Warisan
Journal of History and Cultural Heritage
Vol. 6
No. 1
April 2025
ISSN: 2746-3265 (Online)
Published by
Mahesa Research Center
sinta S5

The Transformation of Islamic Intellectual Traditions in Palembang: From the Sultanate to the Colonial Era

Nor Huda Ali, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said, Surakarta, Indonesia
Otoman*, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This article explores the socio-intellectual history of Islam in Palembang, spanning from the Sultanate era to the colonial period. Employing a qualitative historical approach and library research, the study examines the evolution of Islamic scholarly networks, the pivotal role of local *ulama*, and the influence of Dutch colonial policies on religious education. Primary sources include manuscripts authored by Sheikh Abdussamad al-Palimbani, royal Sultanate documents, and Dutch colonial archives. Data were analyzed thematically using a historical-hermeneutic framework and source criticism to ensure textual authenticity and contextual accuracy. The findings demonstrate that Palembang functioned as a major intellectual hub in Sumatra, shaped by the dynamic interplay between local Islamic authority, transregional *ulama* networks, and the pressures of colonial administration. This study contributes to the historiography of Malay-Islamic scholarship by highlighting the adaptive resilience of religious intellectual traditions amid shifting political regimes.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted 29/03/2025
Revised 11/04/2025
Accepted 24/04/2025
Published 30/04/2025

KEYWORDS

Palembang; Islamic intellectual history; *ulama* networks; Sultanate; colonial religious policy; Islamic authority.

*CORRESPONDENCE AUTHOR

otoman_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34007/warisan.v6i1.2692

INTRODUCTION

Palembang, one of the oldest cities in Indonesia founded on June 17, 683 CE, possesses a long and dynamic history shaped by cultural, religious, and political interactions. According to the Kedukan Bukit inscription discovered in Kampung 35 Ilir, Palembang has long served as a vital center in the historical trajectory of the Nusantara (Amin, 1986, p. 68). As a waterfront city traversed by the Musi River and other major waterways, Palembang holds a strategic position in both trade and political networks (Sevenhoeven, 1976; Hanafiah, 2005, p. 3). This geographical advantage positioned it as a hub of intercultural exchange involving Hinduism, Buddhism, and later Islam. Despite the historical coexistence of these major religions, Islam emerged as the dominant faith and continues to define the socio-cultural identity of Palembang's inhabitants (Sevenhoeven, 1976, p. 13).

Although considerable scholarly attention has been given to Palembang's development as a commercial and political center, studies focusing on the city's socio-intellectual Islamic history, particularly during periods of political transition and colonial intervention, remain limited. Existing research tends to emphasize the political and cultural dimensions of Islamic presence in the Palembang Sultanate, while underexploring the enduring intellectual contributions of Islamic scholars within the local community. For instance, Azra highlights the political role of Islam in the Sultanate of Palembang but falls short of examining the continued evolution of Islamic religious scholarship into the colonial era (Azra, 2004, pp. 135–138).

This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the transformation of Islamic socio-intellectual traditions in Palembang across two centuries, from the Sultanate era through the colonial period. Notable figures such as Sheikh Abdussamad al-Palimbani—renowned throughout the Malay Islamic world (Azra, 2004, pp. 135–138)—and *ulama* affiliated with the Sammaniyah Sufi order (Drewes, 2005), who expanded Islamic influence into the rural interiors of South Sumatra (Azra, 2004, pp. 145–149), exemplify this intellectual legacy. Despite the Dutch abolition of the Palembang Sultanate in 1825, Islamic education and the role of *ulama* continued to flourish under colonial constraints.

Furthermore, the Palembang Sultanate made a significant contribution to Islamic intellectual development in the Malay world (Zulkifli, 1999). As Abdullah observes, by the 18th century, Palembang had supplanted Aceh as a leading center of Islamic scholarship in the region (Abdullah, 1996, p. 212). This intellectual ascendancy is reflected in the discovery of approximately 55 valuable manuscripts in Arabic and Malay from the reign of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II (Drewes, 1976, p. 68).

