

Brunei: Traces of History and Culture Amazing in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

Brunei, a small country in Southeast Asia, has an incredible historical and cultural heritage that has had a significant impact on the region. This article examines the rich culture of Brunei, including its deep Islamic heritage introduced by Sultan Muhammad Shah, its rich history from the 5th to 7th centuries that confirms Brunei's position as the oldest independent country in Southeast Asia, the fascinating architecture of Bandar Seri Begawan, and its unique cultural diversity. Brunei's rich Islamic heritage dates back to its first Sultan, Sultan Muhammad Shah, who created a strong foundation for the country's rich and diverse religious life. Brunei's recorded history from ancient times to the present, including the historical period from the 5th to 7th centuries documented by Chinese historians, confirms Brunei's position as the oldest independent country in Southeast Asia and provides an important foundation for its cultural development. Brunei's architecture, especially in Bandar Seri Begawan, features a unique appeal with two beautiful mosques and a floating village on the Brunei River. Brunei's cultural diversity is also one of its most appealing features, from its long-standing monarchy to its diverse cultural landscape, creating a blend of ancient traditions and modern life that can be enjoyed through Brunei's many events and festivals. This article delves deeply into Brunei's history and culture, showing how the country has maintained its rich and influential identity in Southeast Asia. With a focus on its Islamic heritage, rich history, stunning architecture and cultural diversity, Brunei continues to be known as a unique and regionally valued cultural destination. With a deep understanding of Brunei's rich history and culture, this article celebrates the beauty and uniqueness of the country as one of the most exciting destinations in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: History, Culture, Southeast Asia, Brunei

INTRODUCTION

Brunei has an amazing culture in Southeast Asia that is rich in its cultural heritage. The country is located in the Southeast Asian region and has a rich history and a very influential heritage. Brunei has a rich Islamic heritage, which was introduced by its first Sultan, also known as Sultan Muhammad Shah. This gives Brunei a deep and diverse Islamic heritage in everyday life. The history of Brunei spanning the period from the 5th to the 7th century, as recorded by Chinese historians, is a testament to Brunei's position as one of the oldest independent countries in Southeast Asia.

This history provides a strong foundation for Brunei's culture. One of Brunei's attractions is its beautiful architecture. Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital of Brunei, has two stunning mosques and a sprawling floating village on the Brunei River. It is a charming place and a photographer's dream. Brunei offers a rich cultural diversity, from

its long-standing monarchy to its diverse cultural landscape. Visitors can see and feel the blend of ancient traditions and modern life in Brunei.

The country of Brunei is a small country in Southeast Asia with an area of only about $\pm 5,765 \text{ km}^2$ with the capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan. Geographically, Brunei Darussalam is a country located in Southeast Asia, located on the island of Borneo, coinciding with the West Coast of Borneo. This country borders directly with Malaysia, precisely in the Sarawak section. And also Indonesia because its location is in the north of Borneo.

Brunei Darussalam became independent from British colonial rule under the Commonwealth of Nations on January 1, 1984, led by Sultan Hasanul Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Wadaulah. Brunei is inhabited by various ethnic groups, namely Chinese, Indian and Malay, with the majority of ethnic groups inhabited by Malays. The main language used is Malay. The majority of religions practiced by the people of Brunei are Islam, besides that there are also Christianity, Buddhism, Animism, and beliefs that are generally practiced by non-Malays (Ruliyadi, 2011).

Brunei has a long history, starting from the 6th century AD. In Chinese historical records, Brunei is known by the names Poli, Poni, and Bunlai. The Nagarakertagama manuscript also mentions Brunei by the name Barune(ng). The origin of the name Brunei is believed to come from the Sanskrit "Varunai" which later changed to "Brunai" and finally to Brunei. Islam entered Brunei in the 13th century AD, around 1264 AD. Islam was introduced by Islamic traders and preachers, and was well received by the King and people of Brunei. Raja Awang Alak Betatar was the first King of Brunei who converted to Islam in the 14th century and changed his name to Sultan Muhammad Shah. Since then, the Sultans of Brunei who are descendants of Sultan Muhammad Shah have taken turns ruling Brunei and maintaining the Islamic Sharia.

Brunei became an attractive trading center for traders because of its strategic geographical location. In the 15th century, Brunei had become a developed port and a destination for traders. Brunei also has a tax-free policy for traders entering the country. In addition, Brunei also experienced progress in the fields of economy, politics, and Islam when led by Sultan Bolkiah V in the 14th century. Sultan Bolkiah V was known as Nahkoda Ragam, a famous ship captain and ocean explorer in the region.

Brunei is a Malay Islamic Sultanate that has an Absolute Monarchy Political System. Sultan Haji Hassanali Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah is the head of state with full executive power. Brunei does not have a legislative council, but in 2000, a Legislative Council was formed with members appointed directly by the Sultan. The Legislative Council has a consultative task and reports national policies to the Sultan. With religious education and expertise in diplomacy, Brunei has become an advanced kingdom and plays an important role in the development of Islam in the surrounding area.

