



The Acculturation of Malay-Islamic Elements in the Dabus Dance Ritual in the Malay Community of Perak, Malaysia

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Submitted: 2023-08-15. Revised: 2023-10-16. Accepted: 2024-03-08

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to examine the Islamic and Malay elements that are acculturated in the Dabus dance ritual of Perak, Malaysia. The focused group of this study is the Dabus of Tanjung Bidara village, estimated to have been established since the 1818s. However, throughout that time, the perception of the Malay community has not been strong yet, specifically regarding the ritual relationship of the Dabus dance with Islamic values. In fact, not infrequently, Dabus dance rituals are seen as contradicting the values of Islam itself. It is even seen over as skewed by some of the Malay community. However, in terms of history, meaning, practice, and ritual function, the Dabus dance itself cannot be separated from Islam. The study was designed as a field study. The data collected is qualitative and analysed critically using ritual theory, cultural symbols, and acculturation. Data was collected through interviews, field observations, and documents. Other data sources include a review of text, photos, videos, and relevant articles. The findings show that 1) the process of Malay-Islamic acculturation in Dabus dance rituals has been since the arrival of Dabus dance in the Malay peninsula and continues until now; 2) one of the most significant Islamic-Malay acculturation methods and strategies is the reinvention of the Dabus dance over time; 3) Islamic-Malay acculturation includes not only physical forms (forms, structures, and ritual elements) but also non-physical aspects (*doa*, *zikir*, *selawat*, *berzanji*, belief).

Keywords: acculturation; ritual; dabus dance of Perak

How to Cite: Chan, A. H. B., Saearani, M. F. T. & Alfarisi, S. (2024). The Acculturation of Malay-Islamic Elements in the Dabus Dance Ritual in the Malay Community of Perak, Malaysia. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 24(1), 134-148

INTRODUCTION

The process of acculturation in Malaysia has started since the existence of Malay civilization, spanning from the Srivijaya, Melaka, Asahan, Langkat, Deli, Serdang, Pelalawan, Siak Sri Indrapura, Jambi, Palembang, Johor-Riau-Lingga, Brunei eras until the present day (Zakaria, A. G., Rahman, A. H. I., & Zulkanain, 2016). In the context of Malay dance, this acculturation has predominantly taken on a secular na-

ture rather than a sacred one. The sacredness of Malay dance is primarily limited to rehabilitation and healing rituals performed in a possessed or sub-conscious state by *mindok*, shamans, healers, or selected mediums. As a result, the art form remains confined to its specific community settings. The Malay dance is highly dynamic and serves as a vessel for the Malay nation and culture, encompassing traditions nurtured within the palace as well as those embraced by the common people, each with its

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own unique philosophy (Anis, 2000).

The Malay dance is a coastal culture that flows along the archipelago coast and acts as a medium to communicate the total feelings. The feelings that flow are then brought to all regions and places to be spread, thus growing and blending in communities. This development is very influential in the music that accompanies the Malay dance. However, the elements of the movement are stylized according to the feelings and nature of movements as well as the characters of the community in a certain district by displaying movements derived from nature and the acculturation of daily activities and relationships among the diversity of humans.

Folk dance among the Malay community has undergone an acculturation process that is in line with the country's and Malaysian society's development. Folk dance is an art that has progressed with the times or, more clearly, has gone through the process of reinvention. Prior to the occurrence of reinvention or recreation, the process of invention or creation inevitably takes place first. The invention of folk dance began before and after the independence of Malaysia. However, there is a very significant difference between reinvention and recreation in folk dance in the 90s and now. Folk dance has undergone many changes, especially in choreography, music as accompaniment, clothing, make-up, and stage performances as important parts of the acculturation process from time to time. Hence, those are important parts of the endless acculturation process.

Perak is a state with various cultural forms such as dance, silat (martial arts), and others still inherited now, especially among the Malays. If efforts in documentation and preservation are not conducted, these cultures will certainly disappear after the passing on of active members of the cultures. History has proven that the state of Perak is the oldest state in Peninsular Malaysia, also known as *Ganga Negara* in an ancient word (Muhamad, 2012, 2020). Perak is recognized as the successor to the greatness of the Malacca Government (Za-

karia et al., 2016); thus, it has a relationship with Kampar in Central Sumatra.

This has resulted in a clash or even acculturation of power of Aceh and Bugis who have already converted to Islam; hence, residents from parts of the archipelago such as Patani, Minangkabau, Mandailing, Java, and Banjar have entered the state of Perak in the history of its glory once before. This influence has caused many artistic developments, resulting in several records stating at least thirteen (13) types of dance and music that can be traced in the state of Perak. Surveys from the historical aspect show that the process of defending this folk art takes place from time to time. Starting with the development among the former communities and current government institutions (JKKN) is a very important process of reaffirmation from the aspect of acculturation considering the two following transitions, namely institutions and societies.

