

# The Theme, Style, And Humor Malaysian Popular Magazines in Malaysia *Gila – Gila, Ujang and Gempak* (1978 – 2015)

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## ABSTRACT

Due to the emergence of digital technology and the popularity of social media, many local cartoon magazines, including *Ujang* and *Gempak*, have ended their publications. The decline is because people have many options and access to digital and free cartoons. The inclination and tendency to change from the sociocultural aspect affect the cartoon theme, style, and humor. This study aims to critically analyze the style, theme, and humor of cartoons in magazines like *Gila-Gila*, *Ujang*, and *Gempak*. This study was conducted through contextual analysis of the selected samples of cartoons. Feldman's method of art criticism comprising the strategies of description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment and Gombrich's theory of style were applied to the cartoons. The *Gila-Gila* cartoonist selected for this research is Rejabhad. The cartoonists from *Ujang* and *Gempak* are Sukun and Zuan, respectively. The findings of this study show that each cartoonist has his style, theme, and humor while instilling sociological, cultural, economic, and religious aspects as well as having the Malay and Malaysian essence. Humor can be generated by many methods either in communication or persuasion. Therefore, in the future, it may strengthen the role of cartoons and cartoonists in the new publications of local cartoon magazines.

**Keywords:** *Theme, Style, Humor, Gila-Gila, Ujang, Gempak*

## INTRODUCTION

*Makhazin* comes from an Arabic word, which means magazine, that comprises different types of writing and drawing. It contributes to the knowledge, information, or entertainment in any capacity as a “storehouse” containing a variety of information that is simply used as a light and compact reading

material compared to a book (Hamed, 1997). The magazine is a media or periodical publication containing articles from various authors (Assegaff, 1983). Various types of magazines can be found in the market, which are entertainment, *da'wah*, education, science, comics, cartoon, and fiction. Magazine publications have started since 1876. From 1968 until 1997, the magazine publications in Malaysia increased (Hamed, 1997) containing local humor in the forms of cartoons and articles.

According to David Low, cartoon, which is a form of a drawing, is representational or symbolic, creating a satirical, witty, or humorous point. It may contain captions comprising more than one panel. Nevertheless, cartoons usually appear in periodical publications (Mulyadi, 2004). The year-end of 1970 marked a historic and significant moment in Malaysia due to the existence of Malay humor genre cartoon magazines in the Malay language such as *Gila-Gila*. It was first published in 1978 and has produced many corporate leaders and cartoonists. The successful publication of *Gila-Gila* has resulted in the making of other cartoon magazines such as *Gelihati*, *Batu Api*, *Mat Jenin*, *Humor*, *Ujang*, *Apo*, *Gempak*, *Utopia*, *Starz*, *Jom*, and *G3* (Mulyadi, 2015).

There are various characteristics in Malay cartoons in terms of concept, theme, style, character, humor, and social commentary. Cartoon magazines commonly use cartoon strips for their sequential episodes and more than one frame to deliver a cartoon. In Malay cartoon magazines, cartoonists have different ways or styles of illustrating and delivering their cartoons. Each published magazine in the market has a different style, theme, and humor, including form, color, and purpose. Several themes found in Malay cartoon magazines portray social activities, community, city, village, and multicultural scenes.

Only several entertainment magazines in Malaysia still maintain their positions in the field of publication of local cartoons. This is due to the growth of advanced technology, allowing people to gain access to the website via the internet. Keen involvement by the Y and Z generations, who are more interested in advanced and digitized technology, has caused a tremendous change and acceptance. Hence, the economic factor is also a cause of the reduction of entertainment magazines in the country. Technology transforms along with the change of time. There has been a massive use of mass media, which has caused the decreasing use of paper-based Malay cartoon magazines. People prefer to use tablets, laptops, computers, and smartphones to access digital cartoons as they are easier means. Jaafar Taib mentions the declining Malay cartoon publications as follows.

*"Whatever the media is, it will go through a transformation. In the past, people only relied on newspapers to find out current issues but now the media has turned to the internet which can be accessed by anyone. Just like a cartoon magazine, will change according to the media. The current generation is no longer fond of sheets of paper, they prefer electronic works such as animation or digital games"* (Jaafar Taib as cited in Saidi, 2015).

