

THE CHANGES ON THE TRADITIONAL BELIEFS OF THE BRUNEI MALAY COMMUNITY IN THE NORTH BORNEO (1881- 1963)

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Abstract. Religion and traditional beliefs are important aspects of Brunei's Malay community's life. The influence of Islam on this community's traditional beliefs can be seen in almost every aspect of life, from birth to death. The expansion of Islam in North Borneo has altered not only the community's perception of superstitions but also their understanding of the application of true Islamic values in their everyday lives. The arrival of preachers in North Borneo changed the definition of the Bruneian Malay community's understanding and practice at the time. This paper will be discussed from two perspectives: the first is about the forms of practice and traditional beliefs of the Bruneian Malay community, and the second is about the influence of Islam on their traditional beliefs in North Borneo, especially on the west coast. This research will demonstrate that the influence of Islam brought by preachers has successfully changed the perspective and understanding of the Bruneian Malay community towards the guidelines and practices of true Islamic life. It is hoped that this study will be able to meet the objective of showing that, apart from political, economic, and social factors, aspects of religion and traditional beliefs also played a significant role in shaping the mentality and life pattern of the Bruneian Malay community after Sabah achieved independence.

Keywords: *religion, traditional practice, beliefs, Brunei Malay community, North Borneo*

Introduction

The indigenous people of North Borneo were influenced by animism and Hinduism before the arrival of Islam, which provided a foundation for their beliefs. This is the case with the spread of Hindu-Buddhism to Southeast Asia, which strongly indicates to the region's population that various forms of decency exist. Through this collision of external religions and traditional beliefs, the community recognises parallels between spirits and Hindu deities, as both are supernatural and feared for their power (Yusoff, 2011). In this regard, the pre-Islamic Malay community was associated with the practice of invoking Hindu deities to cure illness and avoid harm. Indirectly, the merging of animism and traditional elements of the local and Hindu communities has led to various ceremonies, such as those aimed at increasing sustenance, avoiding disaster, healing,