However, despite this scholarly output, Dutch colonialism exerted substantial pressure on Islamic intellectual life. As documented by Tim Penulis, although the Dutch successfully captured the Palembang royal palace in 1821 and formally dissolved the Sultanate in 1825, Islamic identity remained deeply embedded in the lives of the local population (Tim Penulis (1983/1984, p. 54). During the colonial era, Palembang's *ulama* continued to play influential roles in religious education and the propagation of Sufi orders. Rahim details prominent scholars such as Syaikh Muhammad 'Aqib bin Hasanuddin and Syaikh Muhammad Azhary bin Abdullah bin Ahmad, who extended their Islamic influence beyond urban Palembang into its surrounding interior regions (Rahim, 1998, p. 12).

This study therefore seeks to address this gap by tracing the historical transformation of Islamic socio-intellectual life in Palembang across two pivotal epochs. It not only contributes new insights into the intellectual history of Islam in the region but also analyzes the roles of *ulama* in sustaining Islamic scholarly traditions that extended far into South Sumatra's hinterlands. In doing so, the study enriches the scholarly understanding of Palembang as a center of Islamic knowledge and its enduring contribution to the broader landscape of religious thought in the Malay-Islamic world.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative historical approach supported by library research techniques. The historical method was selected to trace the socio-intellectual dynamics of Islam in Palembang from the Sultanate period through the colonial era. Data collection involved archival research at the National Library of Indonesia, the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia, and select verified digital repositories. During archival visits, particular attention was paid to Islamic manuscripts bearing marginalia and paratextual notes, which offered insights into transmission networks and scholarly readership across generations.

Data analysis followed a historical-hermeneutic approach, wherein texts were interpreted within their socio-political and religious contexts (Gottschalk, 1985, p. 55). Hermeneutic reading strategies were particularly important when engaging with theological manuscripts and royal edicts, allowing the researcher to uncover both explicit doctrinal content and implicit ideological underpinnings. The study applied external and internal source criticism to assess the authenticity, provenance, and rhetorical intent of the documents under review.

Thematically, the analysis centered on three primary concerns: (1) the institutionalization of Islamic learning in the Sultanate; (2) the transformation of *ulama* authority under colonial governance; and (3) the resilience of Sufi networks, especially the Sammaniyah order, as vehicles of socio-religious continuity. These themes were developed inductively from the source material, guided by Kuntowijoyo's conception of historical research not merely as a chronology of past events, but as a critical interpretation of their enduring significance (Kuntowijoyo, 1997, p. 89).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Socio-Intellectual Development of Islam in Palembang during the Sultanate Era

Up until the early twentieth century, the development of Islam in Palembang can be divided into three distinct periods: the pre-Sultanate, the Sultanate, and the colonial Dutch East Indies (Abdullah et al., 1991, p. 44). In the pre-Sultanate era, Palembang functioned as a protectorate of the Sultanate of Demak, and later of Pajang, for approximately 71 years. Amid internal conflict in Demak that led to the transfer of power to Pajang (Surakarta), a group of 24 Demak nobles fled to Palembang. Among them was Ki Gede Ing Suro, regarded as the progenitor of the Palembang sultans (Hanafiah, 1990, p. 9).

Ki Gede Ing Suro established his authority and named the settlement "Palembang," a name which, according to Djohan Hanafiah, held a charismatic resonance within the Malay world. The legitimacy he carried stemmed from the Demak Kingdom, the recognized heir of the Majapahit legacy. He built the royal palace, Kuto Gawang, in the 16th century (Hanafiah, 1990, p. 9). To solidify political foundations, intermarriages were arranged between the royal family and prominent Malay elites, and Malay cultural elements were assimilated. During this time, six successive rulers governed pre-Sultanate Palembang (Amin, 1986, pp. 74–75).