Another factor that has influenced the reducing production of cartoon magazines is our local cartoonists who are not competitive Jaafar Taib as cited in Saidi, 2015. They are unlike earlier cartoonists who had a sense of view toward society and implemented their styles. Observation of the surrounding issues is more interesting to the readers because cartoonists are more sensitive to current issues and the life of the community. Some cartoonists are comfortable in their group and do not compete with other cartoonists by displaying cartoons that have no soul or of mere humor. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Malaysian society was keen to read cartoons in daily, weekend, and national newspapers (Baharuddin Arus, 2017)

Puteri Roslina (2003) mentions in her study that there is not much research in cartoons, and this research looks up to the issue of style, theme, and humor that influence the publication of Malay cartoon magazines. Each magazine has its aspect in terms of style, theme, and humor.

This article aims to study the theme, style, and humor of prominent Malay cartoon magazines, *Gila-Gila*, *Ujang*, and *Gempak*. The objectives will further strengthen the overall procedures and analysis of the research. The selected magazines, *Gila-Gila*, *Ujang*, and *Gempak*, are based on the duration and

popularity of the magazines that have sustained more than 15 years in the market. The study focuses on selected *Gila-Gila*, *Ujang*, and *Gempak* cartoonists based on their popularity and important work during the magazine publications from 1978 to 2015 for *Gila-Gila*, 1994 to 2015 for *Ujang*, and 1998 to 2015 for *Gempak*.

This study analyzes significant series by one cartoonist of each magazine based on popularity such as Rejabhad, Sukun, and Zuan from *Gila-Gila*, *Ujang*, and *Gempak*, respectively. The selected cartoons are *Periwira Mat Gila*, *Tan Tin Tun*, *Selendang Siti Rugayah*, *Amal anak Periwira Mat Gila*, *Workshop*, and *Mat Gempak*. The researchers faced some difficulties while gathering the primary data. There are a lot of magazines and books that can be referred to. However, some magazines have no complete number of issues from 1978 until 2015. Other than that, the interviewees have packed schedules causing them to be unable to give feedback and reply to emails or calls because they are not in Malaysia.

This research may contribute toward educational functions in the industry of local cartoons in Malaysia. It emphasizes the importance of cartoons in promoting racial harmony and multiculturalism community as Malaysian family that is united and always caring and appreciating each other. The findings could serve as a model for local cartoonists and creative industry players in enhancing the possibility of creating job opportunities especially for youngsters who want to join the cartoon industry. In addition, this research will influence the government sector, especially in the art industry by introducing local cartoons to outsiders to understand the beauty of Malaysian cartoons and enhance a healthier economy. This research can also benefit students, academicians, researchers, and curators of the new knowledge of cartoons. This research will also enhance sources of information to the art galleries and the cartoon house, which is an institution that voluntarily keeps cartoonists' artworks.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Definition of Cartoon

Muliyadi (2010) mentions from Harvet (1987: 129) that cartoon develops within the society where it reflects and illustrates various cultural aspects of the society. In this situation, a cartoon can be considered a mode of mass communication that conveys a message. The cartoon is a symbolic art of satire and criticism that has a sense of humor. The cartoon also contains messages of political, social, cultural, economic, and religion.

Cartoons usually appear in periodical publications. Most frequently, a cartoonist's intention is related to political or public affairs, but it may also be related to social customs, fashion, sports events, or personalities. Cartoons need to be analyzed first by focusing on aspects including form, content, and context (Muliyadi, 2010). A caricature's portrayal of mock, imitation, and certain arresting characteristics are exaggerated to create a comic or animation (Gombrich, 1992; Muliyadi, 2004) mentions that caricature can also be categorized as a cartoon.

In fine arts, a cartoon is sketching or drawing. According to David Kunzle (1993) the process to create a cartoon is done using paint, tapestry, mosaic, glass, and papers of similar sizes. A cartoon is a simple drawing containing texts, captions, or framed pictures that copies or symbolizes an event, situation, or human in a humorous form (Puteri Roslina, 2003 as cited in Norhayati, 1989).

