



Malay Civilization of The Lembak Tribe, Bengkulu: Integration of Islam and Local Culture

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Abstract: This research departs from the rich and complex Malay culture, so understanding it requires a flexible mindset. Understanding Malay concepts must be done holistically and comprehensively, and one of the characteristics of Malay culture is its inclusive nature. One of them is the Lembak tribe in Bengkulu Province. The Lembak Malay tribe has a very unique characteristic in playing a role in the spread of Islam; the Lembak tribe has succeeded in maintaining their traditions while adopting other Islamic values. Facts show that the Lembak tribe has a complex social structure with a strong kinship system; this contributes to the way they integrate Islamic teachings into their daily lives. This study uses a qualitative method because it allows researchers to explore complex social phenomena in depth. The results of this study indicate that the Lembak tribe is found in Bengkulu Province; it has close social ties and can integrate Islamic values into daily life. This is evidenced by one of the wedding traditions carried out by the Lembak tribe and the Sarafal Anam custom.

Keywords: Culture; Islamic Integration; Lembak Tribe; Malay

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INTRODUCTION

Each ethnic group in Indonesia certainly has its own unique characteristics, such as the Javanese, Batak, Malay, Bugis, Dayak, and Minang. An ethnic group is a social entity that can be distinguished from other entities based on its roots and cultural identity, especially language. In other words, an ethnic group is a group of people bound by a shared consciousness and identity, strengthened by a common language (Resdati, 2023). Malays are an ethnicity or nation that inhabits the Southeast Asia region. Malays are in Southeast Asia (Hidayat, 2014). They are spread across several countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines (Alfarabi et al., 2019). Even though Malay is a collective identity, the Malay community is not politically bound. Malay ties only appear in the history and identity of the nation. The development of Malay identity runs independently in each country without being tied to each other. Ultimately, Malay identity in each country is determined by past and present history, where the process of formation cannot be separated from the role of power (Alfarabi et al., 2019).

The shifting boundaries of the Malay ethnic group in Southeast Asia were initially the result of colonial intervention, which divided the Malay region into separate regions. This colonial approach made ethnic boundaries more rigid and exclusive, shaping national identity (Hidayat, 2014). This situation has caused significant differences in the ethnic boundaries of Malays in several countries, as they adapt to their respective circumstances. Malays in Malaysia are considered a nation and face challenges in their daily lives, confronting people of Chinese and Indian descent. This situation strengthens Malay bonds, as their existence is threatened if they do not unite. Malays in Brunei Darussalam are stronger because they are the majority in the country. Meanwhile, Malays in Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam struggle to maintain their identity as minorities (Alfarabi et al., 2019). This shows that Malay is not just an ethnic group, but also a whole construction of civilization that has developed through a long and dynamic history (Samsidar & Syamsuduha, 2024). When the definition of Malay is understood within a narrow paradigm, Malays are confined to partial thinking and understanding. Ultimately, Malays are viewed only from a particular perspective, even by Malays themselves, who almost always define them within the confines of their own perspectives (Sanusi, 2017).

The impact of these local developments has resulted in Malay identity in Indonesia becoming increasingly narrow and evolving independently. Choices regarding Malay identity are often determined by current circumstances and change with the demands of the times. Cultural and political pressures under the New Order government contributed to the erosion of Malay identity in Indonesia. This situation arose because the New Order government implemented cultural homogenization, leading to Javanization. Malay identity was

eroded until the advent of the Reformation (Alfarabi et al., 2019). Malay culture is a rich and complex concept, so understanding it requires a flexible mindset, just like Malay culture itself. The relationship between Islam as a religion and customs and culture is very clear in the study of the anthropology of religion. From this perspective, religion is believed to embody the cultural system (Rahman, 2023). Understanding the concept of Malay must be holistic and comprehensive. One of the hallmarks of Malay culture is its inclusive nature. This is likely because most Malays live along rivers or coastlines, connecting with people from all over the world. Malays have absorbed foreign cultures and developed their own superior culture, a culture that embodies a strong sense of identity (Sumardi et al., 2025), which ultimately becomes a benchmark in life; values give meaning to life and behavior (Aslan, 2017). Evidence shows that Malay culture is the result of a blend of Malay and immigrant cultures (Maryamah et al., 2023). Malay life is a system of values that regulates social behavior, social relations, and daily procedures (Pasyah et al., 2026).

