

# AL-ALBAB

## CONTENTS

Religion and Public Policy: Digital-Based Islamic Political Economy and Human Security on Covid-19 Handling  
*Sri Haryaningsih, Elyta*

The Royal Throne of Tuan Besar in the Restoration of Kubu Kingdom: A Nasab Fiqh Perspective  
*Abu Bakar*

The Tuan Guru Tradition of Nahdlatul Wathan in Pesantren  
*Supratman Muslim, Suprpto, Jamaluddin*

Religion and Diplomacy: The Dynamics of Indonesian-Afghanistan Relations During President Joko Widodo Government  
*Fatimatuzzahro, Gonda Yumitro*

Likang Telu: Cultural Basis for Muslim-Catholic Relations in Manggarai  
*Hironimus Bandur, Adison Adrianus Sihombing*

Syncretism on Catholic Symbols in The Invulnerability Rituals in West Borneo  
*Arius Arifman Halawa, Lukas Ahen, Cenderato*

Religion, Lifestyle, and Identity Affirmation within Middle Class Malay Muslims in Pontianak of West Borneo  
*Nur Hamzah, Sangkot Sirait, Zulkipli Lessy*

Reorienting Ecological Paradigm for Harmonization of Humans and Nature: A Christian Perspective  
*Johanna Silvana Talupun, Eklepinus Jefry Sopacuaperu*

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# AL - ALBAB

VOLUME 10 NUMBER 1 (JUNE 2022)

## CONTENTS

1. Religion and Public Policy: Digital-Based Islamic Political Economy and Human Security on Covid-19 Handling  
Sri Haryaningsih, Elyta ..... 3
2. The Royal Throne of *Tuan Besar* in the Restoration of Kubu Kingdom: A *Nasab Fiqh* Perspective  
Abu Bakar ..... 27
3. The *Tuan Guru* Tradition of Nahdlatul Wathan in Pesantren  
Supratman Muslim, Suprpto, Jamaluddin ..... 45
4. Religion and Diplomacy: The Dynamics of Indonesian-Afghanistan Relations During President Joko Widodo Government  
Fatimatuzzahro, Gonda Yumitro ..... 63
5. *Likang Tehu*: Cultural Basis for Muslim-Catholic Relations in Manggarai  
Hironimus Bandur, Adison Adrianus Sihombing ..... 81
6. Syncretism on Catholic Symbols in The Invulnerability Rituals in West Borneo  
Arius Arifman Halawa, Lukas Ahen, Cenderato ..... 103
7. Religion, Lifestyle, and Identity Affirmation within Middle Class Malay Muslims in Pontianak of West Borneo  
Nur Hamzah, Sangkot Sirait, Zulkipli Lessy ..... 121
8. Reorienting Ecological Paradigm for Harmonization of Humans and Nature: A Christian Perspective  
Johanna Silvana Talupun, Eklepinus Jefry Sopacuaperu ..... 139



# RELIGION, LIFESTYLE, AND IDENTITY AFFIRMATION WITHIN MIDDLE CLASS MALAY MUSLIMS IN PONTIANAK OF WEST BORNEO

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## ABSTRACT

*This work aims at revealing the implications of modernization and improvement of the living standards of the middle-class Malay Muslim community in Pontianak City. The modern world has proven to affect the aspects of religion and culture of the people in the globe, including the Malay Muslims in Pontianak. This is based on research employing qualitative approach with the support of ethnographic activities. Observations and in-depth interviews were to support the data collection from middle-class Malay Muslims in Pontianak. The work suggests that the modernization and improvement of the social class of Pontianak Malay Muslims has changed their relationship to the Malay culture where they have become more selective towards existing customs and traditions. In addition, the increase in the living standards has in fact also increased the desire of Malay Muslims towards various efforts to affirm class identity. Modern Malay Muslims tend to adopt modern life style with the supports of Islamic teachings they practice in everyday life as they consider Islam as the foundation of their customs and traditions. The hegemony of modernity has penetrated the life of the Malay Muslims and influenced the characteristics of their religiosity and Malaydom to a more modernized style.*

