

Palembang Malay Literature and Arts as a Living Ecosystem of Malay Islamic Civilization

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji sastra dan seni Melayu Palembang sebagai ekspresi peradaban Islam Melayu. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada tiga persoalan utama, yaitu refleksi nilai-nilai Islam dalam tradisi sastra Melayu Palembang, representasi estetika Islam Melayu dalam songket dan seni pertunjukan tradisional, serta mekanisme transmisi nilai peradaban Islam dalam masyarakat Palembang kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan enam informan kunci, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi terhadap naskah, motif songket, tari, musik, serta praktik adat-keagamaan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa syair, pantun, dan naskah Melayu berfungsi sebagai media transmisi nilai tauhid, akhlak, tasawuf, nasihat keagamaan, dan memori sejarah Islam. Songket Palembang merepresentasikan estetika Islam melalui motif, warna, material, dan konteks ritual penggunaannya, sedangkan Tari Gending Sriwijaya, Tari Tanggai, dan Musik Batanghari Sembilan menampilkan nilai tawadhu, penghormatan, kelembutan, kesabaran, dan spiritualitas. Transmisi nilai berlangsung melalui keluarga, sanggar seni, upacara adat-ritual Islam, pesantren dan majelis taklim, serta institusi formal. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa sastra dan seni Melayu Palembang membentuk ekosistem budaya hidup yang menghubungkan nilai Islam, identitas Melayu, memori kolektif, dan praktik sosial masyarakat.

Kata Kunci : *sastra Melayu Palembang; seni Islam Melayu; songket; seni pertunjukan tradisional; peradaban Islam; transmisi budaya*

Abstract

This study examines Palembang Malay literature and art as expressions of Malay Islamic civilization. It focuses on three main issues: the reflection of Islamic values in Palembang Malay literary traditions, the representation of Malay Islamic aesthetics in songket and traditional performing arts, and the mechanisms through which Islamic civilizational values are transmitted in contemporary Palembang society. This research employed a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six key informants, participatory observations, and documentation studies involving manuscripts, songket motifs, dance, music, and customary-religious practices. The findings show that syair, pantun, and Malay manuscripts function as media for transmitting tawhid, morality, Sufism, religious advice, and Islamic historical memory. Palembang songket represents Islamic aesthetics through motifs, colors, materials, and ritual uses, while Gending Sriwijaya Dance, Tanggai Dance, and Batanghari Sembilan Music embody values of humility, respect, gentleness, patience, and spiritual devotion. The transmission of these values takes place through family, art studios, customary-religious ceremonies, pesantren and taklim assemblies, and formal institutions. This study concludes that

Palembang Malay literature and art form a living cultural ecosystem that connects Islamic values, Malay identity, collective memory, and social practice.

Keywords: Palembang Malay literature; Malay Islamic art; songket; traditional performing arts; Islamic civilization; cultural transmission

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Introduction

Palembang is one of the important centers of Malay Islamic civilization in the archipelago because it has a continuity of Islamic educational traditions, culture, and social identity from the time of the Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam, the colonial period, to the contemporary era (Rochmiatun et al., 2023; Suradi, 2022a). In a broader context, Palembang's position is also related to the network of Malay-Nusantara religious scholars and authorities who play a role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge in the Malay region and Southeast Asia (Burhanudin, 2022; Monady et al., 2025). Therefore, Palembang Malay literature and art is important to be studied as a medium that represents Islamic values, cultural memory, and the identity of civilization that continues to negotiate with modernization and social change.

Several recent studies have examined Palembang Malay Islam from the aspects of history, education, manuscripts, songket, art, and cultural heritage. The study of history and education shows that Islamic education in Palembang developed through social, political, and cultural dynamics since the colonial period and played a role in maintaining religious identity and Malay values (Dewi, 2026; Suradi, 2022b). Manuscript studies affirm the importance of the Palembang Palace manuscript and Malay interpretation by Masagus Muzammil as strong evidence of the Islamic intellectual tradition in Palembang (Darmawan, 2025; Kuswandi, 2025). The study of songket shows that the cultural and business practices of Palembang's songket contain work ethic, Islamic educational values, and Malay identity that lives in the community (Antoni et al., 2023; Indra et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the study of art and cultural heritage shows that the Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam and the Gending Sriwijaya Dance are important representations of historical expression, archaeology, art, cultural education, and character formation (Andhifani & Ali NHA, 2026; Setyaningrum et al., 2025).

