

The Malaya Patriotic Fund Poster Stamp: Developing a Literature Review

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide a perspective view pertaining to Malaya Patriotic Fund Poster Stamp which had been used in Malaya during the World War II period. It focuses on the developing a pool of information concerning the denomination, illustration, dimension, color, perforation and design details of the stamps from two main newspapers between the periods of 1939 and 1940. The objective of this study is to arrange and group information about the stamps using content analysis. This study deals with the qualitative approach to this poster stamp in developing a literature review. The findings show that 11 articles from the two newspapers matched with objective of the study. The findings are considered to create a roadmap to design a detail study for exploring Malaya Patriotic Fund Poster in the context of British Colony and World War II.

Keywords: Malaya Patriotic Fund, poster stamp, World War II, war loan

1. Introduction

Britain was involved in the World War II from 1939 to 1945. The War had forced Britain to seek financial resources in order to cover the costs of the war. These financial resources were obtained from Britain and its colonies including Malaya. Hughes (1958) estimated that financial expenses for Britain in World War II were more than £31 billion. The sources of this financial expense were derived from domestic taxation, domestic and international credit, war savings or war loans, and donation.

When Britain was engaged in the War, its colonies from all over the world were also involved either directly or indirectly to support the country. These British colonies supported Britain through manpower (for the military, technical and medical purposes); infrastructure (such as airports and seaports); finance; and logistics. As a colony of Britain, Malaya was involved in supporting Britain in the World War II. The support was mainly come from finance. Under the British rule, Malaya was divided into three major categories namely the Straits Settlements (Singapore, Malacca and Penang), the Federated Malay States (Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Selangor and Perak) and the Non-Federated Malay States (Johore, Terengganu, Kelantan, Kedah and Perlis).

One of the mechanisms used by Britain to raise war funds was a financial donation. The financial donation applied in Malaya was called the Malaya Patriotic Fund or MPF. According to Stenson (1980), this MPF was the only tool at that time to obtain fund from the people of Malaya, Sarawak and Brunei. The objective of the campaign was to create an awareness pertaining to the contributions of financial resources from public (individual, associations and corporations) into the fund. In addition to that, the fund had also received contributions from outside Malaya such as Borneo, Christmas Island, Sumatera and Java (Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, 1940a). In order to encourage public to contribute financial assistance into the MPF, series of poster stamps were introduced. In philately, these poster stamps are known as a “Cinderella stamps”. These stamps were used by the British administration in order to alert public about the objectives and roles of MPF.

The main objective of this paper is to develop and organize information pertaining to MPF poster stamps. An academic literature written for these stamps is very limited. In addition to that, majority of the sources are from newspapers and books. However, these sources of information only mentioned and described the MPF but lack of information about the MPF poster stamp. For examples, only 12 out of 209 articles in the online resource called the *NewspaperSG* contained specific information about the MPF poster stamp (*NewspaperSG*, 2015). The

NewspaperSC is an online resource for current and historic Singapore and Malaya newspapers. Majority of the articles in this online resource describe the role of the MPF and its contributors.

The lacking of academic literature on the MPF poster stamp triggers the establishment of this paper. This paper begins with a brief history of MPF and its stamps. It then discusses the limitation of academic literature related to the MPF poster stamp and follows by the discussion about the MPF poster stamp from newspapers. Next, the features of the stamp are described in details. This includes its denomination, illustration, dimension, color, perforation and design details. Discussion, practical implications, and conclusion are also discussed.

1.1 A Short History of the Malaya Patriotic Fund (MPF)

The Malaya Patriotic Fund (MPF) is a form of volunteered financial donation to support the British government during the beginning of World War II in 1939. MPF was established in Singapore (Straits Times, 1939a) after the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared officially the involvement of Britain against Germany in World War II on 3rd September 1939 in London. The declaration was named the Chamberlain Declaration (Self, 2006).

In Malaya, the information regarding the MPF was detected and identified from 10th September 1939 to 30th January 1942 (*NewspaperSG*, 2015). Two newspapers in the *NewspaperSG*'s search engine (<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg>) have contributed quite numbers of MPF articles. These newspapers were the *Straits Times* and the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*.

