

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE MALAY KINGDOM IN THE PROCESS OF ISLAMIZATION IN THE MALAY WORLD

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the political, social, and cultural transformations of Malay kingdoms during the Islamization process in the Malay world. The method used is a literature study by examining various scientific sources discussing the history of the development of Malay kingdoms and the process of the entry and development of Islam in the region. The results of the study indicate that Islamization in the Malay world not only impacted changes in religious beliefs, but also brought about profound transformations in various aspects of community life. In the political sphere, Islamization drove a change in the government system from a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom to an Islamic sultanate system based on sharia values. In the social sphere, Islam expanded the network of community interactions through trade, education, da'wah, and marriage, thus forming a more open and dynamic social structure. Meanwhile, in the cultural sphere, a process of acculturation occurred between Islam and local traditions that gave birth to a Malay-Islamic identity, reflected in language, Jawi script, literature, customary law, and sultanate architecture. This study concludes that Islamization was a major factor in the formation of Malay-Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia. This process does not eliminate local culture, but instead integrates it with Islamic values, resulting in a unique and sustainable character of Malay civilization that continues to the present day.

Keywords: Islamization, Malay Kingdom, Political, Social, Cultural Transformation, Malay World.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Malay world is a region with a long and influential history of civilization in Southeast Asia. This region encompasses what is now Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, and southern Thailand. Since its early development, the Malay people have been known as a maritime society active in international trade networks. Its strategic geographic location along trade routes between the Middle East, India, China, and the Indonesian archipelago made the Malay world a meeting place for various cultures, religions, and civilizations.

Before the spread of Islam, Malay kingdoms were influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions that arrived through trade and cultural relations with India. This influence was evident in their government systems, social structures, languages, arts, and religious practices. However, starting in the 13th century CE, Islam began to spread widely in the Malay world through trade activities, religious preaching, diplomatic relations, and intermarriage between Muslim immigrants and local communities. The arrival of Islam not only introduced new religious teachings but also brought significant changes to the political, social, and cultural life of the Malay people.

The process of Islamization in the Malay world was gradual and relatively peaceful. Unlike some other regions where the spread of religion was driven by military expansion, Islam in the Malay region developed through intensive social and economic interactions. Muslim traders from Arabia, Persia, and India played a crucial role in introducing Islamic values to local communities. Furthermore, Islamic scholars and Sufis employed an adaptive cultural approach, ensuring Islam was accepted without significant conflict with pre-existing traditions.

The development of Islam subsequently led to the emergence of various Malay sultanates, which became centers of religious dissemination as well as centers of trade and culture. Sultanates such as Samudra Pasai, Malacca, Johor-Riau, Siak, Jambi, and Deli contributed significantly to shaping the character of Malay-Islamic civilization. In the political sphere, Islam brought about a shift in the system of legitimacy of power, from one previously influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions to a sultanate system based on Islamic values. In the social sphere, Islam expanded the network of social interactions through trade, education, and religious activities. Meanwhile, in the cultural sphere, an

acculturation process occurred that produced a distinctive Malay-Islamic identity through the development of the Malay language, Jawi script, Islamic literature, customary law, and various other cultural traditions.

The transformations that occurred in the Malay kingdoms demonstrate that Islamization was not merely a process of religious change, but also a process of social change that influenced various aspects of community life. The interaction between Islamic teachings and local traditions gave birth to a new form of civilization that maintained Malay identity while also accommodating Islamic values. Therefore, studying the political, social, and cultural transformations within the Islamization process is crucial for understanding the formation of Malay community identity, which remains evident today.

This research employs a literature review method, examining various scholarly sources that discuss the history of Malay kingdoms and the process of Islamization in the Malay world. Through this literature review, this research seeks to explain how Islamization influenced changes in the political system, social structure, and culture of Malay society and how these changes contributed to the formation of Malay-Islamic civilization.

