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## The Dynamics of Islamic and Malay Acculturation: Customary Continuity and Value Transformation in Historical Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

This article discusses the dynamics of acculturation between Islam and Malay culture in a historical perspective, highlighting adat continuity and value transformation. Islamic acculturation in the archipelago did not erase local customs, but rather provided a new foundation based on Islamic values, as reflected in the principle of “adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah”. The process of Islam was peaceful through trade, proselytization, education and marriage, with a flexible approach to local culture. Value transformation involved replacing animist and dynamist beliefs with the concept of tawhid, which emphasizes the oneness of God. A Malay-Islamic identity was born from this acculturation, reflected in art, literature, music and customs, creating a unique and harmonious cultural expression. This article concludes that the acculturation of Islam and Malay culture has shaped a rich and diverse civilization, where Islamic values are integrated in Malay cultural life.

## 1. Introduction

Malay and Java are very important regions for the development of Islam in the archipelago. Western and Indonesian Muslim scholars have contributed a lot to discussing the history of Malay and Javanese Islam, especially the history of the entry of Islam in Indonesia (Azyumardi Azra, 2016), International trade routes, local cultural developments, religious patterns, literature, and socio-political systems (Michael Francis Laffan, 2016). The amount of discussion about Malay and Java means that these two regions are significant in the formation of the Islamic archipelago (Achmad syahid, 2019) or what Nurcholis Madjid calls “Islam keindonesiaan”.

Islam Nusantara is familiar to the Indonesian Muslim community even in the contemporary era, although not all circles can accept this term well and even tend to oppose it. Archipelago Islam is defined as the embodiment of Islam unique to the archipelago as well as an effort to contemplate, live, and appreciate Islam based on its history. Thus, Ahmad Kamaruzzaman Bustaman calls it “historical Islam” (Ahmad, 2022). Besides that, in Mun'im Sirry's opinion regarding historical Islam. According to him, Muslims in Indonesia should be a good example in providing an example of Islam that draws long on its history (Mun'im Sirry, 2021). The historical context of Islam in the archipelago means that Muslims must understand the process of forming Islamic culture, such as the Walisongo's da'wah efforts that are more adaptable, uphold tolerance, peace, which shows that the Islamic process is more accommodating and tolerant (*tasamuh*) of local culture.

The concept of Islam itself comes from the Arabic word “*salima*” which means safe, and the word “*aslama*” which means surrender, submission, obedience, and obedience”. In the context of cultural studies, the word “*aslama*” becomes the main word of Islam, because if it is concluded that the word “*Islam*” in terms of language means obeying, submitting, obeying, and surrendering to Allah SWT. Islam in terms of terms according to Harun Nasution is a religion whose teachings are revealed by God to mankind through the prophet Muhammad SAW as his messenger. Nasution also explained that Islam essentially carries teachings that not only recognize one aspect of life, but are also able to recognize human life from various perspectives (Kastolani & Yusof, 2016).

The Islamic system as a religion is a belief that can be part and core of the value systems contained in the culture of society. It is directly correlated and becomes a stimulus and controller for the treatment of society to be carried out in accordance with cultural values and religious doctrine either directly or indirectly then becomes a guideline for the activities of various institutions in society. actions, activities, and works covered by sacred symbols are then called culture (Ryko Adiansyah, 2017). So the existence of religion not only plays a role as a symbolic life that is haqiqi for humans, but also becomes one of the paths in the formation of good community character and in accordance with the norms of life and Islamic law.

The acculturation process of mixing two or more cultures due to the mixing of nations and influences on each other again occurred in Indonesia with the entry of Islam, which produced a new culture known as Indonesian Islamic culture. The introduction of Islam did not mean the disappearance of Hindu and Buddhist culture. According to Ortiz, acculturation can be defined as “transculturation” to show the reciprocal relationship between aspects of culture (Al-Amri, 2017).