**Keywords:** Identity Affirmation; Middle Class; Pontianak Malay Muslims

## INTRODUCTION

The New Order era in the 1980s is considered to have contributed to the emergence of a new group of middle-class Muslim in Indonesia, a group of Muslim community that is educated, professional, modernist, and active in



the cultural area. The emergence of this new middle-class Muslims was the results of the political and economic policies of that period. In its political strategies, the New Order government instituted political repression against various Muslim groups which led these groups to shifting their formal political activities into cultural fields such as education, *da'wah*, to business. However, development projects and the New Order economy had increased the income and quality of education of the Muslim community (Hasbullah, 2000). The rise of middle-class Muslims in Indonesia is also inseparable from the role of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI), which, despite being a staunch supporter of Suharto, has improved the quality and welfare of the Muslim communities through education, economy, and politics (Rahman & Hazis, 2019).

After the New Order, despite going through a crisis, the continuity of development, economic growth, and the human development index continues to spread to various areas of local governments through a decentralized system (Soejoto et al., 2015). Thus, there is a possibility that the escalation of the middle-class Muslims will occur not only in the central regions, but also in areas outside the Island of Java. On this premise, the growth and development of middle-class Muslims in local areas is interesting to study further.

As far as our search goes, there are several studies on the middle-class Indonesians in general, starting from the political aspect of morality (M. Budiman, 2011), consumption behavior (Ansori, 2009; Suyanto et al., 2019), lifestyle (Gerke, 2000), language (Smith-Hefner, 2007), to transitions in marriage (Nilan, 2008). Meanwhile, several studies focusing on middle-class Muslims have also been carried out, ranging from studies on the emergence and characteristics of middle-class Muslims (Hasbullah, 2000; Rahman & Hazis, 2019; Rozaki et al., 2019) to the manifestation of their religious piety (Alam, 2003). 2018). Furthermore, several other studies focused on the role of middle-class Muslims in transforming the activities of philanthropic organizations (Latief, 2010; Triantoro et al., 2021), the depiction of public space and the dynamics of local politics (Hasan, 2011), cultural products (Heryanto, 2011; Jones , 2007; Utama, 2015), to Islamic Boarding School (pesantren) management (Hidayah, 2021).

In light of several studies on Indonesian middle-class Muslims above, it can be seen that this group is very dynamic, affects various sectors of life (social, political, economic, and cultural), is the majority group in urban areas, and often creates certain symbols and behavior that combine modernity and cultural values. These various characteristics then make the study of middle-class Muslims even more interesting. Therefore, we are interested in seeing

how Muslims, whose ethnicity is synonymous with Islam, use not only religion but also culture, both in terms of negotiation and contestation, as inspiration in the formation of social stratification. In addition, we also wanted to observe the lifestyle of the Malay middle-class Muslims and their intentions.

The selection of Pontianak City as the research location is appropriate because in addition to ethnic heterogeneity (Chinese 18.81%, Bugis 7.2%, Javanese 13.84%, Madurese 19.6%, others 12.98%), the number of ethnic Malays in this city is also quite large, namely 34.50% (Bappeda Pontianak City Data, 2019). The Malays in Pontianak are categorized as the coastal ethnic Malay community in addition to the Malays in Sambas, Mempawah, Landak, Sukadana, and Ketapang. Meanwhile, the Malays in the Sanggau, Sekadau, Sintang, Melawi, and Kapuas Hulu areas are interior Malay tribes. This categorization is based on cultural differences which include language, customary traditions, and the traditional power system of the Malay tribes in these regions. These differences are also presentable to understand the openness and acceleration in accepting cultural influences from outside in the two Malay ethnic communities above. In this case, the coastal Malays are considered to be more quickly influenced by outside cultures than the Malays in the interior (Ahyat, 2006).

Nevertheless, in general, the Malays in West Kalimantan—both in the interior and on the coastal areas— have historically shown an attitude of openness and acceptance of local and foreign cultures. Cultural acculturation, the presence of local religious institutions that can maintain the sustainability of the social system, as well as the expansion of trade and religious networks in the West Kalimantan Malay community are in fact inseparable from the factor of their residence on the Kapuas river route (Prasojo, 2017). Their closeness to the route makes them a community with high mobility so that they are open to differences. Besides, the choice of residence on the Kapuas river route also accelerates their access to the outside influence and culture.

