

THE MALAY KINGDOM AND THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN JAMBI: A STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the Malay kingdom and the spread of Islam in Jambi in relation to local history and religious traditions. This study examines the role of the Jambi Malay Kingdom in the process of spreading Islam since the 15th century AD, with a focus on the transition from a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom to an Islamic sultanate through trade, political marriages such as that of Ahmad Salim (Datuk Paduka Berhala) with the daughter of Pagaruyung, and the preaching of ulama. The study explores the history of Islamization through heritage sites such as the Orang Kayo Hitam Site, the Olak Kemang Stone House, the Seribu Pilgrimage Mosque, and the Gentala Arasy Museum, which reflect the acculturation of Islam with local Malay culture. In addition, the religious traditions of the Jambi Malay community are discussed such as the commemoration of Assyura, Nisfu Sya'ban, grave pilgrimages, and the art of Zapin-hadrah which integrates Islamic law with local customs, demonstrating the harmony of religion and culture until now. This study uses a historical method (library research) consisting of four stages, namely heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The data collected comes from various sources, such as books, articles, and documents relevant to the topic discussed.

Keywords: spread of Islam, Jambi city, local religious traditions

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kerajaan melayu dan penyebaran islam di jambi terhadap sejarah dan tradisi keagamaan lokal. Penelitian ini mengkaji peran Kerajaan Melayu Jambi dalam proses penyebaran Islam sejak abad ke-15 Masehi, dengan fokus pada transisi dari kerajaan Hindu-Buddha menuju kesultanan Islam melalui perdagangan, pernikahan politik seperti Ahmad Salim (Datuk Paduka Berhala) dengan putri Pagaruyung, serta dakwah ulama. Penelitian mengeksplorasi sejarah islamisasi melalui situs warisan seperti Situs Orang Kayo Hitam, Rumah Batu Olak Kemang, Masjid Seribu Tiang, dan Museum Gentala Arasy, yang mencerminkan akulturasi Islam dengan budaya lokal Melayu. Selain itu, dibahas tradisi keagamaan masyarakat Melayu Jambi seperti peringatan Assyura, Nisfu Sya'ban, ziarah kubur, dan seni Zapin-hadrah yang mengintegrasikan syariat Islam dengan adat setempat, menunjukkan harmoni agama dan budaya hingga kini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah (library research) yang terdiri dari empat tahapan, yaitu heuristik, kritik

sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Data yang dikumpulkan berasal dari berbagai sumber seperti buku, tulisan, dan dokumen yang relevan dengan topik yang dibahas.

Kata kunci: *penyebaran islam, kota jambi, tradisi keagamaan lokal*

INTRODUCTION

Malay culture and Islam are two entities that have developed simultaneously and shaped one another throughout the history of the Nusantara region. In the Malay context, Islam is not merely a system of belief, but also a framework of values that underlies customs, social norms, and even everyday cultural expressions. The relationship between the two is dialectical and mutually reinforcing, making it difficult to understand Malay identity without reference to Islam, and conversely, the development of Islam in the Malay region cannot be separated from the local cultural medium that supports it. It is this interaction that has allowed Islam in the Malay region to develop adaptively, peacefully, and with deep roots in community life.

Historically, the process of Islam's arrival and development in the Archipelago began in coastal regions, particularly in the Malay areas of Sumatra, before spreading to other parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Islam is believed to have been present and developed in the Nusantara from the 8th to the 11th centuries CE through international trade networks involving Arab, Persian, and Turkish merchants, as well as local Malay actors themselves (Saputra et al., 2024). Trade routes served not only as channels for the exchange of commodities but also as a medium for the exchange of ideas, values, and religious teachings, a process that unfolded gradually and persuasively. In this context, Malay culture functioned as a cultural space that facilitated the acceptance of Islam without significant conflict with the pre-existing social systems.