In contemporary newspapers, an editorial cartoon is usually in a single frame (Seymour-ure,1996). According to Feldman (1995), in a Japanese cartoon, the editorial cartoon is an important medium of political communication. Editorial cartoon, through graphic illustration, is brief and humorous. It touches various subjects in political and editorial reporting. Cartoon strips are produced in a

sequence of frames. They are presented in sequence, from one frame to the next. Cartoon strips have characters and a specific storyline. Cartoon strips also discuss current political issues. Cartoon strips reveal current issues through dialogues, actions, and characters (Mulyadi, 2010).

## **Theme**

A theme is seen as a universal element. The theme is defined as a function where a “special status is assigned to one part of it” (Halliday, 1994). The theme is recognized by what is placed in the initial position or special status.

The theme is usually related to what ‘subject’ or ‘topic’ is to be used as a main idea of something. The common understanding of a theme is an idea or a point that is vital to a value system in the past (historical research). A qualitative methodological approach was established and acts as an appropriate vehicle to uncover the relationship between styles, themes, and humor in selected Malaysian humor magazines.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research employed qualitative research where the data obtained from secondary data. The secondary data were collected from books, articles, journals, theses, and websites. This research focused on styles, themes, and humor in selected Malay humor magazines by using contextual analysis and content analysis. The contextual analysis required the researchers to go outside the work of cartoons selected to answer the research questions. The contextual analysis was employed to understand how a work of art expresses or shapes the experiences, ideas, and values of the individual or groups that make, use, view, or own them (D’Alleva, 2010). To develop a contextual analysis and content analysis, a researcher might look at evidence such as documents, other images, books, cartoonist writings/ caricatures, and histories. Content analysis researchers can quantify the relationship of certain themes, style, and humor by each one separately from the source, medium and work result.

The obtained data (cartoon) were analyzed by applying four steps of art criticism by Feldman (1994) consisting of description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment. The Gombrich Theory was used concerning symbol, caricature, text, dialogue, styles, jokes, and images related to the issue (Mulyadi, 2010).

## FINDINGS



**Figure 1. Periwira Mat Gila, 1988**  
 (Source: Author's collection)

**Table 1. Theme, Style, and Humor of Rejabhad cartoonist in Gila-Gila magazine in the 1970s**

| <i>Gila-Gila</i>                                   | Theme  | Style   | Humor   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Rejabhad</b><br><i>Periwira Mat Gila (1988)</i> | <b>Socio-cultural</b><br><b>Socio-economy</b><br>Folklore<br>Folklore background<br>The main character of Mat Gila is a commoner living in the village.<br>"If there's money, all can be done." Sultan heard him and challenged him to prove it. The Sultan gave him RM 500 000 and put him on a haunted island. Sultan also challenged him to conceive his child.<br>Farming in the village is like a rice field. | <b>Malay</b><br><b>Malaysian</b><br><br><b>Form</b><br>Drawing in a Malay form where it has a background of Malay's Ancient environment, a combination of images and texts in the folklore artwork.<br><br><b>Stroke</b><br>Sketches using fine strokes, cartoonists used many types of lines as seen through his drawing where it was meticulous.<br><br><b>Language</b><br>Texts using the traditional language of Malay literature such as folklore, idioms, proverbs, and poetry. Uses of classical Malay language such as <i>hamba, tuan hamba</i> .<br><i>*Bulan di langit jangan direnung, orang jauh jangan dikenang, nasib sendiri jangan disesali – Mat Gila.</i> | <b>Lesson</b><br>Humor in the cartoon present has a lesson element.<br><br><b>Funny</b><br>Exaggeration of cartoon image and the texts of dialogue. |

Table 1 shows that *Periwira Mat Gila* uses folklore and sociological theme where it represents the society in the story. The main character of Mat Gila is a commoner living in a village. There are some

issues in the cartoon involving Mat Gila's life starting from being a commoner to marrying the king's daughter. The Sultan trusts him and gives him the title *Periwira*. *Periwira Mat Gila* is also a series from the past and combined to become humor stories for five years. *Periwira Mat Gila*'s cartoon style is characterized by Malay essence. Although the cartoon strokes of *Periwira Mat Gila* are rough and hard, they still show the Malay cartoon identity. The cartoon uses many frames and is organized one by one, from upper to above. The cartoon uses a black and white tone. The cartoon has a king and a common society. The line drawing in the cartoon is fine. The caricature of characters is exaggerated. The text includes the traditional language of Malay literature such as folklore, idioms, proverbs, and poetry. Humor in the cartoon is represented by the exaggeration of facial impression and action as well as elements on the temperament of people.



