

## The Entry of Islam into the Malacca Sultanate based on the Manuscript “Sulalat-us-Salatin”

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas peran penting Kesultanan Malaka dalam Islamisasi Kepulauan Melayu, khususnya melalui sudut pandang naskah sejarah Sulalat-us-Salatin. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana Islam terintegrasi ke dalam tatanan sosial-politik Malaka selama abad ke-15, periode yang ditandai dengan meningkatnya perdagangan dan pertukaran budaya. Pertanyaan penelitian utama menyelidiki proses dan dampak Islamisasi sebagaimana digambarkan dalam Sulalat-us-Salatin. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah yang mencakup tahapan heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi, serta analisis tekstual kritis terhadap naskah ini bersama dengan sumber-sumber sekunder, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa meskipun Sulalat-us-Salatin mengandung unsur mitos dan legenda, naskah ini juga memberikan wawasan berharga tentang konteks historis penyebaran Islam di wilayah tersebut. Temuan-temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa konversi ke Islam bukan hanya transisi spiritual tetapi juga langkah strategis untuk keuntungan ekonomi dan politik. Pada akhirnya, artikel ini berpendapat bahwa memahami narasi sejarah ini sangat penting untuk memahami dinamika pengaruh Islam yang lebih luas di Asia Tenggara.

**Kata kunci:** kesultanan malaka, islamisasi, sulalat-us-salatin.

### Abstract

*The article explores the significant role of the Malacca Sultanate in the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago, particularly through the lens of the historical manuscript Sulalat-us-Salatin. The research aims to understand how Islam was integrated into Malacca's socio-political fabric during the 15th century, a period marked by increased trade and cultural exchange. The central research question investigates the processes and impacts of Islamization as depicted in Sulalat-us-Salatin. This study employs the historical research method, which includes the stages of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, alongside critical textual analysis of the manuscript and engagement with secondary sources. The study reveals that while Sulalat-us-Salatin contains elements of myth and legend, it also provides valuable insights into the historical context of Islam's spread in the region. The findings suggest that the conversion to Islam was not only a spiritual transition but also a strategic move for economic and political advantages. Ultimately, the article argues that understanding this historical narrative is crucial for comprehending the broader dynamics of Islamic influence in Southeast Asia.*

**Keywords:** malacca sultanate, islamization, sulalat-us-salatin.

### INTRODUCTION

In the 15th century CE, the Indonesian archipelago experienced significant advancements in trade. An increasing number of merchants from the Western regions arrived in these islands to purchase valuable commodities such as

spices, pepper, and timber, or simply to rest before continuing their journey to China (Ramadoni & Badrun, 2022, p. 20). One of the key players contributing to this commercial success was the Sultanate of Malacca.

The Sultanate of Malacca, a Malay Islamic kingdom located on the Malay Peninsula, developed into a prosperous and influential polity due to its strategic port. Positioned at a highly advantageous point on the global map, the port of Malacca served as a vital link between the Western and Eastern worlds. Consequently, it emerged as a bustling center of commerce, frequented by merchants from across the globe (Turner, 2019, p. 29; Matyamah et al., 2023, p. 95).

The port of Malacca was also known as the gateway to the Nusantara. This designation refers to its role in controlling the waters of the Strait of Malacca, the sole maritime passage connecting Indonesian ports with international destinations such as China (Yusilafita, Alimni, & Efendi, 2023, p. 4431). Alongside the spread of Islam in Malacca, the grandeur of the Sultanate became increasingly apparent. Malacca subsequently transformed into one of the major centers of Islamic development in the archipelago, owing to the arrival of Muslim traders, missionaries, and Sufi scholars (Maryamah et al., 2023, p. 97; Pratomo et al., 2023, p. 25).

The Sultanate of Malacca played a pivotal role in the Islamization process of the Nusantara. Once Islam had firmly taken root within the Sultanate, Muslim communities began to gain both economic and political advantages. The process of

Islamization intensified as the number of Muslim communities entering the region—particularly through Indonesian ports—increased significantly. Therefore, it becomes essential to understand how the Sultanate of Malacca itself underwent conversion to Islam.

