

**Paper: “Global Peace” in Higher Educational Institutions in Southeast Asia: A Study on Moderation in Brunei Darussalam<sup>1</sup>**

Dr. Ahmad F. Yousif  
Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University  
Spq. 347, Jalan Pasar Baharu, Gadong, BE1310, Negara Brunei Darussalam  
Phone number: Cell: (673) 835-9099; Fax: (673) 246-2233  
e-Mail: [ahmad.yousif@unissa.edu.bn](mailto:ahmad.yousif@unissa.edu.bn)

**Abstract:** Whatever the origins of Islam in Brunei Darussalam, it is certain that from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the Sultanate became a dominant regional power with sovereignty over the whole island of Borneo and the Philippines. During this period, there were a number of Sultans who were particularly active in the promotion of Islamic institutions. For example, Sultan Sharif Ali (1425-1432), the third leader of Brunei, constructed mosques, developed religious schools, and implemented the *Shari’ah* (Islamic law) in the country. This paper, however, examines contemporary religious institutions in Brunei Darussalam, during the ruling of Sultan Haji Hassanah Bolkiah, 1967-2017. In specific, it explores the historical developments of Islam in the country, religious communities and organizations, Islamic educational institutions, as well as the influence of religion on society.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Brunei**

The Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam, located on the island of Borneo, in Southeast Asia, has a small population of less than half a million residents. Approximately two-thirds (66%) of Brunei’s population are consist of ethnic Malays<sup>2</sup>, the absolute majority of which are *Sunni* Muslims, who follow the Islamic legal school of thought, *Madhab al-Shafi’i*. The ethnic Malay community in the country includes Melayu Brunei, Tutong, Belait, Dusun, Kadayan, Murut and Bisaya, who speak Malay language (Bahasa Melayu) and using English as a second language. The Chinese community comprised of ten percent (10%) of the ethnic distribution while the

---

<sup>1</sup> Part of this paper had been published by the same author at “Brunei.” and “Islam in Brunei.” in *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*. Gordon J. Melton and Marin Baumann, (eds.). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio., 2010. e-Book: <http://www.abc-clio.com/product.aspx?id=52831>. It is also published in *Kegemilangan Pemerintahan*. Asbol Mail, Brahim Ampuan, Yusop damit and Rosli Ampal, (eds.). Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei: Yayasan Sultan Haji hassanah Bolkiah, 2018. This is a revised version.

<sup>2</sup> “Population.” Department of Economic Planning and Development of Brunei Darussalam. Accessed October 19, 2016, from <http://www.depd.gov.bn/SitePages/Population.aspx>.

remaining “Others” represents twenty-four percent (24%) of Brunei’s population. Members of the Chinese community speak different Chinese dialects includes Hokkien, Mandarin, Hakka and Cantonese.<sup>3</sup>

In term of religious distributions, Brunei Darussalam is officially a Muslim nation, as stated in the country’s Constitution of 1959. The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan (a royal title) has been the head of the Islamic faith. Other religious communities such as Christian and Buddhist are freely practiced their faiths in Brunei. According to an official report published in 2011, Muslims in Brunei represent nearly 79% of the religious population, while almost 9% Christians, about 8% Buddhists and just slightly above 4% include members of “other faiths” or “no religious beliefs”.<sup>4</sup>

Among the “other faiths” or “no religious beliefs” categories, a small minority practice traditional primitive belief systems, such as animism and shamanism, while a large number within this group have converted to Islam. In addition, the ethnic Chinese, originally from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, adhere to traditional Chinese religions such Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism or “free-thinkers”, while a very small minority has converted to Islam. The majority members of the Christian community in Brunei Darussalam inherited their roots from Chinese or indigenous ethnic backgrounds.

