



Pengangun as Ritual Specialist in Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract:

This paper is an ethnographic account of the spiritual function of pengangun (a wedding attendant) based on anthropological research in the Brunei-Muara district. It explores the important role of women in wedding rituals and the ways in which their role has changed as a consequence of modernization and Islamization.

Keywords: *Anthropology; Brunei-Muara; Ethnography; Islamization; Modernization; Pengangun; Role of Women; Wedding Rituals*

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Pengangun is a Malay term that refers to a wedding attendant; a woman aged forty years and above with spiritual knowledge, who has the ability to protect herself and the couple getting married (bride and groom) from black magic. This paper is concerned with the 'spiritual' knowledge of the pengangun and considers to what extent the pengangun is important in Bruneian wedding ceremonies. In addition, I will discuss the importance of the presence of pengangun in the wedding ceremony and examine how their role has changed as a consequence of Islamization and modernization in the past fifty years. I will also highlight the important role of women (the pengangun) in Bruneian patriarchal society.

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Furthermore, I will discuss the challenges that pengangun have been facing as a result of Islamization and modernization. Brunei is known for its ideology of ‘Melayu Islam Beraja’ (MIB) and every aspect of Bruneian culture and traditions have Islamic connotations. As a result, pengangun face difficulties in practicing their spiritual knowledge and have to incorporate the Quran verses to Islamize it so that they can still be part of Brunei’s tradition. A course was introduced in 2009 at the *Balai Ibadat*¹ in Kampong Sengkarai, Tutong especially for pengangun. This course aimed to educate the pengangun by teaching them the proper way of being a pengangun with the use of Quran verses. Most significantly, this course discouraged the use of mantra when conducting the wedding rituals as it is against Islamic teachings. This indicates the systematic changes in penganguns’ role in Brunei society due to Islamization.

In the context of modernization, pengangun view themselves as less important and less required during weddings because of the changing attitudes of a younger generation. Young Bruneians tend to see the penganguns’ services as against Islamic teachings and as part of the Brunei-Malay *adat* (customary law). The central role of pengangun is to give *cahaya* (glow) to the bride during weddings. The availability of modern services such as hair dressers and make-up artists has reduced the importance of penganguns during a wedding as make-up can give ‘glow’ to the bride without the pengangun’s assistance. Furthermore, pengangun also face difficulties in transferring their knowledge to the next generation because the newer generation are afraid of being tested with black magic that could lead to sickness or even worse, death. Penganguns’ service towards soon-to-be married couples has lessened compared to the past when they carried out ceremonies such as *malam berbedak* (dabbing the seven colored powders), *malam berpacar* (henna ceremony) and *ambil-ambilan* (taking the bride to her husband’s house and vice-versa). These ceremonies are now usually

¹ It is a place where Muslims do their prayers and its architectural building is smaller than a *masjid*. A *balai ibadat* is also known as *surau*.

omitted or no longer carried out. It could be due to economic difficulties or that the younger generation do not see it as important to continue the ‘backward’ cultural practice of the past.

My research is based on interviews with six pengangun and participant observation in the services conducted by pengangun in wedding ceremonies. The fieldwork was carried out in the Brunei-Muara district in December 2013 and January 2014. My informants are pengangun aged between their mid-forties to eighty years, who acquired the ‘ilmu’ from their grandmother or mother as well as the pengangun ‘*tidak mempunyai ilmu kebatinan*’ (without legitimate spiritual power). I define the pengangun ‘without legitimate spiritual power’ as someone who “acquired” knowledge as pengangun through studying and observing the services. In contrast, the ‘legitimate’ pengangun derived her knowledge from dreams or through the matriline.

The legitimacy of a pengangun is defined when the village community acknowledges that the pengangun possesses spiritual knowledge (*orang yang berilmu*) through her ability to give glow and capacity to protect the person getting married from black magic. There are no fees charged for their services. A gold ring is given by the mother of the bride or groom as evidence (known as *pikaras*) in the afterlife that the pengangun has protected the individual. Aside from a ring, the bride or groom’s mother presents four yards of white silk to the pengangun in exchange of *kain lapik pinang* which was used during the first night of the married couple to identify the virginity of the bride.

The services offered by pengangun are not only restricted to the bride, the bridegroom too must have a pengangun. This is because the role of a mother, which is to protect and educate her child about marriage, is replaced by pengangun. Hence, this is the moment when the mother hands over her daughter or son to the pengangun with trust of her child’s life protection. In addition, the bride and groom must have a separate pengangun throughout the

ceremonial process because it would be difficult for one pengangun to attend and look after two persons at the same time. Being pengangun does not necessarily mean that they have to adhere to their role as pengangun but a few of them have multiple roles. For instance, some pengangun have the skills of a *penyunat* (circumciser), *pengapai* (diener) and *pengulin* (traditional midwives).

It is relevant to study the two groups of pengangun as legitimate and not legitimate so that changes in penganguns' role over the years can be analysed, to understand the emergence of the 'new generation' of pengangun. Moreover, it is useful to study the two groups of pengangun as I can compare their differences in carrying out their services. The ones with '*ilmu*' or 'legitimate' are known to reside or originate from Kampong Ayer as they are recognized to be strong believers and practitioners in preserving Bruneian customs and traditions. Nonetheless, there are also pengangun with '*ilmu*' that reside on land. They offer their services in the village community to protect and give *cahaya* to the bride or groom.

Aside from focusing on pengangun with *ilmu* or 'legitimate' spiritual power, it is important to interview pengangun 'without legitimate spiritual power', who are believed to be less knowledgeable and acquire their knowledge only by observing other pengangun performing services for the bride or groom. What makes a pengangun less credible is when they ask for payment for the services. A 'legitimate' pengangun does not ask for payment and it rests upon the bride or groom's mother to give *sedekah* (a form of almsgiving) if they wish to. Furthermore, they may not know the mantra very well since their knowledge is acquired through observation from other pengangun. There is also a category of pengangun who do have 'legitimate' spiritual power but commercialize their skills. Somewhat similarly, there is another category of pengangun who do not possess 'legitimate' spiritual power who also commercialize their skills. The last group of pengangun is increasing in number today.

Scholars have not studied the changing roles of pengangun in contemporary Bruneian society. Therefore, it is important to distinguish the different types of pengangun in Brunei which I categorized into two types; the “traditional” and the “modern” pengangun. I discuss the traditional pengangun first, then the contemporary pengangun to demonstrate the transition of their role.

