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ARABIC SCRIPT IN BANJARESE ETHNO-RELIGIOS IDENTITY

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Abstract

Language sociologists propose some factors contributing to the choice of a language over the other. These factors include economic, social, political, educational, and demographic factors. Other language scientists mention religious, values and attitudinal factors. What is real choice is there for those who use lesser-used script, such as Arabic script for Malay and Bahasa Indonesia, in a community where most people use a major national script, i.e. Latin script to write their language. How do economic, political, religious, educational, and demographic factors influence the choice of use of script for a language?

Introduction

Sociolinguists suggest that there are many different social reasons for choosing a particular code or variety in a community where various language or code choices are available. When discussing about language choice and its results; language shift and language maintenance, sociolinguists mostly speak about choosing a whole system and structure of language. Seldom, if never at all, have they discussed it with respect to the script in which a language is written. Therefore, research on use of script has been a scarcity in the field of sociolinguistics. One of such scarcity has been the work of Christina Bratt Paulston (2003) which mentioned choice of alphabet as one of the major language problems[1].

This study is about Arabic script used to write Banjarese language. Such script is usually known as Malay Arabic script or Jawi Script. The use of such script varies from place to place following the system and structure its respective

[1] C Spat, *Bahasa Melayu: Tata Bahasa Selayang Pandang* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1989). P. 20

language user. Since this study discusses exclusively Jawi script which is used for Banjarese language, for the sake of convenience the term used here is Banjar Jawi Script. This study is uniquely about the reintroduction of Banjar Jawi script as a phenomenon of language maintenance and revitalization efforts. When speaking of Malays and Malay language and culture we are inclined to think in the first place of the parts of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula which are traditionally considered as the homeland of the Malays.[2] We often forget, however, that there is a third Malay settlement area, namely the island of Kalimantan, Kalimantan is traditionally considered the land of the Dayaks. The popular name among modern Malays to refer to their ethnic-geographic attribute is 'coastal Dayaks' (Dayak pesisir). Malays in Kalimantan, living not only on the coasts but also far inland, have so far received little attention.[3] The 'coastal' Kalimantan Malays are of importance for researchers, scholars, as well as students of Malay language and culture. They are generally conservative and have been less influenced than the Malay communities to the west. Several original linguistic and cultural features that have disappeared in Sumatra and Malaysia may have been preserved in the Malay enclaves in Kalimantan. Despite some linguistic and cultural differences, Kalimantan Malays and their counterparts in Sumatra and Malaysia share one distinctive commonality. They share Muslim identity. The degree of Muslim identity distinctiveness ranges from arts, traditions, and clothes to educational and linguistic orientation. Whereas Malaysian Malays have kept the tradition of using Arabic script for religious and other public purposes in Malay language, Sumatra and Kalimantan Malays have only been recently to revert to and revive the use of Arabic script for public purposes.

[2] Spat. P. 36

[3] Maznah Mohamad, "Sex Manuals in Malay Manuscripts as Another Transcript of Gender Relations," *Religions*, 5, 12 (2021): 368.

Method

This study is aimed at two objectives; firstly, exploring and describing some considerations and perspectives on the assertion of Banjerese ethnic Muslim identity through the efforts of reviving the use Arabic script (Jawi) in the writing system of Banjar Malay, secondly, to describe views from the local government, public-religious figures, and general people of the community. Linguistic, sociological, and sociolinguistic perspectives are major references for argumentation that are proposed in this study. Theories used in the analysis of this study include language and its relation with ethnicity, language contact, language maintenance and shift, the function of Arabic in Indonesia, and Malay Arabic script or Jawi script. Data are mainly from interviews with the above-mentioned parties.