Based on previous studies, research on Palembang Malay Islam still tends to be separate in aspects of the history of education, manuscripts, songket, art, and the heritage of the Sultanate of Palembang. The study has not fully placed Palembang Malay literature and art as a unified expression of Malay Islamic civilization. Therefore, this study fills this gap by analyzing poetry, pantun, Malay scripts, songket, dance, music, and cultural practices as symbolic systems that represent Islamic values, Malay identity, and the continuity of Palembang civilization.

Based on the research gap above, this study formulates three main problem focuses. First, how are Islamic values reflected in the Malay literary tradition of Palembang, including poems, poems, and manuscripts left over from the Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam? Second, how do songket weaving and traditional Palembang performing arts represent the aesthetics and values of Malay Islamic civilization through their motifs, movements, and musical melodies? Third, how does the mechanism of transmission of Islamic civilization values take place through the medium of literature and art in the contemporary Palembang community? These three focuses aim to produce

a comprehensive understanding of the Malay Islamic civilization of Palembang, both from the dimension of aesthetic expression and the dynamics of its inheritance from generation to generation.

This research contributes to two domains at once. Theoretically, this research strengthens the study of the Islamic civilization of the Malay archipelago from an ethnographic and cultural perspective, complements existing historical and archaeological studies, while offering an integrative analysis model that connects literature, art, and the transmission of values in a single frame of Islamic civilization studies. Practically, the findings of this research are expected to be a reference for policy makers in designing a program to revitalize the Malay Islamic cultural heritage of Palembang, for educational institutions in developing local content based on Malay Islamic wisdom, and for cultural communities in an effort to strengthen the identity of Malay Islamic civilization in the midst of an increasingly rapid modernization current.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach because the focus of the research is directed at the meaning of Palembang Malay literature and art as an expression of Malay Islamic civilization that lives in social practices, cultural symbols, artifacts, and mechanisms of inheritance of community values. The ethnographic approach allows researchers to understand how cultural actors interpret poetry, pantun, Malay scripts, songket, dance, music, and customary-religious practices as part of Palembang's Malay Islamic identity. With this approach, literature and art are not only understood as aesthetic products, but as a system of meaning that connects the religion, history, customs, and social life of the Palembang Malay community (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Lim, 2024).

The research was carried out in the city of Palembang, South Sumatra, because this area is the former center of the Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam and has an important trace in the history of Malay Islamic civilization. The research locations include the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II Museum, Kampung Tenun 20 Ilir, dance and traditional music studios, the Palembang Grand Mosque area, Kuto Besak Fort, Islamic boarding schools, and taklim assemblies in the Seberang Ulu area. The selection of the location aims to obtain data from artifactual spaces, cultural production spaces, performing arts spaces, customary-religious spaces, and spaces for the transmission of Malay Islamic values comprehensively.

The research informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques because the research requires participants who have knowledge, experience, and cultural authority relevant to the literature, art, and tradition of Malay Islam in Palembang. The criteria for informants include having knowledge of Malay literature, Islamic scripts, songket, dance, traditional music, or Palembang religious traditions; be active in the Malay Islamic cultural community of Palembang for at least ten years; recognized by the public as a figure who has authority in his field; and willing to provide information for academic purposes. This study involved six key informants and about fifteen supporting informants to enrich and validate the key data (Casteel & Bridier, 2021).

Table 1. Research Informant

No.	Category Information	Quantity	Main Criteria	Data Function
1	Palembang Malay dance artist/choreographer	1	Active in Palembang Malay dance for at least 10 years	Explain the value of manners, symbols of movement, dress, and dance inheritance

2	Scholars or traditional leaders	1	Understanding the relationship between Palembang customs and Islamic values	Explain the meaning of Malay Islamic customs and authority
3	Curator museum	1	Mastering the collection of manuscripts, artifacts, and history of Palembang	Provide artifacts, manuscripts, and cultural historical context data
4	Senior songket craftsman	1	Experienced in the production and meaning of songket motifs	Explain the symbols of motives, social functions, and skill transmission
5	Malay philology academics	1	Studying Malay manuscripts or Malay Islamic literature	Assist in the interpretation of Malay poems, poems, and manuscripts
6	Leaders of Islamic boarding schools/taklim councils	1	Involved in the transmission of poetry, dhikr, and Malay Islamic traditions	Explaining the inheritance of values through religious education
7	Supporting informants	±15	Junior craftsmen, studio dancers, students, and community leaders	Enrich and validate key data

