

BRUNEI: A TRACE OF HISTORY AND CULTURE AWESOME IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Abstract

Brunei, a small country in Southeast Asia, has a remarkable historical and cultural heritage that has made a significant impact on the region. This article reviews Brunei's rich culture, including the deep Islamic heritage introduced by Sultan Muhammad Shah, the rich history from the 5th to the 7th centuries that affirms 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 solid foundation for the country's rich and diverse religious life. Brunei's recorded history from the past to the present, including the 5th to 7th centuries historical periods 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 attraction with two beautiful mosques and a floating village on the Brunei River. Brunei's cultural diversity is also one of its fascinating characteristics, from its long-lived monarchy to its diverse cultural landscape, creating a blend of old traditions and modern life that can be enjoyed through Brunei's various events and festivals. This article delves deep into Brunei's historical and cultural footprints, showing how the country has maintained its rich and influential identity in Southeast Asia. With a focus on Islamic heritage, rich history, stunning architecture, and cultural diversity, Brunei continues to be known as a unique and regionally valued cultural destination. With an in-depth understanding of Brunei's rich history and culture, this article celebrates the country's beauty and uniqueness as one of the most exciting destinations in Southeast Asia

Keywords: Brunei, History, Southeast Asia

INTRODUCTION

Brunei has an amazing culture in Southeast Asia that is rich in cultural heritage. The country is located in the Southeast Asian region and has a rich history and a highly influential heritage. Brunei has a rich Islamic heritage, which was introduced by its first Sultan, who is also known as Sultan Muhammad Shah. This makes Brunei have a deep and diverse Islamic heritage in daily life. Brunei's history, which covers the period from the 5th to the 7th centuries, 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 Bruneian culture. One of the attractions of Brunei is its beautiful architecture. Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital of Brunei, has two very amazing mosques and a sprawling floating village on the Brunei River. It is a charming place and a dream for photographers. Brunei offers a rich cultural diversity, from its long-standing monarchy to its diverse cultural landscape. Visitors can see and feel the blend of old traditions and modern life in Brunei.

Brunei is a small country in Southeast Asia with an area of only about ±5,765 km² with the capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan. Geographically, Brunei Darusalam is a country located in Southeast Asia, positioned on the island of Kalimantan coinciding with the West Coast of Kalimantan. This country is directly bordered by Malaysia, precisely in the Serawak part. And also Indonesian because its location is in North Borneo.

Brunei Darusalam gained independence from British colony under the British Commonwealth on 1 January 1984, **led by Sultan Hasanul Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Wadaulah**. Brunei is inhabited by various ethnicities, namely Chinese, Indians and Malays, with the majority of ethnicities inhabited by ethnic Malays. The main language used is Malay. The majority of religions followed by the population of Brunei are Islam, besides that there are also Christianity, Buddhism, Animism, and religious schools that are generally followed by non-Malay populations. (Ruliyadi, 2011)

Brunei has a long history, starting from the 6th century AD. In Chinese historical records, Brunei is known as Poli, Poni, and Bunlai. The Nagarakertagama manuscript also mentions Brunei by the name Barune(ng). The origin of the name Brunei is believed to have come from the Sanskrit "Varunai" which later changed to "Brunai" and eventually to Brunei. Islam entered Brunei in the 13th century AD, around 1264 AD. The religion of Islam was introduced by Islamic Merchants and Missionaries, and was well received by the King and the People of Brunei. Raja Awang Alak Betatar was the first King of Brunei to convert 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 alternately ruled Brunei and defended Islamic Teaching.

Brunei is an attractive Trade Center for Traders due to its Strategic Geographical Location. By the 15th century, Brunei had become a developed Pier 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 Islamic Economics, Politics, and Religion when it was led by Sultan Bolkiah V in the 14th century. Sultan Bolkiah V is known as the Captain of the Variety, 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 Hassanul Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Wadaulah is the head of State with Full Executive Powers. Brunei does not have a Legislative Council, but in 2000, the Legislative Council was formed with members appointed directly by the Sultan. The Legislative Council had the task of Consultative and reported national policy to the Sultan. With religious education and expertise in Diplomacy, Brunei became a developed Kingdom and played an important role in the development of Islam in the surrounding region.

