

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE JAWI SCRIPT TO THE MODERNIZATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MINANGKABAU: A CASE STUDY OF *AL-MUNIR* MAGAZINE

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Abstract. This study examines the significant role of the Jawi script in the modernization of Islamic education in 20th-century Minangkabau. Adapted from Arabic, Jawi script facilitated literacy and the dissemination of Islamic knowledge. It became a vital medium for religious texts, educational literature, and cultural documentation. A notable platform utilizing Jawi script was *Al-Munir* magazine, which emerged as a milestone in reforming Islamic education. Published in Padang, this magazine bridged traditional Islamic teachings with modern ideas, fostering critical discourse and intellectual progress in Minangkabau society.

Keywords: *Jawi Script, Islamic Education, Al-munir Magazine*

INTRODUCTION

Jawi script is a cultural heritage that played a pivotal role in disseminating Islam and literacy in the Malay world, including Minangkabau. This script is based on the Arabic alphabet with modifications for the Malay language. This script is widely used in religious texts, customary documents, and Islamic educational literature. One medium that utilized the Jawi script in Minangkabau was *Al-Munir Magazine*, a publication that marked a milestone in the modernization of Islamic education in the early 20th century.

Nevertheless, with the advent of modernization and the increasing dominance of the Latin alphabet in education, the usage of the Jawi script started to wane. This sparked concerns about the erosion of traditional Islamic literacy heritage, which had once been a defining feature of Islamic education in Minangkabau. Conversely, the modernization of Islamic education presented both challenges and new possibilities, such as integrating traditional values with technological advancements. Therefore, a study of the Jawi script in the context of the modernization of Islamic education, as exemplified by *Al-Munir Magazine*, is crucial to understanding how this literacy tradition has adapted to the changing times.

This research is essential because the Jawi script serves as both a means of communication and a powerful symbol of Islamic identity and Minangkabau cultural heritage. By examining *Al-Munir Magazine* as a prime example of Jawi script literacy, we can gain valuable insights into the evolution of Islamic education in the face of modernization. Moreover, this study will deepen our knowledge of the ongoing efforts to maintain the significance of traditional literacy in the contemporary world, especially as Islamic education confronts the challenges posed by globalization.

This study aims to investigate the role of the Jawi script in the modernization of Islamic education in Minangkabau through an examination of *Al-Munir Magazine*. Previous research, such as "Two Islamic Writing Traditions in Southeast Asia" (Jajat Burhanuddin, 2022), has highlighted the significance of Jawi script in preserving Islamic educational traditions in the Malay region. This study argues that the Jawi script is not only a tool for religious literacy but also a symbol of Islamic

identity that has confronted modernization. Within the Minangkabau context, the Jawi script has the potential to be reintegrated into formal education.

A related study, "Internet, Hadith And Traditional Islamic Learning Practices In Indonesia" (Syihabuddin, 2022) explores how Islamic education is navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by modernization, particularly in the realm of literacy. The author emphasizes that modernization does not need to be at odds with tradition; instead, it can catalyze adapting heritage elements, such as the Jawi script, into digital media and interactive learning environments. Additionally, the article "Transforming Islamic Education in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities for the Young Generation" (Sanusi2024) delves into the obstacles faced in preserving Indonesia's traditional literacy systems, including the Jawi script. The author notes that a significant barrier is the need for more attention given to these scripts in formal education. The study recommends integrating traditional literacy into locally oriented curricula to ensure their sustainability. Through an analysis of *Al-Munir* Magazine, this study aims to demonstrate how the Jawi script can serve as a bridge between traditional and modern Islamic education. This research is also relevant to addressing the need for locally rooted innovations to meet the challenges of globalizing Islamic education in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs content analysis, a research approach used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes within texts, images, or other forms of communication. In the context of studying *Al-Munir* Magazine, this method is highly relevant as the magazine contains various writings that reflect the ideas of Islamic educational reform, the use of the Jawi script, and the intellectual dynamics of its time. This analysis involves an in-depth reading of the texts to identify key themes, such as educational modernization, the role of the Jawi script, and the magazine's contribution to the cultural transformation of Minangkabau society.