Initially, Malay culture was a mixture of local customs and Hindu beliefs. Malay culture was introduced to the Indonesian archipelago by the ancient Malay group from 3000 BC to 1500 BC and continued by the New Malay group from 500 BC. After Islam entered the Indonesian archipelago through the Malacca kingdom, Islamic cultural traditions were absorbed by Malay culture, and in the history of the Indonesian archipelago, Malay civilization occupies a very important position (Zulaemy & Andalas, 2020). Islam entered the archipelago through scholars from Arabia, Persia, and India. A new culture developed in accordance with Islamic teachings: Malay-Islamic culture (Niswah, 2023). Malays view Islam not only as a religion approved by Allah SWT, but also as an identity, thus giving rise to the expression "Malays must be Muslim, otherwise they are not Malay." The strong Islamic identity among Malays means that Islam cannot be separated from the Malay people themselves, so that until death, Islam remains the religion of the Malay people. Islam and the Malay people have a very close relationship, even inseparable. Islam has been closely associated with the Malay people; thus, the emerging perspective is that Malays are Muslims (Muhsinin, 2019). Islam is depicted as truly integrated with the Malay people. Malay people highly value morals, religious beliefs, arts, and customs (Rustam, 2018).

The Bengkulu community is a large Malay group. All the Bengkulu Malay ethnic communities spread across districts and cities in Bengkulu Province, including Rejang, Serawai, Melayu, Bulang, Kaur, Enggano, Muko-Muko, Lembak, and Basemah (Samsudin, 2016). One of the Malay Islamic civilizations that still exists today in Indonesia is the Lembak Malay civilization of Bengkulu Province. The Lembak Malays have unique characteristics and played a crucial role in the spread of Islam in the Lembak region. Since the arrival of Islam in the 13th century, the process of acculturation between Islamic teachings and local culture has been ongoing, creating a distinct identity. The Lembak people are one of the communities that have successfully maintained their traditions while adopting Islamic values, thus creating harmony between religion and culture. The Lembak people have a complex social structure with a strong kinship system. This contributes to the way they integrate Islamic teachings into their daily lives (Alfarabi et al., 2019). The integration of Islam and local culture among the Lembak Tribe, among other things, can be found in ritual processions and wedding ceremonies (Novita et al., 2024).

The Lembak people have a unique way of celebrating Islamic holidays, such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. During these celebrations, they not only perform religious services but also hold festivals featuring various cultural attractions. This demonstrates that the Lembak people have not only adopted Islam but also interpreted and expressed it through their own culture. This is because the tribe possesses unique characteristics, ranging from customs and traditions to language and local wisdom (Polhaupessy et al., 2025). Each ethnic group has a different culture (Triwibisono & Aurachman, 2021) and has its own characteristics (Sugiyanto & Fajriyanur, 2025). For example, the values of solidarity and cooperation inherent in the local culture of the Lembak Tribe align with the principles taught in Islam. This creates space for them to express their faith in ways appropriate to their cultural context. The understanding of cultural and religious identity among the Lembak Tribe is inseparable. They view Islam not only as a belief system but also as part of their cultural identity. Thus, this integration process influences not only religious practices but also how they understand themselves as individuals and as members of a community.