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants to explore their meanings of Islamic Malay poetry, poems, scripts, songket motifs, the value of manners in dance and music, as well as the inheritance of Malay Islamic values through family, studios, customs, Islamic boarding schools, taklim councils, and formal education. Participatory observation was carried out on the process of weaving songket, dance exercises and performances, poetry and dhikr readings, and Palembang Islamic traditional processions. The documentation study was carried out through the study of Palembang Malay manuscripts, the collection of the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II Museum, the digital collection of the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, documentation of songket motifs, photographs, performance videos, and relevant scientific literature (Morgan, 2022; Ruslin et al., 2022).

Table 2. Research Instrument Grid

Research Focus	Aspects Explored	Collection Techniques Data	Data Source	Key Indicators/Questions
Palembang Malay Literature as an Expression of Malay Islam	Poetry, pantun, Malay scripts, monotheism, morals, adab, and spirituality	Interviews and documentation	Philological academic, museum curator, scholar, Malay manuscripts	How do Palembang Malay poems, poems, and manuscripts represent Islamic values?

Songket as a symbol of Malay Islamic aesthetics	Motifs, colors, social functions, status, dress manners, and religious symbols	Interviews, observations, documentation	Songket craftsmen, Weaving Village, motif documentation	What is the meaning of the songket motif in the Malay Islamic tradition of Palembang?
Dance and music as an expression of Malay Islamic culture	Movement, fashion, music, performance etiquette, and the value of modesty	Interviews and observations	Artists, choreographers, studio dancers	What values of manners appear in Palembang traditional dance and music?
Customary-religious practices	Traditional marriages, dhikr, poetry, taklim assemblies, and pesantren traditions	Observations and interviews	Ulama, traditional leaders, pesantren leaders, students	How do Palembang customs integrate Islamic values?
Value transmission mechanism	Families, studios, Islamic boarding schools, taklim councils, formal education, and cultural communities	Interviews, observations, documentation	Artists, craftsmen, students, community leaders	How are Malay Islamic values passed on to the younger generation?
Validation of cultural significance	Confirmation of the meaning of symbols, texts, motifs, movements, and social practices	Member checking and triangulation	Key informants and supporting informants	Is the researcher's interpretation in accordance with the understanding of cultural actors?

Data analysis is carried out thematically through the process of data recognition, coding, code grouping, theme formation, theme review, and drawing conclusions. The data is coded based on three main focuses, namely the expression of Islamic values in Palembang Malay literature, the representation of Islamic aesthetics in songket and performing arts, and the mechanism of transmission of Malay Islamic civilization values. Especially for Malay texts of poetry, pantun, and scripts, this study uses Islamic hermeneutics to read the meaning of zahir and inner meaning and their relationship with the values of monotheism, morals, adab, and Islamic spirituality (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022; Saldaña, 2021).

The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation, triangulation techniques, and member checking. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from scholars, artists, songket craftsmen, museum curators, academics, students, and community leaders.

Technical triangulation was carried out by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking is carried out by returning interview transcripts and summaries of initial findings to key informants to obtain confirmation, correction, and clarification of the researcher's interpretation (Lloyd & Gifford, 2024; McKim, 2023; Morgan, 2022).

The entire research process is carried out by paying attention to qualitative research ethics. Interviews, observations, and documentation are carried out after the informant obtains an explanation of the purpose, benefits, forms of involvement, and use of research data. The informant's consent is obtained orally or in writing, while the identity of the informant who requests confidentiality is maintained in publication. Interview data, photos, videos, and field documents are used only for academic purposes and are not disseminated to other parties without the permission of the informant concerned.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings of the study show that Palembang's Malay literature and art cannot be separated from Palembang's historical position as one of the centers of Malay Islamic civilization in the archipelago. The Islamization of Palembang took place through a long process involving trade, a network of clerics, the power of the Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam, and the transformation of local culture. In this context, Islam not only shaped the religious life of the community, but also influenced the language, literature, manuscripts, art symbols, customs, and cultural identity of the Malay of Palembang. Therefore, poetry, pantun, Malay scripts, songket, dance, music, and customary-religious practices can be read as cultural expressions of the Malay Islamic civilization that grew historically and lived in the society of Palembang.

