

The Transformation of Tauhid Values in Malay Arts and Culture and Their Relevance to the Islamic Identity of Malay Society

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Abstract : This study examines the transformation of tawhid values in Malay cultural arts as part of the internalization process of Islamic teachings in Malay society. This research is important because modernization and globalization have increasingly influenced the existence of Malay culture, which has long been closely associated with Islamic religious and spiritual values. The objectives of this study are to analyze the transformation of tawhid values in Malay cultural arts, describe the forms of internalization of tawhid values in Malay cultural expressions, and examine the relevance of Malay cultural arts in maintaining the Islamic identity of Malay society in the modern era. This study employed a qualitative approach using library research methods. Data were collected from scientific journals, books, and other relevant academic literature and analyzed using content analysis techniques. The findings show that tawhid values in Malay culture have transformed through a process of cultural acculturation without eliminating the local identity of Malay society. Tawhid values are reflected in pantun, syair, gurindam, traditional music, carvings, architecture, and Malay customs as media for da'wah and moral education. This study concludes that Malay cultural arts remain relevant as a means of strengthening Islamic identity and developing the religious character of Malay society in the modern era.

Keywords : Tawhid, Malay Culture, Cultural Arts, Islamization, Islamic Identity

Abstrak : Penelitian ini mengkaji transformasi nilai nilai tauhid dalam seni budaya Melayu sebagai bagian dari proses internalisasi ajaran Islam dalam kehidupan masyarakat Melayu. Penelitian ini penting karena modernisasi dan globalisasi telah semakin memengaruhi keberadaan budaya Melayu, yang sejak lama berhubungan sangat erat dengan nilai nilai religius dan spiritual Islam. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis transformasi nilai nilai tauhid dalam seni budaya Melayu, mendeskripsikan berbagai bentuk internalisasi nilai nilai tauhid dalam ekspresi budaya Melayu, serta mengkaji relevansi seni budaya Melayu dalam mempertahankan identitas Islam masyarakat Melayu pada era modern. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode penelitian kepustakaan. Data dikumpulkan dari jurnal ilmiah, buku, dan berbagai literatur akademik lain yang relevan, kemudian dianalisis dengan menggunakan teknik analisis isi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai nilai tauhid dalam budaya Melayu telah mengalami

transformasi melalui proses akulturasi budaya tanpa menghilangkan identitas lokal masyarakat Melayu yang berlangsung dalam kehidupan sosial masyarakat Melayu. Nilai nilai tauhid tercermin dalam pantun, syair, gurindam, musik tradisional, ukiran, arsitektur, dan adat Melayu sebagai media dakwah dan pendidikan moral. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa seni budaya Melayu tetap relevan sebagai sarana untuk memperkuat identitas Islam dan mengembangkan karakter religius masyarakat Melayu pada era modern di tengah perubahan sosial dan budaya kontemporer secara jelas dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci : Tauhid, Budaya Melayu, Seni Budaya, Islamisasi, Identitas Islam

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of monotheistic values in Malay arts and culture is an important phenomenon in the development of Islamic civilization in the archipelago. Islam does not exist by erasing local culture completely, but rather carries out a process of value transformation through an acculturative approach that allows Malay culture to survive and at the same time breathe Islam. In Malay society, tawhid is not only understood as a theological concept related to the relationship between humans and God, but is also the basis for forming cultural identity, customs, literature, performing arts, architecture, and patterns of social life in society (Izzuddin et al., 2024). The presence of Islam then formed a religious style of Malay culture with the principle of "adat bersendi syarak, syarak berndi Kitabullah" which places Islamic teachings as the basis of the life of Malay society (Fitri et al., 2024).

However, the current development of modernization and globalization poses serious challenges to the existence of Malay arts and culture which are full of monotheistic values. The flow of global popular culture has caused some of the young Malay generation to begin experiencing a cultural identity crisis and move away from the religious values that were previously firmly embedded in the Malay tradition. This phenomenon is evident in the public's diminishing understanding of the symbolic meaning of Islam in Malay arts and culture, such as pantun (pantun), poetry, carvings, traditional music, and even traditional traditions that once served as a medium for da'wah (preaching) and monotheism (tawhid) education (Edison & Saidah, 2024). On-the-ground conditions indicate that Malay arts and culture in some regions are beginning to be viewed merely as cultural heritage without an understanding of the Islamic spiritual values they contain. This has led to a shift in cultural meaning from a medium for internalizing monotheism to mere entertainment or a symbol of ethnic identity (Saputra & Siregar, 2024).

