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## Malay Cultural Resistance In Pekanbaru City: Cultural Disruption Towards A Urban Expansion

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### A B S T R A C T

*This study investigates the resistance of Malay culture in Pekanbaru City amid rapid urban expansion and increasing cultural disruption. As Pekanbaru transforms into a megapolitan city, Malay traditions face significant pressure from globalization and the influence of both local and international cultures, particularly the dominance of Minangkabau culture and foreign media trends. These dynamics threaten the sustainability of Malay identity, especially among the younger generation.*

*The research aims to explore how resistance to cultural disruption is expressed and what strategies are used to preserve Malay culture in this multicultural and urban context. Using a qualitative approach supported by interviews, observation, documentation, and stakeholder engagement, this study reveals that resistance manifests through the preservation of traditional kinship systems, religious practices, architectural heritage, and the continued performance of community-led cultural festivals. It also includes the reinforcement of customary law and the use of the Malay language in official regulations. Furthermore, the study finds that Pekanbaru's vision to become a center of Malay culture by 2025 is reflected in strategic efforts such as cultural tourism development, academic integration of Malay heritage, digital promotion, and cultural literacy initiatives through libraries and schools. However, challenges remain in adapting to the digital age while preserving authenticity. The growing preference for global culture, modern fashion, and non-Malay languages illustrates a shift in cultural priorities. This study concludes that while resistance is present, it requires sustained, innovative, and collaborative efforts between government, civil society, and communities to ensure the resilience of Malay cultural identity in the face of ongoing transformation.*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Malay culture encompasses diverse forms and characteristics shaped by geographical differences and historical processes of cultural diffusion. Despite these regional variations, a common cultural pattern remains recognizable, particularly in shared values, religious beliefs, and symbolic practices. In

the context of Pekanbaru City, for instance, while the Malay cultural identity is prominent, many residents also come from Minangkabau backgrounds and are fluent in the Minang language. This is seen by the uniformity of patterns and values, all of which are based on the teachings of Islam in its implementation. Malay culture can be classified as a large culture. This is evidenced by the large spread of Malay culture in several regions in

Indonesia, one of which is Riau Province. The Malay tribe accounts for 2.27% of the people of Indonesia.<sup>1</sup>

Pekanbaru, the capital of Riau Province, is known as one of the centers of Malay cultural development at the national level. Pekanbaru is recognized as a cultural center due to factors. The presence of Balai Adat Melayu Riau serves as a central institution for cultural activities, traditional ceremonies, and the preservation of Malay customary law. Additionally, there are numerous cultural events that showcase traditional music, dance, and clothing, contributing to the strengthening of Malay identity in the city. These practices, alongside the use of Malay language in education and public signage. However, the effect of the provincial capital, which usually has a special attraction for migrants, has implications for the ethnic diversity in Pekanbaru city. According to a census conducted, the percentage of ethnicities in Pekanbaru consists of Malay (26.1%), Javanese (15.1%), Minang (37.7%), Batak (10.8%), Banjar (0.2%), Bugis (0.2%), Sundanese (1.0%), and other tribes (8.8%) (Bappenda, 2015). Based on the results of the census, it shows that the majority of the population of Pekanbaru are citizens or descendants who come from the Minang tribe, like the typical West Sumatra. The dominance of the Minangkabau ethnicity has made the main language often used by the Pekanbaru community is the Minang language<sup>2</sup>

Despite the Minangkabau tribe's strong cultural presence in Pekanbaru City, parts of Malay culture remain present in social interactions. Malay culture encompasses a wide range of elements, including historical, linguistic, cultural, and interactional dimensions. The language factor is the most important aspect of Malay culture, particularly in everyday life. Furthermore, the concept of cultural values is directly linked to art. Malay culture encompasses a wide range of arts, including theater, dance, carving, cultural parades, and gastronomy. Furthermore, Malay culture is still widely used in everyday life in Pekanbaru City, such as the use of selambayung, a carving technique, naming street names with Malay Arabic letters, and dance in certain activities and Malay specialties that are still popular in the city. This is part of a local government initiative to accomplish the vision of Pekanbaru City 2025, which aims to become the center of Malay culture. These efforts include cultural festivals such as the *Pekan Budaya Kreatif* and *Festival Lagu Melayu Serumpun*, the promotion of traditional arts through the Riau Creative Economy and Culture Center, and community engagement in preserving heritage practices like the *Lampu Colok* tradition in Ramadan. These initiatives show a collaborative approach between the government, community, and private sector in

strengthening cultural identity. In this context, civil society plays an essential role. A civil society is often associated with being civilized upholding values, norms, and laws. These principles are supported by knowledge, faith, and the responsible use of technology.

According to Malinowski in Widyosiswoyo culture is primarily built on a system of human wants, which results in a distinct style.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, modern human requirements differ from those of a few decades ago. The rapid advancement of the times has made human demands more dynamic, both in terms of social life, the environment, and cultural factors. The fast development of technology and information in the digital age undoubtedly has a big impact. The emergence of increasingly complex information explains why this period might be described as one of disruption. Thus, technology and information are essentially like a double-edged sword, which, when used correctly, may be a strength, but if not careful, it can be a threat.

