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The Preservation of the Arabic-Malay Script as A Reconstruction of the Existence of Malay Culture in Brunei Darussalam

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ABSTRAK

Era Globalisasi di Negara Brunei Darussalam, Islam dan budaya Melayu terus memainkan peranan penting dalam membentuk identitas negara. Peranan ini tercermin dalam upaya untuk mempertahankan identitas Melayu-Islam. Isu kontemporer yang dihadapi adalah kemunduran budaya lokal akibat penetrasi budaya asing, yang menyebabkan erosi, dan dalam beberapa kasus, hilangnya tradisi budaya asli. Artikel ini secara khusus mengkaji pelaksanaan aksara Arab-Melayu sebagai strategi untuk mengatasi tantangan yang ditimbulkan oleh penetrasi budaya dalam era globalisasi, terutama pada masa pemerintahan Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah di Brunei Darussalam. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode penelitian historis, yang terdiri dari empat tahap: heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan penjelasan, yang merupakan proses penyajian temuan secara tertulis. Temuan penelitian ini adalah sebagai berikut: Pertama, kemerdekaan Negara Brunei Darussalam dan pengisytiharan sebagai Negara Melayu Islam Beraja bukan semata-mata kehendak raja, tetapi juga kehendak rakyat Brunei secara keseluruhan. Negara Brunei Darussalam terus mempertahankan warisan budayanya di bawah kepemimpinan Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah pada era kontemporer. Kedua, penelitian tentang manuskrip ini berfungsi sebagai langkah preventif untuk melindungi budaya lokal dari pengaruh asing yang dapat masuk ke Brunei Darussalam akibat globalisasi. Terakhir, inisiatif pendidikan dan penelitian merupakan langkah serius yang diambil oleh pemerintahan kesultanan selama masa pemerintahan Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah untuk memastikan budaya Melayu tetap ada dan adaptif dalam situasi dan kondisi apapun.

Kata Kunci: Pelestarian, Kitab Turats, Tulisan Arab-Melayu, Brunei Darussalam

ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization in Brunei Darussalam, Islam and Malay culture continue to play a significant role in shaping the nation's identity. This role manifests in efforts to preserve the Islamic-Malay identity. The contemporary issue at hand concerns the degradation of local culture due to the penetration of foreign cultures, which has resulted in the erosion, and in some cases the loss, of indigenous cultural traditions. This article specifically examines the implementation of the Arabic-Malay script as a strategy to address the challenges posed by cultural penetration in the era of globalization, particularly during the reign of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah in Brunei Darussalam. The method employed in this study is the historical research method, four stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and explanation, which is the process of presenting the findings in writing. The findings of research, they are: First, the independence of Brunei Darussalam and its declaration as a Malay Islamic Monarchy (Melayu

Islam Beraja) was not solely the will of the king, but also the will of the people of Brunei as a whole. Brunei Darussalam continues to uphold its cultural heritage under the leadership of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah in the contemporary era. The second, research on these manuscripts serves as a preventive measure to protect local culture from foreign influences that might enter Brunei Darussalam due to globalization. Last, the educational and research initiatives are serious steps taken by the Sultanate government during Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah's reign to ensure that Malay culture remains present and adaptable in any situation or condition.

Kata Kunci: Preservation, Turath, Arab-Melayu Script, Brunei Darussalam

INTRODUCTION

Brunei Darussalam has successfully made significant contributions towards strengthening the position of Islam in Brunei Darussalam, which has been supported by several factors. Among them is the presence of Sultans and the Bruneian people who adhere firmly to Islamic teachings. Secondly, there is the stability of domestic administration by the Sultans of Brunei Darussalam based on justice, so that the people feel sufficiently happy and are willing to give their sincere and undivided loyalty. Thirdly, the awareness of the Sultans of Brunei Darussalam of the need to build a strong military and defense force. Fourthly, the Sultans of Brunei Darussalam provide delicate services and diplomacy towards traders and visitors from abroad, demonstrating a tolerant attitude, whether they are Muslims or not. The spread of Islam in Brunei, which the Malay Islamic Sultanate has carried out from the very beginning, has shaped the lives of the Muslim community in Brunei today. The spirit of heroism and both physical and spiritual strength in defending the Islamic faith is truly touching. Despite limited technological facilities compared to the present time, they remain enthusiastic and never give up in their efforts to spread the teachings of Islam. They have overcome many trials and obstacles, and their success in passing all these tests has further strengthened the spirit and determination of subsequent Sultans, up until the present time under the rule of Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah.¹

Since the arrival of Islam in the Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam until now, it has been divided into four phases, namely the phase of the formation of the sultanate, the phase of growth, the phase of development, and the phase of glory. The determination of these phases refers to solid and scientific fundamental matters as important arguments to