Statistics show that approximately 90% of the Lembak Tribe's population is Muslim. However, local cultural influences remain evident in their religious practices. For example, during prayers, they often hold religious study groups (*Majelis Taklim*) that incorporate elements of local culture, such as music and dance. This creates a friendly atmosphere and strengthens social bonds among community members. From a theoretical perspective, the integration of Islam and local culture can be analyzed through the lens of acculturation theory. This theory explains how two distinct cultures can influence each other and form new identities. In the context of the Lembak Tribe, this acculturation can be seen as a dynamic process in which Islamic elements are integrated into local culture without eliminating existing traditions. This research is significant in understanding the dynamics of the interaction between Islam and local culture in Indonesia, particularly among the Lembak people. By analyzing how the Lembak people integrate Islamic teachings into their cultural practices, this research contributes to the study of the anthropology and sociology of religion in Indonesia. It also opens up opportunities for further research on how other communities in Indonesia carry out similar processes.

Furthermore, this research provides insights for policymakers and practitioners in understanding the importance of preserving local culture in the context of religious dissemination. By understanding how the Lembak people adopted Islam without losing their cultural identity, it is hoped that more inclusive and sustainable models of integration will emerge in Indonesian society. More broadly, this research also contributes to global discussions about the influence of religion on culture and vice versa. In this era of globalization, where cultural identities are often threatened, studying the Lembak Tribe can provide valuable lessons on the importance of maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity. Therefore, this research is relevant not only for academics but also for the wider community seeking to understand the complex relationship between religion and culture in Indonesia's multicultural context.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth the phenomenon of Malay civilization among the Lembak Tribe of Bengkulu, particularly in the context of integrating Islamic values with local culture that has developed in society. The descriptive method is used to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the facts, characteristics, and relationships between the phenomena studied without manipulating variables. Descriptive qualitative research methods are used when researchers want to obtain an in-depth picture of an event, culture, behavior, or social phenomenon, such as research on the integration of Islam and local culture in the Malay civilization of the Lembak Tribe of Bengkulu (Rupadha, 2016).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The word Malay is well known and familiar; it can be identified in terms of language and race (anthropology), which is known as the Malayan Mongoloid race. The term Malay has a deep and broad meaning because it has two meanings. Malay is meant as a group of Malay people who use the Malay language, while Malay means Malay values and identity; therefore, the term Malay can be understood based on several criteria. First, the national group and its language are Malay. Both are various tribes belonging to Malay (Roza et al., 2022). For the Malay people in Malaya (Malaysia), the name Malay is singular and refers to the nation; they call the Southeast Asian Islands. The word Malay probably comes from the name of a tributary called Sungai Melayu in the upper reaches of the Batang Hari River, Sumatra. There, the Malay Kingdom was located around 1500 years ago, before or during the Srivijaya Kingdom. In terms of etymology, Malay words are said to originate from Sanskrit; 'Melaya' means 'hill' or 'high land'. There are also historical sources which say that the word 'Melayu comes from the Melayu River in Jambi. Khirul A. Mastor, Putai Jin, and Martin Cooper say that 'Malay people' (Malays) are those who are indigenous to the Malaya region, a region on the Malay Peninsula.

Malays also live in Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, Southern Thailand, Cambodia, and beyond Southeast Asia. One explanation is that the word Malay comes from the Tamil word meaning mountains. Perhaps in the past, Indian sailors and travelers came from the west coast of Sumatra via the Indian Ocean and saw an island full of mountains from one end to the other. The island was clearly Sumatra, and the series of mountains was the Bukit Barisan, hence the name Melayu, which means mountains or mountain range. On this mountainous island lived a tribe mentioned in the Malay History as follows: "The Malay people, from Bukit Siguntang Mahamiru (Putra, 2016).

The term "Malay" always refers to the Malay archipelago, which encompasses the islands of Southeast Asia. The term also refers to the ethnic group or Malay people of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, as well as other places where the Malay language is spoken. "Malay" is also often associated with the Malay archipelago, which encompasses Southeast Asian islands, interpreted differently across locations and regions, such as the island of Sumatra. "Malay" is usually associated with the people living in Palembang and its surroundings. In Kalimantan, the word "Malay" is also associated with a diverse Muslim community. Meanwhile, in Peninsular Malaysia, the term "Malay" is associated with people with brown or tan skin. The term "Malay" originates from the Sanskrit word "Malaya," which refers to a region known as a landmass surrounded by oceans. Therefore, from the explanation above, the meaning of "Malay" can be viewed from various perspectives, but the core meaning of "Malay" is the predominantly Muslim regions of Southeast Asia, encompassing Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, southern Thailand, and the southern Philippines.