One of the primary sources for studying the Islamization process of the Sultanate of Malacca is the manuscript *Sulalat-us-Salatin*, also known as the Malay Annals. Despite its controversial nature, *Sulalat-us-Salatin* is a text rich in historical information. It depicts events of the past and provides valuable insights into the socio-cultural conditions of the Malay society in Malacca (Bakar et al., 2022, pp. 1076-1077).

Hamid (1982, pp. 93-94) emphasizes the importance of taking into account local accounts—both written records and oral traditions—when discussing the process of Islamization in the Malay Archipelago. These local traditions, although often containing elements of myth and legend, serve as reflections of the historical past. *Sulalat-us-Salatin* is recognized as a manuscript that represents the intellectual depth and civilizational dignity of the Malay world, as reflected through the values embedded within its narrative (Zakaria et al., 2018, p. 207).

The use of local sources offers a more accurate perspective on the life of the Malay society. Milner emphasizes that

traditional historical materials are highly valuable for understanding Malay history. If these sources are disregarded, interpretations of Malay history risk becoming distorted, potentially leading to inaccurate conclusions (Fathi, 2023, p. 6). Accordingly, *Sulalat-us-Salatin* stands as a relevant local source for examining the Islamization process in the Sultanate of Malacca.

In the theory of Islamization in the Nusantara, Van Leur explains that this process was driven by political and economic motivations. From an economic perspective, the adoption of Islam brought advantages to the Sultanate of Malacca, as it attracted the support of Muslim merchants. Politically, conversion to Islam functioned as a strategic move to resist the dominance of Majapahit (Amin & Ananda, 2018, pp. 93-94).

This article will address three main objectives. First, it examines the manuscript *Sulalat-us-Salatin* as a historical source. Second, it analyzes the process of Islamization in the Sultanate of Malacca based on the narrative presented in *Sulalat-us-Salatin*. Third, it explores the impact of Islamization within the Sultanate of Malacca.

## METHODS

This study employs the historical research method, which includes the stages of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. In the

heuristic stage, the author focuses on the *Sulalat-us-Salatin* manuscript as the primary source. The version used is the edition compiled by Samad Ahmad, which is based on three principal manuscripts: (1) the manuscript owned by Munshi Mohammad Ali, (2) the manuscript owned by Hj. Othman Abdullah, and (3) one manuscript whose original owner remains unidentified (Samad, 1979, p. xi).

Through the stage of source criticism, the author evaluates the content of *Sulalat-us-Salatin* with a critical lens. As with other traditional accounts, the historical validity of this manuscript is often intertwined with elements of legend and myth (Sjamsuddin, 2016, pp. 64-65). The mystical narratives within the text are employed as instruments to bestow sacred legitimacy upon the ruling Malay dynasty of Malacca. Loir (2005, p. 140) explains that myth is an imaginary construction that reinforces authority; thus, the manuscript also functions as a political tool (Loir, 2005, p. 137). Therefore, while the author recognizes the limitations of the manuscript's objectivity, it remains valuable as a representation of the Malay worldview regarding history and power.

In the interpretation stage, the author compares the contents of the manuscript with various other sources, both contemporaneous and modern, to broaden the contextual understanding. In addition to journal articles and books,

external primary sources such as *Suma Oriental* by Tome Pires and the official translated edition of the Ming Dynasty records in *Ying-yai Sheng-lan* by Ma Huan are also utilized.

In the historiographical stage, the results of the interpretation of both primary and secondary sources are presented in the form of historical writing, arranged systematically and chronologically.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Examining *Sulalat-us-Salatin* as a Historical Source

Previously, *Sulalat-us-Salatin* was introduced as a significant traditional historical record of the Malay world. However, it is necessary to further explore the scholarly debates surrounding the use of *Sulalat-us-Salatin* as a historical source. It is difficult to assert that *Sulalat-us-Salatin* can be regarded as a primary source according to the standards of modern historiography. Nevertheless, *Sulalat-us-Salatin* falls under the category of historical literature, which is considered the richest branch of classical Malay literature (Fang, 2011, p. 433).

