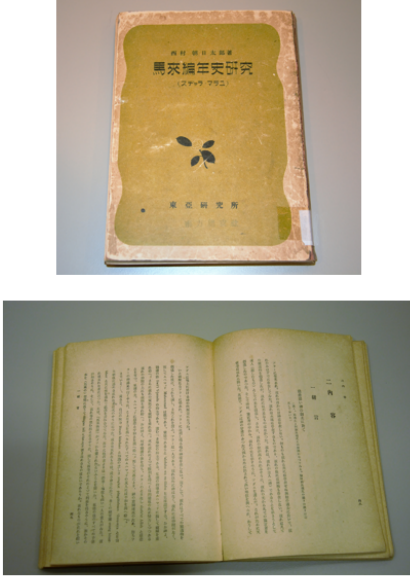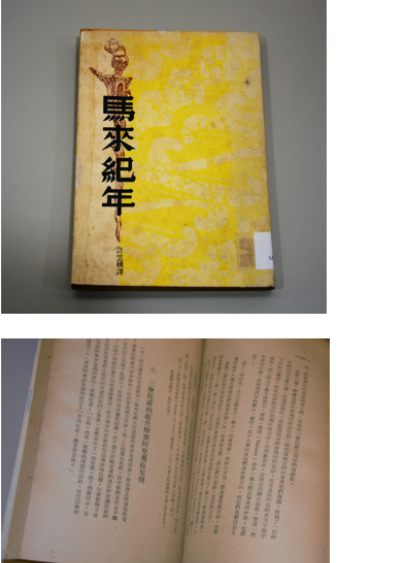**ANNEX A**

EXHIBITS FROM THE NATIONAL LIBRARY'S THE FIRST PRINT: STORIES AND LEGENDS OF EARLY SINGAPORE DISPLAY

S/N	Image Reference	Title	Description
	The First Print: Stories and Legends of Early Singapore		
1.		***Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals)*** Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir c. 1840, Singapore Collection of National Library, Singapore B31655050C	This is the first printed version of *Sejarah Melayu* edited by printing pioneer Munsyi Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (c. 1797–1854). Printed in Singapore by Mission Press with endorsement from the Trustees of Singapore Institution (present-day Raffles Institution), this edition has been considered the standard to which generations of scholars and students refer. In the preface, Abdullah relates that he had chosen to print *Sejarah Melayu* solely for its literary value so as to benefit students of Malay language and literature. This meant more people would have been able to read and appreciate a court text when its accessibility would have previously been limited to court settings and dependent on social relationships. The page on the right relates the story of how, in the 13th century, Srivijayan prince Sri Tri Buana (better known as Sang Nila Utama) founded a settlement that he named Singapura ('lion city' in Sanskrit) on the island of Temasek upon sighting a strange animal, slightly larger than a goat, with a red body and a black head.
	The Munsyi's Lasting Imprint		
2.		***Sejarah Melayu*** Edited by William Girdlestone Shellabear 1898, Singapore Collection of National Library, Singapore B20025340E	This first edition of W.G. Shellabear's (1862–1948) romanised Malay (*rumi*) edition of *Sejarah Melayu* used the same spelling and grammar forms as Munsyi Abdullah's edition from 1840. Shellabear's edition was later reprinted numerous times and taught in vernacular schools across the Straits Settlements. Shellabear credited Munsyi Abdullah's *Sejarah Melayu* as one of the sources for his edition, which he had consulted at the Logan Library in Singapore. On the left page, Shellabear ended with the story of the death of Tun Ali Hati as originally presented in both Abdullah's (c. 1840) and his own *Jawi* edition two years earlier in 1896 but added an 'interesting sequel' of events, such as the reign of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah as the first Sultan of Johor, from a writer believed to be the son of Tun Seri Lanang, who is credited as the author of *Sulalat al-Salatin*.

