

## Cultural Identity of Malaysian Malay Ethnic in Perlis village

Marwah Mawaddah

<sup>1</sup>Social Anthropology, Postgraduate, Medan State University, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [mawaddahmarwah@gmail.com](mailto:mawaddahmarwah@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*The existence of the Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora in Perlis village attracts attention because they occupy the majority of the community there and still maintain the identity of Malaysian culture, what is interesting in this study is that Perlis village is in one area with Deli Malay in Langkat regency but the unique differences in Langkat Malay ethnic culture with Perlis Malay ethnicity which is still in one area makes it interesting for researchers to conduct this research. This study aims to explain the cultural identity of the Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora in Perlis village. In this study using a type of qualitative research with an ethnographic approach conducted with direct interviews and using Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory as the basis for analysis. The method of this research is qualitative with an ethnographic approach. The results showed that the cultural identity of the Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora in Perlis is reflected in various aspects of daily life, ranging from traditions, language, food, clothing, to religious beliefs and practices. The conclusion of this study is that the Malaysian Malay ethnic culture in Perlis village is still generally used by the community as a culture that is still maintained in the Perlis village community. In general, there are several ethnic Malaysian Malay cultures in Perlis village that still exist in the Perlis village community, namely the use of everyday language, the process of birth, marriage to death.*

**Keywords:** *Diaspora, Ethnicity, Ethnic Malay*

### INTRODUCTION

Identity can be seen from an individual or group perspective, identity for a group is a similarity or characteristic possessed by a group, if there are characteristics and understandings shared by several individuals, those individuals will be labeled as coming from a group, while they those who do not have that similarity will be labeled outside the group. Individually, someone can claim or unconsciously receive a picture or image in their social interactions with other individuals. An individual identifies themselves according to the point where they come from on the social map.

In a group, each individual can identify themselves as unique and different from other individuals and then become a factor that influences behavior, thoughts, actions and emotions that tend to be identical to their group. A location or place of residence will be one of the factors in forming our cultural identity seen from the existence of individuals and actions.

In the several studies known so far, no one has revealed the cultural identity of the Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora in Perlis village. Based on research on existing diasporas mIt was revealed that there are three categories of forms of diaspora between regions. First, research on diaspora tends to reveal the reasons for diaspora and the mapping of the population of people in diaspora (Zulkarnaen, 2018; Hidayat, 2014; Fatianda, S., 2022; Akhter. M., 2023). Second, research that examines ethnicity in Indonesia (Arizal, 2020; Ihsan, 2019; Ilham, 2023). Third, research investigates Malay ethnicity looking for various origins of the Malay nation (Faishal, 2021; Hafiz, 2022; Hartini, 2022). Several of these studies have not revealed anything about the Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora in Perlis village, whether in terms of the reasons for joining the diaspora, the conflicts that occurred as a result of the diaspora or the culture maintained by the diaspora community. This research attempts to fill this gap in the literature by revealing the Malay ethnic diaspora in Perlis village.

In everyday life, the cultural identity of the Malaysian Malay ethnic group in Perlis village still uses the identity of their country, such as the use of language, clothing, arts and culture. This is in line with what Hall

(1990) said that cultural identity or also known as ethnic identity can at least be seen from the perspective of cultural identity as a form and cultural identity as a process of becoming culture.

Cultural identity is also seen as a unity that is shared, or which is a person's "basic or original form" and resides in many people who have a common history and ancestry. This can be seen from the Malay Malay ethnic diaspora in Perlis village which has a form in various cultures and the process of becoming a local community which has its basic and original form as the Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora and also has a common history and ancestry of course with the native Perlis population in Malaysia.

This research departs from the argument that the ethnic Malays of Perlis village are ethnic migrants who have a diaspora to Perlis village originating from Perlis Malaysia. They came to Perlis village because of their interest in the marine resources in Perlis village and were driven by business interests, namely to collect nipah roofs. to trade. Apart from that, because Perlis village is located in the middle of an island surrounded by sea on the border of Malaysia and Indonesia, access in and out is easier by sea.