Acculturation is also cultural contact that has a two-way process of mutual influence between the two groups involved in the relationship (Hari Poerwanto, 2000). The relationship of mutual influence between the two cultures results in cultural change. Acculturation is a process of mixing two or more cultures, which

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meet and influence each other. So through this research will further discuss what is Islamic acculturation in civilization and culture.

The process of cultural acculturation occurs because of the universalist impulse of Islam, which can not only have a negative impact, but is also able to have a positive influence (Nurlailiyah, 2020). Through the process of acculturation, Islam, which has holy values, can meet with something profane, namely culture. Through the process of acculturation of Islam and culture, which was also supported by the legitimacy of the Demak Kingdom in Java (Rachmad Abdullah, 2018), Islam then spread throughout the archipelago, including the Malay region. However, the process of acculturation of Islam and culture in the Malay and Javanese regions has fundamental differences. This is due to various factors, such as the form of acculturation that developed and also the characteristics of the people in the two regions.

## **2. Methodology**

The method used in writing this article is using the Library Study Method (Library Reasearch). Library study is a method of collecting data by knowing and analyzing the theories created by scientists who have a connection with the research topic, (Fadli, 2021). So it can be concluded that Library research is the study or study of theories taken from scientists in a study. The instrument in the research is the research itself, where the data obtained is the result of a search that certainly has quality in the meanings of the data.

The data collection technique used in this research is to analyze and construct sources such as journals, articles, books, and from research that has been carried out. Then this analysis method is further guided into the Descriptive Analysis method (Fadli, 2021). The data collection technique used is Descriptive Analysis which comes from reviewing and analyzing related sources which are then described in descriptive form. The concepts are described by researchers in a description of the results of literature studies by reading various relevant and related sources which begin with reading the theory, analyzing, understanding and then concluding in an integrated manner.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

### ***What is Acculturation***

The term acculturation etymologically comes from the English “acculturate” which means “to adjust” (Al-Amri, 2017). In terminology, acculturation itself is a concept that portrays the meeting of two different cultures, then results in the adaptation of the value system and the integration of the original culture with the foreign culture (Supriatna, 2019). According to Koentjaraningrat, the concept of “acculturation” refers to the process by which elements from an outside culture

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meet with the indigenous culture and are gradually accepted without losing the original culture (Koentjaraningrat, 2009).

Acculturation is a social and cultural process involving the encounter between two different cultures, in which there is an adaptation of values and cultural integration without losing the original cultural identity. Etymologically, the term comes from the English "acculturate" which means "to adjust," while terminologically, acculturation describes the interaction that results in harmony between the native and foreign cultures. According to Koentjaraningrat, acculturation is a gradual process in which elements of an outside culture are accepted by the native culture without erasing the existence of that culture. Thus, acculturation can be understood as a mechanism that maintains a balance between change and cultural preservation in society.

According to Redfield, Lintton, and Herkovis, acculturation is a cultural change that occurs between groups that support one culture and groups that support another culture. Purwanto says that acculturation is the process of spreading culture. According to Thurnward in Purwanto, acculturation is a process that occurs individually in each person and does not occur randomly; therefore, acculturation is a process when a person adapts to a new environment (Nafisah et al., 2021). Acculturation in the western world is defined as the process of cultural change that occurs randomly from various individuals or groups to then be expected to adapt to the new environment.

The process of acculturation can occur if there is a voluntary meeting, acceptance, and merging of cultures (Taufik, 2013). Then there is also uniformity or homogeneity, which is a new value that is absorbed due to the similarity of cultural levels and patterns (Kamaludin, 2022). Acculturation affects more than one culture because it is an interactive process between a culture and a particular cultural group. What is required for acculturation to occur is contact between two cultural groups, the native culture and the newcomer culture (Diandini, 2022). Thus, it can be concluded that acculturation is a form of integration between native culture and immigrant culture, which does not eliminate the original cultural elements.