The “traditional” pengangun

I use the term “traditional” to refer to pengangun whom I believe to have credibility in assisting the bridegrooms and can be said to have ‘genuine’ characteristics of a pengangun. One of the genuine characteristics² of a pengangun is that it is gendered and restricted to females. This is because the Bruneians believe that it is only women who are suitable to guide the bride and groom in the area of marriage life. It is an illustration of the empowerment of women through ritual activities in the predominantly patriarchal society of Brunei. Hence, women are able to elevate themselves through wedding rituals and occupy a higher status in the society where women, in particular the pengangun, are highly respected during wedding ceremonies. Furthermore, Susan Sered (1994: 10) pointed out that women in other cultures where male domination in religion is apparent, “domesticate” religion by emphasizing rituals and symbols that give spiritual meaning to their everyday lives. Rozy Susilawati (2001: 31) further states that the pengangun is an important figure in wedding ceremonies and without their presence, the ceremonies will be incomplete.

Another feature that demonstrates the importance of pengangun is that their knowledge is transferred through the female line. Knowledge here refers to the *jampi-jampi* and techniques on dressing up the bride that was taught either by the mother to daughters or

² The characteristics apply to both the “traditional” and “modern” pengangun.

grandmother to granddaughters. Some of the “traditional” pengangun that I had interacted with acquired their knowledge either from their mother or grandmother.

Furthermore, as a result of its matriline feature, the knowledge can be considered as reliable and authentic because their family makes the spells. Hence, as a result of its family embodiment, some pengangun refused to share the *jampi* with strangers. I consider knowledge, especially *jampi* that is transferred from female lines is a form of cultural capital that is embodied and it helps in the reproduction of the knowledge for future generations.

Furthermore, apart from acquiring the knowledge from ancestors, a credible pengangun acquires her knowledge through dreams. Although it may sound skeptical to others, however, I find this type of acquiring knowledge as a special gift and an individual with such a gift should be regarded as spiritual. My informant, Minah claimed that a few months after her mother passed away when she was 17 years old, a woman came into her dreams and said “*Ingat-Ingat kau kan kedia ku.*” (do not forget me) and shook her hand. However, she believed that the woman is not her mother but a spirit. Since then, the spirit has been helping her during ritual activities such as curing illnesses and protecting the bridegroom from black magic.

Interestingly, she has been a pengangun since 1995 and she did not acquire the knowledge from anyone. Although her ancestors were pengangun, their knowledge was not transferred to Minah and her sister, Hajah Rosnah, who is also a pengangun. Although Minah is reluctant to claim herself as a pengangun, the villagers acknowledge her spiritual credibility. She added that the spirit will come by itself when she conducts a ritual. It is the spirit that tells her what spells to use and when I tried to persuade her to spell out the *jampi*, she could not because the spirit only appears when she performs a ritual. In addition, Minah

pointed out that an individual who learns *jampi* from humans differs from learning it from a spirit and she also stated that her *jampi* is shorter than the *jampi* learned from humans.

According to Minah, the spirit will “inform” her by giving her a signal, and she felt a “tick” (intuition) in her heart when it happened. For instance, if I ask Minah to be a pengangun during my wedding, she will require a few days to decide. When the spirit “tells” her that she can be my pengangun, she will agree to my request and throughout the ritual, the spirit will then help Minah by providing her with *jampi*. She added that when the spirit helps her, all sorts of spells come up and she is always astonished when it happens.

Furthermore, my informant Hajah Ainah whom I describe as “traditional” differs from the pengangun I have described above. Her mother was a pengangun, however, she acquired the knowledge to be a pengangun from her *cikgu mengaji* (a tutor teaching how to read the Quran). Her *cikgu mengaji* learned to be a pengangun from a *dukun* as my informant mentioned. As such, although Hajah Ainah did not acquire her knowledge from her mother, I define her as a credible (“traditional”) pengangun because spells that are taught by a *dukun* are mostly not Islamic and I regard a *dukun* as a spiritual individual.

Hajah Ainah has been a pengangun for twenty-two years and within those years, she has come across incidents caused by *sihir* (black magic). One of them was when there were hundreds of flies in the bride’s room and she had to utter a few *jampis* that forced the flies to escape. Flies, as some Malays believe are a *suruhan* (servant) of the sorcerer to do harm to people. Apart from that, the bride’s family saw a black tall figure in their house throughout the wedding ceremony. The bride’s mother believed that it is the doing of her daughter’s ex-fiancé. Hence, it is important for a pengangun to have powerful *ilmu* that can prevent unwanted incidents and most importantly protect the bride from evil harm.

As mentioned in the literature review, the age and appearance of a pengangun is significant and these are one of the characteristics that I defined as 'genuine'. According to my informant Haji Bakar³, a pengangun must be a woman who has gone through the phase of marriage life, someone who has aged (*berumur*) and are well versed with *jampis* to be used for bridegrooms and herself (*tau bacaan-bacaan untuk pengantin dan dirinya*). Their knowledge on marriage life increases as they grow older through life experiences. A similar response was given by my informant who was a former village headman in Kampong Sengkurong, that it is important for a pengangun to be married because they have experienced marriage life and their knowledge is passed on to the bridegrooms.

Furthermore, a pengangun is often seen and regarded as *indung* (mother) that guides especially the bride about the proper way of serving the husband. Mothers, as Susan Sered (1994: 77) stated 'understand love, relationship, and spirituality in ways that men do not'. Therefore, it can be said that the nurturing and affectionate qualities of women, in particular mothers, are suitable to be a pengangun. Susan Sered (1994: 72) further stated that motherhood gives women power and in some cultures it is believed to bestow upon women deep spiritual insights. The pengangun will teach the bride methods of purifying herself when taking a bath (*mandi langir*), beautifying herself to look good in her husband's eyes, and most importantly, *jampi* for sexual intercourse to fulfill the pleasure of her husband.

In addition, there are two ways of transferring this knowledge to the bridegroom; one such way is through oral and another way is through written form. The main highlight of the *ilmu* or knowledge is the *jampi* because it plays a crucial role in guiding the bridegrooms during the process of marriage rituals that I will elaborate later. Knowledge on *jampi* is one of the characteristics that I identified as significant to be a pengangun. This is because having

³ A pseudonym is used to protect my informant's identity. He is one of the village headmen in the Brunei-Muara district and was interviewed on December 11th, 2014 at his house.

deep knowledge on *jampis* reflects the pengangun's spirituality and the more spiritual *ilmu* she possess, the greater the credibility of the pengangun.

At present, to gain access to pengangun with spiritual *ilmu* is difficult because many of them have passed away and often the *ilmu* is not transferred. According to my informants, they find it difficult to teach their knowledge on *jampi-jampi* (spells) to their children because the young generation today are not keen to learn the spells as it is seen as not useful for today's practice. Furthermore, another reason is that the use of *jampi* is seen as not conforming with the Islamic religion because most of the *jampi* used by the elderly contains the calling of spirits for help (*pemujaan*) and such practice is seen as *kurafat* (superstitious).