Islam arrived in the Malay lands when Hindu and Buddhist influences were still strong. At that time, Srivijaya (Buddhist) and Majapahit (Hindu) still controlled much of what is now the Malay archipelago. The Malay people became acquainted with the Islamic religion and culture through trade routes, just as they had become acquainted with Hinduism and Buddhism. Through trade activities, the Malay people, already familiar with Hinduism and Buddhism, gradually became acquainted with Islamic teachings. This spread of Islam first occurred among coastal communities (along the coast and rivers) who were more open to foreign cultures. Therefore, many other nations came to the Malay region to establish trade relations. According to Roza et al. (2022), Malays are renowned for their gentle, polite, and commendable manners. They are courteous not only

to Malays but also to non-Malays. This is what fueled the thriving trade in the Malay lands, involving traders from various countries. This is due to the Malays' friendly nature, abundant natural resources, and location on international trade routes. In the seventh century, Muslim traders from India, Persia, and Arabia traversed the Strait of Malacca on their voyages to Southeast Asia and China. Through these trade connections, Islamic religion and culture entered the Malay world. Muslims began establishing Islamic settlements in Barus (North Sumatra), Kedah (Malacca), Aceh, and Palembang (Zami, 2018).

In Islam, when discussing the terms civilization or culture, it usually refers to similar terms such as millah, ummah, tahaqafah, tamaddun, hadharah, and adab. These terms have been used throughout Islamic history. The existence of Islamic civilization is nothing other than Islam as a belief and practice based on God's revelation and explained by the sayings of the Prophet. Islam as a system of belief/faith through the thoughts of scholars within the corridor of Islam, and this belief system produces actions *hablumminallah* and *hablum minannas*. Islamic civilization is parts of Islamic culture that encompass various aspects such as morals, art, and science, as well as a culture that has a system of technology, architecture, fine art, state system, and extensive science. From this explanation, it can be understood that Islamic civilization brings change not only in the form of physical buildings but also transforms its people to superior morals in various aspects of life (Balwi & Koharuddin, 2005).

The progress and greatness of Islam in the Malay region then changed the character of the people who previously adhered to Hinduism and Buddhism into a Muslim society. According to Hall, Hinduism and Buddhism only developed rapidly in the archipelago in the 5th century AD. The Kutai Kingdom in Kalimantan and Amaravati-style Buddhist statues found in several places in Sulawesi, Java, and Sumatra show the rapid development of Hindu and Buddhist culture at that time. Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms in the archipelago reached their peak in the 9th to 15th centuries AD, including: Srivijaya (Sumatra), Kediri, and Majapahit (Java). The Nagarakertarman book records that Srivijaya's power-controlled areas in Sumatra; in another version, Srivijaya's territory reached most of the archipelago, including Cambodia. Entering the 13th century, Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms gradually weakened; during this period, the Majapahit kingdom also weakened (Putra, 2016).

Converting the Malay community, which already had a Hindu-Buddhist culture, to Islam was not easy. It took a long time and involved various methods, including trade, marriage, preaching, education, Sufism, the arts, and politics. Islam's success in becoming the majority religion in Malay society further advanced and developed Malay civilization, bringing about changes in various aspects of life (social, political, economic, and religious) (Balwi & Koharuddin, 2005). Another important factor driving the rapid spread of Islam was three forces: the palace, the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), and the market. The palace, as the center of power, played a role in providing political legitimacy for its dissemination to the people under its auspices. *Pesantren*, run by religious sects, provided a down-to-earth and easily understood explanation of the essence of religion.