Acculturation is a change that includes all changes that arise due to contact between individuals and community groups with different cultures. According to Sofyan (Poerwanto, 2000), In the process of acculturation, changes are basically in terms of knowledge, ideals, behavior, habits of individuals who experience the process. According to Bakker in Sofyan, rejecting or accepting change is a common thing, but in acculturation that the culture subjected to acculturation they can accept elements from other parties without having to sink but instead develop their own structure without giving up their original identity.

### ***Process of Islamization and Acceptance of Local Culture***

The process of Islam's entry into the Malay region took place peacefully through trade, proselytization, education and marriage. Islamic preachers adopted a

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flexible and accommodating approach to local culture, allowing for acculturation without significant conflict. This approach enabled Islam to be widely accepted by the Malay people, who had previously been influenced by animist, Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. Apart from trade, the Sufistic approach also played an important role in the Islamization process. Sufism teachings that emphasize aspects of spirituality are able to touch the hearts of local communities, so that Islamic values are more easily accepted and integrated into daily life. Sufis often use local cultural symbols and practices as a medium for proselytizing, resulting in acculturation that enriches local culture without losing its original identity (Rambe et al., 2022).

According to Nafisah et al. (2021), Islamic acculturation in the archipelago occurred through a peaceful proselytization strategy, which allowed people to accept the teachings of Islam without having to abandon their local traditions and culture. This shows the close relationship between religion and culture, where both influence each other and contribute to forming a harmonious civilization. In addition, Arifai, (2019) emphasizes that in the process of spreading Islam in the archipelago, the preachers did not use violence, but through a peaceful approach and acculturation with local culture. This allows the formation of a new culture that integrates Islamic values without eliminating the original form of the culture.

### ***The Sustainability of Custom within an Islamic Framework***

When Islam entered into Malay culture, it did not erase the existing customs, but instead provided a new foundation that was based on Islamic values. The principle of “adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah” became the guiding principle of Malay society, which says that customs must be in accordance with Islamic teachings. After the arrival of Islam, the Malay tradition did not disappear completely; on the contrary, it changed in accordance with the values of sharia. Ulama, traditional leaders and kings who became the patrons of the community encouraged this process gradually. Many customs that were considered not to conflict with Islam still existed and were even reinforced with new meanings. One example is the custom of kenduri, tepung tawar, or marriage which is still practiced but packaged with prayers, dhikr, and Islamic principles. Theories such as “Adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah” provide a philosophical basis for the idea that Islam does not abolish adat, but instead frames it to conform to sharia and religious beliefs. This continuity shows that local culture and Islam work together and benefit each other to form a harmonious society (Syahril Jamil, 2019).

The acculturation of Islam and Malay culture in Pelalawan, Riau, has transformed various aspects of culture, including belief systems and customs (Hidayat, 2008). This transformation makes Islam the basis for the life of the nation, state and society, without eliminating the Malay cultural identity itself. Nafisah et al., (2021) said that the acculturation of Islam in civilization and culture in the archipelago allows local traditions and customs to be carried out without damaging the teachings of Islam. This shows the dialectic between Islam and culture, where Islam gives color and spirit to culture and civilization, while

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culture gives richness to Islam. On the other hand, the continuity of customs within the framework of Islam also strengthens the legal identity of Malay society.

### ***Value Transformation: From Local Beliefs to Islam***

Prior to the arrival of Islam, the Malay people adhered to the belief system of animism and dynamism. The arrival of Islam brought about significant changes in this belief system, replacing the old beliefs with the concept of tawhid that emphasized the oneness of God. This transformation took place gradually and harmoniously, allowing the Malays to adopt Islamic teachings without abandoning their cultural identity.

The process of Islamic acculturation in Pelalawan was noted to involve the transformation of the belief system from animism-dynamism to the aqidah tauhid Islam sourced from revelation (Hidayat, 2008). This transformation also includes changes in customs and traditions, which are adapted to Islamic values, thus creating harmony between religion and culture. More, Arifai, (2019) highlights that in the diversity of Muslim communities, local traditions that live and develop in accordance with the conditions of the local community cannot be released. The process of spreading Islam in the archipelago has never been separated from the process of cultural acculturation, so that the teachings of Islam brought by traders from Arabia and the guardians were easily accepted by the people of the archipelago.

