

Becoming Bruneian

Negotiating cultural and linguistic identities in the 21st century

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of candidate

Negara Brunei Darussalam



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List of abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|----------|---|
| A-level | Advanced Level |
| APEC | Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| AS-level | Advanced Subsidiary Level |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| BCGCE | Brunei-Cambridge General Certificate of Education |
| BIA | Brunei Investment Agency |
| BICS | Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills |
| BMA | British Military Administration |
| BNE | Brunei English (Language) |
| BNM | Brunei Malay (Language) |
| BrSE | British Standard English |
| BSB | Bandar Seri Begawan (Capital City of Brunei Darussalam) |
| CALP | Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency |
| CfBT | Centre for British Teachers |
| D1 | Daughter of R1 |
| DV | <i>Deo Volente</i> (God Willing) |
| EIL | English as an International Language |
| ELL | English Language Learning |
| ELT | English Language Teaching |
| ENL | English as a Native Language |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| H1 | Husband of P6 |
| Hj. | <i>Haji</i> (an honorific title for a male who has performed the Hajj pilgrimage) |
| HM | His Majesty (the Sultan of Brunei) |
| HREC | Human Research Ethics Committee, UTS |

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|---------|--|
| IC | Identity Card |
| ICJ | International Commission of Jurists |
| IDB | Islamic Development Bank |
| INT | Interview |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IRK | Islamic Religious/Revealed Knowledge |
| KDN | <i>Keselamatan Dalam Negeri</i> (The Internal Security Department) |
| KP | <i>Kad Pengenalan</i> (Identity Card) |
| L1 | First Language |
| lit. | Literally |
| MIB | <i>Melayu Islam Beraja</i> (Malay Islamic Monarchy) |
| MIM | Malay Islamic Monarchy |
| MoRA | Ministry of Religious Affairs, Brunei |
| MTeach | Master of Teaching |
| NAM | Non-Aligned Movement |
| NEST | Native English-Speaker Teacher |
| NNEST | Non-native English-Speaker Teacher |
| NNST | Non-native Speaker Teacher |
| NST | Native-Speaker Teacher |
| OIC | Organisation of Islamic Cooperation |
| O-level | Ordinary Level |
| P | Adult Participant |
| PP | Pilot Participant |
| PC | Privy Council |
| PCE | Primary Certificate of Education |
| Pg. | <i>Pengiran</i> (a Bruneian honorific title of nobility) |
| PR | Permanent Residency / Permanent Resident |
| R1 | Researcher |

| | |
|--------|---|
| RP | Received Pronunciation |
| RTB | <i>Radio Televysen Brunei</i> (Radio Television Brunei) |
| SLA | Second Language Acquisition |
| SP | Student Participant |
| SPL1 | Student Participant Liaison |
| SPN-21 | <i>Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke 21</i> (21 st Century National Education System) |
| St. | Saint |
| STE | Standard English |
| STM | Standard Malay |
| TEML | Teaching English as a Missionary Language |
| TESOL | Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| TL | Target Language |
| UBD | <i>Universiti Brunei Darussalam</i> (University of Brunei Darussalam) |
| UFO | Unidentified Flying Object |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNISSA | <i>Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali</i> (Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University) |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| USA | United States of America |
| UTS | University of Technology, Sydney |

Glossary of non-English terms

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Bahasa</i> | language |
| <i>baju kurong</i> | a long, loose tunic worn over a full-length skirt, usually in bright, floral fabric |
| <i>Berangin</i> | windy or lacking in conviction |
| <i>biar baringgut dicabut inda mau</i> | although pulled, cannot be shaken or swayed (lit. Let [it] shake, but pulled out it cannot be) |
| <i>biawak punggung</i> | monitor lizard or lazy man |
| <i>Bibiran</i> | lips and lips or too talkative |
| <i>budi bahasa</i> | manners and etiquette (culturally linked to Malay) |
| <i>Bumiputra</i> | a Malaysian of indigenous Malay origin (lit. sons of the soil) |
| <i>calak Brunei</i> | Bruneian identity |
| <i>Campur</i> | mixing |
| <i>cara Brunei</i> | the Bruneian way |
| <i>cara Melayu</i> | a two-piece outfit consisting of a long tunic and loose pants worn by males |
| <i>Cina Muara</i> | a Chinese person who exhibits Malay culture and qualities, but invariably lives in or originates from the Muara area |
| <i>Daerah</i> | district |
| <i>darjah</i> | form class |
| <i>dwibahasa</i> | bilingual |