The openness of *pesantren* to all made these institutions a place for the community to learn and deepen their Islamic teachings. The market, as a residential area for merchants, scholars, and the middle class, faced a burgeoning cultural landscape. Supported by these three forces, Islam's influence in Malay society accelerated. Culturally, Islam was spread through the *pesantren* and the market. Politically, it was legitimized by the palace. Knowledge such as sharia, Sufism, tafsir, kalam (theology), and hadith, as well as general knowledge such as navigation, aesthetics, astronomy, logic, economics, and commerce, etc., flourished. The development of faith and knowledge simultaneously positioned Islam as the pivot of Malay society, influencing all dimensions of their lives. A popular expression explicitly demonstrates the strong influence of Islam: "*adat bersandi syarak, syarak bersandi kitabullah*" (Putra, 2016). It then continued to spread to the interior areas of the Malay region.

From the explanations above, presented by several experts on the influence of Islam on Malay civilization, we can conclude the following: First, Islamic kingdoms or sultanates emerged, such as in Sumatra: Perlak, Samudera Pasai, Aceh, Jambi, Palembang, Pagaruyung, and Riau. On the Malay Peninsula: Malacca, Kedah, Pahang, Selangor, and Pattani; on Java: Demak, Pajang, Islamic Mataram, Cirebon, and Banten. In Kalimantan: Banjar, Pontianak, Brunei, Kutai Kertanegara, and Sambas. In Sulawesi: The Gowa-Tallo Sultanate. In Maluku: Ternate and Tidore; in the southern Philippines: Mindanao. Therefore, it is understandable that Islam brought drastic changes to the system of government with the emergence of kingdoms. Logically, if a kingdom existed, Islam would have already been integrated and become an inseparable part of it. In this Islamic kingdom or sultanate, the term Sultan was also born, and state laws (in the government and legal system) were changed based on the Koran and hadith, which made society more just, comfortable, safe, and liked by the people. The second is education. The early history of Islamic education in Malay land is closely related to the early history of the arrival and introduction of Islam in Malay land. Islamic education provides understanding, appreciation and practice of Islamic teachings to the Islamic community in Malay land, which began with the arrival of Islam in this region, especially during the kingdoms (or Islamic sultanates such as Perlak, Pasai, Malacca, and Aceh) and gave birth to *ulama*, where *ulama* became leaders and educational figures who were highly accepted by the Malay community (Roza et al., 2022). Islamic educational institutions have been open to all levels of society and groups since their inception.

Furthermore, Islam is a religion of scripture. Learning to read and write is obligatory for all its adherents. Thus, with the spread of Islam, the tradition of learning gradually developed. Therefore, the arrival of Islam sparked a rational and intellectual revival with a religious character in the archipelago that had never been experienced before. Furthermore, Islam also spurred profound changes in the Malay psyche and culture. Islam fostered scientific and intellectual pursuits and freed them from the shackles of mythology that had previously dominated their psyche. The third language, literature, and Arabic script are Malay. Arabic and Malay hold equal status because they are both *lingua francas*. Malay is referred to as the *lingua franca* because it is the language of instruction or social interaction in the Malay region, especially in the world of commerce. Likewise, Arabic is the language of instruction and social interaction in trade in the Middle East.

Wardhaugh defines a *lingua franca* as a language of communication commonly used by people who share different mother tongues. A *lingua franca* is a language adopted by speakers of different cultures for shared communication. Examples include Arabic in the Middle East, Latin in Europe during the Middle Ages, Malay in the Indonesian archipelago during the Sivijaya era, and Swahili in Central Africa. Arabic served as a *lingua franca*, particularly in the spread of Islam. Arabic and Malay enjoyed equal status as *lingua francas*. The spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago resulted in linguistic contact between Arabic and Malay. This gave birth to the Jawi script or alphabet, which combines the Arabic script with Malay. In addition, phonemes and Arabic vocabulary were inevitably absorbed into Malay, which then became Indonesian, and this development gradually also appeared in writing or letters: the Arabic-Malay script or Jawi Alphabet. The Jawi alphabet (Arabic: **جوي** Jāwi) (or Yawi in the Patani area, Gundhil in the Javanese area besides Pegon, Jawoe in the Aceh area) is an Arabic alphabet used to write Malay. This alphabet is used as one of the official scripts in Brunei, and also in Malaysia, Indonesia, Patani, and Singapore for religious purposes. According to Syed Nuquib in Roza et al. (2022), approximately three hundred years before the discovery of Arabic script in Arabic on several tombstones, Arabic script in Malay had only been discovered.