Through content analysis, researchers can categorize the magazine's content based on dominant topics or issues, such as articles discussing Islamic education, religious studies, or views on modernity. This approach enables researchers to understand the patterns of communication and ideas conveyed by the authors in the magazine. Additionally, content analysis helps to reveal the social and cultural contexts that influenced the magazine's content, providing a more comprehensive understanding of *Al-Munir*'s role in shaping Islamic discourse in Minangkabau during that period.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1.1 The History of Jawi Script

Jawi script is an adapted Arabic script designed to represent the sounds of the Malay language (Fang: 2011). It has been a cornerstone of communication in the Malay world, particularly in religious, cultural, and educational contexts. As a testament to Southeast Asia's rich Islamic literary history, the Jawi script was instrumental in shaping the cultural identity of Malay communities, including those in Minangkabau, Aceh, Riau, and Malacca. Its origins can be traced back to the 13th century, coinciding with the arrival of Islam in the Nusantara archipelago. Arab traders, scholars, and missionaries introduced Islam and its associated writing system. To accommodate the unique sounds of the Malay language, the Arabic script underwent modifications, with the addition of special symbols and letters.

In its development, the Jawi script became a tool for writing various local languages in the Nusantara archipelago, mainly Malay. Additional letters such as "cha", "nga", and "pa", were created to

represent phonemes that did not exist in Arabic. This letter made Jawi's script more flexible and well-suited to the needs of Malay society. The Islamization of the Nusantara not only brought religious teachings but also a literacy tradition based on the Arabic script. Jawi script was used to write religious texts such as Qur'anic commentaries, hadiths, and books of Islamic jurisprudence. This role made the Jawi script the primary medium for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge in the Malay region (Fang: 2011).

By the 15th century, the Jawi script experienced significant growth in the Malacca Sultanate, a prominent center of trade and Islamic propagation in Southeast Asia. As the official script, Jawi was employed in royal decrees, diplomatic correspondence, and Islamic legal texts. From Malacca, the Jawi script was disseminated to various regions such as Sumatra, Kalimantan, and the Malay Peninsula. In Sumatra, particularly in Minangkabau, this script was utilized to write historical chronicles, religious texts, and folktales. Interregional trade and cultural exchanges accelerated its dissemination. Beyond official documents and spiritual texts, the Jawi script was also integrated into the daily lives of Malay society. Correspondence, poetry, commercial records, and even folk tales were written in Jawi, making it an integral part of the community's literary culture.

Jawi script made significant contributions to Malay literature. Epic tales such as *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, and *Hikayat Abdullah* were composed using this script. These literary works not only served as entertainment but also functioned as a medium for education and the dissemination of moral values. In Minangkabau, the Jawi script was used to write customary laws, historical chronicles, and religious texts. Traditional education in *surau* (Islamic schools) heavily relied on this script to teach religious knowledge to the community. This role reinforced Minangkabau's identity as a Muslim society with deep roots in Islamic tradition. The golden age of Jawi script occurred between the 17th and 19th centuries ('Afifah, 2024). During this period, the Jawi script became the primary medium for education, governance, and culture in the Malay world. Numerous important texts were produced during this time, including legal, literary, and religious manuscripts (Adam, 2019).

Entering the 20th century, modernization and colonialism brought significant changes to the literacy system in the Nusantara archipelago. The Latin alphabet was introduced by the Dutch colonizers, replacing the Jawi script as the primary written language. This shift resulted in a decline in the use of the Jawi script across various sectors. During the colonial period, the use of the Jawi script became limited to *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and Islamic educational institutions (Hidayat, 2023). Despite these limitations, the Jawi script persisted as the primary literacy tool for Islamic religious instruction. Religious texts such as Qur'anic commentaries and hadiths continued to be written in Jawi. After independence, the Jawi script faced challenges in surviving amidst the dominance of the Latin alphabet. However, various preservation efforts were undertaken, including teaching Jawi script in Islamic schools, publishing books in Jawi, and digitizing manuscripts (Hill, 1960).