As far as the religious breakdown of Brunei is concerned, the 1991 census indicated that, 67% of the population identified themselves as Muslims, 13% Buddhists, 10% Christians, and the remaining 10% “Others”, which includes other

---

<sup>3</sup> Department of Economic Planning and Development, (2015). *Brunei Darussalam Millennium Development Goals and Beyond: Towards the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. Brunei Darussalam: Department of Economic Planning and Development, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Economic Planning and Development, (2015). *Brunei Darussalam Millennium Development Goals and Beyond: Towards the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, 5.

religious groups such as Hindus, Sikhs, and non-affiliates.<sup>5</sup> Although Islam is the official religion of the country, religious minorities have the right to observe their religious values and traditions. In this regard, Article 3(1) of the *Constitution of Brunei Darussalam (1984)*, asserts that, "... all other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony by the persons professing them in any part of Brunei Darussalam."<sup>6</sup>

### **Historical Developments of Islam in Brunei**

There are a number of theories regarding the origins of Islam in Brunei Darussalam. One theory is that Islam came to Brunei from China, another traces its route to Arab traders who came to Southeast Asia during the fourteen and fifteen centuries, from Hadramawt in Yemen and possibly through Gujurat, India. Pehin Jamil, former head of the History Center in Brunei, asserts, that the majority of Islamic missionaries who came to Java, Sumatra, Borneo and Celebes, were descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and were of Arabic origin.<sup>7</sup> By the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, Brunei became a dominant regional power. With the coming of the Spanish and the British to the region in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century however, Brunei's political power gradually eroded, until it became a British Protectorate in 1888.

---

<sup>5</sup> Department of Statistics, (2015). *Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook 2015*. Brunei Darussalam: Department of Economic Planning and Development, 186.

<sup>6</sup> Laws of Brunei, Revised Edition 1984, Constitutional Matters I, *The Constitution of Brunei Darussalam*. Accessed December 12, 2016, from (<http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Brunei1984.PDF>), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad Yousif, "Religious Life and Institutions in Brunei," ISIM Newsletter, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Leiden University, The Netherlands, No.5, 16 (July 2000). Accessed January 5, 2017, from ([https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17397/ISIM\\_5\\_Religious\\_Life\\_and\\_Institutions\\_in\\_Brunei.pdf?sequence=1](https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17397/ISIM_5_Religious_Life_and_Institutions_in_Brunei.pdf?sequence=1)); see also Chiara Formichi (2016), "Islamic Studies or Asian Studies? Islam in Southeast Asia." *The Muslim World*, Vol. 106, 716.

## **Influence of Islam in Brunei**

Both in the past and in the present, Islamic values, traditions and ethics have been incorporated and manifested within Brunei's culture, society and politics. Proof of the continuous link between religion and state, past and present, is the continuation of the MIB (*Melayu Islam Beraja* or Malay Muslim Monarchy) philosophy which has been in existence, since Brunei first declared itself a Muslim Malay Sultanate six centuries ago. MIB is the cornerstone of the religio-political ideology of modern-day Brunei, which stresses the importance of maintaining the Malay race, language, culture and Muslim religion of the nation.

The significance of the MIB concept was affirmed during the reign of Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien (1950-1967), when it became officially recognized in the 1959 Brunei Constitution.<sup>8</sup> Its significance was further re-affirmed upon Brunei's declaration of independence on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1984, when Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah asserted that Brunei Darussalam,

... shall be for ever a sovereign, democratic and independent Malay Muslim Monarchy [founded] upon the teaching of Islam according to *Ahli al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah* [followers main streamline of Islam], [and] based upon the principle of liberty, trust and justice, and ever seeking with the guidance and blessing of Allah (All Pure, Most Exalted), peace and security, welfare and happiness of our people, and maintenance of friendly relations among nations on the principle of mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity of all nations free from external interference.<sup>9</sup>

## **Religious Institutions and Organizations**

Religious institutions for both Muslims and non-Muslims are spreading out around the country. According to the Mosque Affairs Department, there are ninety-nine (99) mosques and six (6) prayer-halls in Brunei as of 2015, including two major state

---

<sup>8</sup> Sven Alexander Schottmann (2006), "*Melayu Islam Beraja: The Politics of Legitimization in a Malay Islamic Monarchy.*" *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*. Vol. 40, No. 2, 117.