It is referred to as historical literature because the contents of *Sulalat-us-Salatin* largely consist of stories and anecdotes from the past. As such, it is difficult to categorize *Sulalat-us-Salatin* as a fully historical work (Roolvink, 1967, p. 306). Consequently, scholars hold

differing views regarding historical literature. R.A. Krem argues that although historical literature contains elements of history, its content is often mixed with fictional narratives; therefore, he suggests that such works should be dismissed. Conversely, J.C. Bottoms advocates for the study of historical literature as a historical source, although he considers Malay historical literature to serve more as a form of entertainment for the Malay community. Meanwhile, Snouck Hurgronje regards historical literature as a highly intriguing literary genre, and Hossein Djajadiningrat values historical literature—referred to by him as local tradition—as a meaningful source of historical knowledge (Fang, 2011, pp. 433-434).

*Sulalat-us-Salatin* is difficult to regard as a reliable historical source for several reasons, including the blending of historical elements with myths, legends, and folklore; the existence of multiple versions of the manuscript, which complicates efforts to identify an original version; and the lack of chronological information within the text (Djamaris, 1990, p. 64).

The myths contained in the *Sulalat-us-Salatin* manuscript are numerous and diverse. These elements obscure historical facts and pose challenges in distinguishing reality-based content from fictional components. However, the blending of myth and fact in

Sulalat-us-Salatin primarily reflects the historiographical culture of its time (Adam, 2016, p. 70). What may sound mythical or legendary to modern ears was not necessarily perceived as such by people living during the period in which Sulalat-us-Salatin was written.

In reality, Sulalat-us-Salatin is not a product of pure imagination composed without reference to any sources. Everything written in the manuscript is, at the very least, the result of the author's efforts to gather information, which, according to his own account, was derived from the oral traditions of earlier generations (Ismail, 2011, p. 100). Considering that the manuscript was intended for presentation to the king, it is reasonable to assume that the sources accessed by the author were individuals regarded as trustworthy—at least by the standards of that time.

There are approximately 29 different versions or manuscripts of Sulalat-us-Salatin scattered across the world (Harun, Abd Aziz, & Yahya, 2017, p. 154). The existence of so many versions has caused difficulties for historians in determining which version to use.

The existence of numerous versions of the Sulalat-us-Salatin manuscript is likely due to the fact that every important figure in the Johor Sultanate possessed a personal copy of the text (Ismail, 2011, p. 96). Moreover, the writing process was not entirely finalized; it continued over time,

resulting in various different endings. This point is also mentioned by Raja Ali Haji in his work *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (Haji & Ahmad, 1997, p. 1): “*karena ceteranya yang panjang sudah ada beberapa banyak karangan-karangan orang yang dahulu-dahulu daripada aku..*”

Despite the confusion caused by the existence of multiple versions of Sulalat-us-Salatin, Roolvink (1967, p. 301) argues that the abundance of versions in fact reflects the high regard the Malay community holds for the manuscript. The Malays viewed Sulalat-us-Salatin as a reflection of a resilient and vibrant Malay culture, and thus considered it an important work of historical literature—one written in a language deemed proper and beautiful (Fang, 2011, p. 39). The manuscript was also seen as valuable because it honored the contributions of the ancestors, whose intention was to offer lessons that could benefit future generations.

Historiography places great emphasis on chronological information. However, the greatest shortcoming of the Sulalat-us-Salatin manuscript lies in its lack of precise dating (Ismail, 2011, p. 104). Based on the view that the Malay Annals were written in Goa, the manuscript's composition likely occurred between 1512 and 1524. This was driven by the desire of the Malay author to record historical events. Nevertheless, the most widely accepted date for the

manuscript's documentation is 13 May 1612, which corresponds to 12 Rabi' al-Awal 1201 H, as stated in the Malay manuscript version compiled by H. Samad Ahmad (Gunalan, 1999, p. 113).

The author of *Sulalat-us-Salatin* did not entirely disregard chronological information, but instead conveyed it through phrases such as “*sekali persetua*”, “*tatkala pada zaman*”, and others. Only the Raffles manuscript explicitly mentions dates, reflecting an adaptation to the cultural context of its time (Ismail, 2011, pp. 104-105, 108).