My informants further stated that spells were important in their daily life because it guards themselves from *sihir* (black magic) and *orang halus* (bad spirits) in the past when medical facilities were not available. However, some of the young generations today did not believe in the power of the *jampi* and rely heavily on hospital medicine. My informant Hajah Silmi stated that:

“Kanak-Kanak masa ani payah kan di ajar bacaan-bacaan ani, inda jua dapat dipaksa mun nya inda mau kan belajar. Aku dahulu, nini mengajar, dipelajari jua pasal beguna untuk kitani.”

“It is difficult to teach the spells that I have learned to the younger generation today, I would not force them to learn if they refused. Spells are useful for us and it was my grandmother who taught me.”

A major difference in the penganguns' characteristics in the past and present day is when the pengangun asks for payment. A genuine pengangun conducts her role based on free-will (*ikhlas*) and there is no payment in return because her role is to *mendangani*

(accompany) and protect the bride from harm. The pengangun that I defined as “traditional” and legitimate performs her role willingly but the “modern” pengangun does the opposite.

Instead of payment, the “traditional” pengangun asks for a *pikaras* (a symbolic object) as proof in the afterlife that the pengangun has taken care of the bridegroom. The bride’s mother will have to give a gold ring and she has the right to set the weight of the gold. This is related to *sedekah* (almsgiving), a cultural and religious practice that is done willingly with money or objects used during such occasions. Consequently, sometimes a “traditional” pengangun receives money from the bride or groom’s mother to convey her appreciation for taking care of her child. The amount of money given varies according to individuals. Thus, most mothers give *sedekah* to pengangun for their services.

My informant, Hajah Ainah viewed the act of giving a price for “helping” the bride as inappropriate and it deviates from the pengangun’s norm because a pengangun’s role in society is to *mendangani* (accompany) and *menjaga* (look after) the bridegroom. The other pengangun (Minah, Hajah Jamilah, Rokiah, Hjh Arfah and Hjh Siau) I interacted with had a similar view. Some pengangun emphasized the significance of the gold ring (*pikaras*) and share a similar understanding of its use as I mentioned above.

According to Hajah Jamilah, *cincin emas* (gold ring) and *kain sebandang* (one piece cloth) are required from the bride’s family. The gold ring is for *dunia* (present world) and *akhirat* (the hereafter) as proof. Furthermore, she believed that it will be questioned in the hereafter and the cloth is to be used in the hereafter. Similarly, Minah argued that only a true pengangun will ask for a gold ring and *kain putih* (white cloth) to be used for *nila* (the hereafter).

In the past, the pengangun usually lived with the bridegroom, started her “job” two weeks before the wedding ceremony, and ended her role after the *mulih tiga hari* ceremony.

The start of a pengangun's "job" marks the period of strict supervision by the pengangun when bridegrooms are required to obey the pengangun's rules. In the past, there were precautionary steps that the bride and her family took. Necessities such as the bridegroom's food and attire are prepared exclusively by the pengangun. In addition, it is important to ask the pengangun's permission when entering the bride or groom's bedroom. This rule is to prevent maltreatment of the pengangun, the bridegroom or her family (Kipli Bulat 1995: 16).

According to my informant Hajah Ainah, weddings require constant supervision especially for the bride.

"Pengantin bini ani mesti dijaga banar-banar, makanya banyak pantang larang nya...itu ini inda dapat. Keluar dari rumah atu inda boleh, darah pengantin bini ani manis... ditakuti benda halus atu mengacau pengantin."

"There are different kinds of taboos during weddings and the bride is the most important individual to be looked after... her blood is considered as 'sweet', thus, she is not allowed to step out of the house... as a precaution from bad spirits."

Brides are seen as being more prone to black magic (*sihir*) and disturbance from evil spirits. For instance, my informant Minah stated that, *"Pengantin laki jasad nya saja kan di pelihara"* (It is only the groom's body that needs to be protected). According to Hajah Silmi, she came across an incident where a bride who had been disturbed by evil spirits had suffered from fever and tonsillitis for two weeks. As a consequence, the bride was advised by her pengangun never to leave the house until the wedding ceremonies ended. Her pengangun stated that a bride should not leave the house for one month prior to the wedding and it is during dusk that the evil spirits start to roam and find prey. My informant added that the reason for the bride's vulnerability is because her *semangat* (spirit) is weak and thus she is targeted by the evil spirits.

Apart from assisting the local citizen, the pengangun is also needed by the noble families in Brunei. My informant, Hajah Ainah is an eminent pengangun among the royalty and she is also needed during circumcision rites in the palace because of her specialism in the area of circumcision and *mengangun* (performing the pengangun role). The nobles in Brunei are still active with the Malay ‘little tradition’ and my informant stated that the nobles have strong beliefs in the old *adat* (customary law) of Brunei in contrast to the ordinary citizens of Brunei.

The pengangun I engaged with are orthopraxic because the significance of such practice and words incorporated in the *jampi* is unknown and continues to be practiced today. My informants could not elaborate more when posed with questions such as “To whom do you need to prove?” and “Afterlife as in heaven?” because they reproduce the customs without understanding its function. The cultural practices have become “routine patterns of behavior” and the pengangun are “withdrawn from consciousness” (Elliot 2009: 146). Most often, they gave a similar response whereby the reason for doing certain things that they could not explain is mainly because it is a custom and their ancestors have done it. Nonetheless, although they are orthopraxic, believing in the spells is the only important matter for my informants and as Hjh Arfah stated that “*Asalkan kitani yakin dengan bacaan atu*” (As long as we trust the spells).

Although I have described the pengangun here as “traditional”, they do differ slightly from the pengangun in the past. I believe the pengangun in the 1950s were experts in their role because they knew the reason for using certain words, objects, which makes them not orthopraxic. In addition, throughout my fieldwork, it is striking to see that the pengangun does not refer to the spells as “*jampi*”, instead they use “*bacaan*”. This could be because there is a negative connotation behind the word “*jampi*” as it is usually associated with a *dukun* (sorcerer).

The “Islamized” pengangun

Researchers who have studied pengangun in Brunei have overlooked other categories of pengangun. It is relevant to look at another category of pengangun that has gradually taken over the role of “traditional” pengangun. I define this new type of pengangun as “Islamized” pengangun. They differ greatly from the “traditional” pengangun in terms of how they reproduce the rituals. It is important to note that, I use the term “Islamized” as not exclusively referring to pengangun who have been influenced by the religion of Islam. The term also refers to pengangun that have taken up aspects of modernization in Brunei and modified their role to fit the MIB philosophy. As such, I use the terms “modern” and “Islamized” interchangeably to refer to the new type of pengangun.