In early 1942, the MPF stopped its operation due to Japanese army attacked and later occupied Singapore on 15th February 1942. Based on this short period of time which was from 10th September 1939 to 30th January 1942, it could be stated that the MPF was only in operation for less than 3 years (approximately 2 years, 4 months and 20 days). Beside these two newspapers from Singapore, the information about the MPF appeared in newspapers from other countries such as Australia, United Kingdom and Canada (for examples, see The Sydney Morning Herald, 1940; The Glasgow Herald, 1942; Ottawa Citizen, 1939). These newspapers only describe the news about donors from various organizations to the MPF.

In conjunction with the participation of Britain in the World War II in Europe, the British Government in Singapore introduced the MPF on 7th September 1939 (Straits Times, 1939b). The MPF committee consisted of a Chairman, a Secretary and members of the executive committee (Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, 1939a). The first meeting of this committee was held at the Government House of Singapore on 27th October 1939. The honorary treasurer for the MPF was the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China (Straits Times, 1939c).

The MPF donation came from individuals and organizations across Malaya (including Singapore), Sarawak and Brunei. Then, the donation was sent to Britain in stages and later distributed to several receivers. For example, in the *The Straits Times* newspaper dated 24th June 1941, it published the receivers of the fund: £10,000 to the Lord Mayor's Air Raid Distress Fund, £5,000 to the Shipwrecked Marines' Association, £5,000 to the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Family Association, £5,000 to the British Red Cross, and £5,000 to the Malta Air Raid Relief Fund (Straits Times, 1941).

1.2 The MPF Poster Stamp

In philately, the MPF Poster stamp is referred as a Cinderella stamp. The Cinderella stamp is an unofficial stamp sized design which to be attached on mailed covers or other documents. It is not issued for official purpose by a National post office administration. Therefore, it may not be listed in any official normal stamp catalog such as the Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue. The Scott Catalogue of Postage Stamps is published by the Scott Publishing Company (Scott Online, 2015). It is updated annually and lists all the stamps of the entire world which its editors recognize as issued for postal purposes.

The main objective of the Cinderella stamp is for advertising or amusement (Bjelkhagen, 2014). In the context of MPF, the category of the Cinderella stamp falls under propaganda labels. It aims to support causes that are usually political in nature (Baadke, 1998). The MPF's Cinderella stamp is attached on mailed covers.

1.3 Limited Academic Literature Review on the MPF Poster Stamp

There is very limited academic literature written about the MPF poster stamp. Previous literature only discussed the MPF but there was no indication of mentioning or describing about the stamp (see Yahaya, 2015; Baena, 2008; Cator, 1941). The authors only described the roles of MPF as a financial tool to assist Britain in World War II. Similarly, many academic books have only described the roles and functions about the MPF but they did not indicate any information related to the stamp (see Stenson, 1980; Koh, 2013; Yong, Gonzalo & Carreira, 2014).

In a book titled the *Diaspora at War: The Chinese of Singapore between Empire and Nation*, it described briefly the establishment of MPF in Singapore (Koh, 2013). In another book which titled *Tan Kah-Kee: The Making of an*

Overseas Chinese Legend, only mentioned an active contribution of finance by a Chinese community to support the fund (Yong, Gonzalo, & Carreira, 2014). In the context of MPF poster stamp, both books did not mention specifically any points related to the MPF poster stamp.

In his revenue stamps and postal stationery catalogue book, Tan (2003) has listed four types of MPF poster stamps under special reference numbers. These reference numbers are MPF1 (for 1-cent with no indication of 1-cent mark), MPF2 (for 1-cent with the indication of 1-cent mark), MPF3 (for 2-cent) and MPF4 (for 5-cent). The book also showed photos of MPF poster stamps for MPF2, MPF3 and MPF4 with brief description on color and price. However, it did not show the photo of poster stamp with a pick number of MPF1. It only stated the words “No value, scarlet” and the price lists.

2. Methodology

Content analysis was used in this study. It is a qualitative research method for analyzing text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this study, it was used as a qualitative research tool to determine the presence of certain words or concepts related to MPF poster stamp within texts from digital newspapers. The words and concepts were then analyzed the presence, meanings and relationships, then made inferences about the messages within the texts and time (date) of which these are a part.