<sup>9</sup> Haji Abang Mohd. Jamil Al-Sufri (1998). *Brunei Darussalam: The Road to Independence*. (trans. ed. Abang Haji Mohamad Amin Bin Hasan). Brunei Darussalam: Brunei History Centre, 197.

mosques, *Masjid Omar Ali Saifuddien* and *Jame'Asr Hassanal Bolkiah*, both of which are considered major tourist attractions for visitors to Brunei.<sup>10</sup>

As far as non-Muslim religious institutions are concerned, there are twelve (12) worship halls (in Malay *Balai Ibadat*) among them eight (8) churches (two in Bandar Seri Begawan (BSB), three in Seria, two in Kuala Belait and one in Temburong), the majority being of the Catholic denomination. In addition to the above, there are three (3) Chinese temples (the Kuan Yin or the Goddess of Mercy temple in BSB, the Ching Nam in Muara and the Fook Tong Keng temple in Tutong), and two (2) small Indian temples located in BSB and Seria. Although the small Sikh community in Brunei (approximately 500 people) has no official religious institutions, weekly services are held in member's homes.<sup>11</sup>

The majority of Islamic organizations or departments in Brunei are government or semi-government constructed and maintained. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, established in 1986, is comprised of six (6) different departments, namely, Administration, Islamic Studies, Haj (pilgrimage), Mosque Affairs, Syariah Affairs (Islamic Law), Islamic Religious Council, and the Islamic *Da'wah* Center (propagation center). In addition, the Ministry found the Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College and Sultan Hj. Hassanal Bolkiah al-Qur'an Tahfiz Institute (<https://www.brunei.gov.bn/en>). The Ministry has an informative website (<http://www.kheu.gov.bn/Theme/Home.aspx>) which can be accessible in Malaya language.

The Islamic *Da'wah* Center, launched in January 1985, is responsible for the propagation and expansion of Islamic teachings among both Muslims and non-

---

<sup>10</sup> Department of Statistics, (2015). *Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook 2015*. Brunei Darussalam: Department of Economic Planning and Development, 187.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad Yousif, (2010), "Islam in Brunei." in *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*. Gordon J. Melton and Marin Baumann. (eds.). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 414.

Muslims in Brunei Darussalam. It also undertakes research and studies on Islamic related subjects, publishes Islamic material such as books, pamphlets, periodicals, and networks with other Muslim countries, by exchanging information and organizing intellectual conferences, seminars and meetings on various contemporary Islamic issues. The Center's Publication Control and Censor Unit monitors religious books, periodicals, journals, newspapers and other materials, which contradict Islamic belief and teachings.

In recent years, a number of Islamic economic institutions have been established in Brunei, supervised by specialists in *Shari'ah* (Islamic law), Islamic economics and finance. Among these institutions is the Perbadanan *Tabung Amanah* Islam Brunei (TAIB), the first financial institution founded in 1991, which provides services based on the Islamic law, such as Insurance Islam TAIB (<http://www.taib.com.bn/abouttaib/profile.htm>). Insurance Islam TAIB provides and facilitates different kinds of Islamic insurance for individual, family and groups, including coverage for accidents, which may take place during *Hajj* and *Umrah* (optional visit to Mecca).

The main financial institute in modern Brunei is Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam Berhad commonly known BIBD. Initially, this Bank was started in 1981 as the Island Development Bank than was converted to a complete Islamic financial system in 1993 and subsequently changed its name to become the Islamic Bank of Brunei. In 2005, the Islamic Development Bank of Brunei, which was providing financial services specifically on developments, merged with Bank Islam Brunei to make BIBD (<http://www.bibd.com.bn/about/corporate-profile>).