Jambi occupies a strategic position in the history of the Islamization of the Archipelago. According to Azyumardi Azra, the Jambi region was one of the earliest areas visited by Arab-Muslim traders due to its strategic location on the Malacca Strait trade route. The waters of Jambi became an important port connecting the trade networks of China, India, and Arabia, thereby opening up extensive opportunities for cross-cultural and interfaith interaction. Nevertheless, the history of Islam's official arrival in Jambi has various accounts. Some sources state that Islam began to serve as a political and religious identity during the reign of Orang Kayo Hitam, the first ruler to adopt the title Rajo Melayu Islam Tanah Sarudza. Another view holds that Islam only became the official religion of the Jambi kingdom during the reign of Sultan Agung Abdul Qahar, known as the first Jambi ruler to bear the title of Sultan (Agus Muchtar, 2009).

As Islam solidified its position as the royal religion, the process of acculturation between Islamic teachings and Jambi Malay culture became increasingly evident, manifesting in the power structure, social systems, and religious traditions of the community. This acculturation is reflected in various historical sites, such as the Orang Kayo Hitam Site, the Olak Kemang Stone House, the Thousand Pillars Mosque, and the Gentala Arasy Museum, which represent a harmonious convergence of Islamic symbols and local

cultural aesthetics. At the practical level, religious traditions such as the commemoration of Ashura, Nisfu Sya'ban, grave visits, as well as the zapin and hadrah arts demonstrate how Islamic values do not radically replace local customs but rather integrate with and impart new meaning to the cultural practices of the Malay community in Jambi.

However, in academic studies, discussions regarding Islamization in Jambi remain largely fragmented. Some research emphasizes the political aspects of the kingdom or the chronology of Islam's arrival, while local religious traditions are often positioned merely as supplementary elements to the broader historical narrative. In fact, culture—as a system of values passed down across generations, whether in abstract forms such as ideas, norms, and worldviews, or in concrete forms such as rituals, social actions, and cultural artifacts—is a key to understanding how Islam took root and endured within society (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). Without placing local religious traditions at the center of the study, the process of Islamization risks being understood in a normative and ahistorical manner.

Previous studies have generally addressed the relationship between Islam and Malay culture across the Nusantara, yet research specifically integrating the history of the Jambi Malay Kingdom with the dynamics of local religious traditions remains relatively limited. Existing studies typically separate historical analyses of the kingdom's political history from anthropological studies of local culture. This gap highlights a research gap: the insufficient effort to examine the Islamization of Jambi holistically by linking historical, political, and religious dimensions as an interconnected whole. Based on this context, this study aims to analyze the role of the Malay Kingdom of Jambi in the process of Islam's spread and its influence on the formation and continuity of local religious traditions. This study seeks to position the Islamization of Jambi not merely as a historical event, but as a living cultural process that continues to transform to the present day. Through a historical approach utilizing literature review, this study is expected to make an academic contribution to enriching the study of Islam and Malay culture, particularly within the local context of Jambi.

METHOD

The method used in this study is the historical method, which consists of four stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The data collected comes from various sources, such as books, articles, and documents relevant to the topic under discussion. The following are the steps in historical research, which consists of four stages: 1.) Heuristics is the initial stage involving the collection of data from various sources such as historical archives, historical documents, Islamic religious literature, previous research reports, as well as interviews with community leaders or experts who possess in-depth knowledge of Malay history and culture in Jambi. 2.) Next, the researcher must conduct the source criticism stage, the purpose of which is to evaluate the reliability and authenticity of the information obtained after the data has been collected. This involves a critical examination of various sources to ensure that the data used in the analysis is accurate and reliable. 3.) Interpretation involves an in-depth

analysis of the data to understand how the introduction of Islam influenced various aspects of Malay culture in Jambi. This includes tracing changes in religious practices, customary traditions, arts, language, and social values that occurred alongside the arrival of Islam. 4.) Historiography is the final stage, in which the researcher will evaluate the impact of the arrival of Islam on Jambi Malay culture within a broader historiographical context. This involves a discussion of how this research contributes to our understanding of the history and cultural identity of the Malay people in Jambi, as well as its relevance to existing research and academic discourse. By employing this approach, it is hoped that this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the interaction between religion and culture within the Malay context in Jambi.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The History of Islam's Arrival in Jambi