An online resource called the *NewspaperSG* was used as a source of information regarding the MPF poster stamp (*NewspaperSG*, 2015). Only the two newspapers showed the results for MPF poster stamp, first the Straits Times and second, the Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advisor. Data from these two newspapers were used to develop and to organize information about the MPF poster stamp. These two newspapers were from the World War II period and published in Singapore. In these newspapers, the terms used for representing the MPF stamp were “Patriotic Fund Stamps” and “Poster Stamps”. These terms later were used as keywords in an online search for articles which indicated the MPF poster stamp.

The basis in this study was to identify articles in the Straits Times and the Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser newspapers about MPF poster stamp. A method from van Oostendrop and van Nimwegen (1998) study was adopted in searching the relevant context of MPF poster stamp from the *NewspaperSG*. Keywords of “Patriotic Fund Stamps” and “Poster Stamps” were used in searching the poster stamp articles from 10th September 1939 to 30th January 1942 using online search engine, *NewspaperSG*. The results showed that 11 articles from the two newspapers matched with the MPF poster stamp. From these 11 articles, salient points of the contents, name, date and page number of the newspaper were organized in a Table. See Table 1 for the summary.

To support the information from the above content analysis, observation the physical features of the MPF poster stamp was referred on the actual stamps. These stamps were from the author’s personal collection. Information to the stamps denomination, illustration, dimension, color, perforation and design details were collected through measurement and observation of the actual stamps. Table 2 summarized the findings of the observation. Figure 1 showed the photos of the MPF poster stamp.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 showed the summary about MPF poster stamps news which had been extracted from the Straits Times and the Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser newspapers from 29th December 1939 to 29th October 1940. There were four columns in Table 1. The first column showed the name of the newspaper while columns two and three stated the newspaper date and page. The last column described the summary of the news which directly related to the MPF poster stamp. The first point for each of the news was shown in bold to indicate the title of the news.

Several salient points about the MPF poster stamps have been identified from Tables 1 and 2 and also from Figure 1. The first issue of MPF poster stamps was printed for 50,000 pieces. It was released to the public on the 3rd January 1940. This first issue was only available at major post offices such as in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Malacca, Ipoh, Seremban and Kuala Lipis. It carried a denomination of 1 cent. However, the stamp did not print the sign of “1 cent” on it. It had the largest dimension (39mm x 56mm) compared to other issues. The separation was a non-roulette type.

There was no exact date printed on the second print with a denomination of 1 cent. Referring to Table 2, it was believed that the second printing took place between 4th January 1940 and April 1940. Further study is required to investigate and determine the actual date for this issue. In addition to that, in the Standard Catalogue of Malaysia Singapore Brunei Revenue Stamps and Postal Stationery (Tan, 2003), it does not provide any information about the second print. Referring to Figure 1, this issue had a dimension of 38mm x 54mm. Like the first issue, the separation was a non-roulette type.

Table 1. The MPF Poster Stamp from the Straits Times and the Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser newspapers

Newspaper	Date	Page	Information about the MPF Stamps
The Straits Times	29 th December 1939	11	<p>Title: 100,000 Poster Stamps Being Printed for Sale to Public 1 cent poster stamp printed.</p> <p>According to the Department of Information, in January 1940, it would be possible to contribute to the MPF using the 1 cent poster stamp.</p> <p>The committee of MPF in October 1939 to issue a poster stamp.</p> <p>The first issue of 50,000 pieces printed and arrangement made with the cooperation with the Posts and Telegraphs Department to sell the stamps at post offices throughout the country. This first issue would be available only in the main post offices.</p> <p>The second issue of 50,000 pieces would be available at all the smaller post offices.</p> <p>It described the design of the stamp.</p> <p>It highlighted the function of the stamp – letters posted to addresses oversea and local would provide a very striking reminder that Malaya also participated in raising funds for British.</p>
The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser	29 th December 1939	2	<p>Title: Patriotic Fund Passes Million Dollar Mark 1 cent poster stamp printed.</p> <p>According to the Department of Information, in January 1940, it would be possible to contribute to the MPF using the 1 cent poster stamp.</p> <p>The committee of MPF in October 1939 to issue a poster stamp.</p> <p>The first issue of 50,000 pieces printed and arrangement made with the cooperation with the Posts and Telegraphs Department to sell the stamps at post offices throughout the country. This first issue would be available only in the main post offices.</p> <p>The second issue of 50,000 pieces would be available at all the smaller post offices.</p> <p>It described the design of the stamp.</p> <p>It highlighted the function of the stamp – letters posted to addresses oversea and local would provide a very striking reminder that Malaya also participated in raising funds for British.</p>
The Straits Times	2 nd January 1940	11	<p>Title: The First 50,000 Poster Stamps To-Morrow</p> <p>Poster stamps costing 1 cent each would be on sale from 3rd January 1940 at the main post offices at Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Malacca, Ipoh, Seremban and Kuala Lipis.</p> <p>The sale would go to the MPF.</p> <p>The poster stamp was affixed to letters and parcels when mailing.</p> <p>50,000 pieces of the stamp would be on sale on the first day.</p> <p>Another 50,000 pieces would be available at smaller post office throughout Malaya.</p> <p>Design of the Stamp (1 cent)</p> <p>Head and shoulders of a steel-helmeted British soldier colored in brown in a wine-red frame.</p> <p>The words “MPF” were printed in black in block lettering at the bottom of the stamp, with the sentence “He Will Thank You” in white lettering above.</p> <p>There was a photo of 1 cent MPF stamp with no sign of 1 cent denomination.</p>
The Straits Times	4 th January 1940	11	<p>Title: How to Use the New Poster Stamps</p> <p>The Department of Information in Singapore explained the correct way to use the MPF poster stamps on envelope.</p> <p>The ordinary postage must be paid and when the poster stamp is affixed to an envelope.</p>