Based on this background, this research focuses on the following questions: (1) how did the process of Islamization occur in the Malay world? (2) how political transformation occurred in the Malay kingdoms; (3) how social changes emerged as a result of Islamization; and (4) how cultural transformation shaped Malay-Islamic identity. Thus, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of change that occurred in the Malay kingdoms during the Islamization process.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Type of Research

This research employs a library research method with a descriptive qualitative approach. This method was chosen because the research focuses on examining various written sources related to the transformation of the Malay kingdom from the pre-Islamic to the Islamic period. A qualitative approach is used to understand and interpret historical phenomena in depth through analysis of various relevant literature. With this approach, the research does not aim to statistically test hypotheses, but rather to describe and analyze the changes that occurred in the political, social, and cultural aspects of Malay society.

2.2 Source Data

The data used in this research is secondary data obtained from various written sources. Data sources include history books, scientific journal articles, proceedings, theses, dissertations, research reports, and historical documents that discuss the development of the Malay kingdom during the Islamic era. Apart from that, the research also utilizes classical Malay sources such as Malay History and Sulalatus Salatin as supporting materials for understanding social and political dynamics during the Malay sultanate.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through documentation and literature searches. Researchers identified, collected, and selected various references relevant to the research theme. The selected literature focused on studies of Malay kingdoms during the Islamic period, the process of Islamization in the Malay world, and the development of Malay Islamic sultanates. Furthermore, these sources were classified based on discussion themes such as political, social, cultural, and religious aspects to facilitate the analysis process.

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis. The analysis phase began with reading and understanding all collected sources, then identifying information relevant to the research focus. The obtained data was then reduced, grouped according to specific themes, and interpreted to identify cultural patterns of Malay kingdoms during the Islamic period.

The analysis process involved three stages: (1) data reduction, selecting information relevant to the research objectives; (2) data presentation, systematically organizing data based on political, social, and cultural aspects; and (3) drawing conclusions, formulating findings regarding the transformation of Malay kingdoms during the Islamic period based on the interpretation of the analyzed data.

2.5 Data Validity

To ensure data validity, the study employed source triangulation, comparing information obtained from various literature sources and previous research findings. Information found in one source was verified with other sources on similar topics, resulting in more objective and academically sound data. This approach is expected to provide a high level of validity and provide a comprehensive picture of the transformation of the Malay kingdoms during the Islamic era.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Political Transformation of the Malay Kingdom from the Pre-Islamic Period to the Islamic Period

Based on the literature review, political transformation was one of the most fundamental changes that occurred in the Malay kingdoms after the arrival of Islam. In the pre-Islamic era, Malay kingdoms were generally influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions, which placed the king as the supreme power holder, with religious legitimacy through the concept of the god-king. This system developed in the early kingdoms in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, which had close ties to Indian civilization.

The arrival of Islam in the 13th century brought changes to this concept of power. The establishment of the Samudra Pasai Sultanate is one of the earliest examples of political transformation in the Malay world. This kingdom became not only a center of trade but also a center for the spread of Islam, introducing the concept of the sultanate as a new form of government. The title of sultan replaced the title of king and gained legitimacy based on Islamic teachings. The sultan was seen as a leader responsible for upholding religion, upholding justice, and governing society according to Islamic values.

This political transformation continued with the Malacca Sultanate, which developed into the largest trading center and political power in Southeast Asia in the 15th century. The Sultans of Malacca played an active role in supporting the spread of Islam through government policies and diplomatic relations with other kingdoms. Islam served not only as a religious identity but also as a basis for legitimizing power and political relations between Malay kingdoms.

Further developments were seen in the Johor-Riau Sultanate, which implemented a unique system of government through the division of power between the Sultan and the Yang Dipertuan Muda. This system demonstrated a more complex political adaptation than previous kingdoms. Meanwhile, the Siak Sri Indrapura Sultanate demonstrated how Malay-Islamic governance was able to adapt to changing times, including the influence of European administration during the colonial period.

In a more modern context, the Deli Sultanate demonstrated the persistence of the sultanate institution despite facing Dutch colonialism. The relationship between the Sultan of Deli and the colonial government demonstrates how Malay-Islamic kingdoms made political adjustments to maintain their existence. Thus, the political transformation of Malay kingdoms did not stop with the process of Islamization but continued to evolve in response to changing regional and global conditions.