## **METHOD**

This research uses qualitative research with an ethnographic approach. According to Semiawan (2010) qualitative research is seeking a deep understanding of a symptom, fact or reality. Facts, realities, problems, symptoms and events can only be understood if researchers explore them in depth and are not limited to surface views.

Ethnography is an empirical and theoretical approach that aims to obtain an in-depth description and analysis of culture based on intensive field research. The aim of ethnography is to provide a holistic picture of research subjects with an emphasis on photographing individuals' daily experiences by observing and interviewing them and other people they relate to.

Judging from its origin, the term ethnography comes from the words "ethno" (nation) and "graphy" (describe), so ethnography aims to describe a culture, namely all aspects of culture, both material ones such as cultural artifacts (tools, clothing, buildings, etc.) and abstract ones, such as experiences, beliefs, norms, and the value system of the group under study. From these terms and explanations, it can be interpreted that ethnography is a method that explains, describes, identifies various characteristics of humans (nations) from things that are general to things that are specific.

The ethnographic approach used in this research is ethnography developed by James Spradley (1997) who attempted to discover how people organize their culture in their minds and use this culture in their lives. What's on my mind (mind) humans, and the job of an ethnographer is to find a description of the organization of that mind. Spradley (1997) defines culture as a system of knowledge that humans acquire through the learning process, this knowledge is used to interpret the world around them.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Diaspora as a model for discussing cultural identity because the diasporic experience is defined not only through its essence but also in the recognition of heterogeneity and diversity (the concept of identity living in and through difference; that is, through hybridity). This diasporic identity itself continues to reproduce through transformation and difference Hall (2003).

The cultural identity of a society cannot be displayed purely because its occurrence is impossible without influence from other cultures. Identity will always move or be dynamic and continue without stopping. In this research, the cultural identity of the Malaysian Malay ethnic group in Perlis is reflected in various aspects of daily life, from traditions, language, food, clothing, to religious beliefs and practices..

The Malaysian Malay ethnic culture in Perlis village is still generally used by the community as a culture that is still maintained in the Perlis village community. In general, there are several Malaysian Malay ethnic cultures in Perlis village which still exist in the Perlis village community, namely the use of everyday language, the process of birth, marriage and even death.

The Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora maintains their cultural existence involving various aspects, including language, customs, art, food, traditional clothing, and cultural values. The following are some of the methods adopted by the ethnic Malay Malaysian community in Perlis village to maintain cultural heritage.

## 1. Use of Malaysian Malay

Malay is the official language in Malaysia which is used to communicate with the residents of Perlis village, plus the large number of Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora in Perlis village so that many Perlis villagers use Malaysian Malay language in their daily life in Perlis village.

*"Kate, Edi's father used to be from Perlis, right? There are a lot of Acehnese, Tamiang, and Malays from Langkat Tanjung here, so you say that it's different from Malaysian Malays, they speak Indonesian normally, when you come in, Malaysians just kind of changed to say depo, that What changed is that many of the people from Lorong 11 to Lorong 15 speak Malaysian because many of the descendants of Malaysian Malays are from this area" (March 2024).*

Based on the interview with Mr. Junaidi, it can be seen that the Malaysian Malay language was brought by the Malaysian Malay ethnic group and they use Malaysian Malay language as their daily language so that the native residents of Perlis village also follow it, plus the large number of Malaysian Malay ethnic people who dominate the population in Perlis village.

The Malaysian Malay language brought by the Malaysian Malay ethnic group is the same language used by the Perlis people in Malaysia. This was explained in the research informant interview with Nek Salamah:

*"You talk to me with Malaysian Perlis people, but if you talk to Langkat Malays, it's different, grandma lived in Perlis Malaysia for a year and met grandma's relatives, if grandma sees that everything is the same as us here, she says it's the same, it's not different because that's why grandma at home there because my grandmother feels like her life is here in Perlis" (February 2024).*

From the results of the interview with the informant, it can be understood that the language used by the Malaysian Malay ethnic group is the same as the language used by the Perlis village community. Malaysian Malay is the language used daily in communicating and interacting between communities, the use of Malaysian Malay which is currently used by the Perlis village community makes the Perlis village Malay community very unique because it is thick with Malaysian Malay pronunciation which makes the Malay language in Perlis village audible. unique among foreign communities and the Malays of Perlis village come from Malay Malaysia, so their language and culture are almost entirely the same as the Malay community in Malaysia. This can be seen from the language used by the Perlis village community in daily communication, which is almost the same as the language used by the Malaysian Malay community.

