



History and Development of Islamic Education in Brunei Darussalam, 1900–1983: from Home Instruction to the Religious Primary School

***Awg Haji Asbol bin Haji Mail^a, Ampuan Haji Brahim bin Ampuan Hj Tengah^b, Haji Tassim bin Hj Abu Bakar^c**

Akademi Pengajian Brunei, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Jalan Tungku Link, Gadong, BE1410, Negara Brunei Darussalam.

*Corresponding Author Email: ^aasbol.mail@ubd.edu.bn, ^bbrahim.tengah@ubd.edu.bn, ^ctassim.bakar@ubd.edu.bn

Religious education played an important role in the spread of Islam throughout the Malay Archipelago. In the Nation of Brunei, Islam has been practiced since the 10th or 16th century according to local and Western historians, respectively. This paper discusses the development of Islamic education in Brunei from 1600 to 1983. Early Islamic education was informal, being carried out mainly by family members and Muslim clerics. The standardisation of Islamic education began in the 1930s, as Malay schools gradually incorporated religious elements in the curriculum to foster a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic principles and practices among youth. The establishment of the Department of Religious Affairs in 1954 and religious primary schools in 1956 under Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddein III further entrenched the influence of Islamic education. Thus, the progress of Islamic education in Brunei occurred in stages, corresponding with socioeconomic and political developments affecting the Bruneian Muslim community.

Key words: *Islamic education, religious education, Brunei Darussalam, history of education.*



This article attempts to analyse the transformation of Islamic education in Negara Brunei Darussalam that happened between the 19th century and the pre-Independence era until 1983. Discussion will focus on the educational transformation of the Brunei Muslim community, which involved Muslim clerics, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the government under the Brunei Malay Sultanate rule. This article also discusses attitudes toward education and their effect on the religious practices of the Muslim community in Brunei. In the beginning, Islamic education in Brunei was informal, but it later became more formal and organised.

Introduction to Education in Brunei

Islamic education teaches all religious aspects, such as reciting the holy Quran, understanding Islamic laws and jurisprudence (especially the fundamentals), understanding Islamic history, and living by good ethics and discipline. The objective of Islamic education is to create Muslims who are faithful to Allah so that they will be successful in life on earth and in the hereafter. Conversely, secular education in this discussion refers to an educational system that teaches subjects such as mathematics, science, history, geography, economics, and so on. In Brunei, this type of educational system exists in Malay, English and Chinese missionary and vocational schools. In secular education, religious elements are either not emphasised or not taken into consideration at all.

Before the existence of Malay schools, the Brunei Muslim community had already their own Islamic educational system. Some historians believe that this type of education started simultaneously with the Islamisation of Brunei society. This did not only occur in Brunei, but it also occurred in other states in the Malay Archipelago, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Thus, the spread of the practice of Islam occurred through education (bin Haji Serudin, 1981, 22; Hamid, 1986, 70; Hussin, 1993, 2). Owing to the importance of education in the perpetuation of the religion, Islam makes it compulsory for Muslims to acquire religious knowledge to strengthen their faith. At the same time, Islam has never downplayed the importance of worldly knowledge, and, in fact also encourages Muslims in secular education.

In the early stages following the arrival of Islam in Brunei, Islamic education is believed to have been taught by foreign missionaries who came to the country. They were either from Arabia, Persia, or India. Local and foreign historians disagree about the date of arrival of Islam to the country. Local historians believe that Islam arrived and spread in Brunei much earlier, around the 10th to 14th centuries (bin Awg Othman, 2003, 11; bin Pengiran Haji Abdul Rahman, 1992, 47; bin Haji Umar, 1990, 7). However, foreign historians, such as Tregonning, Hall, Cady, and Tarling, believe that Islam only spread in Brunei in the 16th



century, after Malacca had fallen into the hands of the Portuguese in 1511. The Brunei Malay Sultanate emerged as an important Islamic centre of expansion after the fall of Malacca (Tregonning, 1957, 211; Hall, 1979, 263; Cady, 1963, 167; Tarling, 1966, 44). Foreign missionaries spreading the teachings of Islam were later accompanied by locals who had already acquired religious knowledge. This religious knowledge was gained after discipleship with the foreign missionaries. These disciples were then qualified to teach Fard 'Ayn (fundamental knowledge in Islam), along with basic and easily understood knowledge such as the pillars of Islam, the pillars of Iman (Faith), holy days in Islam, and the training for Quranic recitation (bin Awg Othman, 2003, 284; bin Haji Serudin, 1981, 22).