3.2 Social Transformation in Malay Society

The arrival of Islam also brought changes to the social life of the Malay people. Before Islam's spread, the social structure was heavily influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions, which recognized a fairly strict division of social status. After Islam was accepted by the Malay people, new values emerged emphasizing the equality of all human beings before God.

This social change was evident in the increasing openness of interactions between social groups through trade activities. Samudra Pasai and Malacca developed as international trade centers, bringing together various ethnicities, such as Arabs, Persians, Indians, Chinese, and local communities. This interaction broadened the Malay community's horizons and accelerated the spread of Islam.

Furthermore, the emergence of the ulama (Islamic scholars) as new social actors also transformed the social structure. The ulama served not only as propagators of religion but also as royal advisors, educators, and community leaders. Their position grew in importance with the development of Islamic

educational institutions that taught religious knowledge, Islamic law, Sufism, and various other disciplines.

Social transformation was also reflected in the relationships between social groups, which were increasingly based on Islamic values. Although the nobility system remained in place within the Malay sultanates, Islam provided greater opportunities for social mobility through education and economic activity. Thus, the social changes that occurred were a blend of local Malay traditions and universal Islamic values.

3.3 Transformasi Budaya dan Pembentukan Identitas Melayu-Islam

The study's findings indicate that the cultural aspect underwent the most extensive transformation after the arrival of Islam. The process of Islamization did not erase pre-existing Malay culture, but rather resulted in an acculturation that formed a new identity, namely Malay-Islamic culture.

In the fields of language and literature, Islam encouraged the development of Malay as a language of communication, administration, and religious dissemination. The use of the Jawi script became a key characteristic of Malay-Islamic civilization. Various religious and historical literary works began to develop, such as the Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai, which reflects the integration of Malay literary traditions and Islamic values.

The development of Islamic culture was also evident in education. The Samudra Pasai Sultanate was known as a center of Islamic learning, teaching various religious disciplines. This educational tradition then spread throughout various Malay regions through surau (Islamic boarding schools), Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), and other Islamic educational institutions. Education became a crucial tool in the process of shaping a Malay identity based on Islamic teachings.

In architecture and the arts, Islamic influence is evident in the construction of palaces, mosques, and religious buildings that combine local elements with Islamic values. The Deli Sultanate, for example, left a cultural legacy in the form of the Maimun Palace and the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque which reflect the character of Malay-Islamic architecture. Apart from that, various traditional art forms are maintained with adjustments to Islamic values.

Malay-Islamic culture also developed through traditional principles based on sharia. The concept of "Adat Bersendi Syarak, Syarak Bersendi Kitabullah" which developed in the Malay region shows how Islam is the basis for the formation of social norms, customary law and community life. This principle has become one of the main identities of the Malay people to this day.

3.4 Islamisasi sebagai Faktor Pembentukan Peradaban Melayu

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3.5 Islamization as a Process of Transformation of the Malay Kingdom

Literature reviews indicate that the transformation of Malay kingdoms from pre-Islamic to Islamic times did not occur suddenly, but rather through a long and gradual process. Geographical factors were a crucial factor accelerating this process. Malay regions such as Samudra Pasai, Malacca, Jambi, Johor-Riau, Siak, and Deli were located along international trade routes connecting East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and the Indonesian archipelago. This strategic position enabled intensive interaction between local communities and Muslim traders.

In the context of Jambi, the Batanghari River played a crucial role as a transportation and trade route connecting the interior of Sumatra with the coastal areas. Through this route, various cultural and religious influences entered the Malay region. The arrival of Arab, Persian, and Indian traders gradually introduced Islam to the local population. A similar phenomenon occurred in Samudra Pasai and Malacca, which developed as maritime trade centers and centers for the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia.

The process of Islamization in the Malay world was not carried out through military conquest, but through a peaceful approach that adapted to local culture. Studies of the Islamization of Jambi indicate that Islamic scholars and Sufis played a crucial role in this process. They employed a cultural assimilation approach by understanding the traditions of local communities, particularly those previously influenced by Hindu-Buddhist and Mahayana Buddhism. This approach made Islam more easily accepted because it did not directly reject pre-existing traditions.