¹ Ummi Faizah dan Rahman, "Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam dan Hubungannya dengan Perubahan Sosiobudaya Masyarakat Islam di Brunei Darussalam", *International Journal of Umrānic Studies*, 1(1), 2018 Pp.49-57, p. 52

minimize errors and misunderstandings in making judgments about anything, including assessing the development of Islamic civilization in Brunei Darussalam. As mentioned, each phase shows the development of Islam from one phase to the next.²

The Malay people in Brunei Darussalam consist of indigenous Malay tribes, namely Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut, and Tutong, based on the Nationality Act of 1961. Malay culture is a unifying tool for leaders and people that has directly enabled this country to survive and thrive, and for the future survival of the nation of Brunei Darussalam. Malay tribes practice and maintain traditional values based on customs, morals, and Islamic teachings. Until now, these traditions have been incorporated into the affairs of state governance, namely obedience to the king, religion, and country. A life based on customs, morals, and mutual respect has created a harmonious society in Brunei Darussalam in maintaining the perfection and integrity of Brunei's customs.³

The rights of the Malay people, consisting of seven indigenous Malay tribes, namely Brunei, Belait, Kedayan, Tutong, Dusun, Bisaya, and Murut, with dynamic and dominant Malay cultural values as the foundation of royal, family, community, national, and state life, and making the Malay language the official language of the country.⁴ The function of Melayu Islam Beraja is as a unifying ideology for the Bruneian nation, which consists of the 7 Malay tribes. These Malay ethnic groups have various similarities and differences, such as language, beliefs, and customs. Therefore, Melayu Islam Beraja is a perfect combination of three components, interconnected and inseparable, so that the differences that exist among the various Malay tribes in Brunei can be united in the bond of Melayu Islam Beraja.⁵

Because humans are created as social beings, every child born is inevitably shaped by social influences and shares various common characteristics such as language, culture, and thought. Malay children communicate using the Malay language, embrace Malay culture, and think like Malay people. Similarly, English children communicate in English, embrace English culture, and think like English people. Arab children communicate in

² Maryamah, "Islam dan Kebudayaan Melayu pada Era Globalisasi di Brunei Darussalam", p. 186.

³ Maryamah, "Islam dan Kebudayaan Melayu pada Era Globalisasi di Brunei Darussalam", p. 186

⁴ Maryamah, "Islam dan Kebudayaan Melayu pada Era Globalisasi di Brunei Darussalam", p. 187

⁵ Maryamah, "Islam dan Kebudayaan Melayu pada Era Globalisasi di Brunei Darussalam", p. 187

Arabic, embrace Arab culture, and think like Arab people. This happens to every nation in the world, including the Chinese, Indians, and countless others.⁶

In the era of globalization in Brunei Darussalam, Islam and Malay culture continue to play a significant role in shaping the nation's identity. This role manifests in efforts to preserve the Islamic-Malay identity. Brunei Darussalam has successfully maintained its Islamic-Malay identity in the face of globalization, with Islam and Malay culture remaining central to the lives of Bruneian society. The influence of Islam on culture is evident in various aspects of Malay cultural life in Brunei, including the arts, language, architecture, and social traditions. This has resulted in a unique culture that reflects the close relationship between Islam and Malay identity. Overall, Islam and Malay culture remain key elements in shaping Brunei Darussalam's identity. In the face of globalization, efforts to preserve and promote these values will continue to be an important part of the development of Bruneian society.

The contemporary issue at hand concerns the degradation of local culture due to the penetration of foreign cultures, which has resulted in the erosion, and in some cases the loss, of indigenous cultural traditions. This phenomenon is driven by the rapid and widespread dissemination of globalization, affecting various regions, including Brunei Darussalam. Efforts to preserve Malay culture in Brunei Darussalam, particularly through its safeguarding, serve as a preventive measure to counter the reduction of authentic Malay cultural practices originating from the country. One such preventive effort is the preservation of the Arabic-Malay script in the distinctive Malay language of Brunei Darussalam. This initiative may take the form of research and writing on the script for the local community. Therefore, this article specifically examines the implementation of the Arabic-Malay script as a strategy to address the challenges posed by cultural penetration in the era of globalization, particularly during the reign of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah in Brunei Darussalam.

METHOD

The method refers to a procedure or approach for carrying out tasks in a systematic and planned manner. It involves strict prerequisites, particularly the need for systematic

⁶ Amer Hudhaifah Hamzah, Wan Ahmad Fauzi Wan Husain, "Batu Tarsilah Sebagai Alat Kebesaran Dan Kedaulatan: Salasilah Raja Brunei Dinilai Dari Segi Ilmu Nasab Islam", *Jurnal Islam dan Masyarakat Kontemporer*, 23(3): 245-272, p. 247.

execution. The method employed in this study is the historical research method. Historical research consists of four stages: heuristics, which involves the collection of materials/sources; source criticism, which includes both internal and external criticism; interpretation, which entails the classification of data and the identification of causal relationships; and explanation, which is the process of presenting the findings in writing.