Throughout my fieldwork I have encountered more “Islamized” pengangun than the “traditional” ones. The new type of pengangun differs from the “traditional” pengangun in terms of how the *ilmu* is acquired. Although some of my “Islamized” informants’ mothers or grandmothers are pengangun, their *ilmu* is not derived directly from their matriline. My informants Hajah Siau, Hajah Arfah and Hajah Hasma stated that they did not have any interest in becoming pengangun initially and so did not see the importance in learning the *ilmu* from their mother or grandmother. However, as they grew older they began to observe other pengangun and started to learn how to assist and beautify the bridegrooms.

“Mun nya banar-banar kan belajar mengangun, mesti jua tahu kan bacaan nya. Mun nada bacaan nya, nada berseri pengantin. Selalunya kana minta pikaras nya mun kan belajar bacaan atu.”

“If you are serious to be a pengangun, you need to learn the spells. Without the spells, the bridegroom will not have a glow. To get the spells from a pengangun, you need to provide a pikaras in return.”

(Hajah Hasma)

Hajah Arfah, has been a pengangun for 19 years and gained her knowledge from assisting other pengangun. Although she is familiar with the *jampi*, she prefers not to use it when conducting the rituals because it is seen as deviating from the religion of Islam. She added that, “*kalau bacaan yang penting, sama inda menyalahi agama ambil jadikan bacaan*” (Spells that are useful and are not against the Islamic teachings, we can use them). Another way on how my informant, Hajah Arfah acquired the *jampi* is by keeping the *jampi* that was given by her pengangun during her wedding. When assisting the bridegroom, she still uses some of the spells received from her pengangun and teaches the bridegrooms. She added that it is up to the wedding couple if they want to use the *jampi*.

Two of my informants; Hajah Arfah and Rokiah had encountered many bridegrooms who prefer a pengangun who uses Islamic verses instead of the non-Islamic *jampi*. In the past, there was no preference in choosing a pengangun and the bridegroom only followed the pengangun’s instructions. To some extent, Islamization in Brunei has changed and affected generations today by altering their lifestyle and influencing their way of thinking towards Islam. As a result, generations today are more independent in terms of expressing their opinion and prefer an Islamic pengangun over the “traditional” ones who use the old *jampi*. In addition, throughout my fieldwork and interviews with the “Islamized” pengangun, they are more open in sharing the spells because it is Islamic. One reason for this could be that using the Islamic spells is seen as proper and not scrutinized by the public.

One of my informants, Hajah Siau became a pengangun in 1996 after her husband died and learnt to be a pengangun by observing other penganguns. I describe her as an “Islamized” pengangun because she admitted that “*baiknya memakai ayat-ayat dari Al-Quran daripada bacaan orang lama atu*” (It is better to use the Islamic verses than the old *jampi*). She regarded the old *jampi* as inappropriate for use today because it is against Islamic teachings. As a replacement of the old spells, she had been using *ayat-ayat Al-Quran* (verses from the Quran) such as the *Surah Empat Qul*, *Ayat Qursi*, and most importantly *selawat ke atas Nabi Muhammad* (Invocation to the Prophet Muhammad). This kind of preference towards Islamic spells is common among the “modern” pengangun I engaged with during my research.

Instead of abandoning all of the non-Islamic spells, most of my “modern” or “Islamized” informants continue to use the spells by incorporating Allah and the names of Prophets as well as verses from the Quran to make it more acceptable to the state and society. One of my informants stated that in case she is suspected of using illegal *jampi*, she will use the “Islamic” *jampi* as narrated below:

Bismillahrahmanirahim, Ibuku bumi bapakku langit

Mandi roh mandi jasad, Mandi ku di dalam kandang kandil Siti Fatimah

Tebunikan tilamku, Urikan kainku, Tangkai pusat kan tungkatku

Allahu Allah

Mandi roh, Mandi Kalam, Mandi ku bersuci di dalam kandang Siti Fatimah

Allahu Allah.

Allah the merciful, my mother is the earth my father is the sky

Cleansing the body and soul, I am showering inside Siti Fatimah’s protection

Placenta as my bed, amniotic water as my blanket, my bellybutton as my stick

I praise you Allah

Cleansing the soul and Allah's realm, I am showering inside Siti Fatimah's protection

I praise you Allah

The above *jampi* is an example of *mantera mandi*, used by both the “modern” and “traditional” pengangun to give everlasting glow to the bridegroom. This *mantera mandi* is used only when showering the bridegroom and a bucket of water is spelled. The *jampi* quoted above does not connote or invoke the name of spirits and is seen as acceptable.

The effect of Islamization is apparent from the *mantera mandi* above where there are several invocations of Allah's name and the *jampi* begins with ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’. The most common verse that is used among the “Islamized” pengangun is the *Surah Nabi Yusuf*. Pious *ustadz* and *ustazah* in Brunei encourage this *surah* because it is written in the Quran that Prophet Yusuf had a good-looking face. In addition, my informant Hajah Rubayah who had attended the course on pengangun was taught to abandon the old spells and replace it with verses from the Quran. There are a few *jampis* that are acceptable and can be used, however, the user must always believe that they are not the one who made the *jampi* effective but it is Allah the almighty. In other words, everything that the pengangun does is based on Allah's will.

Most of the *jampi* used by the pengangun in Brunei involve the use of Prophet Muhammad's wife's name, Siti Aisyah and the Prophet's daughter, Siti Fatimah whose name is widely used in *mantera* (spells). Both of my “traditional” and “Islamized” informants shared a similar belief in Siti Fatimah and according to them by using her name, the bride will be blessed and appears different (beyond beautiful) from her usual face. As a side note, the *jampi* has the element of trying to unite with Siti Fatimah by calling her as she is seen as

the divine feminine. For instance, Minah believed that Siti Fatimah is *tuhan* (god) and that is the reason her name is incorporated in *jampi*.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, a genuine pengangun does not ask for payment for the services they provide. However, there has been a gradual change in the role of pengangun toward commercialization and this has occurred among the “modern” pengangun I interacted with during my research. One of my informants requested \$250 for her services and her reason for doing this is because she drives her own car and provides all of the materials used during the rituals. In addition, she will ask for extra charges, usually \$30 if the bridegroom’s house is in Kuala Belait or Temburong District because it is too far from her house village. According to my informants; Munah and Hajah Jalihah⁴ who were married in 1991 and 1995 respectively, their pengangun provided all of the necessities for conducting rituals and hence, their families were not allowed to touch any of the materials (*bunga gambir, kayu langir, limau kapas, baras lulut* and *pacar*).

Hajah Jamilah, a legitimate pengangun who argued that her *indung petuan* (her mother’s sister) from whom she trained to be a pengangun forbids anyone including the bridegroom’s family to touch or prepare the ingredients for ritual activities. She recalled one incident when her *indung petuan* refused to be a pengangun for a bride just because her mother had prepared *bedak lulut, bedak tujuh warna* and *pacar*. Hajah Jamilah added, the reason behind this is to prevent *sihir* things being added and mixed into the materials that are going to be used for the rituals. Throughout her experience, the culprit can be anyone including close family members and so it is better to be cautious.