In light of the views above, the Pontianak Malays tend to get influenced more quickly from outside cultures because in addition to residing in the coastal area, they also live around the Kapuas river route. Historically, this position has benefited Pontianak City as a major port and trade route since the eighteenth century (Pontianak City Government, n.d.). Based on this premise, the study of Pontianak Malays becomes more interesting because of the high dynamics of change and development in this community.

In fact, the study of middle-class Malays has been done by Abdul Rahman Embong who sought to explain it from the history, dynamics, lifestyle, to the social and political culture of ethnic Malays in Malaysia (Embong, 2002).

However, apart from the different locations and timescales, the study does not really show the possibility of group differences in middle-class Malay Muslims. In fact, contemporary Muslim society (especially in Indonesia) is very diverse (Kersten, 2015). Moreover, there are indications that middle-class Muslims not only consist of moderate Muslim communities, but also conservative-radicals (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018, p. 6). Thus, unlike the findings shown by Abdul Rahman Embong, this study will demonstrate that middle-class Malay Muslims are based on diverse religious understandings and behavior (traditional, moderate, and conservative). Therefore, the characteristics and dynamics of their behavior also vary from one another.

This study used the qualitative research methods and the type of ethnographic research that aim to shed light on systems, institutions, symbols, and patterns (Spradley, 2016), which are related to the religious life of Malay Muslims in urban areas. The object of the study observed the entire middle-class Malay Muslim group (traditional, moderate, conservative). The data were collected through surveys, in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2019).

Qualitative data analysis techniques were carried out starting from the process of collecting, condensing, and displaying data (Miles et al., 2014). Meanwhile, to deepen the analysis, this study also used the Bourdieu's theory of habitus, capital, and arena as well as other relevant theories and research findings. To test the validity of the data, this research used triangulation (data sources and research techniques), extended research period, and discussion with colleagues.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MALAYS AND ISLAM**

There are differences of opinion among scholars regarding the origin of the Malays. However, some scholars such as Nothofer (1996), Belwood (1997), and Collins (2002), reveal that the ancient Malay tribe originated from the island of Borneo. After that, about two thousand years ago, the Malay language spread to several other areas such as Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia (Salim, 2013; Yusriadi, 2015).

The Malays are known as an ethnic group that has a strong relationship with the river and the sea. This can be seen from the place where they live, work, to the erection of the royal palace building in the coastal area around the river and the sea. They are also known as intelligent, polite, generous, clean, and beautiful people in Asia (Sunandar, 2015). They are egalitarian, flexible, open, and adaptable. Their openness to differences is possible because of their high

maritime orientation so they are accustomed to building relationships with other civilizations (Prayogi, 2016).

In spite of the history above, a person will be categorized as a Malay if he meets these three criteria, namely practicing Malay traditions, speaking the Malay language, and being Muslim (Omar, 2014). Of these three criteria, the religious aspect is the most interesting. On the one hand, a person's Islamic religious status will make a member of ethnic Malays. This can be seen when people who come from ethnic Dayak and Chinese convert to Islam, they will be called Malays. However, the Madurese, Javanese and Sundanese who live in Pontianak and are Muslim do not experience ethnic changes as above (Sanusi, 2017; Yusriadi, 2015).

The Malays in Pontianak are categorized as the coastal Malay ethnic community in addition to the Malays in Sambas, Mempawah, Landak, Sukadana, and Ketapang. Meanwhile, the Malays in the Sanggau, Sekadau, Sintang, Melawi, and Kapuas Hulu areas are interior Malays. This categorization is based on cultural differences including language, customary traditions, to the traditional power system of the Malay communities in these regions. This differences are also presentable to understand the openness and acceleration in accepting cultural influences from outside among the two Malay ethnic communities above. In this case, the coastal Malays are considered to be more quickly influenced by outside cultures than the Malays in the interior (Aahyat, 2006).

However, in general, the Malays in West Kalimantan—both in the interior and on the coastal areas— have historically shown an attitude of openness and acceptance of local and foreign cultures. Acculturation, the presence of local religious institutions that can maintain the sustainability of the social system, as well as the expansion of trade and religious networks in the West Kalimantan's Malay communities, are in fact inseparable from the factor of their residence on the Kapuas river route (Prasojo, 2017). Their closeness to the route makes them a community with high mobility so that they are open to differences. In addition, the choice of residence on the Kapuas river route also accelerates their access to outside influences and cultures.