The identity of the author of *Sulalat-us-Salatin* remains uncertain. There are three main views regarding the authorship of the manuscript: (1) Tun Sri Lanang, a bendahara (chief minister) of the Johor Kingdom, who is believed to have been commissioned to write *Sulalat-us-Salatin* in 1612 (Andaya, 2019, p. 142); (2) Orang Kaya Sogoh; and (3) an anonymous author (Gunalan, 1999, pp. 103-104). Each of these views is supported by fairly strong arguments.

Tun Sri Lanang is most frequently regarded as the author of *Sulalat-us-Salatin*, as the arguments supporting this view are considered more convincing. This position is reinforced by Syeikh Nuruddin al-Raniri, a prominent scholar and religious advisor at the Aceh Sultanate. Syeikh Nuruddin explicitly stated that Tun Sri Lanang was both the author and compiler of the manuscript. His claim is

based on his personal acquaintance with Tun Sri Lanang (Harun, Abd Aziz, & Yahya, 2017, p. 130). This statement is also found in Syeikh Nuruddin's own work, *Bustan-us-Salatin*, written in 1638 (Ismail, 2011, p. 96).

Anthony Reid further supports this view by asserting that Syeikh Nuruddin al-Raniri was a writer who consistently grounded his works in historical facts (Reid, 2011, p. 69). This strengthens the assumption that Tun Sri Lanang was the original author of *Sulalat-us-Salatin*.

Although *Sulalat-us-Salatin* has several limitations that prevent it from being considered a fully reliable historical source, the manuscript still offers a unique perspective for understanding Malay history. Following Sartono's view, *Sulalat-us-Salatin* should be seen as part of traditional historiography, reflecting the worldview, beliefs, and values of the Malay society of its time (Djamaris, 1990, p. 64). Thus, the manuscript not only presents a historical narrative but also serves as a reflection of how the Malay people understood and interpreted their past—even when conveyed through the lens of myth and local beliefs.

## **B. The Islamization Process of the Sultanate of Malacca Based on the Narrative in *Sulalat-us-Salatin*.**

The Malay world had long been in contact with Islam, even before the emergence of the Sultanate of Malacca, which is

considered the first Malay kingdom. The Malay-Malaccans were migrants from the island of Sumatra who settled in the Strait of Malacca region in the 12th century (Marsden, 1999, p. 147). This group originated from Jambi, with its center located near the Batang Hari River (Suwardono, 2013, p. 33). However, by the end of the 7th century, Jambi had fallen under the control of Srivijaya, which at the time was flourishing as a major maritime kingdom (Andaya, 2019, p. 47).

During their time in Sriwijaya, the Malays engaged extensively with Muslim traders and even established small communities there. This is supported by the account of I-tsing, a Chinese monk, who, during his journey to Nalanda, India, referred to Srivijaya as a trading center located along a great river—now known as the Musi River—frequented by Muslim merchants from Arabia, as well as Chinese and Indian traders (Sholeh, 2018, p. 210). In addition to being a commercial hub, Srivijaya also maintained diplomatic relations with the Umayyad Dynasty during the reign of Caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (717-719). This is evidenced by two letters sent by the ruler of Sriwijaya, one of which included a gift of spices as a symbol of friendship, and the other containing a request for an Islamic scholar to be sent to Srivijaya (Wandiyo et al., 2020, p. 36).

Thus, the interaction between the Malays and Islam during the Srivijaya era

was not limited to commerce but also encompassed political and religious relations, which strengthened the influence of Islam in the Malay region.

In addition, after the migration of the Srivijayan Malays to Malacca, the city became widely known among traders, including Muslim merchants (Sarry & Putra, 2024, p. 16). Its prominence was so significant that Sulayman al-Mahri and Ahmad bin Majid documented direct maritime routes connecting Arab ports to Malacca. Specifically, Sulayman al-Mahri provided detailed descriptions of the route from the port of Diu in Gujarat to Malacca, as well as the return route from Malacca to Aden in Yemen (Peacock, 2024, p. 161). These documented trade routes illustrate how Malacca functioned as a primary link between the Arab world and Southeast Asia, while simultaneously reinforcing its role within the Islamic maritime trade network.