**Figure 2. Tan Tin Tun, 1989**  
 (Source: Author's collection)

**Table 2. Theme, Style, and Humor of Rejabhad cartoonist in Gila-Gila magazine in the 1980s**

| <i>Gila-Gila</i>  | Theme  | Style   | Humor  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Cartoonist Rejabhad: <i>Cartoon Tan Tin Tun</i> (1989)</b> | <p><b>Socio-cultural</b><br/>                     Malay lifestyle, Romance, Love, and family conflict (the relationship between Tan Tin Tun, the mother of Tan, and his father). There is also a family relationship without a blessing from Tan's grandfather.</p> <p><b>Socio- Economy</b><br/>                     Working as an entertainer such as a singer and a theater's actor. Farming such as paddy farming and other types of farming in Kedah.</p> | <p><b>Form</b><br/>                     The drawing is influenced by Malay characteristics which are the core source/ element of the story. Combination of image and text in the masterpiece. Usually, a traditional Malay house has a mat to be used as a place to sit, the cartoonist Rejabhad also embeds these elements of Malay traditions in his arts.</p> <p><b>Stroke</b><br/>                     Fine drawing. The image of the traditional house is clear in the illustration, the use of lines, such as bold and thin lines, as well as the repetition of the shapes of the wood.</p> | <p><b>Lesson</b><br/>                     Performing an obligation such as going to the mosque and attending religious events. Humor in the cartoon contains lessons and values.</p> <p><b>Satire</b><br/>                     Content in the text has a satire element.</p> <p><b>Funny</b><br/>                     Exaggeration of image and text in the cartoon.</p> |

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|--|--|---|--|
|  |  | <p><b>Language</b><br/>                 The texts use classical and traditional Malay language elements such as folktales, <i>pantun</i>, proverbs, idioms, and poetry. For example, '<i>Batu yang sentiasa bergolek, mana bias lekat lumut. Jauh api dari semanggang</i>'.</p> |  |
|--|--|---|--|

Table 2 shows cartoonist Rejabhad's cartoon entitled Tan Tin Tun in 1989 which has a sociological theme. It touches on society and its conflict. It also has love and economic themes. This cartoon uses classical and traditional Malay language. The illustration uses a black and white tone. The form of the cartoon has Malay characteristics and the strokes of the drawing are fine and bold. The cartoon has a sequential frame and is arranged one by one from left to right and continues to the bottom.



Figure 3. *Selendang Siti Rugayah*, 1997  
 (Source: Author's collection)

Table 3. Theme, Style, and Humor of Rejabhad cartoonist in Gila-Gila magazine in the 1990s

| <i>Gila-Gila</i>  | Theme  | Style  | Humor   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Cartoonist Rejabhad: cartoon <i>Selendang Siti Rugayah</i> (1997)</b></p> | <p><b>Socio-cultural</b><br/>                     Religion<br/>                     Malay lifestyle<br/>                     Love conflict between Rugayah and Sulaiman caused by a third party.</p> <p><b>Socio-economy</b></p> | <p><b>Malay Malaysian</b></p> <p><b>Form</b><br/>                     The drawing form is Malay-influenced which has a Malay society background. Combination of figures and texts in the artwork.</p> <p><b>Stroke</b></p> | <p><b>Satire</b><br/>                     Content in the text has a satire element.</p> <p><b>Funny</b><br/>                     Exaggeration of image and text in the cartoon.</p> <p><b>Da'wah/lesson</b><br/>                     Humor contains a da'wah message where it</p> |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | <p>Working as a rubber tapper at a rubber plantation.</p> <p><b>Religion</b><br/>                 Doing <i>ibadah</i> is being claimed, going to mosques, and attending religious events.</p> <p>Things that are religious and superstitions are prevented such as using “<i>minyak pengasih</i>”</p> | <p>A fine sketch of a village house in the illustration. Using various types of lines, such as thick and thin, for example, grass.</p> <p><b>Language</b><br/>                 Text using the Malay language literature such as folklore, idiom, poetry, and proverb.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p><i>*Bercinta laksana meniti di titian rapuh</i><br/> <i>*sebelum rotan cukup, kita kaitkan dengan akar kayu</i></p> | <p>shows the good and wrong things toward a reader.</p> |
|--|---|--|---|