The first stage, Heuristics, is a method that prioritizes the search for as many sources as possible, which may be found in oral, written, and moving image forms. These sources are classified into two categories: primary and secondary. A primary source is a concrete source based on direct events, while a secondary source is a supporting resource derived from primary sources, complementing the scholarly interpretation of related facts.

The next stage is Source Criticism, which involves determining the authenticity (genuineness) and integrity (completeness) of historical sources (external criticism). This is followed by an evaluation of the truthfulness or validity of the sources (internal criticism). At this point, it is possible to distinguish between sources that meet the criteria of hard facts (proven truths) and soft facts (which still require further validation). Not all sources are immediately used in writing; only those that are valid and scientifically accountable are ultimately selected.⁷

The next stage is Synthesis, which involves the creation of facts that are logically organized and interconnected into a unified historical narrative. This includes classifying facts (external synthesis) and connecting the assembled facts (internal synthesis) based on logical and objective principles.

Finally, in the writing stage, the method used is the descriptive-narrative method, which involves writing history in the form of a narrative that utilizes theory and methodology. The author describes how the sequence of events unfolded chronologically. However, based on the available sources, the writing will take a descriptive-analytical approach, focusing more on explaining why and how these events occurred.⁸

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Short Description about Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam, referred to as "Brunei," is believed to be derived from the name of the entire island of Borneo. The British, prior to the 19th century, referred to it as

⁷ Abd. Rahman Hamid dan M. Shaleh Madjid, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2011)

⁸ Dien Madjid dan Johan Wahyudi, *Ilmu Sejarah Sebuah Pengantar* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2014), p. 218.

Burni, Bourni, Bouncee, and Borne. After the 19th century, they began calling it Brune, Brunai, Bronei, and Brunei. The Chinese referred to it as Puni or Poni, while the Dutch called it Berow, Barow, Barau, and Berau. Brunei Darussalam is a wealthy nation located on the northern part of Borneo. Brunei is bordered by two Malaysian states, Sabah and Sarawak, and is ruled by the Sultan's lineage, with the current Sultan being Hassanal Bolkiah. The country covers an area of 5,765 square kilometers.⁹

Brunei is divided into four districts: Belait, Muara, Temburong, and Tutong. In addition to Bandar Seri Begawan (the capital), other key cities include Muara, Kuala Belait, and Panaga (known for its oil industry and recreational activities). Brunei's economy is primarily supported by substantial income from oil and gas, with minimal contributions from agriculture, fisheries, and potential future industries. The majority of Brunei's population is of Malay descent, with smaller communities of Chinese, Dayak, and Kadazan people. The official and predominant religion is Islam, though Christianity and indigenous religions are also protected. Notably, due to the nation's prosperity, education and healthcare are provided free of charge to its citizens.¹⁰

Brunei Darussalam is one of the oldest monarchies that still exists in the modern world today. The country is led by Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, with the Shafi'i school of thought as the official state doctrine. Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah has been the ruler of Brunei Darussalam since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1984. Despite its relatively young age of independence, the country has achieved prosperity for its people due to its vast reserves of oil and natural gas. Given its abundant natural wealth, it is no surprise that Forbes magazine ranks Brunei as the fifth richest country in the world.¹¹

Brunei Darussalam is a peaceful country where its people live in a harmonious environment. This small nation, covering an area of 5,765 km², is divided into four districts: Brunei-Muara, Tutong, Belait, and Temburong. With a population of approximately 411,900, it is about one-tenth the size of Bali. The population is most concentrated in Brunei-Muara (72%), followed by Belait (15%), Tutong (11%), and

⁹ Saifullah, *Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam di Asia Tenggara*. (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2010), p. 161-162.

¹⁰ Saifullah, *Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam di Asia Tenggara*, p. 162-163.

¹¹ Ocktoberriyansyah, Kanun Jenayah Syariah Brunei Darussalam 2013 dan Relevansinya dengan Delik Agama dalam RUU KUHP Indonesia, *Jurnal Asy-Syir'ah: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah dan Hukum*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 2017, p. 95-115, p. 101

Temburong (2%). The majority of Brunei's population is of Malay ethnicity, making up 66% of the population, followed by the Chinese at 10%, and other ethnic groups at 24%.¹² The Malay ethnic group itself is composed of several sub-groups. Despite the ethnic diversity, based on the researcher's observations, there is no conflict among these groups; they live in a harmonious, traditional East Asian social system that is still quite strong. Their manner of speech, dress, and interaction with others are exemplary. There is never any visible conflict among them, and they show mutual respect and allow freedom of religion for fellow citizens. In fact, in Kampong Kianggeh, Brunei-Muara, where the researcher stayed, there is a large Chinese temple (kelenteng) located right by the main road, not far from the Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque.¹³