Palembang transitioned into the Sultanate period under the leadership of Kiemas Endi, also known as Prince Arya Kesuma Abdurrahim, who declared independence from the Mataram Sultanate and founded the Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam in 1675 (Aly, 1987, p. 149). He adopted the title Sultan Susuhunan Abdurrahman Khalifatul Mukminin Sayyidul Imam and was also referred to as Sunan Cindewalang. The use of the title "Susuhunan," according

to Sevenhoeven, indicates the influence of Majapahit traditions, though the sultan was also believed to have Arab ancestry (Sevenhoeven, 1976, p. 21).

Kiemas Endi is thus recognized as the founder and first sultan of the Palembang Sultanate. He initiated the tradition of using Islamic titles for rulers, replacing traditional names. The Sultanate, as noted by Abdullah, evolved into a power center that consciously embraced Islamic doctrines and practices (Abdullah et al., 1991, p. 212). The institution played a formal role in reinforcing Islamization through institutional measures such as the establishment of the position of penghulu (chief religious judge) and religious symbols. Architecturally and spiritually, the Grand Mosque of Palembang, built in the early 19th century, was described by Dutch observers as one of the finest buildings in the Dutch East Indies (Abdullah et al., 1991, p. 212).

Under Sultan Abdurrahman, the Sultanate entered a phase of political consolidation. To fortify his rule, Sultan Abdurrahman renewed a 1642 contract with the VOC (Dutch East India Company), which was re-signed in 1662. This agreement allowed the VOC to establish warehouses and trading posts along the Aur River, across from the royal palace in Beringin Janggut, near Pasar 16 Ilir, Palembang (Amin, 1986, pp. 74–75).

Socially and religiously, Sultan Abdurrahman demonstrated significant commitment to Islamic development. Islam had by this point become the official religion of the Sultanate (Abdullah et al., 1991, p. 44). One notable development was the arrival of a scholar from Mecca, known locally as Tuan Tanjung Idrus, who had previously stayed in Cirebon. He was instrumental in spreading Islam to the upland Komering region, and was later buried in Dusun Adumanis, Semendawai Barat District, Ogan Komering Ulu Timur (Aly, 1987, p. 149).

In addition to Komering, Islam expanded rapidly in Muara Lakitan, Musi Rawas, in the upper Musi River region. A key figure here was "Bujang Jawe," a noble from Demak who arrived around 1668. The Sultanate played an active role in this Islamization by dispatching Penghulu Jalil, an official religious functionary. Later, the mission continued under Prince Abduleman and Penghulu Haji Pidin (Amin, 1986, pp. 74–75).

During the reign of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayawikrama, Islamization was also documented in Muncakkabau, Ogan Komering Ulu, around 1750. The campaign was led by Kiemas Jambu, a court official, assisted by Marto, a figure from Semarang (Aly, 1987, p. 149). The 17th century thus marked a pivotal period for Islam in Palembang, during which the city developed as a center of Malay literature and civilization.

Religious activities and mosques began to flourish in Palembang city. A religious bureaucracy was established within the Sultanate's administrative structure, and religious authority was delegated to appointed officials. Although not yet uniform, Islamic values had been significantly integrated into daily life. According to P. de Roo de la Faille, at the end of Ramadan, officials pledged loyalty to the sultan in a formal ceremony in which Prince Penghulu Natagama stood beside the sultan as the chief cleric authorized to rule based on Islamic law (Sevenhoeven, 1976).

In the 18th century, the Sultanate faced internal strife. Under Sultan Muhammad Mansur (1706–1715), political fragmentation emerged between central elites and local peripheral powers. Unable to maintain political stability, the sultan abdicated. His brother, Sultan Komaruddin (1715–1722), assumed power but failed to resolve the familial disputes. Eventually, power passed to Prince Jayawikrama, the son of Sultan Muhammad Mansur (Hanafiah, 1990, p. 9).