Religious education in balais

In the early stages, Islamic education was conducted in private homes. As more and more people embraced Islam, this activity was held in *balais*,¹ prayer halls, and, later, mosques. The teaching of Islamic education in private homes continued until the turn of the 19th century. For example, there was a religious scholar of that era, Dato Ahmad bin Haji Abdul Latif, from Banjarmasin. He is said to have migrated to Brunei during the reign of Sultan Abdul Momin (1852–1885). When he arrived in Brunei, he stayed in Burong Pingai Village, one of the villages located in Kampong Air. His house was made into an Islamic educational centre. He taught his students prayers, Quranic recitation, and tawheed (the Oneness of Allah). Most of his students came from Kampong Air. Because of his breadth of religious knowledge, Sultan Abdul Momin appointed him to be the Islamic Religious Development Officer in Brunei. The Sultan then wanted to bestow him the title Datu Seri Maharaja. This shows that the Sultan wanted to raise his status as a religious affairs minister. The title Datu Seri Maharaja is a title of distinction to religious ministers in the governmental structure of the Brunei Malay Sultanate. Dato Ahmad declined the title. Like Dato Ahmad, Tuan Imam Abdul Rahman bin Awang Matserudin (1872–1945), another religious scholar, made his home in Bukit Salat Village, Kampong Air, an Islamic educational centre (bin Angas et al., 1992, 15, 31-32; binti Haji Metali and Ahmad, 1988, 63).

¹ There are four definitions of *balai* according to the Malays in Brunei. First, a balai is a place to store fishing equipment such as *balat*, *tugu*, *jala*, *pukat*, and *lukah* (fishing nets and traps). It functions as a storage room. Second, a *balai* is a place to have a small industry workshop to weave and produce fishing equipment, to make boats, or to process mangrove wood to be made into firewood for cooking. Third, a balai is a place to study silat or martial arts. Finally, a balai is a place to learn and have religious activities. Balais such as these are generally owned by scholars who are Pehin-pehin Manteri Agama (titled religious ministers). Thus, the final definition is used in this discussion (H. K. bin Serudin, personal communication). Also see bin Haji Ibrahim (1982, 83).



Although many Bruneian clerics conducted the teaching of Islamic education in their own homes, some had to open new centres to accommodate their increasing number of students. Therefore, a few established custom-built huts called balais to conduct the teaching of Islamic education. This was what Pehin Khatib Muhammad bin Hassan (1860–1941) had to do when his house in Lurong Sikuna Village, which had been a centre of Islamic education, could no longer accommodate his students. In the new balai, he was able to deliver his teachings more effectively. This was replicated by Pehin Datu Imam Abu Bakar bin Abdul Rahman (1880–1937), in Kianggeh Village, located in the town of Brunei (bin Angas et al., 1992, 21, 28, 50).

The balai education system only existed in Kampong Air, in a central government district of the Brunei Malay Sultanate, which contributed largely to spreading the teachings of Islam in the country before the existence of any educational system or formal education. Bruneian clerics, consisting mainly of *Pehin Manteri Agama*² (titled religious ministers), disseminated Islamic teachings in the huts that they built, normally situated near their homes. Notable examples are Pehin Datu Imam Haji Mokti bin Haji Nasar (1864–1946), Pehin Khatib Abdul Razak bin Abdul Rahman Sambas (1875–1943), and Pehin Siraja Khatib Abdul Razak bin Hassanudin (1879–1939). Pehin Khatib Abdul Razak not only had students from Kampong Air, he also had students coming from as far as Sabah (bin Angas et al., 1992, 18-40).

The balai as a religious educational institution played an important role in the dissemination of Islamic knowledge in Brunei, similar to *pondok* in Malaya and *Pesantren* in Indonesia (bin Awg Othman, 2003, 285). The assumption that the balai educational system arose only in the 1920s is grossly inaccurate; in fact, this educational system has been in existence since the 19th century or even earlier than that (bin Haji Ibrahim, 2003, 11). The balai educational system can be divided into two parts: general studies and advanced studies. General studies offered studies in Zikir Brunei, Ratib Saman, Quranic reading, and hadrah, alongside prayer rites. Knowledge in these areas became a necessity in Muslim society to absolve individuals from the requirements of Fard 'Ayn and Fard Kifayah; Bülbül (2018)

² Bruneian clerics were not necessarily Pehin Manteri Agama. Some of them were *Pengirans* and others were *Wazirs*. As an example, Maulana Pengiran Haji Abdul Momin bin Pengiran Sabtu was a Pengiran. He was said to have studied religion in Mecca around 1800–1820. He had many students from around Kampong Air. Maulana Pengiran died around 1880. On the other hand, Pengiran Digadong Pengiran Haji Mohd Salleh bin Pengiran Anak Haji Mohammad (1890–1969) was a Wazir was. He studied religious knowledge at balai Ulama, Brunei. Since he had a deep knowledge of religion, he was appointed to hold an important position in the religious administration of the Brunei government. In 1940, he was appointed as Kadi Besar, and then, in 1948, he was appointed as an advisor in the Syariah Council. He became a member of the Islamic Religious Council in 1955 and a Religious Advisor from 1959 to 1968 (bin Angas et al., 1992, 7, 9, 59-61).