The small population, supported by a high level of public welfare and a deeply rooted Malay culture, has allowed the implementation of Islamic law in Brunei to function effectively. Legal awareness arises naturally from the community itself, without the need for strong enforcement by law enforcement authorities. One interesting example is how drivers stop their vehicles when they see pedestrians wanting to cross the road. The researcher personally experienced this multiple times while attempting to cross various streets in Brunei-Muara. Such small actions can be a strong indication of how people obey larger laws and regulations. For example, all shops close before Friday prayers and reopen about an hour after the prayers end (all shops are closed from 12:00 to 14:00 local time, with Friday prayers beginning around 12:30). Although very few security officers are visible, this regulation is enforced very effectively. Some Indonesian workers interviewed by the researcher mentioned that the police also use CCTV to monitor every corner of the city, making it easy to identify stores that violate the regulations.¹⁴

The legal awareness of the community, of course, does not stand alone. The government plays an active role in regulating the environment to ensure that negative external influences are prevented. Western cultures, which are hedonistic and excessively free, emphasizing individual ego, are minimized in such a way that they do not damage the strong Malay culture that is grounded in Islam. Nightclubs and discotheques are prohibited from operating in Brunei Darussalam. In their place, night markets are organized as a

¹² Seng Piew Loo, Ethnicity and educational policies in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, SA-eDUC JOURNAL, Special Edition on Education and Ethnicity, 6: 2, pp 146-157 November 2009, pp. 146-158, p. 150

¹³ Ocktoberriyah, "Kanun Jenayah Syariah Brunei Darussalam 2013.", p. 102.

¹⁴ Ocktoberriyah, "Kanun Jenayah Syariah Brunei Darussalam 2013.", p. 103.

means of recreation for the public. These night markets are held at specific locations and times. The markets are primarily dominated by food vendors offering grilled fish, grilled chicken, traditional Malay dishes, traditional cakes, and various other items such as clothing, shoes, and household goods.¹⁵

The Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) philosophy itself serves as the foundation of the state, established by the government since Brunei's independence in 1984. MIB is based on three key pillars: Malay culture, Islamic law (syariat), and the system of monarchy. In many of his speeches, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah has consistently emphasized this concept. A strong cultural identity is seen as a safeguard for the society, protecting it from negative external influences. According to the Sultan, the state must do its best to instill religious education in the younger generation so that they are not affected by the "virus of destruction." This virus can corrupt religious beliefs, education, and culture. Disturbances may manifest in unwanted forms, such as ideologies or ways of thinking that contradict the way of life in Brunei. To counter such disruptions, the government has taken steps to mitigate these influences and align them with the principles of the Malay Islamic Monarchy philosophy.¹⁶

The highest position and authority in the Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) is vested in His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan. The Sultan holds full power and absolute sovereignty to establish and annul laws, regulations, and rules. Thus, the Sultan is the supreme source of legal decisions in Brunei Darussalam, serving as the foundation for the constitution. The establishment and abolition of laws and regulations within the constitution are based on the approval of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan. The sovereignty held by the Sultan remains relevant to the political situation of Brunei Darussalam.

The importance of the Sultan's sovereignty is primarily focused on the public good, particularly in maintaining the security and stability of the country, which has been successfully preserved to this day. Additionally, the safety and welfare of the people remain the responsibility of the government. Therefore, prioritizing the common good and stability is crucial in nation-building and governance, as opposed to granting absolute freedom to the people, which could potentially lead to chaos, conflict, slander, or even

¹⁵ Ocktoberriyah, "Kanun Jenayah Syariah Brunei Darussalam 2013.," p. 103.

¹⁶ Ocktoberriyah, "Kanun Jenayah Syariah Brunei Darussalam 2013.," p. 104.

hostility. In Brunei Darussalam, despite the Sultan's full sovereignty and absolute power, His Majesty is still open to advice and suggestions from his officials, who continuously assist him in governance, with the ultimate goal of ensuring the prosperity and safety of the people in Brunei Darussalam.¹⁷

Legal-Formal and the Correlation of Islam with Malay Culture in Brunei Darussalam

The Brunei Nationality Act of 1961, Chapter 4 (1) (a), states that Brunei Malays are "the subjects of the Sultan, with full legal authority specifically granted to the indigenous Malay ethnic groups, which include the Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut, and Tutong." In a religious context, the term "Malay" in Brunei Darussalam does not refer exclusively to Muslims, but rather includes all seven indigenous ethnic groups, regardless of whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim. Furthermore, the status of other ethnic groups outside these seven has been outlined in Chapter 5 (1) and (5) of the Brunei Nationality Act of 1961, which states that they may be accepted as citizens through a registration process, subject to certain conditions, including residency for 15 to 25 years in Brunei. Additionally, they must pass a language proficiency test (both written and oral) administered by a language authority to assess their command of the Malay language. To be granted citizenship, they must demonstrate a good knowledge of the language, be able to speak Malay fluently, and exhibit good conduct.