In light of the views above, the Pontianak Malays tend to get influenced more quickly from outside cultures because in addition to residing in the coastal area, they also live around the Kapuas river route. Historically, this position has benefited Pontianak City as a major port and trade route since the eighteenth century (Pontianak City Government, n.d.). Based on this premise, the study of Pontianak Malays becomes more interesting because of the high dynamics of change and development in this community.

In historical records, the relationship between the Malays and Islam seems so strong. First, the Malays have the belief that customs and culture should not conflict with the basic Islamic principles. This view can be seen from a common Malay saying, namely, *syara' mengata, adat memakai. Iyya kata syara', benar kata adat. Adat tumbuh dari syara', syara' tumbuh dari kitabullah. Berdiri adat karena syara' (Custom ia applied in accordance with Sharia, what is true in Sharia is true in customs, customs are based on Sharia, Sharia is based on the Book of Allah, customs are established on the basis of Sharia)*. This sentence shows how the Malays have made Islam the foundation of Malay customs and traditions. *The Malays and Islam are inseparable, like two sides of a coin. Whatever is regarded as a Malay custom, that's Islam. [If] we explore the various Malay traditions, there must be an element of Islam in it; read a surah or verse of the Qur'an, then send greetings to the Prophet and end with a prayer. ... Then [if] we check the our forebears' writings, they didn't know Latin script, they knew the Arabic-Malay script* (F. Putra, personal communication, 6 February 2022).

Internalization of the Qur'an, both in the form of reciting and writing in various life practices, is a common thing for the Malays. Some of these traditions include *tahlilan* (usually held in several ceremonies; commemoration of Islamic holidays; and family gatherings), *yasinan* or reciting the *Surah Yasin* when moving into a new house, treatment by reading several verses of the Qur'an and placing amulets that are inscribed with excerpt from the Qur'an, giving children with names and accessories (bracelets or necklaces) from the words in the Qur'an, etc.

Assimilation and acculturation between religion and culture in the examples above are not merely based on the belief that Malay customs and traditions grew out of religious teachings. The practice of this tradition in fact stems from the Muslim Malays' belief in the flexibility of the Islamic religion which will always be suitable for every place and time. This view is also what makes religious rituals practiced by the Malays assimilate with local culture and wisdom (Djar'ie & Prasojo, 2015).

Second, historical traces of various Malay kingdoms show that Islam has been an inspiration in their social and political structures (F. Putra, personal communication, 6 February 2022). Even the Malay kingdoms at that time also propagated and controlled the spread of Islam in their territories. To enhance this Islamization project, the kingdom brought in teachers from Arab lands or sent their best people to study there. Arab teachers who were brought in by the kingdom were given a place to live, had a madrasa built for them for religious instruction, and some of them even married the king's daughters.



(Erwin, personal communication, July 2020).

Third, the closeness of ethnic Malays to Islam can also be found in the form of the Arabic-Malay script commonly used in classical manuscripts, royal seals, tombstones, and various ancient carvings. As a form of appreciation, this script remains in use now (Dungcik & Bety, 2014). For example, several schools in Sambas use Jawi script as material in their local content subjects.

Some of the examples above have demonstrated the closeness between the Malay tradition and Islam. However, in its journey, modernity seems to gradually change the old Malay habitus into a new Malay habitus. A critical perspective as a consequence of a touch of modernity has made a new generation of Malays question and review old structures and traditions that are considered irrational and practical towards a pragmatic way of life. Thus, the following discussion will reveal how the Malays with their ethnic entities respond to modernity that they encounter in their lives.

#### **MALAY MUSLIMS' RESPONSE TO MODERNITY**

The modern world began in the renaissance and *aufklärung* (enlightenment) era in the 17th century AD. It was marked by the rise of advancement in human thinking based on rationalism and positivism, resulting in various inventions in the fields of science and technology. The extraordinary advancement that has occurred since then is something that the primitive nations had never imagined (H. Budiman, 1997). Other advancements that have a considerable influence on human life are in the field of information and communication technology. Through various devices, the vast real world is then 'transformed' into a small and efficient space in the form of an electronic screen (Piliang, 2011).