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>fatwa</i> | a ruling on a point of Islamic law |
| <i>gharbzadegi</i> | west-struckness; occidentosis; westoxification |
| <i>gnothi seauton</i> | know thyself |
| <i>go maire tú!</i> | may you have a long life! |
| <i>go raibh mile maith agaibh</i> | thank you very much |
| <i>junjung ziarah</i> | a ceremony for a royal visit |
| <i>kain tenunan</i> | Bruneian brocade featuring gold and silver thread |
| <i>kaling</i> | a pejorative word for a person of Indian origin |
| <i>kampong</i> | Village |
| <i>Kampong Ayer</i> | Water Village |
| <i>kemukaan</i> | face or reputation |
| <i>Keselamatan Dalam Negeri</i> | the internal security department |
| <i>nom de plume</i> | pen name |
| <i>Negara Brunei Darussalam</i> | Nation of Brunei, the Abode of Peace |
| <i>Melayu</i> | Malay |
| <i>Melayu Islam Beraja</i> | Malay Islamic Monarchy |
| <i>Mufti</i> | Islamic scholar |
| <i>Muslimah</i> | female Muslim |
| <i>orang puteh</i> | white person |

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| <i>orang puts</i> | anglicised plural slang version of <i>orang puteh</i> |
| <i>Pengenalan</i> | identity |
| <i>Perambahan</i> | proverb |
| <i>Poklen</i> | member of anti-establishment group associated with Brunei's Water Village |
| <i>pra sekolah</i> | pre-school |
| <i>Sabar</i> | restraint or reserve |
| <i>seperti kacang lupakan kulit</i> | like a peanut that has forgotten its shell |
| <i>sinjang</i> | a short decorative sarong-type garment, featuring traditional Bruneian motifs, worn by Malay males |
| <i>temet nosce</i> | know thyself |
| <i>terima kasih</i> | thank you |
| <i>Titah</i> | speech by His Majesty the Sultan |
| <i>tudung</i> (alternative spelling: <i>tudong</i>) | headscarf |
| <i>Yang Di-Pertuan</i> | Head of State (lit. he who is lord) |
| <i>Wawasan</i> | vision |
| <i>Ziarah</i> | royal visit when cash gifts are distributed |
| <i>Zikir</i> | chant (lit.); strong adherence to Islamic ideals |

Abstract

As the world has become increasingly globalised, long-held understandings of ethnic, national, religious, cultural, and linguistic identities have been uprooted and diffused. This has resulted in a 21st century re-engagement with the nebulous concept of identity. This ethnographic study explores how the competing forces of essentialising and hybridising social constructs impact the personal identities' construction of a group of 16 young people in Brunei Darussalam – a sultanate on the island of Borneo. It juxtaposes identity-as-performative with identity-as-assignation in light of the country's powerful ideology of *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB), translating as Malay Islamic Monarchy. This state apparatus seeks to confer and promote a triad of politically desirable identities on all Bruneians in an attempt to preclude the need for agentic identity construction at an individual level, something that is regarded as potentially destabilising. MIB emphasises Malay language and cultural norms as assertions of ethnicity and nationalism. However, Brunei has a rich linguistic ecology in which English, as one of its languages, plays a key role as the dominant medium of education, posing a linguistic dilemma. Drawing on qualitative data, generated by extended participant observation, informal interviews and content analysis, this study seeks to uncover how participants negotiate their multiple identities amid such contradictory influences. What emerges from four-fold thematic analysis (politico-economic; linguistic; religious; socio-cultural) is not a coercion of fixed identities, but a complex dynamic web of accommodation and reconciliation. Participants reveal how they actively calibrate their levels of commitment to or subversion of their many selves to achieve personalised local-global synthesis. In this way, they perform Bruneianness using all of their cultural and linguistic resources.