Students who participated in general study classes were not required to be able to write and read Jawi. Conversely, advanced studies required students to be able to write and read Jawi. They were taught Fiqh, Faraidh, Babun Nikah, Nahu and Qawaid, Tasawuf, and Akhlak. This course of study allowed a student to become a Qadi (Muslim Judge), an officer to solemnise marriages, or a teacher (Department of Islamic Studies, 1996, 45-46). In balai education, the reference books used were the same as those used in other, similar religious educational centres in the region, such as *Matla' Badrin*, *Sabilul Muhtadin*, *Furu' Masail*, *Bughyah Al-Tullab*, *Hidayah Al-Salikin* and *Siar Al-Salikin* (bin Awg Othman, 2003, 286). The balai religious educational system was purely non-profit.

Aside from disseminating religious knowledge, balais also played a role in other religious activities. For example, in the 1940s, in the month of Ramadhan, balais were turned into locations for tadarus (Quranic reading) gatherings by the owners. Tadarus gatherings were also held in homes, prayer halls, and mosques. Muslims living near the balais were encouraged by the Muslim ministers who owned the balais to attend and join the tadarus gatherings, which were normally held starting from five in the afternoon until dusk prayers. Food for the feast that was held after the gathering was usually either brought in small amounts by attending individuals or charitably prepared by the Muslim community living nearby. Giving food, such as desserts, charitably has always been practised by the Muslim community in the country, because they believe in the teachings of Islam whereby giving charitably, especially in the month of Ramadhan, will bring them great rewards in the hereafter (D. H. I. binti Pehin Khatib Dato Paduka Haji Mohd Said, personal communication, May 24, 1993).

On some occasions, balais were also the locations of tahlil gatherings, or prayer recitations for the deceased, which are usually held annually in the month of Syaaban, just before Ramadhan (bin Haji Ibrahim, 2003, 11). According to Mamud Saedon, the balai educational system present in Brunei contributed greatly to increasing the number of local clerics who had a deep knowledge and understanding in fiqh, in accordance with Imam Syafiee's teachings in the Malay language. The educational traditions here were akin to the traditions in the region (bin Awg Othman, 2003, 286). Nevertheless, the contribution of the balais as a religious educational channel was not actually comprehensive for the Muslim community in Kampong Air. Balai education was only offered to male students; thus, female students were excluded from gaining religious knowledge. Women who were good at reciting the Quran and religious knowledge could only learn at home, in private, and were restricted from any mingling with men (bin Haji Ibrahim, 2000, 30-31). The role of balais as an educational institution slowly decreased and finally became extinct when Islamic studies was introduced in schools, and especially after the institution of Religious Primary Schools in 1956.



Education under British governance

After the British arrived in Brunei, and especially after the emergence of the British Residential governance in 1906, there was a British influence not only on politics, governance, economy, and law but also, indirectly, on the educational system in Brunei (Maxwell and Gibson, 1924, 194-150). The British introduced a formal secular educational system to the people of Brunei when they established the first Malay school in 1914 in Jalan Pemanca in Pekan, Brunei. From 1914 to the twentieth century, there existed two educational systems in Brunei: the Islamic educational system and the secular one (State of Brunei, 1914, 5).

Despite the existence of the Malay schools, Islamic studies were not included in the curriculum. The British administration was not concerned about religious studies, because they believed that this type of education would not contribute to the development of Brunei (Asim & Kumar 2018). Malay schools, conversely, trained students to work as lower-grade government officers. At the same time, the Brunei Muslim community was seen as being more comfortable learning about Islamic teachings traditionally, in private homes, balais, prayer halls, and mosques. In addition, the Muslim community did not place much importance on including religious studies in the educational system. This was because most of them were not interested in such an educational system to begin with, since children were needed in the home to help support parents' livelihoods. This phenomenon resulted in the government passing a law, *The Attendance 1929*, that made it compulsory for children between the ages of 7 and 14 years to attend school. Any parent that refused to comply with this law would be fined 50 sen to \$1.00, depending on the number of times the offence was committed (State of Brunei, 1929, 20).

A new era of Islamic education began in 1931, when religious principles started to be taught in the formal education system as a subject in Malay schools in Brunei town. It was the effort of three Brunei community leaders, including two Wazirs and a Ceteria: Pengiran Bendahara Abdul Rahman, Pengiran Pemanca Haji Mohd Yassin, and Pengiran Syahbandar Hashim. These leaders believed that religious education must be taught in schools so that it is more organised and effective. This view was in line with one of the legal article of Islam known as 'Law No.1 1912' which states:

No one is allowed, other than in his own home, and to his wife, children and members, to teach Islamic knowledge unless with prior consent from the DYMM Al-Sultan. And whoever is found to be teaching Islam without prior consent and whoever has received consent to teach but teaches that which is false or untrue can be punished. If he is clearly found guilty by a court that has



the right to try him, he will be fined not more than twenty-five ringgit (bin Kahar, 48).