From its earliest days, the Batanghari River has played a central role in the history of Jambi's development as a strategic hub for trade and civilization. The river served as the primary transportation route connecting the interior regions with the outside world; consequently, since the 7th century CE, the Batanghari River Basin (DAS) has been a bustling thoroughfare for foreign traders, particularly from China, India, and the Arab world. Before Malacca emerged as an international port in the 15th century, the city of Jambi was already recognized as a key region within Southeast Asia's maritime trade network. Although shipping routes shifted due to Malacca's dominance, Jambi's status as a port city for trade did not disappear overnight. Local commodities such as pepper, areca nuts, and forest products remained the main attractions, leading the people of Jambi to actively participate in the world of trade during the 15th century (Sintya, 2024).

This role in international trade facilitated intensive cultural exchange between the local Jambi community and foreign visitors. Archaeological findings of colored glass shards at Muara Sabak and Muara Jambi reinforce the hypothesis that Jambi had served as a meeting point for various trading actors since the pre-Islamic era. This aligns with discussions in the literature regarding Islam's influence on Jambi Malay culture, which indicates that Islamization occurred through trade routes and social interactions involving diverse ethnic groups (Saputra & Siregar, 2024). This cross-cultural interaction was welcomed by the local community, allowing Islam to gradually permeate their social and cultural lives.

Traces of Jambi's relationship with the Islamic world are also reflected in foreign sources and local traditions. The name Chan-Pei in Chinese records refers to a strategic region where Po'sse (Persian) merchants stopped to obtain supplies, particularly betel nuts. This indicates that Jambi was not merely a transit area but also a crucial component of the international trade logistics system. The presence of the tomb of Ahmad Barus or Paduka Datuk Berhalo on Berhala Island is also considered early evidence of the arrival of influential Muslim figures who played a role in the spread of Islam in the Jambi region (Apdelmi, 2018). These findings are reinforced by research on the Islamization of the

Jambi kingdom, which shows that the spread of Islam occurred not only through merchants but also through elites who brought religious and political legitimacy (Ona & Syaputra, 2025).

In line with these historical findings, a historical research article on the Islamization of the Jambi Malays asserts that the Malays themselves were active agents in the Islamization process, not merely passive recipients of external influence. This research positions the Malay community of Jambi in a strategic role as agents of the history of Islamization, leveraging their geographical position and trade networks to both disseminate and adopt Islamic teachings (Putra, 2018; Agusti Putra, 2018). This process subsequently gave rise to a distinctive local form of Islam that blended with local customs and cultural values.

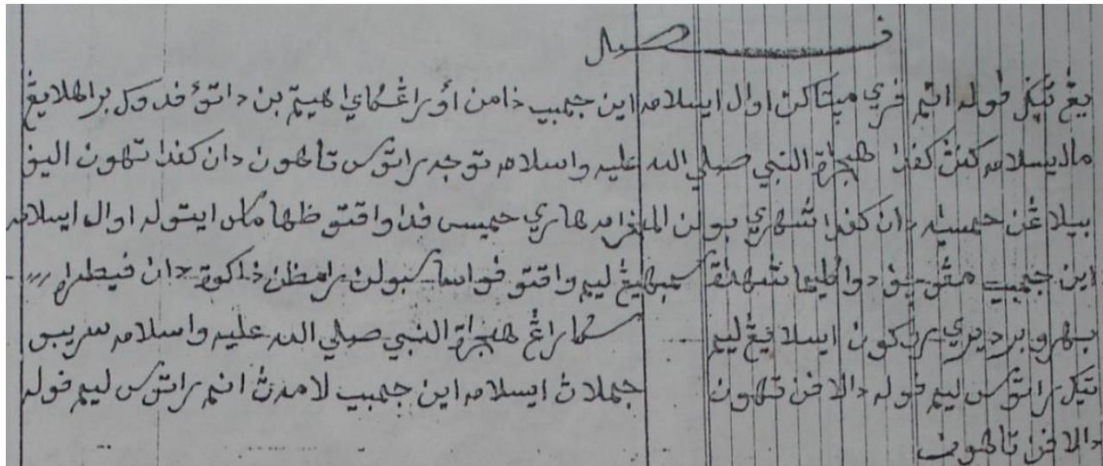
Over time, Islam became increasingly entrenched in the Jambi region, particularly in the Kota Seberang area. The establishment of various Islamic organizations and well-established Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) made this area a center for the development of Islamic education and Sufi orders in Jambi. This phenomenon marked a shift in Islam from being merely the religion of merchants and the elite to a faith deeply rooted among the broader population. Religious education plays a crucial role in shaping the religious character of Jambi's society while serving as a means for the continuous transmission of Islamic values from one generation to the next. This aligns with the dynamics of Islamization also observed in local communities such as the Anak Dalam tribe in Jambi, which underwent a gradual transformation in creed and religious practices through social contact and Islamic education (Alhusni et al., 2021).