Kussudiarjo (1981) and Soedarsono (1976) stated that dance refers to the beauty of body movements with rhythm and soul, or the arts of dance can also refer to the beauty of human body shapes that move in harmonious rhythm. Berry (2003a) asserted that traditional acculturation, especially in terms of dance, has three forms that allow changes in dance. Firstly, the slow acculturation process results from weaknesses in oral transmission and imitation learning that change from one performance to the next, thus causing dance innovations. Next is the acculturation that exists as a result of the adaptation of selected external influences and the efforts to combine forms of movements that have similarities and peculiarities.

Recent acculturation is the change that occurs as a result of revival consciousness, reinvention, and reorientation from the original form because there is a strong influence from outside culture. Nevertheless, the first change, according to Hadi (2006), is a habit because it goes through the process of time, while the second and third changes are related to clashes of culture. In addition, (Hadi, 2011) elabora-

tes that official and unofficial dances will mostly follow the tendencies of popular dances. The identity of traditional Malay dances not only displays the essence and nature of its people but also follows the culture and factors of change in terms of history, politics, economy, language, and others.

(Ghouse, 1994) stated that the Dabus dance has existed since the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW. The Dabus dance is also related to the heroic story of Sayyidina Ali (Samad, 1990). Consequently, (Moraza, 1994) indicated that the Dabus dance first arrived in the Peninsula in 1600 in Kampung Telaga Nenas, which was later brought to Pasir Panjang Laut, Sitiawan, and further developed in Bagan Datoh.

Ghouse (1994) further asserts that traders brought Dabus to Malaya from Aceh. A similar account is mentioned by (Sarifan, 1996), stating that Dabus performances began in 1936 when Dabus was brought from Aceh after Aceh became one of the rulers in the archipelago resulting from the fall of the Melaka Kingdom to the Portuguese. Therefore, understanding Dabus cannot be separated from the origins of its arrival in Malaya. Aceh, Sumatra, Bugis, and Makassar play a significant role in this regard. Through this approach, the meaning and social context of Dabus for the Malay community can be identified.

According to Atjeh (1993, 1994), Dabus originates from the word *Dabbus* which refers to a piece of sharp iron. This aligns with the Arab-Indonesian dictionary compiled by (Yunus, 1974) which defines *Dabbus* as a needle. Meanwhile, (Ma'luf, 2002) explained that the term *Dabbus* or *Dubbus* refers to a small needle-like tool made of iron or gold used to strengthen something by attaching it. Additionally, (Sarifan, 1996) stated that the word *Dabus* in Arabic means a stick or a sharp needle.

Continuing with the topic of Dabus, (Purnama, 1998) emphasises that in Aceh, Dabus is referred to as *Rapa'I*. Other pronunciations include *Daboih* or *Meudaboih*. The tool used for piercing, commonly known as the 'child of Dabis,' is called *Daboih*.

Additionally, (Purnama, 1998) elaborated that in West Sumatra, Dabus is called *Badabuih* or *Dabuih*. Both terms mean a needle. Meanwhile, in the Bugis and Makassar regions, Dabus is known as *Daboso*.

Furthermore (Pratama, 1995) argued that Dabus can be divided into *Tarekat* Dabus and *Ilmu* Dabus. *Ilmu* Dabus refers to abilities or powers acquired outside the path of *Tarekat*, in the form of mantras in the local language. On the other hand, Dabus *Tarekat* represents inner strength obtained through the practice of a particular *Tarekat* teaching, involving the continuous recitation of noble phrases such as *Laila-hailallah* or the name of Allah (Bruinessen, 1992, 1995), following the practice of the Sufis (Pratama, 1995).

In terms of Dabus performances, (Muzakki, 1990) and (Pratama, 1995) explained further that Dabus is a game that combines Islamic traditions and local customs. Prayers recited during performances are a combination of Arabic and local languages, carefully crafted to convey the meaning of monotheism. The *Tarekat* influences behind the Dabus performance are *Rifaiyah* and *Qadariyah*. When a person reaches the state of *fana*, they are characterized by the ability to perform actions that go beyond the laws of nature.

(Ghouse, 1994) asserted that the development of Malay traditional dance began with simple ritual movements, then developed into folk dance to more complex and delicate palace dances. Each phase of development is a continuous series of acculturation processes. Soekanto & Sulistyowati (2017) argued that culture should be seen as a dynamic factor in social changes. However, the question is how deeply it is understood as acculturation. Understanding changes in the perspective of acculturation is important so as not to cause disputes and conflicts.

The interaction that occurs between groups of people with a particular culture and other groups with different cultures, resulting in changes to the original cultural patterns, is referred to as acculturation (J. W Berry, 1997). Furthermore, Berry

(2003b) explained that acculturation is a middle-path process between confrontation and assimilation, separation and absorption, past and future. This process of adjustment is lengthy and requires a good deal of knowledge about the new culture. The adaptation process can take the form of internal or psychological adjustment and sociocultural adaptation. Therefore, there are two orientations in acculturation: choosing to maintain one's original culture and choosing to adopt the dominant culture, which reflects the new comers' expectations of connecting with the dominant group (John Widdup Berry, 2005)

Hadi (2006) and E. Hobsbawm (1983) argued that acculturation is a cultural change resulting from the interaction of two cultural systems. Moreover, acculturation is characterized by a process of change accompanied by diffusion, innovation, or invention that reflects concepts that better represent the sociocultural conditions of a society. Therefore, acculturation involves blending cultures due to the influence of other cultures. This blending occurs because humans directly encounter elements of other cultures in their social lives. Over time, the local community accepts foreign cultures that enter (Koentjaraningrat, 2009).