One of the main requirements for every citizen or permanent resident wishing to pursue further education, either domestically or abroad, is the qualification obtained in the Malay language subject. The status and importance of the Malay language in this context are not driven by political interests, but rather by the fact that the society of this country is homogeneous, and the language is both widely used and dominant. Therefore, it is fitting for Malay to serve as the medium and discourse of life. As stipulated in the constitution, there are three types of nationality or citizenship in this country, as follows:¹⁸

1. Subjects of His Majesty the Sultan by absolute legal authority.
2. Subjects of His Majesty the Sultan by registration.
3. Subjects of His Majesty the Sultan by naturalization

¹⁷ Ahmad Effendi, "Melayu Islam Beraja: Ideologi Negara Brunei Darussalam", *Tafhim Al-Ilmi : Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam*, 13(2), Maret 2022, p. 195-213, p. 202.

¹⁸ Effendi, "Melayu Islam Beraja, Ideologi Negara Brunei Darussalam", p. 207.

The unity of the Brunei Malay people is strengthened by the Malay language as the official language of Brunei Darussalam. The Malay language not only serves as a unifying force among the various ethnic groups in Brunei, but it has also played a crucial role in maintaining the resilience and continuity of Brunei Darussalam up to the present day. The status of the Malay language as the official language of Brunei Darussalam is enshrined in the 1959 Brunei State Constitution, as follows:¹⁹

Chapter 82 (1) of the Brunei State Constitution states that the official language of Brunei Darussalam is Malay. The Malay language as a tool for unity is also mentioned in a royal decree, which states:

“siapapun tidak boleh menyangkal, bahwa bahasa Melayu itu adalah satu- satunya alat perpaduan kita yang paling efektif. Tanpa bahasa ini, kita tentunya tidak akan dikenali sebagai satu bangsa yang berdaulat lagi mempunyai identitas.” (Titah Kebawah Duli Yang Maha Mulia Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiyah Mu’izzaddin Waddaulah, 21 Juli 1990)

Language is not only a tool for communication within a culture, but it also has a profound influence on shaping the thoughts of its speakers. Language can express cultural, social, and intellectual values. A well-structured language system can determine the framework of reasoning and thought. Language accompanies all forms of actions and thoughts, leading to the development of knowledge. Language, thought, and knowledge are three interrelated elements that cannot be separated from each other. In addition to its function as a medium of dialect, language also forms the foundation of culture. Therefore, according to Al-Jabiri, a language system (not only its vocabulary but also its grammar and semantics) has a significant impact on the worldview of its speakers, including how they interpret and explain the world, which in turn influences their methods and ways of thinking. The Malay language has existed since the emergence of the Malay people and is the property of the Malay nation, serving as the primary means of understanding for the Malay people. The Malay language has become a treasure passed down through generations, growing into a major language that is no longer the sole possession of the Malay people but has become a shared heritage of all its users, with the status of a "shared language." In Brunei Darussalam, the Malay language remains a priority and is actively promoted as the main language, both in everyday life and in the education system, without

¹⁹ Effendi, “Melayu Islam Beraja, Ideologi Negara Brunei Darussalam”, p. 207.

neglecting other languages. The Malay language also reflects the intellectual values of the Malay people.²⁰

In relation to knowledge, the Malay language can be categorized into two parts: first, the Malay language as the language of the palace, which has managed to endure and become a heritage passed down through generations to this day. The Malay language has found its identity as the language of knowledge because it contains elements of religious and cultural values. Historically, the Malay language has long served as the language of the palace and the administrative language of the Malay kingdoms in the Malay Archipelago, including Brunei Darussalam, and has been used across the archipelago as a *lingua franca*. The Malay language has also long been used to express high and complex concepts and processes, especially in the fields of religion, philosophy, literature, and culture. Second, the Malay language is related to philosophy, science, and technology. At this stage, it can be said that the Malay language faces an intellectual crisis. The language has yet to demonstrate its identity as a language of knowledge that can adapt to modern needs and express precise intellectual concepts. This is due to a lack of awareness among the Malay community itself to develop the Malay language with the values of philosophy and knowledge. Furthermore, the Malay language is often seen as less popular compared to foreign languages such as English, which is more aligned with the demands of the modern world. Therefore, this issue needs to be addressed seriously to ensure that the Malay language does not decline, but rather survives and continues to evolve as a language of knowledge in the future.²¹

The relationship between Islam and the Malay culture in Brunei is very strong and plays a central role in shaping the identity of the country. Religiously, Islam in Brunei Darussalam is one of the few countries in the world that implements Sharia law extensively. Islam is the official religion, and the majority of Brunei's population are Muslims. This reflects the close relationship between Islam and the people of Brunei Darussalam.