In addition to the preaching of Islamic scholars, the spread of Islam also occurred through marriages between Muslim immigrants and local aristocratic families. In Jambi's history, this process is evident in the marriage of Ahmad Barus (Datuk Paduko Berhalo) to Princess Selaras Pinang Masak, which accelerated the acceptance of Islam within the royal court. A similar pattern was found in other Malay kingdoms, where the conversion of the ruler was often followed by the wider community.

3.6 Integration of Islam with Malay Customs

One of the most important forms of transformation in the history of the Malay kingdom was the integration of Islamic values with local customs. The research results show that Islam does not replace all existing social and cultural systems, but rather adapts to local traditions, giving birth to a new identity known as Malay-Islam.

This integration can be clearly seen in the development of the principle of "Adat Bersendi Syarak, Syarak Bersendi Kitabullah" which later became the basis of the life of the Malay community. This principle developed in various Malay regions, including Jambi and Siak. Through this concept, customs are not seen as conflicting with religion as long as they are in line with Islamic teachings. Thus, customary law and Islamic law complement each other in regulating people's lives.

This transformation shows that Islamization in the Malay World takes place through a process of acculturation. Local culture is still maintained, but given a new meaning in accordance with Islamic teachings. Therefore, Malay identity cannot be separated from Islam because both developed simultaneously in a long historical process.

3.7 Formation of Malay-Islamic Civilization

Studies of various Malay kingdoms show that Islamization not only transformed the government system and social life but also gave birth to a new civilization. Malay-Islamic civilization developed through interconnected networks of trade, education, literature, law, and culture between kingdoms.

Samudra Pasai became a pioneering center of Islamic education in the archipelago, with the development of religious studies, Sufism, and Islamic law. Malacca later continued this role as the largest center of trade and the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. Johor-Riau became a center for the development of Malay-Islamic language and literature, while Siak, Jambi, and Deli played a role in maintaining Malay cultural identity into the modern era.

The development of Malay-Islamic literature such as the Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai, the use of the Jawi script, and the emergence of various religious works demonstrate that Islam contributed to shaping the intellectual traditions of Malay society. In education, religious institutions became important vehicles for the transmission of knowledge and the formation of community identity.

Thus, the results of this literature study indicate that the transformation of Malay kingdoms from the pre-Islamic to the Islamic era resulted in multidimensional changes. These changes include a

political system that shifted from a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom to an Islamic sultanate, social changes that expanded the network of community interactions, and cultural changes that gave birth to a Malay-Islamic identity as the main foundation of Malay civilization to the present day.

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that the process of Islamization in the Malay world brought significant changes to the political, social, and cultural life of the Malay people. Islamization not only served as a process of religious dissemination but also became a crucial factor in the transformation of various aspects of life within the Malay kingdoms.

In the political sphere, Islamization drove a shift in the system of government from Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms to Islamic sultanates. The legitimacy of power, previously based on the god-king tradition, transformed into a power based on Islamic teachings. The emergence of sultanates such as Samudra Pasai, Malacca, Johor-Riau, Siak, Jambi, and Deli demonstrated the development of a political system that integrated Islamic values into the governance and legal systems of the kingdoms.

In the social sphere, Islamization expanded interaction among Malay communities through trade, education, and da'wah networks. The presence of Muslim scholars, traders, and Islamic educational institutions played a crucial role in establishing a more open social structure. Furthermore, the spread of Islam through trade, marriage, and cultural engagement enabled Islam to be widely accepted by society without causing confrontational changes.

Meanwhile, in the cultural sphere, Islamization gave rise to a process of acculturation between Islamic values and local Malay traditions. This process produced a Malay-Islamic identity reflected in the use of the Malay language and Jawi script, the development of Islamic literature, the architecture of the sultanate, and the application of customary principles based on Islamic law. The integration of custom and religion later became one of the main characteristics of Malay civilization that persists to the present day.

Thus, the political, social, and cultural transformations that occurred during the Islamization process have shaped the distinctive character of Malay-Islamic civilization. Islam did not erase pre-existing Malay identity, but rather interacted and adapted with local culture, resulting in a civilization that has had a significant influence on the development of Malay society in Southeast Asia to this day.

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