The Malay language in Perlis village is different from the language used by Langkat Malays because this difference makes the language of the Malay people in Perlis village very unique. Even though Langkat is known as a Malay country, Perlis village has its own differences in terms of language and various other cultures. Maintaining language is an important way to maintain cultural identity, therefore Malaysian Malay ethnics use Malaysian Malay as a way to communicate in everyday life in order to maintain their cultural identity.

## 2. Implementation of Customs

Various implementations of ethnic Malay customs can be seen in Perlis village, such as marriage. The marriage process is still very close to Malaysian Malay culture. This can be seen from the process of determining the implementation of the good day of marriage. It is believed that this has a big influence on the ethnic Malay marriage process in Perlis village, so before when carrying out a marriage, the family has to go to Atok Grandma who can see the good day, then after Atok Grandma determines the day, the wedding can take place.

Apart from having the function of determining the time of marriage, determining the time of marriage is also believed to be able to prevent bad events such as strong winds or unwanted disasters from occurring during the marriage process. After the marriage date has been determined by Tok Granny, the

marriage can be carried out, then after the marriage is held, there will also be Malay culture, namely the exchange of halls, so the men and women are obliged to make a hall, then the men will exchange the hall for the woman and vice versa. It is believed to be a symbol of the exchange of children for families.



Figure 1. Wedding culture (Source: Marwah Mawaddah Research 21 April 2024)

The picture is a Malaysian Malay ethnic Balai exchange event in Perlis village which was held at the time of the wedding and when delivering the bride, the male party brought the Balai and the female also made the Balai and then exchanged them with each other, later the male party had the right to bring the Balai. from the women's side to be taken home while the men's party is left behind.

The Malay culture in Perlis village is the culture of mothers after giving birth, namely soak in a maternity bath. This is an important ritual that Malaysian ethnic Malays always perform where mother and baby bathe together in a traditional herbal mixture to cleanse and refresh their bodies. Usually, this is done a few days after birth, some one day after birth, some three days after birth, up to one week after birth, usually there is someone who mixes the concoction for the soak. The person who does it is usually called a midwife. Then the mother was also massaged and given cold powder which was used all over her body. Culture take a maternity bath It is believed that it can bring good fortune and health to mothers and children, this can be seen from cultural beliefs soak in a mersalin bath this is getting higher, almost all the Perlis villagers who have finished giving birth hold an event take a maternity bath for the good of the future.

Then, the process after death in the Malay community of Perlis village, the process after death usually uses Malay culture, where when someone dies in Perlis village the family left behind is obliged to cook for the mourners who come and the cooked food has become a characteristic of the Malaysian Malay ethnic group. In Perlis village, it consists of rice, pumpkin, salted fish and sambal Belacan. According to the local community, this food has its own meaning, therefore there are only four menus. This is usually cooked for lunch for the mourners who come, after the cooked food is served next to the house of the bereaved, meaning at the house of the neighbor who is grieving.



Figure 2. Lunch culture (Source: Marwah Mawaddah Research 26 April 2024)

Based on the picture, it shows the mourners' families eating at the funeral home after taking the body to its final resting place, then the mourners return to the funeral home to eat, the food provided is served at a neighbor's house. Usually the mourners immediately know to take their own food without being directed because they are used to it in Perlis village after mourning at the food court.

Important traditional ceremonies in the Malaysian Malay ethnic community in Perlis village. Implementation of these customs helps save traditions and cultural values. This is done by the Malaysian Malay ethnic group in order to maintain their culture. It can be seen that the Malaysian Malay ethnic group in Perlis village maintains the existence of their culture by using their culture at every event, from weddings to religious events and the village government uses Malaysian Malay culture and makes it religious events held every year to maintain cultural existence.