Today, BIBD is Brunei's largest Islamic and conventional institution, provides a variety of financial and commercial services and transactions such as *al-Wadiah*

(saving deposit), *al-Mudharabah* (profit sharing), *al-Bai'u Bithaman Aajil* (differed payment sale), *al-Ijarah* (lease or rent), *al-Wakalah* (letter of credit), *al-Takaful* (insurance), and *al-Rahan* (guarantor), all of which function according to Islamic *Shari'ah* principles (<http://www.bibd.com.bn/consumer/services>).<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the above institutions, the government established the *Mulaut* Abattoir in 1990, under the auspices of the Agriculture Department. Essentially, the Abattoir provides slaughtering facilities to local farmers and butchers to enable them to slaughter their livestock according to the requirements of Islamic law. The Abattoir also offers slaughtering services for various Islamic rituals such as *Qurban* (an animal sacrificed during the *Hajj* period), *Aqiqah* (an animal sacrificed for a newborn baby), and *Walimah* (an animal sacrificed during a wedding ceremony). Certification by the Abattoir guarantees that all meat products sold, bought, or cooked meet Islamic requirements. Furthermore, the newly established *Halaqah* Food store markets all kinds of Halal meat products, while Brunei Meat Company (BMC) maintains several branches in the country to sale *halal* frozen meat to public. According to the BMC Food Industries Sdn. Bhd., all their value-added products in Brunei are strictly comply with the Guidelines for Halal Certificate and Halal Label in Brunei, to insure that “all our products are guaranteed 100% Premium quality *Halal* food” (<http://bmcfood.com>).

It should be noted however, that a number of non-*halal* restaurants (which sell meat not-permissible to Muslims) exist in the country to cater and facilitate for the needs of non-Muslim citizens and residents. In addition, most supermarkets have a partitioned section, which sells non-*halal* meat and food products.

---

<sup>12</sup> Cited from a conversation with Dr. Awang Abdul Nasir Bin Haji Abdul Rani, member of the Shariah Advisory Body and the Dean of Faculty of Business and Management Sciences at the Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA), December 15, 2016, Gadong, Brunei Darussalam; see also Report Information from ProQuest (2016), “The Banker Awards 2014: Country Awards Winners – Asia-Pacific.” *The Financial Times Limited* (UK), 3.

There are only a few non-governmental Islamic religious organizations in Brunei. These include the National Association of Qur'anic Reciters and Memorizers (IQRA) which trains and assists members to properly read and memorize the Qur'an, the New (Muslim) Converts Association and the *Ikhwan al-Muslimeen*, which is based in the district of Kuala Belait. Of these groups, only the first two can be genuinely classified as active.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the above organizations, Sufi groups or *tariqahs* (mystical orders), particularly *al-Ahmadiyyah* and *al-Naqshabandiyyah* have also established themselves in the country. Some of these *tariqahs* trace their roots directly to the Middle East, while others entered Brunei via neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Many of these groups engage in *Mawlud Dhikir*, a socio-religious ceremony in which religious poems are read and chanted.<sup>14</sup>

As for non-Muslim religious organizations, more than forty socio-religious and cultural Chinese associations have been established in Brunei.<sup>15</sup> These include dialect-locality groups, trade-occupational, cultural-recreational, mutual help-benevolent, religious and community-wide associations. The primary Christian association in Brunei is the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM), which is essentially an umbrella organization operating on behalf of Christians on the Island of Borneo (i.e. including the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak). In 1994, the Mission changed its name to Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) and later officially known as the BEM (SIB) Olive Garden, located in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia (<http://olivegarden.sibog.org>).

---

<sup>13</sup> Ahmad Yousif, (2010), "Islam in Brunei." in *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, 414.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on Sufism in Brunei, see Hajah Masuriyati Binti Haji Yahya (2006), "The Development of Sufism in Brunei from 19<sup>th</sup> Century to Contemporary Period." M.A thesis, University of Brunei Darussalam.

<sup>15</sup> Leo Suryadinata (1995). *Southeast Asian Chinese: The Socio-cultural Dimension*. Singapore: Times Academic Press, 83.