Representation of Islamic Aesthetics in Songket Palembang

The second objective of this study is to explain how Palembang songket represents Malay Islamic aesthetics and values. The findings show that songket does not merely function as a traditional textile or a marker of social status, but also serves as a symbolic medium that embodies spiritual, moral, and Islamic values within Palembang Malay culture. Palembang songket is a luxurious woven textile produced through the *sunangkit* technique, in which gold or silver threads are inserted into the basic weave to create decorative motifs. Historically, Palembang songket is closely associated with the cultural legacy of Sriwijaya and the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, where it developed as an elite textile linked to nobility, ceremonial honor, and social prestige. Beyond its aesthetic function, songket represents Palembang Malay cultural identity because its motifs, materials, colors, and modes of use convey symbolic meanings related to prosperity, dignity, authority, spirituality, and cultural continuity.

Nyimas Rahmah bt. Abdullah, a maestro songket craftsman who has been weaving for more than 40 years, explains the spiritual dimension of the weaving process as follows:

“Our ancestors taught that the hand that weaves is the hand that prays. Each strand of gold thread is a strand of prayer. That is why songket cloth made with good intentions and prayers will emit a different light than one made carelessly.” (Nyimas Rahmah bt. Abdullah, March 2025).

The quote shows that the process of making songket is not only understood as an economic activity or technical skill, but also as a spiritual activity. Weaving is understood as an act that involves intention, prayer, patience, and meticulousness. These values show that the aesthetics of Palembang songket are closely related to Islamic ethics.

Observations at Kampung Tenun, the collection of the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II Museum, and interviews with Nyimas Rahmah resulted in the identification of seven main motifs of the Palembang songket that contain Islamic symbolic meanings.

Tabel 2. Analisis Semiotik Motif-Motif Songket Palembang dan Maknanya dalam Islam

No.	Nama Motif	Visual Description	Meaning Symbol of Islam	Context of Use
1.	<i>Lepus Bungo Cino</i>	Full flower tendrils fill the fabric, tightly without gaps	The fullness of Allah's mercy (rahmatan lil 'alamin), an expression of gratitude for the blessings	Bridal dresses, grand traditional ceremonies
2.	<i>Nago Besaung</i>	Two dragons face to face are perfectly symmetrical	Balance of power and justice in Islam: the symbol of just power (the just sultan)	Aristocratic and royal attire, state ceremonies
3.	<i>Bintang Berantai</i>	The stars are arranged in a row forming a diagonal pattern	Tasbih and dhikr (99 Asma'ul Husna), the light of Allah's guidance, the stars as a guide to the way	Women's clothes in Eid prayers, wedding gifts
4.	<i>Pohon Hayat (Kaghati)</i>	Towering trees with strong roots and spreading branches	The concept of thayyibah (a good tree, QS. Abraham:24), a blessed life, a pious Muslim family tree	Traditional elder dresses, wedding ceremonies
5.	<i>Pucuk Rebung Bertangkai</i>	Tapered and stalked ends of bamboo shoots	The growth of faith (Hadith: faith grows and decreases), the hope of the next generation of Islam	Young women's clothing, the circumcision ceremony of the apostle
6.	<i>Jando Beraes</i>	Contrasting colorful geometric overhaul	Keberagaman dalam kesatuan (ukhuwwah Islamiyyah), harmoni dalam perbedaan	High-grade everyday wear, cultural exhibition
7.	<i>Tretes Mender</i>	Repetitive wavy line (wave) pattern	Life that revolves (sunnatullah), the ups and downs of the world in the perspective of Islam	Traditional ceremonial fabrics, decorations of places of worship

The findings show that the Palembang songket motif not only has visual value, but also contains a symbolic message. Every motif, color, and way of wearing has a cultural code that is understood by the community. Songket Lepus is used in weddings as bridal attire. Songket with the Nago Besaung motif is used by the nobility in state ceremonies. Songket with the motif of the Chain Star is used in the context of worship and celebration of Islamic holidays. Thus, songket functions as a marker of social status, life phases, ritual moments, and Malay Islamic identity at the same time.