Furthermore, threats can be classified into two types: military and non-military threats<sup>4</sup>. Military threats are essentially a conventional threat that nonetheless employs firearms. Meanwhile, non-military dangers are diverse, encompassing ideology, politics, social, and cultural issues, as well as defense and security concerns.

The entanglement between society, culture and globalization tends to be very difficult to separate, this is because people tend to adopt modern cultures that have emerged due to globalization. Globalization itself is a series of processes in which there is cultural diffusion and acculturation. The entry of foreign cultures through various lines results in the emergence of culture shock to the community. Most people prefer foreign culture over local culture. Whereas today there are quite a lot of language and cultural issues that are urgent enough to be studied, fostered and developed.

In this post-truth era, the dominance of rapid information development has implications for the way people perceive things, including cultural aspects. It is not uncommon for people to prefer foreign cultures that seem more popular than local cultures that are often considered left behind. Products from popular culture are usually attractive to most people, This also applies to Malay culture. The main problem that appears from the unconventionality of Malay culture is the weak ability of culture to answer the challenges of the times

Resistance studies have been widely conducted. Resistance is often connoted as other similar concepts that are actually different, such as protest or revolution. It is always related to power such as denial, opposition, or abolition of power. Resistance is not only rejecting what is

<sup>1</sup> Kompas. (2022). *10 Suku dengan Populasi Terbanyak di Indonesia, Minangkabau dan Batak Masuk Daftar*. Kompas.com.

<sup>2</sup> Kompas.id. (2021). Kota Pekanbaru: Simpul Ekonomi, Seni, dan Budaya Melayu. Kompas.id..

<sup>3</sup> Widyosiswoyo. (2009). *Ilmu Budaya Dasar*. Bogor: Penerbit Ghalia Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Kemhan. (2015). *Doktrin Pertahanan Negara*. Jakarta: Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia

happening but can also be interpreted as an effort or power to maintain something old in a new time<sup>5</sup>

The study of culture is a study that has been going on for a long time. There are many explanations and definitions related to culture itself. Referring to Geertz<sup>6</sup> (1986), culture is a system of meanings and symbols arranged in the sense that individuals define their world, give their judgments which are realized in symbolic forms through the means by which people communicate, devote, and develop knowledge because culture is a symbolic system so it must be read, translated and interpreted. Culture can also be understood as a matter concerned with the mind and reason or it can also be understood as a compound development of *budi-daya* which means the power of the mind<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, culture according to Koentjatingrat (1993) has at least 7 elements of culture, namely: 1) Language system, 2) Knowledge system, 3) Social system, 4) System of living equipment and technology, 5) System of livelihood, 6) System of rallying.

Disruption can basically be understood as an innovation that replaces the entire old system in new ways. Meanwhile, referring to Fukuyama (1999) in his book entitled *The Great Disruption*. Fukuyama defines disruption as a shock that is a social order in society. The development of increasingly sophisticated information technology is the main indicator of disruption. Furthermore, the link between disruption and culture can be seen from the cultural values that have been the ideal embodiment in the family and society suddenly slammed into chaos.<sup>8</sup> Amid the dominance of the Minangkabau tribe in Pekanbaru, aspects of Malay culture can still be found in the process of social life. The entanglement between society, culture and globalization tends to be very difficult to separate, this is because people tend to adopt modern cultures that have emerged due to globalization. In the post-truth era as it is today, the dominance of rapid information development has implications for the way a person views things, including in cultural aspects. It is not uncommon for people to prefer foreign cultures that seem more popular than local cultures that are often considered left behind. Products from popular culture are usually attractive to most people. This also applies to Malay culture. The main problem that appears from the unconventionality of Malay culture is

the weak ability of culture to answer the challenges of the times.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, in the face of modernity and contemporary demands, can Malay culture maintain its identity? This question becomes even more pressing in an era of globalization, where foreign cultural influences are rapidly spreading through media, technology, and consumer trends. As younger generations become more immersed in global lifestyles, traditional Malay values, language, and customs face the risk of being forgotten or replaced. The growing dominance of Western ideals and foreign languages threatens to erode the unique cultural foundations of the Malay identity. Without deliberate efforts to preserve cultural practices and promote national heritage, Malay culture may struggle to sustain its relevance in the modern world. Thus, it would be fascinating to investigate further the nature of Malay cultural resistance in Pekanbaru City.

Furthermore, the aim of this research is to identify and analyze the forms of cultural resistance displayed by the Malay ethnic in Pekanbaru City and examine how these efforts align with the city's cultural vision amidst modern transformation. The implication of this research lies in offering strategic insights for policymakers and cultural stakeholders on sustaining local cultural identity in rapidly changing urban environments.

## METHOD

This research examines Malay Cultural Resistance in Pekanbaru City and the cultural distribution toward metropolitan cities using a qualitative approach supported by descriptive analysis. Descriptive research applies problem-solving procedures that illustrate the current condition of the research subject or object, such as people, institutions, or society, based on observable facts.

The study relies on both primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to information collected directly from informants and serves as the main data source. Secondary data includes materials gathered from journals, books, articles, documentation, and other literature sources.