Sharia culture in Brunei has introduced Islamic law into various aspects of the legal system and social life. This highlights Brunei's commitment to maintaining Islamic values within its society. As a result, the national identity is based on both Islam and Malay culture, which are deeply intertwined within the people of Brunei Darussalam. The country is often referred to as "Negara Brunei Darussalam," meaning "The Country of Peace" in

²⁰ Effendi, "Melayu Islam Beraja, Ideologi Negara Brunei Darussalam", p. 209.

²¹ Effendi, "Melayu Islam Beraja, Ideologi Negara Brunei Darussalam", p. 209.

Arabic, emphasizing the religious aspect of its identity. Thus, the relationship between Islam and the Malay culture in Brunei Darussalam is robust and mutually reinforcing, creating the foundation for the nation's identity and culture.

The Malay culture of Brunei Darussalam is predominantly Malay in ethnicity. Malay culture and Islam are deeply interconnected in daily life. This includes customs, social traditions, and the arts, all of which reflect the influence of Islam in everyday life. The Malay language is the official language of Brunei and is also used in religious contexts. This language often incorporates Islamic terminology derived from Arabic. In the field of education, Islamic education is an integral part of the education system in Brunei. Religious schools and Islamic educational institutions play a crucial role in educating the younger generation about the teachings of Islam.²² The application of the Malay language in Brunei Darussalam is carried out within the scope of education. The use of the Malay language is realized through the study of Jawi script, or the Arabic-Malay script.

The use of the Malay language and Jawi script also presents a challenge in the implementation of Brunei Darussalam's 21st Century Education System (SPN21), particularly in supporting the goal of preserving and strengthening the philosophy of the Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB). In SPN21, most core subjects and general (elective) subjects, such as physical education and health, social sciences, technology, arts, and culture, are taught in English using the Latin alphabet. At the university level, especially at the University of Brunei Darussalam, most programs offered are in English. Only the Arts programs in Malay Language & Linguistics and Malay Literature at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences offer courses or modules in Malay, along with the arts programs at the Brunei Studies Academy.²³

Meanwhile, most Brunei students studying abroad use English as the medium of instruction in their studies. This situation has made English the dominant language of instruction for both domestic and international students. On the other hand, Jawi script is only used in religious education (from pre-school to grade 6) and is no longer used at the upper secondary level or in university.²⁴

²² Maryamah, Wira Sapitri, Shabira Panca Putri, Fatimatuzzahra, Meyana Dewi, Islam dan Kebudayaan Melayu pada Era Globalisasi di Brunei Darussalam, *HYPOTHESIS: Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(2) Juni 2023, p. 190

²³ Brahim Tengah, Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21 (Isu dan Cabaran di Brunei Darussalam), *Sosiohumanika: Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan*, 6(2) November 2013, p. 197-208, p. 206.

²⁴ Tengah, "Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21", p. 206.

The dominant use of English and the Roman script may weaken the spirit and identity of the Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) philosophy. As a result, the shortage of teachers who are skilled and knowledgeable in teaching subjects related to MIB also presents a significant challenge. For instance, some teachers assigned to teach MIB subjects lack the expertise or background knowledge relevant to the concepts or philosophy of MIB. There are even cases where teachers for MIB subjects are drawn from other disciplines, such as Mathematics or Science teachers. These issues and challenges must be addressed in order to strengthen the principles of the Malay Islamic Monarchy in Brunei Darussalam.²⁵

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah has taken steps to ensure that the philosophy of the Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB), which is foundational to the 21st Century Education System (SPN21), is preserved. For example, His Majesty issued a decree regarding the "Compulsory Religious Education Order 2012," which came into effect on January 1, 2013. This order ensures that all students receive religious education for a period of seven years, alongside Islamic religious knowledge subjects under the Ministry of Education for a total of eleven years.²⁶

Cultivation and Study of Arabic-Malay Script Manuscripts

The history of Brunei Darussalam, according to preliminary research conducted by the Centre for the Understanding of Ahli Sunnah Wal Jama'ah, holds no less than 200 books in various academic disciplines. Meanwhile, the collection of turath (manuscripts) stored at the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Islamic Heritage Centre, as explained by the Honourable Pehin Datu Seri Maharaja Dato Paduka Seri Setia Dr. Ustaz Haji Awang Abdul Aziz bin Juned, the Mufti of Brunei Darussalam, includes around 4,733 artifacts and manuscripts. Of these, 1,569 are manuscripts, a number considered remarkable. In fact, a distinguished foreign visitor once described it as the largest manuscript collection in the world that he had ever encountered.

The effort to cultivate the study of Malay manuscripts is driven by the fact that these manuscripts contain the thoughts, personalities, customs, and cultures of the Malay people, making them valuable sources for a wide range of academic disciplines. The ways to promote this cultural appreciation include introducing the concept of manuscripts to the

²⁵ Tengah, "Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21", p. 206.