Representation of Islamic Values in Palembang Traditional Performing Arts

In addition to songket, traditional Palembang performing arts are also an important medium in the expression of Malay Islamic civilization. The findings of the study show that the Sriwijaya

Gending Dance, Tanggai Dance, and Batanghari Sembilan Music contain Islamic values expressed through gestures, costumes, music, poetry, performance procedures, and the context of their use.

Based on an interview with Hj. Yusnani Hasyimzoem and direct observation at the Sriwijaya Dance Studio, each element of dance contains values that are organically internalized by the artists. The Sriwijaya Gending Dance is known as the official dance of South Sumatra which is used to welcome guests of honor in state ceremonies. The Tanggai Dance is a performance dance that is performed in wedding ceremonies and major traditional events. The characteristic of the Tanggai Dance can be seen in the use of long silver nails worn on the fingertips of the dancers.

Hj. Yusnani Hasyimzoem explained the spiritual dimension of the Tanggai Dance as follows:

"The Tanggai dance is not just dancing. The dancer must truly live the tenderness from the heart. If the mind is in turmoil or the heart is not clean, it will be visible in its movements. My teacher always said: before dancing, pray first, cleanse your heart. That's because this dance is worship, not just a performance." (Hj. Yusnani Hasyimzoem, February 2025).

This quote shows that dance in the Palembang Malay tradition is not only understood as an aesthetic performance, but also as an exercise in manners, gentleness, purity of intention, and self-control. Dance movements are a means of internalizing Islamic values through the body and taste.

Batanghari Sembilan music also shows the integration between Malay tradition and Islamic values. This music develops along the main rivers of South Sumatra and has three main elements, namely pantun as a poetic text, song as melody, and instrumental presentation as musical accompaniment (Nopriani & Misnawati, 2024). The main instruments found in the observation include gambus, rebab, and marawis. The three instruments show the presence of Arab-Malay influences in the musical tradition of Palembang.

Ustadz Zubair Habsyi explained the spiritual function of gambus as follows:

"Gambus is not just a musical instrument. In our tradition, gambus is the voice of the heart that longs for Allah. When we play gambus while chanting dhikr verses, it is munajat, which is a conversation of the heart with God. That's why our traditional music is always related to dhikr and maulid, not just entertainment." (Ustadz Zubair Habsyi, April 2025).

The quote shows that traditional Palembang music does not solely function as entertainment, but also as a medium of dhikr, munajat, and expression of spiritual longing for Allah. Islamic values in the traditional performing arts of Palembang can be summarized as follows.

Table 3. Comparison of Islamic Values in Palembang Traditional Performing Arts

Aspects	Gending Sriwijaya Dance	Tanggai Dance	Batanghari Sembilan Music
Main Functions	Dance to welcome guests of honor (state protocol dance)	Dance performance in traditional wedding and slametan ceremonies	Music to accompany Malay verses, dances, and dhikr rituals
Islamic Values	Tawadhu (humility), ta'dhim (honoring guests according to the sunnah), kesucian niat	Softness (rifq); patience, beauty as a reflection of the nature of Allah Al-Jamal	The use of Islamic poetry, the integration of Arabic maqam, rebab and gambus instruments
Costume & Symbol	Songket with Islamic motifs, perfect aurah covering, green-gold	Long nails of silver (symbol of softness), luminous	Players dressed to cover the aurat, sitting

	color (the color of heaven)	songket; bun with Islamic nuances	cross-legged (tawadhu)
Ritual Elements	Starting with Bismillah, closing with salam, sometimes accompanied by prayer	Beginning with prayer, dedication to Allah, accompanying verses filled with dhikr	Three elements: Islamic poems + songs (melodies) + instruments, full structure following the stanzas of the poem
Historical Sources	Created in the era of the Palembang Sultanate (reconstructed in 1945), recognized as the official dance of South Sumatra	Rooted in the tradition of the palace women of the Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam	Growing along the Batanghari Sembilan watershed; influenced by 17th-century Arabic-Malay music

These findings show that Palembang's traditional performing arts are a meeting space between Malay aesthetics, Islamic manners, and social practices of the community. Dance movements, poems, instruments, costumes, and performance procedures form a unity of expression that shows the Islamic identity of Palembang Malay.