Jambi's strategic geographical location has made it a hub for interaction among various nations and cultures. Trade relations with China, India, Arabia, Persia, and the Malay community itself indirectly introduced religious influences that were subsequently adopted gradually by the people of Jambi. Islam did not arrive as a force that drastically replaced local culture, but rather developed through an intensive process of adaptation and integration. This explains why the Islamization of Jambi proceeded relatively peacefully and produced a distinctive religious tradition, in which Islamic teachings have blended with local Malay customs and culture to this day. Thus, the history of Islam's arrival in Jambi cannot be separated from the dynamics of international trade, the role of rivers as primary routes of mobility, and the openness of the Malay community in Jambi to external influences. This process unfolded over a long and layered period, involving economic, political, and religious actors who collectively shaped the face of Islam in Jambi as it is known today.

The Role of the Malay Kingdom of Jambi in the Spread of Islam

In the early days of the kingdom's establishment under the leadership of Princess Selara Pinang Masak, the kingdom was visited by a Turkish merchant and scholar named Ahmad Salim, also known as Ahmad Barus II. He married Princess Selara Pinang Masak, and through this marriage, Islam flourished rapidly and became the official religion of the

Jambi Kingdom. This marked the turning point for the Jambi Kingdom, propelling Islam to further expand and spread throughout the entire realm. After converting to Islam and marrying Princess Selara Pinang Masak, Ahmad Salim, who held the title Datuk Paduko Berhalo, became king of the Kingdom of Jambi alongside his wife. Eventually, one of their sons, named Kayo Hitam, ascended the throne as king of the Jambi Kingdom from



1500 to 1515 CE, and the kingdom became known as the Islamic Malay Kingdom of Tanah Pilih Jambi. By this time, Islam had been declared the official religion and the defining identity of the Kingdom of Jambi; this is recorded in a manuscript titled *Ini Sejarah Raja Jambi* by Ngabihi Shuto Dilogo, as follows:

Translation: *Chapter Thirty-Six: Pri recounts the early days of Islam in Jambi during the time of Orang Kayo Hitam bin Datuk Paduko Berhalo, who converted the people to Islam. Seventy years after the Hijrah of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the year Alif of the Solar calendar, and on the first day of the month of Muharram, a Thursday, at noon, that was when Islam began in Jambi with the recitation of the two testimonies of faith, the five daily prayers, the month-long fast of Ramadan, zakat, and fitrah, thus establishing the five pillars of Islam.*