Indonesia consists of various ethnic groups, each with diverse cultures. The Lembak Bengkulu Tribe is known to have a rich civilization and culture (Wani et al., 2024). This is also the case in Bengkulu society. Bengkulu Province has nine ethnic groups, including the Rejang, Serawai, Enggano, Muko-muko, Malay, Pasemah, Pekal, and Lembak. There are two Lembak tribes; one is the Lembak Delapan tribe, which lives in several districts, such as Rejang Lebong and Central Bengkulu. The Lembak tribe that lives in Rejang Lebong is called the Beliti tribe, while the tribe that lives in Central Bengkulu, Bengkulu City, is called the Lembak Delapan, which is divided into the Lembak Tanjung Agung tribe, the Lembak Pedalaman tribe, and the Lembak Bulang tribe (Harahap, 2016). The Lembak Delapan tribe has one ancient kingdom in Bengkulu: the Sungai Serut kingdom. This kingdom is located in the Tanjung Terdana area and spread along the Bangkahulu River. This kingdom was led by a king named Burniat. Initially, the Lembak tribe lived on the outskirts of the Rejang Empat Petulai kingdom. From Ulak Tanding and Lubuk Linggau, the spread reached the city of Bengkulu. The Lembak tribe is indigenous to Bengkulu. This is said because there is evidence that the Lembak tribe has a history, the Sungai Hitam kingdom, with its King Singaran Pati, who was titled Aswanda. The Lembak tribe has a unique language and a culture, both physical and non-physical, in the form of art (Harahap, 2016).

The Lembak people as a tribe in Indonesia certainly have their own cultural richness (Utami et al., 2025). The Lembak tribe inhabits the province of Bengkulu; the Lembak people are Muslim, so their culture has many Islamic nuances, but besides that, there are still influences from other cultures. The following are the cultural traditions and symbols of the Lembak tribe that have Islamic nuances: Sarafal Anam, Tamat Kaji, Nenjor or Aqiqah, Melayang, Ketan Bekah, Lenguai. In this study the author focuses on the traditional marriage traditions of the Lembak tribe and the Sarafal Anam tradition, because this tradition is a tradition that the Lembak people very much carry out to the point of becoming a routine tradition, this is very interesting because of the Islamic values contained in it, such as in terms of marriage which is a series of forms of gratitude, and sarafal anam which is one of the traditions carried out every Islamic holiday such as the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, and other major holidays.

In the Lembak language, the wedding ceremony is called kaje or bapelan, which is the core or culmination of the ceremony. This activity is a series of celebrations expressing joy and gratitude from all family members, both close and extended. Both parties hold the wedding ceremony, and it takes place on the day of consensus (*Arai pekat*), while the second day is called the day of storytelling (*Andun*) (Hidayatullah, 2021). In the traditional wedding procession of the Lembak tribe, there is a custom of replying to pantun; pantun is used as a medium to convey moral and religious messages. On the day of the wedding, the bride must be dressed in traditional wedding attire. This initial bridal makeup session is not performed at home, but rather at the home of a relative, known as the Bakodai. For the Bakodai ceremony, the bride must prepare a cloth covering the kelimbing tree, rice, coconuts, coconut sugar, and bananas. These items are then handed over to the bride's makeup artist (the bride's host). After the bride's makeup is complete, she is taken to her home, where she is greeted by her mother and smoked with incense. In this marriage ceremony, the groom does not wear wedding attire, but only wears a suit, a cloth, and a pojok (a special *songkok* for traditional ceremonies). Like the bride, the groom also leaves for this wedding without makeup at his home, but at his family's house. When