Furthermore, J. W Berry (2006) characterized acculturation as a process of cultural change that occurs as a result of the interaction between two or more cultural groups and the members of each ethnic group. There are two essential understandings related to the concept of acculturation. The first concept attempts to understand the various phenomena that occur when individuals from different cultural backgrounds enter a new culture, resulting in changes to their original cultural patterns. The other concept is acculturation at the individual level, which involves changes in an individual's behaviour. Therefore, as proposed by (J. W Berry, 1997), acculturation strategies cannot be separated from the attitudes of individuals and groups, which reflect their tendencies in culturizing behaviour as actual activities

exhibited by individuals or community groups.

In relation to Dabus, the expression of individuals in community groups can be seen in the Dabus ritual itself. Rituals are often understood as group activities with spiritual significance. They are considered rituals if they possess three essential characteristics: performed at specific times, have predetermined goals, and utilize special means or media (Bell, 1997). (Hadi, 2006) also revealed that rituals are ceremonial activities associated with religion or belief systems characterized by distinct features that evoke respect for the Supreme Being in the sense of sacred experiences. Rituals are repetitive ceremonies that involve cultures and religions and are strengthened by traditions. Therefore, rituals are often seen as one of the key elements in life that foster a harmonious relationship between humans and the Supreme being, between humans themselves, and between humans and nature (Firdaus et al., 2002).

Furthermore, Hadi (2006) explained that various forms of ritual activities are fundamental human needs expressed symbolically. Therefore, rituals can be spontaneous, unplanned, and sometimes mythological in nature. Rituals are also seen as a means of connecting human desires with the Creator and ancestral spirits. Klarissa et al. (2019) also described rituals as a medium of communication, remembrance, and prayers for those involved. A similar perspective is presented by (Izaty & Anggraini, 2021), stating that rituals are not only acts of gratitude towards Allah but are also believed to prevent evil, especially from supernatural beings. Thus, the symbolic expressions and meanings conveyed through rituals can be understood.

(Gennep, 2004) also shared the perspective that rituals involve an individual's journey from one social order to another, requiring three stages: separation, transition, and incorporation or reintegration. These three stages are presented symbolically. Gluckman (1975) narrated that rituals are inseparable from social ten-

sions besides representing social cohesion, all of which are expressed through relevant symbols. Therefore, (Turner, 1983) delved deeper into the study of ritual symbols because, within rituals, there are various aspects of humans, including beliefs, morality, social structure, religious ceremonies, and even conflicts between different communities.

Because of that, the symbols in the Dabus ritual are very important to be seen as cultural symbols that contain functional meaning for the Malay community. Geertz (1960; 1977) states that all human creations conceptualized culture as a historically transmitted pattern of meanings contained in symbols or a system of concepts derived from symbolic forms that enable humans to communicate, preserve, and develop their knowledge of life and attitudes toward life. These expressed symbols can be found in material or physical, behavioral, linguistic, and ideational symbols (Heddy, 2016; Yudha, 2000). Gesick (1989) and Turner (1987) argued that humans are essentially compelled to construct social life repeatedly because they feel threatened by something beyond their control, such as the forces of nature. Therefore, (Sachari & Sunarya, 2001) argued that symbols are instruments or tools used by humans to achieve specific goals, such as a sense of security and the reinforcement of social structures.

According to Turner (1983) the use of symbols is crucial in ritual events. Furthermore, it is stated that the study of ritual symbols should focus on which symbols are used and, equally importantly, on the relationship between these symbols and their meanings. Therefore, religious ceremonies are characterized as arenas where religious doctrine is transformed into a series of metaphors and symbols. Moreover, (Turner, 1987) described symbols as having a multivocal nature, meaning that they have multiple meanings. In this context, symbols can refer to various things, people, or phenomena. Another characteristic of symbols is polarization. Due to the multiple meanings of symbols, there

are contradicting meanings of symbols.

Regarding the process of interpreting symbols, Turner (1975) also explained that the interpretation of ritual symbols occurs through the interpretive scope provided by the original informants to the researcher. In this case, interpretations must be classified according to the social characteristics and qualifications of the informant during the interview process. The next dimension is the operational dimension. At this stage, verbal interpretation should not be included; interpretation refers to what is demonstrated throughout the observational process. Lastly, there is the positional dimension, which means that each symbol is connected to other symbols. In other words, ritual symbols do not exist in isolation but are interconnected within a cultural unity (Turner, 1987).

Since the ritual symbols in the Dabus dance are interconnected, one of the very interesting things is that the unity of Islam and Malay is maintained through the reinvention of the Dabus. Hobsbawm (1983) explained that the reinvention of traditions is a process of formalization and ritualization that refers to the past. Reinvention is considered to be the process of creating complex rituals and symbolics performed by certain individuals who are experts or highly skilled, thus the authority among the community.