Furthermore, digital transformation and the development of social media have also influenced the shift in cultural orientation of Malay society. Local culture, previously passed down through oral tradition and social practices, is slowly being replaced by modern, more instant and consumerist popular culture. As a result, the monotheistic values formerly implicit in Malay artistic and cultural expressions are diminishing in meaning in contemporary society (Ahmad et al., 2024). In fact, Malay arts and culture play a crucial role as a medium for cultural da'wah, capable of conveying Islamic values persuasively, humanistically, and contextually, in keeping with the character of Malay society (Putra, 2024). Several previous studies have examined the relationship between Islam and Malay culture from various perspectives. Research by Sumiyati et al. explains that Malay culture is closely linked to Islam, such that Malay identity cannot be separated from Islamic values (Fitri et al., 2024). Research by Saputra and Siregar also shows that the process of Islamization has had a significant influence on the development of Malay culture, including aspects of art, language, and customs of the Jambi Malay community (Saputra & Siregar, 2024).

Furthermore, research by Riski Angga Putra examines the transformation of da'wah through Malay literature, using fables and poetry as a medium for conveying Islamic values to the Malay

community (Putra, 2024). Another study by Edison and Elbina Mamla Saidah highlights the importance of regenerating Malay Muslim ideology to maintain the existence of Malay culture amidst modern social change (Edison & Saidah, 2024). However, these studies tend to focus on Islam and Malay culture in general, cultural da'wah, or the preservation of Malay identity. Few studies specifically examine how the transformation of monotheism values occurs in Malay arts and culture and how these values change in meaning amidst modern developments. In other words, studies on the integration of monotheism in Malay artistic and cultural expressions remain partial and do not place monotheism as a primary focus in analyzing contemporary Malay cultural transformations. Based on this situation, this study presents a research gap in analyzing the transformation of monotheism values in Malay arts and culture as a process of internalization of Islamic values that continues to evolve in response to social changes.

This research not only examines the relationship between Islam and Malay culture normatively but also analyzes the forms of transformation, the process of cultural adaptation, and the relevance of monotheism values in maintaining Malay cultural identity in the modern era. The novelty of this research lies in its analytical approach to the transformation of monotheism in Malay arts and culture, positioning them as a medium for internalizing Islamic values and a space for cultural negotiation amidst globalization. This research also seeks to demonstrate how Malay arts and culture function not only as a traditional heritage but also as an instrument for shaping the social spirituality of contemporary Malay society. Based on this description, the purpose of this study is to analyze the transformation of monotheism values in Malay arts and culture, describe the forms of internalization of monotheism values in Malay cultural expressions, and examine the relevance of Malay arts and culture in maintaining the Islamic identity of Malay society in the modern era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with library research. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on an in-depth understanding of the meaning, values, and transformation of monotheism in Malay arts and culture through the interpretation of various relevant scientific sources. Library research was used to examine concepts, theories, and previous research findings related to monotheism, Malay arts and culture, the Islamization of culture, and the transformation of Islamic values in Malay traditions (Abdurrahman, 2024). The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from scientific journal articles, academic books, and recent research findings discussing the transformation of Malay culture and the values of monotheism from an Islamic perspective. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from supporting documents, proceedings, and other references relevant to the research theme. Source selection was conducted purposively, taking into account the relevance of the theme, the credibility of the authors, and the recency of publications to ensure the data used aligns with contemporary academic developments (Waruwu, 2024).