Mechanism of Transmission of Malay Islamic Civilization Values through Literature and Art

The findings of the study show that the transmission of values does not take place through a single pathway alone, but through several interconnected mechanisms. This study identified five main mechanisms, namely family transmission, art studio transmission, transmission of Islamic customary ceremonies-rituals, transmission of Islamic boarding schools and taklim assemblies, and transmission of formal institutions.

The mechanism for transmitting the values of Malay Islamic civilization in Palembang through literature and art takes place through five main channels, namely the family, art studios, Islamic ceremonies and rituals, Islamic boarding schools and taklim assemblies, and formal institutions. On the family line, Malay Islamic values are inherited through the habit of storytelling, reading poetry, teaching pantun, and introducing children to customs, songket, dance, and traditional music. However, this path has been weakened due to changes in family structure, urbanization, the use of digital gadgets, and the reduced role of elders. The weakening of family transmission shows that oral traditions are not only related to the loss of literary form, but also to the reduction of Malay Islamic culture's way of thinking, manners, and sensitivity in the lives of the younger generation. KH. Muhammad Arsyad Nawawi stated:

"In the past, mothers or grandmothers memorized hundreds of Islamic rhymes and poems. Now, many young people do not know a single poem. It is not just a loss of culture, but a loss of the Malay Islamic way of thinking." (KH. Muhammad Arsyad Nawawi, March 2025).

In addition to the family, the transmission of values also takes place through art studios, Islamic ceremonies and rituals, Islamic boarding schools and taklim councils, and formal institutions. The art studio becomes a space for the inheritance of values through dance exercises, music, movement meanings, costumes, and accompanying poems. Observations in dance studios

show that practice not only emphasizes technique, but also forms gentleness, patience, respect for teachers, and awareness of manners. Hj. Yusnani Hasyimzoem emphasized:

"The Tanggai dance is not just a performance. Dancers must pray, cleanse their hearts, and live tenderness because this dance is also part of worship."
(Hj. Yusnani Hasyimzoem, February 2025).

Islamic traditional ceremonies, such as traditional marriage, circumcision, aqiqah, the Prophet's maulid, tahlil, and salvation, are the most powerful mechanisms because poetry, pantun, songket, dance, and music are present simultaneously in the living social space. Islamic boarding schools and taklim assemblies also play a role through the learning of Arabic-Malay poetry, nadzam, dhikr, Maulid Barzanji, and the reading of religious verses. At the Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School, Seberang Ulu I, the recitation of Malay maulid verses is still routinely carried out every Thursday night after the Isha prayer. The pedagogical function of poetry in this religious space was explained by KH. Muhammad Arsyad Nawawi:

"Palembang poetry contains religious advice, the stories of the guardians, and the teachings of monotheism. Through poetry, our ancestors taught Islam in a language that was close to the community." (KH. Muhammad Arsyad Nawawi, March 2025).

Meanwhile, formal institutions have potential through cultural arts lessons, extracurricular activities, and Malay studies courses, although they have not been systematically integrated into the curriculum. These findings show that the transmission of Malay Islamic values in Palembang is still strongest through traditional and religious spaces, while families and formal institutions need to be strengthened again so that the continuity of intergenerational values is maintained.

Tabel 4. Mechanism for the Transmission of Islamic Civilization Values through Literature and Art in Palembang

Mechanism	Media/Channels	Main Actors	Contemporary Effectiveness	Challenge
Family-based transmission	Storytelling, reading poems together, teaching rhymes during family ceremonies	Parents, grandparents, family elders	LOW, which has experienced a drastic decline due to lifestyle modernization	Urbanization, digital gadgets, disappearance of elder figures
Studio-based Studio-based	Dance practice, music, teaching the philosophy of movement and the meaning of poetry	Art maestro, studio coach, senior artist	MEANWHILE, the studio is still active but the interest of the younger generation fluctuates	Modern entertainment competition, operational costs
Transmission of Islamic Ceremonial Ceremonies	Traditional marriage, circumcision, aqiqah, the prophet's birthday, tahlil, salvation	Indigenous leaders, scholars, community leaders	TINGGI, namely traditional ceremonies are still intensive and maintained	Simplification of customs, the influence of religious modernism