Result and Discussion

Language and ethnic identity

W.W. Isajiw (1974) in defining ethnicity included the term collective, intergenerational cultural continuity'. The term inherently contains the sense of links to one's own kind, i.e. one's own people, to collectiveness that not only purportedly have historical depth but, more crucially, share putative ancestral origins, and therefore, the gifts and responsibilities, rights and obligations deriving all of society and culture, depending on the extent to which ethnicity does pervade and dictate all social sensing's, doings, and knowing's. In this context, Fishman, Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1982) in commenting these components of definition proposed three conclusive ethnicity-related questions: Who are we? From where do we come from? What is special about us?

Fishman (1989, p 336) further claimed that language is part of the authentic 'doing' constellation and authentic 'knowing' constellation that are recurringly assumed to be dimensions of ethnicity. It is indeed widely believed that there is a natural connection between the language spoken by members of a social group and

that group's identity. By their accent, their vocabulary, their discourse patterns, speakers identify themselves and are identified as members of this or that speech and discourse community. From this membership, they draw personal trength and pride, as well as sense of social importance and historical continuity from using the same language as the group they belong to (Kramsch, 1998).

Yoshino (1995:12), in discussing ethnicity, claimed that the uniqueness of the in-group is most directly felt in interactions with outsiders, the linguistic and communicative mode is the key area. Indeed, language together with culture, religion, and history, is a component of ethnicity and nationalism. In this context, language relates with past time pride and authenticity. Besides, it also functions as contrastive self-identification. The latter function can be in the form of unifying function and at the same time separating function. Kramsch (1998) argued using or choosing one code over the other implies the performance of cultural acts of identity. Although ethnic differences are sometimes not accompanied by linguistic differences, it is rare to find two or more mutually unintelligible languages used in a society without the speakers belonging to different ethnic groups.

Banjarese People and Banjarese Language

Banjar refers to both linguistic identity and ethnic entity. Ethnically speaking, Banjar is the name people living in the southeastern coastal part of Kalimantan island. Banjarese language is the language spoken by these people. The lexicons of Banjarese are mixture of Malay, Javanese, and various Dayak dialects (Usman, 1990:39). Banjarese is also identified as one of the many Malay dialects. John U. Wolff (quoted by Ahmad and Zain,1988: 85) discussing about Banjarese language, said:

> "… on Banjarese Malay. This dialect is spoken through most of the province of South Kalimantan and northwards along the West Coast - I am not sure how far north. What is known is that Malay dialects are spoken all along the West Coast and that they are all very similar to Banjarese - there probably is no sharp demarcation between the dialect of Banjar and that of Kutai to the north of it, they are both quite similar Malay dialects".

In line with the above view, Johannes Jacobus Ras (1926:7-12), author of the famous Hikajat Bandjar: A Study of Malay Histroiography, said: "*The language spoken in this part of Borneo, the Banjarese colloquial, … is perhaps best defined as the independent continuation of a rather archaic type of Malay, superimposed on a substratum of Dayak dialects, with admixture of Javanese*". These views support the opinion that genealogically Banjarese is a Malay dialect spoken throughout South Kalimantan as well as in its neighboring provinces. Ninuk Kleden-Probonegoro (1996:70) asserted that Banjarese language is also used by other ethnic groups in neighboring Central Kalimantan and East Kalimantan as a second language. Besides being used as a vernacular, Banjarese language is also used as medium of instruction in South Kalimantan elementary schools up to the third grade.

Language Contact

Language contact takes place between speakers of different languages in contact situation. The two languages in contact become a *sprachbund* (Lehiste, 1988: 59), i.e an area where two or more languages meet and used there.

Cause of contact language is the arrival of a group of people in large number to a linguistically homogeneous place. The consequence is both the immigrants and the locals use their respective language, and this will finally lead to a *Sprachbund*; a meeting area of two different languages used in that area. The immigrants might assimilate with the locals and use the local vernacular as their own language; or on the reverse, the local language is overtaken by the immigrants' language, hence the locals use the immigrants' language. Whichever the result of language contact phenomenon depends very much on extralinguistic factors such as the number of speakers of respective languages, status or degree of material and non-material cultures, political and military power which are available to each of the groups.