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation studies, exploring various scientific literature obtained from accredited national journals, international journals, scientific books, and openly accessible academic digital sources. Researchers identified, classified, and inventoried data related to the concept of monotheism, Malay arts and culture, the process of cultural Islamization, and changes in Malay culture in the modern era (Fadli, 2021). In the data collection process, the researcher also conducted a critical review of the contents of the literature to find patterns of relationships between the values of monotheism and expressions of Malay cultural arts. The data analysis technique used content analysis, with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Rijali, 2018). The collected data were analyzed interpretively to understand the transformation of monotheistic values in Malay arts and culture, both in symbolic, philosophical, and socio-cultural aspects. The analysis was conducted by connecting the theory of cultural transformation, monotheistic values, and the reality of contemporary Malay cultural development to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relevance of Malay arts and culture as a medium for internalizing Islamic values. To maintain data validity, this study employed source triangulation techniques by comparing various

thematically related scientific references. Furthermore, the researchers also conducted a critical analysis of differences in perspectives across studies to obtain an objective and in-depth interpretation of the transformation of monotheistic values in Malay arts and culture (Helaluddin & Wijaya, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of Monotheistic Values in Malay Arts and Culture

The results of the study show that the Islamization process in the Malay region did not erase the local culture that had previously developed, but instead carried out a transformation of values through a cultural acculturation approach. The value of monotheism then becomes the core of various Malay artistic and cultural expressions, both in customs, literature, performing arts, architecture and social traditions of society. The principle of "adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah" is the basis for integration between Malay culture and Islamic teachings so that Malay identity is synonymous with Islamic values (Hasbullah, 2014).

This transformation can be seen in the change in Malay cultural orientation, which was previously more influenced by elements of animism and local beliefs towards a culture based on monotheism. In Malay literary arts such as pantun, syair, hikayat, and gurindam, the value of monotheism is realized through moral messages, religious advice, strengthening morals, and an invitation to get closer to Allah. Pantun Melayu not only functions as entertainment, but also as a medium for spiritual and social education for the community. Likewise, Malay poetry and sagas contain many teachings about faith, patience, tawakal, and the ethics of Islamic life (Azzahra et al., 2025).

In addition to literature, the value of monotheism is also evident in Malay carving and architecture. Geometric ornaments, Arabic calligraphy, and plant motifs in Malay carvings demonstrate the influence of Islam, which avoids excessive depictions of living creatures. Traditional Malay mosques are built with a religious philosophy that emphasizes simplicity, harmony, and symbolizes humanity's relationship with God. This demonstrates that Malay art and culture are not merely aesthetic expressions but also a means of internalizing the value of monotheism in society (Billah & Mawaddah, 2025).

In Malay performing arts and traditional music, the transformation of monotheism also takes place through the use of poetry with religious preaching and moral nuances. Traditions such as marhaban, berzanji, and the art of tambourine music are part of the media for Islamic preaching that are culturally accepted by the Malay community. Arts and culture then function as a means of communicating Islamic values that are persuasive and contextual according to the character of Malay society (Rahman & Rahman, 2017).

The transformation of monotheistic values in Malay arts and culture demonstrates that the process of Islamization took place through an acculturation approach without eliminating pre-existing local culture. Monotheistic values then became the foundation of various Malay cultural expressions, such as customs, literature, performing arts, architecture, and social traditions. This is evident in the emergence of Islamic values in pantun (pantun), poetry, fables, carvings, and traditional Malay music, which serve as a medium for da'wah (Islamic propagation), moral education, and spiritual internalization. Thus, Malay arts and culture serve not only as a cultural heritage but also as a means of establishing Islamic identity and strengthening religious values in Malay society.

Internalization of the Value of Monotheism in Contemporary Malay Art and Culture

The internalization of the value of monotheism in Malay art and culture did not only occur during the early days of Islamization, but also continues to evolve in line with social changes in contemporary Malay society. Based on the literature review, the value of monotheism in Malay culture is maintained through a dynamic process of cultural adaptation, enabling Malay art and culture to survive amidst the tide of modernization. In this context, Malay culture is not positioned as a static tradition, but rather as a social space that continually adapts without abandoning basic Islamic principles. The value of monotheism serves as a moral foundation that

shapes Malay society's perspective on art, customs, and social life as a whole (Saputra & Siregar, 2024).