²⁶ Tengah, "Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21", p. 206-207.

public, spreading awareness of their importance, and integrating manuscript research and its methodologies into relevant subjects taught in schools. At the Universiti Brunei Darussalam, the study of Malay manuscripts, particularly from a philological approach, is already being taught. Although the number of students involved is still small, some have already conducted academic research on Brunei's Malay manuscripts. However, to further expand the study of Malay manuscripts, research on these manuscripts must be more widely promoted among the public and students.²⁷

Cultural cultivation is a process of instilling cultural and religious values in individuals, so that they develop behaviors that are polite, cultured, moral, and ethical. The process of cultural cultivation and knowledge transmission occurs within the family and the surrounding environment, while the educational process begins in childhood. The accumulation of culture, knowledge, and skills that must be mastered and passed down from generation to generation increases both their quality and quantity. The processes of cultural cultivation, knowledge, and education not only reflect the conditions and needs of the workforce but should also be oriented towards fulfilling the individual's life needs within society. The values of virtue within a society must be practiced by every individual in order to create a harmonious environment. Among the characteristics of these virtuous values are kindness, independence, respect, love, justice, freedom, cooperation, and a sense of community.²⁸

The Jawi script is a writing system for the Malay language that utilizes Arabic characters. Its emergence as a means of writing Malay began with the arrival of Islam in the Malay Archipelago around the 14th century. As Islam spread, so did the use of Jawi, which became the primary script for the Malay Muslim monarchy, religious missions, trade, and the everyday activities of the Malay people. During that period, Jawi was an integral part of life for the Malays. However, over time, the role and usage of Jawi have diminished. Today, the Roman alphabet has largely replaced Jawi as the primary writing system for the Malay

²⁷ Harapandi Dahri, The role of Brunei Darussalam in Empowering Islamic Treasurer in the Archipelago "Study of Malay Manuscripts at the Sultan Haji Hassanala Bolkiah Islamic Treasury Hall (BKISHHB)", Proceedings Borneo Islamic International Conference; 13. 2022; 13-35, p. 18

²⁸ Abdul Aziz Rahman, Abdul Razaq Ahmad, Jalaluddin Abdul Malek, dan Mohd Mahzan Awang, Penglibatan Sosial dan Pembudayaan Nilai Murni melalui Pembelajaran Tidak Formal dalam Kalangan Penduduk Bandar Putrajaya, *Kajian Malaysia*, 34(2), 2016, 75–100, p. 82.

people, meaning Jawi is no longer the dominant script in the Malay Archipelago as it once was.²⁹

The current education system in Brunei is known as the National Education System for the 21st Century (SPN21). Introduced in 2008 to replace the previous system, SPN21 is designed to meet the demands and challenges of the globalized world. According to the Ministry of Education, SPN21 is considered more appropriate as it focuses on developing essential 21st-century skills, such as communication, mathematics, information technology, critical thinking, problem-solving, self-management, and competitiveness, ensuring that students are equipped to enter various career fields. In the SPN21 system, Years 1 to 6 correspond to Standard 1 to 6 of the former primary school system, while Years 7 to 11 are equivalent to Form 1 to Form 5 in the previous secondary school structure.³⁰

In the current education system, Jawi continues to be taught as part of the Malay language curriculum. The syllabus focuses on developing key language skills, including listening, speaking, reading and comprehension, writing, as well as Jawi. The goal of the Jawi lessons is to help students learn to spell, read, and write in Jawi. Emphasis is placed on proficiency in reading, comprehension, and critically engaging with various materials written in Jawi to gain knowledge and information. Students are also encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas through different forms of Jawi writing, fostering creativity, especially through the art of *kebat* (calligraphy). In primary school, Jawi is taught as part of the Malay language subject with a time allocation of 60 minutes every two weeks. Jawi lessons are also included in the Malay language curriculum for students in Years 7 and 8. The Jawi component is a mandatory part of the Malay Language examination in the Student Progress Assessment (SPA), which evaluates Year 8 students before they advance to Year 9. However, Jawi is not included in the Malay Language exam at the "O" level, though it remains a part of the Malay language curriculum for students in Years 9 to 11.³¹

Jawi has remained a key medium of instruction since the establishment of the systematic religious schools, which are managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The *Akta Perintah Pelajaran Ugama Wajib 2012* (Compulsory Religious Education Order Act 2012) provided a framework for introducing Jawi through religious education to all Muslim

²⁹ Sri Kartika A. Rahman, Ampuan Hj Brahim Ampuan Hj Tengah & Rozaiman Makmun, "The Role of Education in the Development of Jawi in Brunei Darussalam", *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 17 (2), 2022, 13-24, p. 13.