Language contact can also take place without direct meeting or contact of the speakers of two or more languages. Such contact situation is evidenced in English and Arabic. Classical Arabic, for example, underwent contacts with other

languages in many parts of the world through spread of Islamic religion. This can be seen in massive borrowing from Arabic in languages such as Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay, and Bahasa Indonesia whose speakers are predominantly Muslims.[4] Not only did contact between Arabic and these languages result in heavy borrowing of lexicons, but also in the adoption of Arabic alphabets as medium of writing the local languages.

Language Shift and Language Maintenance

When a group of speakers of a language live side by side with other group of language speakers their language will undergo one of two tings: language maintenance; their language continues to be used for social interaction, and therefore is maintained, by its speakers and other speakers of other language, or language shift; the language will be ceased and replaced by a new language, which is the most frequently used in social interaction. Linguists have identified a number of significant factors explaining how society's change of attitude towards a preference of language choice and how shift takes place. Some of these factors include migration, industrialization, urbanization, language prestige, education, and government policy pertaining to a particular language which is used as medium of instruction at schools and other formal institutions. Romaine added some external factors that influence maintenance, shift, and death of a language are number of speakers, social class, educational and religious background, pattern of settlement, and government policy. N. Glazer in his article, *`The process and problems language-maintenance: an integrative review*' confirmed some other factors which promote language maintenance,[5] including:

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[4] Sarah G Thomason, *Language Contact* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). P. 2-3

[5] Suzanne Romaine, *Bilingualism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989). (reprinted 2000). P.40;358; N Glazer, *"The Process and Problems of Language-Maintenance: An Integrative Review" Dalam Joshua Fishman. Language Loyalty in the United States* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968). P. 253

a. Support of a minority group in the form of *parochial school*, in the tradition of Christianity; and/or Madrasah and *Pesantren* or Islamic boarding schools in Islamic tradition.
b. The prestigious status resulting from the establishment of the only official language, such as the case of Spanish in Mexico, French in Lousiana, USA, and Malay during the colonial era in the Dutch East Indies.

Arabic as the language of Islamic religion

Along with the advent of Islam in this archipelago, a large number of new religious concepts, which are Arabic specific and therefore intranslatable to the local vernacular, were introduced. In fact, there are many religious expressions are directly borrowed from Arabic. Every Muslim in the world, regardless of their native language, learned a number of expressions in Arabic, such as greeting (*Assalamu'alaikum*), supplication (*Bismillahi*), expression of faith (*Laa ilaha illallah*), and some formulaic expressions and terminologies in prayers, including the obligatory recital of the first verse of the Qur'an and other optional verses in the performance of five-time daily prayers.[6] For academicians and researchers who deal with Islamic studies need a good mastery of Al-Qur'an and Hadits (Prophet's traditions and sayings), as well as other fields of Islamic academic heritage.

Arabic Script in Indonesia

If we discuss about the use of Arabic script in Indonesia, it is inevitable for us but to touch on the discussion of the relationship between Arabic language and the religion of Islam. Prior to the influx of European elements, Bahasa Indonesia had traditionally been influenced by and incorporated many elements from Sanskrit and Arabic. The influence of the two languages is a byproduct of the acceptance of the Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam by people living in the

[6] A. C. S. Peacock, "Arabic Manuscripts from Buton, Southeast Sulawesi, and the Literary Activities of Sultan Muḥammad ʿAydarūs (1824–1851)," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, 1, 10 (2019): 44–83.

archipelago stretching from Malay Peninsula in Malaysia, Sumatra, to the Moluccas.