Although modernity has brought progress in various fields, it also has negative consequences to human life. Modernity is considered as an unfinished project so that modern humans are actually in a condition full of great risks (Giddens, 2005). Modern humans tend to be mechanical where their lives revolve around production and material consumption activities so that they are dragged into monotonous situations and life (Fromm, 2010). Modern humans live in the "periphery of the circle of existence" and it blurs their identity (Shirayev & Levy, 2012). Generally, there are three forms of human actions in the face of modernity. First, to accept and fully enter into modern life. Second, to take some aspects of modernity combined with the old value structure. Finally, to completely modern values and hold to the old values.

From the results of this study, we also observed that the response of the

Pontianak Malay Muslim community in dealing with modernity is divided into several groups similar to the division above. First, some young Malays living in urban areas have fully adopted modern life and abandoned old traditions. Their Malay identity has been replaced with a cosmopolitan urban identity. This group generally has a higher education background, works in the public sector, and lives in a housing complex or apartment. This group are comprised of younger generation of Malays who are affiliated with Islamist ideologies and movements. They no longer practice Malay customs and traditions.

The second group consists of Malays who are going through acculturation, namely maintaining old traditions that are considered still relevant while adopting modern values and products. For instance, we found a young Malay family who sent their children to an international school but still practices Malay traditions with their children, such as *tepong tawar* (housewarming ceremony), *naik ayon* (one of the stages of birth ceremony) and *tepong tawar besunat* (circucision ceremony). Finally, there are also Malays who are actively and staunchly rejecting modern things because they seek to maintain their Malaydom. Generally this group resides in suburban areas in a predominantly Malay community. However, the number is not significant compared to the first and second groups.

In addition to their response to modernity, in this study we also made observation on how Malay Muslims in Pontianak view their traditions and culture from the perspective of the religion they practice. As a result, there are three different responses. First, the majority of Malay Muslims in Pontianak still practice traditions regarded as not being in conflict with Islam. This group still considers that not all traditions and cultures are in accordance with religious teachings. Therefore, for them, conflicting cultures and traditions need to be filtered.

The second group with a fairly large number still practice all Malay traditions and culture. Because, they believe that everything is in harmony with Islam. For example, a circumcision that begins with *tahlilan*, *tepong tawar* (a celebration event when moving to a new house), *robo'-robo'* (warding off misfortune), *naik ayon* (a ceremony held for the birth of a child), and so on. They consider that almost all of these customs and traditions contain Islamic elements such as reading the Qur'an, and reciting prayer so that there is no conflict between religion and culture. The third group, namely the 'purified' group. They completely reject tradition and culture because they think that there are no examples in the Qur'an or Hadith. In fact, they view tradition and culture as the legacy of their ancestors. In addition, the habits of those who still practice traditions are viewed as a lack religious knowledge.

At least, there are three factors that cause changes in Malays in terms of their Malaydom, namely because of the shifting role of the family, the changes in social structures of society, and the fading cultural center (Abdullah, 2017). In the modern era, the dominance of parenting and legacy of traditional values held by families and parents has begun to be replaced by other sources, such as figures in motion pictures and television. Meanwhile, in the arena of life and social structure, modernization has given birth to a contestation between tradition and the market. In this contestation, parties with strong social capital (economy, symbol, network, and culture) will certainly have the upper hand (Jenkins, 2004). The research findings show that those who are more influential in changing the social structure are dominated by middle-class Malay Muslims. With adoption of modernity, they have changed the value structure of the old Malay tradition and culture. In the following discussion, we will further explain this new Malay group that are made up of middle-class Muslims.

#### **MIDDLE-CLASS MALAY MUSLIM LIFESTYLE**

To further understand the middle-class, we refer to the explanation of two major perspectives on class society, namely Marxian and Weberian. In the Marxian understanding, the concept of social class, including the middle-class, is built within an economic framework that is clearly measured by income and expenditure. Meanwhile, in the Weberian perspective, the position of the middle-class is determined by not only economic status, but also intellectual capacity and inspiration for change. Measured from the Marxian framework, middle-class Malay Muslims are people who, according to the Asian Development Bank's indicators, spend on consumption expenses of IDR 28,000 – 280,000 per day or IDR 840,000 – 8,400,000 per month. Meanwhile, Solvay Grake explained that the middle-class are people whose a maximum of 50% of their income is spent for consumption purposes, then the rest is for the needs of the enjoyment of life and savings (Rubaidi, 2021).