Table 3 shows the theme in the artwork, which is about the love conflict between Rugayah and Sulaiman, sociological, cultural, economic, and religious. Sociological refers to social life in the village that practices Malay customs and lifestyle. In the 1990s, Rejabhad began to produce another cartoon entitled *Selendang Siti Rugayah*. His style of drawing is classic. The language used describes him as a classic cartoonist as he uses full spelling and polite prose. He is gifted in painting especially in the background of the cartoon where he shows the environment of a village. He draws the background carefully by using thick and small lines. Humor can be seen in the cartoon from the distortion of characters, the text presented, and the action of characters. Besides, the humor of the cartoon is presented in the lesson and satire forms.



**Figure 4. Workshop 1996**  
 (Source: Author's collection)



**Table 4. Theme, Style, and Humor of Sukun cartoonist in Ujang Magazine in the 1990s**

| <i>Ujang</i>  | Theme  | Style   | Humor  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Cartoonist Sukun: Cartoon Workshop (1996)</b></p> | <p><b>Socio-cultural</b><br/>                     Socio – economy<br/>                     Lifestyle<br/>                     Malay lifestyle<br/>                     Society in Village<br/>                     Handle the issues of hangout, gambling, and noise among young people in the village by spending their time through activities such as sports.</p> <p><b>Religion</b><br/>                     A <i>surau</i> in the village for religious activities.</p> | <p><b>Malay Malaysian</b></p> <p><b>Form</b><br/>                     Drawing has a touch of Malay and Malaysian styles.<br/>                     Design a home village, <i>surau</i>, and Malay traditional attires such as <i>baju Melayu</i> and <i>sarong</i>, <i>songkok</i>, and <i>kopiah</i>.</p> <p><b>Stroke</b><br/>                     Fine sketches<br/>                     The use of various lines such as thick and thin lines. Repetition.</p> <p><b>Language</b><br/>                     Free Malay language and mixture with other languages.<br/>                     Examples:<br/>                     *<i>abistu..macamna</i><br/>                     *<i>tau beno la</i><br/>                     *<i>sapa</i><br/>                     *<i>bebudak</i><br/>                     *<i>gua</i><br/>                     *<i>cayalah</i></p> | <p><b>Funny</b><br/>                     Exaggeration of image and text.</p> |

Table 4 shows the main characters of the cartoon, Dicky and Cupin. Dicky has a workshop. Cupin is his employee. The main theme in this cartoon is a villager's lifestyle. In this cartoon, the researchers found Malay and Malaysian identity in terms of the style in cartooning. The background of the cartoon closely recaps images of a Malaysian village from a Malay-designed house with meticulous and fine strokes. Each character and item can be seen clearly. Even the sequence of frames is organized in the humor aspect. The cartoonist puts his humor on the exaggeration of a cartoon character as well as blends in with the text to make the cartoon funny and have satire or lesson content.



Figure 5. *Mat Gempak*, 1998  
 (Source: Author's collection)