Prince Jayawikrama was enthroned in 1726 as Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayawikrama, also known as Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I (SMB I). He established Kuto Lama, inhabited from 1737 onward. After ruling for 33 years, he was succeeded by his son, Prince Ratu (Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin Adikesuma, 1758–1776), followed by Sultan Ahmad Bahauddin (1776–1803), and finally Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II (SMB II), known as Susuhunan Mahmud Badaruddin. SMB II ruled in four non-consecutive periods: April 1804–May 14, 1812; August 14, 1813; October 30, 1818; and October 30, 1818–June 1, 1821 (Sevenhoeven, 1976, p. 21).

As political stability and economic conditions improved, the sultans of Palembang fostered Islamic civilization by turning the royal court into a center of knowledge. Unlike the pesantren system in Java or the madrasah institutions in the Middle East, the Sultanate established the palace as a library and religious study hub (Abdullah et al., 1991, p. 212). This intellectual consolidation was not limited to scholarly pursuits alone but was supported by a deliberate bureaucratic restructuring under Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II. This included the reinforcement of key Islamic administrative roles such as the penghulu and syahbandar, the implementation of the lungguh system, and the codification of Islamic-Malay customary law through the Simbur Cahaya legal code. These efforts reflect a conscious adaptation of Malay-Islamic governance principles, as demonstrated in the restructuring measures undertaken by Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II (Lubis, Tanjung, & Muhajir, 2022).

From the 18th to early 19th centuries, the Palembang Sultanate supplanted Aceh Darussalam as the intellectual and literary center of Malay Islam in the archipelago, following Aceh's decline due to internal strife and Dutch colonial encroachment. Palembang's literary tradition combined Javanese and Malay influences, forming a unique "Malay-Javanese" cultural synthesis (Abdullah et al., 1991, p. 212). This development was closely intertwined with the Sultanate's religious and bureaucratic structure, which institutionalized Islamic governance through the formal roles of *penghulu*, *syahbandar*, and other religious officials. These roles were not merely functional but symbolized the integration of Malay-Islamic civilizational values (Tamadun Melayu-Islam) into the administrative machinery of the Sultanate. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II played a pivotal role in restructuring the bureaucracy to reflect Islamic principles, thereby reinforcing both the spiritual and political legitimacy of the palace (Lubis, Tanjung, & Muhajir, 2022).

This intellectual florescence was supported by the sultans' favorable policies toward Arab immigrants, especially those from Hadhramaut. Since the 17th century, Arab migration to Palembang had increased. Within the royal court, Arabs received preferential treatment—according to Dutch reports, they were permitted to sit beside the sultan during official ceremonies, unlike other local nobles. They also enjoyed legal immunity in many cases (Sevenhoeven, 1976).

Economically, Arab traders were granted freedom and influence. A prominent figure was Prince Syarif Ali bin Syaikh Abubakar (1790–1877), a wealthy merchant and Captain of the Arabs in Palembang, who maintained the largest fleet of trading vessels. His success was attributed to strong ties with both the sultanate and colonial officials (Amin, 1986, pp. 74–75).

In contrast, the Chinese community faced more restrictions. Although allowed to reside in Palembang, they were confined to floating houses on the Musi River and barred from owning farmland. These measures facilitated surveillance, and their homes could be burned down if deemed a threat to the Sultanate (Aly, 1987, p. 149).

Despite such unequal treatment, both Arab and Chinese communities played vital roles in the economy. Chinese merchants supplied goods that were distributed inland by Palembang traders, while Arabs primarily served as intermediaries. This economic prosperity contributed to the growth of Islamic intellectualism, which peaked during the reigns of Sultan Bahauddin (1776–1803) and Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II (1804–1812, 1813). This period witnessed the emergence of several influential *ulama*, including Syihabuddin bin Abdullah Muhammad, 'Abdussamad al-Palimbani, Muhammad Muhyiddin bin Syaikh Syihabuddin, Kemas Fachruddin, Muhammad Ma'ruf bin Abdullah Khatib al-Palimbani, and Ahmad bin Abdullah (Iskandar, 2021, p. 438; Quzwain, 1985).