Then, E. Hobsbawm (1983) asserted that sometimes new traditions can be easily incorporated into old traditions. At times, they can also be created by borrowing from old elements preserved for hundreds of years through official ceremonies, symbols and moral-religious values, specific cultural figures, folklore, and other works of cultural art.

This medium has a transformative nature within it, providing a highly open space for development into new mediums. In the context of producing new mediums, reinvention becomes a strategic effort to create human creativities stored in social memories and collective cultures.

To what extent are new traditions allowed to utilize old materials, and to what

extent can they be compelled to invent new languages or devices and expand the vocabulary of ancient symbols beyond the set limit? This is a continuity of history that must be invented. For example, it involves inventing a time in the present to make it more memorable and plausible through science fiction. In the context of Malaysia, it is a reinvention of old stories, traditions, and customs of the Malay people in villages of the past through the series of Upin and Ipin.

Therefore, to facilitate the concept of reinvention in the context of the Dabus dance, the first thing to refer to is its origin, which is Caliph. Caliph is a title given to someone in Islamic society whose duty is to lead by upholding the teachings of Islam.

As a Caliph, a person must perform duties and responsibilities in appropriate manners according to the needs of the community they lead. In the Malay context, for example, a Caliph offers healing services. Basically, reinvention occurred when the Caliph provided medical treatment to the community. Reinvention has taken place, as mentioned, because originally, the Caliph, a religious leader, also became a Caliph involved in healing practices and spreading Islam.

Indeed, that is the case, as medicine requires a certain level of expertise and specific stages as a process. Therefore, various rituals are performed. With the emergence of rituals throughout the healing process, reinvention has occurred, leading to the birth of the Dabus dance, which has evolved over time. Eventually, the Dabus dance was created to meet the needs of the community. All of these represent phases that must be traversed as a process of recreation or reinvention, as Dabus inherently possesses its unique transformative nature.

Furthermore, a conception of reinvention occurs in the Dabus dance as an acculturation process. 1) Ritual form. The Dabus performance primarily comes from ritual. The presence of the Caliphs in Nusantara, or Malay peninsula, has endured

for several centuries since the introduction of Islam. Simultaneously, the Caliphs in the region of Nusantara or within Malay culture assume multifaceted roles, serving as religious leaders and offering medical services. The foundation of the Dabus presentation is rooted in the ceremonial structure that facilitates the healing process. 2) Dabus performances in village ceremony. After the formation of the ritual structure, the essential component of Dabus progress was the dance, which subsequently led to the emergence of the phrase "Dabus dance." However, it maintains a strong and intimate association with the ritual. Hence, Dabus's betting performance is favoured within the ritual. Because of that, Dabus's betting performance is favoured within the framework of the community ceremony. 3) Stage performance. Over several centuries, the practice of Dabus dance has experienced significant growth and gained popularity within the Malay community. Initially conceived as a ceremonial performance inside villages, the Dabus dance has evolved into a distinct style of stage performance. This pertains to the sultan's and government's responsibilities and authorities, who express their desire to incorporate the Dabus performance as a cultural spectacle inside the palace's many events and governmental initiatives. 4) The future of Dabus dance. The future prospects of Dabus dance remain questionable. Nevertheless, when studying the prevailing cultural manifestations in which the Dabus dance has been incorporated within contemporary frameworks. It is possible to anticipate the enduring presence of the Dabus dance in the future. Reinvention continuously may emerge inside the current society.

Based on the views described, it can be found that the Dabus research carried out so far has not touched on the close relationship between Dabus and Islam. More clearly it can be said that in relation to the Dabus dance, until recently, no studies have examined the development that occurs from time to time in the Dabus dance as acculturation. It is an essential effort,

especially to practitioners, to maintain the existence of the Dabus dance. This effort can also be seen as adaptation and creation as it features different patterns.

For example, a study by Kipli (2016) focused more on the structure of rituals and how the ritual process of the Dabus dance is conducted. (Rozimah & Maziah, 2014) also focused on the performance structures of the Dabus dance. Shahira & Sharifudin, (2014) even had the opinion that Dabus's dance is merely an artifact that seen Dabus through music particularly. Similarly, Azam, Zaharul, & Nor Shuradi, (2013) focus the discussion solely on elements of Dabus music. This is also similar to the studies conducted by Mazidah (1995), (Nazri (1988, 1998), Kulop (2010), and (Rasul, 1982) that put the Dabus dance as merely an inheritance. Likewise, Abdullah (1987) and Sarifan (1996) observed the Dabus dance from the perspectives of history and development in the social context of society.

Although it is undeniable that past studies have made significant contributions to the existence of the Dabus dance to date, this cannot be seen as sufficient to defend the Dabus dance. Therefore, the view that distinguishes this study from past studies is the depth of examining the development of each process of the Dabus dance as acculturation, especially rituals that present symbols, not as merely processes and structures. This study explores symbols in rituals of the Dabus dance as an acculturation of Islam and Malays. This is important because since before, Islamic leaders among the Malays have the opinion that the teachings of Islam contradicted the Dabus Dance. This was also stated by the Caliph of Dabus Perak, Mr. Rosnan. In fact, all the elements, processes, structures, and contents of the Dabus rituals cannot be separated from Islam itself because the process of acculturation between the two has been going on for hundreds of years.