In addition, there are four Indian related socio-religious organizations in Brunei. These are the Indian Association of Kuala Belait-Seria, the Indian Association of Bandar Seri Begawan, the Hindu Welfare Board, and the Indian Chamber of Commerce. The oldest is the fifty-year old Hindu Welfare Board, which functions as a Hindu religious organization and has approximately 3000 members, both Bruneian residences and foreigners. The second major Indian organization is the forty-three year old Indian Association, which is considered a social organization for the Indian community and has 300 registered members.<sup>16</sup>

### **Religious Education**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the growth and development of Islamic religious education in Brunei. In 1956, seven full-time Islamic schools were officially opened. Since then, the number of religious schools has increased to 160 schools, ninety-nine of them located in Brunei-Muara district, twenty in Belait, twenty-nine in Tutong and twelve in Temburong.<sup>17</sup>

Religious (*Ugama*) classes are also taught in the public schools. According to Haji Abdul Rahman Bin Haji Nawi, the Director of curriculum development at the Ministry of Education, “Ugama (Islamic) lessons are offered as a subject called 'Islamic Religious Knowledge' (IRK). Students need to take this subject two hours each week at the secondary and the primary school levels, divided into four periods a week, each of which lasted thirty minutes.”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> K S Sandhu and A Mani (1993). *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 23-26.

<sup>17</sup> Department of Statistics, (2015). *Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook 2015*, 208.

<sup>18</sup> Unstructured interview with Haji Abdul Rahman Bin Haji Nawi, Director, Department of Curriculum Development, Ministry of Education, January 1, 2017, Brunei Darussalam; see also John R. Minnis (1999), “Is Reflective Practice Compatible with Malay-Islamic Values? Some Thoughts on o Teacher Education in Brunei Darussalam.” *Australian Journal of Education*. Vol 4, No. 2, 172-185.

Islamic education is also promoted under schools and colleges affiliated with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, where traditional Islamic subjects are taught in both Malay and Arabic languages. Some of the more reputable religious institutes in the country are the *Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Tahfiz al-Qur'an Institute*, the Brunei College of Islamic Studies (*Ma'had*) and the Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPU-SB)

The Institute Tahfiz al-Qur'an Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah<sup>19</sup> located in the center of the Bruneian capital, operates under the Ministry of Education, and presently accommodates forty-two (42) boy and forty-one (41) girl students.<sup>20</sup> It was reported that the Institute have presently 163 memorizers in the ten, twenty and thirty Juzu'a (Qur'anic chapters) categories.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Institute was established to produce Qur'anic prodigies who would be able to further their studies in academic institutions in Brunei or overseas, particularly Arabic countries. For example, there were thirty-six (36) students from the Institute who received special certificates from the Faculty of Usuluddin (UNISSA), during the 2016's Convocation.<sup>22</sup>

The Brunei College of Islamic Studies (*Ma'had*) in Tutong and the Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPU-SB), formally known *Maktab Perguruan Ugama*, in BSB, both operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The *Ma'had* is an Islamic secondary school, which accommodates approximately 500 students, who study for a duration of five years (<https://mahadislambrunei.wordpress.com/about>). KUPU-SB, however, offers a

---

<sup>19</sup> Institute Tahfiz al-Qur'an Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah (<https://www.facebook.com/INSTITUT-TAHFIZ-AL-QURAN-SULTAN-HAJI-HASSANAL-BOLKIAH-713085862144467/>).

<sup>20</sup> Unstructured interview with Ustaz Pg. Haji Haslin Bin Haji Ali, Principal, Institute Tahfiz al-Qur'an Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, January 1, 2017, Brunei Darussalam.

<sup>21</sup> Radio Television Brunei (RTB), Report, "Al-Qur'an Memorizers." Accessed January 2, 2017, from ([http://www.rtbnews.rtb.gov.bn/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=36834%3Aal-quran-memorisers&Itemid=106](http://www.rtbnews.rtb.gov.bn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36834%3Aal-quran-memorisers&Itemid=106)).

<sup>22</sup> Unstructured interview with Dr. Lilly Suzana Binti Haji Shamsu, Dean, Faculty of Ususluddin, Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA), January 1, 2017, Brunei Darussalam.

three-year training program for more than 304 students, in an effort to qualify them to teach in religious schools around the country (<http://www.kupu-sb.edu.bn>). Both the *Ma'had* and KUPU SB teach traditional Islamic studies subjects such as Qur'an, *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions), history, philosophy, *Sufisim* (mysticism), Islamic law, particularly *Shafi'e* school of law. Abang Hadzmin Bin Abang Haji Taha asserted that,