METHOD

Research on Brunei's historical and cultural footprints in Southeast Asia can involve a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to unearthing and revealing unique aspects of the country's culture and history. Brunei's historical research involves the analysis of historical documents, archaeological records, and relevant literature to understand Brunei's political, social, and cultural developments from

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

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

Involves hands-on research in Brunei with interviews with community leaders, observation of local traditions, and participation in cultural events. The field research provides in-depth insights into the daily life and culture of the Brunei people. The study of Brunei architecture involves the analysis of historic buildings, mosques, palaces, and other architectural structures to understand cultural values and symbolism. Researchers study Brunei's distinctive architectural style and its relationship to cultural identity. (syhadha, 2021)

The research uses qualitative methods such as interviews and observations, as well as quantitative methods such as surveys and statistical analysis to support 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 belongs to the Malay clan, which is considered to be the oldest country among the kingdoms in Malaya. The existence of Old Brunei is documented in Arabic, Chinese, and oral traditions. 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. The name remained in use during the Tang Dynasty (618-906 AD), changed to Po-Lo during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 AD), and later to Po-Ni (Puni) during the Ming Dynasty (1363-1643 AD). The book of Shong Shu records that on May 2, 473 AD, there was an envoy from the king of Pouli (Brunei) who came to China to pay "tribute". This account 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 Southern Seas of the Western Region), in a section entitled "There Were Already China-Brunei Relations before the Liang Dynasty (502-557).

Moreover The Nagarakertagama manuscript by Prapanca states that Brunei is known by the name barune(ng), which is supported by data that refers to the naming of the kingdom of Brunei before Islam. Some sources state that the name Brunei comes from the Sanskrit word "varunai", which is taken from Varunadvipa, meaning the island of Borneo. This name was later perfected to Brunei, and after the arrival of Islam, to Brunei Darussalam. Historians argue 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)**

Brunei's golden age was reached during the time 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. Later these two countries resisted, dealing with a long history of the two countries being independent. Malaysia became independent on August 31, 1957, and at that time Brunei was declared to join 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 the Malays. Then after the conflict that occurred began to subside, Brunei chose to tell the story in Malaysia.

Brunei Darussalam became independent in 1984, led by Sultan Hasanah Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Wadaulah. With the teachings of *ahlussunah wal-jamaah* and *madhhab shafi'i* as official mazhab. After its independence in 1984, Sultan Hasanah Bolkiah introduced a new ideology that was in accordance with the life of the people of Brunei, called Malay Islam *braja* MIB and officially embraced by the Kingdom of Brunei Darussalam which was ratified in a proclamation dated January 1, 1984. In his sense, MIB has three main foundations, namely Malay Islam and the Malay king in the context of *mig* is the Malay nation enshrined in the constitution of Brunei Darussalam in 1959, namely 7 types of ethnicities living in Brunei Darussalam including *belait*, *bisaya*, Brunei, *dusun*, *kedaya*, *murut*, *tutong*. Islam according to the context of this MIB is that Brunei is an Islamic kingdom, not secular, but Brunei is a monarchical kingdom led by an absolute king. **(septiana, 2022)**

B. Brunei Culture

In Brunei Darussalam, family traditions involve the mother's participation in welcoming the birth of a child, especially for mothers who are housewives for the first time. After 40 days from birth, the tradition of Visiting Baths is carried out. When children grow up to be toddlers, they undergo the tradition of *Karat Jambol*, which is a circumcision session for baby girls. *Gotong Royong* is an activity carried out by the community, including wedding celebrations and thanksgiving ceremonies, where organizations work together in predetermined tasks.