### **The Process of Islamization**

*Sulalat-us-Salatin* presents a distinctive narrative regarding the advent of Islam in the Sultanate of Malacca, particularly through the story of Raja Kecil Besar, the heir to the Malaccan throne. In this account, Raja Kecil Besar is portrayed as having a dream in which he encounters the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the dream, the Prophet guides him to recite the shahada (the Islamic declaration of faith) and bestows upon

him a new name: Sultan Muhammad Shah. This event is not merely depicted as a dream, but as a form of spiritual legitimization that intertwines temporal authority with religious sanctity. As cited:

*“Maka sabda Rasulullah pada Raja Kecil Besar, ‘Ucap olehmu: Asyhadu alla ilaha il’ Allah wa asyhadu anna Muhammad-ar-rasulullah.’ Maka oleh Raja Kecil Besar seperti sabda Rasulullah salla’llahu ‘alaihi wa salam itu diturutnya. Maka sabda Rasulullah kepada Raja Kecil Besar, ‘Adapun namamu Sultan Muhammad Syah.’”* (Samad, 1979, p. 72)

A similar pattern can be observed in the story of Sultan Malikus Saleh, the first ruler of Samudra Pasai. Although not identical, this narrative also features an encounter with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a dream. In the dream, the Prophet is said to have spat into Malikus Saleh’s mouth, and the following day, he found himself able to recite the Qur’an fluently, despite having only recently embraced Islam. This event likewise serves as a form of spiritual legitimization, positioning Sultan Malikus Saleh as a divinely guided ruler who received direct instruction and blessing from the Prophet himself. As recorded in *Sulalat-us-Salatin*:

*“Syahadan pada malam itu Merah Silu pun tidur, maka ia bermimpi dirinya berpandangan dengan Rasulullah salla’llahu ‘alaihi wa salam. Maka sabda Rasulullah kepada Merah*

*Silu, ‘Ngangakan mulutmu!’ Maka oleh Merah Silu dingangakan mulutnya; diludahi oleh Rasulullah mulut Merah Silu....Telah hari siang, maka fakir pun naik ke darat membawa Quran disuruhnya baca pada Merah Silu. Maka oleh Merah Silu dibacanya Quran itu... Maka Merah Silu dirajakannya dan dinamainya Sultan Maliku’s Salleh.”* (Samad, 1979, hlm. 57)

Through these two narratives, the author of *Sulalat-us-Salatin*, Tun Sri Lanang, seeks to illustrate the intimate connection between Malay kings and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). His intention is to portray Malay rulers as pious figures who received both recognition and appointment directly from the Prophet. The association of royal authority with religious sanctity is a common motif in the Malay noble tradition. This is further exemplified in the story of Sri Tri Buana, whose lineage is traced back to Prophet Solomon—a narrative that serves to strengthen the legitimacy of royal power (Andaya, 2019, p. 69). Thus, Tun Sri Lanang presents the idea that a king’s authority is not solely sustained by political means or military strength, but also by divine blessing and spiritual endorsement received from the Prophet Muhammad.

By incorporating the story of Sultan Malikus Saleh’s conversion to Islam, *Sulalat-us-Salatin* explicitly highlights the role of the Samudra Pasai Sultanate in the

Islamization of the Malaccan Sultanate (Ahmad et al., 2012, p. 6). According to the Suma Oriental, Malacca once sought to establish trade relations with the Kingdom of Samudra Pasai. However, the Sultan of Samudra Pasai at the time imposed a condition: that the Malaccan ruler must embrace Islam (Pires & Rodrigues, 1944, p. 240):

*"Kemudian raja Pase tersebut mengirim duta besar kepada Xaquen Darxa tersebut dan mengatakan bahwa dia bersedia mengabdikan permintaannya | jika dia mau mengubah Moor, dan dia harus memberi tahu dia secara lengkap apa yang dia putuskan, sehingga dia bisa dengan cepat mewujudkan keinginannya."*

Interest in Islam had already become apparent during the reign of Raja Iskandar Shah. This was demonstrated by his willingness to accommodate Muslim merchants who stopped over in Malacca. Although his hospitality may have been strategically motivated—to attract a greater number of Muslim traders—it reveals his recognition of the substantial economic benefits that could be gained by revitalizing the port through commercial relations with Muslim merchants.