In contemporary Malay society, the internalization of the values of monotheism is evident in efforts to maintain Islamic artistic traditions as part of the community's cultural identity. The tradition of reciting religious poetry, *marhaban* (*marhaban*), *rebana* (*tambourine*), *barzanji* (*barzanji*), and *gurindam* (guilds of advice) is still practiced in various socio-religious activities such as weddings, circumcisions, commemorations of the Prophet's birthday, and other Malay traditional activities. These traditions serve not only as cultural entertainment but also as a medium for spiritual education, instilling values of faith, morality, and respect for Islamic teachings in the younger generation. This demonstrates that Malay arts and culture have educational and religious functions that remain relevant in modern society (Putra, 2024).

Furthermore, the development of digital media has also encouraged the emergence of new forms of Malay cultural transformation based on the values of monotheism. Several Malay communities have begun utilizing social media, digital video, and online cultural platforms to reintroduce Islamic Malay arts and culture to the wider community. Malay *pantun* with a *da'wah* nuance, Islamic poetry, and traditional Malay music are now published through digital media as an effort to revitalize local culture amidst the dominance of global popular culture. This phenomenon demonstrates that cultural transformation does not necessarily result in the loss of traditional values, but can also provide a new means of expanding the dissemination of monotheism values to the younger generation of Malays (Samsudin *et al.*, 2024).

However, the research also reveals challenges in the process of internalizing the value of monotheism in contemporary Malay culture. Cultural globalization has led some people to view Malay arts and culture merely as symbols of ethnic identity and cultural attractions without understanding their spiritual meaning. This shift is evident in some Malay art performances, which emphasize entertainment and aesthetics over their missionary and moral education functions. As a result, the value of monotheism, which was previously the soul of Malay arts and culture, has experienced a reduction in meaning due to the influence of modern, more consumerist and pragmatic popular culture (Edison & Saidah, 2024).

This situation demonstrates that the sustainability of the values of monotheism in Malay arts and culture is highly dependent on the process of cultural regeneration and community education. Families, traditional institutions, religious leaders, and educational institutions play a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of Islamic values in Malay culture. Instilling these values through local cultural education is crucial so that the younger generation will not only know Malay culture as a ceremonial tradition but also understand the spiritual, moral, and philosophical values of Islam contained within it. In this regard, Malay arts and culture serve as a medium for shaping the religious character of the community and as a cultural bulwark against the influence of globalization, which has the potential to erode the Islamic identity of Malay society (Andini & Sirozi, 2024).

Finally, the internalization of monotheism in Malay culture also demonstrates that Islam in the archipelago developed through a moderate and humanistic cultural approach. Malay arts and culture are evidence that Islamic propagation can proceed peacefully through the integration of religious values with local traditions. This approach makes Islam easily accepted because it does not completely erase the community's cultural identity, but rather provides new values that strengthen the spiritual dimension of local culture. Therefore, the transformation of monotheism in Malay arts and culture can be understood as a process of dialogue between religion and culture that produces a religious Malay identity while maintaining its cultural roots.

Thus, the internalization of monotheism in contemporary Malay arts and culture demonstrates that local culture still holds strong relevance in maintaining the Islamic identity of the community in the modern era. Malay arts and culture serve not only as a traditional heritage but also as a medium for value education, strengthening social spirituality, and a means of cultural propagation that can adapt to changing times. The challenges of modernization have indeed caused shifts in cultural meaning, but through cultural revitalization and strengthening

Islamic values education, Malay arts and culture still hold great potential as an instrument for shaping the religious character of today's Malay community.

The Relevance of Malay Arts and Culture as Guardians of Islamic Identity in Modern Society

The rapid social changes of the modern era have not completely eliminated the role of Malay arts and culture in community life. In fact, in a society increasingly open to global cultural influences, Malay arts and culture remain a crucial element in maintaining the Islamic identity of the Malay community. The values of monotheism embodied in Malay traditions make culture understood not only as ancestral heritage but also as a moral and spiritual guideline in social life. Therefore, the existence of Malay culture remains significant as a marker of the identity of the Malay Muslim community amidst changing times.