This tradition has an important meaning in strengthening the relationship between parents and children. For example, when worshipping in a mosque or *surau*, a boy is invited by his father to Friday prayers together on foot. In preserving Brunei's culture, local artisans 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 value as status markers. The traditional arts of silver and gold 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, artisans also produce iron crafts such as *Kris*, *Machet*, *Spear*, and *Sword*, as well as wood decorations and *Songkok* as a Malay cultural *peci*. Islam and Malay culture are a unity that underlies the development of culture. In 2011, the government of Brunei Darussalam together with the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* published the General Guidelines for *Jawi Spelling* to replace the previously used *Jawi Za'ba Spelling System*. *Jawi* writing is also taught in *Bahasa Melayu* subjects in schools. **(halkis, 2018)**

Brunei, a country in Southeast Asia, has an amazing cultural wealth with an influential heritage. The rich Islamic heritage, introduced by its first Sultan, Sultan Muhammad Shah, provides diversity and depth in everyday life. Brunei's history spanning the 5th to 7th centuries, as recorded by Chinese historians, confirms its position as one of the oldest independent countries in the region, providing a solid foundation for its culture.

Brunei's beautiful architecture, especially in Bandar Seri Begawan with its two stunning mosques and a village floating on the Brunei River, is a captivating attraction for photographers. Brunei also boasts a rich cultural diversity, from historic monarchies to diverse cultural landscapes, creating a unique blend of old traditions and modern life. With all these elements, Brunei's culture in Southeast Asia deserves recognition for its rich history, deep Islamic heritage, stunning architecture, and unique cultural diversity. **(muriadi, 2018)**

In 1986, the Department of Islamic Religious Affairs in Brunei Darussalam was upgraded to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This ministry has the responsibility of controlling general issues related to the religion of Islam, 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 enforced based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, including in the handling of criminal acts against 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 Allah's decree to eliminate negative moral values and prevent the spread of societal diseases such as drugs and AIDS.

However, the response to the implementation of Islamic Sharia which began on May 1, 2014 did not go smoothly, with the Sultan of Brunei receiving criticism from various quarters. This action raises pros and cons among the public, including from non-Muslim Chinese who make up 15% of Brunei Darussalam's population. Despite the criticism, the majority of the Malay Muslim population supports the Sultan's move to implement Islamic Sharia law. Despite differences of opinion, the majority of Bruneians accepted Sultan Hasanal Bolkiah's decision without any riots in the community.

CONCLUSION

Brunei Darussalam has experienced historical development starting from a small sultanate to becoming a developed country which then returned to a small scale but still maintained progress in the contemporary era. In the beginning, Brunei Darussalam had been 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 application of Islamic sharia and the development of Islamic civilization from the time of Sultan Syarif Ali in the 15th century to Sultan Hasanal Bolkiah who experienced a colonial period by the British in 1888.

The ideology of Brunei was established on 1 January 1984 with the concept of Malay Islamic Monarchy. Previously, the time of Sultan Syarif Ali was known for the four principles of the kingdom, namely Canon, Syara', Adat Istiadat, and

Resam which was then followed by the 1959 State Constitution during the time of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III. The Malay Islamic Philosophy of Monarchy in Brunei Darussalam has three main concepts, namely: Malays as the majority ethnic group that has existed for a long time in Brunei Darussalam, Islam as the basis of law used in people's lives, and Monarchy as a government in the form of a kingdom.

The Malay Islamic Monarchy philosophy is the foundation for Brunei Darussalam, just like Malaysia with the Rukun Negara and Indonesia with Pancasila, as a guide for the nation and nation. The implementation of the Malay Islamic Monarchy philosophy in Brunei Darussalam during the time of Sultan Hasanal Bolkiah from 1984 to 2019, involves five aspects, namely religion, economy, social, politics, education, and culture. Of the five aspects, only four aspects were fully realized based on the principles of Malay Islamic Monarchy, while the political aspect, especially in terms of political parties, was not fully implemented because the Conservative Tradition of the Islamic sultanate system of the classical era of Brunei did not involve legislative institutions or political parties.

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