Table 5. Theme, Style, and Humor of Zuan cartoonist in Gempak Magazine in the 1990s

| <i>Gempak</i>  | Theme  | Style   | Humor  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Cartoonist</b><br/> <b>ApoH @ Zuan:</b><br/> <b>Cartoon</b><br/> <i>Mat Gempak</i><br/>                     (1998)</p> | <p><b>Socio- cultural</b><br/>                     Lifestyle<br/>                     Love<br/>                     Malay lifestyle<br/>                     Society and friendship.</p> <p>The villagers practice the old values and norms such as washing clothes manually without using the washing machine and washing them outside the house. A group of teenagers sitting around somewhere usually at the end of the village.<br/>                     Friendship - Matt has a friend who is said to be his girlfriend from the City School.</p> | <p><b>Malay</b><br/> <b>Malaysian</b><br/> <b>Form</b></p> <p>Drawing has a touch of Malay and Malaysian styles.</p> <p>Overview of the village through the design of homes, crops, and plants around the home such as palm trees, shrubs, and prayer.</p> <p><b>Stroke</b><br/>                     Fine sketches, the use of various lines such as thick and thin lines. Repetition in objects can also be seen. The older ones are wearing a t-shirt, <i>pelikat</i>, and <i>kopiah</i>.</p> <p><b>Language</b><br/>                     Text using free Malay language mixed with other languages.</p> <p>Example:<br/>                     *yeay<br/>                     *gedebuk</p> | <p><b>Funny</b><br/>                     Exaggeration of image, expression, and action in the cartoon, as well as dialogue, presented.</p> |

Table 5 shows a theme that revolves around Malay people's lifestyle in a village. At the beginning of the story, cartoonist Zuan shows the real situation in a village featuring *Mat Gempak* as the main character. The strokes in the drawings are detailed. The fine and thick lines of each character and

background produce a great impact on this cartoon. It looks very interesting. The composition of the cartoon character and the text is suitable for each frame. Humor elements of the cartoon could be seen in the form of shapes, characters' actions and expressions, content, and text delivered. The text is suitable for each character, as the text is commonly used by the people in the society symbolically, sarcastically, or humorously.



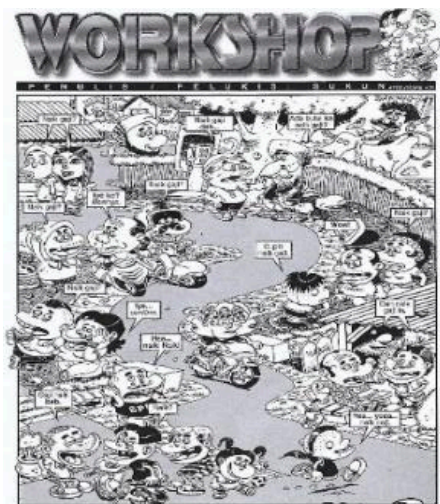
Figure 6. *Amal anak Periwira Mat Gila* 2001  
 (Source: Author's collection)

Table 6. Theme, Style, and Humor of Rejabhad cartoonist in *Gila-Gila* magazine in the Millenium Era

| <i>Gila – Gila</i>   | Theme  | Style   | Humor   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Cartoonist</b><br/> <b>Rejabhad:</b><br/> <b>Cartoon <i>Amal anak Periwira Mat Gila</i> (2001)</b></p> | <p><b>Socio- cultural</b><br/> <b>Socio-economy</b><br/> <b>Folklore</b><br/> <b>Love</b><br/>                     Amal has two siblings and they live together with their parents in the village, the theme of village life is a family living in a village practicing Malay customs.</p> | <p><b>Malay Malaysian</b></p> <p><b>Form</b><br/>                     Drawing based on the Malay community with images and texts. Malay traditional houses usually have mats (<i>tikar mengkuang</i>) to sit, a cover (<i>saji</i>) for food, and a food container (<i>tempayan</i>). Rejabhad portrays Malay identity in his artwork.</p> <p><b>Stroke</b><br/>                     Fine sketches.<br/>                     The description of the village house is clearly illustrated. There are various lines, thick and thin, in grass drawing.</p> <p><b>Language</b></p> | <p><b>Lesson</b><br/>                     Content and context in the cartoon which has a lesson element.</p> <p><b>Satire</b><br/>                     Cartoons have satirical elements such as criticizing people's stupidity.</p> <p><b>Funny</b><br/>                     Exaggeration of image and text in the cartoon.</p> |

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|--|--|--|--|
|  |  | The text used is based on traditional Malay literature such as folklore, proverbs, idioms, and poetry.<br>Example:<br><i>*jebat derhaka Amal maafkan,<br/>                 inikan pula ayah dan abang kandung.</i> |  |
|--|--|--|--|