METHOD

Research on Brunei's historical and cultural footprint in Southeast Asia can involve a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to explore and reveal unique aspects of the country's culture and history. Research on the history of Brunei involves the analysis of historical documents, archaeological records, and relevant literature to understand the political, social, and cultural development of Brunei from a specific

period, such as the 5th to 7th centuries, as well as the role of historical figures in shaping the country's identity.

This approach involves an in-depth study of aspects of Brunei culture such as art, music, dance, traditional clothing, and traditional beliefs. Researchers analyze cultural artifacts, oral traditions, and religious practices to understand the values, norms, and cultural identity of Brunei society. This method compares Brunei's history and culture with neighboring countries in Southeast Asia to highlight similarities, differences, and cultural interactions between the countries. This analysis helps understand the regional context that influenced Brunei's development.

Involves direct research in Brunei through interviews with community leaders, observation of local traditions, and participation in cultural events. Fieldwork provides in-depth insights into the daily life and culture of the Bruneian people. The study of Brunei architecture involves analyzing historic buildings, mosques, palaces, and other architectural structures to understand their cultural value and symbolism. Researchers study Brunei's distinctive architectural styles and their relationship to cultural identity (syahadha, 2021).

The study used qualitative methods such as interviews and observations, as well as quantitative methods such as surveys and statistical analysis to support the research findings. By combining multidisciplinary approaches and diverse research methods, the study of Brunei's history and culture can provide a holistic understanding of the country's cultural heritage in Southeast Asia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. History of Brunei

Brunei Darussalam is a Malay country, which is considered the oldest country among the kingdoms in the Malay lands. The existence of Old Brunei is documented in Arabic, Chinese, and oral tradition records. In Chinese historical records, Brunei is known as Po-li, Po-lo, Poni, or Puni, while in Arabic records it is known as Dzabaj or Ranjd. The Kingdom of Brunei has been established since the 6th century AD. This is evidenced by the existence of trade relations between Brunei and the Liang Dynasty (502-556 AD) in China, where Brunei was known as Po-Li. This name remained in use during the Tang Dynasty (618-906 AD), changed to Po-Lo during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 AD), and then to Po-Ni (Puni) during the Ming Dynasty (1363-1643 AD). The Shong Shu records that on May 2, 473 AD, an envoy from the king of Pouli (Brunei) came to China to pay "tribute". This record is also mentioned by Feng Chengjun in his book "Xi Yu Nan Hai Kao Zheng Ye Cong Jiu Bian" (Nine Chapters on Arguments and Translations on the History and Geography of the South Seas of the Western Region), in the section entitled "There Was Already Sino-Brunei Relations before the Liang Dynasty (502-557)".

In addition, the Nagarakertagama Manuscript by Prapanca mentions that Brunei was known as barune(ng), which is supported by data referring to the naming of the Brunei kingdom before Islam. Some sources state that the name Brunei comes from the Sanskrit word "varunai", which is taken from Varunadvipa, meaning Kalimantan Island. This name was later refined into Brunei, and after the arrival of Islam, it became Brunei Darussalam. Historians believe that Brunei has existed since the 7th or 8th century. This kingdom was once conquered by Srivijaya and Majapahit, but after Majapahit collapsed, Brunei stood alone and even managed to control the Philippines and Kalimantan (putra, 2022).

The golden age of Brunei was achieved during the reign of Sultan Bolkiah (1473-1521). After the arrival of Europeans, Brunei became one of the British colonies in 1888. At the same time, Malaysia also became a British colony. Then the two countries fought back, and with a long history, the two countries became independent. Malaysia became independent on August 31, 1957, and at that time Brunei was declared to have joined Malaysia. However, at the beginning of its independence, Malaysia was still unstable in controlling the country's security. Especially in the 1960s, there was a conflict between the Chinese and Malays. Then after the conflict began to subside, Brunei chose to separate from Malaysia.

Brunei Darussalam became independent in 1984, led by Sultan Hasanul Bolkiah Mu'izaddin Wadaulah. With the teachings of the Ahlussunah wal-jamaah and the Shafi'i madhhab as the official madhhab. After independence in 1984, Sultan Hasanah Bolkiah introduced a new ideology that was in accordance with the lives of the Bruneian people, called Malay Islam Braja MIB and was adopted officially by the Kingdom of Brunei Darussalam, which was ratified in a proclamation on January 1 1984. In his understanding, MIB has three main foundations, namely Malay Islam and the Malay king in the context of mig is the Malay nation as enshrined in the constitution of Brunei Darussalam in 1959, namely The 7 types of ethnic groups living in Brunei Darussalam include Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kedaya, Murut, Tutong. Islam according to the context of MIB is that Brunei is an Islamic kingdom, not a secular one, but rather Brunei is a monarchy led by an absolute king. (septiana, 2022).

B. Brunei Culture

In Brunei Darussalam, family traditions involve the participation of mothers in welcoming the birth of a child, especially for mothers who are first-time housewives. After 40 days from birth, the Mandi Berlawat tradition is carried out. When the child grows into a toddler, they undergo the Karat Jambol tradition, which is a circumcision session for baby girls. Gotong Royong is an activity carried out by the community, including in wedding celebrations and thanksgiving ceremonies, where organizations work together on assigned tasks.