Syihabuddin bin Abdullah Muhammad, active during the reign of SMB I, translated Ibrahim al-Laqani's *Jawharat al-Tawhid* into Malay in the 1750s. His work, *Syarh yang Latif atas Jawharat al-Tawhid*, was highly influential and preserved at the National Library in Jakarta. He also authored *al-Risalah*, inspired by *Risalat al-Tawhid* by Wali Ruslan al-Dimasyqi, aimed at correcting perceived deviations in Sufi practices (Iskandar, 2021, p. 438).

Another notable scholar, Kemas Fachruddin, an official during Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin I's reign, translated several Arabic texts, including *Mukhtasar* (a misnamed work due to translation errors), Futuh al-Sya'm (from Abu Isma'il al-Bashri's *Mukhtasar Futuh al-Sya'm*), and *Tuhfat al-Zaman fi Dzarf al-Yaman*, translated in 1761 at the request of Prince Ratu of Palembang (Feener, 2015, p. 263).

Among the most prominent figures was 'Abdussamad al-Palimbani, who lived during the reigns of Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin and Sultan Muhammad Bahauddin. A major Sufi thinker, he was instrumental in propagating the Sammaniyah order in Palembang and beyond (Drewes, 2005). His notable works include *Zuhrah al-Murid fi Bayan Kalimat at-Tawhid* (1764, Mecca) and *Hidayat al-Salikin fi Suluk Maslak al-Muttaqin*, both widely read in the Malay world (Sevenhoeven, 1976).

Muhammad Muhyiddin bin Syihabuddin, following his father's path, translated the biography of Syaikh Muhammad Samman in Hikayat Syaikh Muhammad Samman (Iskandar, 2021, p. 440). Beyond religious literature, the Sultanate also fostered secular literary culture. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II himself authored allegorical poetry such as Syair Burung Nuri, a notable contribution to Malay literature (Ikram, 2004, p. 12).

Overall, the Sultanate demonstrated substantial intellectual and literary achievements—both religious and secular—shaped by enlightened policies and socio-economic prosperity. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II (SMB II), known for his literary aptitude, also amassed a distinguished manuscript collection. According to Drewes, 55 beautifully written and bound Arabic and Malay manuscripts were attributed to SMB II. Other royal figures such as Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin, Sultan Muhammad Bahauddin, Prince Jayawikarama, and Prince Arya Muhammad Zainuddin also curated similar collections (Drewes, 1976, p. 67).

These royal libraries were housed in the palace, but much of the collection was confiscated by British forces led by Gillespie in 1812, following SMB II's defeat. Further seizures occurred after the Dutch conquest, with materials transported to Batavia. Drewes estimate that about 100 titles from the Palembang royal collection survive today, dispersed across libraries and museums in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Russia, and Indonesia (Drewes, 1976, p. 68).

The final phase of the Sultanate (1811–1825) was shaped by British-Dutch rivalry for control over the Indonesian archipelago and the subsequent Dutch reassertion of power post-French occupation. After fierce military resistance by the Palembang Sultan, the Dutch succeeded in toppling the dynasty and ending the Sultanate's status as an independent political entity. Although local leaders posed ongoing resistance, Dutch forces held a technological and strategic advantage that eventually led to the collapse of traditional authority in Palembang (Drewes, 1976, p. 444).

The Socio-Intellectual Development of Islam in Palembang during the Colonial Era

De facto, the Palembang Sultanate came to an end on 16 July 1821, when Prabu Anom was appointed Sultan of Palembang, replacing Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II, who had been deposed and arrested by the Dutch on 8 July 1821 (Woelders, 1975). The Sultanate was officially dissolved on 9 August 1825. However, even after its formal dissolution, resistance from the upland communities continued until the mid-1860s, as the Dutch struggled to gain full control over the interior regions of South Sumatra (Drewes, 1976, p. 54).