After 1931, Islamic education was taught after Friday prayer. It was not included in the daily school schedule. The teachers who taught the subject were officers from the mosques and people who had religious knowledge. Their monthly allowance of \$5.00 (Brunei Department of Museum, 1979, t.p.) was paid by the three community leaders mentioned previously. This shows that religious studies at that time was merely an additional subject, because it was not included in the daily school schedule, and the government had no special allocation for religious education, unlike other subjects taught in the Malay schools.

In 1936, a local, Marsal bin Maun, was appointed Director of Malay Education. He used his power to implement steps to improve the status of religious education in Malay schools in Brunei town. Through his efforts, religious education was no longer taught on Friday afternoons, but was included in the daily school schedule. Furthermore, it was no longer taught once per week. Instead, it was taught twice per week, in the afternoon. In 1941, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (1924–1950); Anwar (2018) established an Arabic religious school at his personal expense. The school was categorised as a private school, but was registered with the Department of Education. The only teacher was an Arab, Syeikh Abd Aziz Al-Shimi. The school had 60 students, including five female students (bin Juned, 1968, 45). The Arabic school did not survive long; when World War II broke out and the Japanese successfully gained control over Brunei. All educational activities ceased.

Post-war religious education

After the Japanese were defeated and peace was restored in Brunei, religious education in Malay schools was revived. At the dawn of 1946, religious education was a subject taught in Malay schools in each district in Brunei. However, it was no longer taught twice weekly, but again once a week, on Thursdays (bin Mohd Daud, 1992, 1). This reduction was due to the shortage of teachers; there were now more schools that offered religious classes as a subject, yet those who were able to teach it still consisted mainly of mosque officials. At this point, the teaching staff's allowance was increased to \$25.00 per month (bin Kahar, 48; Brunei Department of Religious Affairs, 1981, 15).

During his reign in the Brunei Malay Sultanate, beginning in 1950, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III (SOAS III; 1950–1967) implemented many innovations. One of his important concerns was the development of Islam. In order to facilitate the administration of Islam in Brunei, he commissioned the establishment of the Department of Religious Affairs in 1954



and the Islamic Religious Council in 1962. To deepen the appreciation of Islam in Bruneian society, Islamic educational activities were increased. In 1956, the government proceeded to build a religious primary school, and, ten years later, it was followed by an Arabic school. The effort to further develop Islamic education was continued by SOAS III's son, Sultan Hassanal Bolkihah, who ascended the throne in late 1967. Under his leadership, Islamic education continued to thrive. Before Brunei attained independence in 1985, the Religious Teachers' Training College and the Islamic Studies Institute were built. This reflects that the status of Islamic education in the country continued to grow and prosper.

In 1955, the Brunei government brought in two Johorean religious officers in an effort to study and evaluate the effectiveness of Islamic education in Brunei. Their evaluation found that one of the reasons for the weakness in the Islamic education taught in Malay and English schools was that the contact hours were insufficient. This was proven when a random test of students found that a majority of them could not recite the syahadah (oath), list the pillars of Islam, or take ablution, despite the simplicity of these tasks and their compulsory nature for any Muslim student. This clearly showed that treating religion as merely a subject in Malay and English schools were not effective in providing religious education. Therefore, it was strongly suggested that a religious primary school or a special religious school be established, with an afternoon schedule from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m..

The religious primary school had three sessions. The first session, from 2:00 to 3:30 pm, was for children in Years I and II. Students who were accepted into this class should, at minimum, come from Year III of the Malay school. The second session, from 3:30 until 5:00 in the afternoon, was for students in Years III to V. The third session, from 2:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon, was for students from Year VI. Year VI is the highest and last class in the religious primary school. If students did not have any obstacles, such as failing their examinations to be promoted to the next class, they could complete religious primary school up until Year VI. After that, the student would transition to Form II in the Malay or English school. The long study duration was thought to have a greater impact on students' understanding of the teachings of Islam.³ Meanwhile, students who completed Year VI in the primary religious school still had the opportunity to pursue religious education in secondary school as a subject (Andrade & Fiamenghi, 2018)

³ The Johorean religious officers were Osman bin Mohd Said dan Ismail bin Omar Abdul Aziz who was later appointed the Brunei Government Mufti. Refer to the Statement of Johorean officer's visit to Bruneian Malay and religious schools. SCRWO 11/55 (Brunei, 1955).



The government officially established religious primary schools throughout the country in September 1956. SOAS III explained the main aim of these schools as follows:

It is time that each Malay and English school in Brunei have religious education in the afternoon to prevent all kinds of destruction and slander which are brought on by parties that do not like peace and good ethics of the sons and daughters of this land, especially because in religious education, there are a lot of lessons on how to improve our way of life so that one will not be lost in eternal damnation (Brunei Department of Religious Affairs, n.d., iv).