accompanying the bride and groom to the traditional wedding, the groom always brings (offers) a *tapan ilim* (a complete betel leaf container). The bride and groom depart for their future wife's house, led by a traditional leader ([Hidayatullah, 2021](#)). This traditional leader is entrusted with escorting the bride to the traditional leader (chief). The wedding ceremony is usually performed on a prayer mat, and the bride remains in the bridal chamber during the marriage vows. If the ceremony is held at the groom's home, the prayer mat is given to the parents/guardians of the woman performing the marriage. After the ceremony, the groom is not yet reunited with the bride; instead, he must return home later that evening. On this day of agreement, in addition to the post-wedding prayer, a prayer/feast is also held, known as the *Kenduri Sekulak* (a small thanksgiving for the wedding ceremony). *Sekulak* is a small feast, consisting of four cups of rice ([Hidayatullah, 2021](#)).

After the wedding ceremony at the groom's house, the bride and groom return to the bride's house to mingle, officially becoming husband and wife. In the past, the couple would receive advice from their elders before this ceremony, but this is no longer the case. After officially marrying, the next morning (after dawn prayers) they must go to the groom's parents' house. The groom must also give the bride's mother a gold ring (or even have her put on) as a sign of his acceptance of his wife. The final part of the wedding celebration is a feast, commonly known as "eating crust," held the day after the wedding night. This feast features a special dish: chicken curry with gourd (*kundur*), for which the ingredients are sourced from the groom's family. In the past, these ingredients were delivered in kind; today, they are no longer given in kind but instead in exchange for money. The eating crust ceremony is the final part of the wedding ceremony in the Lembak community ([Harahap, 2016](#)).

The *sarafal anam* art form is a traditional art form passed down from generation to generation by the Lembak people. Often referred to as "zikir" (remembrance of God), the *sarafal anam* art form became known to the Lembak people with the arrival of Islam in Bengkulu ([Amelia & Hudaidah, 2021](#)). Regarding the entry of Islam into Bengkulu, there are several theories: first, it states that Islam entered Bengkulu through an Acehnese cleric, Tengku Malim Muhidin, who spread Islam in Mount Bungkok and succeeded in converting Ratu Agung, the ruler of Mount Bungkok. The arrival of Tengku Malim Muhidin is said to have been in 1417 AD. Second, through the arrival of Ratu Agung from Banten to become King of Sungai Serut. Ratu Agung, according to Siddik 26, was the son of Sultan Hasanuddin of Banten (1546-1570). Ratu Agung ruled in the Sungai Serut Kingdom, estimated to be 1550-1570 AD. Third, through the marriage of Sultan Muzaffar Syah (1620-1660 AD), king of the Indrapura Kingdom, with Princess Serindang Bulan, daughter of Rio Mawang (1550-1600 AD) from the Lebong kingdom (Depati Tiang Empat). Fourth, through the friendship between the Selebar Kingdom and the Banten Kingdom and the marriage of Prince Nata Di Raja (1638-1710) to Princess Kemayun, daughter of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. Fifth, through the relationship between the Palembang Darussalam Kingdom and King Depati Tiang Empat in Lebong.

From the five theories above, it can be concluded that Islam entered Bengkulu in the time span between the beginning of the 15th century (1417) to the end of the 17th century; therefore, it is not surprising that in 1685, Bloome reported that the coastal population of Bengkulu had embraced Islam, fasted and sworn an oath using the holy book, the Koran ([Tarobin, 2015](#)). The local wisdom of the *anam* (*sarafal anam*) has developed and become a cultural acculturation that flourished in the Bengkulu region. This acculturation is Islamic in nature because, in ancient times, Islam was well-received, and the community itself formed a tradition that blended Islam with Bengkulu's regional values. Philosophically, some differences cause groups to accept or reject this culture ([Uge et al., 2019](#)). Apart from being a developing culture, this tradition can be used as a tourist attraction that can introduce the characteristics of the Bengkulu people, the majority of whom are Muslim ([Zamrozi et al., 2021](#)). In its implementation, the *anam* ritual is preserved in the Bengkulu region and is still often combined with several events such as graduation ceremonies for reading the Koran, finishing the *aqiqah*, *sekujang*, and even baby naming ceremonies ([Susanto et al., 2020](#)).