This tradition has an important meaning in strengthening the relationship between parents and children. For example, when praying in a mosque or surau, a boy is invited by his father to pray Friday prayers together on foot. In preserving Brunei culture, local craftsmen produce various types of metal objects in Kampong Sungai Kedayan and Kampong Ujung Bukit. Metal objects such as cannons and gongs are used in traditional royal ceremonies and have important values as status markers. Traditional silver and gold arts in Brunei are focused on Kampong Sungai Kedayan and Kampong Pandai Mas, producing various silver crafts such as Pasigupan, Cupu, Kiap, Kabuk Panastan, Kaskul, and Tumbak.

In addition, craftsmen also produce iron crafts such as Kris, Parang, Spear, and Sword, as well as wooden decorations and Songkok as a Malay cultural cap. Malay language and Jawi writing are inseparable in Brunei Darussalam, especially in religious books. Islam and Malay culture are a unity that underlies cultural development. In 2011, the government of Brunei Darussalam together with the Language and Library Council published the General Guidelines for Jawi Spelling to replace the previously used Jawi Za'ba Spelling System. Jawi writing is also taught in Malay language subjects in schools (halkis, 2018).

Brunei, a country in Southeast Asia, has an astonishing cultural richness with an influential heritage. The rich Islamic heritage, introduced by its first Sultan, Sultan

Muhammad Shah, provides diversity and depth to daily life. Brunei's history spanning the 5th to 7th centuries, as recorded by Chinese historians, confirms its position as one of the oldest independent states in the region, providing a strong foundation for its culture.

The beautiful architecture of Brunei, especially in Bandar Seri Begawan with its two stunning mosques and floating villages on the Brunei River, is a captivating attraction for photographers. Brunei also presents a rich cultural diversity, from its historic monarchy to its diverse cultural landscape, creating a unique blend of ancient traditions and modern life. With all these elements, the culture of Brunei in Southeast Asia deserves to be recognized for its rich history, deep Islamic heritage, stunning architecture, and unique cultural diversity. (muriadi, 2018).

In 1986, the Department of Islamic Affairs in Brunei Darussalam was upgraded to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This ministry has responsibility for controlling general issues related to the Islamic religion, including supervision of Islamic education, teaching methods, curriculum and other educational facilities. The vision and mission of this ministry covers the fields of Education, Mosques, Da'wah and Syiar, Hajj and Umrah, Law, Administration, Sharia, Zakat, Waqaf, and Baitul Mal (efendi, 2021).

Islamic law is upheld based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, including in handling criminal acts against both Muslim and non-Muslim individuals. In 1996, the Sultan of Brunei ordered the implementation of Islamic Criminal Law by establishing the Sharia Court as an implementation of Islamic criminal law which is considered as a decree of Allah to eliminate negative moral values and prevent the spread of social diseases such as drugs and AIDS.

However, the response to the implementation of Islamic Sharia law which began on May 1, 2014, has not gone smoothly, with the Sultan of Brunei receiving criticism from various parties. This action has caused pros and cons among the community, including from non-Muslim Chinese ethnic groups who make up 15% of the population of Brunei Darussalam. Despite the criticism, the majority of the Muslim Malay population supports the Sultan's move to implement Islamic Sharia law. Despite differences of opinion, the majority of Bruneian society accepts Sultan Hasanal Bolkiah's decision without any unrest in society.

CLOSING

Brunei Darussalam experienced historical development starting from a small sultanate to a developed country which then returned to a small scale but maintained progress in the contemporary era. Initially, Brunei Darussalam was involved in trade with the Chinese dynasty in the 3rd to 5th centuries, known as Po-Li or Po-Lo. Islam began to enter this region around the 14th century, with the implementation of Islamic law and the development of Islamic civilization from the time of Sultan Syarif Ali in the 15th century to Sultan Hasanal Bolkiah who experienced a period of British colonization in 1888.

Brunei's state ideology was established on January 1, 1984 with the concept of Malay Islam Beraja. Previously, the time of Sultan Syarif Ali was known for the four principles of kingship, namely Kanun, Syara', Adat Istiadat, and Resam, which was then followed by the 1959 State Institution during the time of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III. The Malay Islamic Philosophy of Beraja in Brunei Darussalam has three main concepts, namely: Malays as the majority ethnic group that has long existed in Brunei Darussalam, Islam as the legal basis used in community life, and Beraja as a government in the form of a kingdom.

The Malay Islam Beraja philosophy is the basis for Brunei Darussalam, as is Malaysia with Rukun Negara and Indonesia with Pancasila, as a guide for the nation and state. The implementation of the Malay Islamic Reign philosophy in Brunei Darussalam during the time of Sultan Hasanah Bolkiah from 1984 to 2019, involved five aspects, namely religion, economics, social, politics, education and culture. Of these five aspects, only four aspects were fully realized based on the principles of Malay Islam Beraja, while the political aspects, especially in terms of political parties, were not fully implemented because the conservative tradition of Brunei's classical era Islamic sultanate system did not involve legislative institutions or political parties.

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