Transmisi Pesantren & Majelis Taklim (Religious Institution)	Learning Arabic-Malay poetry, nadzam, dhikr, maulid Barzanji	Kyai, ustadz, guru ngaji, leader of the council	MEDIUM-HIGH	The dichotomy between 'modern' Islam and the tradition of Islamic boarding schools
Formal Institutional Transmission (Formal Education)	School cultural arts curriculum, Malay studies courses in higher education	Teachers, lecturers, government curriculum	LOW-MEDIUM	A national curriculum that does not accommodate local wisdom

Of the five mechanisms, transmission through Islamic customary ceremonies and rituals seems to be the strongest in contemporary Palembang society because traditional marriage, circumcision, aqiqah, maulid, tahlil, and salvation are still living spaces for Palembang Malay literature and art. In these various ceremonies, poetry, pantun, songket, dance, and music are present at the same time so that the value of Malay Islam is not only taught verbally, but also experienced directly by the community. On the other hand, family transmission has decreased significantly due to changes in family structure, urbanization, the use of digital gadgets, and the weakening of the role of elders, so that the tradition of storytelling, reading poetry, and teaching rhymes to children is increasingly rare. This condition is an important challenge for the sustainability of the Malay Islamic civilization of Palembang.

Contemporary Challenges to the Sustainability of Malay Islamic Literature and Art Palembang

In addition to discovering forms of expression and value transmission mechanisms, this study also identifies a number of challenges that affect the sustainability of Malay Islamic literature and art in Palembang. There are seven main challenges found in this study. First, lifestyle modernization and urbanization that shifts people's priorities from tradition to modernity. Second, the penetration of global popular culture that dominates the tastes of the younger generation. Third, the weakening of intergenerational transmission due to changes in family structure from large families to nuclear families. Fourth, the lack of systematic support from local governments in the form of sustainable cultural policies. Fifth, the emergence of a small number of religious interpretations that view traditional art as heretical. Sixth, the limited economic market for traditional art products so that they are not always able to compete with mass products. Seventh, there is no adequate documentation system so that many literary and artistic traditions are at risk of being lost along with their maestros.

KH. Muhammad Arsyad Nawawi expressed his concern about the weakening of cultural transmission as follows:

"In the past, a mother or grandmother who could not read memorized hundreds of Islamic rhymes and poems. Now, even undergraduates don't know a single poem. It's not just a loss of culture, it's a loss of the Malay way of thinking." (KH. Muhammad Arsyad Nawawi, March 2025).

The statement shows that the loss of literary and artistic traditions does not only mean the loss of cultural forms, but also the loss of the way of thinking, feeling, and inheriting the values of Malay Islam. Therefore, the findings of this study confirm that the revitalization of Palembang Malay literature and art needs to be directed not only at the preservation of the external form of

culture, but also at the re-strengthening of Islamic values, manners, and the identity of civilization contained in it.

Discussion

This discussion rests on the perspective of Southeast Asian Islam, material religion, aesthetics of religion, and intangible cultural heritage. In the perspective of Southeast Asian Islam, Islam is understood not only as a normative teaching, but also as a historical tradition that moves through a network of scholars, trade, language, art, power, and local social practices (Aljunied, 2022; Formichi, 2020). The material theory of religion and the aesthetics of religion affirms that the religiosity of society is not only present through doctrines and texts, but also through cultural objects, bodies, sounds, movements, spaces, symbols, and sensory experiences (Arab et al., 2023; Johnston, 2017). The perspective of intangible cultural heritage also places living traditions as collective practices that continue to be inherited, negotiated, and adapted to social changes in order to remain meaningful to the community of their inheritors (Harrison et al., 2020; Stefano & Davis, 2017)(Stefano & Davis, 2017; Harrison et al., 2020). Based on this framework, Palembang Malay literature and art can be read as a cultural space where Islamic values are present through poetry, pantun, Malay scripts, songket, dance, music, customs, and social practices of the community.