Certainly, this study suggests that Islam-Malay acculturation, which has been going on for hundreds of years, is the strongest reason to state that, particularly in

Malay community contexts, Dabus and Islam cannot be distinguished.

METHOD

The research conducted is a qualitative descriptive field research aimed at obtaining sufficient information according to the research needs. Although qualitative and descriptive, all data are critically analysed to describe the Dabus dance in Perak from the perspectives of acculturation, symbols, rituals, and the elements contained within it. All of these are critically synthesized to explain the interrelationship between symbols. A multidisciplinary approach is employed to support the research methodology (Supanggih, 1995). Ritual theories have been used to analyse the overall process and elements of the ritual, enabling an explanation of the relationships between ritual symbols. Acculturation theory is applied to elucidate the process of interaction between Islam and the Malay culture.

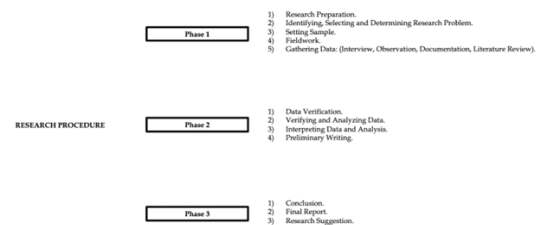


Figure 1. The Research Procedure is Formulated Based on (Moleong, 2015).

The research procedures are divided into three (3) phases. The first phase involves research preparation and data collection. The second phase is the collected data analysis. Finally, the third phase is the stage of writing the overall research findings (Figure 1).

The data collection method involves observation, which entails observing everything related to the Dabus dance and other relevant elements. Next, in-depth interviews will be conducted with the informants who are heirs and artists of the Dabus dance. Documentation is understood as everything that the researcher documented during the observation and

interviews. Furthermore, it also refers to the collection of documentation related to the Dabus dance obtained from the heirs or other relevant sources. The literature review, on the other hand, was conducted to obtain scholarly information about the Dabus dance.

The informants were divided into two (2) groups. The first group consisted of four main informants, heirs, and artists, including prominent cultural figures from Perak. In addition, in-depth and repeated interviews were conducted with these four informants. The second group, referred to as additional informants, consists of the Dabus Tanjung Bidara dance group members in Perak. The interviews were conducted with these additional informants to gather relevant additional information.

The main informants in this study consisted of three males and one female. The male informant is Mat Rosnan bin Hashim, who is the Caliph (leader) of the Dabus Tanjung Bidara group in Perak. He has been involved in Dabus for over 20 years. Next is Mohammad Radzi bin Manaf, who is not only a practitioner but also an heir with over 20 years of experience in Dabus. Lastly, Mohd Yusof bin Othman is a prominent cultural figure from Perak who has researched and analyzed the Dabus dance in Perak for the past 30 years. Finally, another informant is Fatimah Seteh, who is both an heir and an experienced Dabus dancer, a member of the Dabus Tanjung Bidara group for 30 years.

All main informants were presented with questions related to the history of the Dabus dance, the social context of the Dabus dance, the performance structure of the Dabus dance, performance equipment, Dabus dance practices, Dabus rituals, recent developments in the Dabus dance, and community and government responses to the Dabus dance. These questions were explored in-depth, considering the context of the interviews and aligning with the research objectives. Therefore, this research was conducted over a period of 1 year and nine months, from 2021 to 2023.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Dabus Dance Group of Tanjung Bidara, Perak

Regarding the existence of the Dabus Dance Group in Tanjung Bidara Village, Perak, Mr. Rosnan stated that:

“Basically, there are no written records regarding the establishment of the Dabus dance group in Tanjung Bidara Village. Therefore, my main reference is based on oral traditions that have been well-preserved and can be used to formulate the group’s journey year by year. Based on that, I would like to start with the most recent, which is myself. I have been involved in this field for over 20 years. In fact, if my participation as an audience is included, it has been over 30 years. Referring to the story of the previous Caliph before me, he served as Caliph for almost 40 years. That was how it was, from the first Caliph until now, as the seventh Caliph of Dabus, it is understood that the existence of the Dabus dance group in Tanjung Bidara Village has been more than a hundred years.” (Interview, September 18, 2022, in Tanjung Bidara).

Based on the information, Figure 2 briefly explains Dabus’s journey before he finally reached Tanjung Bidara Village, Perak, in 1818.

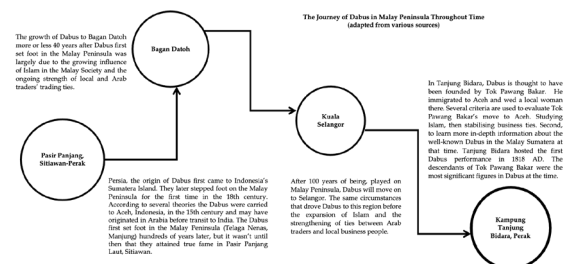


Figure 2. The Journey of Dabus in Malay Peninsula over the Years.