My claims about the commercialization of the “modern” pengangun were further reinforced when my informant Siti requested \$250 from the bride’s family for her services

⁴ Pseudonyms are used as my informants refused to use reveal her identity.

because she drives her own car and provided the necessities for ritual activities. I categorize her as “modern” because she fits my description of an ‘illegitimate’ pengangun that asked for payment from the bridegroom’s family, studied to be a pengangun by observing others, and most importantly used Islamic *jampi* when conducting rituals. “It is not proper to use the old *jampi* because it can interfere with our Islamic belief and teachings that caused us to be *syirik* (superstitious)” as my informant Siti argued.

According to Hajah Hasma, “*inda bisai makai bacaan lama atu, kitani takut bida’ah*” (It is not appropriate to use the old spells to avoid unlawful heresy) and “*masa ani makai ayat Quran saja, takut ku kan memakai bacaan lama atu*” (I am afraid to use the old spells, thus I prefer to use verses from the Quran). Although some of my “Islamized” informants are familiar with the old *jampi*, they had become Islamized and chose to adhere to Islamic teachings. In the case of Hajah Hasma, she obtained the old spells from other pengangun and in order for me to get the spells during the fieldwork, she requested a *pikaras*. She is further illegitimate because her *ilmu* on *mengangun* is not derived from her matrilineal line but by learning from other pengangun. She initially started to learn spells for herself such as spells that makes her *jasad* strong.

My informant Hajah Ainah whom I identify as a “modern” pengangun, shared her experience with a bride who had been haunted with bad spirits at night. The bride heard the sound of women crying outside her window, dogs barking along with howling sounds and the most disturbing scene is when she heard scratching sound on the walls. This kind of doing as stated by my informant is the work of *sihir* to make the bride go insane. Unfortunately, the pengangun could not stop the disturbances and had to call an Ustadz to prevent those things from harming the bride. A “traditional” pengangun would know the proper rituals and spells to get rid of the spirits, and in the past an Ustadz was not widely used to “help” the pengangun. However, in the modern day when Islamization in Brunei has become dominant,

the Ustadz is sometimes called on to intervene in rituals which are usually the preserve of women.

Wedding rituals

As I have mentioned, the pengangun is the key figure in wedding ceremonies and their presence helps to complete the festivities. This section aims to demonstrate the reason for having pengangun during wedding ceremonies by using examples of wedding rituals I gathered during my fieldwork. Ritual is primarily a medium of communication as argued by Edmund Leach (1968: 176⁵). The wedding rituals not only portray the Malay custom, most importantly the pengangun's spirituality can be analyzed as the *jampi* are used as a medium to communicate with the unseen beings or the divine creator of the universe. Old *jampi* involves the invocation of unfamiliar names and hence the user must believe in the *jampi*, so that it will have an effect.

Researchers such as Kipli Bulat (1995: 13) argued that the pengangun is important when it comes to wedding festivities because uneventful things had happened and hence as a precautionary measure, someone with spiritual power is needed during wedding. It has been the Malay custom for a pengangun to be present a month before the wedding starts as my informant Hajah Ainah believed that "*sebualan sebelum kawin atu mesti sudah dijaga pengantin, ada-ada saja benda yang inda diingini berlaku*" (Unwanted things happened and thus, the wedding couple must be protected one month before the wedding). As Kipli Bulat (1995: 16) noted, "In the old tradition, the pengangun starts her role as early as forty days or one month prior to the wedding ceremonies."

⁵ The information was cited from David Hicks "Ritual and Belief: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion" 1999 on page 176.

Nonetheless, the pengangun today differs greatly from the past. Based on my fieldwork, I found that both the “traditional” and “modern” pengangun I engaged with performed services one week before the wedding festivities. The pengangun begins with *Istiadat Malam Berjaga-jaga* with Berbedak Siang or Berbedak Mandi ceremony. Kipli Bulat (1997: 23) stated that this ceremony takes place a week earlier before the actual wedding ceremony (*bersanding*). The highlight of the berbedak mandi ceremony is the dabbing of aromatic powder (*badak lulut*) that has been diluted with water.

Hajah Ainah stated that *badak lulut* consists of twelve ingredients (*air mulih, bunga mawar, bunga gambir, cakur, tamu lawak, tamu kunci, tamu kuning, tamu putih, banglai, daun nilam, pualam and kayu cindana*) that has been dried out and blended. She added that, pengangun today do not have the knowledge as well as ability to make *bedak lulut* and thus, they rely on what the market provides. Hajah Ainah and Hajah Jamilah were taught by their mothers about how to make *bedak lulut*. In the past, *bedak lulut* was made by the pengangun herself. However, making *bedak lulut* requires much effort and thus my “traditional” informants prefer to buy it at *tamu kianggeh*.

This ceremony usually takes place on Friday morning when the bride or groom is seated on a cushion for the *bedak mandi* ceremony. Close family members are then invited to dab the *bedak lulut* onto the bride or groom’s palm (Refer to figure 1). As stated by Hajah Ainah, in the past, this ceremony was strictly for married elderly who have grandchildren. It is believed that the elderly blessing is crucial for the bridegroom’s happiness. Moreover, the families that had been invited number only seven to nine people. This custom has changed in this present day where invited families are young and do not have the knowledge on how to dab the *bedak lulut*. The ring finger must be used to ‘*membadaki*’ (dabbing the *bedak lulut*) because there is an aura from the finger that can ‘*bangkit cahaya*’ (awaken the inner glow) of the wedded couple.

When it comes to the groom, my informant Hajah Jamilah uses *jampi cahaya Allah* before the groom proceeds to the *pelamin* (symbolic of dais) and the *jampi* is believed to bring out the inner glow.

*Cahaya Muhammad namanya nur cahaya
Cahaya Allah kan Cahaya mu
Cahaya Muhammad kan cahaya mu
Berkat memakai lailahaillah, Berkat memakai bangkit cahaya dari Allah*

Muhammad's radiance is called Allah's radiance
Your radiance is from Allah's radiance
Your radiance is from Muhammad's radiance
There is no diety but God (thank you), The rise of radiance from Allah (thank you)

Following the *bedak mandi* ceremony, *berlulut*⁶ ritual takes place where the pengangun scrubs the bridegroom's body from head to toe using the *bedak lulut* and followed by the *pirasang*. *Pirasang* is a coarse powder that is made from Siamese rice that have been cooked to brown color and blended. The purpose of this ritual is to cleanse the body from dirt, removes dead skin and '*badan sentiasa berbau harum*' (the body remains to smell good).