His Majesty's decree can be regarded as expressing the core aim of religious education in Bruneian religious primary schools. The aim was later updated by the Department of Religious Affairs in 1973, as follows:

1. To educate children so that they can understand and believe, as well as practise the teachings of Islam with faith in Allah the Almighty.
2. To teach religious knowledge to children to embed a strong awareness of having a religion.
3. To lead children to be keen and interested in religious teachings so that they are able to bear their full responsibilities when they are adults.
4. To form good ethics in children so that they will become citizens of high morals based on the true teachings of Islam.
5. To train children to abide by their duties and abstain from any prohibitions so that they can become Muslims who are pious and loyal in fulfilling Allah's decrees and laws.
6. To educate children so that they become responsible citizens in performing their duties to the country and the people based on the teachings of Islam (Brunei Department of Religious Affairs, 1973, 2-3).

The contact hours for religious education were successfully increased with the establishment of the religious primary school. From 1931 until 1964, religious education was taught in Malay and English schools, and was characteristically a marginal subject. Students who undertook this subject did not have to sit an examination, as they did with other academic



subjects. Thus, it was not recorded in students' achievement records. Students who took this subject did not study it seriously because it was not included in their overall achievement records. Thus, religious education had a very small impact in the minds of the students. Additionally, not all schools could manage to have religious education, because they lacked teaching staff. Although some schools did provide religious education, not all the students were able to learn it. For example, in the early 1950s, religious education was only taught to students in Years IV and V. Year V was the highest Year in the Malay school at that time (bin Haji Apong, 1980, 25; bin Mohd Daud, 1992, 1).

Development of religious primary schools

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were parents that questioned whether the students who studied religion in the morning session were only repeating the subjects of the religious primary school, and vice versa. This type of repetition was viewed as a waste of time, and many believed it would lead students to feel bored. This accusation was denied by the Department of Religious Affairs, which was responsible as an enforcement agent to implement Islamic education in Brunei. The Department stated that religious education in Malay and English schools was limited in terms of time and curriculum. Religious education in the religious primary school was, in contrast, more comprehensive and covered over an extended schedule. Simultaneously, the educational system in such schools was not limited to theories but was also accompanied by practical components, such as how to take ablution and complete the prayer rites. These components were not present in the religious education as a subject in the Malay and English schools. Notwithstanding, the practice of having dzuhur and 'asr prayers as a group was only implemented in religious primary schools in 1978 (Brunei Ministry of Religious Affairs, n.d.b, 5; Brunei Ministry of Religious Affairs, n.d.c, 5; Alusa, M. M. 2018). With the introduction of the religious primary school and religious education as a subject in the Malay and English schools, religious education could be conducted continuously.

When the religious primary schools were newly established, they were temporarily housed within the compounds of seven Malay and English government schools, which were all located in the city and towns.⁴ The primary religious schools were special schools that exclusively taught religious subjects without combining any other academic or non-religious

⁴ The schools involved in Brunei and Muara were Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien College, Sultan Muhammad Jamalul Alam Malay School, and Lela Menganai Malay School. The two in Belait were Ahmad Tajuddin Malay School and Sekolah Melayu Muhammad Alam Seria. There was one school each in Tutong and Temburong. These schools were Muda Hashim Tutong Malay School and Sultan Hassan Bangar Malay School Temburong (Brunei Ministry of Religious Affairs, n.d.a, 2).



subject. These subjects included prayer, morals, Quranic recitation, tawheed, and others. These were taught in the Malay language using the Jawi transcription (modified Arabic script). The religious primary school system and curriculum were the same as that implemented in the religious schools in Johore, because Johore was earlier than the rest of Southeast Asia in implementing formal religious education (Department of Islamic Studies, n.d., 3; binti Haji Adnan, 1992, 61). Additionally, in the recruitment of foreign teaching staff and religious administrative officers, a higher priority was put on recruitment from the State of Johore over the other states. The Bruneian government regarded Johore as being more experienced in conducting formal religious education.

Soon, Brunei gained a number of university graduates majoring in religion, especially from Al-Azhar University in Egypt, and they were then involved in the administration and implementation of religious education in religious primary education. In the 1970s, these graduates took steps to upgrade the curriculum and content of religious education to remove the resemblance to religious education in Johore. A committee was set up to evaluate and overhaul the religious primary school curriculum in Brunei. The aim was to improve the curriculum and content of religious education in these schools so that they were succinct, yet compact, and thus easier taught and understood by students.

Prior to this change, the religious primary school curriculum was quite lengthy, yet less organised; many students failed the tests because there was too much to read and understand. This change not only involved the religious primary school curriculum, but it also involved the textbooks that were used beginning the mid-1970s.⁵ Previously, some of the textbooks, such as *Kitab Matla'al Al-Badrain*, were very difficult to understand owing to the use of a linguistic style that was too traditional. A few Bruneian religious officers, who had previously graduated from university, rewrote existing textbooks and wrote new textbooks, so that it was easier for students to understand the contents.