In the digital age, technology has become a vital tool for preserving the Jawi script. Several institutions have digitized ancient Jawi manuscripts to make them accessible to younger generations. Social media and language learning applications have also started to integrate Jawi script learning. Although its usage has declined, the Jawi script remains relevant as a symbol of the cultural and religious identity of Malay society. It serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity while reminding us of the importance of preserving cultural heritage amidst globalizations. In Indonesia, the Jawi script is still used in several regions, such as Sumatra, South Kalimantan, and Java. In the

Minangkabau context, this script is an essential part of local history and cultural studies, especially in customary and religious manuscripts.

Numerous academic studies have been conducted to understand the role of the Jawi script in Malay history and culture. These studies not only reveal the history of the Jawi script but also its potential for integration into modern education. Cooperation among Malay-speaking regions such as Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia is key to preserving the Jawi script. Through collaboration, the Jawi script can be promoted as a shared identity of the Malay-Islamic world. A major challenge in preserving the Jawi script is the need for more interest among younger generations and the dominance of the Latin script. Therefore, innovative strategies are needed, such as integrating the Jawi script into popular arts and culture, to attract public interest. Jawi script is a literary heritage that plays a vital role in the history of the Malay-Islamic world. Despite facing various challenges, this script remains a symbol of cultural and religious identity that deserves preservation. With appropriate preservation efforts, the Jawi script can continue to thrive and stay relevant in the modern era, serving as a bridge between tradition and the future.

1.2 Its Role in the Modernization of Islamic Education

Al-Munir magazine was a significant publication in the Malay world that emerged in the early 20th century. Published in Padang, West Sumatra, the magazine served as a platform for Minangkabau scholars and intellectuals to disseminate ideas about reforming Islamic education. *Al-Munir* is renowned for its efforts to bridge the gap between classical Islamic traditions and the challenges of modernity, particularly in the realm of education. The content of the magazine reflected the intellectual dynamics and the spirit of Islamic reform that characterized Minangkabau during that period (Yasmin, 2023).

This magazine covered a wide range of important topics, from Quranic commentary and Hadith studies to social issues such as education, economics, and politics. One of the most striking features of *Al-Munir* was its rational and progressive approach to religious matters. The magazine's contributors sought to explore the universal values of Islam that were relevant to the needs of modern society. In this way, *Al-Munir* served not only as a medium for preaching but also as an educational tool that provided new insights for Muslims.

In the context of Islamic education, *Al-Munir* placed particular emphasis on the importance of science and technology. Articles within the magazine often underscored the necessity for Muslims to pursue worldly knowledge in addition to religious knowledge. Education was viewed as a tool to empower the community, enabling them to compete in the face of modernization. This idea reflected the influence of Islamic reform movements emerging in the Middle East, such as the thoughts of Muhammad Abduh and Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, which the authors of *Al-Munir* also adopted (Yasmin, 2023).

One of the most significant contributions of this magazine was its promotion of the integration of religious education with general education. *Al-Munir* criticized the traditional educational model that solely focused on religious teachings without considering other fields of knowledge. Instead, the magazine proposed a more balanced educational model where Islamic values remain the foundation, but also accommodates modern knowledge such as science, mathematics, and language.

Furthermore, *Al-Munir* played a significant role in promoting the Jawi script as a medium of literacy among the Minangkabau people. Many articles in the magazine were written in Jawi script, demonstrating how local Islamic literacy traditions were preserved amidst the wave of

modernization. The use of the Jawi script also reflects an attempt to maintain Malay cultural identity while simultaneously adopting external reformist ideas.

On the other hand, the magazine also criticized educational practices deemed irrelevant to the demands of the modern era. One recurring criticism was directed at teaching methods solely focused on rote memorization rather than fostering deep understanding. *Al-Munir* advocated for more interactive and comprehension-based educational approaches, aligning with Islamic principles that encourage critical thinking and reflection among its followers.

Al-Munir also addressed the role of women in education, a relatively progressive issue for its time. The magazine emphasized the importance of providing equal access to education for women, as they, to play a significant role in building a generation that is both intelligent and virtuous. By advocating for women's education, *Al-Munir* demonstrated its commitment to inclusive social reform.