*"Pada akhir tiga tahun, para pedagang dari Benggala dan Moor Arab—yang pada waktu itu terdiri dari sejumlah besar pedagang dari ketiga bangsa ini—telah menetap di sana. Mereka sangat kaya, dengan bisnis besar dan kekayaan melimpah, dan mereka menetap di Malaka*

*untuk menjalankan perdagangan mereka." (Pires & Rodrigues, 1944, hlm. 240)*

The relationship between the Sultanates of Malacca and Samudra Pasai became increasingly close, likely due to the Malaccan rulers' origins in Sumatra (Wade, 1997, p. 49). Samudra Pasai, which had embraced Islam earlier, had already deeply rooted the religion within its domain. Marco Polo's visit in 1229 documented that the people of Ferlec (Perlak, now part of Aceh) had already converted to Islam (Polo, 2016). Ibn Battuta also witnessed Islamic practices in Samudra Pasai in 1354, including the Sultan performing Friday prayers (Battuta, 2014, pp. 15-16). These records demonstrate the strong Islamic influence in the region. It is therefore unsurprising that the ruler of Pasai wished for Malacca to embrace Islam as well, as documented in the Suma Oriental: *"Usaha untuk membuat sang raja berpindah menjadi seorang Moor (Muslim), sebuah keinginan yang sangat diharapkan oleh Raja Pase"* (Pires & Rodrigues, 1944, hlm. 241).

Besides dynastic ties, a shared perception of a common threat (Wade, 1997, p. 49) was a key reason for Samudra Pasai's efforts to establish Islam as the official religion in Malacca. The Ming Shi-lu records a conflict between the Sultanate of Pasai and Malacca against Siam. The Sulalat-us-Salatin recounts how the ruler of Samudra Pasai was captured by the king of Sharu'n-nawi (Andaya,

2019, p. 67). Meanwhile, the Suma Oriental notes that the Malacca-Siam conflict erupted after Parameswara killed Siam's governor in Singapore (Pires & Rodrigues, 1944, p. 232).

At that time, the Chinese Empire intervened to resolve the issue. In 1403 CE, Malacca sent three envoys to China to report the Siamese threat. Two years later, in 1405 CE, Malacca again dispatched envoys to China to strengthen ties and request protection against Siam (Yaakob & Ismail, 2017, p. 134). Siam, now outmatched, dared not retaliate after China established a government depot at the northern end of the Malacca Strait, near Samudra Pasai (Wade, 1997, p. 54). The establishment of this depot demonstrated China's role as protector of the two sultanates, Samudra Pasai and Malacca. It was this conflict with Siam that solidified the two polities' shared sense of vulnerability against a common threat.

Beyond shared cultural, commercial, and political dynamics with Pasai that contributed to Malacca's successful Islamization, the role of ulama was equally pivotal. These ulama facilitated the Islamic conversion of Malacca's king. The Sulalat-us-Salatin chronicles the arrival of an ulama, Syed Abdul Aziz from Jeddah, whose presence authenticated the veracity of Raja Kecil Besar's visionary encounter with the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

*“Maka titah Raja Kecil Besar, “Alamatnya kalam beta seperti dikhatankan orang, itulah tanda sah Hamba bertemu dengan Rasulullah salla 'llahu 'alaihi wa salam: dan sabda Rasulullah pada Hamba, Asar sekarang datang sebuah kapal dari Jeddah, turun orangnya di pantai Melaka itu sembahyang; hendaklah turut olehmu barang katanya.” Maka Bendahara pun hairanlah melihat kalam baginda seperti dikhatankan orang...Setelah hari pun asarlah, maka datanglah sebuah kapal dari Jeddah, serta ia datang berlabuhlah; maka turunlah makhdum dari dalam kapal itu, Syed Abdul Aziz namanya,” (Samad, 1979, hlm. 73).*