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Islamic socio-religious landscape of Palembang underwent notable transformations, shaped by colonial pressures, modern education, and evolving interpretations of Islamic practice. Despite challenges posed by Western influence and colonial policies, the people of Palembang maintained a strong Islamic identity. Even after the Sultanate's political collapse, the city remained a spiritual stronghold and was regarded by the colonial government as a center of resistance against Dutch authority (Drewes, 1976, p. 63).

To manage religiously charged unrest, the Dutch colonial administration implemented a pacification policy (*politiek van pacificatie*) in Palembang, like strategies employed in Aceh. Initially, however, the colonial authorities lacked sufficient understanding of Islam, the Arabic language, and the Muslim social order, which prevented them from interfering directly in religious matters (Rahim, 1998, p. 15). This changed with the arrival of Professor Christian Snouck Hurgronje in 1889. He argued that Islam lacked a clerical hierarchy akin to Christianity, and that *ulama* and *kyai* were not inherently political. He further explained that *penghulu* (local Islamic judges) were essentially native bureaucrats, while independent *ulama* were not conspirators but rather devout individuals concerned with worship (Burhanuddin, 2014). Hurgronje's theory of "Islamic politics" was widely adopted in the Dutch *inlandsch politiek*, which aimed to manage native affairs by preserving the penghulu system within the colonial administrative framework (Drewes, 1976, p. 60).

During the colonial era, *ulama* in Palembang were generally categorized into two groups: bureaucratic *ulama* (*ulama birokrat*) and popular or grassroots *ulama* (*ulama rakyat*). The former held official positions as penghulu, enforcing Islamic law while also functioning as colonial advisors, tax collectors, population recorders, and supervisors of religious education. Owing to their integration with the colonial bureaucracy, they were often referred to as "dependent *ulama*" (Feener, 2015, p. xx). In contrast, the "popular *ulama*" were independent scholars focused on *dakwah* and grassroots religious instruction. Their activities typically took place in homes, *langgar* (small prayer houses), mosques, or rural regions. Basic religious education was delivered informally, often expanding to the study of hadith, *tasawwuf*, and arithmetic. Some students pursued advanced Islamic studies in the *Haramayn* (Mecca and Medina), typically in conjunction with pilgrimage (Drewes, 1976, p. 59; Rahim, 1998, p. 12).

The dichotomy between bureaucratic and independent *ulama* can be analytically framed within theories of religious authority. Drawing on Weberian concepts of legal-rational and charismatic authority, colonial-era Palembang illustrates a dual structure wherein the institutional legitimacy of the penghulu coexisted—and occasionally conflicted—with the moral-spiritual authority of independent Sufi teachers. This tension reflects broader patterns in Islamic societies under colonial rule, where formal religious offices were co-opted by imperial regimes, while *ulama* outside the state structure became vehicles of cultural resilience and religious authenticity.

Notable *ulama* of this period included Syaikh Muhammad 'Aqib bin Hasanuddin, Syaikh Muhammad Azhary bin Abdullah bin Ahmad (1811–1874), Masagus Haji Abdul Hamid bin Mahmud (1811–1901), Haji Abdurrahman Delamat (1820–1896), Haji Muhammad Azhari bin Abdullah bin Ma'ruf (1856–1932), and Haji Abdullah bin Muhammad Ahary (1854–1937) (Rahim, 1998, p. 12).

Syaikh Muhammad 'Aqib bin Hasanuddin was a direct disciple of ‘Abdussamad al-Palembani. Born around 1760 in Palembang, he traveled to Mecca at a young age to study under his teacher. Upon receiving ijazah (authorization) to teach and propagate the Sammaniyah order, he returned to Palembang and settled in Kampung Pengulon near the Grand Mosque and the former royal palace (Peeters, 1997, p. 34). Even after the fall of the Sultanate, Syaikh Muhammad 'Aqib maintained close ties with the former aristocracy, including Panembahan Bupati (the brother of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II) and Sunan Ahmad Najamuddin II, who acted as patrons of Islamic learning (Drewes, 1976, p. 59).