In Pontianak, the economic and business sectors are still dominated by ethnic Chinese. They control the automotive, electronics, construction materials, textile, some culinary markets, etc. However, the Pontianak Malays also have a fairly strong position in certain sectors, such as construction, transportation, property, tourist attractions, hotels, and owners of public gas stations. The increase in the economic level of the middle-class Malay Muslims also occurs among the younger generation aged 30-45. This can be seen from the financial capacity they have such as their ownership of a business or venture, investing for the future, and having quite a lot of savings in the bank. Several other

middle-class characteristics can also be easily found in this group, such as living in an elite neighborhood, sending their children to a favorite school, owning a private vehicle, spending their free time on vacation or doing various other fun activities.

Furthermore, based on the Weberian framework, middle-class Malay Muslims in Pontianak are those who have careers in the formal sector (such as bureaucrats, employees, politicians, and professionals) and the non-formal, such as middle-level businessmen and traders. This group has relatively high purchasing power and mobility. Their views and political actions are reformist, more pluralist and open to modernity (Jati, 2016; Klinken & Berenschot, 2014). In the case of the Malay Muslims in Pontianak, in addition to being entrepreneurs in several sectors as previously mentioned, many of them also work as civil servants, become party leaders, and hold important positions in various agencies, both government and private.

To further explore the characteristics of this middle-class Malay Muslim group, we observed their lifestyle. In this case, we used Bourdieu's theoretical framework which explains that each particular social stratum has its own preferences as an effort to differentiate class and affirm identity (Bourdieu, 1984). Middle-class preferences discussed here are preference of food, fashion, and culture. The food preference among middle-class Malay Muslims in Pontianak can be seen from their choice of places and forms of consumption behavior. Some of the places visited by middle-class Malay Muslims are several medium class restaurants such as the Zakaria restaurant, Beringin, Melda, Pojok, Pondok Bambu, Grill Me, Pondok Ale-Ale, Raja Uduk, and culinary outlets located in the corner of the mall.

The Middle-class Malay Muslims eat out quite often. During the day, they usually have lunch with their co-workers and their business colleagues in groups. While at night, they tend to choose to eat out with their families. Eating at home usually only take place on weekends. This consumption behavior is supported by the emergence of places to eat with various menus. The behavior of eating out that emerged in the twentieth century as a way of spending leisure time has increased along with the increasingly massive development of places to eat (Warde & Martens, 2001).

Interestingly, one of the forms of behavior of the middle-class Malay Muslims is that on several occasions they eat at exclusive places that are frequented by the elite class. Some of the places they visit are among others Sari Bento restaurant, Gajah Mada restaurant, Pondok Kakap seafood restaurant, Kartika hotel restaurant, and several other restuarants at three-star hotels. This behavior is in line with what Bourdieu stated that the middle-class in general

will also try to imitate the lifestyle of the elite class above it. However, there is an exception here, namely the middle-class Islamist Malay Muslim group. They practice eating out less, often on the grounds that it is hedonic, time-wasting, and of little use. In addition, we assume that this rejection is also due to their tendency to close themselves off from outside life and prefer to hang out with their fellow group members.

Next is their fashion preference. The Pontianak middle-class Malay Muslims show similar taste in fashion to the middle-class in general. They are very adaptive to the trending styles and fashions of clothing. The clothes they wear are purchased in malls, distros, and online stores. Regarding Muslim attire, they are accustomed to adapting to the theme of the event. This is usually seen in recitation activities which are held not only in mosques, but also at cafes and housing complexes. At this event, they will usually get an invitation from a whatsapp group which includes the dress code. During the event, we observed how they seemed to be competing to look impressive through the clothes, cosmetics, and perfumes they wore. In order to draw attention and show their existence, this recitation activity will be filled with selfie activities with other participants. After that, the pictures will be uploaded on social media.