While not elaborated in detail, the Sulalat-us-Salatin frames Syed Abdul Aziz's arrival - as divine confirmation of Raja Kecil Besar's dream - as emblematic of the ulama's pivotal role. The text records only a fragment of his da'wah: his immediate observance of salah upon landing at Malacca's coast. Significantly, Raja Kecil Besar became an active participant in this Islamic propagation, learning the ritual prayer (salah) directly from Syed Abdul Aziz, whose teachings adhered strictly to the Prophetic tradition (SAW). The king's enthusiastic reception of the ulama, whom he formally endorsed as Malacca's religious authority, epitomizes Islam's peaceful and voluntary acceptance in the region.

*“Setelah sudah makhdum itu sembahyang, maka raja pun*

*menderumkan gajahnya. Makhdum dibawa baginda naik gajah, lalu dibawa baginda masuk ke dalam negeri. Maka segala Orang Besar-besar semuanya masuk Islam; sekalian isi negeri lelaki perempuan, tua muda, kecil besar sekaliannya masuk Islam dititahkan baginda. Maka raja pun bergurulah pada Makhdum akan tertib sembahyang, baginda digelamya seperti sabda nabi salla 'llahu 'alaihi wa salam."* (Samad, 1979, hlm. 74).

The Islamization process accelerated significantly through royal patronage. This pattern of ruler-led conversion was indeed prevalent across the Nusantara, where populations frequently embraced Islam following their monarchs' conversion (Permatasari & Hudaidah, 2021, p. 7). Scholars often term this the "political theory" of Islamization, characterized by a top-down approach from monarchic rulers to subjects. The *Sulalat-us-Salatin* documents this identical pattern in the Malacca Sultanate's Islamization: when the ruler converted, his subjects promptly followed suit. This phenomenon reflects the Malay societal hierarchy's philosophical foundations - the belief that nobility descended from deities while commoners originated from the sea (Marsden, 1999, p. 147). Such status differentiation fostered a cultural fear of royal curses among those who might defy the king's commandments.

### C. The Impact of Islamization in the Malacca Sultanate.

Following its conversion to Islam, the Malacca Sultanate established the religion as the fundamental foundation of daily life. During the Sultanate's reign in the 15th century, the conversion of Malay society to Islam progressed significantly. Islam was not merely adopted as a religion but became a guiding principle shaping lifestyle, customs, and governance—effectively emerging as the core of civilizational identity in the Malacca Sultanate (Kusnadi, Rama, & Rasyid, 2022, p. 83).

The deep entrenchment of Islamic practices in daily life within the Malay Sultanate was documented by the Chinese traveler Ma Huan. A Muslim himself, this early 15th-century Chinese chronicler authored *Ying-yai Sheng-lan* (The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores), an account of Admiral Zheng He's expeditions. Though not participating in all voyages, Ma Huan systematically recorded observations across Southeast Asia, the Nusantara archipelago, and as far as Arabia and Africa - including some regions he knew only through secondary sources. His eyewitness testimony from Malacca (1413-1415) provides a crucial external perspective:

*"Raja dari negeri itu dan seluruh rakyatnya mengikuti agama Islam, berpuasa, menjalani pertobatan, dan*

*melantunkan doa-doa."*  
(Huan, 1970, hlm. 110).

The Malaccan ruler conspicuously emphasized his Islamic identity. As sovereign, he recognized his position as both symbol and exemplar for his subjects—though Ma Huan's account notes the populace did not yet express their Islamic faith through distinctive attire. This phenomenon becomes understandable when contextualized within Ma Huan's observation that the Malacca Sultanate had only recently embraced Islam at that time. Significantly, Ma Huan's records describe the king (likely referring to Raja Iskandar Shah) as already adopting the full regalia and bearing of an Islamic sultan.