The articles in this magazine frequently cite Quranic verses and hadith to support arguments for reform. It demonstrates a moderate, text-based approach taken by the authors. They endeavor to show that Islam is inherently compatible with scientific advancements and modernity, provided that its core values are preserved.

Al-Munir magazine also functioned as a conduit for disseminating reformist ideas from beyond the Nusantara region (Hidayat, 2023). Articles on modernization movements in Egypt, Turkey, and India were frequently featured in the magazine, offering readers insights into how Muslim communities in other countries were navigating the complexities of modernity. In this way, *Al-Munir* served as a window into the global Islamic world for the Muslim population of Minangkabau (Yasmin, 2023).

Al-Munir's role in the modernization of Islamic education extended beyond its espoused ideas and significantly impacted society. The magazine successfully stimulated intellectual discourse among scholars and students and influenced educational policies in the Minangkabau region (Hidayat, 2024). Several modern madrasahs that emerged during this period adopted the ideas presented in *Al-Munir*.

Beyond education, *Al-Munir* delved into a broad spectrum of social issues, including the significance of inter-Islamic cooperation, poverty alleviation, and equitable economic development. It demonstrates the magazine's comprehensive vision of uplifting the community, not merely through education, but also holistic social empowerment. In terms of language, *Al-Munir* employed simple yet meaningful Malay, making it accessible to a diverse audience. This approach underscores the magazine's commitment to disseminating its reformist ideas to the public rather than confining them to the intellectual or religious elite.

However, *Al-Munir* encountered substantial challenges during its publication. Not all segments of society embraced its reformist agenda. Some traditionalist factions perceived the modernization ideas presented in *Al-Munir* as being too divergent from local Islamic traditions. Nevertheless, the magazine remained steadfast in its mission to introduce reforms aligned with the evolving needs of the Muslim community.

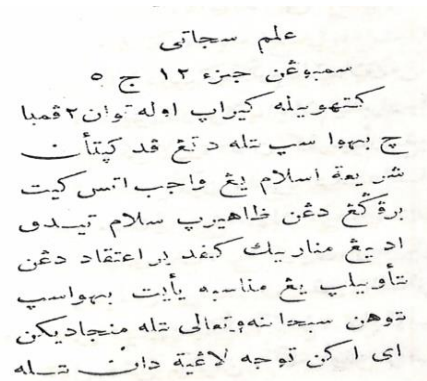
Al-Munir's courage in advocating for reform has solidified its place as a pivotal milestone in the history of Islamic education in Indonesia. Despite its eventual cessation of publication, its influence persists to this day, particularly in the ongoing reform of Islamic education towards greater

inclusivity and progress. This magazine stands as a testament to the capacity of the media to serve as an agent of social change. Through its consistent publications, *Al-Munir* not only disseminated information but also cultivated critical consciousness among Muslims regarding the significance of education and advancement. *Al-Munir's* successful integration of traditional Islamic values and modern ideas positions it as a model for other media outlets seeking to facilitate change without compromising cultural or religious roots. Through its inclusive approach, grounded in community needs, the magazine has cultivated a robust intellectual discourse that remains pertinent today.

1.3 Jawi Script and the Modernization of Islamic Education in Minangkabau

Jawi script and the magazine *Al-Munir* played a significant role in modernizing Islamic education in Minangkabau at the beginning of the 20th century. As a representation of local literary traditions, the Jawi script supported the transformation of how Islamic knowledge was disseminated and understood (Yatim, 1999). Its existence enriched the traditional educational landscape, which had previously relied solely on oral methods. It allowed Islamic texts to be transmitted more widely and in written form, providing greater access for the community to understand religious teachings.

Fig. 1. *Al Munir* Magazine



On the other hand, *Al Munir* magazine, which was first published in Padang in 1911, became a crucial instrument in driving the modernization of Islamic thought. With its progressive editorial approach, the magazine served as a platform for discussion and the dissemination of innovative educational ideas among Minangkabau Muslims. Published articles often emphasized the importance of integrating modern science with Islamic values, an approach that laid the foundation for the modernization of education in the region.