KUPU-SB is a teacher's training college producing Islamic religious teachers where students are not only learning the Islamic studies courses but also how to teach Islamic courses. The *Mahad*, however, offers all standard subjects taught in public schools in addition to Islamic subjects, in a more thorough compared to public schools.<sup>23</sup>

At the tertiary level, the Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS) was established in 2010, at the University of Brunei Darussalam, to provide postgraduate degrees i.e Master of Arts (M.A.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), by research, on Islamic civilization and contemporary issues (<http://soascis.ubd.edu.bn/programs>). In fact, SOASCIS was a substitute to the former Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddin Institute of Islamic Studies (IPI) at the University, which was used to provide three different areas of specialization - Islamic Law (*Shari'ah*), Theology and Propagation (*Usuluddin* and *Da'wah*), and Arabic Language.

In 2007, and with a declaration from the Sultan, IPI was upgraded to the current Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA), and becomes the first Islamic institution of higher learning in the country. Today, UNISSA have five (5) faculties and eight (8) centres. According to Norarfan bin Haji Zainal, the current Rector, UNISSA is an authentic Islamic University, of international standard, "offers a variety of programs across disciplines based on Al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah"

---

<sup>23</sup> Unstructured interview with Dr. Abang Hadzmin Bin Abang Haji Taha, Deputy President, Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPU-SB), December 31, 2016, Brunei Darussalam.

(<http://www.unissa.edu.bn/about-us/corporate-profile/rectors-message>). Currently, UNISSA offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in major fields of Islamic studies such as Usuluddin, Shari'ah and Islamic law, business and management, Islamic banking and finance, Arabic language, Islamic civilization and development (<http://www.unissa.edu.bn/programmes/programmes-offered>).

As far as non-Muslim religious educational institutions are concerned, a number of Christian based schools established during the colonial era, are still in operation today. Such schools include St. George's and St. Andrew's in BSB, St. Michel's and St. Angela's school, in Seria. There are eight Chinese schools in Brunei managed by the Chinese community in the country, including the well-known Chung Hwa Middle School in the capital. It should be noted that "since all schools (in Brunei) must follow national curriculum including private schools, so "Islamic Religious Knowledge" is becoming one of six compulsory core subject students, Muslims and non-Muslims, need to take."<sup>24</sup>

### **Religious Festivals and Social Customs**

Muslims in Brunei annually celebrates a number of religious holidays, including *Eid al-Fitr*, *Eid al-Adha*, the Prophet's birthday, 1<sup>st</sup> of *Muharram*, *Nuzul al Qur'an*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ramadan and *Isra* and *Miraj*. The Christian New Year and Christmas are also official recognized holidays, in addition to the Chinese New Year. Although they are not recognized as national holidays, the Hindu community in Brunei celebrates both *Thaipusam* and *Deepavali* festivals. On a regional and local level, *Hari Gawaihfdf*, an annual festival commemorating the rice harvest is celebrated by the *Iban* tribe. As

---

<sup>24</sup> Unstructured interview with Haji Abdul Rahman Bin Haji Nawi, Director, Department of Curriculum Development, Ministry of Education, January 4, 2017, Brunei Darussalam.

far as social customs are concerned, birth, marriage, divorce, burial and other social ceremonies in Brunei are generally done according to the Islamic law, with emphasis on the *Shafi'ai* school of law.

### **Media Coverage**

Islam in Brunei is well represented in the local print, electronic and social media. For example, Radio-Television Brunei (RTB) devotes great time a week to religious or religious-related television programming, including five channels (<http://www.rtb.gov.bn>). Religious input includes a short Qur'anic recitation (usually followed by du'a, a short supplication) to officiate and close broadcasting every day, daily broadcasts of the *Azan* (call for prayer), coverage of the weekly Friday *Khutbahs* or religious sermons, congregational prayers and supplications, intellectual lectures and forums, the annual Qur'an competition, Islamic entertainment shows and songs, Muslim festivals and celebrations, and other socio-religious activities. Moreover, RTB have five radio stations, namely Nasional, Pilihan, Pelangi, Harmoni and Nor Islam (<http://www.rtb.gov.bn/Theme/Home.aspx>).