				This means it was a voluntary surcharge of 1 cent for the MPF.
The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser	4 th January 1940	5		<p>Title: Public and Purpose of Poster Stamps</p> <p>The Department of Information in Singapore explained the correct way to use the MPF poster stamps on envelope.</p> <p>The ordinary postage must be paid and when the poster stamp is affixed to an envelope.</p> <p>This means it was a voluntary surcharge of 1 cent for the MPF.</p>
The Straits Times	5 th February 1940	8		<p>Title: For War Funds – One Cent Stamp on all ‘Chits’</p> <p>There were suggestions to reduce the size of the MPF stamp into three quarters from the original size and to have larger denomination rather than only 1 cent.</p>
The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser	11 th June 1940	6		<p>Title: A Singapore Woman’s Diary</p> <p>The first batch of 1 cent stamp was a huge success.</p> <p>The color of the 1 cent stamps was brown and red.</p> <p>The Government introduced the 2 cents and 5 cents of MPF stamps.</p> <p>The 2 cents stamp was printed in green and the 5 cents was printed in blue.</p> <p>The size for these two denominations was smaller to the 1 cent stamp.</p> <p>The stamps could be obtained at the General Post Office or at the honorary Secretary of MPF.</p>
The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser	26 th September 1940	4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title: A Woman’s Diary • The poster stamp would promote public to donate for MPF. • In May 1940, 820,000 pieces were issued. • In August 1940, another 500,000 pieces were issued. • The denominations issued were in 1 cent, 2 cents and 5 cents. • These stamps could be bought at the post offices.
The Straits Times	3 rd October 1940	12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title: Latest List of Donations to MPF • The news mentioned the sales of poster stamps throughout Malaya.
The Straits Times	29 th October 1940	11		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title: Patriotic Fund Stamps Not Valid for Postage • The Department of Information in Singapore explained the correct way to use the MPF poster stamps on envelope. • The ordinary postage must be paid and when the poster stamp is affixed to an envelope. • This means it was a voluntary surcharge of 1 cent for the MPF. • Letters to be received by Singapore post offices with only MPF stamps affixed were required for the addressees to pay a surcharge of 16 cents for each sealed envelope.
The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser	29 th October 1940	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title: Patriotic Fund Stamps Not Valid for Postage • The Department of Information in Singapore explained the correct way to use the MPF poster stamps on envelope. • The ordinary postage must be paid and when the poster stamp is affixed to an envelope. • This means it was a voluntary surcharge of 1 cent for the MPF. • Letters to be received by Singapore post offices with only MPF stamps affixed were required for the addressees to pay a surcharge of 16 cents for each sealed envelope.