Unlike the groups above, again, the Islamists show a different clothing preference. The women prefer loose clothing with long headscarves up to the knees. While the men use *cingkrang* pants (ankle pants or cropped pants). They buy clothes like this in shops that are generally owned by people from their fellow community. From the various styles of clothing above, we noticed that this is what Bourdieu stated as a practice of distinction. Clothing in this perspective is not only seen as an effort to meet primary needs, but also as a symbol of identity for its wearer. Finally, another form of preference among middle-class Malay Muslims here is cultural behavior which in Bourdieu's view is reflected in hobbies and activities. Pontianak as a city with various facilities and infrastructure provides flexibility for this group to carry out various activities and enjoy hobbies. The economic and symbolic capital they have also makes it easier for them to display their preferences and identity as the middle-class.

Based on our findings, the middle-class Malay Muslims' sports activities are interesting to observe. They consider exercise as part of their lifestyle. Sports serve as an effort to maintain health, appearance, and no less important is as a means to represent oneself as members of the middle-class. There are two sports that they are interested in, namely jogging and cycling. They usually go jogging in special areas, such as the jogging track of the Tanjungpura University campus, Pontianak, the Pangsuma sports facilities, and the track



along the banks of the Kapuas river. Meanwhile, they go cycling on urban streets. The sporting clothes and accessories they wear are quite complete, starting from special sportswear such as pants, shoes, hats, and for those who cycle, they wear helmets and sunglasses as well. On the sidelines of the activity, they seem so excited to take selfies and upload them on social media.

Another middle-class Malay Muslims' lifestyle that we noticed and it is interesting to discuss here is the *halal* lifestyle. This lifestyle emerges as a necessity to ensure that every action and choice is in accordance with the Shari'a, is guaranteed to be *halal* in accordance with the Islamic religion, and is part of an effort to be pious (Adinugraha & Sartika, 2019). Currently, the *halal* lifestyle has penetrated into various sectors of life, ranging from food, tourism, cosmetics, agriculture, business, management, etc. (Sarasati, 2018).

The demand to meet these needs is then accommodated by various parties, especially intellectuals and business people. For intellectuals, they have founded institutions and teams that will conduct studies on various products and services before being labeled as *halal*. Meanwhile, for business people, they will compete to produce various *halal* products and services for Muslim consumers. This practice gives rise to the commodification of religion which seeks to compare Islamic symbols with products and services to be traded.

The emergence of the *halal* lifestyle is an effort made by the Muslim community to fight the domination of global capitalism. One of the ways is to produce various *halal* products and services. They view this effort as a great opportunity to elevate the Islamic world to become a major actor in the *halal* industry sector. This is because the Muslim population is quite large. However, this resistance has been noticed by corporations, so they also launch similar products and services but with much better quality because of the superiority of their capital. Although the Muslim business actors are still unable to fight the domination of secular capitalists, this contestation has somehow made the *halal* lifestyle a trend that is starting to be universally accepted. This is because this lifestyle offers cleanliness, health, safety, and virtue in itself (Mejova et al., 2017). This lifestyle is also part of the practice of distinguishing the middle-class Malay Muslims to express and defend their middle-class identity in front of members of other social classes.

## CONCLUSION

Historically, Islam and the Malays have had such a strong relationship. The Malays consider Islam as the foundation of their customs and traditions. This can be seen from the strong Islamic elements such as reciting the

Qur'an, *shalawat* (greetings and salutation upon Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h), and saying prayer in various Malay traditional rituals. However, when the hegemony of modernity has penetrated the life of the Malays, the characteristics of their religiousity and Malaydom have begun to change. This also affects the relationship between the two aspects, namely religion and culture. In addition to modernization, this change has also been strengthened by the birth of a new generation of Malays who are part of the middle-class. In viewing customs and traditions, this group seeks to re-select the traditions they wish to preserve by considering religious norms and its usefulness. Interestingly, a small number of them even reject the Malay tradition because it is regarded as being in conflict with Islamic teachings.

The inherent characteristic of these middle-class Malay Muslims is their high desire to display their class identity. This can be easily seen from the display of their lifestyle, starting from their preferences, fashion, and culture. In addition, another typical lifestyle for the middle-class Malay Muslims is the *halal* lifestyle which is manifested in food products, tourist attractions, cosmetics, etc. Modernization and the increasing standard of living seem to have affected several aspects of Malay society's life. In modern life, people's sources of information are increasingly diverse and global market expansion is getting stronger. This has, of course, weakened local cultural centers, ranging from families, local traditional leaders, to local cultural communities.

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