It is crucial for the remains of the *bedak lulut* that have been scrubbed to be kept by respective pengangun and during the *bersanding* ceremony, the groom's pengangun will hand in the *bedak lulut* to the bride's pengangun. The bride and groom's *bedak lulut* will be mixed together and my informants believed that by uniting the groom and bride's *bedak lulut*, it will ensure the couple will have ever lasting happiness. Once the *bedak lulut* is mixed, it must be buried or dispersed into rivers to prevent the bridegroom from getting harmed by black magic.

⁶ Refer to Figure 2.

After the *berlulut* ritual, the *pengangun* conducts a showering ritual to bring out the bridegroom's inner glow. This ritual is called *mandi langir*⁷ and it takes place in the morning of the solemnization day and the actual wedding ceremony (*bersanding*). In the past, the bride or groom would be seated facing *matahari hidup*. However, such an act has changed because Muslims should not turn their back from the *kiblat* as it is considered a sin. Significantly, all of my informants had changed their style of showering the bridegroom by facing the *kiblat*.

At first, the bride or groom will be seated at the center and five or seven children stands in a circle surrounding the bride or groom. Odd numbers is common in ritual activities as it is believed to have a greater effect (*mengasi*) than using even numbers. These children will hold lighted candles and each of them wears different colors of *selendang* (shawl) on their right shoulder. The candle is a symbol of *cahaya* that helps to bring out the inner glow or radiance and some of my informants believed that the light from the candles is transferred to the bride or groom.

The bride or groom is then showered at the top of her or his head with water containing *kayu langir*⁸ (whiteflower albizia) because according to my informants, the *roh suci* from within will come out from the forehead. It is important for the *kayu langir* to produce bubbles and villagers believed that only a spiritual *pengangun* can bring out the bubbles because there is a specific spell for it. A contrasting response from Minah is that the *langir* is the *pengangun*'s saliva, the *langir*'s leaves are the *pengangun*'s ears and the roots are from the *pengangun*'s heart veins (*akar jantung*). Following that ritual is showering of the right and left shoulder where Allah is believed to bless the individual. Next, water filled with squeezed *limau kapas* (limes) is poured to the bridegroom.

⁷ Refer to Figure 3 for materials used during the *mandi langir* ritual.

⁸ Refer to Figure 4

Finally, a bucket of water is then mixed with seven different kinds of flowers and *bunga gambir* to produce a good aroma and is then poured from the forehead up to toe (Refer to Figure 5). The lighted candles are then given to the *pengangun* and the bride will extinguish the candles with water from her mouth (Refer to Figure 6). Once the candles have been blown out, it is then dabbed onto the right and left shoulder and lastly to the chest as this ritual is believed to make the bridegroom physically strong (strong *jasad*). There are different kinds of *jampi mandi*, which my informant Hajah Ainah used when showering the bridegroom:

*Eh Nur Alifah! Nur suci nama nyawa ku
Bersikor sani nama tulangku
Aku mandi di dalam kandang kalimah Allah,
Allah kan cahaya ku, Muhammad kan wujudku,
Lailahaillah Muhammadarusulullah.*

Excuse me, the radiance of Allah! Allah's holy radiance is my soul's name
I am showering inside the name of Allah
Allah is my radiance, Muhammad is my existence
There is no deity, but God. The Prophet Muhammad.

*Kandang Kandil
Bandang kalimah
Cahaya mu di dalam kandang Allah
Yang mahar suci
Tikar putih akan... permaidani akan lapik mu
Kau di dalam kandang Allah
Mahar suci Ya Allah, Lailahaillah Muhammadarusulullah.*

The fence of five⁹ holy evenings in Muslim calendar
Allah's radiance
Your inner glow is from Allah's radiance
The holy divine
White mat as your... the carpet as your pedestal
You are inside the protection of Allah
Allah the holy divine, There is no diety, but God. The Prophet Muhammad.

⁹ Maulud Nabi, Israk Mik'raj, Sha'ban, Lailat al-Qadar and Rejab (the night of Prophet Muhammad's conception).

Another example of *jampi* used by Siti when showering the bridegroom is as follows:

Bismillahirrahmanirahim
Ujud mandi Adam mandi Nur
Mandi cahaya aku menyalam di lautan rahmat
Aku timbul di lautan cahaya
Wujud Allah akan wujud ku
Kudarat Allah kan kudarat ku
Berkat ku memakai dua kata wujud daripada Allah
Wa'ashaduallah Allah Wa'Ashadu Anna Muhammada' Rasulullah

Allah the merciful
I am showering using Adam's radiance
I am diving inside the grace sea to get radiance
I arise from the radiance sea
Allah exist and I exist
Allah's power is my power
I am using the two word that exist from Allah (thank you)
I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and messenger

From the first *jampi* above, *Nur* and *Bandang* refer to *cahaya* (light) and *Alifah* refers to the first Arabic letter of Allah's name *alif*. As stated by my informant, *Kandang* is a fence and *Kalimah Allah* refers to the Allah's name and by using *kandang kalimah Allah*, it is believed that the individual will be under Allah's protection. From the illustrated *jampi*, words such as Allah, Prophet Adam and Quran verses is incorporated as a way of Islamizing the *jampi* as well as the *pengangun*'s role.

After the showering ritual, a *pengangun* will conduct a *bertangas* ritual strictly for the bride. It uses a brassware filled with *kemenyan* and dried leaves (*daun sambung*, *daun tawas*, *daun balik angin* etc) that have been spelled¹⁰ with *jampi* by the *pengangun* as stated by H.H Zaleha (2004: 35). The bride will be surrounded with a mat and covered with cloth from her neck to toe. The brassware is then placed at the center while the bride stands with her legs open to allow the smoke to enter her vagina. This ritual is to ensure the bride's vagina

¹⁰ Refer to Figure 7 for the spell used during the *bertangas* ritual. The spell was gathered from the work of Siti Saihalina (2005: 70).

remains intact for sexual pleasure. H.H Zaleha (2004¹¹) stated that three kinds of twigs (*kayu masuri*, *kayu pucuk* and *kayu ganti*) are boiled and the water is given to the bride to be consumed. The elderly people believed that by drinking the water, it can create everlasting pleasure for the wedded couple.

According to my informants, Hajah Ainah and Hajah Siau, such a ritual is rarely practiced today as most brides regard the ritual as against Islamic teachings. It is believed that the *kemenyan* smoke invites the *satan* and the use of *kemenyan* is often associated with a *dukun*. Moreover, the *pengangun* course that was conducted in Tutong emphasized that the *bertangas* ritual is forbidden and must not be practiced as it violates Islamic teachings. However, there are other *pengangun* who continue to offer to conduct the ritual as long as the bride agrees to it.