Table 6 shows the theme of village life, a family living in a village practicing Malay customs and practices. The style of Rejabhad's drawing is very detailed and clear through the drawing of in-house appliances, patterns on walls, floors, and mats. Each character has a pattern on the outfit. The story has values and lessons as well as humor that can be drawn from the use of dialogue and facial expressions. The stroke in the drawing is meticulous, each item in the house is clearly shown such as the wooden, rattan, kitchen appliances, and living room. There is a perspective in the house. Malay identity can be seen in the drawing of the early Malay kingdom, as the society lives in the village with no development. The characters wear Malay-influenced outfits, in situations before Independence Day. Rejabhad is wise in processing traditional Malay literature in his text. It has content and Malay aesthetic such as idiom or proverbs in Amal's character. There are values embedded in his story; respect the elders because it is one of the special worships of Islam, humor presented has values and lessons. It is not only funny on the exaggeration of image cartoon, but it also has satirical aspect.



**Figure 7. Workshop 2004**  
 (Source: Personal collection)

**Table 7. Theme, Style, and Humor of Sukun, cartoonist of Ujang Magazine in the Millenium Era**

| <i>Ujang</i>  | Theme   | Style  | Humor  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Cartoonist Sukun:<br/>                     Cartoon Workshop (2004)</b> | <b>Socio- cultural</b><br>Lifestyle<br>Friendship<br>Various scenarios in a community. Debt is a popular issue among the people. Every debt should be | <b>Malay Malaysian</b><br><br><b>Form</b><br>This is a Malaysian cartoon. There are various races in a village such as Malay, Chinese, and Indian. The | <b>Funny</b> Exaggeration of image and text in the cartoon.<br><br><b>Satire</b><br>The dialogue presented has a satire element. |

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|--|---|--|--|
|  | <p>paid off. Cupin promises to pay all his debts on his payday.</p> | <p>identity of Malaysia could be seen through the cartoon.</p> <p><b>Stroke</b><br/>                 Drawing strokes are detailed, using different types of lines to create images in the cartoon. The image of a village could be seen in the background such as trees, animals, motorcycles, houses, roads, bushes, public phones, hallways, rooftops, and lawns.</p> <p><b>Language</b><br/>                 There are multiple informal languages.<br/>                 Example:<br/>                 *ada butul ka naik gaji?<br/>                 *iyeke? Bestnya...<br/>                 *iye...<br/>                 confirm...<br/>                 *gaji naik beb...</p> |  |
|--|---|--|--|

Table 7 shows the representation of the Malaysian community where there are various ethnicities in a village. The community, social, and cultural themes in this cartoon can be seen in the images drawn. There are a variety of communities such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, and others. Sukun portrays common events that happen in a community such as the attitude of a young man who likes to owe money but has problems paying his debts. The images are drawn in detail. The first frame only shows one frame but has all community, action, caricature, and landscape. Sukun sarcastically presents this episode but still inserts the element of humor through the style of the characters in the cartoon. He highlights various facial impressions and actions to create the element of humor in the story. The cartoon is funny and has a satire element. The facial impression and action presented are funny including the text of the dialogue.