The extent of influence of Sanskrit and Arabic in Bahasa Indonesia, especially in its lexicon, can be seen in the wide spread use of terminologies. Religious or liturgical terminologies are interchangeably used across religion. For example, *do'a* which is Arabic word and of course associated with Islamic religion, yet it is used by adherents of other religions. The same is true with the Sanskrit word *sembahyang* (literally means to worship gods) is used interchangeably with its equivalent Arabic word *shalat* by Muslims.[7]

As for the magnitude of Arabic influence in Bahasa Indonesia can be seen in these Indonesian sentences, which most of the constituents are from Arabic (Arabic words are in italics):

a. *Masyarakat wajib taat hukum* ('People must comply with laws')
b. Berdasarkan *musyawarah* dan *mufakat akhirnya* anggota *syarikat* pekerja itu *sepakat* untuk menyampaikan *maksud* mereka secara *lisan* kepada kepala *daerah.* (Based on conventional agreement, members of the labor union agreed to convey their intention orally to the district government').

In the first sentence, each of the words is Arabic. The word *masyarakat* ('people, society') derives from Arabic verbal root /sy-r-k/ شا رك 'to join, gather' assemble'; *wajib* from verbal root /w-dʒ-b/ وجب 'oblige, a must, inexcuseable'; *taat* from /th-?/ طاع 'obedient, comply'; and *hukum* from /h-k-m/ حكم 'decide, law, wise'. While the Arabic elements in the second sentence are *musyawarah, mufakat, akhir, syarikat, sepakat, maksud, lisan*, and *daerah* which derive from /sy-w-r/ شاور 'discuss',

[7] D. gerth Van wijk, *Tata Bahasa Melayui* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1985). P. 132

/w-f-q/ وفق 'agree', /a-x-r/ اخر 'end, finish', /q-s-d/ " قصد intention, to head to', /lisan/ لسان 'tongue', and /d--r/ دار 'circulate, cover' respectively.[8]

In the field of education and academic, especially in religious teaching, Arabic is compulsary for it is the language in which Islamic literature is written. In many Islami boarding school (pesantren) Arabic is a compulsory language of instruction and day-to-day language used by students and their teachers' interaction.[9] The important position of Arabic language in the domains of religion, eduction, and other social life leads to its popularity and use of Arabic alphabets to write the language. The use of Arabic alphabets is not only limited to Arabic literature, but also in writing the local vernacular, especially Malay and its various varieties, including Malay dialect of Banjarese language.

Jawi Script: Arabic alphabets used to write Malay language.

Cornelis Spat (1931), a Dutch researcher of Malay language, said that there has been no record explaining that the Malay peoples had their own alphabets, before Arabic alphabets were used to write their language. There had been no written Malay language before the introduction of Islam except some scripts on the stone which used Hindu-Java script. Islam indeed encouraged the Malays to use alphabets intensively and probably extensively. The acceptance of Islamic religion by the local Malays facilitated the use of alphabets of the foreign people who brought the religion. Up until now the alphabets are still used, although it is not the only medium of writing for Malay language, because Latin alphabets, introduced by the Europeans, are extensively used.

(Re)Introduction of Banjar Jawi Script: Analysis

In 2006, District Government of Banjar, South Kalimantan issued regulation

[8] M Luthfi Fathullah, *Manuskrip Ulama Nusantara Dijarah Penjajah* (Jordan: University Jordan press, 2008). P. 125

[9] Imam Dhia Ul Islam and Ridha Fadillah, "Application Of Arabic Language Rules To Students Of SMA Al Baladul Amin Kandangan And MA Ummul Qura Amuntai.," *Jurnal Al-Maqayis*, 2, 8 (2021): 124–138.

number 5 on the system of writing identities in Arabic script. Based on this regulation, names of public offices, schools, streets, and other government agencies be written both in Latin alphabets and Arabic script. This regulation reflects the intention and effort by the local government to revive one of the traditions that has long been abandoned and once was distinctive literacy tradition of the old Banjar Sultanate.[10] This revival is not without historical, socio-psychological, and educational justifications.