Furthermore, data collection was conducted through several methods, including in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature studies. Interview participants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who have a deep understanding of Malay culture, including cultural practitioners, local government officials, and academic researchers. In addition, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with local community leaders and traditional

<sup>5</sup> Muslimin. (2015). Resistensi Paguyuban Pegadang Pasar terhadap Pembangunan Mall Diyono City. *UMM*.

<sup>6</sup> Geertz, C. J. (1986). *Mojokuto : Dinamika Sosial Sebuah Kota di Jawa*. Jakarta: PT Pustaka Grafiti Press

<sup>7</sup> Koentjatingrat. (1993). *Kebudayaan, Mentalitas dan Pembangunan*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama

<sup>8</sup> Fukuyama, F. (1999). *The Great Distruption : Human Nature and the Reconstruction of Social Order*. London: Profile Book.

<sup>9</sup> Storey, J. (2007). *Cultural Studies dan Kajian Budaya Pop: Pengantar Komprehensif, Teori dan Metode*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra

figures to capture diverse viewpoints and facilitate deeper reflection on cultural identity and resistance.

Document and literature analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, focusing on key issues related to cultural preservation, external cultural influences, and institutional responses. Each document was coded and categorized according to recurring themes relevant to the research objectives. These combined methods provided a well-rounded understanding of the challenges faced by the Malay community in preserving its cultural identity amid urban pressures and globalization.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Malay Cultural Resistance in Pekanbaru City

Culture is fundamentally tied not only to local wisdom activities, but also to a habit that is carried down through generations. However, when seen in a broader context, culture has a very broad meaning and breadth, as described by EB Tylor who believes that culture is a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, conventions, and other abilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society.<sup>10</sup> Malay culture, both in terms of customs and society, is fundamentally linked to Islam; the teachings and ideals found in Islam have a significant impact on the Malay community's entire life process. This bond can be exhibited in a variety of ways, including the Malay community's daily existence.

Malay culture, which is very rich and diverse, is currently faced with various challenges that can affect the continuity and development of Malay culture itself, especially in areas with a multicultural population density, such as what happened in Pekanbaru City. The shifts that occur are caused by factors such as globalization, modernization, and socio-economic changes. The influence of mass media and information technology also plays an important role in influencing the use of culture in daily life.

Pekanbaru City, Riau Province's capital, is the province's largest city in terms of total area and population. The population of Pekanbaru City in 2022 was 1,007.54 thousand people.<sup>11</sup> The tremendous increase in a single year is inextricably linked to the city of Pekanbaru's rapidly improving development environment. Today, Pekanbaru is no longer a huge city, but rather a metropolitan metropolis. With the quick flow of expansion and development that occurs, it is inevitable that in the next few years, the rank of Metropolitan cities will develop into Megapolitan Cities.

Population growth are influenced by a variety of factors, including infrastructure, educational access,

and employment opportunities. These elements serve as strong attractors, drawing considerable attention and interest, which contribute to making the city of Pekanbaru rich in captivating attractions. This is in addition to the city of Pekanbaru's potential for industrial and economic development, which is bolstered by the surrounding territory and the buffer zone of Riau Province's capital.

Basically, the Malay culture in Pekanbaru city is not like the Malay culture in other areas in Riau Province. The condition of Pekanbaru as the provincial capital coupled with the high urbanization that exists makes Pekanbaru a very multicultural city which has implications for the unclear variety of Malay culture in Pekanbaru as it is today.

However, the Malay culture which is the legacy of Riau Province also no longer has a real form in the process of social life in the Pekanbaru City area. The Malay people are an ethnolinguistic and cultural group spread across various regions of Indonesia. Each Malay community in these regions possesses distinct cultural, linguistic, and traditional characteristics shaped by their local social environments and historical backgrounds. By becoming a Malay, we indirectly eliminate the existing sense of tribalism, although it is not uncommon to find that the use of tribes inherited from non-Malay lineages still occurs.

The growth of Pekanbaru city is basically influenced by the rapid flow of internal migration and modernization, which often has an impact on the cultural attachment. The existence of existing local culture is often eroded in the midst of advanced conditions like today. It is not uncommon for local cultures that are inherited from generation to generation to find it difficult to survive and begin to be sidelined by more happening cultures and their dominant presence. Referring to Tenas Effendy, there are at least several factors that cause a shift in Malay culture such as, first, lack of understanding. Second, conditions that have changed, such as marriage which prioritizes practicality. In the past, aspects of marriage were regulated in great detail starting from proposing, hantar belanja, berinai, berendam, katam kaji to the marriage contract. Third is the loss of politeness.