The government's move to establish religious primary schools received a positive reaction from the Brunei Muslim community. They welcomed the schools and saw them as a blessing,

⁵ The officers who were involved in writing the textbooks were Mohd Zain bin Haji Serudin, Yahya bin Haji Ibrahim, and Mohd Amin bin Haji Abdul Rahim, his full title is Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Awang Mohd Amin bin Pehin Datu Pekerma Dewa Dato Paduka Haji Abdul Rahim. He is currently appointed as the Brunei Ambassador to Indonesia. Mohd Zain wrote books such as *Tarikh I*, *Kitab Pelajaran Ibadat Siri I – III* dan *Zainuttalib Siri I – VII* which replaced *Kitab Matla'al Al-Badrain*. Yahya, on the other hand wrote *Kaedah belajar al-Quran* and Mohd Amin produced religious books for primary schools (Ministry of Religious Affairs, n.d.b, 3; bin Mohd Daud, 1992, 22).



because an educational infrastructure was being provided by the government free of charge. The Muslim community accepted the fact that a religious primary school graduate might not reap any economic gains and that this type of education did not guarantee a student a good job, unlike English education. The only good job prospect for a religious primary school Year VI graduate was to become a religious teacher. However, the Muslim community were not concerned much if a religious primary school graduate would have a guaranteed future or otherwise; what was more important to them was to give their children a good religious education so that they could become faithful and ethical Muslims. Nevertheless, owing to lack of teaching staff, some Brunei Muslims continued to provide private religious tutoring for their children.

The learning in and administration of religious primary schools in the 1950s and 1960 can be considered smooth and faced with no huge obstacles. Nevertheless, in the 1970s, religious schools that were located within the compounds of Malay and English schools started to have difficulty in accommodating students. This problem arose following the rise in the number of students who entered Malay and English schools. This situation led to unrest between the head teachers of the Malay or English school and the religious primary school. Because of the increase in the number of students, the Department of Education had to have two sessions for Malay and English schools. The department had to give priority to schools under its administration. In order to overcome this problem, the Ministry of Religious Affairs transferred the religious primary school students to halls and mosques. This situation affected the achievement of religious primary school students (Author, Date, Page).

Despite increasing requests among Bruneian Muslims to open additional religious primary schools, the government was unable to respond owing to low availability of teaching staff and school buildings. In areas that received government approval to build a religious primary school, the schools were located in association halls, community halls, and school buildings that were built by the community with government aid. Following the increase in the number of students attending religious primary schools, school sessions were held in the morning and afternoon (bin Kahar, n.d., 51; bin Mohd Daud, 2004, 38-39). The morning session provided students the opportunity to study religion if they attended the Malay or English school afternoon session (Ahmed, Majid & Zin, 2016; Ali & Haseeb, 2019; Haseeb, Abidin, Hye, & Hartani, 2018; Haseeb., 2019; Suryanto, Haseeb, & Hartani, 2018).

This situation might not have arisen had the Ministry of Religious Affairs allocated a long term plan to construct specific buildings for religious primary schools across the country, and not depended too much on using Malay and English school buildings. A study on the yearly increase in the number of students should be done not only for religious primary schools but also for Malay and English schools. Findings from this research would enable a projection of



the yearly increase of student numbers. Thus, plans to construct religious primary school buildings could also be made.

Realising that student numbers in religious primary school have increased yearly starting in 1974, the Ministry of Religious Affairs made plans to construct religious primary school buildings. The Department of Education received special allocations to build religious schools, and this plan was included as part of the country's development plan (bin Mohd Daud, 1992, 46). From then on, the construction of religious school buildings became more organised. It was compulsory for each school building to have a hall for students and teachers to use to conduct dzuhur and 'asr prayers, as well as a place to take ablution (bin Mohd Daud, 2004, 40). However, this plan was still unable to accommodate the entry of new students into religious primary schools up until the 1980s. Thus, the use of Malay and English school buildings continued. This sharing of buildings only occurred in schools that had one session.

Summary and conclusion

From the previous discussion, it is apparent that religious education in Brunei Darussalam underwent multiple transformations from the 19th century until 1983. Religious education, which had earlier operated in homes, balais, prayer halls, and mosques, developed after it was formalised. This transformation occurred in sync with the socioeconomic and political development in Brunei, and involved clerics and the government. Since the establishment of religious primary schools in 1956 until 1983, rapid development occurred continuously, in terms of the number of students, teachers, or school buildings.⁶

Religious primary schools could also be seen as a catalyst in the development of the use of the Jawi transcription in the education system in Brunei. These are the only schools that fully use the Jawi transcription in the learning and teaching system. On the other hand, the use of Jawi in Malay and English schools became less important, especially at the dawn of 1960s. As an effect, Malay and English school students became less adept in writing or reading in Jawi (binti Pengiran Haji Matarsat, 1984, 17; Abdulaimi & Abdeldayem 2018). This is despite the fact that the Jawi transcription should be treated as a cultural heritage of the Malays and has always had a close association to religious values.