During his reign, Orang Kayo Hitam was able to harmonize the ideology of the Jambi Kingdom’s government with Islamic teachings, known as “Adat Bersendi Syarak and Syarak Bersendi Kitabullah.” This integration is evident, among other things, in the existence of the Pucuk Undang Nan Delapan, which is based on the Qur’an and the Hadith. This explanation is not only found in the ISRJ Manuscript but is also enshrined in the Jambi Law, written by Demang Setia Wiguna Ja’far at the command of Sultan Ratu Ahmad Nasir. Both manuscripts contain text explaining the difference between customary law and Sharia law: “lianna alsyar’ muwfiqah al’ulama wa lianna al’adah muwafiqah sayyid fi albilâd,” meaning that Sharia provisions or laws are the consensus or decisions of the ulama, while customary law is the consensus of the local leaders. Nevertheless, customary law must not conflict with Islamic law, as “wa amma adat al-Islam muqabalah bi al-shar’,” meaning that Islamic customs are in accordance with Islamic law. Such provisions and explanations were already employed by Kayo Hitam

during his reign and were continued even into the subsequent period of the Jambi Kingdom/Sultanate. (Deki, 2020)

In addition to political legitimacy and the codification of customary-Islamic law during the reign of Orang Kayo Hitam, the spread of Islam in Jambi was also marked by a strong acculturation of local culture with Islamic values, so that da'wah was not merely a top-down initiative from the palace but also reached broad segments of society. Research indicates that Jambi's traditional seloko, as a form of traditional oral cultural expression, underwent a transformation in values when Islam became the kingdom's official religion. Seloko, which originally contained local wisdom, began to incorporate elements of Islamic teachings, such as the values of tawhid, ukhuwah, and obedience to God, thereby becoming an effective medium for cultural da'wah among the Malay community of Jambi (Rumpun Adat Depati Setio, 2025).

This interaction between Islam and local traditions was not merely ritualistic but also gave rise to new religious practices involving the broader public, not just the royal elite. Historical studies indicate that Islamic values permeated the social structure of Jambi society through trade relations and daily interactions, reinforcing religious consciousness in both public and private life. This process demonstrates that ulama, Muslim merchants, and local communities collaborated to disseminate Islamic teachings horizontally outside the formal royal structure (Desfianti & Hudaidah, 2025).

In the context of historiography, Islam's influence on local historical writing is also evident in the development of literature and archives containing Islamic values. One study reveals how Islam left a strong imprint on Jambi's local historical writings and literary works in the 18th century, indicating that religious values had become an integral part of the local community's thinking (Wahyuni & Pradita, 2025). Overall, this evidence demonstrates that the role of the Malay Kingdom of Jambi in the spread of Islam was not merely institutional but also cultural and social, where da'wah through cultural media, the acculturation of values, and the production of historical narratives became crucial components in the ongoing process of Islamization.

Local Religious Traditions of the Malay Community in Jambi

Epistemologically, the term "tradition" originates from the Latin word "traditio," which shares a similar meaning with "culture" or "customs."²⁰ A tradition refers to a form of activity carried out by a group of people or a community on an ongoing basis.²¹ The religious cultural traditions of the Arab-Malay community in Seberang Kota Jambi consist of religious ritual traditions such as the commemoration of Ashura (Syuro), the celebration of Nisfu Syaban, Burdah, Nginau, Nuak Ketan, baby naming ceremonies, and grave visits.

1. Cultural Tradition of Ashura Day

This activity has been preserved by the Seberang Kota Jambi community from generation to generation. Assyura Day, or Syuro, falls on the 10th of Muharram (Marfu'ah, 2010a). During this event, the Seberang Kota Jambi community is encouraged to give alms, trim

their hair, visit the homes of the Tuo Tenganai elders, and perform grave visits. This tradition is unique to the Seberang Kota Jambi community and is not practiced in other regions of Jambi. Consequently, it is considered a distinctive cultural heritage of the Seberang Kota Jambi community. The purpose of this tradition is to strengthen social bonds and ward off all forms of calamity. Assyura Day marks the tenth day of the Islamic month of Muharram. The term “Assyura” itself means “the tenth.” This day has become popular among Muslims.