Furthermore, the penetration of global media through technology has created a scenario of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), where traditional Malay expressions coexist with imported values. For instance, younger generations in Pekanbaru increasingly prefer digital content in foreign languages and consume global entertainment (e.g., K-pop, Western fashion), which marginalizes local narratives. Field interviews confirm this tendency; adolescents frequently cited foreign influencers as cultural references, while local traditions like *pantun* or *zapin* are rarely mentioned. This aligns theory of "cultural imperialism," wherein dominant global cultures displace local voices. While digital platforms could theoretically support cultural preservation, in practice they tend to amplify mainstream, Westernized content. The threat of globalization often leads to cultural homogeneity. Although technology has the potential to promote and preserve culture, in some cases its impact has jeopardized aspects of local culture. This is due to the

<sup>10</sup> Tylor, E. B. (2010). *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>11</sup> BPS Kota Pekanbaru. (2022). *Pekanbaru Dalam Angka*. Pekanbaru: Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Pekanbaru.

rapid flow of information that exists so that it is not uncommon for the dominance of visualization on social media to provide extraordinary appeal to today's society. Furthermore, the development of local culture tends to be hampered or even retreated due to the influence of technology. One of the biggest challenges of technological development is the existence of foreign cultures and increasingly modern global values that continue to erode public interest in local culture. Furthermore, this has further eroded the Malay culture which is rich in local wisdom values.

In the context of the times, cultural aspects that are not relevant to the current civilization tend to be abandoned. Cultural aspects that are no longer relevant to the current civilization tend to be abandoned. This is a common occurrence, considering the continuous social and cultural changes that require constant adaptation. However, if the existing heritage is not well preserved, this will have implications for the fading of values that have been taught for generations. Meanwhile, in reality, globalization can determine the direction of cultural development. In a narrower socio-cultural scope, one of the implications of globalization is the emergence of new patterns of culture in various forms and arrangements<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, adjusting to the times becomes necessary, especially in finding strategies for rational use of technology to support the development of local culture, increase appreciation for traditional arts and culture, and protect cultural diversity from conflict. In the era of globalization and modernization, Malay culture must continue to develop and be able to keep up with the times in order to remain relevant and able to make a major contribution to the progress of our nation. The combination of culture and modernization must be done without leaving the distinctive aspects that exist. The distinctive aspect is an identity and dignity that must be well maintained despite the rapid flow of globalization. Therefore, it is important to maintain and respect Malay culture so that it is not neglected, especially considering the influence of Islam which helped shape the cultural identity.

Although technology has brought many benefits in advancing Malay culture in Pekanbaru City, there are also negative impacts that need to be considered. Some of the negative impacts on the development of Malay culture in Pekanbaru include:

1. Technology can cause distortions or changes in authentic aspects of culture. In an attempt to attract attention in the digital world, some elements of Malay culture may undergo modifications that diminish their original historical value and uniqueness.
2. Technology can also cause a shift in cultural values. Globalization through digital media can influence people's views on traditional values and shift the focus towards more universal or popular values. This can reduce the authenticity and sustainability of Malay culture.

Whereas in the positive side, technology actually provides great benefits for the development of Malay culture. The influence of technology on the development of Malay culture can have a significant impact. Here are some of the ways in which technology can affect the development of Malay culture:

1. Cultural Content Enrichment; technology allows wider access to Malay cultural content through the internet. The public can access Malay information, stories, songs, dances and traditions online. This can result in the enrichment of knowledge about Malay culture among the wider community.
2. Digital Media Development; digital media such as videos, podcasts and social media platforms allow people to share and promote Malay culture in a more engaging and accessible way. Video tutorials on Malay dance or cuisine, for example, can help broaden understanding of the culture.
3. Tradition Preservation; technology can be used to record and preserve endangered Malay traditions. Video or audio recordings of traditional ceremonies, folklore and songs can become important archives for future generations.
4. Learning and Education; educational apps and online learning platforms can be used to teach Malay language, folklore, history and culture to the younger generation. This helps to ensure that these cultural values are kept alive.
5. Cultural Globalization; technology can also help spread Malay culture around the world. Through social media and online platforms, Malay culture can be recognized by the global community, promoting cultural diversity and raising awareness about this cultural heritage.

In addition, maintaining the rich and diverse Malay culture, there needs to be a balance in the utilization of technology. Protective measures and regulations need to be taken to ensure that the use of technology does not damage the essence of Malay culture and retain authentic values. In addition, education on the importance of cultural sustainability and respect for ancestral heritage needs to be emphasized in this digital era.

Currently, the largest tribe in Pekanbaru City is the Minang tribe. Minang is the largest ethnic in Pekanbaru. The next largest tribes are Malay, Javanese, North Sumatra, Chinese, and others. The existing heterogeneity is certainly a strength for Pekanbaru to develop, but it cannot be denied that there will be a clash of values that will affect the social life of the people in Pekanbaru. This is because one aspect that has a big influence is the aspect of daily language.

In Pekanbaru, it is rare for residents to use Malay as their daily language. This can also be influenced by factors such as urbanization, modernization, and

<sup>12</sup> Mudra, M. A. (2008). *Redefenisi Melayu Upaya Menjabatani Perbedaan Konsep Kemelayuaan Bangsa Serumpun*. Yogyakarta: Balai Kajian dan Pengembangan Budaya Melayu.

penetration of other regional cultures and global culture. The use of Malay language is not dominant considering the use of Indonesian language is an obligation but it is not uncommon to find people using other regional languages, especially Minang language in social life.

Furthermore, culture basically something that is done repeatedly until it becomes a habit. The fading process of using language in social life does not occur within a few months, it takes a long process to replace the existing speech process. This shows that other regional languages have become a habit, so that people forget the mother tongue they use every day, thus it can be seen that the degradation of language values is indirectly happening in Pekanbaru City.