The arrival of Islam in Malay society brought significant changes in the belief system, which was previously dominated by animism and dynamism, to a monotheistic belief that emphasized the oneness of God. This transformation process took place gradually and harmoniously, allowing the community to adopt Islamic teachings without losing their cultural identity. Moreover, Islamic acculturation in Pelalawan includes the adjustment of customs and traditions to Islamic values, creating a balance between religion and local culture. This shows that the spread of Islam in the archipelago is inseparable from cultural interaction, so that the teachings of Islam can be well accepted by the local community.

### ***Malay-Islamic Identity: Acculturation as Cultural Core***

The acculturation between Islam and Malay culture gave birth to a distinctive identity known as “Malay-Islam”. This identity is reflected in various aspects of life, including art, literature, music, and customs, where Islamic values are integrated with local culture, creating a unique and harmonious cultural expression. Malay identity cannot be separated from Islamic values that have been deeply integrated with local culture through a long process of acculturation. Since the 13th century, the process of Islamization in the Malay region has not only brought religious teachings, but also shaped the framework of thought, law, literature, and even the aesthetics of society.

For example, in classical Malay literature such as hikayat and gurindam, the content of Islamic values becomes very dominant such as the concepts of justice, trust, and piety. Malay also developed into a language of da'wah and scholarship,

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especially after the development of the Jawi script which combines Arabic letters with Malay phonetics. In the legal field, Malay kingdoms such as the Sultanate of Malacca began to adopt the Melaka Law which was based on Islamic law. All this shows that Islam is not only the religion of the majority, but also the spirit in the cultural expression and collective identity of the Malay people. Malay-Islam has become a synergistic dual identity, where culture and religion reinforce each other and color people's daily lives (Affandi, 2021).

Besides that, Nafisah et al., (2021) emphasizes that the acculturation of Islam in the archipelago allows local traditions and customs to continue without damaging the teachings of Islam. This shows the dialectic between Islam and culture, where both contribute to each other in shaping a rich and diverse civilization. Furthermore, the role of Islam in building Malay social and cultural identity is also characterized by the strengthening of ethnic identity that replaces previous beliefs such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Malay traditions, such as customs, arts, and language, became important tools in maintaining a unique cultural identity.

In this context, Islam not only functions as a religion, but also as a unifying element that strengthens Malay cultural identity (Aisya et al., 2024). Thus, the acculturation between Islam and Malay culture has shaped a distinctive Malay-Islamic identity, where Islamic values are integrated in various aspects of Malay cultural life, creating harmony between local traditions and Islamic teachings. The acculturation of Islam in the archipelago has allowed local traditions and customs to continue without undermining the teachings of Islam, creating a mutually beneficial dialectic between religion and culture. This process contributed to the formation of a rich and diverse civilization, where Islam was instrumental in establishing Malay social and cultural identity by replacing earlier beliefs such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

Malay traditions, including customs, arts and language, are vital means of maintaining a unique cultural identity. In this context, Islam serves not only as a religion, but also as a unifying element that strengthens Malay cultural identity. Thus, the acculturation between Islam and Malay culture has created a distinctive Malay-Islamic identity, where Islamic values are harmoniously integrated in various aspects of Malay cultural life.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The acculturation of Islam and Malay culture in the archipelago resulted in a rich civilization through the continuity of customs and transformation of values. The peaceful process of spreading Islam, through trade, proselytization, education and marriage, enabled the integration of Islamic values into local culture without losing its original identity. The principle of “adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah” became the guide, combining tradition with Islamic teachings. A Malay-Islamic identity emerged as a result of this acculturation, reflected in art, literature and customs. This acculturation creates a unique and harmonious

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cultural expression, where Islamic values are integrated in various aspects of Malay cultural life.

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