Based on the results of the study, Malay arts and culture serve as a means of culturally transmitting Islamic values. Religious values in pantun, gurindam, syair, customs, and Malay performing arts convey messages about morality, courtesy, social responsibility, and the relationship between humans and God. The transmission of values through culture is considered more easily accepted by the community because it is carried out through an approach that is close to everyday life. In this context, Malay culture functions as a medium of preaching that is not patronizing, but is able to shape the religious awareness of society slowly and sustainably (Putra, 2024).

The existence of Malay arts and culture also plays a crucial role in addressing the identity crisis faced by the younger generation due to the influence of globalization. The influx of modern popular culture has caused some young people to become alienated from their own local culture. They are more familiar with global digital culture than with the Malay traditions inherited from their predecessors. This situation has led to a decline in the understanding of the monotheistic values formerly inherent in Malay culture. If not balanced by a sound cultural inheritance process, the Islamic Malay identity has the potential to be weakened in modern society (Edison & Saidah, 2024).

On the other hand, Malay arts and culture still have a strong capacity to adapt to changing times. Currently, various forms of Malay culture are being developed through digital media, such as online performances, cultural content on social media, and even digital documentation of traditional arts. These media changes demonstrate that Malay culture is not completely left behind by modernization but is able to adapt to the communication patterns of modern society. The use of digital media is also a strategic step to reintroduce the values of monotheism in Malay culture to a younger generation who are more familiar with information technology (Samsudin *et al.*, 2024).

Beyond technological factors, strengthening Islamic identity through Malay culture is also greatly influenced by the educational and family environment. Local culture-based education can help the younger generation understand that Malay traditions are not merely ceremonial activities, but rather contain profound spiritual and philosophical values of Islam. Families and traditional institutions play a crucial role in reintroducing cultural values oriented toward the formation of morals and religious character in the community. Therefore, preserving Malay culture aims not only to preserve tradition but also to uphold the value of monotheism as the foundation of Malay life (Andini & Sirozi, 2024).

The relevance of Malay arts and culture in the modern era demonstrates the dynamic nature of the relationship between Islam and local culture in the Indonesian archipelago. Malay culture can provide a space for dialogue between tradition and modernity without losing its Islamic identity. The value of monotheism (tawhid) embedded in Malay culture maintains a balance in society, ensuring a spiritual orientation amidst modern life's tendency toward materialism and individualism. Therefore, Malay arts and culture retain a strategic position as a medium for strengthening religious identity and as a socio-cultural bulwark for contemporary Malay society.

Overall, this research demonstrates that Malay arts and culture remain relevant in maintaining the Islamic identity of society in the modern era. This relevance is evident in its function as a medium for value education, religious character formation, a means of cultural

da'wah (Islamic outreach), and strengthening social solidarity within the Malay community. While the challenges of globalization have indeed led to changes in cultural orientation, through cultural revitalization and the strengthening of Islamic values education, Malay arts and culture retain significant potential for maintaining the religious identity of the Malay community amidst changing times.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the transformation of tawhid values in Malay cultural arts takes place through the integration of Islamic teachings and the local culture of Malay society. Tawhid values are not only present as religious teachings, but also serve as the foundation for cultural expressions in pantun, syair, gurindam, traditional music, carvings, architecture, and Malay customs. Malay cultural arts function as cultural heritage as well as a medium for da'wah, moral education, and the formation of religious character. The internalisation of tawhid values can be seen in messages of faith, morality, courtesy, and the relationship between humans and God, which are passed down through oral traditions, performing arts, and social practices. Therefore, Malay cultural arts remain relevant in preserving the Islamic identity of Malay society amid social change, modernisation, and the influence of global popular culture.

Future research is recommended to use a field based approach so that the practice of internalising tawhid values in contemporary Malay society can be examined more deeply. Cultural practitioners, religious leaders, customary institutions, and educators need to strengthen the preservation of Malay cultural arts not only as ceremonial activities, but also as spaces for transmitting Islamic spiritual and moral values. In the policy sphere, the government and educational institutions need to support the revitalisation of Malay culture through curricula, cultural programmes, digital documentation, and the use of modern media. These efforts are important so that tawhid values in Malay cultural arts can continue to be introduced to younger generations and remain an essential part of the Islamic identity of Malay society in the modern era.

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