### 3. Traditional Arts

The canoe competition is the art of rowing a canoe using small pieces of wood and small canoes, but not all Perlis village residents can row small canoes using small wood. This is because there are several arts taught by ethnic Malay ancestors to be able to row canoes so that the canoes can walk on water and not sink.



Figure 3. Canoe competition culture (Source: Marwah Mawaddah Research 26 April 2024)

The picture shows people taking part in the art of canoe rowing competitions in Perlis village which are held on the Babalan river. Usually the canoe rowers are arranged in rowing positions, starting with the heaviest body at the back and the lightest at the front. This is believed to maintain the balance of the canoe so that the canoe can move forward.

Not only canoe competitions but there are several other arts which are traditional arts of the Malaysian Malay ethnic group in Perlis village which are still preserved by the people of Perlis village, such as dance performances when important guests come, this was conveyed by Mr. Ruslan Adek in an interview:

*"The art show is there if a guest comes to welcome guests from outside is a Malay dance, there are various Malay cultures that are made to welcome guests, what more if the regent comes or a government guest is at least greeted with a dance, sometimes also if there is a village event in also make it a kind of cultural performance, some sing, some dance, it's fun to watch" (February 2024)*

From the results of the interview, it can be seen that the Perlis village community makes artistic and cultural performances when important guests visit Perlis village to promote their culture and dances are one of the obligatory things that are held to welcome guests from outside.

The traditional art of the Malaysian Malay ethnic group which still exists to this day is the canoe competition which is held once a year to preserve their culture. The canoe competition in Perlis village is usually participated in by each hamlet representing their respective hamlets in Perlis village and this is also a competitive art that is enthusiastic among the community and has a symbol of strength for the ethnic Malay



community in Perlis village. Each group that wins is considered stronger than the others and will receive a sack of rice and other basic necessities.

#### 4. Traditional Food

The rich and varied Malay cuisine is an integral part of the cultural identity. Malaysia's Malay ethnic community loves and defends traditional recipes, and warung makan or rice shops are often places where culinary heritage is preserved. Malaysian Malay cuisine includes a variety of flavors, ingredients, and unique cooking techniques. Some famous Malay dishes involve the use of spices, coconut milk, and strong traditional spices Amir (2022).

One of the traditional foods of the Malaysian Malay ethnic group is spicy porridge and anyang is usually sold a lot in the month of Ramadan to break the fast. Every afternoon in the month of Ramadhan, many people sell spicy porridge and anyang, typical Malay food from Malaysia. Apart from the month of Ramadan, spicy porridge is also available in the Islamic New Year or at the beginning of the month of Muharram because usually there is a competition to cook spicy porridge or what people usually call Ashura porridge.



*Source: Marwah Mawaddah Research March 18 2024*

Figure 4. Traditional food (Source: Marwah Mawaddah Research 18 March 2024)

Some of the traditional Malaysian Malay ethnic foods that are still available in Perlis village are spicy porridge or usually called Ashura porridge, which is a food made from rice as a base ingredient and then added with other spices. The difference between Malaysian Malay ethnic Ashura porridge and Deli Melayu is located at The spices and flavorings for Malaysian ethnic Malay spicy porridge use more flavorings from the sea such as shrimp, crab, fish etc. while Deli Malay spicy porridge usually only uses spices, potatoes and wartel and usually ethnic Malays in Perlis village eat spicy porridge with Anyang. Fern leaves are boiled and then seasoned with a slightly sour taste and roasted grated coconut is a companion to eating spicy porridge in the village of Perlis. Then there is the Rasidah cake which is usually found at various

Malay ethnic events. This cake is also a characteristic of Malaysian Malay ethnic food and is made from wheat flour and fried onions. The combination of sweet and savory makes the love cake have a unique taste and is usually round in shape with onions. fry on it.

## **5. Traditional Clothing**

Traditional Malay clothing baju kurung for women and baju Teluk Belanga for men. baju Malay continues to be worn and appreciated in formal and non-formal events. Traditional Malay clothing such as baju kurung and baju Teluk Belanga have a high cultural value among the Malay community. The use of traditional clothing is not just a fashion, but also a means of expressing cultural identity and preserving traditional heritage.