The government funds all RTB programs including *Nurul-Islam* (the Light of Islam) radio station, which was established 1997. *Nurul-Islam* focuses exclusively on Islamic programming, including lectures and forums devoted to Islamic topics, broadcast Qur'anic recitations, the *Azan*, congregational prayers, supplications, Friday prayers, as well as all official Islamic ceremonies and activities. Among its popular programs are the daily *Kuliah Mufti* (the State Mufti Lecture) and the *Kuliah Fardhu Ain* (basic Islamic tenants, every Sunday, at 9am) (<http://www.rtb.gov.bn/SitePages/Radio%20Nurislam.aspx>).

As far as print media is concerned, the main official English newspaper, *Borneo Bulletin* (established in 1953), and *Berita Brunei* (formally known as *Berita Borneo*) and *Media Permata*, Malay-language daily newspapers in Brunei. These newspapers are frequently highlight formal and informal Islamic activities around the country, including the daily pray-schedule, occasional articles on Islamic subjects, as well as reporting international events of interest to Muslims. Occasional coverage is also devoted to events, activities and festivals related to religious minority groups in Brunei (<http://borneobulletin.com.bn>). *BruDirect* (also know as *Brunei Direct*) is an online newspaper and presently the most popular website in the country. It was found by the late Ignatius Stephen in 1999, and in March 25, 2016 the website attracted more than 767,000,00 (<https://www.brudirect.com/index.php>).

## **Conclusion**

This paper has demonstrated how Islamic values, traditions and ethics continue to be incorporated and manifested within Brunei's religious institutions, culture, society and politics, in the modern era. Although the government has played a significant role in creating and developing Islamic culture and religious values, educational and financial institutions, it also supporting Islamic programs in the media, while religious minorities have the right to observe their own religious rituals and traditions.

In light of the above conceptual and practical achievements, what does the future hold for the successful development and implementation of moderation (*Wasatiyyah*) to promote “global peace” via educational institutions in the Bruneian context? In order for a “global peace” to become a realistic possibility, there is first and foremost a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of the “Islamic education” debate, both in Southeast Asia in general and particularly

in Brunei. It is hoped that this paper has contributed somewhat to providing a theoretical overview of the various religious and educational institutions in contemporary Brunei Darussalam.

Laying the foundational framework must not stop the developments however. Instead, there is a need for educational and definitely religious policy makers in Brunei Darussalam to further examine and study the initiatives undertaken by institutions in the Muslim world such as Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco, which are at the forefront of “Islamic moderation” and its re-development. Brunei can learn from their experiences, as well as avoid similar mistakes.

Once a commitment to developing and implementing Islamic educational institutions is made, the next step is to determine what is feasible and what is not, given the present Bruneian context and constraints. Certainly, a topic such as “Introduction to Wasatiyyah” can be integrated at various levels of the curriculum. Perhaps, the present low participation rates of students in Islamic education in Brunei, with the exception to UNISSA, would significantly increase, specifically if education were taught from the view that it is a religious duty for all Muslims, in the sense that Islam encourages Muslims to seek knowledge about Allah’s creation and the world around them, beside undertake research that will benefit mankind and develop Muslim societies. The inclusion of Wasatiyyah in the national curriculum may serve to motivate students to engage in and to be an instrument for promoting global peace. They will use the Qur’anic and Prophetic traditions not to “rubber stamp” contemporary challenges, but as a source of motivation to pursue research in priority areas that will benefit Brunei and the *Ummah* (Muslim community) in general.