To revive a writing system for a language is the domain of language planning in the linguistics discussion. Language planning may be defined as deliberate, institutionally organized attempts at affecting the linguistic or sociolinguistic status or development of language. One such form of language planning is *auxiliary-code standardization*. It is standardizing or modifying the marginal, auxiliary aspects of language such place names, and rules of transliteration and transcription, either to reduce ambiguity and thus improve communication or to meet changing social, political, or other needs or aspirations.[11] Therefore, to revive a writing system of a language, in this case Arabic script, has very much to do with the status of the source language as the original user of the alphabets. Such attempt should take into account both linguistic and extralinguistic considerations, as well as social, religious, and political factors. Due to political, social, or emotional significance of names, signs, and the like, place naming is frequently motivated by such considerations rather than by genuine communicative need.

Linguistically speaking, the Arabic language status as the language of Islamic religion is one of the key factors in the successful attempt of reintroduction

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[10] Maimunah Maimunah and Haniah Mukhtar, "Analyzing the Formula for the Mother Tongue's Interference in Daily Arabic Conversation/ تحليل صيغة تدخل اللغة الأم في المحادثة اليومية باللغة العربية," *Jurnal Al-Maqayis*, 1, 8 (2021): 1–24.

[11] Eric Hobsbawm, *"Introduction : Inventing Traditions", in Eric Hobsbawm Dan Terence Ranger (Ed.), The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). P. 148

of Banjar Jawi script in South Kalimantan. In fact, Islam is the religion of the majority of inhabitants of District of Banjar in particular, and South Kalimantan province in general. This psycho-socio-religious factor is of important relevance in this context. Muslims highly revere anything written in Arabic alphabets, even if the writing has nothing to do with anything Islamic such as a piece of torn news paper in Arabic would likely be considered as a piece of the holy script.

Extralinguistically, Banjarese people enjoy a high level of literacy in Arabic alphabets, because they are generally very religious. Taking these factors into account, reintroducing the use of Malay Banjar Jawi script (Arabic alphabets) to school students presumably will not have any inhibition or resistence either from students, parents, or teachers.

Literacy tradition in Islamic South Kalimantan has witnessed extensive use of Arabic scripts in Malay vernacular (Jawi script) to write public or religious documents. With special respect to religious texts written in Jawi script, history has recorded a substantial number of works. The following texts are some examples of the works by Banjar Muslim scholars:[12]

a. Sabilal Muhtadin by Syekh Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari
b. Kitab al-Nikah by Syekh Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari
c. Kanzu al-Ma'rifah by Syekh Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari
d. Asrar al-Salat by Abd al-Rahman al-Siddiq Sapat
e. Senjata Mukmin by Husin Qadri
f. Parukunan Jamaluddin by Qadi Jamaluddin Al-Banjari
g. Kitab Haji dan Umrah by Husin Qadri
h. Al-Dur al-Nafis by Muhammad Nafis Al-Banjari
i. Kitab Sifat Dua Puluh (anonym)
j. Hikajat Banjar (anonym)

[12] Muhandri, "Bahasa Jawa, Arab, Dan Melayu Di Palembang," *Www.Kompas.Com* (blog), 2003. P. 6

k. And various works on Tasawuf written anonymously

The Sultanate of Banjar in South Kalimantan has initiated an effort to revitalize and revive the use of Banjar Jawi script. This effort is a way of preserving a tradition which had long been practiced by the community in the province.

Socio-politically, language planning policy, particularly the revival of the use of Arabic alphabets along with Latin alphabets in place, street, and office names initiated by the Banjar District government has been supported widely by local society.[13] Therefore, all the above-mentioned factors may become a supporting factor as well as strong consideration or rationale for the reintroduction of the use Arabic alphabets to write Indonesian language in the local educational institutions. However, all of these arguments will not mean anything unless standardization of the writing system is also carried out.

