

Script of islam, script of Malay: Jawi revivalist discourse in ealry independent Indonesia and its relationship to Malaya

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Abstrak

Jawi, the Arabic script of the Malay language, is one of the cultural components historically shared in the Malay-Islamic world. Indonesia experienced a shift to the Roman alphabet during the early twentieth century, before Malaya did. However, in the 1950s, immediately after Indonesia's independence, Islamic leaders from West Sumatra initiated a discourse to revive the use of Jawi. This article examines the background of the discourse as well as its relationship to Malaya. Two factors can be identified as forming this background. First, Indonesian Islamic forces demanded the Islamization of the state and society. The discourse on Jawi was related to the emphasis on the significance of Islam in Indonesian culture. Second, regional dissatisfaction was heightened with the predominance of Java, the center of the state. As Jawi is called "the script of Malay" in Indonesia, the revivalist discourse can be understood as demanding respect for the regional Malay culture. From the discourse, it is evident that the unity of the Malay-Islamic world was recognized to some degree after Indonesia's independence. However, it was principally limited to the framework of the Indonesian nation-state and never developed into an idea that united the Malay-Islamic world politically. This indicates that Indonesian Islamic movements of that period—although their activities based on Islamism have attracted scholars' attention—had firmly adopted the idea of the Indonesian nation-state.