Baju Kurung, for example, is a traditional Malay clothing that is often worn by Perlis village women. This clothing consists of a long, loose shirt combined with a long cloth skirt that wraps around the body. Meanwhile, for men, it has an elegant design with a distinctive cut or what is usually called a bay belanga shirt.

The use of traditional clothing is not only limited to formal occasions, but can also be found during holidays, wedding ceremonies, or even as a choice of everyday clothing that reflects pride in the cultural heritage of the Malaysian Malay ethnic group. This creates an emotional bond between the individual and their cultural heritage, and shows concern for the preservation of traditional values.

The use of traditional Malay clothing is also a symbol of cultural diversity in the Perlis village community, because various ethnicities that are not only Malay often maintain and respect their respective traditional clothing. By maintaining the tradition of wearing traditional Malay clothing, the community participates in maintaining the rich cultural heritage that exists. has been passed down from generation to generation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The cultural identity of the Malaysian ethnic Malay diaspora in Perlis is reflected in various aspects of daily life, from traditions, language, food, clothing, to religious beliefs and practices.. Malaysian Malay ethnic culture in Perlis village is still generally used by the community as a culture that is still maintained in the Perlis village community. In general, there are several Malaysian Malay ethnic cultures in Perlis village which still exist in the Perlis village community, namely the use of everyday language, the process of birth, marriage and death. The Malaysian Malay ethnic diaspora maintains their cultural existence involving various aspects, including language, customs, art, food, traditional clothing, and cultural values.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author would like to thank all parties involved in this research, both in contributing moral and material motivation, especially to family, friends and informants who have taken the time to be interviewed by the author.

## **REFERENCES**

- Alunaza, H. 2017. Diaspora as Indonesia's Multi Track Diplomacy to Realize Masterplan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development. PROJECTION Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 22(2)
- Akhter. M. 2023. The Bangladeshi Diaspora in the United States: History and Portrait. Genealogy. MDPI.
- Andrew, Fernando Pakpahan, Rerung, et al. 2020. Web Application Development Basics Modern with the Laravel Framework. Indonesian Science Media
- Asnan, G. 2016. Rivers and History of Sumatra. Yogyakarta: Waves.
- Arizal. 2020. Analysis of Ethnic Culture Creating Community Unity (Case Study in Beringin hamlet, Kalimas Village). Pontianak. FKIP
- Azwan Ahmed. 2016. Transformation and Dynamics of Elite Politics in Perlis, 19th Century 1970-an. University of Science Malaysia, Penang.
- Braziel, J.E. 2008. Diaspora: An Introduction. Oxford: Longman Publishing
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2005. The 'Diaspora' Diaspora"Ethnic and Racial Studies.Flight. 28,