The erosion of Malay culture in Pekanbaru is perhaps most visibly evident in the declining use of the Malay language in everyday communication. As Brown (2000) asserts, language and culture are intrinsically intertwined; a loss in language vitality is a direct blow to cultural identity. In the context of Pekanbaru's multilingual environment, the dominance of Minang and Indonesian—exacerbated by urban migration and modernization—illustrates a classic case of cultural hybridity, where cultural boundaries blur, and linguistic assimilation occurs. This aligns with Bhabha's (1994) theory of the "third space," where local identities negotiate with dominant cultures, resulting in hybrid cultural expressions. Interviews conducted with educators and residents revealed that Malay is now mostly used in ceremonial or governmental functions, while Minang and Indonesian dominate informal spaces. Such patterns reflect a shift from cultural continuity to cultural adaptation, revealing a complex negotiation of identity in urban Riau. In addition, the dominance of the assimilated Minang tribe has implications for the use of existing languages.

Basically, when it comes to language use, as an Indonesian citizen, using Indonesian is the main thing, not to mention that Indonesian is a national identity that must be used continuously. The use of Indonesian as a mandatory language is further strengthened by the issuance of Law Number 24 of 2009 and Presidential Regulation Number 63 of 2019 which regulates the use of language in Indonesia. However, in the implementation of community life, it is found that the use of existing languages uses more non-tribal local languages of Riau or Pekanbaru. This is of course a real form of erosion of language aspects, especially the existing Malay language. Furthermore, when referring to Brown (2000), he emphasized that:

*"A language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language; the two are intricately interwoven so that cannot separate the two losing the significance of either, the culture and language are inseparable"*<sup>13</sup>

Referring to that opinion, it can be ascertained that the relationship between culture and language is very strong, language is part of culture and culture is also part of the language itself. However, in the

process of social life in Pekanbaru City, it is not uncommon to find that Malay language has begun to be degraded. The process of using Malay language began to be eliminated by the use of other regional languages in everyday life. The use of other regional languages is based on the dominance of certain tribes, both those who are part of migration and their descendants. The process of domination of other regional languages certainly does not take place just like that. The replacement of Malay and Minang languages occurs due to the assimilation that exists between the two tribes. Then, there are at least three causes of assimilation:

1. Groups of people with different cultural backgrounds
2. Intensive direct contact with each other for a long time
3. Group cultures change their distinctive characteristics, and also the elements of each change into mixed elements.<sup>14</sup>

Based on that, the long historical process owned by Riau and West Sumatra is certainly one of the determining factors for this assimilation, not to mention this is coupled with the attractiveness of Pekanbaru City for the people of West Sumatra itself. The sizable population has led to the Minang language as the common market and social language of Pekanbaru city residents as well as the less dominant local Malay language but still the main Indonesian language for the unified language of inter-ethnic communication.

Then, many foreign phrases influence language and culture. The influence of foreign languages which is an unavoidable issue of globalization and modernization has implications for social life. Language as a source of culture plays an important role in influencing people's attitudes and ways of communicating. The influence of foreign languages, especially European, on the terms and characteristics of these products is often used and can help users become accustomed to communicating in that language. Over time, the use of these foreign languages can become a habit, leading to a reduction in the use of the mother tongue in everyday life. Words such as meeting and snack are rarely found and have been replaced by the words "meeting" and "snack". In fact, the use of Malay, which is not a mother tongue, needs to be echoed in everyday life, but in reality this language is starting to lose out to the absorption of existing foreign languages.

Furthermore, the use of Malay language in Pekanbaru city is currently only limited to government activities. Whereas the linguistic aspect should emphasize the communication process in general without any limitation on location and timeline. This needs to be emphasized and continued by all government stakeholders considering the use of Malay language in family life has tended to decrease.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, H. D. (2000). Principles of language learning and teaching 4th edition. White Plains, NY: Addison Wesley Longman

<sup>14</sup> Sahir, S. H. (2010, June). Kebudayaan Dan Aktivitas Sosio-Ekonomi Masyarakat Menengah Di Kota Medan Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Language, Literature, and Culture in Southeast Asia, pp. 180-191.

However, the use of Malay language in the social sphere must also be adjusted to the existing multicultural existence. Thus, the use of language is expected to be not only limited to the government process but also to social life. When viewed from the aspect of Malay culture, language has a very vital role as what is contained in the Malay pantun "*Jika ingin melihat orang berbangsa lihatlah pada budi dan bahasa*"

Visual culture in public spaces, like billboards, signage, and advertisements serves as a barometer for cultural visibility. In Pekanbaru, the decline of Malay language and ornamentation in public design underscores a weakening of cultural presence in the urban landscape. Space is socially produced and reflects the dominant power structures and identities. The absence of *Selembayung* motifs or Malay inscriptions on major commercial signage illustrates the dominance of homogenized, commercial aesthetics over local identity. Interviews with city planners and advertising professionals reveal that "modern" visual language is seen as more attractive to consumers, marginalizing traditional forms. This reflects a broader trend of aesthetic assimilation under globalization.