From the 1st to the 10th of Muharram, we are encouraged to fast and perform acts of kindness. The Day of Ashura is a day of great historical significance and immense nobility because on this day, various major events occurred that were generally experienced by the prophets in ancient times (Marfu’ah, 2010b). On this day of Ashura, the community in Seberang Kota, Jambi, also provides aid and prepares a porridge known as Ashura porridge. The tradition of making this porridge stems from an expression of gratitude for the blessings bestowed by Allah SWT. To express this gratitude, the porridge is prepared and distributed to those in need. This porridge is distributed through mosques to travelers, the poor, and orphans. Before distributing the porridge, activities such as reciting the Quran, chanting prayers, and offering supplications are conducted. In addition to the distribution of aid and porridge, on the evening of the day, the recitation of Surah Yasin and Tahlil is led by religious scholars.

2. Cultural Traditions of the Nisfu Sya’ban Celebration

The month of Sha’ban is a noble month filled with miracles. The people of Seberang Kota Jambi believe that Nisfu Sha’ban, which falls within this month, is a special night. The Nisfu Sha’ban activities conducted by the people of Seberang Kota Jambi take place at the mosque on the night of Nisfu Sha’ban, the 14th or 15th, following Maghrib prayer. On that night, the community believes that the angels who record good deeds and sins will meet with Allah SWT. This Nisfu Sya’ban commemoration is held to remind the community to make up for any missed fasts from last year’s Ramadan, as the month of Ramadan is approaching once again. During the Nisfu Sya’ban celebration, attendees recite Surah Yasin, chant prayers, and engage in zikr. They bring bottled water, which is later placed before those reciting Surah Yasin and the prayers. The water, having been blessed through the recitation of Surah Yasin and the prayers, is then taken back home.

3. The Burdah Cultural Tradition

Burdah is a collective recitation of shalawat and expressions of praise and gratitude to Allah SWT and the Prophet Muhammad SAW by the people of Seberang Kota Jambi, led by a religious scholar. Burdah also involves reciting prayers to ward off illnesses that have long afflicted an individual. Burdah is performed when the community of Seberang Kota Jambi faces specific conditions or unusual events. Burdah performed for the sick as part of a healing effort is typically conducted at the sick person’s home by inviting a religious scholar and community leaders to recite Burdah together so that the sick person may recover quickly. Burdah recited during a disaster is carried out by going around the village and mosques. This procession aims to ensure the disaster ends quickly and does not return. Beyond serving as a means of traditional healing, this activity carries the

meaning that everything that occurs in human life should be entrusted to Allah SWT as the Creator. Human life on this earth is temporary; therefore, one must always draw closer to Allah SWT to make life more meaningful and remain protected from all impending dangers.

4. The Cultural Tradition of Eating Together

The tradition of eating together plays a vital role in fostering a sense of community among residents. Through this activity, the community can strengthen social bonds both personally and as a group. This activity is commonly held during various events such as weddings, feasts, circumcisions, and other rituals. This tradition is organized to mark cultural events or ceremonies, which typically feature traditional foods characteristic of the local community. This communal dining tradition is often held at the Ba'lawi Mosque, the oldest mosque in the Arab Melayu neighborhood

5. The Nginau Cultural Tradition

Nginau is a tradition of prohibitions or taboos found in the Seberang Kota Jambi area. This tradition serves as a form of protection from parents for their children. They believe that a child's education begins while still in the womb or when the child is still a fetus. In the Nginau tradition, there are prohibitions that parents must follow, such as avoiding loud arguments, engaging in rough behavior, using profanity, and consuming items obtained through unlawful means. Expectant mothers have their own specific taboos; they are forbidden from insulting, mocking, or criticizing people with physical disabilities, as it is believed that whatever the mother says will manifest in her child upon birth. The above explains that Nginau is a tradition that protects expectant mothers from taboos they believe in, as violating them is thought to invite misfortune. Furthermore, pregnant women are encouraged to recite the Quran, particularly Surah Yusuf, so that the child born will possess the handsomeness and gentle nature of Prophet Yusuf (AS).