Table 2. Features of MPF Poster Stamps

	No value	1 cent big	1 cent small	2 cents	5 cents
Denomination	1 cent but no value indicator	1 cent	1 cent	2 cents	5 cents
Dimension (mm)	39 x 56	38 x 54	32 x 46	24 x 35	25 x 36
Color	Front: Brown and red Back: Blank	Front: Brown and red Back: Blank	Front: Brown and red Back: Blank	Front: Green Back: Blank	Front: Blue Back: Blank
Separation	Non Roulette	Non Roulette	Roulette: Ordinary	Roulette: Ordinary	Roulette: Ordinary
Design Details	Head and shoulders of a steel-helmeted British soldier colored in brown in a wine-red frame. The words "MPF" were printed in black in block lettering at the bottom of the stamp, with the sentence "He Will Thank You" in white lettering above. There was no sign of 1 cent denomination. The back of the stamp was white blank with gum.	Head and shoulders of a steel-helmeted British soldier colored in brown in a wine-red frame. The words "MPF" were printed in black in block lettering at the bottom of the stamp, with the sentence "He Will Thank You" in white lettering above. There was a sign of 1 cent denomination. The back of the stamp was white blank with gum.	Head and shoulders of a steel-helmeted British soldier colored in brown in a wine-red frame. The words "MPF" were printed in black in block lettering at the bottom of the stamp, with the sentence "He Will Thank You" in white lettering above. There was a sign of 1 cent denomination. The back of the stamp was white blank with gum.	Head and shoulders of a steel-helmeted British soldier colored in green in a green frame. The words "MPF" were printed in black in block lettering at the bottom of the stamp, with the sentence "He Will Thank You" in white lettering above. There was a sign of 2 cents denomination. The back of the stamp was white blank with gum.	Head and shoulders of a steel-helmeted British soldier colored in blue in a blue frame. The words "MPF" were printed in black in block lettering at the bottom of the stamp, with the sentence "He Will Thank You" in white lettering above. There was a sign of 5 cents denomination. The back of the stamp was white blank with gum.
Date of Issue	3 rd January 1940	Between 4 th January 1940 and April 1940	Between May 1940 and August 1940	Between May 1940 and August 1940	Between May 1940 and August 1940
Printing	First	Second	Third	Third	Third
Pick number in the Standard Catalogue of Malaysia Singapore Brunei Revenue Stamps and Postal Stationary (Tan, 2003)	MPF1	NA	MPF2	MPF3	MPF4



Figure 1. Photos of MPF Poster Stamps (Source: Personal collection of Dazmin Daud, 2016)

From May 1940 to August 1940, there were another 1,320,000 pieces of the MPF poster issued. The denominations for this group were 1 cent, 2 cents and 5 cents. This group was the third print (see Table 2 and Tan (2003) catalogue book). The dimension for 1 cent in this group was reduced into much smaller size (32mm x 46mm) compared to the first (39mm x 56mm) and the second print (38mm x 54mm). The 2 cents and 5 cents had dimensions of 24mm x 35mm and 25mm x 36mm respectively. The separation for all denominations in this category was roulette ordinary.

The front design of all MPF contained several features. The first feature showed a face of British soldier with head and shoulders of a steel-helmeted. The second feature indicated words “MPF”. These words were printed in black in block lettering at the bottom of the stamp, with the sentence “He Will Thank You” in white lettering above. A brown color in a wine-red frame decorated the front of 1 cent of the first, second and third issues. For the 2 cents and 5 cents, the frame was colored in green and blue respectively. The back of all MPFs was blank.

The correct way to use the MPF poster stamps was to affix them on an envelope or other printed material. The ordinary poster stamp must be paid. The MPF poster stamps carried a voluntary surcharge for Britain. MPF poster stamps did not act as a normal ordinary poster stamp and it did not valid for postage purpose. In Malaya, the ownership of MPF stamps was the Department of Information and the Posts while the Telegraphs Department acted as an agent for a distribution to public.

There was no further information about the MPF poster stamps in the newspapers (The Straits Times and The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser) after 29th October 1940.

4. Conclusion

The introduction of MPF in Malaya contributed an impact to finance Britain in WWII. The fund received positive reaction from public. Although there were extensive literatures about the fund, but the specific information about the MPF poster stamps was very limited. This study explored in details about the MPF poster stamps on gathering information which related its denominations, dimensions, colors, perforations and design details. This group of information was collected using content analysis.

This study is important for those who are interested in finding details about the MPF poster stamps. As for those who are in the field of philately, this study is able to provide comprehensive information about the history and features about the poster stamps. It also links to the Malaya history of numismatics and philately during the WWII period especially in the South East Asia region.

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