A reading of Palembang Malay literature and art shows that local cultural expression functions as a medium for internalizing Islamic values, not just an aesthetic heritage or a symbol of ethnic identity. This argument expands on previous studies that placed Palembang Malay Islam within the framework of education, social relations, family, cultural communication, manuscripts, and intellectual heritage of the Malay Muslim community (Darmawan & Hijjas, 2025; Handoko et al., 2026; Suradi, 2022a). Different from studies that emphasize more institutional, social, and philological aspects, this discussion emphasizes that poetry, pantun, Malay scripts, songket, dance, music, and customs work as symbolic systems that connect monotheism, morals, manners, spirituality, and Malay Islamic identity. Thus, the Palembang Malay manuscript is not only understood as a written artifact, but as a node of civilization connected with oral traditions, religious education, customs, collective memory, and transmission of Malay Islamic values.

In the context of songket, performing arts, and cultural transmission, this study emphasizes that Palembang Malay literature and art need to be read as a cultural ecosystem that connects objects, bodies, sounds, social spaces, and communal practices. Previous studies have shown that the sustainability of tradition-based crafts is influenced by cultural values, digitalization, the institutional environment, sustainability orientation, as well as material, emotional, symbolic, and authentic dimensions in artisan practices (Elias et al., 2024; Harsanto et al., 2026). The study of intangible cultural heritage also confirms that performing arts and performative practices require transmission strategies that connect cultural actors, heritage communities, documentation technologies, and social change (Hodgson et al., 2024; Skublewska-Paszowska et al., 2022). Therefore, digitalization needs to be placed as a support for preservation, not a substitute for traditional living spaces, because Palembang Malay literature and art still need families, studios, Islamic boarding schools, taklim councils, educational institutions, and traditional ceremonies as an arena for direct inheritance (Lian & Xie, 2024; Ren & Lam, 2026).

The novelty of this research lies in the integrative reading of Palembang Malay literature and art as an ecosystem of Malay Islamic civilization. Previous studies have tended to discuss Palembang Malay Islam separately within the framework of education, family communication, manuscripts, crafts, performing arts, or cultural heritage preservation. Different from these tendencies, this study

places poetry, pantun, Malay scripts, songket, dance, music, and customs as interconnected symbolic networks in shaping monotheism, morals, adab, spirituality, social identity, and collective memory of the people of Palembang. Thus, the main contribution of this study is to offer a framework of analysis that the Malay Islamic civilization of Palembang is not only inherited through religious texts and the history of the sultanate, but also through aesthetic practices, cultural objects, bodies, sounds, and social spaces that remain alive in society.

The implications of this study show that Palembang Malay literature and art need to be understood as an ecosystem of Malay Islamic culture that connects texts, objects, movements, sounds, customs, and social practices. Therefore, preservation is not enough to be done through festivals or identity symbols, but must be directed at value education, regeneration of cultural actors, digital documentation, and the integration of local content in formal and non-formal education. The limitations of this study lie in the scope of locations that only focus on the city of Palembang and the limited number of informants, so that they do not represent all variations of Malay Islamic expression in South Sumatra. The next study is suggested to expand the study area, compare the Malay Islamic tradition of Palembang with other regions, and use a mixed methods approach to measure the perception and involvement of the younger generation in the heritage of Malay literature and art in Palembang.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Palembang Malay literature and art are integral media for expressing and transmitting Malay Islamic civilization. The findings answer the three research focuses by showing that Islamic values are reflected in syair, pantun, and Malay manuscripts through teachings on tawhid, morality, Sufism, religious advice, and Islamic historical memory. Songket and traditional performing arts represent Malay Islamic aesthetics through motifs, colors, gestures, costumes, music, and ritual contexts that embody values of gratitude, dignity, balance, humility, gentleness, respect, and spiritual devotion. Meanwhile, the transmission of these values takes place through family, art studios, customary-religious ceremonies, pesantren and taklim assemblies, and formal institutions, with customary-religious ceremonies emerging as the strongest living space for intergenerational cultural inheritance.

The main finding of this study is that Palembang Malay Islamic civilization is not only preserved through religious texts or the history of the sultanate, but also through aesthetic practices, cultural objects, bodily movements, sounds, and communal rituals that remain active in society. Theoretically, this study offers an integrative understanding of Palembang Malay literature and art as a cultural ecosystem that connects Islamic values, Malay identity, collective memory, and social practice. Practically, the findings imply the need to strengthen cultural regeneration, digital documentation, local-content education, and collaboration among government, pesantren, schools, studios, museums, and cultural communities so that Palembang Malay Islamic literature and art remain relevant for younger generations in the contemporary era.

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