Furthermore, if observed, the Regional Original Revenue (PAD) of Pekanbaru City is very high from this. Thus, if there is a special regulation related to this, of course this has implications for increasing visibility and helping people increase sensitivity to existing Malay culture. Therefore, the restoration of Malay language in public spaces is an effort that must be made.

There are at least a few benefits such as the use of Malay language in advertising allows businesses to communicate more effectively with local audiences. It helps create an emotional connection between brands and consumers, as consumers feel closer to advertisements in their own language. Malay also helps to create a stronger brand identity in the Malaysian market and beyond.

Then, Bahasa Melayu can be used to respect and appreciate local culture. When businesses use a Malay-language approach, they show respect for the traditions and values of the local community. This can indirectly improve the company's image in the eyes of consumers and build a positive reputation. In addition, the use of Malay language in advertising can contribute to the legitimization that companies are well aware of the concept of "where the earth is, there the sky is". In some cases, national laws and regulations require advertisements to use official languages, and Malay is one of them.

However, it is important to note that the use of Malay language in advertising must be carefully scrutinized. The language used must be appropriate to the local culture and norms. Any mistranslation or inappropriate use will backfire and damage the company's reputation.

Using of Malay in public spaces, especially in advertising, offers an excellent opportunity to better reach local consumers, strengthen brand recognition, and comply with local laws, local regulations. However, the government must take care to ensure that Malay is used correctly and respects local culture.

In addition, there needs to be an effort to maintain the sustainability of the Malay language, one of the important aspects of Malay culture. Malay is one of the languages that is rich with cultural and historical values, and is the identity of the Malay nation. In the era of globalization and modernization, the Malay language needs to be preserved and continuously developed to remain relevant and useful for society. The government can strengthen regulations related to the use of Malay language and promote the use of Malay language in daily life. In promoting and preserving Malay culture, technology can also be put to good use. Social media and other digital platforms can be used to introduce and teach Malay culture to others, as well as enrich and strengthen Malay culture with collaboration and creativity from the community.

Overall, the influence of technology has contributed greatly to cultural changes and developments in Pekanbaru city. Although there are still efforts to maintain and learn the Malay culture, cultural changes and the spread of foreign cultures have become a significant trend, especially among the younger generation. One approach that can be done is by what the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology through Instagram @sayebudaye which is an account that focuses on building awareness of Malay culture for in Riau Province through the content presented. Pekanbaru, which has now become a big city, certainly needs a special place for local culture, especially Malay. Furthermore, this approach will be more easily accepted by the younger generation who are highly influenced by the use of technology.

Today's young generation tends to be influenced by foreign cultures that are seen as more modern and attractive, so local cultures such as Malay yellow clothes are considered less attractive and outdated. Several examples show the difference between domestic and foreign goods in terms of appearance, quality and attractiveness. This affects their appreciation of local arts and culture, such as drama or theater performances, where they sometimes do not get maximum appreciation and support despite their best efforts to be creative. Technological developments, particularly the Internet and the accessibility of global content, have led to changes in the cultural preferences and influences of the younger generation. Foreign cultures popularized by popular artists such as *Blackpink* often dominate trends and lifestyles. On the other hand, local products are often considered less attractive or of lower quality than foreign products. This phenomenon causes a loss of local cultural values and complicates efforts to maintain and promote local cultural heritage.

One of the most visible examples of this aspect of the times is in the process of dressing Malay, the existing baju kurung is no longer like it used to have a function that is in accordance with its purpose. Today, the influence of the times has made traditional clothing begin to be adjusted to the current style of dress. However, it is not uncommon to find that the use of this traditional clothing has begun to injure the values contained therein. One of the real forms of the

loss of the spirit of Malay clothing is in terms of women's dress. It is not uncommon to find that today's dressing style tends to change the function of *baju kurung* among women. The development of the fashion industry and the spread of popular culture through social media also play a role in the erosion of Malay culture in the aspect of dress. Many young men and women prefer to wear clothes inspired by global fashion or styles adopted from other cultures. These influences may gradually shift traditional Malay dressing preferences and pose challenges in maintaining a rich and beautiful cultural heritage.

The transformation of traditional dress, particularly among women, reveals broader shifts in cultural values and gender expectations. *Baju kurung*, historically associated with modesty and Malay-Islamic ideals, is now often reinterpreted through a contemporary, fashion-oriented lens. Drawing from Giddens' (1991) concept of reflexive modernity, individuals today actively negotiate their identities, including how they dress, in response to broader societal changes<sup>15</sup>. For example, several respondents mentioned adapting *baju kurung* styles for social media aesthetics, indicating a shift from traditional symbolism to performative identity. While such adaptations demonstrate cultural dynamism, they also raise concerns about the erosion of religious-cultural meanings embedded in traditional attire. In Islamic studies, it is clear that a woman's style of dress must cover four aspects: hair, neck, hands and feet. Even though in the process these four aspects are still protected, if we refer to the strong attachment between Malay culture and Islam, Islam hates the way of dressing like the clothes of the *jahiliyah* people who show the curves of the body that invite evil and immorality<sup>16</sup>.

One of the efforts made is also in line with benchmarking to the Regional Regulation owned by Siak Regency Number 14 of 2015 concerning Language and Dress article 1 paragraph 10, namely:

"Malay Clothing is the traditional clothing of the Siak Regency community, and is an inseparable part of the side of life that has the value of the Siak Malay cultural tradition."