In general, the local wisdom of the *sarafal anam* is similar to Islamic musical arts in other countries, such as the *gambus* in the Malay and Arab regions, *qawwali* in India, *Mehter tahkimi* in Turkey, and the *Fatimid festival* in Egypt. *Gambus* music itself is similar to the *sarafal anam*, but there are differences in the instruments used and the values it seeks to achieve ([Nafiah, 2021](#)). *Qawwali* prioritizes harmony between love and religion ([Shah, 2021](#)). Various sources explain that the *anam sarafal* exists among the Malay, Rejang, Lembak, Pekal, and Serawai ethnic groups in Bengkulu province. Historically, this art was brought by a Bantenese cleric who spread Islam. The Lembak community knows this cleric as *Datuk Syech Serunting*. Furthermore, according to literature, it was adopted from *Datuk Syech Serunting* by a Lembak community member named *Wahid Bin Rauf*, also known as *H. Tue*, in the 17th century, and it continues to develop to this day ([Ismail, 2019](#)). Those who study this form of *sarafal anam* not only learn Islamic art but also indirectly study the Quran, manners, social skills, emotional stability, and other Islamic teachings. The technique of *sarafal anam* utilizes vocal techniques and a type of membranophone percussion instrument known as the *rebana/redap*. The traditional art of *Sarafal Anam* is one of the traditional arts that is alive and well in the cultural traditions of the Lembak Bengkulu people, which are spread across several regions and certain communities ([Fauzan et al., 2022](#)). *Sarafal anam*, commonly referred to by the Lembak tribe as *bedikir*, has a fairly complex history. As stated in the previous chapter, this

art was brought by scholars from Banten and accepted by the Lembak community during the Islamization process of the Lembak community in the 17th century. In writing, it is not stated who started the bedikir activity, because the way of learning in the Lembak community was previously more dominant by listening than writing or recording genealogies, experiences, or knowledge gained. Based on the results of tracing several descendants of bedikir elders who were formerly teachers, it was found that the beginning of bedikir sarafal anam began with the marhaban activity carried out by adult men in the 19th century. Marhaban is an activity of reading the Barzanji book with distinctive rhythms that are now commonly used for the napat procession/welcoming the month of Muharram and the Prophet's Birthday, as well as the nenjor activity/cutting dirty hair in the akikah procession. Over time, the Marhaban activity evolved into a "bedikir sarafal anam" activity, using a large musical instrument, the rebana/redap/gendang. The rebana is a traditional musical art form that has long been present in Indonesia and still exists throughout the archipelago (Putri, 2017). One of the meanings of the Sarafal Anam art form for the people of Bengkulu is togetherness and cooperation. A Sarafal Anam performance requires the involvement of at least 20 people. These values of togetherness are reflected in the collaborative response between the group performing the poem and the group performing the answering song. The Sarafal Anam performance continues until the main poem is finished. Sarafal Anam is an integral part of the Bimbang tradition, where this traditional celebration would not be possible without the support of family and community. The values of togetherness are also evident in weekly rehearsals, which serve as a means of fostering friendship (Amelia & Hudaidah, 2021).

CONCLUSION

As a religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin (blessing for the universe), Islam has brought significant enlightenment and progress to humanity, including within the context of Malay society in Indonesia. The peaceful entry of Islam into Malay lands through various theories and channels of Islamization made this teaching easily accepted and able to integrate with pre-existing local culture. This integration not only strengthened the community's Islamic identity, but also supported the continued development of Malay culture, which took root in various regions such as South Bengkulu and Bengkulu City. This research confirms that this process of integrating Islam and local culture is also reflected in the lives of the Lembak Tribe, who maintain cultural values such as marriage traditions and Sarafal Anam as a manifestation of harmony between Islamic teachings and Malay customs. Thus, Islam plays a role not only as a religion but also as a transformative force that shapes and enriches Malay civilization in Bengkulu.

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