**Figure 8. Mat Gempak, 2000**  
 (Source: Personal collection)

**Table 8. Theme, Style, and Humor of Zuan and Zint, cartoonists of Gempak Magazine in the Millenium era.**

| <i>Gempak</i>   | Theme   | Style   | Humor   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Cartoonist Apoh @ Zuan: Cartoon Mat Gempak (2000)</b></p> | <p><b>Lifestyle Conflict Love Friendship Sociological</b><br/>                     Mat lives in the city with his friends. They are adolescents living life in the community. Having conflicts, being friends with different ethnicities such as Chinese.<br/>                     The prevalent and contagious disease at that time of 1999 started in China and spread to other countries including Malaysia.</p> | <p><b>Malaysian Japonism</b></p> <p><b>Form</b><br/>                     Malaysian Characteristic, various nationalities can be viewed at the cartoon-like Malay, Chinese, and others. At this point, Zuan uses the Japanese style that has become a trend for cartoonists. Using digital illustration in the background.<br/>                     A western cartoon superhero is also put in this story such as Superman.</p> <p><b>Stroke</b><br/>                     Zuan's sketches are more compact and advanced. They are more detailed from the stroke angles using various lines of thick, thin, coarse, and fine. These lines from the characters and perspectives in the painting as well as the addition of solid colors such as using fresh and warm colors.</p> <p><b>Language</b><br/>                     There are multiple informal languages.<br/>                     Example:<br/> <i>*Diorang tu spesies baru agaknya. Tapi peliknya takkan 100% macam manusia? Pelik bin ajaib!</i><br/> <i>*Ala...kira okeylah.</i></p> | <p><b>Funny</b><br/>                     Exaggeration of face and action of character as well as dialogue used in the cartoon.<br/> <b>Satire</b><br/>                     Content in the cartoon has a satire element.</p> |

Table 8 shows that the cartoonist has a Japanese style in *Gempak* magazine, the themes revolve around the life of multicultural people living in the village and the city, as well as the themes of love, friendship, and conflict. Initially, Apoh's style is more to the Malay and Malaysian essence which can be seen in the form and stroke. In the 90s, *Mat Gempak's* story centers around the village where Zuan plays a cartoon of *Mat Gempak* with family and friends, telling stories and scenes in the village such as gardening, biking, raising chickens, and more. The cartoon style is more to the Malay and Malaysian essence and the humor conveyed is also more relaxed and funnier. In the 2000s, Apoh's storytelling began to change as *Mat Gempak* migrated to the urban area. He put the objects of development and technology in his cartoon. The style of the painting in *Mat Gempak* also looks toward the Japanese style. The humor presented is more aggressive, sharper, and funnier. More actions are shown. *Mat Gempak* also touches on issues that are going around globally in the context of the SARS issue around 1999 in China. At that time, Malaysia also took precautions so that outbreaks would not happen. Although Zuan's ethnicity is Chinese he lives around the Malay community and culture, making him eager to create cartoons with Malay style at first.

Recalling the memory and experience through the *Mat Gempak* cartoon, showing the family scenario of the Malay community, the atmosphere, background, and character refer to the culture of the

Malay community. It is a bit different in terms of language and action where it is a bit rough, but every picture frame shows a lot of humor. The cartoon style captures the Japanese style with the techniques, stroke, and image of characterization of character. The humor presented can also be seen in the use of course and free language. So, the characters look funny.

## CONCLUSION

The study of theme, style, and humor in Malaysian prominent cartoon magazines from 1978 to the millennium era (2015) in this research is fascinating because it shows the journey of cartoons from 1978 to the new millennium in terms of theme, style, and humor. A variety of themes, styles, and humor can be seen in cartooning because each cartoonist has his own identity, content, context, and ideas. It has given a big impact on the local cartoon industry especially in magazines because it can sustain more than a decade and attract a lot of readers. The style, theme, and humor show a multicultural society in Malaysia in terms of culture, economy, religion, politics, and technology. The change of time from the 70s to the millennium era shows the journey of cartoonists presented in the cartoon in magazines. As we can see from the emergence of time, the difference between the past and present generations, namely generation X, Y and Z, can be seen through reading cartoons in magazines and digital format. This study is very important in the arena of cartoon art as it shows the creativity and credibility of local cartoonists in producing various types of cartoons. As well as cartoonist has been a main source and tools to community in learning, critics, model, teaching the socio – cultural and political aspect in Malaysia. As cartoon not only containing a joke but it have it essences, aesthetic and value that can build a nation building towards the society.

The Malaysian cartoon has its own identity in terms of form, language, economy, religion, geography, politics, culture, and ethnicity which have influenced the style, theme, and humor in cartooning. The influence of socio-political and culture in cartooning is one of the factors that allows the publication of local cartoon magazines. Readers are among the multicultural community and they accept the ways these cartoons are delivered. This research will contribute to the historical documentation of cartoon strips focusing on the style, theme, and humor of popular cartoon magazines. Besides that, there is still a lack of information about local cartoon magazines. In addition, other researchers can also make a comparison on prominent cartoon magazines between *Gila-Gila* and *Gempak* as their cartoon styles are different.

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