*"Adapun pakaian raja: ia menggunakan kain putih asing yang halus untuk dililitkan di kepalanya; pada tubuhnya, ia mengenakan pakaian panjang dari kain biru berpola halus yang dirancang seperti jubah"*  
(Huan, 1970, p. 110).

Beyond sartorial transformation, the sovereign's name change substantiates his commitment to establishing Islam as the foundation of daily governance. The Sulalat-us-Salatin records that Raja Kecil Besar, upon conversion, immediately adopted the Islamic regnal name Sultan Muhammad Syah—a deliberate act of political theology. More significantly, the text constructs prophetic legitimacy by claiming this name was conferred directly by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

*Baginda (Raja Kecil Besar) digelamya seperti sabda nabi*

*salla'llahu'alaihi wa salam - Sultan Muhammad Syah.*  
(Samad, 1979, hlm. 74).

The use of the title 'Sultan' marked a significant change in the Malay governance system towards Islamization. Previously, titles such as Raja Kecil Besar were used, but after the king converted to Islam, the title was changed to 'Sultan'. This change was followed by adjustments in the governance system that began adopting Islamic principles. Although traces of Hindu-Buddhist influence remained, the transformation process continued (Mugiyono, 2016, p. 37).

In terms of regulations, the Malacca Sultanate had a famous law, namely the Malacca Law (*Undang-Undang Malaka*), which reflected the meeting and interaction between Islamic law and customary law. This law illustrated the acculturation and fusion of these two legal systems. For example, the execution of Hang Kasturi who was accused of treason was followed by the execution of his wife and children and the confiscation of his property. After that, his corpse was thrown into the sea. The killing of rebels (*bughat*) was in accordance with Islamic teachings, while the punishment of family members and the disposal of the corpse into the sea were part of local customs (Masykhur, 2020, pp. 298 & 304).

In the end, Islam exerted a profound influence on Malay culture and identity, as reflected in the literary work

*Sulalat-us-Salatin* (Abdur-Rahman, 2012, p. 556). The presence of Islam in Malacca was not merely as a religion, but also blended with local traditions, creating a distinctive Malay-Islamic culture. This work illustrates that fusion through the use of hadith and Arabic terminology that imbued Malay historical narratives with Islamic values, while simultaneously reflecting the transition process from Hindu-Buddhist traditions to Islamic culture. This blending produced a Malay-Islamic flavored literary work that strengthened Malay identity as an inseparable part of Islam, demonstrating that Islam had merged and become a fundamental element in building Malay culture and traditions.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study of the *Sulalat-us-Salatin* manuscript, this paper concludes that the Islamization process in the Malacca Sultanate was a significant event that not only transformed political and social structures but also shaped Malay-Islamic cultural identity. The *Sulalat-us-Salatin* as a traditional historiographical work, though blended with myths and legends, remains a valuable source documenting the Malacca Sultanate's conversion to Islam. This process was influenced by three main factors: (1) trade relations, (2) diplomatic ties with Samudra Pasai, and (3) spiritual legitimacy through the mystical narrative of Raja

Kecil Besar's encounter with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Islamization in Malacca began with the royal elite and subsequently spread to society through a top-down approach, where the populace followed their leaders' example. The arrival of ulama such as Syed Abdul Aziz further accelerated this process by peacefully introducing Islamic teachings. Additionally, trade relations with Muslim merchants from various regions established Malacca as a center for Islamic dissemination in Southeast Asia.

The impacts of this process are evident in transformations of governance systems, law, and culture. The royal title was changed to "Sultan," symbolizing the acceptance of Islam as the foundation of leadership. The adoption of the Malacca Laws reflected the synthesis of Islamic law and customary law, while Malay culture underwent a transformation toward a new Malay-Islamic identity.

Thus, the Islamization of the Malacca Sultanate not only strengthened the kingdom's political and economic position but also created the foundation for the development of Islamic culture in the Malay Archipelago. The *Sulalat-us-Salatin* manuscript illustrates how Islam and local traditions acculturated, producing a distinctive Malay identity that established Islam as a fundamental element in societal life. This also demonstrates the Malacca Sultanate's role

in the Islamization process across the Malay Archipelago.

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