According to Peeters, the last mention of his name appeared in a Dutch annual report in 1849, suggesting that he had passed away by then. He was buried in Gubah, 24 Ilir, Palembang—today known as Gubah Datuk (Peeters, 1997, p. 35). Although comprehensive biographical records of Syaikh Muhammad 'Aqib bin Hasanuddin remain limited, his role in Islamic education and Sufi propagation is well documented. As a disciple of ‘Abdussamad al-Palembani, he played a central role in extending the influence of the Sammaniyah order in Palembang and its surroundings. His legacy is also preserved in Manaqib Syaikh Muhammad Samman, where he is portrayed as a spiritually gifted scholar (Drewes, 1976, p. 63).

The endurance of the Sammaniyah order during the colonial period highlights the function of tarekat as spaces of subaltern resistance. In contrast to the bureaucratic religiosity co-opted by colonial administration, these mystical networks fostered communal solidarity, spiritual autonomy, and alternative moral authority. As such, tarekat can be interpreted as "counter-publics"—cultural and religious spheres where marginalized voices cultivated intellectual and spiritual agency in the shadow of imperial power (Drewes, 1977; 2005).

Reflecting on the colonial legacies of Islamic authority in Palembang, one may argue that the resilience of grassroots *ulama* and the adaptability of tarekat practices continue to shape religious life in the region today. Contemporary Islamic identity in Palembang still draws upon historical patterns of informal religious education, community-based leadership, and Sufi traditions. This continuity underscores the enduring vitality of the city’s socio-intellectual heritage and its relevance in navigating modern challenges of religious identity and pluralism.

CONCLUSION

This article asserts that the primary strength of the Palembang Muslim community in confronting political upheaval and colonial pressure did not lie in formal political structures, but in the resilience and depth of its socio-intellectual Islamic traditions. Although the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate was politically defeated by the Dutch in the early nineteenth century, the Islamic identity of its people not only endured but evolved through religious education, *ulama* networks, and the sustained practice of tarekat, all of which continued to grow organically in both domestic and public spheres.

The socio-intellectual development of Islam in Palembang during the colonial era cannot merely be understood as a form of cultural resistance. Rather, it should be viewed as a continuation of a deeply rooted Islamic scholarly tradition that originated during the Sultanate. The coexistence of bureaucratic and grassroots *ulama*, each fulfilling distinct yet complementary roles, demonstrates how the Palembang community forged an adaptive and resilient religious model under conditions of foreign domination. In this context, tarekat—especially the Sammaniyah order—functioned as both spiritual and social arenas that strengthened communal bonds and constituted an alternative structure of power in response to colonial hegemony (Drewes, 2005).

Viewed through the lens of Islamic intellectual history, the history of Palembang should not be read solely as a chronicle of political succession, but more profoundly as a narrative of the intellectual and spiritual resilience of a local Muslim society. This constitutes Palembang’s critical historical contribution to the broader socio-intellectual landscape of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world—a narrative of how Islamic identity and knowledge were preserved, transformed, and strategically reproduced as enduring legacies, even under the repressive conditions of colonial rule. The bureaucratic and religious hybridization under Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II illustrates the resilience of Malay-Islamic traditions in local governance, whereby Islamic legal, educational, and cultural values were embedded into administrative structures that outlasted the political sovereignty of the Sultanate itself.

Academically, this study expands the horizon of local Islamic historiography by presenting a model of adaptive religiosity emerging from the intersection between political authority and spiritual leadership. Future research may further explore the postcolonial development of Sufi orders or examine the continuity of the Sultanate’s intellectual legacy in modern Islamic educational systems. In the context of contemporary global challenges, the Palembang case offers valuable insights into how local Islamic traditions can serve as sources of identity, resilience, and renewal, offering a paradigm through which other local Muslim societies might also be reinterpreted.

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