Political and Cultural Context

At the beginning of the first four-year term, the new elect regent of Banjar District issued a regulation which dictates that names of public offices, schools, streets, and other government agencies be written both in Latin alphabets and Arabic script. Four years later, family members of the former Sultan of Banjar re-established the Sultanate of Banjar on July 24, 2010. The re-establishment is precedented by the founding of LAKKB – *Lembaga Adat dan Kekerabatan Kesultanan Banjar* (Institute of Tradition and Royal Kinship of Sultanate of Banjar).[14] This institute is the promoter of the re-establishment. From the perspective of temporal context, the current regent or head of Banjar district happens to be one of the many princes and princesses of Banjar Sultanate.[15] The LAKKB has used his term to reintroduce and re-establish the Sultanate of Banjar. Although the reintroduction

[13] Medri, "Jejak Bahasa Melayu Aceh," *Acehlong.Com* (blog), 1988. Diakses pada 15 juni 2022

[14] Jelprison, "Arab Melayu Sebuah Pengenalan," kampungrison.wordpress.com, 2008. Di akses 20 April 2022

[15] Heru Susetyo Nuswanto, "Bangsa Moro Di Mindanao : Roh Islam Melayu Di Jasad Pinay," *Www.Heru.Blogspot.Com* (blog), 2008. P.1

and re-establishment of the sultanate is claimed to merely play roles and functions of creator, conserver, continuer, and developer of both court and public traditions and cultures.

Historically, the sultanate was the creator and developer of new traditions in and for the royal court and the people. *Hikajat Banjar* recorded that the Islamic court had sent envoys to Giri, East Java to bring mask puppet, puppet dancer, and other forms of dances to liven up the court life. Prior to that, the Hindu court had received presents from Majapahit kingdom a set of gamelan instruments (Si Rancakan) and *babuns* (traditional drum).

During the Islamic sultanate, the court was active in developing traditions and cultures. In 1666, prince Singa Marta was sent to Bima to purchase some horses to breed in Banjar. Not only did the envoy go back with horses, but also with some artists and singing instructors from the island of Bima. In the period of Sultan Inajatullah reign (ca. 1678), gamelan was no longer the sole music instrument played in the court, royal family and the people were enjoying the play of Dayak small guitar, and other Borneo-specific and indigenous instruments. During the term of prince Hidayat (1854-59), besides Javanese, Bugis and Malay arts and literature flourished well. All of the above-mentioned facts are indicative that the royal court of the sultanate of Banjar was traditions and culture creator.[16]

With the abolition of Banjar sultanate in 1860 by the Dutch, performances of rituals, festivals, and ceremonies, which had functioned as both political and cultural bonds between the court and the people, were forbidden by the Dutch colonialists. Such ban had cut the people of Banjar from their patrons politically and culturally. Some cultures and traditions which were introduced by the court were gone while some others were livened up or taken over and developed by

[16] Isle Lehiste, *Lectures on Language Contact* (Mass Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001). ; Rohmatun Lukluk Isnaini, "Revitalisasi Peran Bahasa Arab Untuk Mengatasi Konflik Dalam Perspektif Multikultural," *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan: Fondasi Dan Aplikasi*, 1, 6 (2018): 15–26.

people. One such tradition is the use of Arabic script for writing.

The current sultan of Banjar has been sensitive enough to play the role of continuing, reinventing, and developing these long-gone traditions. What the sultan has done, in Eric Hobbawn's (1983) term is 'tradition invention'. It is about tradition that is actually invented, constructed, and officially institutionalized whose data and time are easily traced and readily proves by itself as 'tradition'.

Conclusion

Invented tradition refers to a set of practices -whose rules are officially formed explicitly or implicitly-, or a set of rituals or symbols – which thrive to internalize values and norms of certain behaviors in a repeated manner, and show their connectedness with the past. Tradition invention is therefore process of formalization and ritualization which indicate connections with the past. Tradition invention in the context of reintroduction of the use of Banjar Jawi script is therefore important for the Banjar sultanate institution not only for its historical ground, but also for the acceptance of the existence of the sultanate institution by the people of Banjar. The re-establishment of Banjar Sultanate institution is a tradition invention in its own right.

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