6. The Nuak Ketan Cultural Tradition

This tradition is typically held when a pregnant woman reaches her seventh month of pregnancy. Nuak Ketan serves to inform the community that the mother has been pregnant for seven months and may require assistance. The activity also aims to ensure the child in the womb remains healthy and is born safely. In this tradition, the family of the pregnant woman prepares white glutinous rice, which is served on a plate. The glutinous rice is then sprinkled with coconut that has been processed with palm sugar (coconut kernel). Once the glutinous rice dish is prepared, it is distributed to relatives and neighbors living near the house. This glutinous rice is also given to those who will assist with the pregnant woman's delivery. The person who assists with the delivery is referred to as a traditional birth attendant by the community in Seberang Kota Jambi. Over time, the Nuak Ketan ritual no longer involves traditional midwives, as today women in labor are taken directly to a hospital or birthing center to be attended by medical professionals. Consequently, only the glutinous rice is still prepared and distributed to family and neighbors. Although the practice has evolved, the purpose of the ritual remains the same: to ensure the child in the womb remains healthy and is born safely. This tradition is an

expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for sustaining human life on this earth. Without the Creator's intervention, humans would not attain the life they desire.

7. The Baby Hair-Cutting Tradition

The baby hair-cutting ceremony involves shaving the baby's hair, performed seven days after birth during the aqiqah ceremony, which involves sacrificing two goats for a boy and one goat for a girl. The ceremony includes the recitation of the marhaban, the janzi, and prayers to Allah the Almighty and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the religious scholars. The hair is shaved by seven individuals considered significant, such as religious leaders and community figures. The purpose of this baby hair-shaving ceremony is to express the parents' hopes and wishes for their child to grow up to be a righteous person. The hair-cutting is a ritual always performed when parents perform the aqiqah for their child. This activity serves as an expression of praise and gratitude to Allah SWT for granting health to the child. With Allah SWT present in every aspect of the child's life, the child will grow into a good person, eventually becoming a righteous child who is devoted to their parents.

8. Cultural Tradition of Visiting Graves

Visiting graves is an activity involving the act of visiting the graves of the deceased to clear the graves of overgrown grass and then offer prayers for the departed so they may rest in peace in their graves. The purpose of this activity is to pray for deceased relatives so that they may be placed in Paradise by Allah SWT. Originally, this activity was carried out collectively by an entire village or neighborhood at a mutually agreed-upon time. In the Seberang Kota Jambi community, grave visits are held twice a year: in the days leading up to Ramadan and on the second day of Eid al-Fitr. During these visits, the Yasin, Tahlil, and prayers are recited so that the souls of deceased Muslims may be placed in paradise by Allah SWT.

CONCLUSION

The Malay Kingdom of Jambi has been proven to be a key actor in the spread of Islam in the East Sumatra region since the 15th century CE, as revealed through a library research approach that examined primary sources such as ancient manuscripts, Malay chronicles, and foreign travelers' accounts, as well as secondary literature in the form of academic journals and local history books. [conversation_history] The process of Islamization occurred not only through international trade routes in the Strait of Malacca involving Arab, Persian, and Indian merchants, but was also reinforced by strategic political marriages such as that of Ahmad Salim (Datuk Paduka Berhala) with the daughter of the King of Pagaruyung, systematic da'wah by ulama, and the political transition from the Hindu -Buddhist Sriwijaya kingdom into the Jambi Sultanate, which adopted Islamic sharia as the basis of law and governance. This study highlights Islamic heritage sites as invaluable material evidence, such as the Orang Kayo Hitam Site, which houses the tombs of kings and symbols of the acculturation of the two religions; the Rumah Batu Olak Kemang, a 19th-century center of Islamic education; the Seribu Tiang Mosque (Al-Falah) on the banks of the Batanghari River, and the Gentala Arasy Museum, which displays

Malay-Islamic manuscripts and calligraphy—all of which reflect how Islam adapted to local culture without erasing traditional identities. The religious traditions of the Malay community in Jambi—such as the commemoration of Ashura through almsgiving and tomb visits, Nisfu Sya’ban through nightly prayers at the mosque, the recitation of the Burdah for safety, and the arts of Zapin, Hadrah, and Gambus integrated into social rituals—demonstrate a sustained harmony between orthodox Islamic teachings and inclusive local practices.

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