The use of the Jawi script in various local Islamic texts demonstrates how local traditions can serve as a medium for educational transformation. Beyond preserving cultural identity, it also fostered a strong emotional connection with the community, making Islamic education more readily accepted. Jawi script helped introduce the concept of literacy to a community previously limited to *surau* education. It encouraged the development of a stronger reading and writing tradition, aligning with the spirit of modernization. *Al-Munir* magazine pioneered the introduction of new ideas that stimulated awareness of the importance of formal education beyond the *surau* system. By presenting content that delved deeply into social, educational, and religious issues, *Al-Munir* became a pillar in shaping public opinion. Through this medium, progressive scholar like Abdullah Ahmad and Muhammad Djamil Djambek conveyed reformist ideas that later inspired the establishment of modern Islamic educational institutions in Minangkabau.

Jawi script also played a vital role in preserving the works of local scholars. Religious texts written in the Jawi script demonstrate Islam's ability to adapt to local cultures without compromising its core

principles. These works serve as a bridge between classical Islamic traditions and the demands of the modern world, particularly in developing Islamic education curricula that meet the needs of contemporary society.

As the first printed publication in Minangkabau, *Al-Munir* magazine also introduced modern journalistic techniques to the Muslim community. It marked the beginning of the development of critical thinking among its readerships. By utilizing the Malay language, the magazine was able to reach a broader audience, not only in Minangkabau but also across the Nusantara archipelago. It accelerated the process of modernizing Islamic education by fostering inter-regional dialogue. The integration of the Jawi script into Islamic education demonstrates how Minangkabau society values its cultural identity while being receptive to innovation. This approach aligns with the spirit of Islamic modernism, which prioritizes *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) to address contemporary challenges. The use of this script exemplifies how modernization does not necessarily entail abandoning tradition, but instead involves the recontextualization of culture for educational purposes.

Al-Munir magazine's success in capturing its readers' attention is evidence that print media can be a catalyst for social change. Discussions about educational reform, the role of women in Islam, and the importance of modern science, as promoted by *Al-Munir*, brought a new dimension to Islamic education in Minangkabau. It highlights the fact that the modernization of Islamic education requires a combination of tradition and innovation.

Jawi script and *Al-Munir* magazine serve as symbols of the harmonious integration of Islamic values and local cultural identity within the context of modernizing education in Minangkabau. They demonstrate that global dynamics do not solely influence the transformation of Islamic education but are also deeply rooted in local traditions. Thus, modernization in Minangkabau represents a balance between adopting best practices and respecting local wisdom. More broadly, their roles exemplify how Islamic education in Indonesia can evolve dynamically while upholding cultural values. This evidence suggests that tradition and modernity complement each other in creating relevant, inclusive, and sustainable Islamic essences

CONCLUSION

The contribution of Jawi script and *Al Munir* magazine to the modernization of Islamic education in Minangkabau was highly significant, especially during the transition to the 20th century. As part of the Malay cultural heritage, Jawi script served as an essential medium for disseminating Islamic literacy to the Minangkabau community. Its use facilitated the understanding of religious texts, which had previously been limited to a select few, thereby opening avenues for more progressive Islamic thought.

Al Munir magazine, first published in Padang in 1911, played a vital role in introducing reformist ideas in Islamic education. Utilizing Jawi script as its primary medium, *Al Munir* featured articles promoting the importance of modern education rooted in Islamic values. The magazine became a platform for intellectual discussions on integrating religious education with general knowledge, which was seen as a critical step in addressing contemporary challenges.

The modernization of Islamic education in Minangkabau, supported by Jawi script and *Al Munir*, influenced not only curricula but also teaching methods. Traditional Islamic boarding schools (*surau*) began adopting classical systems that combined religious studies with secular sciences. This aligned with the reformist spirit of *Al Munir*, which emphasized the significance of literacy and

critical thinking in Islam while maintaining traditional roots. Overall, Jawi script and *Al Munir* were integral to the journey of modernizing Islamic education in Minangkabau. They facilitated intellectual transformation while strengthening the Islamic identity of the Minangkabau people amidst the challenges of globalization. By prioritizing literacy and dialogue, Jawi script and *Al Munir* laid a solid foundation for an Islamic education system that is inclusive and adaptable to the changing times.

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