In order to understand the development of the Dabus dance in Tanjung Bidara Village, the diagram below depicts the genealogy of the Dabus dance journey up to the seventh Caliph, who is the current leader of the Dabus dance. The diagram illustrates the significant figures of Dabus throughout generations in Tanjung Bidara

Village, Perak, spanning hundreds of years.

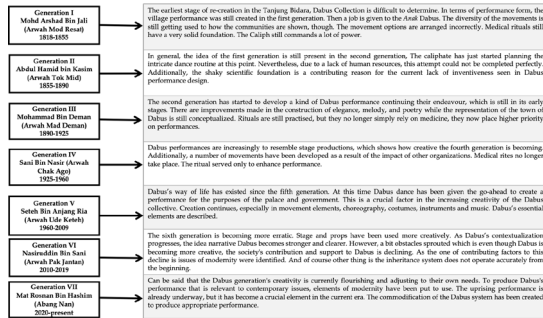


Figure 3. Genealogy of the Dabus Dance Group in Tanjung Bidara Village, Perak.

With thorough sift, generally, all the elements included in Dabus in terms of its original elements as well as the latest reinvention of Dabus can be grouped into three (3) main categories: the core elements of Dabus, Dabus accessories, and Dabus equipment (Figure 4).

Each of these categories is interpreted genealogically based on the nature and characteristics of Dabus performances and the meanings embedded in the changes that occur.

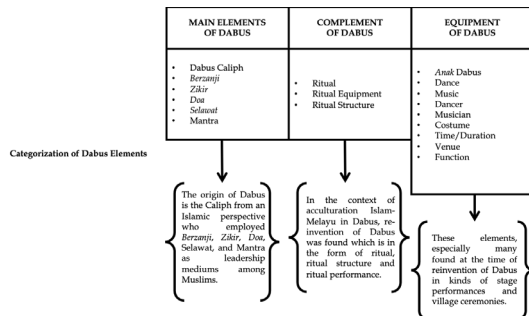


Figure 4. Categorization of Dabus Elements.

Concept of Dabus Rituals

As previously mentioned, the rituals associated with the Dabus dance are essential complements to the dance itself. The term 'complements' in this context refers to the rituals as a form of reinvention in Dabus itself before becoming a dance performance. Therefore, the ritual structure becomes an essential element in the early phase of reinvention.

Based on the ritual structures provided, Dabus rituals are identified to have

the following conceptual framework, as depicted in Figure 5.

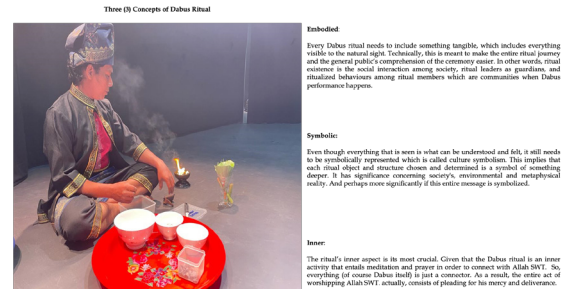


Figure 5. Concepts of Dabus Ritual.

Furthermore, when these concepts (embodied, symbolic, and inner) are interconnected in greater depth (Turner, 1983), they produce the concepts of physical, metaphysical, and inner aspects, as illustrated in Figure 6.

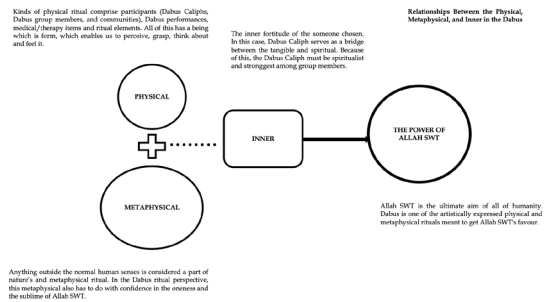


Figure 6. Relationships Between Physical, Metaphysical, and Inner in Dabus.

The Caliph, dancers, and members of the Dabus need to be aware of and proficient in the prayers and *zikir* used in Dabus. This is because these prayers and *zikir* are closely related to the social reality of the community, including the Caliph of Dabus himself. This indicates the meaning that the behaviours of the Caliph of Dabus should align with the teachings contained in the prayers and *zikir*, as well as with the social life within the community. In addition, to uphold their own dignity, the Caliph of Dabus is duty-bound to uphold the dignity of all members of the Dabus group by embracing the Islamic and Malay values included in Dabus.

Caliph of Dabus recites *doa* derived from the Quran. Then, the prayers must be well-remembered during Dabus per-

formances or after returning to social realities. Furthermore, Caliph of Dabus is also obligated to conduct oneself in accordance with Islamic teachings and Malay values. It doesn't stop there; Caliph of Dabus is responsible for constantly practicing and internalizing the prayers, making it habitual. Lastly, Caliph of Dabus should embody all the values encompassed in Dabus in their daily life alongside the community.