The existence of religious primary schools could also be regarded as a way to balance the effects of secular education; education in Brunei before the existence of these schools was

⁶ For further details please refer to the statistics in Attachment (I)



dominated by Malay and English education. Therefore, previously, there were concerns about the emergence of a Muslim generation who were experts in various fields as a product of secular education, yet were poor in their religious faith. Thus, having religious education instilled since childhood, the younger generation is to a greater extent barred from committing acts that are opposed by Islam and Malay culture. This has been clearly stated by Pehin Yahya Brunei, ex-Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs:

Ever since religious primary schools were held in 1956 until 1983, they have left a positive effect on religious life in this country. Religious life has become one with the people of this country, where *religious consciousness* exists deeply rooted everywhere in life. In other words, a majority of Muslims will realize that every aspect of daily life has its laws stating obligations and prohibitions, and rewards and punishments. This is the greatest and the most successful effect. The most noticeable effect is religious education has given womenfolk (children or adult) a lot of rewards for the hereafter. This is proven when we see that there are a lot of religious school children as well as religious teachers, and in fact even adult classes, followed by an increasing number of female religious officers who are graduates from al-Azhar University (bin Haji Ibrahim, 2003, 33-34).

Religious primary schools that were built throughout the country have given more and more children an opportunity to learn about Islam. Before the existence of these schools, few children could study religion well and in an organised manner. The emergence of religious primary schools within the Muslim community in Brunei has distinctly contributed to the practice of the teachings of Islam among the younger generation in the country.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdul Aziz bin Juned. 1968. *Buku kenangan berpuspa*. Brunei: Department of Religious Affairs.
- Abdul Hamid bin Mohd Daud. 2004. *Perkembangan persekolahan agama di negara Brunei Darussalam dari tahun 1956-1984 Masihi*, Brunei: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Abdul Hamid bin Mohd Daud. Sejarah persekolahan agama bersistem di Brunei. In the writer's own safekeeping. 1992.
- Abdul Latif bin Haji Ibrahim. 1982. Peranan rumah-rumah perkumpulan dalam masyarakat Melayu Brunei. in *Iktisar budaya*, Brunei: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.



- Abdul Latif bin Haji Ibrahim. 2003. *Brunei Darussalam rantisan sejarah dan budaya*. Brunei: Akademi Pengajian Brunei, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.
- Abdul Saman bin Kahar. Pelajaran agama di sekolah-sekolah. th. in *Sri Pembangunan*, No.2 Brunei: Information Section, State Secretariat.
- Abu Bakar bin Haji Apong. 1980. Development of education in Brunei during self government period with special reference to primary education. M.Ed. thesis. University of Lancaster, England.
- Ahmed, U., Majid, A. H. A., & Zin, M. L. M. (2016). HR Moderating HR: Critical link between Developmental HR Practices and work engagement in a Moderated Model. *Management Review: An International Journal*, 11(2), 4.
- Aldulaimi, S. H., & Abdeldayem, M. M. (2018). The Economic Value of Time in Arab Culture: New Evidence using Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI). *Humanities*, 3(1), 63-72.
- Ali, A., & Haseeb, M. (2019). Radio frequency identification (RFID) technology as a strategic tool towards higher performance of supply chain operations in textile and apparel industry of Malaysia. *Uncertain Supply Chain Management*, 7(2), 215-226.
- Alusa, M. M. (2018). Influence of Leader's Demographic Characteristics and Perspective towards Implementation of NGOs' Gender Parity Strategies in Secondary School of Kibera Informal Settlement. *American Journal of Education and Learning*, 3(2), 54-63.
- Andrade, A. F., & Fiamenghi-Jr, G. A. (2018). Sheltered Children's Psychological Suffering and Carers' Lack of Training: Observations from a Brazilian Sheltered Home. *International Journal of Social Sciences Perspectives*, 3(1), 34-37.
- Anwar, M. N. (2018). Acquisition of Skills for Listening Comprehension: Barriers and Solutions. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 7(3), 50-54.
- Asim, A., & Kumar, N. (2018). Service Quality in Higher Education: Expectations and Perceptions of Students. *Asian Journal of Contemporary Education*, 2(2), 70-83.
- Bülbül, A. E. (2018). Reliability and Validity of Fear of Happiness Scale: A Case Study of University Students. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 5(2), 91-95.