## References

- Department of Economic Planning and Development (2015). *Brunei Darussalam Millennium Development Goals and Beyond: Towards the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. Brunei Darussalam: Department of Economic Planning and Development.
- Department of Economic Planning and Development of Brunei Darussalam (2016), "Population." Accessed October 19, 2016, from <http://www.dep.gov.bn/SitePages/Population.aspx>.
- Department of Statistics (2015). *Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook 2015*. Brunei Darussalam: Department of Economic Planning and Development.
- Formichi, Chiara (2016), "Islamic Studies or Asian Studies? Islam in Southeast Asia." *The Muslim World*, Vol. 106, 696-718.
- Minnis, John R. (1999), "Is Reflective Practice Compatible with Malay-Islamic Values? Some Thoughts on o Teacher Education in Brunei Darussalam." *Australian Journal of Education*. Vol 4, No. 2, 172-185.
- Report Information from ProQuest (2016), "The Banker Awards 2014: Country Awards Winners – Asia-Pacific." *The Financial Times Limited* (UK), 1-16.
- Sandhu, K S and A Mani (1993). *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Schottmann, Sven Alexander (2006), "Melayu Islam Beraja: The Politics of Legitimization in a Malay Islamic Monarchy." *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*. Vol. 40, No. 2, 111–39.
- Suryadinata, Leo (1995). *Southeast Asian Chinese: The Socio-cultural Dimension*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.
- The Constitution of Brunei Darussalam* (1984). Revised Edition. Accessed December 12, 2016, from <http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Brunei1984.PDF>.
- Yahya, Hajah Masuriyati Binti Haji (2006), "The Development of Sufism in Brunei from 19<sup>th</sup> Century to Contemporary Period." M.A thesis, University of Brunei Darussalam.
- Yousif, Ahmad (2010), "Brunei." *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*. Gordon J. Melton and Marin Baumann. (eds.). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clío. e-Book: <http://www.abc-clio.com/product.aspx?id=52831>.

----- (2010), "Islam in Brunei." *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*. Gordon J. Melton and Marin Baumann. (eds.). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio. e-Book: <http://www.abc-clio.com/product.aspx?id=52831>.

----- (2000), "Religious Life and Institutions in Brunei." ISIM Newsletter, No. 5, 16. International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Leiden University, The Netherlands.

### **Internet Sources**

Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam Berhad (BIBD), <http://www.bibd.com.bn/about/corporate-profile>.

*Borneo Bulliton*, <http://borneobulletin.com.bn>.

*BruDirect*, <https://www.brudirect.com/index.php>.

Brunei College of Islamic Studies (*Ma'had*), <https://mahadislambrunei.wordpress.com/about>.

Brunei Meat Company (BMC), <http://bmcfood.com>.

Department of Economic Planning and Development of Brunei Darussalam, "Population." <http://www.depd.gov.bn/SitePages/Population.aspx>.

Institute Tahfiz al-Qur'an Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, <https://www.facebook.com/INSTITUT-TAHFIZ-AL-QURAN-SULTAN-HAJI-HASSANAL-BOLKIAH-713085862144467/>.

Ministry of Religious Affairs, <http://www.kheu.gov.bn/Theme/Home.aspx>.

Negara Brunei Darussalam Government, <https://www.brunei.gov.bn/en>.

*Nurul-Islam*, <http://www.rtb.gov.bn/SitePages/Radio%20Nurislam.aspx>.

*Perbadanan Tabung Amanah Islam Brunei* (TAIB), <http://www.taib.com.bn/abouttaib/profile.htm>.

Radio-Television Brunei (RTB), <http://www.rtb.gov.bn/Theme/Home.aspx>.

Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPU-SB), <http://www.kupusb.edu.bn>.

*Sidang Injil Borneo* (SIB), <http://olivegarden.sibog.org>.

Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS), <http://soascis.ubd.edu.bn/programs>.

Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA), <http://www.unissa.edu.bn>.

Yousif, Ahmad (2010), "Brunei." and "Islam in Brunei." Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices. Gordon J. Melton and Marin Baumann. (eds.). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clío. e-Book. Accessed January 5, 2017, from <http://www.abcclio.com/product.aspx?id=52831>.

Yousif, Ahmad, "Religious Life and Institutions in Brunei," ISIM Newsletter, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Leiden University, The Netherlands, No.5, 16 (July 2000). Accessed January 5, 2017, from [https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17397/ISIM\\_5\\_Religious\\_Life\\_and\\_Institutions\\_in\\_Brunei.pdf?sequence=1](https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17397/ISIM_5_Religious_Life_and_Institutions_in_Brunei.pdf?sequence=1)).

The Constitution of Brunei Darussalam,  
<http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Brunei1984.PDF>.