Meaning of Dabus Ritual

According to (Turner, 1967), the fundamental and pervasive nature of symbolic forms in human life is because these symbols originate from the very essence of human origins, which is referred to as stemming from primordial biological experiences. The organisms of human bodies, along with significant and meaningful experiences, function as a pattern that is utilized to invent symbolic representations that carry meaning.



Figure 7. One Kind Movement of the Dabus Dance.

In this way, every meaning derived from the Dabus dance ritual comes from both within and outside. At this stage, these meanings have been structurally formed through a deep and continuous process of acculturation. The internally constructed meanings are built upon various deeply rooted sources within the Malay society. On the other hand, the external meanings

refer to the Malay people's brilliance in responding to the teachings of Islam, which they subsequently believe in.



Figure 8. Preparations of Dabus Dance Ritual by Dabus Caliph.

As a cultural symbol (Turner, 1987; Yudha, 2000), it is important to identify the ritual elements in the Dabus dance before giving it a precise meaning. Here are elements of the Dabus dance ritual consisting of 1) The Dabus Caliph takes the proper seating position; 2) Reading doa; 3) Warming the *Anak Dabus*; 4) Showing parched corn; 5) Sprinklers with water; 6) Medical/therapy; 7) Taking and taming *Anak Dabus*; 8) Open the circle (*gelanggang*).

Next, the elements of the Dabus dance rituals will be explained with the meanings formed from both internal and external sources, resulting in the acculturation of Malay-Islamic (Figures 9, 10, and 11).

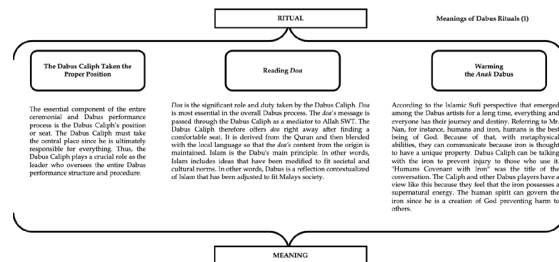


Figure 9. Meanings of Dabus Rituals (1).

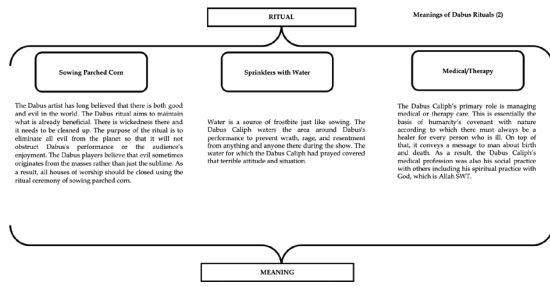


Figure 10. Meanings of Dabus Rituals (2).

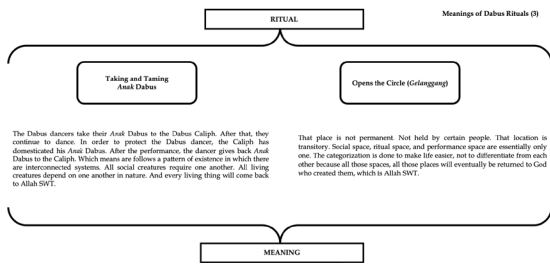


Figure 11. Meanings of Dabus Rituals (3).

Components of Dabus Rituals

The essence of Dabus rituals lies in their connection to traditional medicine. The Dabus ritual is not about showcasing an individual's immunity. Therefore, from the very beginning, martial arts fighters were the first group among the Malays to accept and practice Dabus. This is because the spiritual elements, which are highly valued in martial arts, are also present in Dabus.

All this while, many have recognized Dabus as something mystical; hence, it is misleading to perceive Dabus rituals solely as mystical (Figure 6). This is because there are very few mystical elements present in Dabus, and one of them is stabbing. Although stabbing is an important element in Dabus rituals, it cannot be a solid reason to draw a conclusion that Dabus is mystical. That is why the fundamental concept of Dabus rituals is medicine.

That matter is in line with the components or symbols used in Dabus rituals, which it depicts the relationship among religion, culture, art, and the community's social life (Figure 7).



Figure 12. Fire as a One of Ritual Component.



Figure 13. Shredded Leaves as a One of Ritual Component.

Doa and Songs of Dabus

The doa requested in the Dabus performances have a hierarchy because, fundamentally, the Caliph of Dabus is an ordinary human being who greatly needs intercession from the beloved ones of Allah SWT. In this regard, Radzi (Interview, September 16, 2023, in Tanjung Bidara) stated that:

“Doa and songs in the Dabus dance rituals do not stand alone. Both are one unit that is inseparable. This is because both derive from the same source, which is the Quran. The songs, which are in the Malay language, are undoubtedly based on the Quran, but is in the Malay language.”