Next, is the solemnization ceremony (*akad nikah*) when the *pengangun* must be seated beside the bridegroom at all time. Based on my informant's experience, she had come across brides who burst into tears and grooms who could not pronounce '*aku terima nikahnya dengan tunai*' (I promised and accept her to be my wedded wife for a certain amount of dowry). To overcome such situation, my informant Hajah Ainah spelled a glass of water and asks the bridegroom to drink. The spell is as follow:

*Kunung kanang, daun dadap tumbuh di batu
walaupun ku mundur bumi peperangan
namun hati ku tetap seperti batu
batu yang di tetapkan Allah
berkat ku memakai dua penantap, lailahaillah muhammadarasulullah.*

Range of mountains, Erythrina euodiphylla leaves grow on a rock
Even though I retreat in war
My heart remain firm as a rock
Rock that is created by Allah

¹¹ Ibid

I am using the two kinds of rigid word, there is no deity but God, The Prophet Muhammad (thank you).

Subsequently, *malam berbadak* ceremony takes place usually on Saturday night and this ceremony differs slightly from the *berbedak mandi* ceremony in terms of the materials used for dabbing the wet powder. Seven colors¹² (Red, Orange, Green, Yellow, White, Blue and Purple) of powders are used during the ceremony. Hajah Ainah stated that individuals with spiritual knowledge on the ceremony will only use white, green and yellow colors as white symbolize purity, green symbolize the color of Islam while yellow is the color of the nobles.

During this ceremony, the pengangun stands beside the bride while uttering few *jampis* to shield the bridegroom from *sihir*. My informants pointed out that the bride, groom and the pengangun herself are prone to be tested by other spiritualist using black magic. They added that, the moment when people start dabbing the colored powder is when the sorcerer is ‘sending’ something to make the bridegroom sick, unhappy and so on. Minah stated that most of the time, the pengangun itself is the evil culprit and it occurs through shaking hands.

According to Hajah Hasma, she felt strong heat behind her back when she was on the *pelamin* (symbolic of dais) with the bride and for her it is important to equip oneself with *ilmu pendinding* during *berbadak* ceremony. In the past, this ceremony is conducted by the bride’s family and the groom’s family will be invited to dab the colored powders¹³. The very next day, similar practices were repeated by the groom’s family at his house. Accordingly, most of my informants believed that the black magic is usually done by the opposite side of the family and their pengangun to see the extent of the pengangun’s spiritual power.

¹² Refer to Figure 8

¹³ Refer to Figure 9

Following the ceremony, another important ritual called *masuk pengangunan* takes place that marks the start of the bride or groom being grounded by the pengangun. The bridegroom will dress up in white garment and adorned with Malay traditional accessories. The bridegroom will lay his hands over the pengangun's shoulder as if the pengangun is piggybacking¹⁴ (*besikut*) the bridegroom and the pengangun will make three rounds around the bridal's bed. In each round, the pengangun will utter *jampi* or verses from the Quran and its purpose is to *guris*¹⁵. The bridal bed must be supervised to prevent people from sitting on it.

In the last round, the pengangun will give *salam* (*Assalamualaikum* greeting) to the bride's mother and she responds with *Waalaikumsalam*, and invites her child to sit on the bed with her. One person will hold a lighted candle behind the bride and the grandmother, father and mother of the wedded couple will sit on the bridal bed holding a lit candle (Refer to Figure 11). Furthermore, people involved in the ritual will sit together on the bridal bed and the pengangun will ask Allah's help to bless and protect the bride throughout the wedding ceremonies. In addition, a *jampi* was spelled out by my informant Hajah Siau as narrated below:

*Bukan salam sebarang salam,
Salam empat penjuru alam ku,
Bukan kata sebarang kata ku katakan,
Kata-Kata Allah dan Rasulullah ku,
Ku berlindung di dalam kandang,
Ku bersembunyi di tiang,
Ku tidur di pasak bumi,
Ku berdiri di kaki langit,
Tiada siapa yang memandang dan terpandang,
kecuali Allah hu Allah
Lailahaillallah...Muhammadarrasulullah*

¹⁴ Refer to Figure 10

¹⁵ *Guris* involves the use of *jampi* that creates an unseen fence around an area that have been spelled. It is used to prevent the bridegroom from disturbance caused by satan, jin and *sihir*. Typically an amulet is used to *guris*. *Guris* is also placed at the bridal bed (*pelamin*) as it is a place that is frequently used by the bridegroom.

This is not an ordinary greeting,
Greetings to the four corners of my realm
This is not an ordinary saying,
It is the words of Allah and Prophet Muhammad
I am covering myself in a fence
I am sleeping in the core of the earth
I am standing at the top of the sky
No one is able to see except Allah the Almighty
There is no deity, but God. The Prophet Muhammad.

Following that is the *malam berpacar* or *berinai* ceremony that involves the applying of henna on the palms, fingers, feet and toes of the bridegroom (Refer to Figure 12). The henna is made from a plant that has been crushed, and mixed with tea and *asam aur-aur* (*Garcinia parvifolia*). According to my informant Minah, she came across an incident where a bride felt a burning sensation from the henna that was put onto her palm. As a result, to avoid such incident from happening, the henna had to be kept by the *pengangun* from others so that no one will cast a spell on the henna.

Hajah Ainah stated that the circle shape on the groom's palm symbolizes the full moon where as a circle with oval shape on the bride's palm symbolizes a crab that is waiting for its egg to hatch. The Malays believe that full moon and a crab that is laying its eggs is a sign of fertility. In the past, the *pengangun* prepared the henna that had been spelled to give an orange color when applied to the bridegroom's palm. There are instances when the henna requires several hours for it to leave a mark and it is often associated with the *pengangun's* spiritual *ilmu*.

The long awaited day for the bridegroom is the *bersanding* ceremony, known as the wedding reception. The *pengangun* will conduct the *berlulut* and *mandi langir* ritual before the bride is dressed. Once dressed, Hajah Ainah advised the bride to consume a small amount of salt using the ring finger, as salt is believed to prevent the bride from evil disturbance.

Finally, the pengangun conducts a concluding ritual for the bride called *pengarusan* with the use of three lighted candles and seven colored threads.

Furthermore, the candles are lit while the threads are circled around the bride's head three times and tied to the bride's neck (Refer to Figure 13). Once tied, it is then fused with the candles and the bride will be asked to blow out the candles¹⁶. My informants agreed that the ritual is significant to ensure that the bride will be protected before departing to *pelamin* (dais) and if the candles are blown several times, it is a sign that the bridegroom's marriage will not last forever.