The influence of technology on the survival of Malay culture faces significant challenges and changes, especially among young people. To maintain and revive interest in Malay culture, an innovative approach is needed without losing its Malay identity. Nevertheless, the strong values contained in Malay culture must still exist and not be eroded by existing innovations.

Then, the building aspect also began to erode. Today, Malay ornaments are starting to fade on the physical appearance of Pekanbaru city. In fact, Malay characteristics can be displayed in the existing physical development. Malay buildings are generally determined based on the shape of the roof, namely the

rhombus roof, pyramid roof and Ionic roof.<sup>17</sup> However, the model that is most easily found in the past few decades, especially in Pekanbaru City, is the form of roof decoration or commonly known as *Selembayung*. *Selembayung* itself can be understood as a decoration that is located crosswise at both ends of the building's joiner. In this traditional Malay house building, each meeting of the roof corners is given a *Selembayung* which is determined from wood carvings.

The existence of *selembayung* is basically an effort to realize public awareness related to cultural values in the location where they live. The influence of *Selembayung* can be seen in the government and private sectors of Pekanbaru city, becoming a symbol that connects the past and the present, and strengthening Malay identity in various regions. In this way, Malay cultural heritage can be maintained and preserved in all aspects of city life.

Apart from the physical development aspect, *Selembayung* has a deep meaning in the context of Malay culture. The ornaments, commonly called "*selo bayuang*" and "*tanduk buang*", have symbolic meanings that reflect affection,

traditional knowledge and self-respect. The patterns of leaves, flowers, birds and others in *Selembayung* elegantly depict these values. The use of these ornaments is not limited to residential construction but is also used on traditional Malay Pekanbaru altars as a symbol of cultural authenticity.

### Strategies at Pekanbaru's Malay Culture Maintenance

Basically, there have been many efforts made to maintain the maritime identity that exists in Pekanbaru City, while supporting the vision and mission of Pekanbaru City 2025. Nowadays, the development of the times can no longer be rejected, the dynamic changes of the times must continue to be utilized and empowered so that existing cultures are not lost and eroded by foreign cultures. One approach that can be taken is to combine traditional elements with a modern touch. Using creativity in promoting Malay traditions in the form of dance productions, performing arts or wedding ceremonies can be an attractive alternative for young people. However, these changes must pay attention and maintain the roots of traditional Malay culture. The heterogeneity of the Pekanbaru community must be recognized as one of the factors that influence the development of Malay culture. It is important to understand how different influences from surrounding areas, such as Riau and Riau Islands, affect the language, tone, customs and architecture of houses in Pekanbaru. Therefore maintaining consistency and strengthening the distinctive Malay elements is essential to maintain the local culture.

In an effort to maintain and strengthen the sustainability and development of Malay culture, the role of the government is very important. The government must strengthen regulations in

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Giddens (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press

<sup>16</sup> Quraish Shihab (1996) *Wawasan Al Qur'an*. Bandung: Mizan.

<sup>17</sup> Effendi, T. (2005). *Pantun Nasehat*. Yogyakarta: Balai Kajian dan Pengembangan Budaya Melayu.

preserving and promoting Malay culture. The government must also develop adequate infrastructure to promote Malay culture, such as museums, theaters, galleries, and cultural tourist attractions. In addition, the government also needs to conduct more massive campaigns and promotions to introduce Malay culture to all levels of society.

Malay language education is often limited to formal educational settings, such as schools or language courses. However, sustaining the culture on a massive scale requires a more holistic and integrated approach within the community. It is important to involve more sectors and institutions in promoting the use of Malay, such as mass media, cultural organizations, and local communities.

Meanwhile, creating artworks or performances that combine Malay traditions with modern elements can be one of the alternatives to attract the younger generation's interest in Malay culture. Creative packaging of Malay culture in a more attractive and trending form can be an effective way to introduce and generate interest in Malay culture. Efforts to invite the younger generation to appreciate and understand Malay culture should be done by persuasion, not by force. Providing real and positive examples of strengthening Malay culture through arts and cultural development programs is an effective way to inspire the younger generation. Although budget limitations can be an obstacle, continuous efforts and cooperation with stakeholders can be a solution to the implementation of activities that support the preservation and development of Malay culture in Pekanbaru.

It is important to focus and appreciate local initiatives to promote and preserve Malay culture. By combining traditional elements with modern nuances, the uniqueness of Malay culture can be maintained and enjoyed by the younger generation of Pekanbaru.

Other aspects that exist in the process of maintaining the existing Malay culture is by emphasizing local content subjects in Pekanbaru city elementary schools. As stipulated in Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, the process of organizing basic education is the responsibility of the City / Regency of each region. Based on this, elementary schools in Pekanbaru city become the main aspect of the process of instilling awareness of Malay culture for students. This existing local content is called the Malay Culture of Riau (BMR) subject.