In addition to the aforementioned hierarchy, the prayers recited by the Caliph of Dabus must also include at least three (3) main requirements: the *doa* it-

self, blessings upon the Prophet, and the recitation of *berzanji*. None of these three requirements can be omitted. *Berzanji*, for example, is considered the core content because it serves as the fundamental and primary source for creating rhythmic Malay songs in Dabus performances. The Malay rhythmic songs with *berzanji* verses express love for Prophet Muhammad SAW, with the peak being the manifestation of monotheism (*Tawhid*) towards Allah SWT. The harmony between *selawat*, and *berzanji* with the local Malay language then constructed the Dabus song which is in the form of a Malay old poem (Abidin, 2002; Alisjahbana, 1971). Therefore, prayers in Dabus performances must fulfill all of these requirements.

Dabus Dance Ritual Actor

One of the important elements in the Dabus dance ceremony is the performers. Essentially, all performers are equally important, although, in practice, the Dabus dance rituals heavily rely on the Caliph (Figure 8). Yusop stated the following:

“It is undeniable that the Caliph holds an important position in the overall process of the Dabus rituals. However, at the same time, other performers should not be overlooked. Basically, all performers are one. In my view, this is an important teaching in Islam that is earnestly implemented in the Dabus dance, where the status of an individual is equal, despite social hierarchies in society” (Interview: December 16, 2022, in Ipoh, Perak)

The concept of actors in Giddens’s (2011) perspective emphasized their rationality, reflexivity, and self-motivation to feel secure and cope with life more effectively (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Social actors do not simply produce activities sporadically; rather, they continuously reinvent them. It is through this process that they express themselves as actors. The term ‘ritual actors’ refers to individuals who perform; specifically those directly involved in the entire Dabus ceremony. The role and function of these actors are to oversee the Dabus ceremony and ensure its success.



Figure 14. Dabus Caliph (The Most Highest Actor in Dabus).

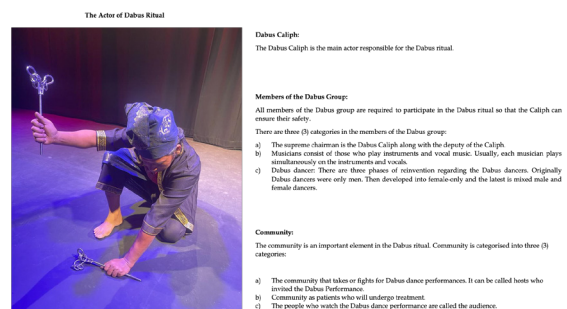


Figure 15. Dabus Caliph in Performance.

Although Yusop stated that every ritual actor in the Dabus dance is considered equal, there is actually a hierarchical structure within the ritual practices. Since the Caliph controls all Dabus dance rituals, the Caliph holds the main position, followed by all the members of the Dabus dance group and the community itself. The equality emphasized by Yusop is understood within the context of values and philosophy. Islamic teachings prioritizing human equality have acculturated with the Malay concept of humanity, placing a high value on social equality. Rank and status serve as social identities; nevertheless, they cannot be separated from the fundamental value of human equality (Figure 9).

CONCLUSIONS

The Malay-Islamic acculturation found in the Dabus dance of Perak, Malaysia, occurs continuously. In fact, it can be said that there is no end to this process because even though there are fluctuations in the Dabus dance, it turns out to be one of the suitable strategies for acculturation.

This is evident in the reinvention efforts carried out by artists and inheritors of the Dabus dance. In this context, apart from being creative and aesthetic skills, reinvention also serves as an acculturation strategy. It can be said that reinvention is an important and distinct characteristic of the Malay-Islamic acculturation in the Dabus dance of Perak, Malaysia.

Apart from this, Malay-Islamic acculturation in the Dabus dance of Perak is not only evident in its physical aspects, such as performance structure, elements, dance movements, performance props, and songs performed; instead, it exists in the daily social practices. For practitioners of the Dabus dance in Perak, the acculturation of the values included in the Dabus dance with Islamic values is a hereditary doctrine. Behaviours observed during Dabus dance performances, emphasizing politeness, mutual respect, and good speech, should be practiced in their communal lives. There are moral principles they adhere to, and if the reality of Dabus dance performances contradicts their reality as Muslims, they will follow the Islamic moral obligations.

Furthermore, there is a spiritual acculturation in which the practice of doa throughout the rituals must adhere to the Quran, recitation of *berzanji*, and sending blessings upon Prophet Muhammad SAW. In other words, the Quran, *berzanji*, and *selawat* are mandatory during Dabus's performance. At the same time, the meanings contained in these doa have been fully integrated into the Malay language. In other words, the acculturation of Islamic doa and the Malay language occurs simultaneously, harmoniously, and in unison. The doa are recited in Islam while their intentions are embedded in the Malay language which is *pantun* lama.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was made possible through funding from the Research Grant Scheme issued by RMIC Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) under the Grant

for Malay Civilization and Heritage Research (GPPWM) with Research Code: 2021-0007-106-01, titled 'Reinvention of the Dabus Dance of Perak, Malaysia.' The research was successfully conducted because of the outstanding support and cooperation from the Dabus dance artists and inheritors, namely Mat Rosnan bin Hashim, Mohammad Radzi bin Manaf, and Fatimah Seteh, as well as the cultural figure of Perak, Mohd Yusof bin Othman.

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