In addition, the groom will be escorted by the pengangun and upon arrival at the bride's house, a spiritual man¹⁷ will guide the groom and conducts a *pusing naga* (three circle of a dragon) ritual. The groom will make three rounds of circles and a *doa* or *jampi* is read by the spiritual man. Generally, yellow colored rice grains are then sprinkled on the groom to signify prosperity and long life. However, this practice is forbidden by the state as it is associated with Hinduism and should not be practiced by Brunei citizens. The groom will then annul the bride's ablution by placing his hand on the right and left shoulder of the bride and kisses the bride's forehead. The ceremony ends with the bride and groom seated together on the *pelamin* (dais) with respective pengangun standing side by side.

Implementation of Syariah Law

I have referred to the Islamization of women spiritualists in Brunei with reference to the Syariah Law introduced in April 2014. Consequently, it is relevant to discuss my

¹⁶ Refer to Figure 14 and Figure 15.

¹⁷ This spiritual man is not referred as *dukun* or *bomoh*, but someone who is *pandai* (knowledgeable) that knows how to defend oneself from *sihir* and spirit disturbance. I believe they have studied from a guru to acquire the knowledge and spells is also used during the *pusing naga* ritual.

informants' views on Syariah Law as it will impact on their role as *pengangun*. In addition, some of my informants have multiple roles such as *pengurut* (masseur) who use material and conduct practices viewed as illegal by the state and incompatible with the teachings of Islam. This type of spiritualist will be greatly affected by the upcoming law as they are viewed as a threat¹⁸ and must be stopped.

Additionally, the government took the initiative in Islamizing society to another level when a fatwa on *jampi yang dilarang* (spells that are forbidden) was passed by the State Mufti in 2001. Although the fatwa is directed at the *bomoh* (sorcerer) who use *jampi* for curing illnesses, the examples of forbidden *jampi* in the fatwa are also used by the *pengangun* in Brunei. Currently, there are no laws specifically directed at *pengangun* and cases of using illegal *jampis* have not been reported. From my perspective, although the government has criminalized the use of *jampi* among the *bomoh*, the message is only received by a small number of people and the *jampi* can still be used behind closed doors.

Based on my informants' ¹⁹ perspectives, the use of *jampi* is for the sake of the bridegroom and it helps to guard them throughout the ceremony, thus she does not see the reason for abandoning the use of illegal *jampi*. She added that throughout her experience using the *jampis*, she has not been reported to the Pusat Dakwah. Furthermore, the bride's mother and grandmother also encourage her to use the *jampi* as it has been part of the Malay tradition during wedding ceremonies.

The Syariah Law implemented in April 2014 will only affect the *pengangun* if they use illegal *jampis* that cause harm on others and if they use an amulet (*azimat*) that has been

¹⁸ Activity that is defined as a 'threat' directly refers to the *dukun* or *bomoh* because they are seen as individuals who are not religious Muslims. Society has been made to think that individuals that engage with the spirit cosmos are not Islamic as it is seen as deviating from the teachings of Islam. It created a stigma and the spiritualist is most often labelled as a threat to the society.

¹⁹ I have to protect her identity to ensure her safety when discussing issues that relates to the state and illegal *jampi* as this topic is seen as sensitive.

spelled with non-Islamic verses. Furthermore, my respondents are not aware that they are liable to arrest by the religious officials if they use illegal *jampis* because they are not familiar with the law. Two of my “traditional” respondents contested that, they are not *dukun* and only a *dukun* uses *sihir* to inflict harm on others. All they do is to help beautify and protect the bride from evil spirits and they do not have the intention to harm the bridegroom (*Pengangun ani tugasnya menjaga sama membari seri pengantin ganya bukan kan membuat jahat*).

In addition, there has not been any reports regarding pengangun using illegal *jampis*, however, cases of both men and women spiritualists being investigated by religious officials are common. According to my informant Minah, a woman spiritualist in her village was arrested and the materials she used for curing illnesses were inspected by the officials. The villagers believed that someone must have reported her to the religious officials. Nonetheless, she was set free because of the lack of evidence. Hence, a case involving the use of illegal *jampis* or *sihir* is a complex matter to investigate and unlikely to be investigated unless a report is made.

There are a small number of my informants who abide by the *fatwa* and most of them are people who have been socialized in the Islamic environment. They see the significance of implementing the Syariah Law as changing the old practices that is not in line with the Islamic religion. My informant Hajah Rokiah suggested that the Ministry of Religious Affairs should conduct a course especially for pengangun so that their practices during wedding rituals are based on Islamic teachings rather than using the old traditions. In addition, two of my informants are aware of the Syariah Law and they expressed concern that it can affect them if their services are not seen as Islamic.

This paper discussed the role of “traditional” and “Islamized” pengangun in wedding ceremonies in Brunei. Although there has been a gradual transformation in the traditional role of pengangun, they have also adapted to Islamization. It gives new meaning to their role that their ancestors once held. I have also presented the narratives of my informants in response to the Syariah Law. It is apparent that some pengangun are still active with their ‘little tradition’ because there is a strong commitment to preserving the Brunei-Malay adat of using *jampi*. Having said this, these women spiritualists are also significant co-creators of Islamic religiosity in ritualistic practices reserved for women.

APPENDIX



Figure 1: The

bride's grandmother

is dabbing the wet bedak lulut during beredak mandi ritual



Figure 2: The bride is being scrubbed with bedak lulut and pirasang. At the end of the ritual, the pengangun collects the scrubbed remains to be kept by the pengangun until the bersanding



Figure 3: *Materials such as candles, limau kapas, kayu langir, bunga gambir and selendang for the berbedak mandi ritual.*



Figure 4: *The bride is showered with water mixed with kayu langir. The figure shows the bubbles of the kayu langir.*



Figure 5: *The bride is showered with water containing bunga gambir to give good aroma.*



Figure 6: *The bride was asked to give one blow to the lighted candles with water in her mouth*

Bismillahirrahmanirahim.

Pi yakun kata Allah, Kalikun kata Jibril,

Kata malam siang kau libas,

Kata siang malam kau libas,

Libas di bawah angin, libas di bawah air

Berkat ku memakai doa pelibas

Tabalak tabalik kemabali ke orang punya

Figure 7: *A jampi that is used for the bertangas ritual.*



Figure 8: *The Seven colored rice powders used during the Malam Berbadak ceremony. Water is provided to clean the fingers.*



Figure 9: *The bride's mother is dabbing the colored powder.*



Figure 10: *The masuk pengangunan ritual where the groom piggybacks the pengangun*



Figure 11: *The groom sits with his family after getting invited by his mother while the pengangun reads doa to bless the groom.*



Figure 12: *The groom is waiting for his henna to dry during the Malam Berpacar night.*



Figure 13: *The pengangun fused the seven colored threads together around the bride's neck for pengarusan ritual.*



Figure 14: *The bride is asked to blow the candles that have been fused with the seven colored threads.*



Figure 15: *The pengarusan ritual ends with the bride blowing the lighted candles.*

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