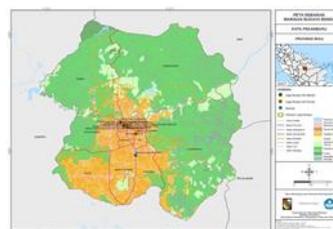
BMR, which is implemented by the government of Pekanbaru city, basically aims to preserve culture, tradition and local wisdom in the school environment of students. By understanding and appreciating local culture, it is expected that participants will feel familiar and proud of their cultural identity. The existence of the Riau Malay Culture curriculum in elementary schools is also the first step in the seriousness of the Pekanbaru City government in maintaining the symbols and emblems that exist within the scope of the Pekanbaru city government simply to students.

However, BMR users are not vocal in helping to preserve Malay culture in Pekanbaru. This is because BMR learning does not have a big enough implication.

The implementation of BMR, which is only done once or twice a week, is not really able to compete with the process of foreign culture that can be absorbed by students every day. The existing intensity will certainly have implications for the mindset and perspective of students, which if examined further this will have an impact on the interests and interests of students.

The next step in efforts to maintain existing culture, especially those carried out by the tourism and culture office, is to continue to encourage the tangible cultural heritage in the city of Pekanbaru. Tangible cultural heritage itself can be understood as a cultural heritage in the form of material or physical objects that can be seen and also touched. Currently, the government continues to encourage the addition of cultural heritage in Pekanbaru City. Currently there are at least a few examples of tangible cultural heritage that are very familiar in Pekanbaru such as *Rumah Singgah Tuan Kadi*, this building is an old Malay building built on July 23, 1958. The location of the house under the Siak III River Bridge makes this building quite iconic and well-known in the community.

**Figure 1.1**



Map of Cultural Heritage Distribution in Pekanbaru  
Source: Pekanbaru City Tourism and Culture Office Archives (2023)

In the context of education, authorities and relevant institutions can organize cultural tour programs that invite tourists to learn more about the history, values and traditions of Malay culture. Through local guides or trained tour guides, tourists can be given in-depth information about the Malay language, local customs, as well as the important role of this culture in the identity of Pekanbaru city. The map shows the distribution of cultural heritage and historical objects in Pekanbaru city represented by symbols so that people can easily understand how the distribution of cultural heritage and objects is located in this city.

Another effort made by the Pekanbaru city government is to actively participate in cultural parade activities in order to introduce Malay culture, especially those in the city of Pekanbaru. One of the major events followed by the Pekanbaru City Government was a cultural exhibition organized by APEKSI (Association of Indonesian City Governments).

In an effort to educate the public, the Pekanbaru City Government, through the Tourism Office, has held educational programs to promote the Malay language

and culture to tourists. These programs include cultural tours, workshops and seminars that aim to provide tourists with knowledge about the history and importance of Malay culture in Pekanbaru.

Then, an important effort to preserve Malay culture is through libraries. Libraries are windows into the cultural and intellectual wealth of a society. In the context of Malay culture, libraries are an important means to preserve the rich heritage of literature, history and knowledge. This step has been taken by the city of Pekanbaru through the Library Service.

**Figure 1.2.**



Specialized Room for Malay Literature  
Source: Pekanbaru City Library

The library actually provides access to Malay literature and classics, such as *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and *Sejarah Melayu*, which are important parts of Malay literature. This allows the younger generation to know and appreciate their literary heritage. Secondly, libraries are places where historical and cultural materials can be found and studied. Through the existing collection, the community can maintain its knowledge of the richness of Malay traditions, customs, arts and culture. However, this library does not seem to have shown the expected results given the lack of visits to the Tenas Effendy corner, which is within the scope of the Riau Province regional library.

The role of the local government of Pekanbaru city is also not lost in the preservation of Malay culture through various programs and initiatives. These include the establishment of cultural centers, the promotion of traditional arts and crafts, and the preservation of historical sites. Lastly, being the most frequently promoted in recent times is the Lembaga Adat Melayu Riau (LAM Riau). LAM Riau is a cultural institution that has a significant role in the preservation of Malay culture in Pekanbaru and Riau Province. LAM Riau is involved in various cultural activities, such as organizing cultural festivals, promoting traditional arts and crafts, and preserving historical sites.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the resistance of Malay culture in Pekanbaru is a strategic and continuous response to the challenges posed by globalization, demographic shifts, and urban development. Rather than being passive preservation, the resistance involves active measures such as maintaining traditional kinship systems, religious practices, architectural symbols, cultural festivals, and the use of the Malay language in governance. These efforts reflect a resilient cultural identity that continues to endure despite the growing dominance of external cultural influences. Furthermore, the findings indicate that cultural sustainability in Pekanbaru requires the collaboration of communities, government institutions, and educational sectors to ensure that traditional values remain relevant in a modern context. This cultural resistance also contributes significantly to the city's urban identity, positioning Pekanbaru as not only a growing economic centre but also a culturally distinct metropolis. From a policy standpoint, the research emphasises the importance of developing comprehensive local frameworks that integrate cultural sustainability into urban planning, public education, and community spaces. Initiatives such as strengthening partnerships, increasing investment in cultural infrastructure, and utilising digital platforms for cultural promotion are essential to ensuring the long-term survival of local traditions. Ultimately, sustaining the Malay cultural identity in Pekanbaru requires not only the protection of heritage but also its adaptation, allowing it to thrive within an increasingly diverse and modern urban society..

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