³⁰ Sri Kartika A. Rahman dkk, "The Role of Education in the Development of Jawi...", p. 21.

³¹ Sri Kartika A. Rahman dkk, "The Role of Education in the Development of Jawi...", p. 21.

children in Brunei aged seven and older. The curriculum of these religious schools covers the basics of Islam, including *fardu ain* (obligatory worship and prayer), religious practices specific to the Malay-Islam Bruneian community such as *tablil* (prayers for the deceased), *doa selamat* (prayers for safety), and *Dikir Syarafil Anam*, Arabic language, as well as Jawi reading and writing. According to the Religious School Syllabus 2012, Jawi is currently taught as a separate subject at the pre-school level (Jawi subject), Standard 1 (Rencana Jawi subject), and in Standards 1, 2, and 3 (Jawi Reading and Writing subject). The allocated time for Jawi lessons for pre-primary students is between 100 to 120 minutes per week, while for Standard 1, 2, and 3 students, it is around 25 to 30 minutes per week.³²

Then, the teaching methods for Turath books in various schools, madrasahs, pesantren, and other study centers are designed to assist lecturers in teaching the Turath books so that students can easily understand how to read, write, and comprehend the content of the Malay Turath texts. These methods include:

Talaqqi Kitab:

1. Each lecturer explains the background of the Malay Turath book being taught, such as its author, the purpose of studying it, its content, and the expected outcomes after studying it.
2. Each student is asked to read while the others listen (pay attention) to their classmate's reading, and the teacher observes and corrects any mistakes in reading.
3. The lecturer explains the meaning of the reading that the student has read.
4. The lecturer connects the reading to other fields of knowledge.

Syarah:

1. Each lecturer explains the content of the Malay Turath book being taught, such as the author of the book, the purpose of studying the book, the content of the book, and the expected outcomes after studying the book.
2. The lecturer reads the book directly, and all students are asked to pay attention to the lecturer's reading, take notes, and provide commentary on what is presented by the lecturer, whether in the book or in their own notes.
3. The lecturer explains the content of the book according to the topics within it, providing analysis through other fields of knowledge.

Halaqah:

³² Sri Kartika A. Rahman dkk, "The Role of Education in the Development of Jawi...", p. 20-21.

1. Each lecturer explains the background of the Malay Turath course content being taught, such as the author of the book, the purpose of studying the book, the content of the book, and the expected outcomes after studying the book.
2. The lecturer divides the students into several groups, providing them with topics from the contents of the book.
3. The lecturer asks each group to carry out the following tasks:
 - a. Summarize the assigned topic;
 - b. Find and present verses from the Qur'an, hadiths of the Prophet, and sayings of the scholars (qaul Ulama');;
 - c. Copy the verses from the Qur'an, noting the name of the surah, surah number, and verse number;
 - d. Perform a simple takhrij (verification) of the hadith;
 - e. Identify the sayings (aqwâl) and understandings of the scholars from the text of the book.³³

CONCLUSION

The independence of Brunei Darussalam is the independence of the entire Brunei people, with the king serving as the head of state and government, fully leading the affairs of the nation without foreign intervention, despite having previously been under British protection and having faced challenges from Spain and Japan. The independence of Brunei Darussalam and its declaration as a Malay Islamic Monarchy (Melayu Islam Beraja) was not solely the will of the king, but also the will of the people of Brunei as a whole. This is because, historically, the people of Brunei have embraced the philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy, such as practicing Malay culture, adhering to Islam, and upholding the monarchy system. Thus, the people also played a significant role in the effort to achieve the independence of Brunei Darussalam, which was marked by the declaration of the country as a Malay Islamic Monarchy. Brunei Darussalam continues to uphold its cultural heritage under the leadership of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah in the contemporary era.

The study of Malay manuscripts in efforts to reconstruct the history of Islam in Southeast Asia highlights the recent developments in scholarly activities related to Islamic

³³ Harapandi Dahri, "Pengajaran Kitab Turats Melayu di Brunei Darussalam", *Jurnal Al-Fikra*, (Bandar Seri Begawan: Universitas Perguruan Agama, 2016), p. 175

manuscripts in the Malay world. This includes efforts in preservation, research, digitization, and publication, both in the form of books and academic journals. Research on these manuscripts serves as a preventive measure to protect local culture from foreign influences that might enter Brunei Darussalam due to globalization. This presents a unique opportunity for researchers and students, particularly those interested in studying Malay manuscripts, whether from the linguistic, content-based, or intellectual network perspectives.

The preservation of the study of Arabic-Malay script among students at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels is an effort to enhance the existence of Malay culture at a time when globalization poses a significant threat to local cultures, including in Brunei Darussalam. The educational and research initiatives are serious steps taken by the government of the Sultanate during the reign of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah to ensure that Malay culture remains present and adaptable in any situation or condition.[]

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