- No.1. Matter. 1-19. January 2005.
- Brauw, Alan de. dkk. 2017. Does Internal Migration Improve Overall Well-Being in Ethiopia. Inggris: Journal of African Economies. Vol. 27, No. 3: 347-365.
- Cohen , R. J. , Swerdlik , M. E. , & Sturman , E. D. 2010 . Psychological testing and assessment: An introduction to tests and measurement (8th ed.). McGraw Hill.
- Conny R. Semiawan. 2010. Qualitative Research Methods. Jakarta: Grasindo.
- Daryono. 2013. Instructional Media. Yogyakarta: Gava Media.
- Daryono, H. et al. 2013. From Pangkalan Brandan, Indonesian Oil and Gas Goes Global: Transformation to Non-Oil and Gas in Pangkalan Brandan is a necessity. Jakarta: Petrominer.
- Daniel, Y. 2005. Dance in the African Diaspora. In M. Ember, C. R. Ember, & I. Skoggard (Eds.), Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World.
- Fatianda, S. 2022. Aneuk Jamee Tribe: Minang Community Diaspora in the Land of Aceh (Historical Study and Socio-Cultural Life). HISTORIA: Journal of History Educators and Researchers, 5(1), 147-156.
- Geertz, C. 2005. Clifford Geertz by His Colleagues. USA: University of Chicago Press.
- The meaning of Mr. 2022. Social Interaction of Ethnic Chinese and Ethnic Malays in Sunga Bulan Village, North Singkawang. Pontianak: Journal of Sociology and Humanities Education, Vol. 13, no. 2
- Hidayat Zinggara. 2014. Representation of the Malay and Chinese Southeast Asian Diaspora In New Media. Jakarta: Esa Unggul University Jakarta.
- Ilham S, Muh. 2023. Ethnicity in Bureaucracy (Case Study of Javanese Ethnicity in Government North Luwu district. Makassar: Hasanudin University.
- Ihsan, A. 2019. The Aesthetic Value of Peacocks as a Basic Concept of Character Education in Formal Education of the Bugis Community in Sidrap Regency. Young Journal of Arts and Culture, 34 (2),259-268.
- Kalra S. Virinder, dkk. 2005. Diaspora & Hibridity. London: Sage Publications.
- Good luck. 2007. People and Culture in Indonesia. Jakarta: Bridge.
- Knott, Kim. 2011. Moving People Changing Places. Home. New York: Courier Corporation.
- Kenny, K. 2013. Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford Uni). Oxford.
- Lahneman, W. J. 2005. Impact of Diaspora Communities on Global and National Politics. Report on Survey of the Literature, CIA Strategic Assessment Group and University of Maryland, July.
- Lee, E.S. 2011. Migration Theory. Gajah Mada University Population Research Center.
- Mantra, Ida Bagoes. 2012. General Demographics. Yogyakarta: Student Library,
- M.Faishal. 2021. Beliefs and Customs of the Batu Bara Malay Community. Medan: UINSU.
- M. Hafiz. 2022. Cultured Riau Malay Community. Pekanbaru: Dakwatul Islam vol 6 No
- Mohd Firdaus Abdullah, and Arba'iyah Mohd Noor. 2018. Cooperation between Kedah and Perlis in development of the domestic water supply system in the state of Perlis. 1969-1978. Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics and Strategic Studies. 45(1), 56-78.
- Nasha Rodziadi Khaw, Mohd Kasturi Nor Abd Aziz & Nazarudin Zainun. 2022. Historical highlights Perlis: Cultural and socioeconomic development. University of Malaysia Perlis.
- Nurbaiti, B. 2017. The Influence of Migration Status Through Sociodemographic Characteristics on Level of Worker Welfare in DKI Jakarta (Cross Sectional Susenas Data Analysis 2013). Jakarta: Journal of Scientific Studies, Vol. 17, no. 2: 71-85.
- Ofeh, M.A. & Muandzevara, A.T. 2017. Investigating the Effects of Migrant Remittances on the Economic Growth of Cameroon. Kanada: International Journal of Economics and Finance. Vol. 9, No. 2: 58-69.
- O'Loughlind C.Kenny L. 2013. The Diagnosis And Management of Pre-eclampsia and Eclampsia :American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.
- Rice, F.P. 1990. The adolescent development, relationship & culture (6th ed.). Boston: Ally & Bacon.
- Rosaliza, M. 2015. interview-an-interaction-communication-and.
- Rosyid Abdul Majid et al. 2022. The Aallawiyin Ethnic Diaspora of the Basyaiban family in Magelang its implementation in the world of education. Yogyakarta: Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University.
- Shaffer, D.R. 2002. Developmental Psychology Sixth Edition Childhood And Adolescence. USA: Wadsworth: Thomson Learning.
- Syahpani, D. 2010. History of the Arrival of Javanese People in Sumatra, Jakarta:UM Press.



- Sudarsono. 2005. Taxonomy of Higher Plants. Malang: UM Press
- Sugiyono. 2012. Educational Research Methods Quantitative Approach, Jakarta
- Wahlbeck, O. 2002. The concept of diaspora as an analytical tool in the study of refugee communities. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 28 (2): 221-238.
- Yusuf, A. M. 2014. Research Methods: Quantitative, Qualitative & Combined Research. Jakarta : Prenadamedia Group
- Zulkarnaen. 2018. Diaspora of Arab Descent People in Jakarta, Jakarta: Al Azhar Indonesia Humanities Series.

## BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS



Marwah Mawaddah, born in Perlis village on 30 October 1999, is a Unimed Anthropology Postgraduate student who is also active in various community organizations.