3.		***Ceritera ilmu kepandaian orang putih* (Story of white people's knowledge and expertise)** Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir 1855, Singapore Collection of National Library, Singapore B31655051D	This text was written and published by Abdullah in another collaboration with Reverend Benjamin Keasberry. He had worked closely with Keasberry since the 1830s to combine lithographic techniques with the artistic tradition of Malay manuscripts, producing some of the most beautiful Malay imprints of the 19th century. This book comprehensively compiles technological innovations pioneered by Europeans such as steamships and piping systems. The subject of printing is explored extensively in this text and some parts of this topic first appeared in the introduction of *Sejarah Melayu* by Munsyi Abdullah. Originally intended for the students of Mount Zion (Bukit Zion) in Singapore, the compilation was so popular that it was re-edited and romanised for use in government schools in the Netherlands Indies in the mid-1860s.
4.		***Mengesan jejak pelayaran Abdullah Munsyi* (Tracing the steps of Abdullah Munsyi's voyage)** Harun Aminurrashid 1966, Singapore Donated by Mr Abdul Ghani Hamid Collection of National Library, Singapore B19002705B	Attitudes towards Munsyi Abdullah have varied over time. He has been hailed as a champion of modern Malay thinking and writing but also regarded by others as a *tali barut* (stooge) for the British. Abdullah's controversial comments on the Malay community have certainly been challenged by several prominent thinkers. One of them is the editor and author Harun Aminurrashid (1906–1986). A key player in the post-war revival era of Malay publishing, Harun questioned Abdullah's depictions of East Malaysians, or the *orang pantai timor*, in *Kesah Pelayaran Abdullah ke Kelantan* (The story of Abdullah's voyage to Kelantan). Abdullah had regarded their way of life, education and religious knowledge as lacking and underdeveloped. Harun and his family went on the same journey to Kelantan that Abdullah had undertaken. Abdullah had noted that there was a lack of schools in Kelantan but Harun observed that by 1965, there were in fact more than 300 schools including secular and religious centres. Harun's travelogue gives readers a glimpse of the change and continuity found in East Malaysia since Abdullah's journey 130 years ago.
	A Timeless Tale Through the Ages		
5.		***Singapura dilanggar Todak* (Garfish attack on Singapore)** Abdul Samad Ahmad 1963, Kuala Lumpur Collection of National Library, Singapore B02933106B	The famed tale of the garfish attack on the coast of Singapore owes its origins to *Sejarah Melayu*. In this 1963 version, the Paduka Sri Maharaja commands his men to form a barricade of shins against the shoal of garfish, but a quick-witted boy suggests building a barricade of banana stems instead. The king later fears that the boy would threaten his authority in the future and orders his execution. Writer and political activist Abdul Samad Ahmad (1913–1999) had long been inspired by the stories and narrative styles of *Sejarah Melayu*. Here, he retained the *pantun* (quatrain) form found in parts of *Sejarah Melayu*, where it made its first appearance, and other chronicles from around the same period. Through the series *Dongeng Sejarah Singapura Tua* (Early historical myths of Singapore), Samad highlighted particular tales of slander (*asutan fitnah*) and jealousy (*hasad dengki*) from *Sejarah Melayu* that brought about the demise of the Melaka and Singapura kingdoms.

6.		***Some Malay legends: Stories based on the Sejarah Melayu*** H. L. Hodge 1940, Singapore Collection of National Library, Singapore B18836010E	In this textbook, students were presented with the intrigue surrounding Badang, the legendary strong man and commander-in-chief who was first introduced in *Sejarah Melayu*. As a test of his physical strength against Nadi Bijaya Pikrama, an Indian warrior, Badang, had hurled a boulder to the mouth of what is now the Singapore River. The rock laid there for a long time and became popularly known as the Singapore Stone. This supplementary reader, published by Malaya Publishing House, contained condensed extracts from *Sejarah Melayu* such as the departure of the fifth king of Singapura, Raja Iskandar Shah, from Singapore to Melaka. This was an example repeatedly used in colonial-era textbooks to highlight the Sultan's declining power and influence.
7.		***Marai hennenshi kenkyu: Sujara Marayu (Evidence of reconnaissance : Sejarah Melayu)*** Asahitarō Nishimura 1942, Tokyo Collection of National Library, Singapore B02946983H	In preparation to extend Japanese rule, there was considerable pressure among Japanese academics in the 1930s to expand their study of economics to include socio-cultural aspects in the region's history. As *Sejarah Melayu* is highly esteemed in the Malay literary world, it was singled out as a key text among Japanese scholars. Historian Asahitarō Nishimura gave a general overview of *Sejarah Melayu* by setting its historical context and listing its variants including Munsyi's version. He also provided brief translations of each chapter and explanations of key terms, aimed at a lay Japanese audience. According to him, the text offered valuable insights into the worldview of the Malays and was of great historical and cultural importance.
8.		***Malai ji nian (chinese version of Sejarah Melayu)*** Xu Yunqiao 1954, Singapore Donated by Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations Collection of National Library, Singapore B26080466J	Among the Chinese educated in Malaya in the 1950s, there grew a sense of a Malayan consciousness. Interest into Malayan works deepened and there was an increase in the number of Chinese translations of Malay literary works. In 1946, prominent scholar Hsu Yun-Tsiao (1905–1981) translated *Sejarah Melayu* into Chinese as he felt that it had high literary and historical value. He had also wanted to translate it for those who did not have access to the Malay or English versions. His translation was serialised in the magazine *Nanyang Monthly* which he headed, and was subsequently republished in full as part of the *Nanyang Siang Pau Books* series in 1954. Hsu's translated edition of *Sejarah Melayu* was an assigned text in the late 1950s when National Language courses were introduced in Nanyang University.