- Cady. J.F. 1963. *South East Asia: Its historical development*. U.S.A : Mc Graw Hill.
- Department of Islamic Studies, Ministry of Religious Affairs Brunei. 1996. *Pendidikan agama di negara Brunei Darussalam*.
- Department of Islamic Studies, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Brunei. t.th. *Sistem pelajaran agama Islam di negara Brunei Darussalam*.
- Department of Museum, Brunei. 1979. *Risalah pameran sejarah perkembangan Islam di Brunei*.
- Dyg Hajah Ismah binti Pehin Khatib Dato Paduka Haji Mohd Said. 1993. aged 58 tahun. No 83 Sim 625 Kampong Madewa BF 1120 Km 7 Jalan Tutong Negara Brunei Darussalam. Interview, 24 May.
- Haji Kassim bin Serudin. 1988. aged 82. Kampong Setia "B" Negara Brunei Darussalam, one of the villages in Kampong Air di Brunei. Interview, 25 May.
- Hall.D.G.E. 1979. *Sejarah Asia Tenggara*. translation. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur.
- Haseeb, M., Abidin, I. S. Z., Hye, Q. M. A., & Hartani, N. H. (2018). The Impact of Renewable Energy on Economic Well-Being of Malaysia: Fresh Evidence from Auto Regressive Distributed Lag Bound Testing Approach. *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, 9(1), 269-275.
- Haseeb., H. Z., G. Hartani., N.H., Pahi., M.H. Nadeem., H. . (2019). Environmental Analysis of the Effect of Population Growth Rate on Supply Chain Performance and Economic Growth of Indonesia. *Ekoloji*, 28(107).
- Ismail Hamid. 1986. *Perkembangan Islam di Asia dan Alam Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann (Malaysia) Sdn.
- Joriah binti Haji Metali. Hajah. 1988. Dato Haji Ahmad. *Pusaka*, (1).
- Mahmud Saedon bin Awg Othman. 2003. *Jejak-jejak, kumpulan kertas kerja*, Brunei: Academy of Brunei Studies, Brunei Darussalam University.
- Maxwell. S.W.G. & Gibson. W.S. 1924. *Treaties and engagements affecting the Malay states and Borneo*. London: Je. Truscott.



- Ministry of Religious Affairs Brunei. 1973. *Panduan am kerja guru-guru agama Brunei 1973*.
- Ministry of Religious Affairs Brunei. 1981. *Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Brunei 1954-1979*.
- Ministry of Religious Affairs Brunei. t.th. *Penyata sekolah-sekolah agama kerajaan Brunei bagi tahun 1956-1958*.
- Ministry of Religious Affairs Brunei. t.th. *Penyata sekolah-sekolah agama kerajaan Brunei bagi tahun 1968-1970*.
- Ministry of Religious Affairs Brunei. t.th. *Penyata sekolah-sekolah agama kerajaan Brunei bagi tahun 1977-1978*.
- Mohd Jamil bin Haji Umar. 1990. *Latar belakang sejarah Brunei*. Brunei: Dperatment of Historical Centre.
- Mohd Zain bin Haji Serudin. 1981. Pandangan Islam mengenai pendidikan. Educational Seminar paperwork, held by the Malay Teachers' Association, Brunei, 30 October – 1 November.
- Pengiran Haji Mohammad bin Pengiran Haji Abdul Rahman. Pengiran Haji. 1992. *Islam di Brunei Darussalam*, Brunei: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Brunei.
- Pengiran Mariam binti Pengiran Haji Matarsat. 1984. Masalah tulisan jawi di sekolah dan maktab: Pengajaran dan penggunaannya, *Beriga* (5).
- SCRWO 11/55. 1955. Statement of Johorean religious officers' visit to Malay and religious schools in Brunei.
- Simat bin Angas, Suhaili bin Haji Hassan & Haji Ismail bin Ibrahim. 1992. *Tokoh-tokoh agama di Brunei Darussalam: Pengenalan ringkas*. Brunei: Department of Museum.
- State of Brunei, *Annual report 1914*
- State of Brunei, *Annual report 1929*
- Sufean Hussin. 1993. *Pendidikan di Malaysia, sejarah, sistem dan falsafah*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.



Suryanto, T., Haseeb, M., & Hartani, N. H. (2018). The Correlates of Developing Green Supply Chain Management Practices: Firms Level Analysis in Malaysia. *International Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 7(5), 316.

Tarling, N. 1966. *South East Asia: past and present*, Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire.

Tregonning, K.G. 1957. *From earliest time to 1511*. London: University of London Press.

Yahya bin Haji Ibrahim. 2000. *Sejarah dan peranan institusi-institusi Melayu Islam Beraja*. Brunei: Pusat Da'wah Islamiah, Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Yus Sabaraiah binti Haji Adanan, 1992. *Kedatangan awal guru-guru agama Johor di Brunei. Pusaka*.(5)



Attachment (I)

**NUMBER OF TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND RELIGIOUS PRIMARY SCHOOLS
IN BRUNEI, 1956–1983**

Year	Teachers	Students	Schools
1956	9	283	7
1957	25	779	15
1958	57	1271	29
1959	65	1375	32
1960	67	1606	37
1961	110	3391	45
1962	139	4107	49
1963	142	4263	51
1964	186	4753	54
1965	199	5130	62
1966	276	5646	63
1967	247	6786	65
1968	332	6935	68
1969	329	8488	75
1970	445	7728	80
1971	435	7689	82
1972	390	7856	82
1973	381	8760	84
1974	367	8465	85
1975	363	9814	91
1976	312	10444	96
1977	342	11146	98
1978	430	12069	101
1979	478	12924	101
1980	529	13769	103
1981	541	13757	105
1982	555	14267	105
1983	604	14909	105



Note: The number of religious teachers in this table includes both those teaching in religious primary schools and those teaching in schools that had religious education as a subject. However, the number of students and schools only include those in religious primary schools.